

# Alice Elizabeth Kane

b. Apr. 18, 1908, Belfast, Ireland; d. May 30, 2003, Toronto, ON



Alice Kane graduate portrait. Credit Old Magill yearbook 1930

## Education:

1930 BA McGill University

1933 Diploma in Librarianship, University of Toronto Library School

1941 BLS University of Toronto Library School

## Positions:

1930–1973 Toronto Public Library: Boys and Girls House, Dufferin-St. Clair, Riverdale, Queen and Lisgar, and Danforth Branches, Head, Parkdale Branch

1965–1973 In charge of story-telling in Boys and Girls in-service training programme, Toronto Public Library

1969–1972 Taught story telling, Summer School, University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, NB

1965–1974 Visiting Lecturer at the Faculty of Library and Information Science, University of Toronto

1979 Taught the first course ever offered by the Storytellers School of Toronto, which she helped to found

## Publications:

Kane, Alice E. (1933). Gipsies in fiction, 5 p., an unpublished University of Toronto Library School project.

Kane, Alice E. (1942). "Introducing foreign children to a Canadian library." *The School; A Magazine Devoted to Elementary and Secondary Education* 30 (March): 602-606.

Kane, Alice E. (1943). "Merlin's Isle of Gramarye." *Childhood Education* 20, no. 3 (Nov.): 118-120.

Kane, Alice E. (1948). "Puppets." *Recreation* 41, no. 1 (April): 20-22.

Aubry, Claude (1965). *The Christmas wolf*. Translated from the French by Alice Kane and illustrated by Edouard Wolf. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Aubry, Claude (1968). *The magic fiddler and other legends of French Canada*. Translated by Alice E. Kane. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates.

Aubry, Claude (1983). *The king of the Thousand Islands: a Canadian fairy tale* Translated from the French by Alice Kane and illustrated by Vesna Krstanovich. Toronto: Clark Irwin.

Kane, Alice (1983). *Songs and sayings of an Ulster childhood*. Edited by Edith Fowke. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Kane, Alice (1995). *The Dreamer awakes*. Edited by Sean Kane. Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press.

*Tales from an Irish Hearth*. (Ten classic tales of ordinary folk and of fairies, witches, pookas and changelings). 1985. Audiocassette. All three tapes available from the Storytellers School of Toronto.

## Honours:

1998 D. Litt, York University "in recognition of her contributions as a storyteller, librarian, writer and teacher."

1998 The CBC commissioned a documentary on her life.

## Associations/Committees:

Member and co-founder of the Story Tellers School of Toronto  
The Bruce Trail Association

## Accomplishments:

1979 Co-founder of the Storytellers School  
Alice Kane Award established with Storytelling School of Toronto

## Other areas of Activity:

1,001 Friday Nights of Storytelling (weekly adult storytelling session)  
Regular performer at Toronto Festival of Storytelling

## Comments:

"Alice Kane is the best storyteller in North America, if not the English-speaking world." – Edith Fowke

"Internationally recognized as a storyteller of spell-binding effect and folklorist of international stature. Her background as a native of Ulster, combined with her prodigious memory, enabled her to become a teller of the great, long and intricately wonder-tales of Celtic tradition. She told those tales with spell-binding effect never failing to move her audiences profoundly while she implicitly instructed them in depth, meaning and magic of oral culture. " Kane was a primary figure in the revitalization of storytelling that led to the establishment of the Toronto Storytellers School and the city's famed storytelling festival. A former librarian in the Toronto Public Library, Kane has done more than any other Canadian to foster and resuscitate oral literature. At the time of the awarding her D.Litt, in lieu of a convocation address, Rita Cox, protege of the 90-year old Kane, told one of Kane's favourite stories."

A deeply literate person, trained as a librarian and full of respect for books, Alice Kane was a primary figure in the revitalization of storytelling that led to the establishment of the Toronto Storytellers School and the city's famed storytelling festival. She has contributed greatly to a rich cultural life in Ontario by encouraging storytellers from many different cultures to share their stories. As a librarian in the Toronto Public Library's "Golden Age," Alice Kane played a major role in developing the library's world-renowned children's library services. She trained, influenced and inspired many other librarians to provide children with the best and most significant access to the world's literatures. In the process, Ms Kane also offered access to the world of wonders to be found in oral narratives. Her legacy includes the Storytellers School, the storytelling festivals held annually in Toronto, Vancouver and Whitehorse, and the presence of courses in oral literature at several universities.

(From: York University upon the granting of her D.Litt)

## Sources:

Kirk, Heather. (1991). [Alice Kane: River without end. Stories without end.](#) Accessed September 3, 2023.

Globe and Mail, Obituaries, June 3 and 4, 2003

ELAN no. 34, Fall 2003, p. 15

Ex Libris News, no.8, Fall 1990, p.13-14

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