

had retired on half pay. Her married name suited her well. Her moods were often black, with reason; her husband, whom she loved well, could never adjust to the idea that a Canadian farmer, even though a gentleman, had to work with his own hands.

The sisters would produce two celebrated books on pioneer life: Catherine wrote *The Backwoods of Canada*, and Susanna, *Roughing It in the Bush*.



Catherine described the building of a log house, a logging bee—a work of social significance in which the neighbours pitched in. “The work went merrily on with the help of plenty of Canadian nectar (whiskey), the honey that our bees are solaced with. Some huge joints of salt pork, a peck of potatoes, with a rice pudding and a loaf as big as a Cheshire cheese formed the feast that was to regale at the raising—we laughed and called it a pic-nic in the backwoods and rude as was the fare, I can assure you great was the satisfaction expressed by all the guests of every degree.”

Susanna hated such bees—she found her male neighbours particularly abhorrent when they had a skinful—but she did learn to admire the hard-earned results of her own manual labour: “My husband and I had worked hard in the field, it was the first time I had ever tried my hand at field labour, but our ready money was exhausted—we could not hire and there was no help for it. I had a hard struggle with my pride, before I would consent to render the least assistance on the farm. . . . If we occasionally suffered severe pain, we often experienced great pleasure, and I have contemplated (with joy) a well-hoed ridge of potatoes on that bush farm.”

Catherine remained eminently practical; her *Backwoods* was intended to be basically a guide for the woman pioneer, as was her more explicitly named *A Female Emigrant's Guide*, which stressed the food and medicinal possibilities of native Canadian plants and the various ways of cooking plants and animals. Slowly, through their long lives (Susanna lived to be 82, Catherine, 98), the sisters gained fame. “I actually shed tears of joy over the first twenty dollar bill I received from Montréal,” Susanna would write. “It was my own; I had earned it with my own hand, and it seemed to



my delighted fancy to form the nucleus out of which a future independence for my family might arise.”

Susanna became a recognized great literary figure before her death in 1885; Catherine became that and more. She trained herself as a naturalist and wrote two basic works, *Canadian Wild Flowers* and *Plant Life in Canada*. A fern, *A. Marginale (Swa.) var: Traillae*, was named for her, and the Canadian Government gave her an island in Stoney Lake where she spent her last full years. Her final book, *Pearls and Pebbles*, was published when she was 92. Her backwoods had long been tamed but her own bright spirit was wild and free until the last.

Margaret Laurence

Margaret Laurence, Canada's great novelist, is the author of seven works of fiction, the latest a complex novel, *The Diviners*.

In the words of writer Don Cameron, she is “an ordinary person concerned about her kids, working her way through the shopping and the washing and the vacuuming, talking over her shoulder as she cooks an excellent roast, puzzling her way through issues like pollution, abortion, the population crisis.”

(Right) Celia Franca who was leading dramatic dancer with Sadler's Wells Theatre (now Royal) Ballet is the founder and artistic director of the National Ballet of Canada, and co-founder and artistic adviser of the National Ballet School. Her awards and honours, which include the Centennial Medal and the Medal of Service of the Order of Canada, are almost innumerable. (Bottom) Karen Kain, from Erindale, Ontario, is the rising star of the National Ballet of Canada. During the Ballet's long American tour, she danced *Swan Lake* with Rudolf Nureyev.

