

Alice Jamieson

It had been a long day at school. Today in English class I researched historical people in Alberta. In preparation for an essay I had to do the following day. There were many names to pick from. As I sat having dinner, I narrowed down my choice.

When bedtime came I slowly drifted to sleep while thinking about what to put in my essay. I quickly opened my eyes. It felt like I woke up but, I knew I was still asleep. I was dreaming. Everything was blurred. When my eyes adjusted I realized I was sitting at a table with another person. It was the person I chose to write about, Alice Jamieson.

“Hello!” She exclaimed.

“Hi,” I replied, “I never thought I would meet you in person.”

“I never thought I’d see anyone like this either,” Alice joked.

“So, why are you here Ms. Alice?” I questioned.

“To help you write the story,” she informed me.

“Ok,” I mumbled nervously, “tell me about yourself.”

And so she began. “I was born in New York, on July 14th 1860. My parents were James Jukes and Isabel Duxbury. They were both British nationals however, they moved to the United States when they were just children. I had six siblings, 3 brothers and 3 sisters. Sadly one of each died during infancy. In my early childhood my family moved to Chicago. This is where I spent my formative years.”

I was very intrigued by her story. I listened intently.

“I married my husband, Reuben Rupert Jamieson on March 8th, 1882 in Springfield, Ohio. Reuben was one of eleven children. Fifth born to be exact. When we got married he was working in Toronto, Ontario for Canadian Pacific Railroad. I gave birth to two sons and two daughters during our time in Toronto. We later moved to Smiths Falls, Ontario as Reuben was promoted to a position there with the C.P.R. Our fifth child, a baby boy was born there. However he died in infancy”.

“In later years we moved to Alberta. This is when my husband became Superintendent of the C.P.R.’s Western Division and was posted to Calgary. Subsequent to this he was promoted to General Superintendent of the C.P.R.’s Central Division in Winnipeg. In 1909 he retired from the

C.P.R after being elected Mayor of Calgary. He served in this position for two years. He passed away in 1911 after a short illness.”

As she recounted her life story. I sensed the pain of losing her husband but, this woman sitting before me displayed grace and humility. I was impressed by her fortitude and the things she went on to accomplish.

“Could you please tell me about your career?” I asked.

She chuckled a bit as she reflected. “I held many positions and was very active in several organizations. I was president of the Women’s Hospital Aid Society, Musical Club, and the Canadian Club. In 1907 I was one of the founders of the YWCA. It is the country’s largest and oldest women’s multi service organization, serving over 300 communities across Canada”. Alice exclaimed. Also in 1912 I helped organize the Local Council of Women. This group worked collaboratively with many women’s organizations in Calgary to make the lives of members of the community better, especially that of women and children. The preceding year, 1913 was a milestone year, one that propelled us towards future change. Alongside Maude Riley, I helped make it possible for women to become police officers.”

“It was in 1916 that I had found my preferred job. I was appointed to be a judge in the juvenile court in Calgary. I was the first female judge in Alberta, Canada and the British empire. Later on, I became the second female police magistrate in Canada after Emily Murphy of Edmonton. I had spent a year in the court as the magistrate when complaints started being lodged against me. It came into question why a woman was serving such a position as this in the court.

“As you may be aware,” she explained, “back then women were not seen as persons under the law in Canada. The system was quite different from what you know today. I found the accusations made against me to be outrageous. As such, I fought the system. The Supreme Court of Alberta found in my favour and I continued to preside in the court. Perhaps you’ve heard of the Famous Five? They were petitioners in the groundbreaking Persons Case.” She suggested I look them up.

As she stood up, she adjusted her beautiful feathered hat and slipped her gloves back on. “Well then.” she said “It was nice chatting with you. Morning is fast approaching and you need to be rested. Be well”.

“Thank you for the information Ms. Alice.” I said.

Before leaving she turned around. “Young man, I have a question,” she asked, “is it true that they’ve started naming buildings after me?”

Yes,” I said proudly, “there is an all-female school called the Alice Jamieson Girls Academy, which was established in 2003 and the Jamieson Place tower in downtown Calgary.” We both smiled. As everything slowly roved out of view.

When I woke up I was eager to get ready for school. I thought about what I had discussed with Ms. Alice. What a remarkable woman she was. What an amazing life she lived. She did not allow her detractors to dissuade her. She persevered and I now had a better understanding of Alberta’s rich history.

Today women are well recognized in the eyes of the law and hold many positions in society. This was all made possible by the many contributions and relentless efforts of Alice Jamieson and the women who rallied with her. I aspire to one day bring about change and make a difference. Be a voice as Alice was. To engage and enrich the lives of both men and women and to allow for equal opportunity. To not judge a person because of gender, creed or religion but, rather by the content of their character and good works. I desire to be a responsible member of my community and give back. Maybe I could start by volunteering!

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_Jamieson

<http://ywcacanada.ca/en/pages/national/who>

<http://albertachampions.org/Champions/alice-jane-jukes-jamieson-1860-1949/>

In The Footsteps Of Giants Volume 2