



Preserving, promoting, and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.

CULTURAL MOMENT FOR JAN 15TH CELEBRATES OLIVE (PALMER) DIEFENBAKER

Thinking back, has there ever been a teacher in your life who has left a profound influence on you as an adult?

Such was the case of a teacher, Olive Palmer. Olive was born in Roland, Manitoba in 1902. Her father, Charles Freeman was a Baptist Minister and Olive first met a young John Diefenbaker in Saskatoon at the church where her father was preaching. He was studying Law at the University of Saskatchewan. Shortly after, Olive's family moved to Ontario for the ministry.



She attended McMaster University and Teacher's College majoring in French and in 1933, began teaching in Guelph where she met Harry Palmer, a lawyer, her first husband. He died suddenly in 1936 leaving Olive and a daughter Caroline. Olive went back to teaching and was given a job at Arthur District High School where she taught until 1940 when she moved to Owen Sound to begin a new career as the director of child guidance for The Ontario Department of Education.

She reunited with John Diefenbaker in 1951 and they were married in 1953 in Toronto. Olive revisited Arthur with her husband John Diefenbaker in 1962 and throughout his time as Prime Minister of Canada 1957-1963, was an asset to his campaign team for her ability to remember names, her charm and being able to speak fluent French. Olive Diefenbaker died in 1976 in Ottawa as a former wife of our 13th Prime Minister but in Arthur for many former students, she was Mrs. Palmer.

Submitted by Bonny McDougall, Wellington North Cultural Roundtable