

Canada's First Woman Golf Professional:

**Evelyn Keffer,
Too Long Unsung**



By Donald J. Childs

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I sing of golf and the woman.

On the evening of Saturday, October 5th, 1918, as war raged in Europe and as the Spanish Flu ravaged Canada, the country's elite gathered in Ottawa's Grand Trunk Central Station for a somber event: the body of one of the pandemic's victims was about to be placed on a train to Toronto.



Figure 1 Postcard circa 1918 showing Ottawa's Grand Trunk Central Station.

A large crowd of men and women were milling about in the train station's General Waiting Room.



Figure 2 Postcard circa 1918 showing the General Waiting Room of the Grand Trunk Central Station in Ottawa.

People arrived carrying flowers as they descended the steps from the Wellington Street entrance. Already the waiting room was decorated with "many floral tributes"; yet one particular display stood out from the others: "a large wreath from the members of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 7 October 1918, p. 7).

Everyone awaited the arrival of the hearse carrying the coffin. In it were the remains of Mrs. Karl Keffer, formerly Evelyn Alice Freeman, deceased wife of the golf professional at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club.



Figure 3 Mrs. Karl Keffer, née Evelyn Alice Freeman, circa 1914.

Bearing flowers, the coffin was carried with measured steps to a box car. The body it contained would be delivered to 1940 Queen Street East, Toronto, the home of Evelyn's parents, thence to be moved in funeral procession to Mount Pleasant Cemetery on the afternoon of Tuesday, October 8th.

Karl Keffer, overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, had been sent a cable the day before telling him about his wife's death, but it is not clear that he knew yet what had happened. Evelyn had been in good health until Tuesday, October 1st, when she complained of "what at first appeared to be a very slight illness" (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1918, p. 3). Soon, however, "she was seized with pneumonia" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 7 October 1918, p. 7). It developed "rapidly" (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1918, p. 3). And so "She was removed to a local hospital" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 7 October 1918, p. 7). She "died on Saturday morning She was 30 years of age" (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1918, p. 3).

The Royal Ottawa Golf Club was shocked: "The keenest regret is expressed by members ... over her untimely death"; "A large number of members ... attended at the station when the remains were placed on board the train for Toronto" (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1918, p. 3; *Ottawa Citizen*, 7 October 1918, p. 7).



Figure 4 Ottawa Golf Club members circa 1904.

Regarding the Club members present at the station, the newspapers listed by name various barristers, solicitors, architects, bankers, and businessmen. For example, there was D.M. Finnie, manager of the Bank of Ottawa, and there was J.E. Macpherson, vice-president of the Bell Company of Canada. Everyone was prominent in some field.



Figure 5 John F. Orde, in Canadian Golfer, vol 3 no 2 (June 1917), p. 100.

Many of the people listed in the newspapers were also members of Royal Ottawa's Board of Directors. Finnie was the Club's vice-president, for instance. The Club's vice-Captain, P.J. Baskerville, Chairman of the Green Committee, was also present.

Others who were at the train station were not only members of Royal Ottawa's Board of Directors and its most important committees, but also members of similar administrative entities of the Royal Canadian Golf Association. J.A. Jackson, for instance, past president of Royal Ottawa, was the former Secretary-Treasurer of the Royal Canadian Golf Association. In 1918, he had just been appointed to the R.C.G.A.'s Board of Directors, designated to serve on its Executive Committee.

Perhaps the organizer of the Club's show of respect for Evelyn Keffer was John F. Orde, K.C., the Royal Ottawa member with the most extensive golf service record. He was a present member of the Board of Directors, a past president of the Club, and a past president of the R.C.G.A. It was Orde who had hired Karl Keffer in 1911.

Two golf professionals were also present at the train station.

One was the only golf professional other than Karl who was located in Ottawa: David L. Black of the Rivermead Golf and Country Club. "Davie" knew the Keffers well. Not only had he often competed against Karl, but also as of 1916 he began to compete alongside him, for he and Karl in that year pioneered the practice of patriotic golf matches: in 1916, in home and away contests, Ottawa's two pros Keffer and Black played Montreal's Murray brothers (Charles and Albert), who, like Karl, had apprenticed at the Toronto Golf Club under the head pro George Cumming. Hundreds of spectators paid good money to watch the matches, all proceeds being donated to causes supportive of the war effort. The practice caught on and was adopted by golf clubs from coast to coast in Canada, and then in the United States.



Figure 6 The Red Cross golf match at Rivermead Golf and Country Club, August, 1916, between Charles and Albert Murray, on the one hand, and Davie Black and Karl Keffer, on the other.

The other golf professional at the train station was Evelyn's brother Frank Freeman, of the Rosedale Golf and Country Club, who had purchased a burial plot for his older sister before leaving for Ottawa.



Figure 7 Grave marker of Evelyn Alice Freeman (Mrs. Karl Keffer) in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Toronto.



Figure 8 Toddler Howard Keffer and his mother Evelyn, shortly before her death.

Accompanying Frank Freeman to Ottawa was another of his seven sisters – perhaps Ida, who had been Evelyn’s bridesmaid at her wedding to Karl almost five years earlier. Evelyn’s sister had probably come to Ottawa not just to accompany the remains back to Toronto, but also to take charge of Evelyn’s son Howard on the train ride home.

Still seven weeks short of his fourth birthday, the little boy was no doubt quite bewildered by what was happening all around him.

On that soft October night so long ago, the members of the Royal Ottawa golf community that gathered at the Grand Trunk Central Station were paying their respects not just to the deceased wife of the Royal Ottawa golf professional Karl Keffer;

they were also paying their respects to a woman who had by virtue of her work at their golf club become a golf professional in her own right. For since her husband’s departure for Europe at the beginning of the 1917 golf season, Evelyn Keffer had performed the pro’s duties at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club.



Figure 9 Sandra Post. circa 1970.

Those with a passing knowledge of Canada’s golf history might have thought that Sandra Post was Canada’s first woman golf professional. She springs to mind as the first Canadian woman to have earned her living as a professional golfer playing on the Ladies Professional Golf Association tour.

Post famously won the LPGA championship as a 20-year-old rookie in 1968, and thereafter pursued a long career on tour, winning a number of other tournaments as well, despite the fact that she was frequently hampered by injuries.

Yet there were other ways of becoming a golf professional than by competing for prize money on a professional golf tour.

And so we read of another of Canada’s first woman golf professionals in a *Maclean’s Magazine* article published in 1937: “The choice was golf or

college. Now Marjorie Kirkham is Canada's first woman golf professional" (Dink Carroll, "Golf Pro," 15 June 1937, p. 21).

Just before Joseph Kirkham moved his family to Los Angeles from Montreal in the late 1920s for the sake of his health, he had cajoled his 16-year-old daughter Marjorie to take up golf to keep him company on the local municipal golf course. Born in 1909, she took just one lesson in 1925 and became so proficient at the game that she soon received the attention of expert professional coaches in both Montreal and Los Angeles. She not only profited from such high-caliber instruction, but also learned how to offer it herself, such that after a stellar competitive career as an amateur golfer in California, Ontario, and Quebec, she became the first Canadian woman to earn a living as a golf instructor when she opened her own school in a prominent Montreal department store late in 1936.

She was 27 years old.



Figure 10 Marjorie Kirkham, mid-1930s.

Kirkham felt that becoming a professional golf instructor was the only way she could stay in the game:

I'd gone as far as I could in tournament play I could never win an American or British championship because I simply haven't got enough money to do it, even if I had the latent ability.... I have no regrets at turning professional.... I think I made a wise move.... The only trouble with it ... is that it's just a winter job. No club can support two pros, one for the men and one for the women, and there won't be any room for me at a club.

(Dink Carroll, "Golf Pro," Maclean's Magazine, 15 June 1937, pp. 32-33).

But, again, there were other ways of being a golf professional than by teaching or touring, and Kirkham herself mentions the most notable one – the way that was foreclosed to her: serving as a club's golf professional. Yet it turns out that even earlier in the 1930s, a woman had found a way to do this very job, thereby becoming another of Canada's first woman golf professionals, and she had done so as a teenager.

Born in 1912, Verena Margaret Newton was a good golfer from the moment she took up the game at age 14, competing alongside Kirkham herself in a number of events during the 1931 season, but Newton's budding amateur career was cut short by a famous decision she made the following spring – a decision that made her the focus of an Associated Press story published in newspapers across North America in April of 1932: “Woman Golfer Joins Ranks of Pro Class ... Miss Verena Newton, nineteen, yesterday became the first woman golf professional in Canada. She has a job with a club in Muskoka” (*Daily Colonist* [Victoria, B.C.], p. 14; see also the *Manchester Evening Herald* in Connecticut [28 April 1932, p. 9]).

Canadian Golfer devoted an article to her accomplishment: “at last Canada has to have a woman professional golfer. Miss Verena M. Newton, a charming 19-year-old Toronto girl, has decided to take the plunge and this season will take over the pro duties at the recently formed Lakeside Club at Minett, Muskoka, and make no mistake about it, she is well-equipped to do so. Miss Verena quite sprang into fame last year, when unheralded and unsung she entered for the Canadian Ladies' Close Championship at Lambton and romped away with the handsome cup She is not only an exceptionally good golfer, but is quite capable of looking after the requirements of golfers in regard to club repairs and the dozen and one things a capable pro is called upon to perform” (vol 18 no 1 [May 1932], p, 47).



Figure 11 Verena Margaret Newton, in *Canadian Golfer*, vol 18 no 1 (May 1932), p. 47.

The Toronto newspaper *The Mail and Empire* sent reporter Ken W. McTaggart to interview Newton. Explaining that “She can shaft a head like a man, rewind clubs, can do anything that is done around a pro’s shop because she has done them all lots of times,” McTaggart assures readers that “with all her golf she is definitely feminine”: “She is a good cook,” he writes, and “She wears becoming costumes and is very dainty.” He seems to be at pains to domesticate her relatively unladylike declaration of a rather defiant independence: “You see ... I have to make some money. I can’t just go on playing golf for fun because I can’t afford it. Everybody said I was crazy to be a pro because I can’t play in women’s tournaments anymore. But why should I care? I don’t want to play that way. The game is fun and I hope I can

make my own way this way and have my fun playing, too.... It's what I want to do, so what about it?" (cited in *Canadian Golfer*, vol 18 no 1 [May 1932], p, 47).

Running a professional golf shop the way Newton did in 1932 is not just another way of being a golf professional; it is the original way – dating back to the 1700s in Scotland, when several generations of the Robertson family of St Andrews began to be described as golf professionals because of their club-making and ball-making skills.

As we now know, however, newspapers and magazines were mistaken in declaring that Newton was Canada's first woman golf professional, for almost ten years before either Newton or Kirkham had even picked up a golf club as young girls, and more than thirty years before Post was even born, unheralded and unsung Evelyn Keffer had for two years run the pro shop at one of Canada's oldest and most venerated golf clubs.

A generation earlier, something similar had happened in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century when Georgina Campbell took over her husband Willie's role as golf professional after his death.



Figure 12 Willie Campbell circa 1890.

Willie and Georgina Campbell immigrated from Scotland to the United States in 1894, where Willie became the golf professional of the Country Club at Brookline, Massachusetts, laying out new holes for that iconic golf course, as well as laying out the first nine holes for several other Boston courses that would become foundational to the growth of the sport in that city. He also went on to lay out courses elsewhere in Massachusetts, as well as in New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

Born in Musselburgh, Scotland, in 1862, Willie had apprenticed with Old Tom Morris and had caddied for Bob Ferguson, the person regarded as the greatest golfer in the world in the 1880s and the person who would

subsequently coach Campbell, an excellent golfer who had led the British Open in 1887 with three holes

left to play, and who had also led the U.S. Open in 1895 with six holes left to play, before in each case he scored a disastrous 9 on the very next hole and lost the tournaments by a stroke or two.

Campbell was clearly on his way to a place of importance in the early development of American golf, but his life was cut short by cancer in 1901, when he was just 38 years of age.

Yet despite his short life in America, Campbell has not been forgotten, in large part because of his wife. Robert Muir Graves and Geoffrey S. Cornish observe not just that Willie Campbell “became a pioneer in planning municipal golf courses in America – facilities that became significant in accommodating a tidal wave of people who were taking up the game,” but also that “his wife Georgina became America’s first woman professional golfer” (*Classic Golf Hole Design* [Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2002], p. 181). Georgina had not only married Willie; she had become his apprentice. And she would not only assume his role as a golf professional; she would manage the very municipal course that he had fought so hard to build.



Figure 13 Georgina and Willie Campbell outside their Massachusetts pro shop in the mid-1890s.

Georgina Campbell, also born in Musselburgh (in 1864), had learned golf in Scotland and met her husband there when she was a member of the gallery following the swashbuckling Willie in one of his matches. In Massachusetts, she became his assistant golf professional, making and painting gutta percha golf balls and giving lessons to wealthy Boston women eager to take up the game. She had played the game long enough to have experienced the transition

from the time in her youth when a woman who took a full golf swing was thought unladylike to the beginning of a new age when women’s golf was unthinkable without the full swing that Georgina taught women in Boston.



Figure 14 Georgina Campbell, professional golfer at Franklin Park Golf Links, Boston, circa 1910.

When her husband died in 1901, Georgina beat out all male applicants in the competition to succeed him at Boston's Franklin Park Golf Links (which Willie Campbell had convinced municipal authorities to build in order to make golf available to working-class golfers at a cost of just 12.5 cents for a daily ticket). The success of this adventure in municipal golf had made the position of head pro at this course a lucrative one, so the competition to replace Willie Campbell was fierce.

Of course, Georgina Campbell immediately became famous as golf's first woman head pro. In an interview with *Golfing* magazine shortly after her appointment, she argued that golf was the perfect game for women: "It is not necessary to make any great effort when using the golf clubs. Hence it is grand exercise, with the exact amount of effort used which suits the golfer's physique. The fine long walks over the slopes and ridges which is the golf course; the bright, soothing, green grass; the incentive to beat one's opponent without going into violence – I could play the

game forever" (19 September 1901). And it seems she nearly did: although she was the head pro at Boston's Franklin Park Golf Links only until 1927, when she retired, she kept up her golf game almost until she died in 1953, in her ninetieth year.

Although today we associate golf professionals with the best players of the game that we see competing weekly on television on the world's professional golf tours, we should note that in 1917 one did not have to demonstrate proficiency at the game of golf to be regarded as a golf professional. Bert Tew, for instance, golf professional in the 1920s at the Oakville Golf and Country Club and the Lakeshore Golf and Country Club, shot a round of 100 at the 1920 Canadian Open held at Rivermead.

The question of what constituted professionalism in golf, however, was a fraught topic in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Certain famous golfers competed as amateurs in America's top summer competitions but during the winter used their fame as accomplished golfers to have travel expenses and room and board paid by southern resort owners who thereby induced them to appear in tournaments promoting their resorts. Walter J. Travis, the U.S. amateur champion of 1901, was accused of this sort of underhanded professionalism in the very year he first won the U.S. Amateur championship. Although the United States Golf Association ignored these charges against its champion,

the controversy prompted the U.S.G.A. to define the status of golf professional ever more explicitly and comprehensively as the century progressed.

By 1915, according to the U.S.G.A., one crossed the Rubicon from amateur to professional status when one “accepted, directly or indirectly, any fee, gratuity, money, or its equivalent as a consideration for the performance of any act or service arising in connection with the game of golf” (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 1 no 1 [May 1915], p. 68). However much proficiency at the game of golf might be the cause of inducements to perform acts or services in connection with the game, proficiency at the game of golf was not directly relevant to the question of whether one received compensation for acts or services connected to the game.

At the beginning of the next year, the U.S.G.A. made even clearer that professional status would be attributed not just to someone “Playing or teaching the game of golf for pay,” not just to someone “Personally making or repairing golf clubs, golf balls, or other articles for golf,” and not just to someone “Serving, after reaching the age of sixteen, as caddie, caddiemaster, or greenkeeper, for hire” (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 1 no 1 (May 1915) p. 68); professional status would also be attributed to someone “accepting or holding any position as agent or employee that includes as part of its duties the handling of golf supplies” (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 1 no 10 [Feb 1916], p. 210).

As we shall see, according to the standards of the day, we cannot doubt that Evelyn Keffer by 1917 would have been regarded by the U.S.G.A. as a golf professional. *Canadian Golfer* magazine certainly advocated for the same understanding of professionalism to be maintained in Canada.

Evelyn Alice Freeman was born in Toronto in 1888, the fifth child (and third girl) in a growing family in which she would eventually have nine siblings: six sisters and three brothers. When she was born, her father John William Freeman, who had come to Canada from Somerset, England, in the 1870s, worked in a factory making paper bags. Her mother Sarah Alice Chapman was also an immigrant from England, arriving in Canada as a young child. She married John Freeman when she was just twenty and began having children immediately.

Evelyn was an intelligent young woman. When Ralph Reville, the editor of *Canadian Golfer* magazine, met her while she was performing the head pro duties at Royal Ottawa in 1917, he declared that she was “possessed of a particularly bright and clever personality” (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 6 no 6 [October 1918], p. 312). She seems to have been a good student, perhaps ambitious to take her place as a member of the twentieth century’s “new woman” movement: she would earn her own living in the

Queen City. She trained for a career as a stenographer and found employment as such in a Toronto office shortly after graduation from high school. Within a few years of commencing such office work, she had acquired bookkeeping skills as well and was thereafter employed right up to the time of her marriage as a bookkeeper.

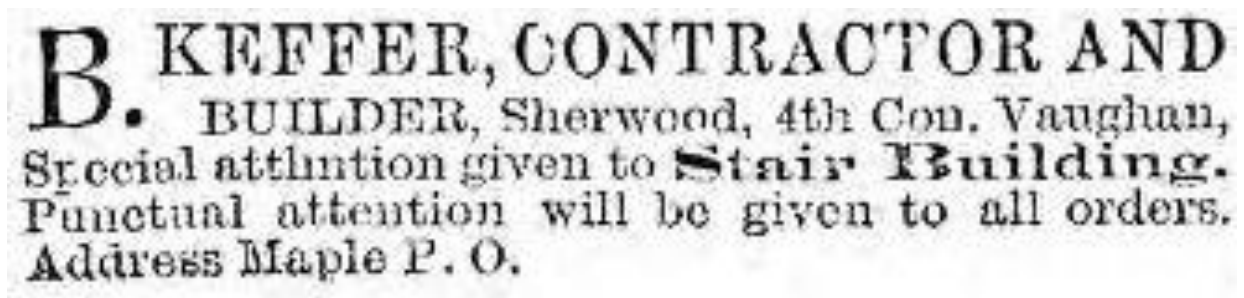
By the time Evelyn entered the working world, her father had risen through the various departments and ranks of the stationery trade to become foreman in the book-binding department of the Browne-Searle Printing Company of Toronto. Evelyn's younger brother Charles was a photo engraver. One of her younger sisters was a telephone operator; another was an office clerk. Given the jobs John Freeman's children did, we might suspect that the father had used his influence to find openings for Evelyn and her siblings at Browne-Searle.

Or it may be that Evelyn worked in the office at the Toronto Golf Club where her younger brothers William (Willie) and Francis (Frank) had some influence, for they worked there as assistant golf professionals under the head pro George Cumming. At the beginning of his apprenticeship (which continued through the 1912 golf season), Willie had worked for a while alongside another young assistant golf professional named Karl Keffer, whom he would introduce to his older sister Evelyn (*Quebec Chronicle*, 14 October 1912, p. 7).

When Karl Keffer retired in the early 1940s after thirty-two years as the head pro at each of the Jekyll Island Club and the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, he said, "32 years is a pretty long stretch as professional at one golf club, but I've enjoyed it all" (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 May 1943, p. 25).

Karl had been much more than a club pro, however, for he had won the Canadian Open in 1909, and then he had repeated as champion in 1914. After these victories, he would go on to win the Quebec and Manitoba provincial opens, as well as a number of other professional tournaments. He played with all the great players of the day – not just from Canada, but also from Britain and the United States (including Harry Vardon, Harold Hilton, Walter J. Travis, Bobby Jones, and Walter Hagen, to name but a few).

Karl Caspar Keffer was born 1 March 1881 in Tottenham, a small village about forty miles north of Toronto. He was the first-born child of twenty-one-year-old Sarah Brown, whose family background was said to be Irish, and twenty-nine-year-old contractor, carpenter, and stair-builder Benjamin Keffer.



**B. KEFFER, CONTRACTOR AND
BUILDER, Sherwood, 4th Con. Vaughan,
Special attention given to Stair Building.
Punctual attention will be given to all orders.
Address Maple P. O.**

Figure 15 York Herald, 18 October 1877, p. 3.

The Keffer family proudly claimed German heritage, but Karl's forebears had actually lived in Ontario for a couple of generations by the time he was born. He was part of a large network of Keffers who had migrated to Ontario from Pennsylvania in the early 1800s.

Before Karl was five, his parents moved from Tottenham to an eastern suburb of Toronto known as Norway, living very close to the Toronto Golf Club, then located in the Leslieville area of the city, and not far from the Freeman household. The community was so small and close-knit that Evelyn and Karl probably passed each other on the streets many times before they were introduced.

Keffer's father died in 1893 at age forty-two, when Karl himself was just eleven. His mother was thereafter on her own (she would never re-marry), with Karl still in primary school, sister Ettie just eight years of age, and sister Alice not quite six. It was a difficult time. Alice died of diphtheria in 1897 at ten years of age when Karl was still in high school. Karl no doubt worked at a variety of jobs as a teenager to help out with the family's finances, caddying being just one of his jobs. At the time of the 1901 census, for instance, when he was not yet twenty years old, he was working as a "confectioner." It seems that "He worked for a while in a candy factory but a boiler blew up and that ended his candy career" (Golf Quebec, <http://www.golfquebec.org/en/pages.asp?id=394>).

In those days, caddying was a way for boys in the Leslieville area to earn a bit of money, and so it was both for Karl and for Evelyn's older brothers Frank and Willie. Karl was initially less interested in playing golf, however, than in playing other sports: in fact, he "played a great deal of hockey and baseball in his younger days" (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 May 1943, p. 25). He was particularly good at hockey, "a star ... in the Toronto city league ... on the forward line of several east-end teams" (*Ottawa Journal*, 6 April 1917, p. 11). His love for hockey was such that he played senior hockey longer than most men did in those days, enjoying competition at the highest level in Toronto until he was twenty-seven, when "a deep skate wound in his left foot became infected" (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 May 1943, p. 25).

When it came to playing golf, he was just as much of a “natural” as he had proved to be at hockey and baseball. He won the first caddie tournament ever held at the Toronto Golf Club, beating a number of caddies who also went on to become professional golfers. When he retired, Keffer said that “as far as his own development was concerned, it came from caddying and watching the good [golfers] in action.... That should be a good start for anyone” (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 May 1943, p. 25). Having caddied beyond the age of 15, Karl was regarded as a professional golfer when he entered the 1905 Canadian Open, finishing well behind winner George Cumming, and earning no money. Still, Cumming was sufficiently impressed by his old caddie’s performance to invite him to become one of his assistant professionals.

While still an apprentice, Keffer won the Canadian Open of 1909, played on his home course at the Toronto Golf Club. This victory was entirely unexpected by the golf world. But it made Karl a star. Perhaps the most important consequence of his victory was that it brought him to the attention of Walter J. Travis, the American winner of both the United States and British Amateur championships, who had just launched his magazine *American Golfer*. Travis told readers about Keffer: “It was generally conceded that some of the well-known pros would win But all calculations were upset, for a dark horse came to the front and beat them all, and that by good, steady golf Karl Keffer, assistant pro to G. Cumming, of the Toronto Golf Club, was little heard of previous to this, but those who had seen him play and had played with him were not surprised” (*American Golfer*, August 1909, vol II no 3, p. 191).

Fatefully, a few months later, Keffer arranged to run advertisements in Travis’s *American Golfer*, beginning in February of 1910, announcing that he was available for hire as a professional golfer:

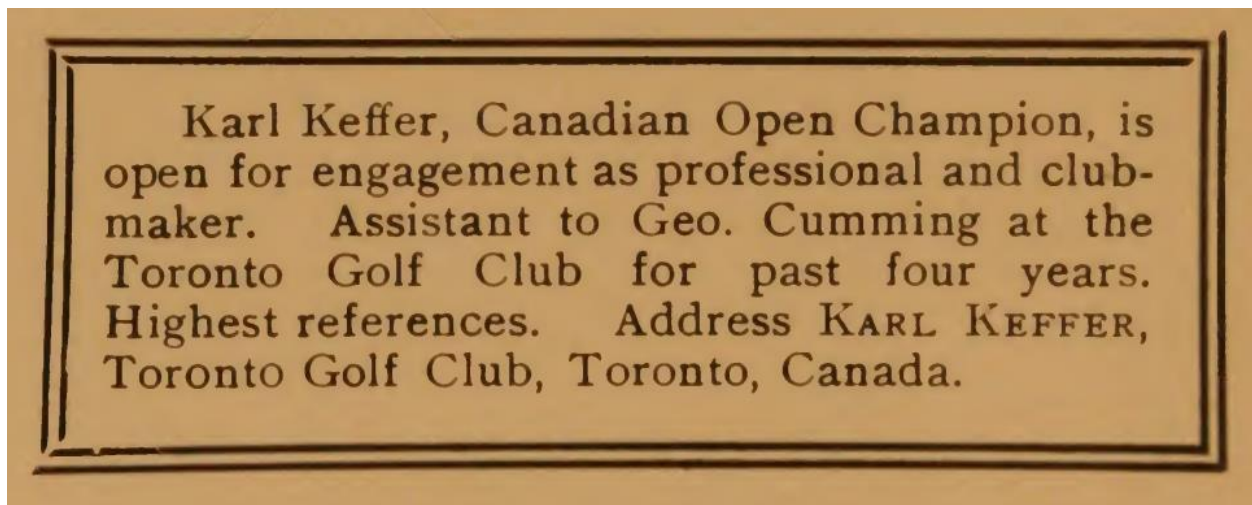


Figure 16 *American Golfer*, vol 3 no 4 (February 1910), p. 319.

Keffer had alerted Travis to the fact that he was on the job market at just the right time.



Figure 17 Karl Keffer,
Jekyll Island, 1910.

Virtually as Travis was reading the letter that Keffer had sent him, a representative of the Jekyll Island Club of millionaires had simultaneously written to Travis seeking advice about who might be appropriate to appoint as golf professional for the Club's new Donald Ross course. Travis suggested that the Club hire Keffer. A member of the Club's golf committee observed: "Any man recommended by Mr. Travis would, I am sure, be entirely agreeable to the members of the Club" (<https://travissociety.com/society-news/>).

So in January of 1910, the apprentice who was the reigning Canadian Open champion was hired right out of the shop of Toronto Golf Club professional George Cumming to be the golf professional at perhaps the most famous sportsmen's club in the world (a position he would hold until the closure of the club in 1942).

New York newspapers certainly regarded this appointment as newsworthy. The *New York Tribune* reported: "Karl Keffer, the professional golf champion of Canada, has been engaged by the Jekyll Island Club, which has recently laid out a new course on its beautiful grounds at Jekyll Island, Georgia. It is understood that Keffer was recommended to the club by Walter J. Travis" (14 February 1914, p. 8).

Similar items appeared in New York's other big newspapers, such as the *Times* and the *Sun*.

Keffer was becoming as famous in the United States as he was in Canada.

In the spring of 1910, after his first season at Jekyll Island, Karl secured a position at the Albany Country Club. His career was taking off.

Although Karl finished near the bottom of the field at the 1910 U.S. Open, Travis continued to promote him, seizing an opportunity later in 1910 to compare him to golf's first international superstar, Harry Vardon: "Karl Keffer, the Canadian pro in charge of the Albany Country Club links, played a good round during September which was a stroke better than Harry Vardon did over the same course, which at the present time is a stroke and a half harder to the nine holes than at the time Vardon visited the club" (*American Golfer*, October 1910, vol iv no 5, p. 403).

Keffer now had recommendations from the Albany Country Club, the Jekyll Island Club, Walter J. Travis, and George Cumming. It is not surprising that after the 1911 season at Jekyll Island he received one of

the most prestigious appointments in Canada: that of head pro at the Ottawa Golf Club, which became the Royal Ottawa Golf Club the year after Keffer arrived. Yet for all of his growing fame, when Karl “made application” to the Ottawa club, he was initially approved for just “a term” as acting professional (*Ottawa Journal*, 26 October 1955, p. 28).

He passed the audition, of course, and stayed for a further “term” of thirty-one years.

So this was the state of Karl’s life and the state of his golf game when two of his fellow apprentices at the Toronto Golf Club, the Freeman brothers Frank and Willie, introduced him to their sister Evelyn. Did Karl’s international fame as a golfer, or perhaps his athletic prowess generally, appeal to Evelyn? The *Ottawa Citizen* said that he was “a splendid specimen of an athlete” (16 November 1916, p. 8). Perhaps just as attractive as any of the above features that he possessed was the temperament that led to his being known to many in Ottawa as “kindly Karl” (*Ottawa Journal*, 26 October 1955, p. 28). But just what they found attractive in each other is not known.

Whatever the case may be, “bright and clever” Evelyn and “kindly” Karl got married in December of 1913.

Evelyn lived in the family home right up to the point when she and Karl got married. Karl lived in Ottawa each year until the end of the golf season in November, and then he travelled by train to Jekyll Island where this exclusive southern resort began welcoming its members and their guests as early as December. But in December of 1913, Karl delayed his trip to Georgia.

An Ottawa newspaper reported that he would go to Toronto before going to Jekyll Island, but there was initially no hint as to why he would visit Toronto. With his plans set, however, Karl let his friends back in Ottawa know what was going on:

A Golfer’s Romance

Karl Keffer to Wed Miss Freeman, of Toronto

Word has been received from Toronto of the approaching marriage of Karl Keffer, the well-known professional of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club. His bride to be is Miss Evelyn Alice, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Freeman, of Toronto. Miss Freeman is a member of a Toronto golf family, and their marriage will be the culmination of a romance begun some years ago when Keffer played at Toronto. December 30 is the date set for the wedding, which takes place at 22 Hartford Avenue, Toronto. Keffer and his

bride will afterward leave on their honeymoon for the South, where Karl will spend the winter as professional to the Jekyll Island Golf Club, which has one of the finest courses in Florida [sic]. Keffer's many friends in Ottawa will wish him every happiness. (Ottawa Citizen, 11 December 1913, p. 9)

Karl had taken rooms for December in a house about a block from the Freeman home, where the wedding would take place.



Figure 18 The Freeman home at 22 Hartford Avenue, Toronto, as it looks today.

He was no doubt back and forth between the two residences frequently.

But Karl also had errands to run, the most important of which was on Christmas Eve!

That day, he obtained a marriage license.

The romance had been underway for about four years, according the newspaper (which dated it from when Karl “played in Toronto,” presumably either when he won the Canadian Open at Toronto in 1909 or when he was assistant professional at the Toronto Golf Club from 1906 to 1909), but Karl and Evelyn seem not to have planned the wedding sufficiently far ahead of time for banns to have been read in church.

Six days later, Evelyn married Karl in the relatively ramshackle Norway Anglican Church called Saint Monica’s, where Karl had been the best man at the wedding of his friend Fred Rickwood four years before.

Evelyn’s bridesmaid was her sister Ida; Karl’s best man was another former Cumming apprentice, William Bell.

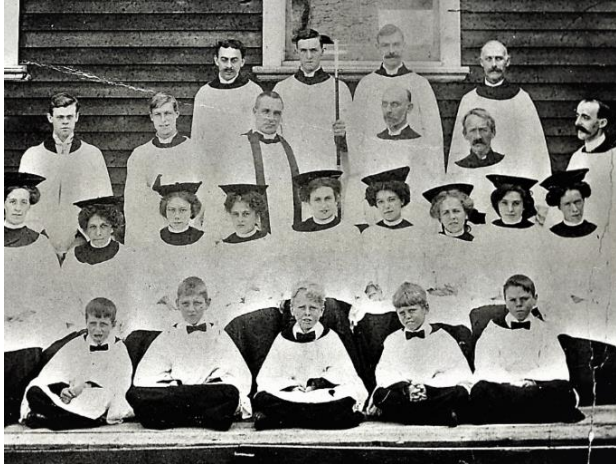


Figure 19 1908 photographs of the choirs at Saint Monica's Anglican Church at the corner of Gerrard Street and Ashdowne Avenue, Norway, Toronto, give a glimpse of the old house that was converted into a church. The man at the extreme right of the photograph of the adult choir bears a strong resemblance to Evelyn's brother Frank (seen third from left in the photo below).

Most of the old gang of apprentices from Cumming's pro shop probably also attended the wedding.

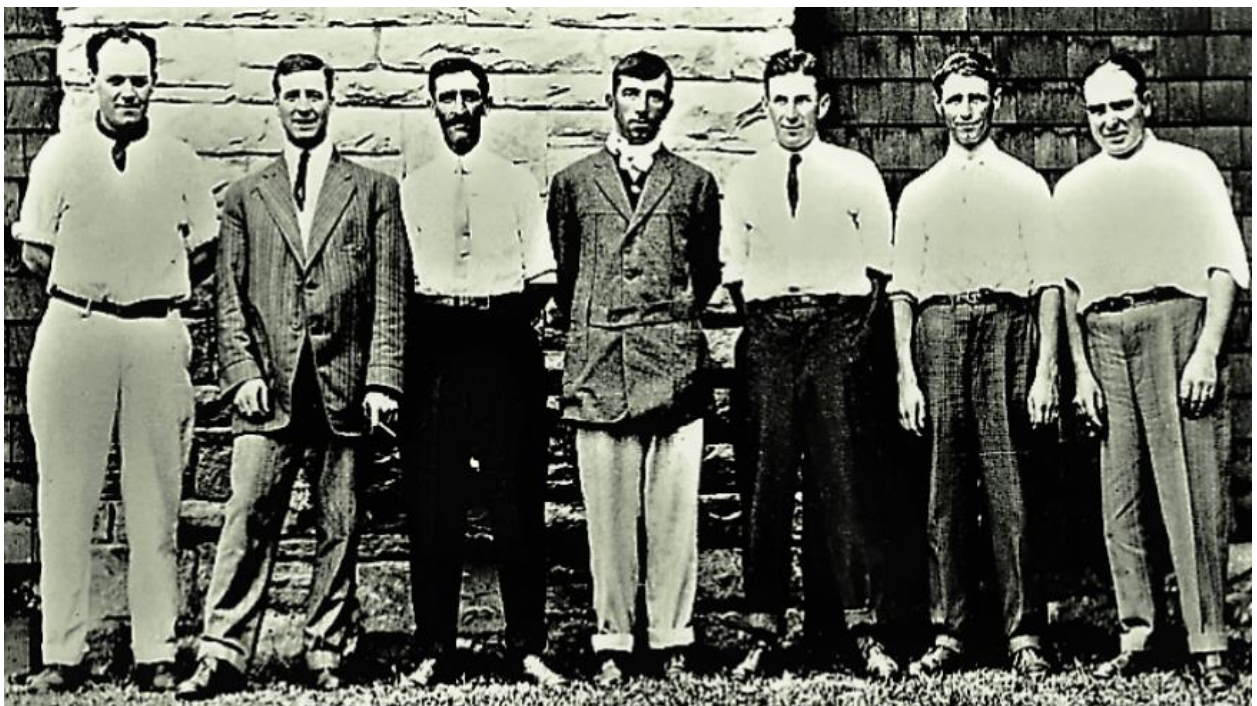


Figure 20 From left: Charles Murray, Wm J. Bell, Frank Freeman, Karl Keffer, Albert Murray, William Freeman, George Cumming, in the summer of 1912 at Frank Freeman's Rosedale Golf and Country Club, where they competed then in the Canadian Open..

Although the newspaper said that Evelyn and Karl would immediately leave for the South on their honeymoon, whether there was time for an actual honeymoon is not clear. Karl was already later than usual in going to Jekyll Island, where the 1914 season was underway.

We have a photograph of Evelyn and Karl at Jekyll Island, perhaps as newlyweds.



Figure 21 Evelyn and Karl at Jekyll Island, circa 1914.

It may be that Evelyn and Karl delayed their proper honeymoon until March, when they travelled from

Jekyll Island to the Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina. The newspaper reported that “Mr. and Mrs. Karl Keffer of Ottawa are making a short stay” (*Pinehurst Outlook*, 28 March 1914, p. 11). On the Donald Ross course Pinehurst #2, Karl would compete in the prestigious North-South tournament alongside top professionals like Walter Hagen, as well as alongside top amateurs like his benefactor, Walter J. Travis



Figure 22 Evelyn Keffer and infant Howard, shortly after his birth.

Evelyn was about a month pregnant when they arrived at the resort. Later that year, Evelyn and Karl’s only child Howard Franklin Keffer would be born in the Toronto home of her parents on November 25th.

Given Evelyn’s office skills, acquired as a stenographer and bookkeeper, one wonders whether she immediately helped Karl manage the pro shops at Royal Ottawa and Jekyll Island. The *Ottawa Citizen* perhaps implies as much when referring to her as Karl’s “loving wife and helpmate” ((19 February 1919, p. 3) According to a Royal Ottawa member, Karl “spent a lot of time in his workshop making and repairing golf clubs and left the pro shop to his assistants” (King Finney, cited in “Golf Pioneer,” Professional Golfers’ Association of

Canada, <https://www.pgaofcanada.com/media-centre/archive/golf-pioneer-1154>). Evelyn may have been the earliest of the “assistants” to whom Karl liked to delegate his pro shop duties.



Figure 23 Karl Keffer after enlistment, *Canadian Golfer*, vol 2 no 8 (December 1916), p. 438.

Two years after their son was born, Karl decided in the fall of 1916 to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He will have done so only after extensive consultation both with Evelyn and with the directors of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club.

Royal Ottawa was among the foremost of the golf clubs in Canada when it came to supporting the war effort. By 1917, 115 of its members had enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, more than at any other Canadian golf club (15 of these men had died by 1917). The Club staged charity matches to raise money for the Red Cross and various Patriotic Funds. It dedicated certain parts of its land to the cultivation of vegetables to increase the food supply. With a membership thoroughly representative of government, the public service, the legal and medical professions, as

well as business and manufacturing, Royal Ottawa was patriotically determined to support its head pro.

Keffer's enlistment was widely reported as an exemplary instance of patriotism, as the golf club must have anticipated. The following article was typical:

GOLFER HAS TURNED SOLDIER

Karl Keffer, of the Royal Ottawa Club, has enlisted with the 207th

(Special to The Gazette.) Ottawa. November 17.

It is now Private Karl Keffer, of the 207th Battalion. The well-known professional of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club has rallied to the colors. Keffer enlisted this week with Colonel C. W. McLean's battalion and will go overseas with that unit. Karl makes a striking figure in khaki and will, no doubt, acquit himself with as much credit in the big fight abroad as he has done in many gruelling contests over the green swarded golf links. Keffer now holds the open championship of Canada, having won it at Toronto in 1914, the last year in which the meeting took place. This was the second time he has won the honor. Keffer has also competed for the American open title, being on one occasion very close to winning it. He has also a golfing record that will seldom be equalled. Karl came to the Royal Ottawa Club in 1911, previous to which he was attached to one of the Toronto clubs. For the past few years he has acted as professional during the winter to the Jekyll Island Club in the south, where he is equally well known. Keffer is one of the most brilliant all-round golfers in Canada, his driving often having won the admiration of the most critical British, Canadian and American players. On the occasion of his Canadian tour several years ago, Harold Hilton, the famous British player, referred, in a magazine article, to Keffer as the most accurate driver he had met on this side of the water. Private Keffer is an officer in the Canadian Professional Golfers' Association, which recently made a handsome donation to Canadian patriotic purposes. He was one of the organizers. Karl had a chance to qualify for a commission, but preferred to go in the ranks.

(Montreal Gazette, 18 November 1916, p. 18)

Like many Canadians with German-sounding names, Keffer had received special attention during the war. When donations for "patriotic war funds" were solicited in the fall of 1914, and large donations

were acknowledged in the newspapers, we read of Keffer's: "A notable contribution was that of Carl Keffer, the professional of the Royal Ottawa Club, who gave \$100. Mr. Keffer is of German descent" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 29 September 1914, p. 1). His subsequent donation of \$100 to the same fund in 1916 was mentioned in the newspaper by name only, with no reference to nationality. With his enlistment that year, he was now undoubtedly a representative of exemplary Canadian manhood: "Keffer is a Toronto boy, a splendid specimen of an athlete, whose rigorous training methods enabled him to pass the medical test without a flaw" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 18 November 1916, p. 8).

Keffer used the celebrity that his status as reigning Canadian Open champion conferred upon him to make an appeal in the pages of *Canadian Golfer* to his fellow golf professionals, enjoining them to enlist, too, and show the enemy what a professional golfer was made of:

Perhaps you have been thinking of enlisting for active service. I have already done so with the 207th Battalion of Infantry, Ottawa, and I extend an earnest appeal to all who can and will to join in the big work over in France. I feel sure that all of our clubs will think a great deal more of us, and will extend us every consideration, and will be glad to put up with less efficient service in the workshops at the hands of our assistants, if we try to do our share until the country is assured of more prosperous times. Can you see your way clear to make the break? It seems to me in view of the appeal made to the country by the Premier, Sir Robert Borden, a few days ago calling upon every man of military age to place himself at the disposal of the Canadian Army the golf professional should not be found wanting. How many of us can and will respond, and what better place than the capital of your country to enlist in? There is room in the 207th Infantry Battalion which is now recruiting in Ottawa and is booked to go across around the New Year – a grand chance to get in a live battalion and go across right away. Golf professionals are always in training and a squad of golfers could hold their own with anyone. Let us get together and make up one or two sections in the above well-known battalion. Frank Locke and Fred Rickwood are already there. Let us join them. Did you ever think as I have what your feelings would be after the war is over and you might have helped and didn't try? Suppose we should lose the war because those who could help did not do so. Also, it is far better to enlist voluntarily than to be conscripted. Golf professionals, please give the above your earnest consideration and for any information, write,

Karl Keffer, Open Champion of Canada

(*Canadian Golfer, vol 2 no 1 [November 1916], p. 5).*

The *Ottawa Citizen* reported that “On [Keffer’s] return he will resume his duties at the Royal Ottawa Club, the position being kept open meanwhile” (18 November 1916, p. 8). In his letter, Keffer subtly pressures other golf clubs to follow Royal Ottawa’s example when he expresses confidence that such clubs will extend “every consideration” to golf professionals who enlist.

Keffer anticipates that golf professionals who enlist in the army will be replaced in their “workshops” by their “assistants.” One option at Royal Ottawa would have been to replace Karl temporarily with one of his apprentices, or with an apprentice from another club’s pro shop. The latter occurred at the Riverside Golf Club in St. John, New Brunswick, where the golf professional was Fred Rickwood, for whom Keffer had acted as best man at his 1909 marriage. After Rickwood’s departure for Europe with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1915, the Riverside club replaced him with an apprentice from the pro shop of Karl’s brother-in-law Willie Freeman. Royal Ottawa might have done something similar, but it did not.

Neither did the Club promote one of his apprentices to serve as Keffer’s replacement. Keffer’s most senior apprentice, James Clay, who had come to Royal Ottawa with him in 1911, covered for Keffer at Jekyll Island during World War I. By 1917, however, Keffer had helped Clay to a summer appointment as the golf professional at the Jefferson County Golf Club in Watertown, New York, so Clay was not available to substitute for his old boss at Royal Ottawa in any event. Karl’s other apprentice, William (Willie) Mulligan had served Keffer for five years as a caddie from 1910 to 1915, and he then graduated to club-making, being just over one year into his formal apprenticeship as Keffer’s assistant professional when his boss enlisted in the CEF. Although when Willie ultimately graduated from his apprenticeship in 1920, the *Ottawa Journal* observed that, as Keffer’s assistant, he had been “a student of the Ottawa expert who taught him all the fine points of the game,” it seems that when Keffer went overseas young Willie was deemed not yet ready to shoulder the head pro’s duties (26 March 1920, p. 20).

Instead, as we know, Evelyn took her husband’s place.

It was by no means obvious that she should have done so. No woman in Canada had ever done so before.

In fact, there was reason to think that Evelyn might follow Karl to Europe: thousands of wives of Canadian soldiers followed their spouses to Britain (including my own grandmother).



Figure 24 Fred Rickwood, left, and Karl Keffer photographed at the Caledonia Springs invitational golf tournament on 7 September 1909, a month after Keffer's victory in the Canadian Open and several months before Keffer would serve as best man at Rickwood's wedding.

In the case of the Keffers' friends, the Rickwoods, Edith Rickwood moved to England with her two young children Florence and George in 1915, where they rented a house in her husband's old hometown in Yorkshire.

Both Evelyn and Karl, therefore, would have been very aware that such a course of action was possible for Evelyn and the couple's young son Howard.

Evelyn seems not to have been inclined to do as Edith Rickwood did. In fact, one of the Ottawa newspapers indicates that

Evelyn took the initiative in the matter of her replacing Karl: "she volunteered to 'carry on' in her husband's absence" (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1918, p. 3).

The Royal Ottawa Golf Club seems to have been grateful that she was willing to do so: "her willingness ... elicited many praiseworthy comments" (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1918, p. 3).

In fact, Evelyn's resolve to "carry on" was celebrated in the newspapers in the same way Karl's resolve to enlist had been: just as exemplary patriotic spirit had been demonstrated by Karl's exemplary Canadian manhood in the fall of 1916, so it was again demonstrated during the 1917 and 1918 golf seasons by Evelyn's exemplary Canadian womanhood.

The *Ottawa Journal* deemed Evelyn "a devoted, loyal wife" who took on Karl's work at Royal Ottawa "in order to permit her husband to go overseas" (7 October 1918, p. 3).

The *Ottawa Citizen* observed that "Since her husband's enlistment about two years ago, Mrs. Keffer has very patriotically carried on his duties at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club.... Her willingness to 'carry on' allowed her husband to fulfill his ardent desire to serve his country overseas" (7 October 1918, p. 7).

As the newspapers saw it, just as other women across Canada had supported the war effort by replacing enlisted men in factories and offices, so Evelyn had supported the war effort by replacing Karl in the pro shop.



Figure 25 Private Karl Keffer and Evelyn Keffer, late 1916 or early 1917.

The couple's patriotism was singled out in a similar way in a newspaper report less than a month before Evelyn's sudden illness and death. An article about the many dozens of generous donations to the Ottawa campaign for the Navy League of Canada (which trained sea cadets) concluded with a surprising focus on Evelyn: "One of those who sent along something was Mrs. Karl Keffer, wife of the professional at the Ottawa Golf Club. She sent \$25" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 9 September 1918, p. 3).

Every other person named in the article was much more socially prominent, and each such person had given much more money – all donating at least \$100 or more. The newspaper reported that there were

"numerous other donations of \$50 or less" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 9 September 1918, p. 3). Evelyn, however, was the only person mentioned by name who had donated \$50 or less. Again, the point seems to have been to single out the Keffers as exemplary patriots: "Her husband is now serving in France and is the only professional of a Canadian club who is on active service" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 9 September 1918, p. 3). Of course the latter claim is not true, as Karl had himself acknowledged in his letter to the editor of *Canadian Golfer*, but the newspaper was not going to let the facts get in the way of the more important truth: the Keffers' patriotic support of the war effort was exemplary.

Note, by the way, that Evelyn's donation was quite a large one, relative to a golf professional's income. When Karl's friend Alberet Murray left the Quebec Golf Club in 1908, the club sought a replacement golf professional, offering a salary of \$25 per month. So we can see how generous Evelyn's donation of \$25 might have seemed from her point of view.

At Royal Ottawa, it is clear that all three parties – the Club, Karl, and Evelyn – agreed that having Evelyn replace Karl was not just theoretically possible, but actually quite practical. One supposes that there must have been a basis for confidence that such an arrangement would work. Certainly, two years into

their experiment of having the wife replace the husband as golf professional, Club members offered “many praiseworthy comments” about her “ability” (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1918, p. 3). Was anyone surprised?

The editor of *Canadian Golfer*, Ralph Reville, implied that it was no surprise at all that Evelyn handled the pro’s duties in such a “capable manner,” for she had been to the “manner” born: “Mrs. Keffer was not only the wife of a champion, but a sister to such well-known professionals as Frank Freeman, of Rosedale, and W.M. Freeman, of Lambton. From young girlhood she had, therefore, been more or less brought up in an atmosphere of golf” (p. 312). And as mentioned above, perhaps Evelyn had effectively been running the pro shop already from 1914 to 1917, while Karl gave lessons, worked at club-making, and supervised his apprentices Willie Mulligan and James Clay.

All the reports seem to agree that Evelyn was well-known and well-liked, both at Royal Ottawa and within the broader community. One newspaper observed that “She had a wide circle of friends in Ottawa,” another of the factors making “Mrs. Keffer’s death ... particularly sad” (7 October 1918, p. 8).

Perhaps to allow Evelyn to stay close to both her pro shop and her young child, the Club agreed that she would live with Howard on the grounds of the golf club in a building known as “The Cottage.”



Figure 26 The “Fountain Villa” home of Edward V. Wright.

In 1903, when the Royal Ottawa Golf Club purchased the land on which it is presently located, it acquired a number of dwellings and outbuildings that were originally part of the farm of Edward V. Wright (grandson of Hull’s founder Philemon Wright). He presided over his farm, subdivided from his grandfather’s Britannia Farm, from a hill-top house

known as “Fountain Villa.” The Club purchased the property and its related buildings from its early 1900s owner, a Mr. and Mrs. McVeity (the latter of whom also went by the nickname Mrs. Slinn, because she was the vice-president of Ottawa’s Slinn Bakery), and then the Club had golf architect Tom Bendelow of Chicago design its 18-hole golf course. It proceeded to erect a clubhouse where Mr. and Mrs. McVeity had kept an orchard.

Some of the houses and outbuildings associated with the farm can be made out in the photograph below.



Figure 27 The Royal Ottawa clubhouse is the building on the horizon in the background. In the centre of the photograph may be the dwelling known as "The Cottage," in which Evelyn and Howard Keffer lived. To the left it are several farm buildings. Photograph from *Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 2 (June 1917), p.91.

This living arrangement for the Keffer family would seem to have been ideal, and even idyllic: mother and son live in a country cottage just steps from her pro shop. Yet it seems unlikely that Evelyn and Howard enjoyed a comfortable two years in this dwelling. The Club's annual report indicates that during 1918 "The cottage, which was in a most disgraceful condition owing to lack of repairs, was enlarged and renovated" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 4 no 11 [March 1919], p. 588). So Evelyn and Howard's first year in the cottage was apparently spent in "disgraceful" conditions; and at least part of their second year would seem to have been spent in a work zone.

Presumably Evelyn had made the disgraceful condition of the cottage known to the Club and the latter had consequently undertaken the enlargement and renovation in question, probably with a view to making the living conditions adequate for as long as Evelyn might have to serve as the acting golf professional. After all, the end of the war was not in sight at the beginning of the 1918 golf season, and so there was no way of knowing how long Evelyn would have to continue to serve in place of Karl.

The Club's undertaking of this expensive renovation project is probably another indication that it was quite happy with Evelyn's work in the pro shop and was determined to keep her happy, too.

We have read that "Since her husband's enlistment about two years ago, Mrs. Keffer has very patriotically carried on his duties at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 7 October 1918, p. 7). And we have also read that "she has given a satisfactory service to all members of the club" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 7 October 1918, p. 7).

So just what did Evelyn's "duties" as golf professional involve? Just what comprised the "service" that she rendered so satisfactorily to Club members?

First, of course, there was the matter of equipment sales through the pro shop.

In *Canadian Golfer*, Ralph Reville observes that “In the pluckiest manner possible, after her husband’s praiseworthy departure for overseas, she took over the management of his golf shop and business at the Royal Ottawa Club, and ... looked after the wants of the members in a very capable manner, indeed” (p. 312). The *Ottawa Journal* says something similar: “She carried on his business at the Golf Club, looking after his duties in connection with the handling of golfing accessories” (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1918, p. 3). The fact that Evelyn was able to donate \$25 to the Navy League of Canada suggests that business of selling golf equipment and accessories through her pro shop at Royal Ottawa was thriving under her charge.

The *Ottawa Journal* also says that one of her “duties” was connected with “the handling of ... games” (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1918, p. 3). Note, however, that as during Karl’s last year at Royal Ottawa before enlistment at the end of 1916, so for Evelyn’s two years in charge in 1917 and 1918, there were “no cup matches at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club”; the newspaper explained that “any competitions that may be played will simply be to aid the Red Cross and other patriotic funds” (*Ottawa Journal*, 16 June 1917, p. 18).

There were many such patriotic matches played at Royal Ottawa during Evelyn’s years in charge, and she no doubt played an important role in organizing them. Groups of Royal Ottawa members arranged matches amongst themselves for which they paid entry fees that went to help all sorts of war causes. Those who were to play in such matches submitted their names to the pro shop, and the golf professional drew up a starting sheet.

In this regard, Evelyn and her Rivermead counterpart Davie Black had their hands full with a large-scale patriotic match between the Rivermead and Royal Ottawa clubs in October of 1917. We read in *Canadian Golfer*:

A most interesting inter-club match took place, Saturday and Monday, October 6th and 8th, between the Royal Ottawa Golf Club and the Rivermead Golf Club. An entry fee was charged and the proceeds will be turned over to one of the Patriotic Funds. On Saturday, October 6th, the games were all played on the beautiful links of the Royal Ottawa Club. The weather was cool and threatening, but that did not dampen the spirits of the contestants, one hundred and ten players from the two clubs playing out the full eighteen holes. (vol 3 no 6 [October 1917], p. 336).

“Handling ... games” at Royal Ottawa in place of her husband, Evelyn handled 55 games that day – almost one year to the day before she passed away.

It was to engage in patriotic matches on a smaller scale that Ralph Reville came to Ottawa at the end of September in 1917. He played before a “large gallery” at Royal Ottawa in a match with George S. Lyon (eight time amateur champion of Canada and 1904 Olympic gold medallist), well-known Toronto Golf Club player Major Temple Blackwood, and Royal Ottawa member P.D. Ross (who a few years earlier had donated the trophy for the Canadian P.G.A. championship).

A similar patriotic match the day before at Rivermead had drawn to its gallery “cabinet members, members of the Senate and House of Commons, medical and legal lights, departmental chiefs, and various other valued members of the great democracy including millionaires and multi-millionaires” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 1 October 1917, p. 6). “Handling ... games” of this sort, as Evelyn was bound to do, would have required great organizational skills.

It may have been on this occasion that Reville formed his good impression of Mrs. Keffer’s “capable manner.” Yet it is also likely that he met her earlier in the year, at the start of her first season in charge of the pro shop, when he visited Royal Ottawa during the last week of May to research an article on the Club that he published in the June issue of *Canadian Golfer*. By having visited Royal Ottawa in May and October of 1917, he found himself in position to evaluate Evelyn’s success over the course of that year’s golf season.

Given the nature of the membership at Royal Ottawa, in addition to organizational skills, considerable diplomatic skills were no doubt required of Evelyn, especially when she received last-minute requests from the high and mighty for immediate accommodation on the first tee.

Such was the case when she received word in the pro shop in the fall of 1917 that Lord Northcliffe, “the Napoleon of British journalism,” proposed to indulge “his taste for golf ... by a couple of rounds on the links of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club” (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 6 [October 1917], p. 319). With little warning, Evelyn had to shift the tee times of members of the cabinet, House of Commons, and Senate in order to accommodate the whim of Lord Northcliffe, who had arranged to play golf with the Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden, Sir Henry Drayton (Chairman of the Board of Railway Commissioners), and the Ottawa Member of Parliament, A.E. Fripp, K.C., who also happened to be the President of Royal Ottawa. Reville knew all about that, too, for he wrote it up in *Canadian Golfer*.

No pressure on Evelyn there.

Note also that although the Club had abandoned its various official cup competitions, other “Club competitions were held almost weekly during the playing season” of 1918 (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 4 no 11 [March 1919], p. 587). “Handling” these weekly “games” was probably the source of Evelyn’s most regular interaction with Royal Ottawa’s members, so many of whom showed up at the train station to pay her their last respects.

Of course another of the pro’s duties was golf instruction.

When Willie Mulligan eventually got his own winter job as a golf professional in the U.S. South (in Alabama), he explained to a reporter from the *Montgomery Advertiser* that at Royal Ottawa during World War I he had “filled the place of Mr. Keffer as instructor” (14 December 1922, p. 3). Reville seems to allude to this arrangement when he writes that Evelyn “took over the management of [her husband’s] golf shop and business at the Royal Ottawa Club, and with an assistant looked after the wants of the members in a very capable manner, indeed” (p. 312). Like any golf professional with an apprentice, Evelyn delegated certain of her duties to her apprentice. Karl himself, in the 1930s, delegated golf instruction to his apprentice Ernie Wakelam, whose son recalled: “Once my dad arrived as an assistant professional, Mr. Keffer let him handle the majority of lessons at the club” (“Golf Pioneer” “Golf Pioneer,” Professional Golfers’ Association of Canada, <https://www.pgaofcanada.com/media-centre/archive/golf-pioneer-1154>).

I do not know whether Evelyn actually played golf, or, if she did, whether she undertook to instruct the women members at Royal Ottawa. Evelyn’s husband Karl was certainly a proponent of women’s golf, so it is hard to imagine that he did not encourage Evelyn to play the game.

During Karl’s first season at Royal Ottawa, the Club built its nine-hole “ladies’ course,” the construction of which would have been supervised by him. Calibrating the length of holes appropriate for such a course would have required serious knowledge of the women’s game (a whole committee was dedicated to the re-measuring of Royal Ottawa’s championship course for the 1911 women’s amateur championship [*Ottawa Journal*, 21 September 1911, p. 8]). Karl certainly attended to the requirements of the women’s game in other respects, too. Unlike other club makers, for instance, he made a point of advertising that he specialized in making golf clubs “right and left hand” in “ladies’ weights.” Compare his advertisement below to those of his brothers-in-law Frank and Willie Freeman, who, like all other golf professionals advertising in *Canadian Golfer Magazine*, omit any reference to women’s golf.

<h2 style="text-align: center;">KARL KEFFER</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Professional and Clubmaker Royal Ottawa Golf Club Ottawa, Canada.</p> <hr style="width: 10%; margin: auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">Open Champion of Canada, also Open Champion in 1909.</p> <hr style="width: 10%; margin: auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">My Specialties:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">CLEEKs</td> <td style="width: 50%;">DRIVERS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MIDIRONS</td> <td>BRASSIES</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MASHIES</td> <td>SPOONS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PUTTERS</td> <td>DREADNOUGHTS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NIBLICKS</td> <td>CADDY BAGS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>JIGGERS</td> <td>GOLF BALLS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DRIVING MASHIES</td> <td>GLOVES, SHOES</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MASHIE IRONS</td> <td>HATS, SWEATERS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MASHIE NIBLICKS</td> <td>AND ALL</td> </tr> <tr> <td>KAY MILLS PUTTERS</td> <td>ACCESSORIES</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BRAID MILLS PUTTERS</td> <td>CLUBS, RIGHT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ALUMINIUM PUTTERS</td> <td>AND LEFT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ALL IRONS HAND FORGED</td> <td>HAND</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ALL CLUBS HAND</td> <td>AND IN</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MADE</td> <td>LADIES' WEIGHTS</td> </tr> </table>	CLEEKs	DRIVERS	MIDIRONS	BRASSIES	MASHIES	SPOONS	PUTTERS	DREADNOUGHTS	NIBLICKS	CADDY BAGS	JIGGERS	GOLF BALLS	DRIVING MASHIES	GLOVES, SHOES	MASHIE IRONS	HATS, SWEATERS	MASHIE NIBLICKS	AND ALL	KAY MILLS PUTTERS	ACCESSORIES	BRAID MILLS PUTTERS	CLUBS, RIGHT	ALUMINIUM PUTTERS	AND LEFT	ALL IRONS HAND FORGED	HAND	ALL CLUBS HAND	AND IN	MADE	LADIES' WEIGHTS	<h2 style="text-align: center;">FRANK FREEMAN</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Professional to the Rosedale Golf Club, Toronto</p> <p>A Golfer is judged by his Clubs. All my Clubs are hand made and finished. I get all my heads from England and Scotland. All Golf Bags sold by me are hand made. I always keep in stock all kinds of Maxwell Irons and the best makes of Golf Balls. A trial order solicited</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FRANK P. FREEMAN</p> <hr style="width: 100%; border: 1px solid black;"/> <h2 style="text-align: center;">WM. M. FREEMAN</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Professional to the Lambton Golf and Country Club, Lambton Mills, Ontario.</p> <p>A fine line of Wood and Iron Clubs always kept in stock, also all Golf requisites. The most careful attention given to properly "fitting" and suiting golfers and their needs. All Clubs hand made and finished and guaranteed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WM. M. FREEMAN</p>
CLEEKs	DRIVERS																														
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Figure 28 Advertisements from the very first issue of Canadian Golfer, vol 1 no 1 (May 1915), p. 72.

Karl Keffer delivered the goods advertised above, especially so far as ladies' clubs were concerned.



Figure 29 Ladies' wooden driver bearing the imprint "Karl Keffer" over "Royal Ottawa."

In fact, a good number of the clubs made by him possessed today by the Canadian Museum of History are women's clubs.

Making and repairing golf clubs was another of the pro's duties. Had Evelyn learned these skills from Karl or her brothers? Was Willie Mulligan sufficiently advanced in this art to serve the needs of Club members?

Since reports are unanimous that Evelyn met all the golfing needs of the Club's members, she must somehow have managed to make and repair golf clubs as required, either herself or via her assistants.

Another of the pro's duties at Royal Ottawa would have involved managing the caddies.

In this regard, an observation made by the *Ottawa Journal* may be helpful: we read that she carried on her husband's business and looked after his duties at the golf club "with the assistance of two boys" (7 October 1918, p. 3). One of these "boys," we know, was Willie Mulligan. (Although he was 21 years old when his boss Karl Keffer enlisted, Willie told the *Montgomery Advertiser* that he "was too young to go across" [14 December 1922, p. 3]). Who was the other boy? I suspect that it was Willie's younger brother Harry, who was 16 years old at the time, and still a caddie.

When Karl took up his position at the Ottawa Golf Club in 1911, he had immediately advertised in local newspapers for caddies: "Wanted – A number of respectable, well-mannered boys, ten to fifteen years old, with references, to act as caddies (carrying clubs) afternoons during season at the Ottawa Golf Club, Aylmer Road. Take Hull electric car and apply Karl Keffer, Club House" (*Ottawa Journal*, 28 April 1911, p. 1).

Michael and Ida Mulligan's boys Willie and Harry fit this description.

In the early 1900s, the parents had brought their young family from Montreal to Hull, where Michael would work as a plumber. When Keffer published his caddie call, William was 15 and already working in a store. Harry later recalled that even as a 10-year-old he was ready to work "during the summer holidays" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 3 May 1955, p. 9).

Michael and Ida had no doubt raised their children to be "well-mannered," and as for "respectable" – well, that presumably went without saying. Willie probably arrived at the clubhouse armed with a letter of reference from the owner of the store where he worked; perhaps he vouched for his brother Harry. Someone in the family must have seen Keffer's advertisement: it ran for several days in both of the big Ottawa newspapers. Perhaps their father had given them the fare for the electric car so that they could call on this mysterious Mr. Keffer, who was described in the newspapers as a "champion" golfer, someone that the Ottawa Golf Club was fortunate to employ. It is doubtful that anyone in the family knew what golf was, but an opportunity for boys like Willie and Harry to work for the people at the top of Canadian society did not come along every day.

I cannot resist the observation that the gods of golf granted one of Canada's open champions two Mulligans!



Figure 30 Harry Mulligan's follow-through in the 1940s.

As we know, Willie was with Karl Keffer for the long term. Harry started with Keffer, but he then moved up the Aylmer Road to work as a caddie under Davie Black at Rivermead around 1915. Karl may well have more or less “loaned” Harry to his good friend Davie to help him out at the beginning of the war, when clubs were understaffed. When Davie Black moved to British Columbia in 1920, however, Harry returned to Royal Ottawa to serve an apprenticeship under Keffer – which he later implied was what he had really wanted to do all along: “Keffer was the king pin of Canadian golf in those days, winning just about everything in sight” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 3 May 1955, p. 9).

My guess is that Davie Black may have loaned Harry Mulligan back to Evelyn when Karl left for Europe, precisely to help her out on the caddie front.

Managing the caddies at Royal Ottawa would not have been a simple or an easy job. Recall that Karl’s initial advertisement invited applications from a certain kind of boy: he was looking for respectable boys with good manners. The boys responding to his advertisement would have been working-class boys, and not all such boys would have satisfied the criteria in question. And since caddies shared a certain intimacy with their so-called social superiors – on the one hand, they were expected to advise them with regard to technique and strategy, but on the other hand they were expected to turn a blind eye toward embarrassing ineptitude and lapses of decorum – the most discrete of the applicants would be perhaps the most valued caddie.

All applicants would have been in need of instruction regarding the nature of the game: its rules, its etiquette, its codes of dress. They would have needed explicit explanations of their duties to the individual players for whom they caddied, their obligations to other players to maintain silence and to stand still (out of sight) when anyone was making a stroke, and so on. They would have needed to learn how to make a sand tee, where they were allowed to walk, when to remove the flag and where to hold it or place it on the ground. They would need to learn the seniority system in the caddie shack, where the senior caddie might well be the equivalent of an assistant professional: able to instruct with regard to the proper golf swing, knowledgeable in regard to greenkeeping matters, and trusted with caddying

for the most distinguished club members. Harry Mulligan might well have been Evelyn Keffer's senior caddie.



Figure 31 A photograph of Evelyn's brother Frank Freeman with some of his caddies at the Rosedale Golf and Country Club, in Canadian Golfer, vol 2 no 7 (November 1916), p. 354.

Although during World War I, many golf clubs scaled back their activities because so many men were away on war service, the Royal Ottawa Golf Club still had several hundred members during the 1917 and 1918 seasons, and, as we have seen, these members remained active golfers. Whereas the club might well have employed more than 100 caddies at the peak of the golf season in years just before or just after the war (it had 130 caddies at the start of the next war [*Ottawa Journal*, 30 April 1941, p. 25]), fewer caddies would have been needed in 1917 and 1918. Recall, however, that at least 110 caddies would have been needed for the matches played at Royal Ottawa between Rivermead and Royal Ottawa on October 6th, 1917.

At large, affluent clubs like Royal Ottawa, managing such a large number of caddies – comprising boys as young as 10, teenagers, and even young men in their early 20s – was a job generally delegated by the

golf professional to a caddie master (Royal Ottawa employed two in 1940). Not just senior caddie, perhaps Harry Mulligan was Evelyn's caddie master.

And what about the rest of the pro's duties?

We read that Evelyn "carried on [her husband's] business at the Golf Club, looking after his duties in connection with the handling of golfing accessories, games, etc." (*Ottawa Journal*, 7 October 1918, p. 3).

"Etc."?

The editor of *Canadian Golfer* refers to the "etc." of the pro's duties as "the dozen and one things a capable pro is called upon to perform" (vol 18 no 1 [May 1932], p, 47).

Among the other duties of a club's golf professional was to undertake course improvements in coordination with the Green Committee. In this regard, it is interesting to note that for several years, the Royal Ottawa Golf Club had on its "to do" list renovation projects regarding the "fair greens" of the fifteenth and sixteenth holes. (A hundred years ago, what we call the "fairway" was often called the "fair green," as distinct from the "putting green"). Plans for these renovations had no doubt been drawn up by Karl Keffer before he joined the army.

From the Club's annual report for 1917, however, we learn that "It was decided, until the termination of the war, not to undertake the special and costly work necessary to improve the fair green conditions of the fifteenth and sixteenth holes" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 12 [April 1918], p. 652).

Yet – surprise! – this work was in fact carried out in 1918: "Considerable improvements ... were undertaken during the year, including the ploughing up and re-seeding of the 15th and 16th fairways and the building of new tees and bunkers, besides the bringing of the course as a whole into a higher state of perfection" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 4 no 11 [March 1919], pp. 587-88). Karl Keffer was likely responsible for the design and location of the new tees and bunkers in question, and it may well have fallen to Evelyn to consult with the Green Committee about the implementation of her husband's designs.

Evelyn may even have been expected to do a little gardening.

In 1917, the Royal Ottawa Golf Club dedicated "several acres to potatoes and several acres to beans," asking members "to take part of their open air exercise in using hoes," with "The aim ... to produce at least 1,000 bushels of potatoes beyond the requirements of the club": "The proceeds from the sale will be divided between the Patriotic and Red Cross Funds. The main object, however, is not to obtain funds,

even for these worthy objects, so much as to increase the quantity of food available in time of war” (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 1 [May 1917], p. 38).

It is also interesting to note that winter sports were pursued at Royal Ottawa after the golf season ended: “The Royal Ottawa golfers during the winter months go in very largely for skiing and snowshoeing, the ‘comfy’ club house being kept open all winter” (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 8 [December 1917], p. 450). The Ottawa Ski Club, formed around 1910, had disbanded at the beginning of World War I, but some of its members kept the skiing passion alive at Royal Ottawa until the Ottawa Ski Club was re-formed in 1919.



Figure 32 Ottawa Ski Club members in the 1920s.

Did Evelyn take advantage of the opportunity to expand her pro shop business during the winter of 1917-18 by offering skiing and snowshoeing accessories for sale?

If so, such a venture would have been curtailed before the end of the winter in 1918, for a wartime “ban on the heating of clubhouses” meant that “the club was closed for two months last winter” (*Ottawa Journal*, 10 February 1919, p. 11). For the sake of saving coal, the federal government had published an order requiring the closing of clubhouses of all sorts for two months that winter: “During the months of February and March of 1918, no golf, country, yacht, canoe or hunt club shall remain open except on Wednesdays and Saturdays. On other days of the week the coal consumption of such clubs shall be restricted to the quantity necessary to prevent damage through freezing” (*Almonte Gazette*, 15 March 1918, p. 2).

Whatever constituted the full range of the “Etc.” of the pro’s duties at Royal Ottawa, we know that Evelyn did them all to the members’ complete satisfaction.

When Evelyn Keffer died in October of 1918 and the Canadian Army learned of her husband Karl's bereavement, it ordered him back to Canada to look after his son.

His war was over.

Amazingly, however, before Karl could sail back to Canada, he himself contracted the Spanish Flu and very nearly died in a London Hospital, where he languished between life and death for eight weeks over the course of the first months of 1919. After recovering his health, he returned to Canada in the spring, just in time to resume his job as golf professional at Royal Ottawa, and just in time to compete as defending champion in the 1919 Canadian Open, the first national championship to be held since Karl's triumph in the tournament of 1914.

Although Evelyn's life was over, her story was not.



Figure 33 Lieutenant Howard Keffer, RCE, Ottawa Journal, 25 August 1943, p. 22.

On the one hand, she and Karl had produced a son, Howard.

And Evelyn's son Howard had children, who had children, who had children.

Among Evelyn's many descendants are her great-grandson Kyle and her great-great-granddaughter Seren, seen in the photograph below, which was taken a few years ago when Seren and Kyle attended the ceremony at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club during which Karl Keffer was inducted into the Quebec Golf Hall of Fame – something that might never have happened had Evelyn not held Karl's place for him at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club from 1917 to 1918. In the photograph, Kyle and Seren stand not far from the former location of "The Cottage" in which Evelyn and son Howard lived when she ran the Royal Ottawa pro shop.

No doubt Evelyn would have regarded such descendants as an important part of her story. They are obviously a valuable part of her legacy.



Figure 34 Evelyn Keffer's great-grandson Kyle Keffer and her great-great-granddaughter Seren Keffer at Royal Ottawa Golf Club, 29 June 2016, for the induction of Karl Keffer into the Quebec Golf Hall of Fame.

But another important part of her continuing story and continuing legacy is her demonstration of a woman's ability to run a pro shop to the complete satisfaction of the members of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club.

Although Karl's career earned him a well-deserved place in the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame (1986), the Ontario Golf Hall of Fame (2000), the PGA of Canada Hall of Fame (2014), and the Quebec Golf Hall of Fame (2016), Evelyn's work as golf professional at Royal Ottawa from 1917 to 1918 has not earned her entry into any hall of fame.

Yet Evelyn Keffer's unsung entry into the ranks of Canada's golf professionals was nonetheless important: it was part of the process of larger social developments that would lead to women like Newton and Kirkham taking their place among the ranks of golf professionals in the 1930s – and would in due course lead to many women golf professionals taking their place in golf's many halls of fame.

On that somber October evening at Ottawa's Grand Trunk Central Station over a hundred years ago, the presence of so many people associated not just with the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, but also with the Royal Canadian Golf Association, made Evelyn Keffer's send-off doubly "Royal" – which, in historical retrospect, we might judge to have been quite fitting, given that these representatives of the country's golf community were paying their last respects to the country's first woman golf professional.

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