

University of Toronto
University Arts Women's Club - University of Toronto Women's Association

NEWS & EVENTS

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At our General Meeting of **October 19, 2023**, our Programme Coordinator Maureen Somerville introduced with great pleasure our guest speaker, Mrs. Ann Birch. Maureen noted that Ann in her novels chooses a time period in history and inserts real persons as well as creating fictional characters. Ann spoke about writing historical fiction. Ann has an MA from the University of Toronto. She belongs to several historical societies, among them The Etobicoke Historical Society, The Town of York Historical Society, The Niagara Historical Society, and Canada's National Historical Society. For several years she was Chair of the Campbell House Volunteers, and she has been an historical interpreter at The Grange and Campbell House, and is currently involved with events at Montgomery's Inn. She gives many talks to historical societies and book clubs.

A long-time historical researcher, Ann spoke about her three historical novels: *Settlement*, published in 2010, an untold story of scandal and political intrigue in old York, *Duelling in a New World*, published 2018, and *A Daughter Rebels*, published 2020. She spoke about the necessary research to write fictionalized history, and the importance of consulting multiple secondary sources as well as never giving two characters the same or similar names to avoid confusion.

After Q and A time, Kirsteen McLean, our Past President, thanked Ann and expressed appreciation for the countless hours she has spent researching her chosen period in history, and creating believable characters in her realistic novels of everyday life in early York and Toronto.



Mrs. Ann Birch

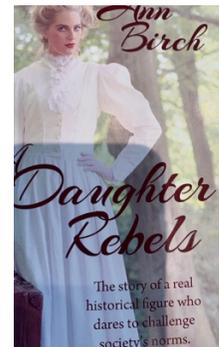
Educator and Historical Fiction Author



Settlement



Duelling in a New World



A Daughter Rebels

At our second General Meeting, **November 16, 2023**, held at The Faculty Club, University of Toronto, Maureen Somerville, our Programme Coordinator, introduced Katie Daubs. Katie is a senior writer with the *Toronto Star*. The title of her presentation was The Missing Millionaire: The True Story of Ambrose Small and The City Obsessed with Finding Him.

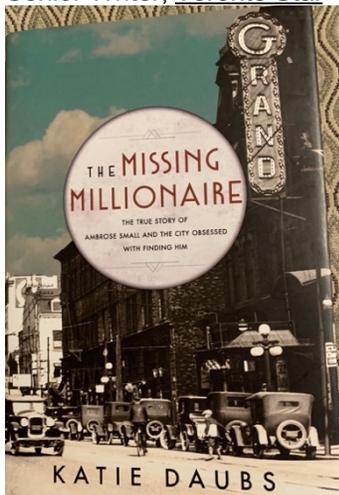
Katie was delighted to be speaking to us. She began by introducing the main characters of the true story. She spoke about Ambrose J. Small, the self-made millionaire and his ambition in building his empire. He owned the Grand Opera House in Toronto and many other theatres and had made enemies in the process. Was he murdered, kidnapped, or did he simply disappear with a million dollars? Suspects included his wife, Theresa Small (nee Kormann) a devoted Catholic, his mistress Clara Smith, his forgotten two sisters, Florence and Gertrude Small, his half siblings, Theresa's nieces and nephews. There were disagreements about his will between Theresa and Small's two sisters. Jack Doughty, his private secretary was never charged. As weeks turned into years, his disappearance became the most extraordinary and unsolved mystery of its time.

Katie gave an engaging talk about this intriguing story. She enjoys speaking about Ambrose J. Small, and appreciated the opportunity to share her enthusiasm with us. She answered questions at the end and was thanked by Christine McClymont, our Special Events Coordinator.



Katie Daubs

Senior Writer, *Toronto Star*



The Missing Millionaire:
The True Story of Ambrose Small and The City Obsessed with Finding Him, Published 2019



Ambrose J. Small



Theresa Small (nee Kormann)



Clara Smith



Florence Small



Gertrude Small



Jack Doughty

Those interested in joining UAWC-UTWA are invited to contact Linda Andrews, Membership Coordinator, uawcutwa@gmail.com

Maggy Stepanian, Media Coordinator

December 13, 2023