

Note: A printed 2nd edition of “Pete’n’Catharine: Their Story” was planned for 2014, but unfortunately did not occur. In honour of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies 50th Anniversary, the original 1980 edition has been digitized and presented as an e-book on the Whyte Museum’s website (whyte.org). The Introduction written by Carmen Pearson for the 2nd edition provided such valuable insights, that it has been included below as a separate essay.

Carmen Pearson has a Ph.D in American Literature, with a specialization in Modernist studies, and a particular emphasis on female Modernist writers in the American West. She published books and essays and presented academic papers relevant to this area of study subject while also teaching in universities in Texas and Alberta. Drawn to Catherine Whyte’s own life story, experiences in the Canadian Rockies, artistic expressions and dedication in both defining and celebrating the culture of the Canadian Rockies, Carmen produced the essay below. In the last decade, Carmen has run a small resort on Mayne Island in British Columbia and currently continues to do so along with developing a hunting and fishing lodge in the Colorado Rockies.

Introduction to *Pete'n'Catharine: their story*
By Carmen Pearson

This text, although somewhat altered in presentation, is a re-issue of the 1980 work of the same title, edited and annotated by Jon Whyte and published by the Whyte Foundation of Banff, Canada. That 1980 collection celebrated and chronicled the life of Catharine Robb Whyte (1906 – 1979) and Peter Whyte (1905 – 1966), both long-time residents of Banff, best known as portrait and landscape artists, local community supporters and philanthropists, and founders of the Whyte Foundation and Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff, Alberta. In addition to this, they were the aunt and uncle of Jon Whyte, sharing their home with their nephew who occasionally dropped in from down the street.

Following his beloved aunt's death in March 1979, Jon Whyte, a poet, English scholar, local historian and artist in his own right was charged with the task of overseeing and sorting much of his aunt and uncle's copious collection, still housed in their home next to the Whyte Museum.

From the time that Catharine and Peter Whyte had, in the spring of 1931, completed what was originally meant to be their studio and summer cabin, the log structure on the banks of the Bow River had evolved into the couple's sole permanent and much-loved residence, a capacious hold-all for their own and others' letters, art and artefacts. Beyond their own personal letters and correspondence, Catharine Whyte, as the remaining sibling, upon her mother's death in Concord, Massachusetts had added to this collection with boxes of diaries and letters of her own descendants, their history in the United States dating back to Puritan times—their output in letters and diaries and collectibles nearly as prodigious as her own.

As Jon lingered in the quiet rooms of that home of the Bow River, he would have been confronted by boxes and boxes of letters, over thousands that Catharine had written back to her mother in Concord on almost a daily basis since her marriage in 1930, with almost as many from her mother—returned to her and carefully saved. Overflowing the dark corners of the log home, stacks of newspapers, old issues of *Canadian Art*, letters from Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, J.E.H. MacDonald and Carl Rungius mingled with scribbled notes from David Bearspaw, clippings from the local papers, faded receipts for groceries and old calendars marking appointments and meetings spilled out onto boxes with tape recordings of Jimmy Simpson, the White boys playing on the pots and pans and Hawaiian musical broadcasts. Portraits of members of the Stoney tribe, of local outfitters and pioneers, and of colourful Balinese natives silently peered down from the walls above. Added to this were postcards from hundreds of trips, diaries and letters from and to the couple, as-well as documents from grandparents and aunts and uncles and siblings and cousins, long since deceased on all sides of the family. What stood piled in corners and shelves extended far beyond a local memorabilia. Much of the raw material of social history of both Canada and America history lay within Jon Whyte's fingertips.

If this were not daunting and thrilling enough, Jon also well knew if the walls could speak, they would tell stories from the thousands of visitors, famous and otherwise, who had found a warm welcome in this log home over the years. Nearly as soon as Catharine and Pete's cabin was habitable, it quickly evolved into the address for the Banff-cum- Whyte version of the literary and artistic salon for everyone from Pierre Trudeau to members of the Stoney tribe to the local children and neighbours either residing in or passing through the Park's mountain village. In fact, during mid-July of that first summer of 1932 the couple stayed in their cabin, Catharine noted, "We counted for the fun of it, how many different people had been in the house since the

middle of May and there were over a hundred we could remember. Nearly all of them have to have tea or something.” That pattern repeated itself up to the last few days before Catharine’s death in 1979.

In that initial year after his aunt’s death, Jon Whyte would bury himself in this material and in the walls of this home. Assisted by a handful of archivists from the Foundation, the small group was challenged with adding to what was already recognized as one of the most comprehensive and valuable collections of art and western history in Canada. It had initially been named “the Wa-Che-Yo-Cha-Pa Foundation.” Long imagined by Peter and Catharine Whyte and finally realized in 1967, its name had been suggested to the Whytes by George McLean of Morley in 1958, and translated, meant “anything you see, anything you do, it’s perfect. Doesn’t matter what you do or what you see. All there. Would draw influence—in that way perfect, in that way nice and beautiful. Your mind draws to the work, and influence draws. Can’t say nothing against.” Its lease land had been a wedding gift Pete’s parents had given the couple in 1930. The bulk of the Foundation’s financing had been secured by the generous trust Catharine’s father, Russell Robb I, created for his family prior to his death in 1927.

“Wa-Che-Yo-Cha-Pa,” both Catharine and Pete had agreed, was a perfect and fitting name for what they envisioned as their legacy to art and culture and Alberta. It was “a name that wasn’t too long, but suitable for a place where there were paintings and books and our ground with the grass and trees” (quoted from Pete Whyte in a letter by Catharine Whyte, May 28, 1958.) As had been the case in many visions for their life’s work, this project began with a most fundamental thrust and focus, pure in intent, which held the course of time and grew to become far more than the two could have envisioned. Catharine’s good friend and confidant Pearl Moore was right in both her prediction and its implication back in 1954 when she had discussed the prospects of a museum in suggesting that “it was like a nest egg, if you put one in the nest a hen would start laying and the same with a museum, once you start everyone will get interested and we might get a real one some day.” Indeed, over the last five decades, the collection has attracted both researchers, contributors and casual visitors, discovering and adding to the history of the Bow Valley and to valleys far beyond the Bow. As in the past, today the Whyte Museum and outlying buildings are still surrounded by trees that capture the air as it comes off the ever-flowing blue waters of the Bow and its shaded grounds offer a tranquil stopping off point from the hustle and bustle of the often crowded downtown streets, populated now as they were even in the turn-of-the-century, by interesting people from all corners of the globe.

However, back in 1979, much of what is now safely housed in the museum was still in the couple’s residence and the bulk of Catharine’s family collection had yet to be archived. How best to proceed may well have been an overwhelming task to anyone other than Jon Whyte. Because of his personal knowledge of the family, based on his own childhood in Banff and many hours spent as an adult in his widowed aunt’s and many other neighbour’s company and his eager interest and willingness to take on the project, he was no doubt one of the most well-suited to begin what would be years of painstaking archival work in bringing order to the chaotic richness of what lay before him that winter in that lovely, albeit crowded log home.

Even as Jon stood at the threshold of the home, catching glimpses of the “little Jonny” who followed the swarm of local children into his aunt and uncle’s fascinating house for rollicks on the bearskin rug, glimpses of beautiful artwork and “gingerale” and cookies, the professional writer and historian must have known the potential pitfalls that lay ahead. Although in the frontispiece of the 1980 book *Pete’n’Catharine*, he claims to “have endeavoured to let their story

tell itself, intruding minimally. . .” it is not difficult to imagine him smiling at the irony of this—as he was wont to do of many things—while penning those words.

On the surface, surely enough, his aunt and uncle’s words fill the body of the text and their illustrations make up the bulk of the margins, but selection is everything. As an editor and historian, Jon Whyte well knew that. His own unique biography—interests and prejudices, strengths and weaknesses, and artistic spirit could help but permeate the book.

Raised and educated in the postmodern razzle-dazzle age of “nothing is as it appears,” even in, in his heart, had he all the best intentions to distance himself from this work, Jon Whyte knew no editor could. Furthermore, as a player in the family saga with its story set out on these pages, his involvement was much closer than that of an impossibly biased editor; he was the character “Jonny.” These were his people—his story—his legacy too. “I did not prepare a scholarly text” he writes in his brief introduction, as though that may have been a choice he actually contemplated. This inability to distance himself from these people and their stories sheds light on some of his unique editorial choices and is by no means a flaw in the collection; it is an unavoidable and fortunate enhancement.

Born Jon White in 1941 in Banff, of Dave “Jack” White (the son of shop owner Dave White and brother of Peter Whyte) and of Barbara Carpenter White, a Quaker school teacher moved west from the eastern United States, young Jonny early on distinguished himself with his precocity in astute observations and strong sense of self and an understanding of the power of communication. At only six, he impressed his aunt enough that she reiterated her experiences with him to her mother: “We often test people out for fun to see if they notice the pictures. Some see the pictures before noticing anything else in the house. Little Jonny came over the other evening and right away noticed we had an Indian head instead of the camp over the table and then he remarked on the new pictures Pete had stacked on the floor. He sat on his heels and studied them for a minute and then looked up at me and said, ‘They are pretty good, aren’t they, Catharine?’ in the most professional manner.”

Jonny’s Aunt Catharine noticed more than that. She went on in that same letter to note: “Mom (Annie Curren White—Jonny’s grandmother) never seems to notice him. Cliff (Jonny’s uncle) will say something if he hasn’t too much ski business on his mind.” To be fair, Catharine no doubt well knew that Mom White was most likely over-run by grandchildren and in-laws and the busyness of the family’s many commercial interests in Banff and Uncle Cliff, likewise, had good reason to be pre-occupied, involved as he was in bringing the ski industry to the Canadian Rockies with years dedicated to building up Lake Louise and Sunshine as world class and ski venues. Propriety would not have allowed her to mention what was really on her mind: that Jonny’s house was a troubled one, punctuated by a darkness in his parent’s troubled marriage and his father’s occasional battles with the bottle.

By 1956, Jonny yet left Banff with his mother and finished his schooling in Medicine Hat, and then in Edmonton at the University of Alberta. It wasn’t until 1968 that Jon, now twenty-seven, returned to his boyhood home, under the auspices of completing a dissertation for Stanford by creating a film on Old Jimmy Simpson, a by-then legendary figure in outfitting in the Canadian Rockies.

Jonny had come of age in the psychedelic sixties, holding court in the then vibrant intellectual and creative buzz of coffee houses surrounding the Edmonton campus. He was of the Beatnik generation, but had adopted a “Banffnik” version of it upon returning from graduate film studies in Stanford. His was a generation angry and at war with their parents, demanding a departure from the old ways, but paradoxically, upon his return to his childhood home, Jon

Whyte melded his counter-culture generation's outlook with a genuine concern and admiration for the Canadian Rockies and a deep nostalgia for its local color and history. Certainly, the fact that in those early years of the 1940s and 50s, somewhat troubled, but somewhat blessed, the young boy had found his greatest solace and interest in the area's beauty and in the village's pioneer outfitters, Stoney Natives and international visitors. Although some were surprised by his move back to his childhood home, assuming he was destined for "greener fields," they most likely did not understand, as Jon did, that Banff always had been more than its reputation as an isolated Edwardian tourist destination indicated. After having travelled and seen much of the world, he would have come to understand how very unique Banff was in the world: truly always cosmopolitan. He had only to walk back into his aunt's house to be assured of that fact.

Still grieving over the recent loss of her dear husband, but very much alive to the world around her, Jon's Aunt Catharine welcomed him back in. Her walls told the stories of the mountaineers and skiers and artists from all over the world who had sat on that very same bench where the prodigal nephew now sat, inspired in spirit and intellect by the same mountain streams and peaks that those before him had been and by the same woman who sat across from him.

By this time, like his uncle Peter, Jon had changed his name to the original and more artistic spelling "Whyte,"—and like his uncle, by doing so, had distanced himself from the more mercantile elements of the family. Indeed, his connections in Banff, if not all but severed by the years and circumstances, were worn thin—but for those with his ever-hospitable aunt. She welcomed him home and even assisted by participating in his film project on Jimmy Simpson, appearing in it as a commentator. Over the years, Jon, as the bachelor and Catharine, as the widow, travelled and dined together and enjoyed each other's company. Ever the gracious aunt, Catharine continued to subtly smooth out some of the young man's rougher edges, just as she had done to the precocious lad's. She'd change the subject or offer a few quiet words to tame his occasional rantings and ravings and dark outbursts. Well acquainted with them through her many years with Pete, Catharine navigated through her association with Jon with the quiet grace that became her hallmark.

As Jon re-established himself in Banff, he focussed his efforts on his poetry and work in local history. In later years, he was well-known locally in Banff for producing pieces in the *Crag and Canyon* and other publications that alternately pleased, puzzled and occasionally vexed his readers. He liked wordplay and "poetic paradoxes." As Harry Vandervlist described this in his introduction to *Jon Whyte: Mind Over Matter*, he "ceaselessly made connections and created imaginative structures—in other words, he learned in a poetic and visionary fashion, shaping information into worlds . . . [as such] . . . Every book Jon wrote or edited manifested his interest in book design, layout and typography . . . [and spoke] to readers not just in words, but through the language of spacing, typography and design . . ."

There can be no doubt, preoccupied with his own flourishing career as a poet, that Catharine's unexpected death in 1979 came as something of a shock to Jon and that he felt this loss deeply and reacted with what had served him best since his childhood: his unique ability to shape meaning through words and images. The meshing of literary and visual design evident in the 1980 collection reflects many of Jon Whyte's proclivities and talents. Not surprisingly, the by-product of his work that winter, feeling the loss of his aunt and grieving through a creative output, was far from ordinary. What came of it was the 1980 edition titled: "Pete'n'Catharine – their story drawn from diaries, letters, and notes, illustrated with their drawings, photographs, cartoons, cards and sketches." This highly unusual combination of a written text and portfolio collection was issued more as a collector's item than as a mere book with accompanying pictures.

With only three hundred highly sought-after copies selling for \$150/each, the text of the large blue-cloth-covered book features excerpts from diaries, letters, and notes from Catharine and Pete and other members of their family and their friends. Its wide margins are in themselves a running commentary; supplemented by Jon Whyte's annotations, they include drawings, photos, cartoons, cards, telegram excerpts, sketches, book covers and other items of interest Jon discovered in his sorting. A portfolio collection of coloured re-prints of artwork by both Jon and Catharine Whyte in a separate envelope further enhance this collection. Since its release, several copies of this valuable collection have been readily available for the general public at the Whyte Archives in Banff. However, for interested members of the public, either not privy to one of the privately-held copies of this piece or with ready access to the Whyte in Banff, this work has often been inaccessible. As such, the Whyte Foundation, in conjunction with Rocky Mountain Books, has produced this newer and more accessible version of the 1980 issue.

The 1980 collection's creation, content and circulation are worthy of closer examination. Although Jon's aunt had dedicated her life to as low-key and egalitarian an approach to all matters as her democratic Concord roots and quiet nature would allow, it is curious that one of the first tributes to her, after the many honours she had received prior to her death, was something that seemed rather showy and exclusive, produced almost for an inside circle of elite collectors. Many reasons might explain this. The 1980 release was a project limited in scope and circulation, but high in quality. By falling back to the very old tradition of art production by something akin to private subscription, the Whyte was able to offer this high quality and valuable collection to the public, (albeit limited), while also producing a self-supporting project, in keeping with the Foundation's mandate. However, beyond this, it is difficult not to believe that Jon Whyte may have had more in mind than just these practical matters. He would have well-known that cultural production could take many forms: one was the most common—that—usually a book—was a commodity—to be traded at a given price and its value commensurate with the volume of its circulation; the other—usually a piece of art—was the piece created as a collectible, valuable because of its rarity and quality—with a price that varied and often increased over time.

In creating the 1980 limited edition, Jon Whyte created an unusual hybrid: a book that would become a collector's item. Therefore, for readers interested in Jon Whyte, as the poet and historian and key figure in Alberta cultural history, his approach in this collection, although dedicated to the life and work of his aunt and uncle, also tells much about Jon Whyte. As such, it is a rich and demanding collection: a Jon Whyte original.

In this unusual collection, he offers no introduction, nor does he explain who his aunt and uncle might be or what readers will find in the pages that followed, nor does he offer anything more than the most perfunctory advice on how a reader should approach the book. Within the text itself, at times he painstakingly delineates the sources and writers of the excerpts included. At other times, he leaves it to readers to puzzle through the entries on their own. Occasionally, his annotations in the margins read as something for "the insiders" with his unusual witticisms and running commentary. These are often interrupted by lengthy silences. In his annotations, he sometimes gives copious detail to a somewhat obscure fact, seemingly to help readers along—and then, in other spots, curiously omits events screaming out for explanation. One such instance is the sudden death of his boyhood buddy, "Little Donny Becker." His aunt's excerpts include details of a delightful day spent with Donny and Jonny and his friends picnicking in September 1950. The next excerpt on September 6 reads "Little Donny Becker died Monday morning and we all feel so badly for he was one of the best kids in Town. He was very

adventuresome and knew no fear, a good sport in every way and a great leader among the boys Jonny's age." Surely this must have been a cataclysmic event for a young Jon Whyte. Conspicuously and mysteriously, he offers no explanation. Another similar and troubling omission is his own uncle's death in 1966. Readers only learn that Peter Whyte passed away by the content of one of Catharine's notes.

Jon Whyte's unique humour and sense of irony permeates the text, evident occasionally in his insertion of a certain photo or sketch that hardly seems to belong just there . . . and the occasional juxtaposition of excerpts so ironic, they are sometimes truly painful. To anyone familiar with the Whyte's short association with the operation of Skoki Lodge and their pioneering work in the early days of the international ski industry in Canada, ending tragically and prematurely with the death of Kit Paley, a talented but rather absent-minded mathematician from M.I.T. who skied off on his own and died in an avalanche, Jon's choices of excerpts prior to this death are troubling. He includes an excerpt from the 6th of April where Catharine writes to her mother, "I'm so glad you realize how safe skiing really is, doing it the way we do it. On the trails at home, where they ski out of control all the time, it's a different matter. All the boys have been getting the word from home: 'Do be careful.'" The next excerpt, on the 8 April reads: "I started writing you last night and then changed the letter into one to Russ, and now I've decided to write to you instead. You will have received the wire we sent in case the paper made too much of the story. It was really a most unfortunate accident, but though we tried to stop Paley from going off alone he would insist on doing it and unfortunately went on a slope that avalanched during a change in the temperature yesterday afternoon. There is never any need for us to go off alone on any questionable slope. It isn't as if we hadn't warned Paley, for every one of us had." In fact, there had been more material following the excerpt in the original letter of 6 April buffering this irony; however, stripped away, the dramatic impact and horror are heightened.

At other times, Jon's comments seem even slightly patronizing. For instance, when the text includes an excerpt from the teenage Catharine's diary to her imaginary friend "Buz", innocently stating, "I dressed and went up to the Rockerfellows to tea. Think of it, Buz dear – I quite stepped out," Jon comments in the margin "Catharine learned to spell Rockefeller quite rapidly." Similarly, when she records details of a 1926 visit to a Boston exhibit by recording ". . . then to Belmont Browne's oils of the Canadian Rockies which were very interesting, blue predominating in all the mountain pictures. Pete White who comes from Banff says they are fine." Jon again writes: "She quickly learned his name is 'Belmore.'"

The book's balance is as curious as these occasionally odd annotations. Overall, the text focuses deeply on certain eras in the nearly seventy years the pages follow, while completely skimming over other years as though they were dark holes in time. The early childhood and adolescent years are felt, much as they are: moment by moment. The latter years speed by with barely a breath to distinguish seasons, accurately replicating the inevitable time compression that does seem to occur as the years in an individual's life mount up. Of the original collection's 144 pages, Jon Whyte divided the years, beginning in 1918 and ending in 1978, into four parts.

Because Catharine was the prodigious and precocious journal and letter writer, and her mother, the careful custodian of every document, the voice throughout the text is inevitably and primarily that of Catharine. This family tradition, with an almost religiosity in its dedication to daily journal and letter writing, particularly on the part of the females, is indicative of the underlying Puritan influence in all these women's lives. The organic flow of words they produced that studied the tremor of each leaf and recorded the days' activities was very much in

sisterhood with the Anne Bradstreets and Emily Dickinsons of earlier eras who found solace, freedom and a safe place for self-expression in the private time they spent creating and studying words. Constant reminders of the self-conscious nature of these writings have been edited out of the excerpts Jon included, most likely because of their repetition; but it is clear that all these letter writers, Catharine included, thought about their words and their import. A self-conscious appraisal of the process and its import was standard in almost all these notations: apologies for not writing more, for not writing better, for not writing with greater clarity or lucidity are standard punctuations in most entries. These comments are clear evidence that these women saw value in these letters.

In Catharine's case, if she were only to be known by the contents of her diaries and letters, anyone would think she had been quite loquacious and self-involved. In fact, in person, she is most often remembered as being quiet, gracious and talented in drawing out others' stories and opinions. In the circumscription of the manners of her upbringing and, eventually, of her own approach to social interactions, writing was Catharine's other world: a world with more candour. From its earliest days, this world of writing Catharine inhabited was a world where she tried to replicate as accurately as she could, the life around her. Her eye for details was almost photographic and her pains in recording these details, prodigious. Harkening back again to her Puritan forbearers, Catharine's details recorded the details on the direction the sun slanted in through the window, the number of branches on a tree and the way a neighbour might tip his hat as he walked down his street. Each detail counted; at times she wasn't sure for what, but she persevered. Like her grandfather before her, she collected life's details without judgment or appropriation: so thrilled and awed she was by the bounty before her. Jim Thorsell described her as a "clear vessel"—purer than anyone else he'd ever known. He could have been describing her writing. She didn't edit or embellish life. Scarcely given to romance or fantasy, Catharine's was a world based almost exclusively in reality. For her, there was far too much of interest in the here and now to do anything but record and study it. She assiduously recorded the surface texture of life: each colour and sound and shape and movement, as though in doing so, the sub-terrain would reveal itself. This style says much about her beliefs. It may well be that she considered too much introspection almost vulgar or self-indulgent—or, at the very least, a waste of valuable time.

Interestingly, Catharine did not seem to consider herself a writer (nor did anyone else, for that matter!) although she produced well over 5000 pages during her lifetime and wrote almost every day; ironically, perhaps she did not consider herself a writer because it came so easily, almost organically. Just as Jon Whyte dismissed Pete's Grandfather – John Donaldson Curren (1852-1940) as a "naive painter," so Catharine may have also dismissed her own efforts as "naive", humbled by the intellectuals and academics, the critical arbiters of taste and professionalism who seemed to have somehow defined what writers and artists really were.

For all that Jon Whyte saw and relied so much upon in his aunt's writings and was himself an iconoclast in terms of creative endeavours, in some of his criticisms he too seems to have been caught in the modernist and intellectual elites' bifurcation of high-brow and low-brow: that artificial and often arbitrary distinction classifying certain creations into "works or art", others into "artefacts" and others into, well, just plain "other." And so, Catharine's words were "other." However, she and the other females of the family evidently thought highly enough of these "scribblings" to carefully preserve them. This was a quietly rebellious action against the powers that be. Preserving these letters gave them an inherent value, if for no other reason than their abundance and constancy. In later years, their presence would force others to question what

true art was, what real writing was. This writing was the mainstay for Jon's work on *Pete'n'Catharine*.

Ironically, as the years passed after *Pete'n'Catharine's* publication and Jon Whyte continued to plough his way through his aunt and uncle's work, he lamented, of his aunt's art, "Catharine never made time to finish any big landscapes." Arguably, those big landscapes sat there, at his very feet, with their endless details—all done with the tool with which his aunt was most familiar and confident and dedicated to: the pen. In the pages Jon included in his 1980 text, hundreds of little sketches—all done in words—set forth the landscapes of a lifetime, sprawling and endless. Too immersed in the trees to see the forest, Jon unknowingly offered up samples of his aunt's rich landscapes in the rich pages of *Pete'n'Catharine*.

Part I begins with Catharine as a young girl, "buzzing away" to either "Buz" or "Katrinka," her imaginary friends and readers in her secret journals. It then follows her course through school and her meeting with Pete at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The young couple's at first secretive and then wholly open love letters back and forth fill up the bulk of the textual material up to their wedding in 1930.

Part II, primarily letters Catharine wrote back to her mother, beginning with their separation after her move west in 1930 and steadily issued until her mother's death in 1962 chronicle the young couple's early days in the Canadian Rockies, building their homes, forming new friendships, participating in the early days of the ski industry. Part II ends in 1932, with the end of Pete and Catharine's operation of the Skoki Lodge and includes the years 1933 through the outbreak of World War II when the couple travelled extensively throughout the world, particularly the Far East and Europe. These latter years of the 1930s with intimate glimpses of a world on the cusp of cataclysmic change are sadly relegated to an annotation of the side of the page.

Part III begins with the couple's settling back to life in Banff and their subsequent separations and moves to a number of military posts in Canada connected with Peter's participation in various military regiments in the Canadian forces during World War II. Part IV begins in 1945 with Peter's return to civilian life and gradual decline until his death in 1966. With Catharine's mother's death in 1962, the daily chatty letters that had peopled a lifetime ceased; however, the ever-prodigious letter writer continued her output with annual Christmas letters to a wider reading circle and samples of these are included in the text's last pages.

The years after her mother's death, although abundant in activity and friendships and successes, are compressed down to 3 ½ pages with almost no annotations. This paucity, although perhaps necessary due to the dearth of material available to Jon Whyte at the time, belies the richness of Catharine's Whyte's life—up to the very moment of her death. Her re-introduction to the world of skiing, assisted by Roy Anderson was one of her greatest delights and sources of pride. This same ski instructor and good young friend encouraged her to take flying lessons. She finished those with a solo flight. With the talented musician, David Zweifel, Catharine made forays into the mountains and the world of classical music that had so daunted her as a young woman. With Jim Thorsell, she travelled to the Arctic, shared days with the "Eskimos", started to paint again and enthusiastically encouraged and listened to this talented man's dreams for more national parks throughout the world. In fact, the last days before her death had been spent accompanying Jim Thorsell to Dominica to see the work he was doing on the national park on that small island.

That Part I fills over half the pages of this collection and that Part IV, thirty three years, receives a scant thirty-some pages is noteworthy. The days preceding Catharine and Pete's

wedding, filled with anxious notes back and forth, seem to go on *ad nauseum*—while other important events in the couple’s lives, such as an extensive trip up the newly created Alaskan Highway beautifully captured in a journal of well over one-hundred pages by Catharine, are omitted completely. There may be many explanations for this; one might be that much of this material was simply impossible to lay a finger on in those early days before it had been better organized; the other is that certain things either interested Jon Whyte more, particularly detailed aspects of his aunt’s life—as his memories of his uncle ended for him in his teenage years, while he had been a steady adult companion to his aunt Catharine for the last twelve years of her life. As an editor with a limited budget and space considerations, he was forced to choose from the material, selecting certain segments of their lives, particularly their time spent in the Canadian Rockies, most likely of greater interest to his readers and more relevant in creating their legacy as artists of the Canadian Rockies.

Accordingly, if Jon felt that the book’s primary purpose was to capture some of Banff’s history, those years just prior to the outbreak of World War II when the couple travelled extensively throughout the world, particularly the Far East, would not have been appropriate to include; however, if this were the case, then it is difficult to understand why so much detail of Catharine’s girlhood suitors and social liaisons in New England receive the space that they do. Her adolescent friendships and flirtations during the summers with the Rockefellers in Maine and her coming out as a Boston debutante begin to read as a Jane Austin novel of manners after a number of pages, casting a spell that do something of an injustice to the ambitious and independent young woman she really was and the accomplished mature woman she would become.

Perhaps, a bit in awe of a world that was long ago and far from his own, this material particularly interested him and Jon, a born raconteur, further understood that in including this material and repeating Catharine’s associations with the East, he was simultaneously capturing readers’ attention with some good old fashioned name dropping and narrative drama, while also further elevating the aura of Banff as a magnet for the some of the world’s most cosmopolitan and talented and moneyed figures, thus adding to the drama of his aunt and uncle’s lives.

Jon’s focus on the disparity between his aunt and uncle’s backgrounds would be emphasized in oral presentations and other material he and others would present to the public over the years. This was the stuff of legends, good for selling copy. The net result of this, although surely not intended, is something of a two-dimensional picture of this unlikely romantic couple: Peter Whyte, the athletic mountain man and artist, and Catharine Whyte, the wealthy eastern heiress and debutant, both brought together in a common pursuit of artistic expression and independent success through their mutual love for the Canadian Rockies, adventure and each other. Although, on the surface, much of this is true, the contents of the couple’s letters and other material reveal a greater complexity, demonstrating the similarities and compatibility between the two and several clues as to why this somewhat superficial picture of their characters may have emerged.

In his diligent efforts in editing the 1980 *Pete’n’Catharine* collection and subsequent material, Jon had more in mind than just capturing something of his aunt and uncle’s lives for local history. He fully understood that much work was still to be done to promote their work and continue in their own life’s efforts to make their marks as serious and accomplished Canadian artists. Beyond the training, dogged determination, hard work and talent required for any success in the art world, there is also the matter of public perception and critical reception. Here, all practical matters slip into a murky ground of where an artist lives, who he or she knows, what

circles the artist frequents, as-well-as the subjects, styles and substance of the individual works and the impression of the collection as a whole. Jon's goal, in emphasizing certain names and contentious issues, may have been to lay claims in this murky ground, thus working towards creating a legend.

Artists' legends need colourful figures: somewhat at odds with the world—cut off from family and the mainstream and single-minded in their pursuit of artistic fulfillment. Both Catharine and Pete also well knew all this. From the start of their interests in careers as artists, they had been, from time to time, caught up in the temptation to paint their own pictures richly, as Jon attempted to do after their death. But, by middle age, they matured beyond this. However both acquiring the practical tools required for a career as a professional artist and creating the aura of living the artistic life caught them both in their early years as they worked to forge their identities. Catharine found inspiration in the museums of Boston and common acquaintances with the likes of John Sargent and other talented figures and Peter, as a young mountain guide had the privilege of quiet hours spent in the mountains with some of the most talented artists of the days: the likes of Carl Rungius and J.E.H MacDonald. Both were also encouraged and mentored, to various degrees from childhood to pursue their own artistic leanings: Catharine, by her own mother and other family acquaintances (but less so by her brother, who took over as the man of the family upon his father's death in 1927. As Catharine embarked on her formal studies as an artist in Boston, Catharine noted "Russ was so funny about art. He said he didn't see why I wanted to paint because people never do it well and then hang their pictures all over the house.") With some responses similar by his own family members, also worried about any financial security the life of an artist might provide, Peter was encouraged more by his friendships with the summering artists of Banff.

Both knew enough to understand that professional training was an asset to an artist. From her girlhood, Catharine had private tutorials in Concord, followed by intensive sessions in the studios at the Wheeler Academy. Peter learned on the trail, standing behind the masters; encouraged by his mentors, he took art lessons through correspondence courses and then, via connections with Hollywood in his summer guide work, he studied at the Otis Institute for a time in California. Eventually, the two's common trajectories would cross in 1928 at the School of Art at the Boston Museum. Still forming their opinions of themselves as individuals and the figure of an artist in the world, the two, both full of high ideals and ambitions, came together in their mutual desire to define themselves as artists. They both hoped to find independent success and some measure of happiness.

Although the Boston School's approach was relatively traditional at the time, stressing the rudiments of life drawing and art history and the importance of the Impressionists and their use of light, it was a highly competitive and enlightened environment, its classes burgeoning with some of the most talented and ambitious pupils of the day. All the students, through their study at the many galleries in the area and from work in the classroom and other associations were well-acquainted with the more bohemian and avant-garde movements of the day.

Both Catharine and Pete, like Jon, were well aware of the myth (and real fear) that good art and good artists could never emerge or be fostered in a bourgeois lifestyle. So, it may well be that in Jon's efforts to heighten the dramatic tension between the two and their family relations and their pasts, he hoped to diminish any aspect of their lives that seemed so deeply rooted in a "bourgeois conservatism." However, by 1988, Jon retreated from his efforts in romanticising his aunt and uncle's lives and work, recapitulating with comments like "[their] innate aesthetic conservatism reined them in too tightly, keeping them from "the greatness they could have

attained.” “They did not challenge each other.” In this final interpretation, his aunt and uncle seemed failures as artists. “Failure,” particularly in the Arts, is something that only time can tell. But, certainly, a fear of failure haunted both Catharine and Pete from the first days when they chose their professions; however, for them, art was to be a mode to achieve a more deeply rooted impetus that drove the two from their earliest conscious desires.

Before there was art, there was an ethos that permeated the two sensitive and creative individuals so thoroughly that it guided them through every action of their lives—and even brought them together. Although they did not consider themselves religious and whether or not they realized it, the doctrine of the Fall and redemption through good works, so integral to the Protestant ethos and to the mainstream culture of their own upbringings, permeated and guided their lives.

“My ambition in life is to be loved by all and to be able to be good and help others to be good and to do good to others,” wrote Catharine as a young girl, unaware of the source of this desire. As the two planned their lives together, their great hope for success at artists was not to assuage their egos; rather, any success in art would be an indication of purposeful lives, well lived. Catharine and Pete, although buoyed and guided by this same ethos, lived on its two opposite realms. One was the dark and damning side: haunted with admonitions of human failures and weakness. The other light-filled side was filled blessings and prayers of thanksgiving for redemption and abundance despite our human failures. Long ago, Catharine’s Grandfather Morse had pulled himself (and his family’s subsequent generations) from this dark side of the Protestant ethos and the black tyrannies of a church which dominated his own troubled childhood through the constant black ravings of his own father, a shopkeeper and hell and brimstone believer. With these battles won, by Catharine’s childhood, Grandfather Morse’s ties with the Church had been loosened and his family’s ethos had been one directed towards the light, in celebration and wonder. Theirs were to be lives diligent in searching out each blessing, all but turning their backs on that dark side of their culture’s Protestant roots.

Peter Whyte, however, had not been so fortunate. His childhood, in that strict Scottish Presbyterian household in Banff, run also by a shopkeeper, focused its religious discourse on human weakness and failure. In fact, in despairing during some of Pete’s darkest hours, Catharine commented to her mother (with an uncharacteristic candour), in 1949: “May 27: Dr. MacKenzie told me he thinks it was the way Mom brought up the family so strictly that has resulted in the three boys having the difficulties adjusting themselves now. She was so strict about Sundays they couldn’t even whistle in the old days unless it was a hymn, and she wouldn’t go on a picnic or ride in the car on Sunday. It was a sin to dance or be seen in a beer parlor. Good old Scotch Presbyterian. He thinks they had no outlets. I think he is right.”

So, although both Pete and Catharine carried with them the doctrine of good works, of redemption through a fruitful and caring existence, Catharine sought life’s blessings while Peter wrestled with his often damning focus on human weakness and failure. His greatest blessing, he always knew was the light living with Catharine provided and her consistent encouragement for him to create fine art. Conversely, Peter truly believed in Catharine’s talent and potential and provided her with the freedom she needed to seek out her own paths to creation and redemption.

“With Pete I feel so independent and sure and unhurried,” Catharine exclaimed, prior to their marriage. That impression had much to do with Peter’s unique demeanour amongst the many potential suitors Catharine had at the time. Unlike the other “boys”, he spoke directly and honestly. Wisely, Peter Whyte understood that a woman of Catharine’s independent and adventurous spirit sought more than just the charms of a man. Humbled and formed in boyhood

by the grandeur of the mountain world around him, Peter Whyte carried that awe and humility in his heart. Instead of talking about his background, he revelled in the image of Catharine meeting his “adopted parents,” members of the Sarcee nation. How endearing it must have been to Catharine when this unusual fellow took her to her apartment and proudly showed her his box of medals and trinkets, won for ski races and jumping in his far-away and beloved mountains. His most generous gift to her (for, after all, theirs was a “Scotch friendship”!) was a Hudson Bay blanket. This thick woollen gift, with its bright green and red and yellow stripes carried with it an iconography of the complex entanglement of the European and native, a complexity that would wrap itself around Peter and Catharine’s own lives, until—full circle and in her old age, Catharine would herself be welcomed into the Stoney tribe as a blood sister—Princess White Shield. Peter’s gift, that Hudson’s Bay blanket, would hide the newlyweds from the world during their first days of marriage and, as the years passed, warm and sooth them from life’s abrasions. Catharine fell in love with Pete’s genuine humility and honesty and love for things far greater than himself, qualities borne in him by his Canadian childhood. Concomitantly, Catharine fell in love with the possibilities of what she might become in the Canadian West.

Married to Peter Whyte, Catharine called herself “Mrs. Peter Whyte,” but she never was dwarfed by this title or partner—as she may well have been had she married one of those Ivy League Boys. She was always “Catharine” first. So, the two came together with more in common than art, but art was the common language and codeword for an avenue to something far deeper the two sought—and found in different measures in each other and in the shared trajectory their lives would take.

In the early days of their romance, Peter and Catharine’s letters are filled with ambitions of who they might become and how they might get there. The two wrote back and forth, conjuring up plans of how to achieve all this. At the time, they believed an artistic life would require a distancing from their own backgrounds. Travel and adventure and mingling amongst the interesting people of the world would enhance it. All this stimulation would have to be interrupted at regular intervals by a somewhat selfish cloistering, leaving time for the serious business of drawing and painting. Real artists needed a studio. Not only would this provide a place for painting and meeting potential clients, a studio would declare to the world the seriousness of their intent and professionalism. And so, Catharine and Pete did all these things.

In choosing to marry and pursue these goals, Peter and Catharine both knew that with these exciting possibilities, certain sacrifices and a constant effort in balancing their many goals would be required. First, there would be the challenge of maintaining their family commitments and affections. Both married “outside the fold.” Catharine, raised in a world of moneyed and well-educated engineers and businesspeople might have been expected to find her match from this New England crowd during her summers in Maine or at a dance in her debutante year in Boston. Likewise, Peter’s family may well have thought he would have married a local girl or, at the very least, a Canadian. In fact, this aspect of their backgrounds worried them so much that they hid their growing attachment and planned engagement from nearly everyone up until the last moment. However, this secret may also have been the by-product of youth’s desire for a certain degree of intrigue and melodrama. Both sets of families seemed pleased with the coupling.

As much as it would have been romantic and very much in keeping with the artistic image of scorned lovers, Catharine and Peter’s engagement fell dramatically short of the object of ridicule that Catharine endlessly conjured up in her letters prior to the couple’s announcement. Somewhat immaturely, Catharine, still caught up in imagining the course of her life as a radical

and bohemian artist, conjured up other suitors and options she had forgone for the sake of her Rocky Mountain Man. In fact, most of this was purely a fabrication on her part. A teenage crush with John D. Rockefeller III, some shared dances at the local club, one or two drives around Seal Harbor and yachting excursions with friends and a handful of one or two polite notes and gifts somehow spun themselves in the lively young Catharine's mind into a surety of marriage and a drama of having forsaken life as Mrs. Rockefeller for her days in a log cabin in Canada. While Peter sailed round the world, cutting his own image as the adventurous bohemian, he was barraged with her taciturn emotions and wandering thoughts of the life she'd forsaken in the almost daily letters she fired off to him. When it wasn't wild imaginings about being Rockefeller's wife, Catharine conjectured on how maybe Gardner, (purportedly Peter's good friend and Catharine's chaperone in his absence), or maybe even some other ivy-league suitor might be heart-broken that she didn't choose one of them. For a life of constancy and hard-wrought humility, this young and spirited Catharine is to be forgiven these small flights of fancy. At a major crossroad in her life and having just lost a father she adored and who had loved her unconditionally, the days before her marriage showed Catharine at her most vulnerable, with evidence of every weakness she would work a lifetime to control leaking out in her letters and journal entries. But, the trips, the secretive meetings and letters, and all these other fanciful notions fired back and forth across the globe are also evidence of the pressure the two felt in achieving artistic success by their rather naive and harmless attempts in replicating the steps of the radical and bohemian artist.

This small stab at rebellion on Catharine's part hardly seemed to tweak the recently widowed Edith Morse Robb because, in their own ways, Mr. and Mrs. Russell Robb I had chosen somewhat unusual paths themselves. For instance, after marrying, rather than living in Boston, sensibly near Russell Robb's place of work, the two preferred to settle in the wooded countryside outside of Boston, living in a quiet village and acreage surrounded by quiet walks and still ponds. Even their choice of summer spots, Seal Harbor, Maine, was well-known as a choice for New England and New York's "rusticators," those who preferred the logs and stones of Maine over the pretensions of Newport, Rhode Island and other summer spots. During their summers in Maine, the Robbs would have been privy not just to the Rockefellers' wealth, but also to their high-minded visions and success in helping to enhance and protect the area's flora and fauna in what eventually became the eastern seaboard's first national park: Acadia.

Adventurously and proudly drawn, as many privileged Americans were in the early years of the twentieth century to the wonders of the growing number of National Parks in the West, the Robbs enjoyed their rustic forays into many of these sites as Mr. Robb continued in his business trips and "electrified the West" with the genius of Stone & Websters' advanced engineering, (much akin in its impact in the early years of the twentieth century as Microsoft's has been to the latter years of the century.) In 1916, the very same family trip that took in the American West also propitiously led the Robbs north to the Canadian Rockies and its parks. During that train trip, Mrs. Robb chided a young Catharine, who wouldn't sleep as the train pulled its way over the steep mountain passes; so mesmerized was the young girl by the grandeur outside the windows, she could not sleep.

This was the mother who had boldly demanded in 1926 that her daughter, not yet twenty-one, be given her own car, a new custom-ordered Packard. As much as she loved her daughter and wanted to share the details of their day-to-day lives, from very early on, Mrs. Robb encouraged her daughter's independence and must surely have revelled in every adventure her daughter so carefully accounted to her over the years in all those letters. So, although moving up

to the “wild north” seemed to fit in with the image of the rebellious young artist, Catharine’s mother hardly blinked at the announcement. Maybe she might have if Catharine had announced she were moving to Yellowknife or Carstairs—or *even* the cowtown of Calgary, but not Banff... but Edith Morse Robb remembered the Canadian Rockies fondly and recalled that, after washing the coal dust off, she had luxuriated in the CP Hotels, watched the avalanches spill down into Lake Louise, and took high tea at the Banff Springs, meeting up with interesting visitors from all over the world as she strolled along the hotel’s stone paths. To a woman whose husband’s life work had been dedicated to bringing the world closer together by advances in electricity, communication and transportation, Banff did not seem so very far away.

Adding to this was the fact that a commonality had existed for many years between Banff and Concord, something that still remains. Both are small and seemingly sleepy picturesque villages with small storefronts, coffee shops, libraries, museums and schools just one block over from private residences with green lawns and well kept gardens, deceptively masking the cosmopolitan undertow and rich history permeating each street corner. Even long before Catharine had considered a life in Banff, the two villages had had a repartee for many years, with artists, athletes, naturalists and conservationists lecturing their Concord listeners on their experiences and findings in Banff and its environs.

So, although, in her fancy, Catharine imagined that her break with Concord was quite radical and in keeping with an artist, her mother’s reaction thwarted some of these reveries. Further, Mrs. Robb wasn’t quite the society woman she was made out to be in later years. In fact, she was of tough non-nonsense Yankee stock, having spent most of her Maine childhood subjected to far greater discomforts (and thrills) than her daughter would ever experience in Banff. Edith Morse had been born into a household with a surfeit of wealth in intelligence and liveliness, but near poverty in practical matters. Although opportunities to travel and live in Japan and in the Far East, sometimes as the first whites to venture forth into these isolated communities, were part of Edith’s childhood, so too was the constant worry of any creature comforts. As her father’s search for brachiopods in a ditch in Japan led to a discovery, then passion, and then lifelong obsession in amassing the most comprehensive Japanese pottery collection in the world, Edith and her family concerned themselves with staying warm and paying the local grocer. Her needlepoint business had not just been an idle pastime for a gentlewoman; it had been a source of much-needed income. In later years, after her father’s collection had finally been sold for a sizeable sum to the Peabody Museum and her husband, Russell Robb’s, genius and endless industry was finally rewarded, Edith Morse Robb did enjoy and shower her children with the benefits of that bounty, but she certainly wasn’t beyond imagining her daughter’s life in the Canadian Rockies.

Perhaps because of the occasional squabbles between the two and Jon Whyte’s choice in the 1980 *Pete’n’Catharine* collection to include an angry letter Catharine wrote but never mailed to her mother after her strained visit to Banff shortly after the couple’s marriage, it has often been assumed that Mrs. Robb had been horrified by her daughter’s primitive living conditions and life in Banff. In fact, the contents of this note focus more on problems arising from who would use the car and direct the summer days’ activities; Mrs. Robb evidently demanding too much of the young couple’s personal and professional time. Naturally, an over-reading of this rift would further perpetuate the myth of the artist cut off and misunderstood by family; but it hardly could have been the case with almost daily letters back and forth between the two filled with news as-well-as genuine warmth and concern. Theirs was a love better lived long-distance and via letters, but all as real in that form as any other. In fact, despite their differences with

family, both Catharine and Peter had deep affection, attachment and pride in their families, even re-visiting their ancestors' homes in the 1950s, as though completing some inevitable orbital thrust in their return trips back East.

However, despite these glitches in their somewhat overwrought bohemian self-renderings, particularly those on Catharine's part, the newly married Whytes were genuine in their support for each other and their mutual independence and love of adventure and new challenges. Before the expression had been coined, it could aptly be said that Catharine had "no fear." Although her family's love of the outdoors had toughened her up by summers yachting and hiking on the Maine coast and skiing and sledging in New England, nothing could have prepared Catharine for breaking trails in the dead of winter in the Canadian Rockies or for sleeping in rustic cabins as winds dropped the outside temperatures to -20° or -30° below zero—or, of for sharing her quarters with a rough and tumble assortment of men. Her tough Yankee roots and common sensible upbringing shone in her new Rocky Mountain home and, throughout her life and adventures, "being afraid" never entered her mind, nor her vocabulary. In fact, Roy Anderson remembers her whispering to him on her death bed, as though to reassure the distraught young friend, "don't worry. I'm not afraid."

Despite the outward appearance of a comfortably bourgeois lifestyle and although lacking some of the more superficial trappings of an artist: the beret tipped sideways—the sordid love affairs—the homeless wanderings, both possessed the qualities perhaps most essential to any creative individuals: a fearless sense of adventure, a deep and genuine interest in everything around them and a dedication to their calling. Catharine's quick eyes and sense of humour did not miss a detail of her days—and each day held something precious, whether it was meeting the Honourable Paul Martin in the kitchen as she and Pete were about to go to bed or in seeing a cinnamon bear and cubs outside the window. As much as they both enjoyed many of life's small details, both mutually disliked the affectations of artists and others they met with, what Catharine viewed, as artificial pretensions. Many of those dissipated in the thin air of the Canadian Rockies.

It is possible that their adventurous and generous spirits could easily have been snared early on in the details of the family's local enterprises. In the early days of Skoki, both Catharine and Peter showed themselves to be adept and quite enthralled with the hospitality business. The couple's rather sudden and fortuitous departure from Banff after Kit Paley's ski accident at Skoki has often been attributed to Peter's overwhelming grief over this incident. From this, he emerges as a somewhat weak and overly wrought character. However, in studying his background and deep adoration for the Canadian Rockies, there is perhaps more to this story than that. All of his life, Peter's mountains had been a place of refuge and safety, more home than the family shop and house in Banff. This tragedy at Skoki was not just horrible because of his sense of responsibility for someone else's life; it was also imbued for both Pete and Catharine with a loss of innocence. In this tragedy, for the first time, the still young and romantic couple had seen the other side of his beloved Peter's Janus of the mountains and reeled in horror at this vision. The mountains and their lives together would never be the same. With their new-found independence had come the full force of responsibility. Catharine understood all this, and tried to explain. In a letter to Kit Paley's mother, she wrote: "I hope you understand why I am answering your letters instead of Pete. We have both felt this thing terribly and though some people are what we call in the west 'hard boiled' and can say 'accidents like this are bound to happen,' we can't think of it that way. Pete can't even talk about it yet, which is the reason we have been so long in writing."

Although Peter's overwhelming grief with the incident surely was not planned, in the strange coincidence of things, his exodus not only provided a break from the ugliness of that event, it also brought the couple back on course with their earlier plans. Travelling for a number of years allowed them to focus on their lives together and their work as artists. Had they continued in Skoki, it is very possible that every hour of their days would have been consumed in their efforts to pioneer the success of the ski industry in western Canada. However, time away from the busyness of Banff provided a welcome solitude for the couple to grow in other ways. In particular, travel seemed to nurture Pete's creative enthusiasms even more than it did Catharine's. In one amusing incident, Catharine offered an example of this to her mother in a letter: "November 22 [1933], HANALEI, KAUAI: One evening the sunset was so lovely as we drove along that Pete got excited as he was driving and leaned forward to see better, and came near knocking his front teeth out, he hit the steering gear so hard. We've been more careful ever since, but yesterday, here was the most beautiful effect of sunshine on the sugar cane, Pete began waving his arms about, pointing, and hit me in the face."

Throughout their years together, producing and understanding art was a consistently common bond that held the two together on a single course. From the early days of their courtship, with eyes wide open, Catharine detected and often noted the challenges that lay ahead in maintaining a balance with her in-laws, neighbours, family back in Concord and her husband-to-be who, in fact, carried with him more of the stereotypes of the highly sensitive, brooding and taciturn romantic artist than Catharine herself. As early as 1927, in her private journals Catharine records her earliest impressions of Pete and notes: "Had a great time with Peter. He gets discouraged though I haven't quite decided about what." After World War II, at her wits end to bolster her husband's sagging spirits and health, no doubt exacerbated by his discouragement at his failure to get a posting as a war artist overseas, Catharine acknowledged that his depression must have had something to do with his strict Presbyterian upbringing. Again determined to lighten her husband's darkness and to help him to achieve more as an artist, Catharine cosseted her husband with care, often cutting herself off from many of her normal social activities. With her encouragement and his own determination, Peter continued to paint, but in bits and spurts, particularly after his eyes began to fail. Subsequently, the last ten years of the couple's time together was increasingly cloistered and filled with health concerns and domestic details.

Interesting friends and artists still visited the couple in Banff, and Peter and Catharine made trips to O'Hara, to the prairies and to other locations to paint; but gone were the flamboyant days of their lives before the war. However, in her ever-cheerful outlook, Catharine could see that in many ways, in the quiet of these post-war years, they had learned to live more deeply and had finally come to an understanding of the true source of cultural output: an intimacy and affinity with the natural world around them. Culture, had at its source, a deep intimacy with a particular landscape. The Whytes' long association with artists of the First Nations had demonstrated that to them years earlier. Now convinced in the importance of place, the two turned their energies and resources towards building a centre that would nurture and preserve the rich cultural traditions of their mountain community. More and more, administrative and the often trifling details of the community filled their days.

To many, this may have seemed a death blow to their energy and actual image as serious artists and Jon Whyte certainly lamented this. In fact, in his introduction to the book produced in conjunction with the Whyte's 1988 exhibition *Mountain Glory: The Art of Catharine and Peter Whyte*, he ended by writing: "They were not dilettantes, but their generosity of spirit allowed

others to distract them from one of their two potential contributions. They made their mountain community richer by creating a museum, but it is our loss that they did not leave the legacy of a growing aesthetic vision that seemed so attainable in the early 1930s.”

Theirs had not been an aesthetic vision limited to their own artwork. Theirs had been a moral vision and commitment controlled by an ethos where self and the “I”, so prevalent in Jon’s counter-culture era, played a minor role.

“The reason we have souls is because our God gave part of himself to his creation, all he could give us, but having given of himself it makes his creation grow and evolve,” Catharine wrote in one of her letters to Pete during their courtship.

“I don’t believe I could worship God in a church; everything seems pinched, shut in, and the people and the sky pilot could not possibly find him in anything so common place as the handwork of mere man,” Pete responded.

And so, the couple chased light through the mountains and Peter worked and worried that no human hand could ever be as fine as creation’s and Catharine revelled in capturing that particular shade of yellow on the one special day the larches turned in mid-September; reality was far too fine for them to ever truly render. These were their moments of creation, of transition and perhaps even of transcendence.

Today, Wa-Che-Yo-Cha-Pa and the spirit of its founders, nestled in a unique corner of the Canadian Rockies—a place with paintings and books, tranquil grounds with its trees and grass—still wait and welcome. Much of its beginnings are found in the pages that follow.