

Jennie Lamb (2004)

Jennie Lamb was a music teacher in Guelph for more than fifty years. In her 1967 Christmas booklet to her students, she wrote her hopes “to build an Academy in Guelph devoted to carrying on the idea started by Dr. Edward Johnson,” “the Development of String Music in this City,” and “to have a full Orchestra season, our object being to build a more permanent Youth Orchestra.”



Jennie Lamb was already an established teacher when, in 1956, she was appointed to teach violin and viola to many of the 55 children who registered for the Crusade for Strings. This programme was initiated and funded by Edward Johnson to educate young musicians so that they could play in the orchestras of the future. A recital given by the students in the spring of 1957 demonstrated the success of the classes and ensured the continuation of the programme. The 1958 spring concert featured the Crusade for Strings Orchestra that had been formed under the direction of Jennie Lamb. It was she who bought the music, found rehearsal space and trained the students at her own expense. Edward Johnson attended this concert and described it as “a magnificent experience.”

The Crusade for Strings continued for some years after the death of Edward Johnson in 1959, but the challenge of training young string musicians in Guelph in the sixties was taken up by Jennie Lamb. In 1961, she registered The Academy of String Art that flourished and grew, so that a few years later the String Art Orchestra was formed. The tradition of Spring Concerts started in 1957, continued and showcased the Orchestra and solo performances by Guelph music Students. Many of these young people went on to make careers in teaching and performance, locally and nationally. In addition, Jennie Lamb’s students continue to enjoy and use music in many ways and have conveyed this love of music to children of this generation.

Students remember Jennie Lamb with great warmth and affection. They remember a lady who in a very firm but quiet way inspired them in their music and encouraged them to make music a vital part of their lives.