

HOMELAND MINUTES



Kate Aitken (Mrs. A.)
www.virtualmuseum.ca

And Here's Mrs. A.

To the women working away in their kitchens across Canada during WWII, Kate Aitken needed no introduction. They recognized her familiar voice as she dispensed household hints, gossip and current events 16 times a week on her CBC Radio *Your Good Neighbour*

show. Kate's Monday broadcasts provided a week's menu based on the considerations of rationing and the produce in season from Victory Gardens. She wrote all the material herself even when at a peak she was presenting three broadcasts a day.

Having started her own successful canning business at Sunnybank Farms on the Credit River near Streetsville in Mississauga, Kate was not only a radio celebrity, she was also sought after as a speaker, interviewer, demonstrator, educator and writer for newspapers, cookbooks and autobiographies. (She wrote 52 cookbooks in her life.) She had cooking classes in Montreal, headed the cooking school at the CNE and lectured for the provincial and federal Departments of Agriculture on practical farming techniques for the specialty gardener.

Like a grasshopper, to which she compared herself, Kate hopped from venture to venture with energy and enthusiasm encouraging others to try new things and to never give up. She often had the 400 women in her cooking classes sort magazines that would go to service personnel to encourage wartime volunteerism.



Kate Aitken visiting London's bombed dockside area in 1945. Children relate experience of being both bombed and buzz-bombed. www.virtualmuseum.ca

Kate was the Conservation Director for the Federal Wartime Prices and Trade Board that regulated prices and rationing. Her slogan "Use it up, wear it out, make over, make do" became a poster; her "Remake Revue" which travelled across

Canada with new ideas for remaking clothing became

a way of life. Her wartime popularity became so great that by 1945 Kate received 260,000 letters a year which she answered with the help of over 20 secretaries. She created broadcasts, pamphlets, books and columns in response to needs she perceived among her listeners and followers. Mrs. A. truly was every Canadian homemaker's good neighbour.