

The Enterprise-Bulletin

Coming of age in turn-of-the-century Canada

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A Collingwood author is showing that while the printed word can be about history, the art of writing isn't history.

Gloria V. Phillips of Courtice Crescent is one of three novelists up for the top prize in a national writing competition for her historical fiction book, *A Pilgrim Passing Through*.

Phillips has been employed by the town as a crossing guard for 20 years. She is also a dedicated genealogist whose other writings include two non-fiction genealogy books: *From Islay They Came* and *The Clockmakers Children*. Her writing reflects her interest in history and her talents as a researcher.

A Pilgrim Passing Through is based "very loosely" on the research Phillips has done on her own family as a genealogist. Her grandfather was a "Home Boy" or "Barnardo Boy": a name given to children sent to Canada in the late 1800s and early 20th Century from families in the United Kingdom to give them a chance at a better life--as well as providing cheap labour on farms, where most wound up.

The practice ended in 1925 when the Canadian immigration laws banned the practice. Children under 14 were no longer allowed to immigrate to Canada unless they were accompanied by their parents.

Phillips said she discovered her great-grandfather was a friend of Dr. Thomas Barnardo. Barnardo was one of the chief advocates of the "child migration." That's likely how he arrived here, since the family was well-off.

Most of the children sent to Canada came from poor or destitute families.

More research revealed that Phillips's father-in-law was also a 'home boy'.

"I just sort of worked with that and wove a fiction out of it," said Phillips.

A Pilgrim Passing Through chronicles the life of a 'Home Child' who emigrated from Britain to Canada a century ago, one of the more than 100,000 children who were sent to Canada over a

70- year period. The book is a finalist in the Historical Novel category in The Word Guild Canadian Christian Writing Awards.

The book was released in 2008, and has been selling well, she said. A sequel is in the editing process, and Phillips is writing a third.

"It's very exciting," said Phillips. "I'm thrilled, absolutely thrilled. I did it not expect it all."

The winner will be announced on June 17th at a black-tie awards gala at World Vision's headquarters in Mississauga.

The contest received a record number of 237 entries from writers in eight provinces.

The 30 award categories include nonfiction books, novels, articles, columns, poems and song lyrics.

The Word Guild, the organization that sponsors the awards, consists of more than 340 writers and editors across Canada who write from a Christian perspective and publish work in a variety of genres.