

## Archive Treasure 1884

The Victoria High School Archives is a special place full of many treasures. One of the most interesting is a little autograph book from 1884.

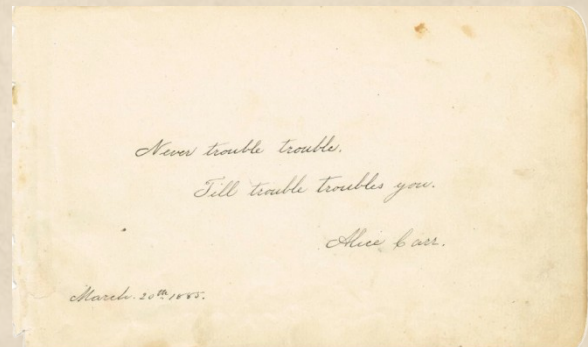
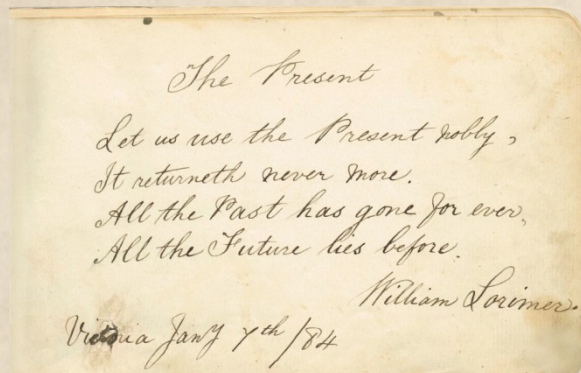
The phone rang in the Archives one morning. On the line was Janet Antonsen from Abbotsford, BC. She wanted to donate an autograph album that had been the property of her grandmother, Christina Taylor Lorimer. Christina was born March 3, 1871, in Victoria, the eldest of eight children born to Scottish immigrants William Lorimer and Lily (Main) Lorimer. She died in July 1931 and is buried in Ross Bay Cemetery.



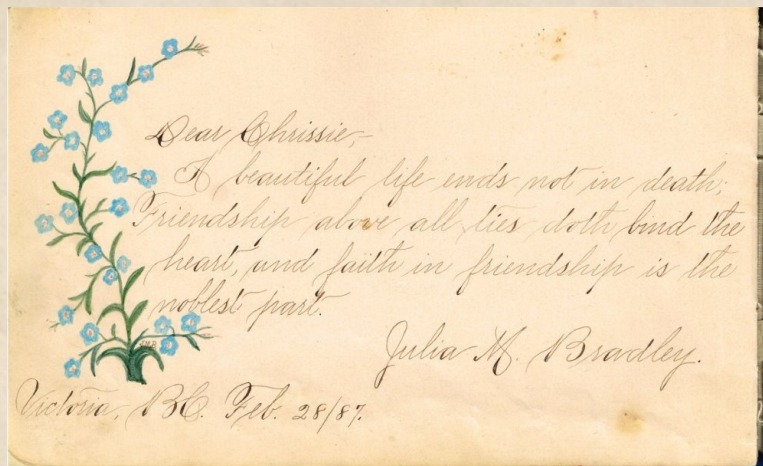
The autograph book was a “special present,” a gift from her father. It covers her years at Vic High, with autographs from January 1884 to March 2, 1887. The 8” by 5” book has a worn blue fabric cover with three painted swallows in relief. On the first page is a picture of roses with AUTOGRAPHS printed on it.



The first autograph is from William Lorimer, dated January 7, 1884. The last one is from a friend, Grace Halliday, dated March 2, 1887. On March 20, 1885 the book was signed by Alice Carr, sister of Emily Carr.



The handwriting is from another era and is very beautiful.



Christina became a teacher at South Park School. She married Fredrick Swanson Widdowson, who was born in Victoria in 1868. They had three daughters: Lily (b. 1901), Frieda (b. 1903) and Jessie (b. 1905), who all went to Vic High. The Widdowson family home at 624 Avalon Road is now designated a heritage house.

The autograph book was donated to the Victoria High School Archives by Janet (Beaton) Antonsen and Marion (Beaton) Jopson, granddaughters of Christina (Lorimer) Widdowson and daughters of Frieda (Widdowson) Beaton. As children they would haul it out of the trunk in the attic and thumb through it.

The book is in very fragile condition, but it is such an honour to have it come home to Vic High.