

# Alma Clutton

1875-1955





# Alma Clutton

**BIRTH** 1 OCTOBER 1875 • Norwich, Oxford, Ontario, Canada

**DEATH** 30 OCTOBER 1955 • Norwich, Oxford County Municipality, Ontario, Canada

## Facts

### Age 0 – Birth

1 October 1875 • Norwich, Oxford, Ontario, Canada

### Age 1 – Birth of brother Ernest Clutton (1876–1960)

12 November 1876 • Norwich, Oxford County Municipality, Ontario, Canada

### Age 6 – Residence

1881 • Norwich, Oxford South, Ontario, Canada

Record indexed as 'Glutton'

### Age 16 – Residence

1891 • Norwich Village, Oxford South, Ontario, Canada

Marital Status: Single; Relation to Head: Daughter; record indexed as 'Clabton'

### Age 20 – Education

abt. 1895 • Detroit, Wayne, Michigan, USA

Studied photography with F.W. Schaldenbrad; returned to Canada and established her own photography business; see Gallery

### Age 26 – Residence

1901 • Norwich, Oxford, Ontario, Canada

District: Oxford South;

### Age 36 – Residence

1911 • Norwich, Oxford South, Ontario, Canada

### Age 41 – Death of father Jonathan Lamb Clutton . (1850–1917)

25 Jan 1917 • Detroit, Wayne, Michigan, USA

### Age 41 – Arrival

2 Aug 1917 • Detroit, Michigan, USA

### Age 42 – Arrival

Mar 1918 • Detroit, Michigan, USA

### Age 45 – Residence

1 Jun 1921 • Norwich, Oxford South, Ontario, Canada

Residence Religion: Baptist; Marital Status: Single; Relation to Head: Daughter; indexed as 'Dema Clutton'

### Age 46 – Departure

6 May 1922 • Europe

Ship "Empress of India"; travelled to Egypt; visited relatives in southern France;

### Age 46 – Arrival

28 Jul 1922 • Quebec, Canada

From France to Canada; cousin Lettice Clutton from southern France travelled with Alma when she returned to Canada;

### Age 71 – Death of mother Anna Jane Moore (1850–1946)

1 December 1946 • Norwich, Oxford County Municipality, Ontario, Canada

### Age 74 – Residence

1949 • Oxford, Ontario, Canada

### Age 80 – Death

30 October 1955 • Norwich, Oxford County Municipality, Ontario, Canada

## Burial

Nov 1955 • Norwich, Oxford County Municipality, Ontario, Canada

## Family

### Parents



**Jonathan Lamb Clutton .**

1850–1917



**Anna Jane Moore**

1850–1946

### Spouse

## Sources

### Ancestry sources



1881 Census of Canada



1891 Census of Canada



1901 Census of Canada



1911 Census of Canada



1921 Census of Canada



Canada, Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current



Canada, Ocean Arrivals (Form 30A), 1919-1924



Canada, Voters Lists, 1935-1980



Detroit Border Crossings and Passenger and Crew Lists, 1905-1963



U.S., Border Crossings from Canada to U.S., 1895-1960



U.S., Index to Alien Arrivals at Canadian Atlantic and Pacific Seaports, 1904-1944

### Web links



**Canadian Women Artists History Initiative**

[https://cwahi.concordia.ca/sources/artists/displayArtist.php?ID\\_artist=5829](https://cwahi.concordia.ca/sources/artists/displayArtist.php?ID_artist=5829)

Original photograph images have been shared by Norwich and District Museum and Archives, from the Alma Clutton collection. Thank you to Janet Hilliker, Archivist. The following is an excerpt from 'Outstanding Women of Oxford County', The Oxford County Board of Education, 1979.

Alma Clutton, the first woman photographer of Norwich, chose a unique profession for her time in the late 1800s. It was unusual for a woman to be involved in any profession outside of the home, especially one requiring the technical training and skill of photography. Still, this did not prevent Miss Clutton from opening a photo studio in Norwich.

Unlike today's era of instamatic cameras and home movies, almost a century ago cameras were not at all a part of the family life-style. The pictures that were taken would be done by professionals in a studio. Cameras were too complicated for the average person to use. Besides they were much too expensive to own.

Therefore, it was a special occasion to have pictures taken, especially if they were done in the home! Whether it was the family portrait or a baby's picture, everyone dressed up in their Sunday best. Imagine how exciting it must have been to enter a studio prepared with backdrops, lights, and marvellous gadgets that were all new to you!



Boating on the Otter Creek by Alma Clutton



**CAN MONEY PARSONS' + BUSINESS + COLLEGE**  
**and SHORT-HAND INSTITUTE at KALAMAZOO.**  
 See Page 4. We Occupy Our Own Building.

*Detroit*      **MICHIGAN STATE GAZETTEER**      *Detroit*

bert, real estate, 781 St Aubin av. ss Mary, dressmkr, 356 5th. Joseph, dry goods, 1270 Gratiot av. ustav A H, meats, 547 McDougall av. er Max, drugs, 327 Dix av. n W, whol meats, 34 Arcade Mkt. ames H, lawyer, 36 Moffat Bldg. color (Miss R. Meher, Ella Taylor)	Mann Mrs E C, medicines, 13 Columbia e. Mann Frederick W, physician, 250 Fort w. Mann John, sauer kraut mnfr, 16 Maple and 30 Central Mkt. <b>Mann &amp; Schaldenbrand</b> (Austin F Mann, C A Schaldenbrand), Photographers, Commercial Work and Amateur Printing, 244 Woodward av.
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In the late 1800's, under the direction of F. W. Schaldenbrand in Detroit, Miss Clutton studied photography. There, she learned how to use her talents to the fullest; her eye for colour, and her artistic skill were very valuable. For a young woman to travel to an unknown city to learn a professional trade was a considerable undertaking.

Fortunately, Alma was encouraged by her mother, and a member of her family seems to have aided her financially. Returning home, she set up her own studio with a large sloping window for lighting, on the second storey of a store on Norwich's Main Street.

Once recognized in the Norwich district as a competent photographer, Alma Clutton soon became popular for her photos— especially those of young children and babies. She had many patrons throughout the year, but during the Christmas season business really boomed. Miss Clutton's photos have provided valuable insight into Norwich's history by providing portraits of former residents.

However, because of ill health, Miss Clutton was not able to expand her business and her studio was not moved or enlarged. Perhaps it was her heavy workload which overcame her, because she was said to have had a nervous breakdown early in life. In the determined manner which had characterized her early studies, she recovered from this setback and continued her work successfully.



Alma learned of photographic technique & portraiture from Schaldenbrand of Detroit



Alma Clutton Photography Studio  
18 Main St W, Norwich, ON  
Second level  
denoted by yellow arrow



18 Main Street W, Norwich, second floor studio of Alma Clutton, indicated by yellow arrow.



Photograph by Alma Clutton



Alma's deep sensitivity and generosity is revealed by her charitable involvement in the community. She helped several girls with financial loans to further their education in such careers as nursing, and she took on photography apprentices.

A young girl named Jean Gainfort Merrill who was interested in photography apprenticed under Miss Clutton for a three-year period. She later moved to Toronto and opened her own studio, becoming the first female member of the Canadian Press Photographers Union.

Another indication of Alma's interest in the local community was her contributions of antiques to the newly- opened museum. Her collections, with some help from a certain Miss Mott, helped to start the original museum above the post office, thus founding the first Historical Society of Norwich. Today, although the styles and techniques of photography have changed dramatically, Miss Alma Clutton provides an example for women wishing to enter a profession which is still predominantly men.



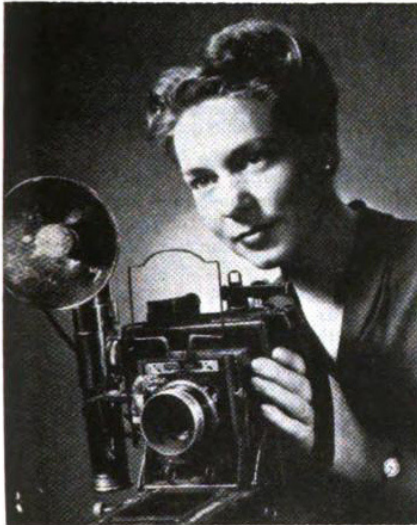
Alma Clutton, self portrait,  
Pelee Island, Lake Erie.



# News photography— Feminine Version

**I**F SHE IS tough physically, willing to work long hours and is not too addicted to high-heeled shoes, news-photography offers an exciting field for the girl who wants a career, according to Jean Gainfort Merrill, one of the very few women news photographers in Canada.

If a girl is a clinging vine who needs somebody to help her carry her flash-bulbs and her cameras and who expects



**Jean Gainfort Merrill** of Toronto is one of few women news photographers in Canada. She finds it exciting work.

her co-workers to wait on her, she might as well forget the whole business.

It is unlikely that there are more than five women news photographers in the whole of Canada, and most of them, like Miss Merrill, learned the hard way. The years of apprenticeship are paying off now, but she still is working hard and on more than one occasion has fallen asleep in the middle of a good show which she went to for relaxation.

For those who want a photography career, Miss Merrill suggests they learn the business properly—in the darkroom. In her home town of Norwich, Ontario, she went to work for a photographer, Alma Clutton, after she finished high school. She started by learning retouching and spent three years in the darkroom. She gradually worked into taking portrait pictures for Miss Clutton.

With money she had saved she took off for Winona Lake, Indiana, and spent a month at a school run by the Photographers' Association of America. Back she went to Norwich, where she managed the studio for a year, and then decided to try her luck in Toronto.

That was back in 1937 when jobs were hard to get. "I walked miles hunting for work," she recalls, "and finally ended up doing retouching in a coupon studio at \$18 a week." It was good experience, but

December, 1947



Norwich train station platform, photographed by Alma Clutton

PRIM. INSP. ADM. REF. Aug. 2, 1917

**MANIFEST** Part of Detroit, Mich. Date 8/2/17 Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_

Family name CLUTTON Given name ALMA Accompanied by \_\_\_\_\_

Copied from BSI records

C.T.V. No.	Place and date of issue	Section and subdivision	Quota country charged	R. P. No.
		Act of 1924		P. V. No.
Place of birth (town, country, etc.)	Age <u>41</u> Yrs. Sex <u>F</u>	M. S. Occupation <u>photographer</u>	Read <u>Y</u>	Write <u>S</u>
<u>Norwich, Ont. Can.</u>	W. S. D. <u>W.S.D.</u>	Last permanent residence (town, country, etc.)	<u>Norwich, Ont. Can.</u>	
Language or exemption	Race	Nationality	Name and address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came	
<u>English</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>Brother - Ernest Clutton, Skudder, Ont. Can.</u>	
Ever in U. S. From <u>Yes</u> To <u>1915 left in 1915</u> Where <u>Michigan</u>		Passage paid by <u>Self</u>		
Destination, and name and complete address of relative or friend to join there				
<u>Mother - Mrs. Anna Moore, 172 Park Ave., Detroit, Mich.</u>				
Money shown <u>\$40.</u>	Ever arrested and deported, or excluded from admission <u>no</u>		Purpose in coming and time remaining <u>indefinite</u>	
Head tax status <u>W.S.L.</u>	Height <u>5 Ft. 2 in.</u>	Complexion <u>Med.</u>	Hair <u>br.</u>	Eyes <u>blue</u>
Distinguishing marks <u>none</u>				Con. Im. Identification card No.
<u>Detroit, Mich., SS "Tashmoo" - Aug. 1, 1917</u>				
Records by	Previously examined at	Date	Previous disposition	Present disposition, P. I.
				<u>Adm Ref</u>

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Immigration Service. Form 548. 14-2140

Alma Clutton's border crossing documentation, visiting her mother in Detroit, 1917

## Remembrances from Joyce Hoover Clark, a cousin of Miss Alma Clutton.

We called her Cousin Alma. She felt being called an aunt sounded older. She was my mother's third cousin. The story goes that her father liked to drink and Alma's mother, Jane Anne Moore Clutton, (Granny, we called her) did not think that children should be brought up this way. So Mr. Clutton moved to Detroit and sold furniture.

Granny was brought up as a Quaker (Society of Friends). So that is why Cousin Alma went to Detroit to go to school in photography. Her only brother, Ernest, had a farm on Pelee Island and was the first to experiment in growing tobacco there; and the first in Ontario to grow soybeans.

I do not know when she graduated, but my father said she was the best photographer of children. She had many different toys in her studio that made sounds to get your attention. Her camera was a big box under a curtain on a stand that rolled to wherever you wanted. Cousin Alma took over the business from a man who'd retired (and inherited his glass negatives).

We had many photos taken of us. When I was older she would invite me down to the studio to learn about photography. Alma Clutton trained two girls from around Norwich in photography, and I know one [later] worked in Toronto.

After graduating, Cousin Alma travelled to Europe and Egypt (about 1921?). I have seen photos of hers of the pyramids. She visited the Cluttons in southern France and by this introduction is how my mother, Lettuce Clutton, came to Canada to the Cluttons in Norwich and later married Douglas Hoover.

I remember Cousin Alma was like the movie 'Auntie Mame', always wanting us to learn something different. She took Alma Sutton (a cousin) and myself to Toronto to see a ballet; stay in a hotel overnight; to a soup kitchen to see the less fortunate and eat cabbage soup, and home again on the train. [That] was really something back in our day!

When Mother took us down to visit them in Norwich, Cousin Alma always made a cake and would get a block of ice cream from the store. That was really a treat for us farm children.

I do not think she made much money but she enjoyed her job. When Cousin Alma died, her brother, Cousin Ernest Clutton [1876-1960], sold the big camera.

With the help of Miss Mott, a high school teacher in Norwich, Alma started a museum.

They collected things people did not want, or bought items they thought should be saved, and stored them upstairs over the post office.





### Late Miss Alma Clutton

Funeral services were held at the Arn & Son funeral residence on Tuesday afternoon for the late Miss Alma Clutton, whose death occurred in the Willett Memorial Hospital in Paris on Sunday, October 30. The services were conducted by the Rev. H. K. L. Charlton, rector of the Anglican Church

in Paris, who carried out the simple ceremony requested by the deceased. In keeping with the request there were few flowers and no eulogy. Bearers were G. Harold Poldon, W. A. Adams, John and Paul Moore, Ronald Sutton and C. D. Bushell. Interment was made in the Norwich cemetery. The late Miss Clutton was the

daughter of the late Mr and Mrs. J. L. Clutton and was born in Norwich 83 years ago. She had lived in Norwich all her life and was a well known photographer for almost 50 years. For more than 40 years she had her studio in the Clutton block on Main street. During the years she had taught several young folk the art of photography and several, perhaps the most outstanding of whom is Jean Gainfort Merrill, well known Toronto photographer, have gone on to gain success in this field.

Miss Clutton had been in failing health for about three years and was in hospital since April. She lived quietly, read extensively and took little part in anything except the Norwich Pioneers Society. In this she was deeply interested and active and was the curator of the Norwich Pioneers Museum. She is survived by one brother, Ernest, Norwich.

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