

ANNE DUKE JUDD

Ellen Between the Lines

Grandmothers prescribed
ladies' names appeared
only three times in print:
third daughter, November 11, 1898
charming in white silk taffeta, 1921
At death, ritual words—
passed away, entered into peace.
Not *tragic accident*.
Not *shock to the community*.
Not *helpless to prevent*.

Identified by relationships
daughter of
wife of
mother of
Who was she?
Newspaper hints,
Imagination creates her life
between lines of type.

Ellen Caroline united in bonds of holy
matrimony.

Married a man and his farm.

Lived for it...

the garden,
the canning,
cream to churn,
overalls to wash.

Died for it...

hay loader crushing her.

injuries beyond husband's prevention,
doctor's distance.

Printed black
or carved in stone

too few words.

Buried with three children—

Gladys (invalid daughter) born eight months
after the candlelit wedding;

Neil, a month short of his first birthday;

Baby, a single date, 1929.

In the gaps:

tears,

teething,

hopes,

bending pregnant over the wash tub.

Monday, July 6, 1936

sunny, hot

and dry for haying

Laneway dusty,

noisy with hens

and sigh of windmill vanes.

Ellen moving briskly

After dinner to help.

Smelling hot leather,

sweet hay,

sweating men and horses.

Freeze-frame in the heat waves:

Jack slipping from the wagon,

Ellen reaching for the reins,

the Clydesdales stepping,

the hay loader shifting.

doctor tucker shaking his head.

Was Ellen still wearing her apron?

Who brought in the wash?

Born in Muskoka, Anne Duke Judd has been a freelance writer, editor, bookseller, and publisher. Now living near Lake Huron, she is active in Writers' BLOC and the poetry cooperative Words Aloud.