

## Biography:

**Jean Morris né Cairns** was born October 31st, 1886 the daughter of James Gardiner Cairns and Christina (Watson) Cairns. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Toronto in 1910. She studied as a law student under Donald Grant in Huntsville and was called to the Bar in 1913. She married Phillip Reginald Morris four years later and she would practice under the name P.R Morris

Jean Cairns Morris was the first female member of the HLA and was the fifth woman to be called to the Bar in Ontario (Clara Brett Martin being the first in 1897, and Eva Maude Powley the second in 1902). Jean was a pioneer...and it wasn't easy!

She initially practised law with her husband John Reginald Morris and later with her daughter Alma Morris Malcolm. In 1929, her husband who had heavily invested in the stock market and lost just as heavily with the crash, gave up law and turned to prospecting. She carried on with her law practice. Her daughter Alma Malcolm would be called to the Bar and be an active member of the Hamilton Legal community. Jean would complete a project begun by her husband with the construction of what was to be a family home on the shores of Lake Ontario a project that was not fully completed until the 1950's. The House was known as 'Cairngorm' and to others as the "Fruitland Castle". After a brief period of occupancy by Jean the property eventually moved into other hands and is now a fine dining establishment known as *Edgewater Manor*.

The August/September 1992 Issue of *Canadian Lawyer* profiled Jean and her lawyer-daughter Alma (called to the Bar in 1959) and her two lawyer- granddaughters (Jean & Janet, called 1979 daughters to Alma's son and his wife) of the Cairns/Morris legal clan. As related to her by her mother, Alma recounted that when Jean attended University to obtain her BA the men would pound their desks as a sign of contempt at her presence and that the behaviour continued to some degree even while she was in law school. She had difficulty in obtaining an articling position but finally did so in Huntsville. Upon marriage she shocked the legal community by continuing to work as the social expectation widely held at the time was that legal work was not the business of a married lady. She defied them and with her husband formed the Firm of Morris & Morris Jean retired from the practice of law in 1967 at age 81. She died on April 18th, 1982 at age 96. Her grandson is a lawyer practising in Hamilton. This writer had the opportunity and privilege of speaking with both Alma and Jean the younger. They both conveyed their pride in their mother/grandmother and her determination to break the glass ceiling when it was a great challenge to do so very day. All members of the Bar owe a debt of gratitude to people like Jean Cairns Morris, member of the HLA.

*Source: Arye, John D., "The Hamilton Law Association 1879-1919: The First Forty Years," pg. 52.*