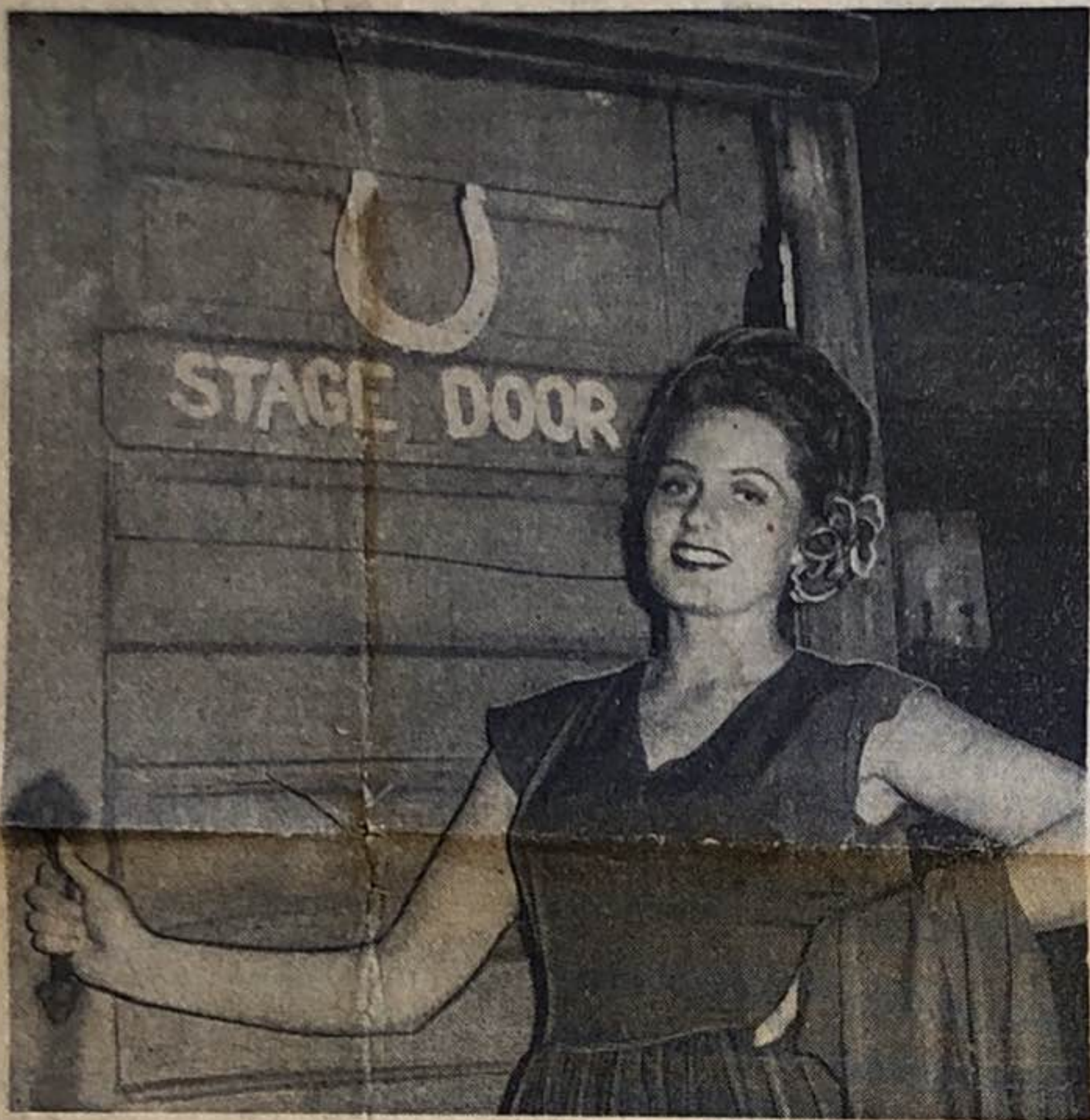


## Village Players Drama Group Leads 'Back to the Barn' Movement



Make-up often is done outdoors by the light of an oil lamp. Joan Cruchet applies lip paint with the aid of a flickering flame.

Using former stalls as dressing-rooms, Toronto's Village Players for the past five summers have given private productions in a barn near the city limits on north Bathurst St. Gwen Dainity (left), who stars in "The Prodigious Wife," is ready to make her stage entrance under the

sign of the horseshoe for good luck. A trio of Spanish dancers (right) try their routine outside the barn, using oddments of construction debris as an impromptu stage. They are Zelda Friedman, Joy Sander-son and Marian Jones.

### Village Players Are Established In Barn Theatre

By BROCK McELHERAN

Since time immemorial, cows have shown a touching kindness toward barns. In return, barns have gradually adapted themselves to the needs of cows, so that today, after generations of adjustment, it can safely be stated that barns are considered eminently satisfactory by the average cow. They are also much used by other forms of farm life such as the horse, chicken, etc.

Leading New York companies do not make a practice of playing in bona fide barns, although a superficial examination of some of that city's more distinguished theatres may appear to contradict this statement.

Leading back-to-the-barn trend in Canada are Toronto's Village Players, who for the past five summers have given private productions in a barn near the city limits on north Bathurst Street. This noteworthy edifice stands on the property of Dora Mavor Moore, permanent director of the players.

#### Stalls Now Dressing-Rooms

A curious fact in this connection is that the barn has not as yet completely rid itself of its former notions as to its mission. Amateur carpentry and will-power, however, are assisting it. Two former stalls are now dressing-rooms, and apart from an occasional oat in the grease-paint the arrangement is satisfactory, provided the play is a dialogue. Otherwise most of the dressing is done in a tent, the make-up tables being set in a convenient meadow.

Home-made lighting operates effectively from the loft. At one end of the main floor a low stage has been installed (literally, for once), and an audience of about 75 can be accommodated on chairs, in addition to an unspecified number hanging from the rafters. The floor being flat, the members of the audience arrange themselves according to height, the shortest at the front. If this isn't done beforehand, it takes place gradually during the evening, especially in warm weather when the human neck stretches easily.

#### House Built in 1812

The setting is pretty, the barn standing quietly at the end of a lawn shaded by a gigantic elm. The adjoining house snuggles into the landscape with skill born of years of constant practice. It was built during the wartime housing shortage five wars ago—in 1812, to be exact.

While the barn's present status in barndom is roughly equivalent to a baronetcy, it is decidedly a newcomer to the aristocracy. It was built as a soldier's hut in the last war but one, and afterward was converted into a barn, thereby reversing the usual procedure.

The Village Players were formed by Mrs. Moore in 1936 for the purpose of touring high schools in this Province, performing each year the Shakespearean drama chosen for special study by the students. Twenty-two different schools were visited before war conditions made this impossible to continue. Despite the enlistment in the Armed Forces of 53 of the members, the organization in 1941 commenced giving summer performances in the barn.

Mrs. Moore feels strongly that Canada needs young people who are competent play directors, and her main interest at present is to further this end. She exercises general supervision, but the actual directing is done by people in their twenties.



Off-stage musical effects are really off-stage. Max Davidson, flautist, does his stuff outdoors under an apple tree. Ladder rests on the roof of the barn for handy use by stage-hands shifting scenery.



Joan McColl, another dancer, strikes a pose against the evening sky.