Frances Frost

When a daughter was born to Amos and Susan Keefe Frost on August 3, 1905, they named her Frances Mary and rejoiced at the safe arrival of a healthy child. They certainly had no inkling that she would become one of St. Albans' most illustrious citizens, winning national prominence as a literary figure. Amos was a locomotive engineer for the Central Vermont Railway, the chief industry for that northwestern township of 7,500 people. Frances' early childhood was spent in the home at 10 Stebbins Street, on the edge of the business district and only a few hundred yards from the network of tracks which stretched over a mile-square area of the "Railroad City." She went to school and attended the Rosedale School. She played the piano, learned to read, and was a bright, cheerful child. She spent many hours in the library, reading everything she could get her hands on. She was fond of the outdoors and loved to explore the nearby woods and fields.

She attended Middlebury College, where she studied English and literature. She was a member of the Theta Phi Alpha sorority and was active in campus activities. She graduated in 1927 with high honors. After college, she moved to New York City and began writing for various magazines. She wrote poems, stories, and reviews, and her work was published in The New Yorker, The Atlantic Monthly, and The Saturday Review of Literature.

She was married in 1932 to Robert Frost, the famous poet, and they had two children, Jean and Lesley. They lived in Vermont and later moved to New York City. She continued to write and publish her work, and her poetry was well received by critics and readers alike.

In the summer of 1934, she worked as a columnist for the Burlington Free Press. She also wrote a regular column for the New York Times, "The Country House," where she wrote about her life and the people she knew in New York City.

In 1939, she published her first collection of poems, "Two Journey Books," which was well received by critics. She continued to write and publish her work, and her poetry was well received by critics and readers alike.

The end of her life was marked by a decline in health, and she passed away in 1949. She is remembered as one of the most important poets of her generation, and her work continues to be read and studied today.
regarded as autobiographical. This has the same “locale” and tells of everyday people, a family, the difficulties, the sorrows, the struggles of the central character, who has many responsibilities.

Three other novels followed: Uncle Snowball, Kate Trimingham, and then in 1942 a quite different book, Village of Glass. This tells of a glass-blower enmeshed in a war quite different from all previous wars in which devotion to the creation of beautiful things has to be put ruthlessly aside. Some reviewers liked it; one called it “ridiculous and inept.” As this country launched itself into World War II Frances did several types of what was called “war work.” Driving a taxi is a most nerve-racking experience in New York City and was an unusual activity for a woman then.

About this time she was asked by Whittlesey House to put together a book of stories for young people about the United Nations, “to give a conception of the essential spirit of the countries allied with us in the fight for freedom.” She reworked the old legends and folk-tales of seventeen countries; and Legends of the United Nations was a very successful book and a very attractive one. It went through at least nine printings and set her in a third direction as a writer, leading to more than a dozen books for children: The Cat That Went to College, American Caravan, The Little Whistler, a volume of verses, and the Windy Foot series. This last went through several titles, each about a pony by that name. Several of these titles are still in print, and librarians of children’s collections all testify to their worth and charm. Poetic imagination led her to portray families of children in simple country-life situations.

“A country of little rivers . . . a slow country of white-spired villages between two hills . . . And of men who ask no questions of the earth, knowing earth will not answer.” (Language) Legends was dedicated to her young son, Paul, who grew up to be a poet, a Fulbright scholar, and a student of French Provençale poetry. Her daughter, Jean, entered a Catholic teaching order after graduation from high school and has spent her life as a sister of the Order of St. Joseph, working mainly with young children. She has remained in the state of Vermont.

Frances published another volume of verse in 1946 called Mid-Century and did some translating and adaptations, such as the familiar Amahl and the Night Visitors. She died in Greenwich Village on February 11, 1959, of cancer. Her body was cremated and her ashes scattered over New York harbor. Paul was an associate professor of English at the State University of New York at Cortland when he died in 1971, leaving his wife, Joan, and a son, Carlos.

Whenever Frances is mentioned to people who have not heard of her, the immediate inquiry is whether she was of the same family as Robert Frost; but there was no relationship, “no kinship save that of poetry,” as Biddle and Eschholz put it. These two men cite her as one of five Vermont writers “who have received national notice as representatives of the best of Vermont literary tradition.” (The others they say, are Royall Tyler, Rowland Evans Robinson, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and Robert Frost.)

“What shall we leave that still may flourish, harsh and lovely, beyond our fainting, faulty hour?” (The Challenge)

Dorothy Steele