

THE CABOOSE



NEWSLETTER OF THE CUMBERLAND TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY (CTHS)

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March 2009

President's message (by Dorothy-Jane Smith)

We have been fortunate that this winter has not been as difficult as last but it still managed to cause us to cancel our January meeting. Brian Grimsey has agreed to talk on the Ottawa River Heritage project, in September. I think we can be promised no snow! I can report that the Board has been busy over the last two months. Verna Cotton's revised *Navan of Yesteryear* came out, thanks to all her work and the help of Jeannie Smith as editor and Randall Ash in production. We are almost sold out so if you want a copy, let us know. As well, we have made progress on the Terry Fox memorial. An interpretive plaque is just about ready to go to production, Martin Rocque has developed three possible looks for a new base and Bob Kendall has investigated the construction work required. I hope to have more to say and show on this in March. See you then!

Our Society

The Cumberland Township Historical Society (CTHS) was founded in 1986. We are a non-profit, volunteer and community-based organization whose goal is to preserve Cumberland Township history.

Our newsletter

The Caboose is published six times each year by the Cumberland Township Historical Society.

Our Executive

- Dorothy-Jane Smith, President
- Jean-François Beaulieu, Vice President
- Randall Ash, Past President, Newsletter production
- Jeannie Smith, Newsletter Editor
- Bob Kendall, Secretary
- Bill Woodruff, Treasurer
- Verna Cotton, Director
- Dan Brazeau, Director

Our address and local history room

Cumberland Branch
Ottawa Public Library
Local History Room
1599 Tenth Line Road
Ottawa, ON K1E 3E8

Our World Wide Web address

www.cths.ca



La famille Dessaint, Sarsfield 1971

Front (L to R): Monique, Louise, Camille;
middle (L to R): Germaine, André, Anne, Jean-Noël;
back (L to R); Denis, Mireille, Jean-Marc, Pierrette, Robert

Next meeting of the CTHS

The next meeting of the CTHS will take place on Wednesday, March 4th in the boardroom of the Ottawa Regional Police Station, Tenth Line Road and St. Joseph Blvd. Plan to arrive at **6:45 pm**. Our guest speaker, Ethel Findlay will share some history of growing up in Cumberland. Be sure to bring a friend along. Light refreshments, as always, will be served.

Society calendar



For more information on these and other upcoming 2009/10 events, please contact a member of the executive committee or visit our website at www.cths.ca.

March 4 th	CTHS general meeting
March 27 th - 28 th	Gene-O-Rama 2009; Ben Franklin Place Brochure and online registration: http://ogsottawa.on.ca/geneorama/
April 4 th and 5 th	Cumberland Lions Club Maplefest; Saturday and Sunday, April 4th and 5th, 8 am to 3 pm; Cumberland Lions Maple Hall; Adults \$6.00, children (12 & under)\$4.00, Seniors \$5.00; maple syrup products will be on sale by the Cumberland Scouts; bake sale by the three village churches, in St. Andrew's, Saturday 8 am to 2 pm
May 30 th and 31 st	Heritage Power and Country Festival Cumberland Heritage Village Museum

Check for events at the Cumberland Museum:
www.Ottawa.ca/residents/heritage/museums/Cumberland

Contact us

If you have questions or suggestions regarding any aspect of the Society including The Caboose, our local history room or anything else of interest to you or to the Society, you may contact any member of the executive by phone or by email:

- Dorothy-Jane Smith, President (225-3554)
- Jean-François Beaulieu, Vice-President (841-0424) jeanfb@sympatico.ca
- Randall Ash, Past President (833-3207) randall2620@rogers.com
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- Dan Brazeau, Director (834-8336) danbrazeau@rogers.com
- Bob Kendall, Secretary (613-830-0015) bobkendall@sympatico.ca
- Bill Woodruff, Treasurer, b.woodruff@videotron.ca

New CTHS Executive members needed

Positions will become vacant in May 2009. For the CTHS to thrive, new members are required to help plan meetings and special projects. Talk to an executive member if you're interested.

Membership renewal for the 2009/10 season (March 2009 to February 2010) is due by March 31st. Just \$15 for membership includes bi-monthly presentations and six issues of The Caboose. Send your \$15 to Dorothy-Jane Smith, 17 East Adams Street, Ottawa, ON, K2G 0H8

Interested in editing The Caboose?

Jeannie Smith and Randall Ash have produced The Caboose since January 2003. Consider taking on this task or providing pictures and stories for future issues. Contact any member of the CTHS Executive if you are willing to volunteer.

City of Ottawa Archives

The City is offering CTHS members a tour of the museum's Interim Preservation Centre in late June or early July. Look for details and sign-up information in the May newsletter.

Heritage Power and Country Festival

Saturday, May 30 and Sunday, May 31
Cumberland Heritage Village Museum
2940 Old Montreal Road
Cumberland, ON

Activities for everyone! Enjoy a horse pull competition, antique cars, music, telegraphers, rummage sale, model train demonstrations and machines powered by gas or steam. Some additional fees apply. Explore our children's discovery area.

Organized in collaboration with the Lions Gateway Club.

Information: 613 833-3059. Check for events at the Cumberland Museum:
www.Ottawa.ca/residents/heritage/museums/Cumberland

Oral History Project

By Bob Kendall

Readers of *The Caboose* will remember that in the 1980s and 90s a series of approximately 60 tapes were made of interviews with knowledgeable residents of Cumberland Township. In 2007 these tapes were converted into mp3 digital recordings, and we are in the process of summarizing these recordings in text format, a very time-consuming task. So far, 45 of these tapes have been completed. Occasionally, edited versions of some of these completed historical gems have been printed in *The Caboose*.

This month, we are featuring an interview with Jean-Nöel Dessaint, recorded by Ann Gonneau on October 18th, 1981, and summarized by Dorothy-Jane Smith. Members may request a copy of the mp3 from the CTHS. File number for this one is 24dess.

Catholic funeral customs

This interview is based in part on Ann Gonneau's research into possible differences between French Canadian and Irish Canadian funeral practices. However, Mr. Jean-Nöel Dessaint affirms that, based on his experiences from the 1920s, there were no such differences, nor does he know of any family burial grounds on private land.

Although wakes were held at home up until the 1940s, the arrangements were made by funeral directors (usually Brunet's in Rockland) and coffins were purchased. The parish church at Sarsfield kept some coffins on hand for those who could not afford to buy one. It was common to embalm the deceased before the wake, although Mr. Dessaint remembers a few where this was not done. The wake took place over two days and two or three nights. A black crucifix was hung on the door and someone was always awake, praying. While there were sometimes flowers, vigil lights (kept constantly lit) were more common. Food was provided by the family, although sometimes neighbours helped. Alcohol was never included in the refreshments.

On the day of the funeral, there was a procession from the home to the church for Mass, with people traveling in their buggies, and then proceeding from the church to the cemetery. Only in Rockland would there

be a procession of people walking. Occasionally, there would be a get-together afterwards, but this would be unusual. Post-funeral social gatherings have really only been provided since community halls became available. The parish halls, often unheated in winter, were not convenient for gatherings.

Before the war, mourners wore black, and widows wore veils. Mme. Dessaint notes that the family wore black for six months to a year, and then shifted to violet and purple. She remembers a death when a Rockland merchant opened up his store on a holiday so the women could buy the appropriate black dresses for the funeral.

The priest tolled the bell when informed of a death. For a man, there were nine slow tolls followed by three rapid ones; for a woman, the tolls were seven and three. In both cases, the pattern was repeated three times.

There were three types of Catholic funerals in those days. The most expensive had three priests, one at the main altar and two at the side, each celebrating Mass. In the second form, there would be one celebrant and two priests assisting. A regular funeral had one priest.



Jean-Nöel Dessaint at the release of his book
"Les sillons de ma vie" in June 2001

Keith MacEachern – My Granddad, friend and hero

by Claire Wales

Claire Wales lives in Scotland and visited Canada last summer. Roberta Cotton's mother, Florence Hill, and Stan Edward's mother, Bertha Edwards, were sisters of Keith MacEachern.

Keith MacEachern was my granddad. He was also my friend and my hero. I have grown closer to him in writing this story and am honoured to be able to share what I know of his life with you.

Keith's ancestors came to Canada in 1831. He was a descendent of two Scottish clans the MacLachlans and the MacEacherns, Campbells and MacDonalds – a fiery combination. In 1692 the Campbells fought and killed MacDonalds in what is known as the Glencoe Massacre, although my research shows that the Campbells of Keith's line were not closely related to the Glencoe Campbells.

Malcolm MacLachlan and Duncan MacEachern lived on the Ross of Mull, the southernmost point on the Isle of Mull which lies off the west coast of Scotland. They married two sisters from the Isle of Iona, Mary and Marion MacDonald respectively. In 1831 they left Gourock on the River Clyde for Canada and landed in Montreal. Both families headed initially for Breadalbane in Glengarry, Ontario and four years later settled in Lochaber Bay on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River.

Robert MacLachlan's son Malcolm married Sarah Campbell and had a daughter Jemima Panton MacLachlan. Duncan MacEachern's son Alex married Elizabeth McKinley and had a son Robert Campbell MacEachern. Robert and Jemima married in 1901 and had many children – 13 in all with three dying in infancy. They moved from Lochaber Bay to Cumberland Ontario in 1907 and owned the farm



MacEachern pioneers: Duncan (son), Duncan (father), Christine (daughter) and Alex (son)

that is now the Proulx Farm south of Innes Road on O'Toole. Keith had five brothers and four sisters. The oldest child was Bertha born in 1902 and the youngest Donald (Don) born in 1925. Jemima needed help bringing up Don after Robert died and one of Robert's sisters adopted Don and raised him. Keith and Don looked like twins and even in older life my mum remembers

seeing Don after Keith had died. She thought her Dad had run away back to Canada and not told her! Keith was very fond of all his brothers and sisters and missed them and his mother after he settled in England.

Life couldn't have been easy on the farm with so many hungry mouths to feed and the "dirty thirties" were particularly hard everywhere. Keith started his schooling at SS#5 Cumberland in 1928 and in 1933 moved on to the Cumberland Continuation School which was in the same building. He enjoyed anything that was hands on and in 1940 he attended evening school to learn sheet metal working. By the time he moved up to higher levels he was restless. A farm life had prepared him for hard work and the outdoors, not for stifling classrooms and exams. At the age of 14 in autumn 1935, he decided that the call of nature was too much and that he could learn French better with French people than at school and he upped and left. Unfortunately he didn't tell anyone that he was going, where he was going or when he would return. His mother was worried sick and only learned of Keith's whereabouts a month later when Keith's good school friend, Bus Kennedy cycled from his home at great speed to the MacEachern farm, on the receipt of a letter from Keith. He had been working as a lumber jack at Temagami in Northern Ontario. At first his workmates scorned his size and doubted his abilities but he stubbornly proved them wrong and turned into a strong and very able woodsman. He didn't return home until the spring of 1936.



Back: Georgina (Keith's sister) and Jemima (Keith's mother); Front: Evelyn (Keith's sister) and Keith, 1927



Keith 1940

When Keith returned home he worked on the farm for four years. He was a strong, handsome young man, and Fern Dale, now Mrs. Bus Kennedy, remembers days at the MacEachern farm very warmly and held a flame for Keith for a long time. She even wrote a poem for him which she kindly recited (word perfect after all these years much to Bus's amusement) on my recent visit.

I wish I were
I know where
Up at MacEacherns
In the big arm chair
The doors all locked
The key up high
And no-body there
But Keith and I

Bus played a large part in Keith's life as a friend and fellow volunteer for WW2. Keith left the farm in 1940 and worked as a sheet metal worker at Ottawa



Cars. He stayed in Ottawa at 144 James Street and enjoyed regular visits to the farm. During one summer visit he met Bus and learned that he had just volunteered for the RCAF. Bus tells the following story "I enlisted in the RCAF on July 11th, 1940. At a picnic in

Cumberland the next day, John Dunning and Keith MacEachern asked me, "Is it true you enlisted?" When I answered affirmative, they eagerly responded, "Well, we're going too!"

Keith joined the RCAF for ground duties and became an air frame mechanic. Bus went to train as a fighter pilot so they went their separate ways. Neither knew at any point whether the other was alive or dead. After Keith's initial training in Toronto where he stayed for six months, he transferred to Trenton, Ontario, where he worked until February 1942. Keith transferred to Britain arriving on 23rd March 1943 and worked at various air fields in England and Wales.

Keith was servicing a spitfire in Wales and as he jumped down from the wing, Bus Kennedy



A message for Hitler Christmas 1942
Keith is 3rd from right

approached his plane. They spent a good number of hours chatting in the sunlight and enjoying news from home. Bus mentioned to Keith that there was a shortage of aircrew in Bomber Command and that he could become a flight engineer on Lancaster bombers. Encouraged by his good friend, Keith transferred and began his training and re-mustered as a flight engineer in September 1942. He was promoted to a sergeant on 11th November 1942. Keith belonged to a number of squadrons but mainly 421st and 52nd.

Keith flew many bombing sorties over Germany both in Lancaster and Halifax bombers. It was on one of these with 52nd Squadron on the night of 11th June 1943 target Dusseldorf that Keith's Halifax HR 852 was shot down. He and the rest of the crew successfully bailed out and parachuted into Germany. He landed on a roof and practically tore

his shoulder from its socket. There was a deep wound that the Germans did their best to stitch up but the large scar was always visible and the joint never recovered. He and his colleagues were transferred to Stalag Luft Camp 357. No fewer than six letters were sent to Keith's mother at first lamenting his loss, and then confirming he had been located by the Red Cross and was alive. In August 1944 Mrs. MacEachern received notice that Keith had been promoted to an officer with effect from 1st January 1944. Being alive in a POW camp did not mean you would survive the war and many didn't. When the Germans were nearing defeat they emptied their camps and began the Long March, during which they moved the prisoners for hundreds of miles with little rest and food, no shelter and terrible conditions. This was the winter of 1944 and was one of the coldest of the war. Many died. When Keith was liberated on 24th April 1945 he weighed less than 100 lbs and his hair had turned white. He never talked about it.

After the war anyone who had bailed out and survived received a Caterpillar Badge. This was the emblem of the Caterpillar Club so called after the silks used to make the parachutes. Keith received his proudly and may have had his future wife to thank for his fortune. Beryl Keeley was in the WAAF where she packed parachutes. I like to think she packed Keith's and helped save him on that awful day.

Keith and Beryl were married on 14th May 1945 in Chapelthorpe, Yorkshire, near Beryl's home village. After the war, Keith was repatriated. They had three children, Heather (my mum), Keith Baldwin and Evelyn. I am very proud to be half Canadian. Keith's middle name was after Harry Baldwin, a close friend of the MacEachern family. Keith's brother Mac found Harry hungry and homeless at the Byward Market in Ottawa one Christmas; he intended to stay for a few days and stayed 70 years!

Keith and Beryl moved to a farm close to Cumberland and began producing pregnant mares urine (PMU) which was used as a base to grow penicillin. Mac was also doing this on the old MacEachern farm. Repatriation provided funds to set up this enterprise, but as much as he tried, Keith could get no help for his war time shoulder injury. He soon moved the family to Killaloe and worked as a lumber jack again. His brother Neil lived in Killaloe and would have influenced his decision to settle there.

During this time the family travelled to England once for a visit in 1951, and then to emigrate in 1955. On arrival in Yorkshire the family set up house in Crigglestone. Keith got a job as a miner, hard work for someone with a shoulder injury. Eventually, the UK Government paid for him to have an operation to ease the pain, and although he couldn't lift his arm above his shoulder, it was much better.

Keith became landlord of the Beverley Arms in Wakefield in 1956. In 1958 they moved to The Station in Castleford – a pub that still remains in the family as it was taken over by Evelyn, Keith's daughter and her husband Ronnie. Times as a landlord were tough and Keith found he had to return to the mines, Silkstone pit, to make ends meet. Eventually they left The Station and moved to Lower Oxford Street in Castleford in 1964 where Keith worked in the local glass factory, Lumb's, as a fork lift truck driver.

Keith retired early due to health problems and moved to Lower Oxford Street. This is where I got to know my granddad. He was a brilliant gardener, not surprising, and spent many hours and all weathers pottering around. Another regular retirement haunt was the British Legion where we joined him on many a Saturday afternoon. He played dominos and shared stories with his friends. I was only very young and had been at Granddad's house and started to tug at the tablecloth. I was warned not to do it, and warned again, and again, eventually resulting in a sharp slap on my leg. It was the first time I remember Granddad doing that and I refused to talk to him for a number of weeks. Stubbornness runs in the family. At the Legion I was asked was I talking to him again, and my answer was always "no". Hence I received the nick name "no" from his veteran colleagues

He was only a small man but had a huge heart and a great sense of humour. He was as strong as an ox but was withered by the war. Nevertheless he lived a long life passing away at 70 leaving a proud family to remember him.

I miss my granddad terribly but have felt him close in my writings. I can often hear him laugh, that wicked cackle of his and remember the numerous political discussions we had. I recall his unique Canadian Yorkshire accent and how he nearly always won the debate. He was a true conservative to the end. He was also a real patriot. Whilst the BBC continued to play the national anthem at shutdown of the television each night, Keith would stand, salute and join in.

Keith MacEachern's spirit of toughness and adventure lives in his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. His medals are displayed with pride and he will never be forgotten.



Consider contributing a story about a Cumberland Township person, place or event that may have been forgotten. Here is the first in a series of articles.

Whatever Happened To?

By Jeannie Smith

What is a life worth? Some people live for the present. Others forget the past and tackle the future. A few wait out their 'transitory resting place' and long for eternal life. One such man was Harold Percival Lawson.

Harold Percival Lawson was born about 1895 in Nottingham England. His mother's family, owners of 'Boots Drugs' were wealthy. When WW1 erupted, Harold, being a staunch member of the Plymouth Brethren, could not kill another human. He became a conscientious objector and spent the war years in jail, suffering through solitary confinement, and bread and water diets. Afterwards, job offers stated "No conscientious objectors need apply".



Harold arrived in Toronto and became a minister with the Assemblies of the Plymouth Brethren. He had a small inheritance from England but mostly existed on handouts.

My father, Douglas Ferguson, while studying dentistry at the University of Toronto 1928-1934, met Harold Lawson at a Plymouth Brethren meeting. Doug invited Lawson to spend summers in Cumberland as his father, John Darby (J.D.) Ferguson, was an evangelist with the Brethren. Harold undertook carpentry work in exchange for room and board. He built a new barn (now owned by Marva Lagimoniere) and

worked on 'Cedar Cabin', our family's log cottage. My grandma, Nettie, sent Harold back to Toronto with Grandpa's old shirts, collars turned to look like new. By 1958, both my grandparent had died and H.P. Lawson stayed with our family in Ottawa, whenever he came for visits.

Harold was gentle, kind, sincere and 'Christ-like'. The last time I saw him was in 1960 when our family



Dr. James Ferguson Jr., Dorothy Helmer, Anne, Suzanne & Doug Ferguson, Harold Lawson, Rene Millar at Cedar Cabin, 1952

visited Toronto relatives at Easter. Father drove around downtown searching for Lawson's boarding house. We found him in a boarding house off Bloor and Jarvis in an upper room, down a smelly hallway. He was wearing one of my Dad's old suits and was lying on the covers of a metal bed. He regretted that he couldn't join us for lunch as he had to preach the 'Good News'. Father gave Harold money, clothes and an invitation to visit us. Harold often gave money and clothes away, but more likely, people helped themselves to all his possessions and he never complained.

A few weeks after our visit, the police came to our house. They told Father that the body of a drifter was found on the side of the 401 east of Toronto. It was a hit and run. In a pocket of the dead man's suit jacket was a crumpled piece of paper with "Dr. Douglas Ferguson, 231



McLeod Street, Ottawa". Harold Percival Lawson had been hitch-hiking to Ottawa but instead found eternal life.



Peter Andersen wrote "I recall Mr. Lawson vividly. He was at 'Chestnut Cottage' the very first summer that we lived in 'Clearview' (1938). In fact he did quite a lot of work that year and the next summer doing outside maintenance on the roof and outdoor

woodwork. The mansard roof of 'Clearview' was one of its distinguishing features but its enclosing of the third story made it difficult for workmen. Mr. Lawson was repairing the exterior of one of the third floor windows and to my mother's horror he had nailed a piece of two by four with a couple of three inch nails and was using it to stand upon while working. Mother said to him, "Mr. Lawson, isn't that a very dangerous thing to be doing? You could get yourself killed." He replied. "Have faith my dear, have faith." Mother's answer was that faith is also helped by a little common sense.

In the evenings, he would walk over to the corner by John Watson's garage and under the streetlight give a reading from his bible, followed by a short sermon with a couple of hymns. His only audience would be a gaggle of kids who were more curious than pious but who were well aware that in return for a correctly quoted verse from the bible a brand new pencil or sometimes a nickel or a dime would be dispensed. In addition a few tracts would be handed around to take home. This would continue regularly for the duration of his visit.

He was a very quiet, soft spoken man who always had time to answer a question or explain something and he was always ready to make minor repairs to our toys, bikes and other gear. He must have had great patience.

To learn more about the Plymouth Brethren read Bob Serré's 'The Great Plymouth Brethren Revival of 1868' in the July 1999 Caboose.



Fern Kennedy, Claire Wales, Bus Kennedy
May 2008



Ed and Edith Minogue, 1967



Bob Russell and Keith
MacEachern, 1991