

The Caboose

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LAST MEETING

Our last meeting was held on May 9 at a restaurant called Au Vieux Duluth in Cumberland Town Centre, Orleans. It began at 1:00 p.m. with a delicious lunch, at a most reasonable price, and was followed by the annual general meeting. The main items on the agenda were the election of a new Council, preparations for the transfer of the Society's collection to the new library, briefing notes for new Council members, and the newsletter. The Council now has six members: Ruth Parsons, President; June Forgie, Vice-President; Kathleen O'Brien, Corresponding Secretary; Ann Gonneau, Treasurer; Verna Cotton, Director; Bob Serré, Director (and Editor of *The Caboose*).

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Importance of Potash to the First Settlers

by Bob Serré

The first settlers who came to the Township of Cumberland in the early nineteenth century were seeking a new life on their own land. Some would make a living from business and trade. Most would provide for themselves and their families by farming. All would have to conquer the dense forest before they could have a place to call home.

Typically, the feelings aroused during the first year were a mixture of awe at the tremendous potential of the new land, anguish at the almost overwhelming weight of physical obstacles at every turn, hope that a new and better life would soon be theirs, and a proud determination to survive.

Once they had thrown up a temporary shelter, the settlers had to clear enough land to build a log cabin and sow a few crops to help sustain them through the winter. Besides putting up a solid roof over their heads, there was little that they could do with the trees they were cutting down except pile them into stacks and burn them. Actually, the

resulting wood-ash was a precious commodity. It was leached with water in large cast-iron pots, and evaporated to a dry product that was known as pot-ash, or potash. This could be sold, and was often the first source of instant cash.

An acre of hardwood trees was needed to produce one barrel of potash. Asheries sprung up around the new settlements, and wood-ash potash became an important industry. By 1851, there were 237 asheries in Upper and Lower Canada. The Canada Directory for 1857-58 shows that J. & B. Greer were dealers in dry goods as well as pot and pearl ashes in Osborne, now Cumberland. In 1862, Nathan G. Dunning was listed as a merchant and potash manufacturer on lot 19, concession 4, in Cumberland Township.

Some settlers didn't get beyond the initial leaching that produced lye from which soap could be made. Others boiled off the leachate, and the resulting product was called black salts. Skill was needed for the next phase, in which the salts were further processed into a white solid called pearl ash, used in the manufacture of glass and the preparation of fertilizers and explosives, as well as in the textile and dyeing industries.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, huge mineral salt deposits were used in Germany to produce potash on a large scale, and the traditional methods of production went into decline. But by then the Township was dotted with beautiful fields producing a variety of crops, and the hard work of clearing the land and producing those important barrels of potash had become a fading memory that the oldtimers might revive occasionally when talking about their pioneering experiences.

Feature Article for September: **An Early Circuit Rider in Cumberland.**

FEATURE LISTING

Local historians and genealogists just love to go through lists of names, hoping to find a juicy morsel of information. The following is a list of names from the early years of Cumberland Township.

ASSESSMENT ROLL FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF CUMBERLAND FOR 1822 (BENJAMIN McINTYRE AND MOSES RYAN, ASSESSORS)

Walter Beckwith	950 acres (uncultivated), 50 acres (cultivated), 4 horses, 7 cows, 293 £
Robert Smith	950 acres (uncultivated), 50 acres (cultivated), 1 ox, 54 £
Elander Smith	" " " "
Amable Foubear	170 acres (uncultivated), 30 acres (cultivated), 1 story hewed timber, 2 horses, 2 oxen, 6 cows, 126 £
William Marin [?]	200 acres (uncultivated), 1 ox, 1 cow, 43 £
Joseph Lacroix	170 [?] acres (uncultivated), 46 £ 8 S

[Source: Lucien BRAULT. Histoire des comtés unis de Prescott et de Russell. L'Original, Conseil des Comtés Unis, 1965, p. 224 a-b)

DID YOU KNOW?

In the old days a surveyor's chain of 100 links, when pulled out in a straight line, made it possible to measure a distance of exactly 66 feet. The surveyor's chain became the standard width of a country road, a city street and the length of a cricket pitch. [Source: Thelma COLEMAN. The Canada Company. Stratford, County of Perth and Cumming Publishers, 1978, pages 178 and 309]

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting is planned for September 2, at 7:30 p.m., in the Cumberland Public Library. Verna Cotton will describe her work as Curator of the Navan Branch of the Tweedsmuir Histories. The time and place will be confirmed in the September issue.

FEATURE OBITUARY

Readers are invited to send in obituaries that reflect the life and times of Cumberland Township pioneers. Researchers can be fussy about where their information comes from, so please indicate the source of the obituary. The following obituary was found in the *Bytown Gazette* of February 13, 1845 (available at the Ottawa Public Library).

DIED

In the Township of Cumberland, Canada West, on the 1st instant, Zalmon DUNNING, aged 78 years, 2 months and 14 days, much lamented by a numerous Family of Relatives, and a large circle of friends. His interment took place at Cumberland, a highly eulogizing Sermon being preached by the Rev. Mr. Greene, and listened to by a numerous and respectable audience.

RESEARCH TIPS

This issue contains a tip from the Editor. The next issue might contain a tip from a reader - go ahead and send one in.

I know of two locations in Ottawa where genealogists interested in French-Canadian marriages can consult the 113-volume **Répertoire alphabétique des mariages des Canadiens français 1760-1935**, published by the Institut généalogique Drouin of Montreal (1989-1991). It contains records from French Canadian parish registers: 49 volumes for the listings under the groom's name (light blue) and 64 volumes for those under the bride's name (dark blue). The two locations are the Ottawa Public Library, on Laurier Street at Metcalfe (3rd floor, call number Ref 929.3714 R4245), and the National Library of Canada, 395 Wellington Street in Ottawa (second floor reference section, call number CS88 A1 R462).

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Our Society's Treasurer, Ann Gonneau, will soon be taking up a new challenge in Korea. Ann's in-depth knowledge and reassuring presence have been a boon, in particular for new members. We wish her all the best in this new endeavour.

This issue of the newsletter contains two items in French. The first mentions the recent appointment of Professor Robert Choquette as Director of the Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française at the University of Ottawa. The second is a short biography of Amable Faubert (the March 1998 issue of The Caboose contained an article on the Dunning and Faubert pioneer families).

QUOI DE NEUF?

L'an dernier, Robert Choquette a été nommé directeur du Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française. Le CRCCF a été fondé en 1958 à l'Université d'Ottawa; c'est aujourd'hui le plus grand dépôt d'archives sur l'Ontario français. Né en 1938, Robert Choquette est professeur et historien. Il a publié de nombreux articles et plusieurs ouvrages sur la religion et l'Ontario français.

VISAGES DU PASSÉ

Amable Faubert, comme son père Gabriel, était un «indépendant» qui faisait la traite des fourrures le long de la rivière des Outaouais, en concurrence avec la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson.

Son grand-père, Jean-Baptiste Faubert, originaire de Paris, avait quitté la France pour venir s'établir dans la région de Montréal, vers 1750. Il avait épousé Geneviève Durocher à L'Annonciation (Oka) le 8 novembre 1753, et ils avaient eu au moins dix enfants. Leur fils aîné, Gabriel, le père d'Amable, avait épousé Marie-Josephte Houle, fille de Gervais Houle et de Josephte Barnabé, le 21 septembre 1778 à Lachine. Il s'était adonné à la traite des fourrures, ayant un poste à l'embouchure de la rivière du Lièvre et possiblement un autre poste près de la ville actuelle de Rockland.

En 1807, Amable Faubert a acheté un terrain de la famille Dunning, dans le canton de Cumberland, et il y a établi un poste de traite. Il a épousé Matilda Dunning, fille de Zalmon Dunning, et ils ont eu au moins huit enfants.

Amable Faubert a laissé de nombreux descendants, et beaucoup de pionniers sont venus après lui s'établir dans le canton. Une rue porte son nom dans le village de Cumberland.

Robert Serré