

# The Caboose

Newsletter of the Cumberland Township Historical Society  
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## LAST MEETING

Our last meeting was held on September 1st at the Cumberland Public Library from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m.. The guest speaker, Bob Serré, talked about the Foubert family that settled in Cumberland during the first decade of the township's history. The talk was followed by a question period, and then a snack was served. There were twenty-four people in attendance, including five members of the Foubert family. It was a delightful evening!

## NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be held at the Cumberland Public Library on Wednesday, November 3rd, at 7:00 p.m. Our guest speaker will be Angus Wilson, who will speak to us about the history of his family. This will be a public lecture. Everyone is most welcome!

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### **The Life and Times of Walter Beckwith (1765-1843)**

by Bob Serré

Walter Beckwith was probably born in November, 1765, but the place of his birth is unknown. The earliest reference to him appears to be a contract dated 6 August, 1812, in which Nathaniel Hazard Treadwell sold him Lot 46, comprising 150 acres of land in Longueuil Township on the Ottawa River, as recorded in Antonio Mandeville's *Historique de la paroisse St-Jean-Baptiste de L'Original*, published in 1936.

The assessment rolls for 1822, 1831, 1832, 1834 and 1835 in Cumberland Township show that Walter Beckwith operated a saw mill on lots 5 and 6 of concession 1 and on three and a half other lots in concession 2 (old survey), with land holdings totalling 1,500 acres in 1835. In 1831, the name was spelled Beckworth.

He had kept his property in Longueuil, since the 1826 census of that township had him and ten other people occupying a one-story house and a two-story house in that part of the Ottawa District.

Among the many letters included in the *Wright Papers* at the National Archives of Canada is one written for Walter Beckworth, by William Stewart, to Ruggles Wright Esquire, care of Mr. E. Cushing, Montreal. It is dated Longueuil, December 21st, 1825, and reads as follows: "Dear Sir, Will you be good enough to retain what you owe to

Messrs. Howe & Quimby in your hands until I see them. I understand they are in Gaol in Montreal. I'll endeavour to have that sum stopt in your hands if possible [...]."

In her 1985 report on *The Timber Trade in the Ottawa Valley*, Sandra J. Gillis explains that Beckwith "was supposed to supply 30,000 feet of timber to Atkinson and Osborne for the navy in 1825, [but] actually cut 96,000 feet. Beckwith was caught and his timber was seized, but his case was exceptional only insofar as he was found out and prosecuted."

When the Rideau Canal was completed in 1832, many men found themselves without work. It was "a time of vicious competition among the timber operators [some of whom] began to employ Irishmen to improve their competitive position by intimidation [...] Peter Ayley was one such employer. Another was Walter Beckwith," as M.S. Cross explains in a paper on *The Shiner's War* published in the *Canadian Historical Review*, volume 54, 1973, pages 1 to 26. Cross goes on to say that Beckwith "ruled with an iron hand in Westmeath, near Pembroke; he boasted he would employ none but Shiners, and they repaid his support by brutally suppressing anyone who questioned Beckwith's right to take timber freely from crown and private lands."

The Shiners were Irish workers who were willing to work for lower wages than their French-Canadian counterparts. Their name, as T. Brennan explains in a 16-page document on *Lumbering in the Ottawa Valley*, comes from the fact that some of them "were employed cutting oak in Western Quebec and were called 'chêneurs' (oak cutters) which became 'Shiners' in English slang."

Shinerism lasted from about 1828 to 1843, and was marked by the worst violence in the Valley's history, reaching a peak between 1835 and 1837 in Bytown. Michael Newton had this to say in volume 1 of his *Lower Town Ottawa*, published in 1979 (page 109): "Walter Beckwith, known as a bully, employed about forty Shiners and would take on none but members of that organization."

Fortunes were made, and fortunes were lost in those wild days of uncontrolled cutting of the Valley's seemingly endless supply of trees. It would seem that Walter Beckwith had his share of ups and downs, judging from the following passage in the *Correspondence and Papers on Various Subjects* of William Edwards, published at Peterborough in 1882: "Old Becket pursued lumbering somewhat largely [and] was held in some dread along the Ottawa [...] the old man degenerated from being the master of large rafts, to picking up stray pieces [...] his name remains to designate a creek in Cumberland."

Walter Beckwith died on January 17, 1843, at Longueuil, "after a lingering illness, aged 77 years and 3 months, one of the first settlers on the Ottawa, formerly engaged in the timber trade, to a heavy extent," so said the obituary in *The Bytown Gazette and Ottawa and Rideau Advertiser* on Thursday, February 9, 1843. Interment took place on January 20, as recorded in the register of the Roman Catholic parish of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in L'Original. That same year, the collector's roll for Longueuil Township contained the following entry [National Archives of Canada, reel M-7736]: "Mrs. Sally Beckworth, 2 horses, 2 milch cows." The supplement added: "Mrs. Sally Beckworth, 47 acres cultivated, 103 acres uncultivated."

## FRASER-KENNEDY

Dr. I.F. (Bus) Kennedy, a member of our Society, has kindly provided the following information about his great-grandfather, Robert Fraser.

Robert's grandfather, William Frazer, of Aberdeenshire, Scotland, married Mary Morris, and their son Samuel Frazer was born in 1751 in Aberdeenshire. Samuel Frazer died in County Armagh, Ireland, in 1829.

Samuel's son, Robert Frazer, was born on 17 August, 1821 in County Armagh, Ireland, and died on 21 March, 1904 in Cumberland, Ontario. Robert adopted the spelling Fraser rather than Frazer. He emigrated to Bytown in Canada West about 1840, and purchased land from the Crown in the Township of Cumberland, at the site of the present Cumberland City Hall building. His farm fronted on the Ottawa River, extended to the south, and had to be cleared of white pine forest.

Robert Fraser invented a carrying platform with a "sleigh" at each end for lumbering in rough wooded country. This revolutionized timber-hauling, and became known first as Bob's sleigh, then simply bob-sleigh.

Robert Fraser married Louisa Jane Hurdman in 1846, in Bytown, and they had ten children. Their eighth child, Jane, married James Kennedy, who took over the Fraser farm. It was there that Robert James Kennedy [Dr. Kennedy's father] was born in 1892. He was Clerk-Treasurer of Cumberland Township for 35 years.

## WEB MASTER'S CORNER

Since our Web site was launched on April 21, 1999, the number of hits has steadily increased. I visited the site on numerous occasions at first to make corrections. As of October 12, there had been 544 hits (165 for the Web master). There is still a steady flow of people learning about our Society through this site.

The Web master has been adding authorized links with other Web sites, while continuously upgrading the information on our Society. We have even had a request from a lady in California for information on the Scharf family. A new feature added recently is a marquee (moving text) announcing our public lectures.

Jean-François Beaulieu

## BY THE WAY...

Wow!! I think our ancestors would be proud of the little party we had for the 200th Birthday of our great Township. Everything fell into place, even if we had a few snags along the way. The plaque is beautiful, and I think it is a great tribute to those who came before us. Thanks to everyone who assisted us in planning and partying.

Many people were able to visit our display at the Museum Community Hall. Thanks to the Museum for the pictures of Cumberland, Navan, Vars; the great display Jean-François Beaulieu put together looked like it was designed to fit the building.

We were gifted with 4 family trees this last month, and a wonderful fan tree of the family of Jacques Ménard. They are now on the shelves at the Local History Room in the Library. Thanks, and keep spreading the word, as we have a lot of families to include yet.

Verna Cotton has been very busy too; she has presented me with a manuscript on the Buildings of the Village of Navan. We will be able to develop our Navan Village walk from Verna's findings, and include the rest of the manuscript in our collection.

Emmett Carr continues to amaze me with his collection of names, dates and stories; a continued thanks to Emmett ... Joan Lancaster and Greta Scharfe-Hill are still busily clipping notices and news items on our behalf ... Margie Hanson went on a search mission to get a copy of the Cumberland Coat of Arms ... thanks Margie. And Bob Serré - well, in addition to giving us a most enjoyable presentation at our September meeting, he continues to deliver a quality newsletter every two months. Let's continue to keep our memories safe for those who come after us. Should you wish to contribute some time to our effort, please give me a call ... we have something for everyone.

Our next guest speaker will be Angus Wilson on November 3, 1999. Please join us to hear about the Wilson Farm and memories of his life. I am looking forward to a great evening.

I wish to thank the ladies of the Navan Women's Institute for allowing me the honour of speaking at their meeting on October 6, 1999. I hope I was able to pass on some of our Society's achievements, goals and dreams.

Spread the word - Russell Lowe is organizing a Bearbrook School Reunion for June 10, 2000. Tell anyone you know about it so the word can be spread. Russell's phone number is 237-5093. His brother Ray is in the process of creating a memories book in celebration of Holy Trinity (Bearbrook) Anglican Church.

Keep up the good work ... thank you.

Ruth Parsons, President

## VIEUX REGISTRES

De 1802 à 1815, l'église catholique la plus proche du canton de Cumberland était Sainte-Madeleine de Rigaud. Voici un extrait du registre de cette paroisse :

Le quinze janvier mil huit cent vingt quatre, par moi prêtre soussigné, a été baptisée Emelie, née le dix septembre dernier de Amable Foubert et de Mathilde Donell ses père et mère cultivateurs résident dans Cumberland Haut Canada. Le parain a été Michel Foubert cousin de l'enfant, la maraine Marie Foubert soeur, le père absent, la mère présente a signé, ainsi que la maraine. Le parain a déclaré ne savoir signer.

Matilda Dunning

Marie Foubert

A.C. Labroquerie ptre

## VISAGES DU PASSE

Casimir Guillaume est né dans le village de Vars, dans le sud-est de la France (Hautes-Alpes), vers 1829. Il était le fils de Joseph Guillaume et d'Anne-Marie Roli. Après avoir complété une année de théologie à Gap en France, il a quitté son pays pour venir terminer ses études à Ottawa, au Collège Saint-Joseph, qui est devenu plus tard l'Université d'Ottawa. Il a été ordonné prêtre séculier le 17 juillet 1859 à Ottawa.

Le Père Guillaume a commencé son ministère à Saint-André-Avellin, village situé au nord de Montebello; il y a été curé de 1859 à 1873. Il a ensuite été le premier curé de la paroisse Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes de Cyrville, à l'est d'Ottawa, de 1873 à 1875. Il avait 46 ans environ lorsqu'il a été nommé curé à Saint-Jacques d'Embrun dans le canton de Russell; il y est resté jusqu'en 1885.

C'est pendant que l'abbé Guillaume était curé à Embrun que le village de Vars a pris naissance, sous le nom de Bearbrook Station, comme conséquence directe de la construction du chemin de fer *Canada Atlantic Railway*, quatre milles au sud du village de Bearbrook, en 1882. Cette partie du canton de Cumberland était une mission de la paroisse d'Embrun et le Père Guillaume, voyant les possibilités de développement créées par le chemin de fer, a acheté plusieurs acres de terrain le long de la voie ferrée.

En 1886, l'abbé Guillaume a été nommé curé à Saint-Isidore de Prescott; il y a exercé son ministère jusqu'en 1888. L'année suivante, à l'âge de 59 ans environ, il a pris sa retraite et il est retourné vivre à Vars.

Comme l'explique Luc Ricard dans un beau livre, publié en 1991, qui marque le 75<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la paroisse Saint-Guillaume de Vars, c'est l'abbé Guillaume qui, en souvenir de son village natal, a influencé le choix de Vars comme nom du nouveau bureau de poste qui a été ouvert dans le village le 1<sup>er</sup> avril 1886.

En janvier 1891, l'abbé Guillaume a vendu un terrain juste à côté de la gare à Charles Brisson, qui y a fait construire un hôtel. L'ancien curé d'Embrun et missionnaire de Bearbrook Station est mort à Vars au mois d'août de la même année, âgé de 62 ans à peine. Il a été inhumé dans le cimetière de Saint-André-Avellin, où il avait été curé pendant 14 ans au tout début de son ministère.

Robert Serré