

# THE CABOOSE



NEWSLETTER OF THE CUMBERLAND TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY (CTHS)

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April 2015

## President's message (by Gérard Boyer)

Following the article on the original settlement of Bearbrook in the last issue of the Caboose, I decided to reconstruct and then revisit where those early settlers had cut their road. The road shows up on the 1840 assessment map as "Road Cut by Quarter Sections".

The road started on the shores of the Ottawa River and ran along Angus Wilson's house (approximately 2734 Old Montreal Rd.) in a straight line south to today's Wilhaven Drive. Then it continued south between the Dunning Rd and the next concession to the east. Most of it has been plowed under. One can find its path again where it intersects today's Beaton Road. I'm not sure exactly where it went up French Hill. I am confident it then skirted the western edge of the village of Sarsfield and continued south. At some point on its southerly path it started curving towards Bearbrook and skirted the west side of that settlement. It then crossed today's Russell Rd and continues to exist today as Forced Road, all the way to Vars. I would love to snowshoe the distance next winter, just to experience the "walk" to Bearbrook.

### 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 four times each year by the Cumberland Township Historical Society.

### Our Executive

- Gérard Boyer, President
- Jean-François Beaulieu, Past President
- Tom McNeely, Vice-President
- Gilles Chartrand, Treasurer
- Verna Cotton, Director
- Ross Bradley, Director
- Ivan Tanner, Director
- Ex-Officio
- Randall Ash, Caboose production
- Dorothy-J. Smith, Caboose editor
- Karly Ali, Website.

### 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](http://www.cths.ca)



June 20, 2015 will be the 75th anniversary of the shooting of OPP Constable Howard (Hal) Dent at the Navan Train Station. Between 2004 and 2005, Past President Randall Ash, and Executive members Jeannie Smith and Verna Cotton planned, researched and wrote the story of Murder in Navan as a CTHS publication and an online performance. The current CTHS executive are partnering with the City of Ottawa to place a commemorative plaque on the Prescott-Russell Walking Trail Link at the site of the Station. A time of commemoration and remembrance will be held on June 20th for the unveiling of the plaque with the program starting at 10 am.

New CTHS year starts May 1. Time to renew memberships at the old CTHS price of \$15.

## Next meeting of the CTHS

May 6, 2015. Annual General Meeting followed by Jill Noakes, David Grattan and Fed Hyde speaking on the Navan time capsule project. Meeting at the Navan Curling Club 1305 Fairgreen Avenue. Doors open at 6:30 for a start-time of 7 P.M. As always, light refreshments will be served.

## Society calendar



For more information on these and other upcoming 2015/16 events, please contact a member of the executive committee or visit our website at [www.cths.ca](http://www.cths.ca).

Meetings begin again on Wednesday September 2, 2015 and continue on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of November 2015 and January, March and May 2016.

CTHS meetings - Unless other stated, all meetings are at 10<sup>th</sup> Line Road Police Station 2nd floor Boardroom. Doors open by 6:30 and start time is 7:00 pm.

**At the Museum** – 613-833-3059  
[CumberlandMuseum@ottawa.ca](mailto:CumberlandMuseum@ottawa.ca)

Contact the museum for costs and times

The museum is open from May 11 to October 26 on Wednesdays to Sundays from 10 am to 5 pm.

**The Caboose is made possible  
in part through a grant from  
the City of Ottawa.**

### Contact us

If you have questions or suggestions regarding any aspect of the Society, you may contact any member of the executive by phone or by email:

- Gérard Boyer, President  
[gcooyer@hotmail.com](mailto:gcooyer@hotmail.com)
- Jean-François Beaulieu, Past President  
(841-0424) [jeanfb@sympatico.ca](mailto:jeanfb@sympatico.ca)
- Dorothy-Jane Smith, Caboose editor (225-3554),
- Karly Ali, Website, [cths@cyberus.ca](mailto:cths@cyberus.ca)

## The Latest News... from Yesteryear

From the *Ottawa Semi-Weekly Journal*  
April 19, 1888, p. 2

### District Doings - Cumberland

Crossing the river here is beginning to get pretty risky, as there is much water on the sides of the River.

The Rev. J. Miles Crombie crossed on Saturday, but on nearing the wharf the ice gave way and he was plunged into the river. Fortunately help was near and he managed to get out all right. Although for some considerable time in the water he was none the worse for his involuntary bath and on Sunday preached in the afternoon in the Baptist church. In consequence with the above a very good joke went the rounds of the village. A well-known wag observed that the minister had got "immersed" so as to discourse to his Baptist friends as one of themselves. To this it was replied that the minister was a good Presbyterian still, having held his head too high to be a Baptist. Referring to the facts that in his "downward grade" river-wise he had kept his head above water by catching hold of a friendly plank, and that with the Baptists no baptism is held to be valid unless the whole body is immersed.

April 23, 1888 p. 2

### District Doings - Vars

This beautiful village is getting to be more enterprising every day. From adjacent villages people are coming in every week and constructing new residences, some of which are an ornament to the newly founded town.

Mr. Lewis Paquet has his hotel fitted up now in such style as to accommodate the most fastidious of the travelling public, and Mr. Jno. McVeigh has his livery in full blast.

Mr. Campbell, late merchant and postmaster of Metcalfe, is also constructing a store and residence which will be an ornament to the village.

The material is on the ground for a mammoth door, sash and blind factory which will give employment to a great many hands.

Mr. Sidney Fetterly's mill is continually on the hum with an enormous amount of logs yet to be cut.

This will be the shipping point for a long time for a very fine section of country, both north and south of the railway.

Dr. Bell has removed into his new residence adjoining the station, where he is always ready to attend to his numerous patients.

What is yet most sadly needed is a new schoolhouse, as the present building is quite a way out of the village.

### **April 30, 1888, p. 3** **District Doings - Canaan**

On Monday 23rd April, Mr. Alexander Hickey and Miss Laplaunt were married at Sarsfield. They intend taking up their abode in this place as farmer. The bride has recently been in the United States.

The roads in this part of the country are very bad at present.

Maple sugar and syrup have been a failure this year owing to the great damages done by fires last fall.

On August 8, 1887 the Semi-Weekly Journal had reported bush fires all along the Canada Atlantic Railway line between Eastman's Springs (Carlsbads Springs) and Casselman. On September 27th about 50 men were guarding the property of Richard Clark near Navan. "It may be said that the whole country, between Navan and Bearbrook Crossing, is literally on fire as fire is burning more or less on almost every man's property for a distance of fourteen miles." Another building identified as threatened was a hotel north of Navan owned by a Mr. McDonald.

On September 29, 1887 the report on the bush fires throughout Ottawa Valley made the first page with the headline "The Reign of Fire - Flame and Smoke Cover the Whole Country". Fires were reported from Pembroke on down while the northern part of Hull had been threatened the previous night. Both local fire brigades and citizens fought the fires. The

Ottawa fire brigades were unable to help as they were fighting a fire on Murray Street. In the Third Concession of Gloucester farmers pulled their machinery and valuables into the centre of their fields and dug trenches around them as a firebreak. The farmers around Hawthorne were focused on saving their homes, tearing down fences and watching for fire "day and night"

## **Cumberland Township exported teachers!**

*by Barb Jaatinen and her sister Charlotte, two of Gertrude's daughters, with Gérard Boyer, one of Gertrude's great-nephews.*

Gertrude Morin was born on November 30, 1905, in Rockland, Ontario. She was the daughter of George Morin and Bella Cameron, both born in Cumberland Township. George came from close to Beckett's Creek and Bella from close to the corner of Quigley Road and Montreal Road. George had gotten work in Rockland at the W.C. Edwards Lumber Mill and was living there when Gert, their second daughter, was born. The family moved to Ottawa for a while where George earned a living as a carpenter. Gertrude started school in Ottawa, but the family moved back to Cumberland Township in 1911. The common wisdom of the day indicated that farming on one's own land held a more secure future for a family man than working as a labourer in the city.

Gertrude attended Cumberland Public School, then was placed with relatives in Ottawa to attend High School there. After graduating, she immediately found a teaching position when just 16 years of age. The job lasted 2 months until it was discovered that she had no teaching qualifications and she was let go. Determined to become a teacher, she lived with a Green family in Ottawa and earned her keep. She finally earned enough money to attend the Ottawa Normal School and she obtained her qualifications in 1924/1925.

She found a position in a little one-room schoolhouse in Meadow Bay, Ontario, along the St. Lawrence River. Her dad drove her there and she was boarded from house to house in Meadow Bay while she taught there. Much later in her life she got to visit one of the houses that she had lived in: it had been moved to Upper Canada Village.

She met Jeannette MacRae at a teachers' convention and they became close friends. Frequent visits to the MacRae household eventually led to her marriage to Jeannette's brother, Archie MacRae, in 1938. At that time it also meant that she could no longer teach, as school boards were reluctant to hire women who would be absent having children. So she raised a family of six daughters and then returned to teaching in 1947. She had the opportunity to teach her own children in The Glen School, SS # 6, a one-room school house just a mile from the farm. She eventually became a Math specialist at a Catholic school in Cornwall and retired at the age of 67 years, in 1972. She passed away in Cornwall, in 1999.



Gertrude Morin in retirement  
(photo from the Morin family collection).

## SS no 10, Clarence

*Transcribed and submitted by Gérard Boyer*

While rooting through some old family records, Anna Mary McNeely (nee Ryan) found an old school register that her mother, Cecelia Ryan (nee McKenna), had preserved. This register covered the decade 1934 to 1944 and includes a treasure of historical information: details of students who attended the school and where they went after promotion, a list of teachers who taught there, interesting details in terms of expenses and materials and a

complete history of the school from its beginnings. We thought it would be interesting to share some of these details over several Caboose issues, and the best place to start is to transcribe the school's history up to 1934, as composed by Cecelia McKenna.

My book of Remembrance, I now open wide  
While my cares and worry I lay aside,  
To lead me, to that long-forgotten land  
Of books, of slates, of three times three  
Droned in an old-fashioned monotony –  
Note books with corners of pages upturned  
I – trembling with fear cause my lessons  
unlearned  
Yet, dear friends don't start when I say  
In my heart there's a longing for the joy of  
that day.  
So in these lines I hasten to tell  
Of the little schools I loved so well, -  
And at the closing you will surely see  
Why such memories are dear to me.

The first day of school! What a milestone in the life of any child: It is the first great step on the broad highway leading to education and a successful life. Only by pausing for a few moments to take a retrospective glance over the past years can one grasp the idea that vast changes are taking place in every sphere of human society; but in no sphere have these changes been more marked than in the education of the child.

Dr. Edgerson (sic) Ryerson, keen-sighted man that he was, put forth his best efforts to educate the common people thereby lifting them from the shadows of ignorance in which the so-called "Aristocrats" of that age would have them plunged. As a result of Ryerson's noble efforts and of many other men with their sane views, schools began to dot the countryside just as stars appear one by one in the mellow heavens of a June evening: Truly these schools were stars, sending the light of knowledge down to the coming generation that they might not walk in darkness.

The call to arms was heard by the citizens in Rockland vicinity and to it a deaf ear was not turned. Though the financial conditions of the community at that time were not such that a new school could be built, nevertheless where



there's a will there's a way and seventy years ago the first school of the section was opened in a room of Mr. Culbert's home, which was distant about the width of six acres from the present school. Mr. Culbert's daughter had the honour of teaching the first class.

At the end of this period a more suitable place was chosen in the home of Mr. Francis Lafontaine. This house was later replaced by the brick house we see to the west of the present school. In previous years this house had been an inn, which was necessary to accommodate the lumbermen at that time. Here Miss Culbert continued her noble task of imparting knowledge to zealous young pupils placed in her charge. Miss MacElroy succeeded Miss Culbert and brought "School Days" to a close in this house as the building of a new school was nearing completion.

Many members of the present community retain cherished memories of the little log-school house built about 1867 on the bank of Hay's Bay now known as Lafontaines Bay, opposite the site of the present school. The land on which the school was built was given by Mr. Francis Lafontaine to be used for school purposes.

This was a small one-roomed building with four windows: the interior being graced by four long desks each accommodating five pupils. Two long benches for the younger ones were also included. Miss MacElroy continued her duties in this school. She was succeeded by Miss Betsy Tompkins who remained six years. Her reign will be remembered as there wasn't any recess. For the first year her salary was Two hundred dollars (\$200), later it was raised to two hundred and twenty-five dollars (\$225). School holidays at this period comprised one week at Christmas, one at Easter and two at mid-summer. Later the mid-summer holidays were extended to one full month – July.

The next teachers were as follows: Miss Alice French, Miss McLennan, Miss McCallum, Miss Flynn, Miss Hunter, Mr. Vallelee, Miss McArdle, Miss Florence Waters and Miss Hughes.

During the period that Miss Hughes taught, the school was destroyed by fire owing to a prank of one of the pupils. While the teacher was absent for lunch a little chap decided he would see if the Christmas decorations would

burn – they did, and the school, too. Following this catastrophe, a number of the pupils received accommodations in the Rockland Public School for the remainder of the term.

Another school was built on the site of the old one. It was a one-room log structure also, with five windows and one blackboard. This building was situated between the bank of the river and the road. At that time the school grounds were very small owing to the nearness of the road. A grove of pines surrounding the school sheltered it from the cold winds in winter and the sweltering sun's rays in summer. A few feet distant stood the woodshed.

The railway went through in 1907 and it was then decided to move the school to its present position. A few alterations were also considered necessary: one window was closed thereby making space for another blackboard: the school was clap-boarded and painted inside and out. Twenty-one pupils were enrolled at the opening of this school. The teachers who during these past years have spent their best labours in instilling the rudiments of learning into the minds of the children entrusted to them by the parents in the community are in order, as follows: Miss Bella Dow, Miss Jessie Currie, Miss Maggie Knox, Miss Kate Lendrum, Miss Maggie Ford, Miss Mary Grimes, Miss Grace Rankins, Miss Dosie Murphy, Miss Anna Shane, Miss Ethel MacDonald, Miss Emily Shane, Miss Mamie Watson, Miss Anna Hurley, Miss Ethel Edwards, Mr. Gordon McNeely, Miss May McNeely, Miss Vivian McCormick, Miss Daisy Marjerisson, Miss Saisie Craig, Miss May Hurley, Miss Gertrude Ryan and Miss Cecilia McKenna. \*June 1939

Many of these teachers are now reaping the fruits of their labours, the joy and peace following a well spent life in the service of humanity. Not only is their reward received on earth but the hundredfold awaits them in heaven, for "They who instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all Eternity. While laying the solid foundation of good character, they were ever keeping in mind that the sons and daughters of today were the men and women of tomorrow. Yes men and women who hold the future destiny of our country in their hands. It is theirs now to go and bring forth good fruits of loyalty to God, to their neighbour and to themselves: it is theirs to pass on the

torch of education to their sons and daughters even as it was passed on to them.

Keep on zealous teachers – your works nobly  
done  
Till the father doth say “Thy course is now  
run.”  
Then all thy labours shall have won for thee  
God’s unveiled presence, through all  
Eternity.

*Composed by Cecelia McKenna*

*Written by Pat Mahoney, Information given by  
Hiram Lafontaine*

*Secretary-treasurer Pat Mahoney, Chairman  
John Mahoney*

In the next issue, we will describe improvements made to the school from 1934 to 1944 and list the students of the class of 1934. If any of our readers know of the existence of a photo of this school, please contact a member of the executive that we might include it in the next issue. A looseleaf copy of the register has been placed in the Rockland/Clarence museum and another will be placed in the Friel Library reading room. The original register remains in the possession of Anna-Marie McNeely (nee Ryan).

## Teachers in Context

*By Dorothy J. Smith*

The remembrance of a school, as composed by Cecelia McKenna and written by Pat Mahoney with Hiram Lafontaine, is a wonderful find. Yet for an historian it is also very frustrating for there is only the most general of dates provided. But we can place this material into a historical context with just a little genealogical searching.

We know the text was written before 1944 when the last entry into the register seems to have been made and likely after the register was opened in 1934. A firmer date, however, came when I searched in Ancestry for Hiram Lafontaine. Not only was the information solicited from him but he signed the text. And I hit pay dirt! I found a Rockland burial record for him (Drouin Collection). He had died on December 22, 1935. He must have passed on

his information to Pat Mahoney and Cecilia McKenna sometime in 1934 or 1935.

But I also wondered who was the writer, Pat Mahoney and the chairman John Mahoney? I assumed that both Pat and John were trustees of S.S.10 of Clarence Township. If I am right, both men must have lived in Clarence Township and been of a “certain age” to have held a public office in 1942—which means they were likely born sometime in the early 1900s or even before.

I decided to start my research by looking for Pat Mahoney, for he seems to have had a more “individual” name than a “John” Mahoney. I therefore searched in Ancestry for a Patrick Mahoney born sometime ten years before or after 1900. What I found was a 1921 census return for a Patrick Mahoney in Clarence Township. He was a 35 year old bachelor living with his brother and sister, John Mahoney and Mary Mahoney, on lot 34 and the East half of 35 in concession 1 old survey of Clarence Township—in short, very close to the boundary between Cumberland and Clarence Township—somewhere close to Canaan Road. In the 1930s he would have been in his 40s, an age of the correct gravitas for a trustee.

John and Patrick were farming together in 1921. But I also found a marriage certificate for a Patrick Mahoney, age 37 in 1923. This was two years after the 1921 census and so quite possibly the same man, given the “correct” progression in age. This man gave his occupation as a printer. While the groom’s father’s name matches the father of Patrick and John Mahoney as found in the 1891 and 1901 census, the mother’s name does not match between the census and the marriage certificate so the link is still unproven. But the combination of John Mahoney and Patrick Mahoney makes a strong connection between the census and the two men identified in the school register.

John and Patrick Mahoney were listed as present at M. Lafontaine’s funeral, so again I feel we have found the correct group of men. M. Lafontaine was 79 years old when he died and so his remembrances of schooling along the boundary between Cumberland and Clarence would go back to 1863, assuming he started school at age seven, as was legally required at the time. This would mean that he was remembering his own school years in the earliest schools described in the text.

Going on to the teachers named, I had three names jump out at me from my own family research—Mr. Vallelee, Miss Maggie Knox, and Miss Ethel Edwards. My niece and nephew are descended from a George Vallillee of Buckingham, Quebec, who moved to Cumberland about 1861 and a few years later brought his large family to Ottawa. Vallillee is an unusual name used solely by this man's descendents, it being a corruption of the equally uncommon Armagh, Ireland name of Valley. My mother's great-aunt was a Miss Margaret Knox of Clarence Township who went by the name of Maggie. There was only the one Knox family in the lower Ottawa Valley at that time. And Miss Ethel Edwards is a name found in another Clarence family which I had long tracked until I determined that they were a separate family from that of my grandfather's cousins, the lumber baron Edwards. Can I make sensible connections between my three people and what we can extract from this text about three of the teachers named by Hiram Lafontaine.

Mr. Vallelee is identified as having taught at the little log school-house built about 1867. Hiram Lafontaine's memories name him as the eighth teacher in that school (the eight being Miss MacElroy, Miss Betsy Tompkins, Miss Alice French, Miss McLennan, Miss McCallum, Miss Flynn, Miss Hunter, Mr. Vallelee). Miss Tompkins taught at the school for six years, a feat which was unusual. Most teachers taught for a very short time, sometimes less than a year, at any one school. Not only did teachers shift schools fairly regularly but women teachers were expected to resign on marriage. Male teachers often taught as a way to fund their own further education. As soon as they had the funds, they were away. But if we assume that all the teachers except Betsy Tompkins taught for an average of one year, then Mr. Vallelee taught at the school around 1879 or the early 1880s. So could he be a connection to the family tree I have been tracking?

The Vallillee family of Buckingham and Cumberland did not, generally speaking, go on to white collar, middle-class careers. George Vallillee himself was a carpenter and almost all of his children went into the building trades with one exception. George Vallillee's eldest son, John Edward Vallillee, was born in 1862 in Buckingham. In 1880 he would have been 18 years old, which was not an uncommon age for young men to teach school as a means of making some money

with which to advance their career in other callings. In 1891, while the rest of the family had moved to Ottawa, John had moved back to Buckingham and was, according to the census, working as a store clerk. By 1911 he was a merchant running a hardware store. He had also served earlier as manager of the McLaren Works in Buckingham and, being McLaren's man, was Mayor of the town of Buckingham. There is no proof but it is quite possible that the Mr. Vallelee who taught school in Clarence Township was John Edward Vallillee who went on to be a manager and merchant in Buckingham.

Hiram Lafontaine's recollections place Miss Maggie Knox and Miss Ethel Edwards in the schoolroom after its 1907 move to the location it occupied in the 1930s. As Ethel Edwards had been born in 1882 (the daughter of Alexander Simpson Edwards and Eliza Roe of Clarence), it is possible that she could have taught school in the years after 1907. And indeed, when I looked for her marriage certificate on Ancestry, I found she married late, in 1922 at the age of 40. More importantly, she gave her occupation as teacher and her residence as Clarence Township.

What about Miss Maggie Knox who was the third teacher after the school had been re-located in 1907? This seems a more doubtful case. My great-aunt Margaret Ann (Maggie) Knox was born in May 1868, in Clarence Township, the daughter of John Knox and Margaret Ann Anderson. She married very late in life after her parents had died. The family story was that she was kept under her mother's thumb as the spinster daughter whose job was to care for her aging parents. Had she taken on teaching sometime soon after 1907 when she would have been in her early 40s? It is possible, particularly if she had been engaged to fill a gap created by her predecessor leaving before the end of the school year to marry. On the other hand, it is possible Miss Maggie Knox could have been her niece, Margaret H. Knox, born 1891 in Ottawa, the daughter of Alexander (Sandy) Knox and Elise Kipp. But what makes this scenario unlikely is that Sandy Knox had moved his entire family to Vancouver by 1911.

Three names and three speculative connections. Two feel like strong connections and the last, Miss Maggie Knox, is the least promising of the three. Can we fill in other teacher stories from our members' genealogical work? Let us know if you recognize any of these names.





l-r: Margaret Ann Knox, Margaret (Anderson) Knox, Stella (Knox) Cameron

*Sometime around 1909 or 1910, Maggie Knox and her mother Margaret Ann (Anderson) Knox of Clarence Township visited Maggie's niece Stella (Knox) Cameron in Cumberland. The pleasure of a summer day on a veranda in Cumberland was no doubt enjoyed by many villagers. Miss Maggie Knox is photographed again, this time by herself, about 1920. (photos from the collection of the Chamberlin and Smith families).*



*The school at Canaan Rd on the First Concession Old Survey had pupils from both Cumberland and Clarence Townships. Both the school and this Ottawa River steamer out of Rockland are reminders to us that Cumberland Village and Rockland shared many links over the years.*

