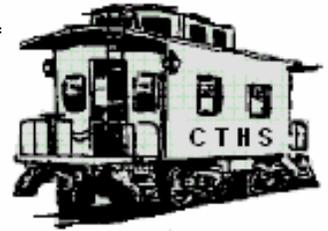


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# THE CABOOSE



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NEWSLETTER OF THE CUMBERLAND TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY (CTHS)

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## President's message (by Jean-François Beaulieu)

I hope that everyone of you had a nice Christmas and a happy New Year. As we got together with family, it was also a good time to think about the less fortunate, who are living through difficult times. It was also a time to think of those of our members who are experiencing health problems this winter. We wish you a healthy New Year and we look forward to seeing as many of you as can come out at our next meeting on Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **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**

- Jean-François Beaulieu, President
- Dorothy-Jane Smith, Past President, Caboose editor
- Vice-President – vacant
- Gilles Chartrand, Treasurer
- Verna Cotton, Director
- Ross Bradley, Director

### **Ex-officio**

- Randall Ash, Caboose production
- Dan Brazeau, 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 1926 SS#5 in Cumberland Village teachers: can anyone tell us the names of the two teachers with Douglas Ferguson?  
(from the collection of Jeannie Smith)

### ***Next meeting of the CTHS***

The next General Meeting of the CTHS will take place on Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor boardroom of the Ottawa Regional Police Station, Tenth Line Road and St. Joseph Blvd. Bryan Ladds will tell us about his archeology work term excavating at Stobi, Macedonia. Plan to arrive at **6:30 pm** as the meeting will begin at **7:00 pm**. Be sure to bring a friend along. Light refreshments, as always, will be served.

## Society calendar



For more information on these and other upcoming 2013/14 events, please contact a member of the executive committee or visit our website at [www.cths.ca](http://www.cths.ca).

	At the Museum – 613-833-3059 / <a href="mailto:CumberlandMuseum@ottawa.ca">CumberlandMuseum@ottawa.ca</a> Season closed on a high note with the wonderful Village of Lights and will reopen in May 2013.
January 19 <sup>th</sup>	Cumberland Community Association Pub Night in Maple Hall
February	February Winterfest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15<sup>th</sup> Euchre tournament in Maple Hall</li> <li>• 16<sup>th</sup> family skating in the afternoon on the outdoor rink, Dinner/Dance with Silent Auction in the evening</li> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup> Family Fun Day at the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum.</li> </ul>

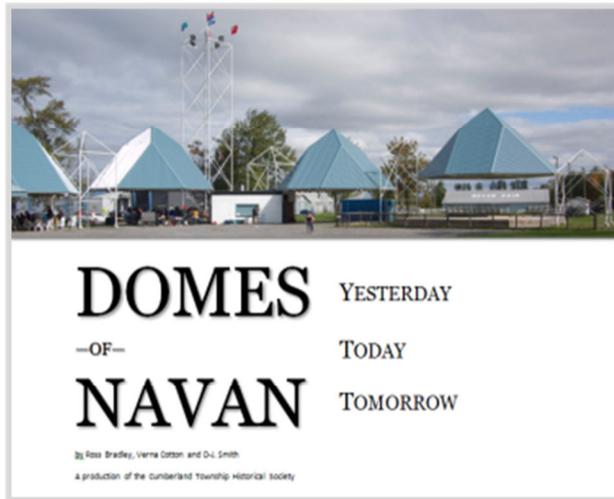
CTHS meetings - Unless other stated, all meeting are at 10<sup>th</sup> Line Road Police Station 2nd floor Boardroom. Doors open by 6:30 and start time 7:00 pm.

### 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:

- Jean-François Beaulieu, President (841-0424) [jeanfb@sympatico.ca](mailto:jeanfb@sympatico.ca)
- Dorothy-Jane Smith, Past President (225-3554), Caboose editor
- Verna Cotton, Director (835-2490)
- Randall Ash, Caboose production (833-3207) [randall2620@rogers.com](mailto:randall2620@rogers.com)
- Dan Brazeau, Website (834-8336) [danbrazeau@rogers.com](mailto:danbrazeau@rogers.com)

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



**On Sale Now - the long-awaited biography of the Navan Fair entertainment domes, the events and the people that brought the domes to Cumberland Township. CTHS members: \$15; non-members: \$20**

**Calling volunteers!! We are at the point where we cannot lose more Board members without losing the Society. It's time to come out and be part of the gang.**

### Did you know?

As more material at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is digitized, more genealogy can be done in the comfort of your own home. Now your searches can also include looking for pre-1968 divorces. Of course, before 1968 simply living apart was a cheaper solution than divorce for an impossible marriage. Before World War II and the creation of national record systems, it was possible for a spouse to simply remove himself or herself to parts unknown. The exception to this ease of disappearance was the efforts taken by the Quebec clergy to track marriages. The massive movement of French Canadians away from their home parishes in the late nineteenth century had raised a



concern for the Roman Catholic Church about an increased potential for illegal remarriage. The Church's answer was to require the clergy in French Canadian parishes in the United States to send a notice of a marriage to the home parish of each party to the marriage. The home priest duly entered the marriage into his records and, of course, raised the alarm if he found the

marriages of any one individual starting to pile up.

A legal divorce, on the other hand, was relatively rare among ordinary Canadians due to the difficulty and expense involved in getting the necessary act of the Federal Parliament passed. These acts, just as with any other

statute, had to be published in official federal government publications. LAC has digitized 12,732 references to divorce acts published in official publications of the Government of Canada for the years between 1841 and 1968, or an average of 100 divorces a year. The database can be searched by going to - <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/divorce/index-3.html?PHPSESSID=p4dkrhj6bgp9mc97metsatpgi4>

I expected little in making a search using Cumberland names for I know of only a few cases of legal divorce from the period prior to World War II (and one of those being a member of my own extended Cameron family who had moved to California). I tried various names including the distinctive Ottawa Valley names of Vallillee and Vallilee, as well as my usual test cases: Cameron, Edwards, Lough and Dalrymple.

From the database, I identified divorces of which I was already aware. These were from the far-removed wealthy side of the family; that is, my grandfather's Edwards cousins and in particular a great-niece of Senator William Cameron Edwards who divorced a member of the Booth family in 1920. But there were no records of divorce for any other of the names that I currently research. My tests did identify a serious drawback in the database search engine; the



Just in from Elizabeth Waymann of Brampton, Ontario who sees the Caboose on-line. She recognizes two of the members of the circa 1900 Cumberland-Rockland Snowshoe Club whose photo was published here in January 2012. back row, left side first woman Ann Cameron Edwards (born 1873) daughter of Sarah Roe and James Nelson Edwards; 2nd row from top, middle woman in toque with white band and tassel, Sarah Roe Edwards (born 1886) daughter of Eliza Ann Roe and Alexander Simpson Edwards. Elizabeth Waymann is the great-niece of Sarah Edwards and a cousin of Ann Edwards through the Roes. With Susie Rice Ferguson Kennedy top row, far right, we now know three of the ladies's name. Just eleven more to go!

returns for "Edwards" included anyone whose given name was Edward as well as those with the surname Edwards. The return of 395 hits was almost totally irrelevant to my research.

The information returned consisted of a list of the names of the divorcing spouses, the date of the Act of Parliament and a citation number. Clicking on "search help" took me to a screen with additional information on divorce in Canada prior to 1968. Here I found a list of the volumes where the statutes were published for different years with the relevant amicus number. I could then request the required volume when next visiting LAC.

Certainly divorce was not in the past a big part of life in Cumberland Township. Still, if you have a missing relation on your family tree, a search here could be helpful as one more avenue to explore for the stray.

A Canadian Virtual War Memorial has been created by Veterans Affairs. You can find it at <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/collections/virtualmem>

This is a registry of information about war graves and memorials of more than 118,000 Canadians and Newfoundlanders. As well there is a daily honour roll with the records of all those who died in battle on the particular day from the Boer War to Afghanistan. A site well worth exploring!

## The Way We Were...

In the summer of 2012 the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum hosted storytelling evenings by local volunteers. The story that follows was prepared by Jeannie Smith for use one warm summer evening and for her own use in the years to come.



August 1924. James, Bessie, Fred and Doug Ferguson with Grampa Helmer passing by in front of Chestnut Cottage.  
(from the collection of Jeannie Smith)

## A Tale Out of School

By Jeannie Smith

The 1920s roared throughout the world to celebrate the end of that horrible war to end all wars. Yet Cumberland continued its serene slumber on the edge of the Ottawa River. For John Douglas Ferguson, 1924 looked bright. His previous ten years had given sorrowful, overpowering joy.

September 4, 1914 was the day that the world began to war. Thankfully, Doug's older brother, James Abner, was safe from joining the first wave of the Canadian Expedition Force. James, who was turning 16 in a month and was attending Lisgar Collegiate, would be heading to McGill to study medicine like his grandfather, Dr. James Ferguson. But there was still danger at home and two weeks after the outbreak of war the youngest of the Ferguson children succumbed to diphtheria.

Nine year old William, or Willie T, had complained to his friend Colin Beaton on Friday September 20th that his throat was really sore. The boys shared the same desk in Maple Hall. That was where classes were being held during

the construction of a replacement building for SS#5 which had burnt to the ground in December 1912. Dr. James Ferguson had just the day before sent a note, hastily written on September 19, 1914, to his daughter-in-law, Nettie, from his home Inglehyrst in Rockland.

"If the white spot is still on William's tonsil and he is still feverish you had better call in Dr. Irwin as I am always suspicious of white spots and fever. If however the white spot is not moving, give him a fever tablet every 3 hours till his temperature comes down to 90 and let him gargle his throat frequently with a tablespoon of Chlorate of Sodium in a tumbler of water. D.V. [God willing] I will be in Cumberland shortly but don't neglect getting Dr. Irwin if not better this afternoon."

The medicine he had prescribed sailed right past the Cumberland Wharf on The Empress to the Rockland docks. It returned only too late to the Cumberland shore. By September 22nd, William Theodore Helmer Ferguson lay dead.

Things had not improved by 1915. Doug's only sister, Elizabeth Gertrude or Bessie, was near death with acute appendicitis. Her grandfather, the surgeon, managed to stop the infection even though the appendix had ruptured. But Bessie would never be able to bear a child. She continued on a downward spiral as she recognized the names of her Cumberland chums on the war casualty bulletins: Charles H. McKenzie, Creswell J. Allan, Robert Leslie Taylor, William J. Spratt, Thomas Foy, Peter J. McLaren, John A. McKenzie. Now they were dead, killed in action. Not until 1920 did she recover will power enough to attend Lady Stanley Institute in Ottawa and graduate as a Registered Nurse in 1922.

World War I armistice arrived at the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918. The Ferguson family did not escape the epidemic of influenza that was

ravaging the world's population. Dr. James was unable to save his wife of nearly sixty years. Susannah Rice McLaurin Ferguson died January 6, 1918 while war still raged in Europe.

The next few years, Douglas spent a lonely high school life in Rockland while boarding week days with the Sheriff family. Money was short, the road was long and his father, John Darby Ferguson, needed the family horse and buggy to drive distances on his evangelical missions for the Plymouth Brethren.

The old doctor, James Ferguson, left his earthly home on February 10, 1921. From his heavenly abode he would proudly view his youngest grandson receive his graduation diploma on October 20, 1922.

Joyfully, the family began to prosper by 1924. Nettie's parents, Elizabeth and William Helmer, had sold their farm in Newington and took up residence at "Chestnut Cottage". They were a great help while JD was away preaching. Grandma Helmer baked the bread and



May 5, 1923 Doug Ferguson as a trainee teacher had taken students on an expedition to Kingsmere. (from the collection of Jeannie Smith)

Grandpa milled the cow. Young James was an intern at the new Ottawa Civic Hospital where his sister, Bessie, was nursing. Brother Frederick William Grant was heading to Philadelphia to work in his Uncle David Helmer's insurance office. John Douglas, newly graduated from Ottawa's Normal School, had a teaching position at SS#1 French Hill from January to June. Doug planned to teach until he had earned enough for tuition to med school at McGill.

The morning of June 9, 1924 was bright with sunshine as Doug bridled his strawberry roan, "Minto". The young teacher had named his horse after the Earl of Minto, who had been Canada's eighth Governor General in 1904, the year Doug had been born. The little stable behind the family home was filled with nervous energy as the gelding stood hitched to the buggy, anxiously awaiting his master's commands.

Nettie handed her son his canvas packsack. It was brim-full with wholesome food that she had prepared for his lunch. Doug had asked for an especially large meal today for today was special. The school inspector from Ottawa was coming out to SS#1 to assess his teaching. Doug had applied for a position at SS#5 in Cumberland Village and this day would seal his future.

Minto travelled the four miles south along the Fifth Concession with ease as Douglas mulled over the day's lessons. After a half hour's travel, the trip was over. He stabled his horse in Lepage's log shed east of the Brennan Farm where the little yellow schoolhouse rose out of the field. Douglas unlocked the wooden door, entered the tiny vestibule, reached for the broom and swept the steps clean. He opened the main door and walked up to his desk. After setting down his sack with his lunch, he raised a few windows to allow the breeze to cool off the warm room. Then he took up a piece of chalk to write the date and some lessons on the slate black board.

Soon the children would come and come they did! All eighteen of them and each one of them an individual, unique in character, size and form, as well as in age, ability and language. The Brennans were Irish Catholics. The Lepages, Lafrances, Daousts and St. Onges were French Canadian. The Garvocks,

Presbyterian Scots, had walked from their farm west of the school. Doug had boarded with that family during the cold, blustery February when the road from Cumberland Village had been impassable.

Once the children were assembled, smiles of welcome exchanged, attendance recorded and "God Save the King" chanted, Douglas began the lessons. It was at this point that the Inspector stepped in to take up his seat at the back of the class.

Everything went as planned. Doug was in control, well able to manage the spelling tests, the math drills, the memory verses and the geography lessons. The task of teaching pupils at various grade levels was not too arduous. Douglas made learning fun and encouraged the students, some close to his own age, to demonstrate their best abilities and to strive and reach their potential. The pupils loved their teacher and his enthusiasm for teaching them was returned. Year later when Douglas opened up his dental practice in Cumberland Village during World War II, many of his former students became trusting patients.

During morning recess, while the youngsters frolicked about outdoors, totally unsupervised save for older siblings who threatened to tattle to pa and ma about misbehavior, the Inspector interviewed Douglas. Responses were well enunciated, answers flowed positively and success was ensured.

All of a sudden, it was lunch time. Some children walked home while others ate outside under the shade of a tree to avoid the warm noon June heat. The classroom was empty except the two men. Douglas offered to share his lunch with the Inspector who was delighted to savor freshly baked bread, fruit preserved jam and homemade oatmeal cookies. But the pièce de resistance was the milk. A metal thermos had kept it cold while the constant rocking motion of Minto cantering from Cumberland to French Hill had shaken it enough to form a small wad of butter on top. Douglas served the tasty dairy treat to the Inspector. The older man spread the butter thickly onto a slice of bread and gulped down the morsel with pleasure.

Just after the lunch period, before classes resumed, the Inspector debriefed the young

school master. He was well pleased with Douglas's performance and definitely the position at SS#5 would be granted for the fall term.

The future for Douglas Ferguson was bright but in just a few years it was glazed over with pain. Life soured for him in the fall of 1926 when he was struck with Scarlet Fever. He had become exhausted and then fell ill trying to balance medical studies at McGill and life in university residence in the eye-opening city of Montreal. It would be three years before he was healthy enough to continue his studies.

Douglas graduated from the University of Toronto in 1934 having switched from medicine to dentistry. He had believed that this vocation would not endanger his life for he had seen the long work hours endured by his physician grandfather and brother. Unfortunately, conducting daily dental x-rays unshielded from radiation for years upon years became the perfect fodder for leukemia.

Wars continued to rage throughout Doug's life and the most terrible, the one he fought with cancer, was a battle that he could not win. His body weakened but his mind remained vibrant with stories of Cumberland. Doug often recounted to his wife Anne and their four daughters, Suzanne, Charlotte, Margaret and Jeannie, the tale of the Inspector's visit.

The final assessment given to Doug by that Inspector in June 1924 foretold the future. The lessons had been perfect, the one-room schoolhouse immaculate, the discipline maturing yet already firm. All was fine ... except the butter. It lacked salt! Douglas spent the last three years of his life on a salt-free diet to help fight the blood cancer. He lost the battle and died November 18, 1965.

Never did John Douglas Ferguson's joy in growing up in Cumberland Village ebb. But even though the teacher left the French Hill school, the flow of life continues in its walls. SS#1 still offers lessons to visitors at the museum where the one room schoolhouse now stands serenely just east of Cumberland, "Slumberland".



## The Latest News from Yesterday

*From the Ottawa Farm Journal  
Friday April 29, 1921, p. 2, col. 4*

### DISASTROUS BLAZE HITS VARS VILLAGE POST OFFICE, BLACKSMITH SHOP AND RESIDENCES BURN

Ottawa, Wednesday

The post office, blacksmith shop and two residences were completely destroyed by fire at Vars yesterday afternoon [Tuesday April 26, 1921] and the entire business section of the village was imperilled (sic). The fire was first discovered at 2:30 o'clock in the house occupied by Mr. William Kennedy, which adjoins the post office. Early attempts to subdue the blaze proved futile owing to the rapid headway gained by the flames before it was discovered. Flying embers from the burning house fell on the post office, and within an hour it was totally destroyed.



The flames then spread to the residence of Mr. Dave Gauley, butcher, and this was partly burnt before the fire was systematically fought. Adjacent to the house occupied by Mr. Gauley, was the residence and blacksmith shop owned by Mr. G. Goyette. All three buildings were wiped out, and only the foundations remained.

The buildings destroyed, which were situated in the business section of the village, were of frame construction. The absence of a heavy wind no doubt saved the rest of the town. A light northeast wind was blowing at the time, but abated late in the afternoon. Practically every citizen in the village turned out to fight the flames, and farmers in the neighborhood also assisted.

The chief sufferers in yesterday's fire and their losses are:

William Kennedy, post office, residence, stable, garage and carriage shed. Approximate loss, \$7,000 partially covered by insurance.

David Gauley, residence partially destroyed. Approximate loss \$3,000. Partly insured.

G. Goyette, residence, blacksmith shop, garage and outbuildings. Approximate loss, \$8,000. Insurance \$1,900.

The town of Vars was last visited by fire two years ago when the Croteau Hotel and a number of shops and dwellings were destroyed, entailing a loss which was placed at between \$20,000 and \$25,000.

The lack of modern fire fighting appliances in the village greatly handicapped the work of the volunteer fire brigade. The old water bucket carrying system was employed to advantage during the earlier stage of the fire, but eventually proved inadequate to cope with the situation. Assistance from Ottawa was requested, but later the fire was partially gotten under control and no apparatus was sent. The General Store owned by Mr. F. H. Tanner was slightly scorched, but not damaged. The total loss is already estimated at \$18,000 only partly covered by insurance. That the loss will easily reach \$20,000 is expected when a more detailed examination has been made.

Addenda (from editor)

I have information only on David Gauley and have not tracked information on the blacksmith, G. Goyette. Information on Mr. Goyette would be appreciated.

David Thomas Gauley (born 1878 in Grenville) was a butcher in Vars from at least 1901. He married Wilhemina Fraser born in Hammond but living in Vars at the time of their marriage in 1901. She was the daughter of Joseph Fraser and Elizabeth Hepburn. David was living in Ottawa in December 1921 when his brother George Gauley of Vars died. This suggests that he may not have recovered quickly from his losses.

## Writing a Life: Jean-Noël Dessaint and *Les sillons de ma vie*

By D-J. Smith

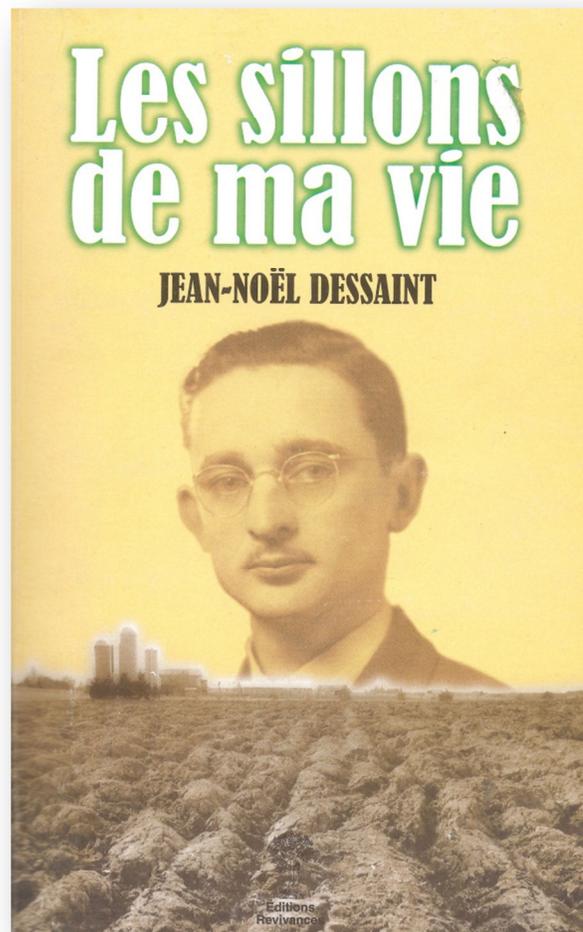
History Keepers can be local historians, researching the old documents of a place and of a people. Sometimes they are the men and women who spend a lifetime collecting the oral stories and the mementos that tell the story of a place. And sometimes history keepers come to their vocation, as Jean-Noël Dessaint did, by writing the story of their own life.

Jean-Noël Dessaint was born in Sarsfield on December 25, 1918 and died there on May 8, 2002. His life is the life of the twentieth century

starting with his birth a month after his mother had nearly died in the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918. He was the youngest of the five children of Amanda Poupart of Clarence Township and Camille Dessaint who had been born in Cumberland Village in 1866. Through his father and his grandfather, Théophile Dessaint, Jean-Noël's story in the Township goes well back into the nineteenth century.

Jean-Noël's stories were published under the title *Les sillons de ma vie* [ed transl: *The Furrows of My Life*]. It is a life which tells the story of his generation of rural Franco-Ontarians. The recounting of his early life brings home the challenges facing a young Franco-Ontarian farm boy desiring a full education.

He attended school at a time when the Ontario government subsidized the separate school system only up to Grade 10 and, then, funded the two high school years at the elementary school rate; all substantially lower than what was available for the public school



system. He had personal challenges, suffering from scarlet fever followed by pneumonia just prior to taking his Model Entrance Exams.

There was the challenge of moving from the small rural school in Sarsfield to the Rockland high school and finding that he had not been taught the basics of geometry needed to follow the course there. There was the challenge of learning in a completely English environment when he took his last years of schooling at the Navan Continuation School. Yet he persevered and while his formal education only went to Grade 11, he had learned well how to learn whatever the environment.

had observed how the price of milk went up in the fall. He determined to freshen heifers in September and October, even though he was the only local farmer to do so. But, with the cheese factory closing in November, he had to find an additional market. The next step then was to send his milk to Producers Dairy in Ottawa by train two times a week. In 1927 a new market opened up when the agent of a Montreal dairy came looking for new sources of milk to meet growing urban demand. The man came off the train at Leonard to ask the stationmaster about local producers capable of shipping a good quantity of milk year round. And so the Dessaint family expanded their dairy



Jean-Noël and Germaine Dessaint with then-mayor Chiarelli in the CTHS History Room, 2001, far left Verna Cotton and far right Jean-François Beaulieu.

The story of both Jean-Noël and his father Camille is also the story of all Eastern Ontario farmers who aspired to be the progressive. The memoirs touch on his father's accomplishments in creating what would later become "Denrob Farm" in Sarsfield out of forest. He describes how his father devoted himself to acquiring the land section by section, clearing it, bringing it into cultivation, and building up a dairy herd out of quality Holsteins and not just scrub cattle.

The memoirs also give us the story of the changing marketplace which determined prosperity or heartbreak for local farmers. Originally the farm had sent its milk to the local cheese factory which operated from April to December. But his father, an "avant-gardiste",

facilities to meet the needs of this new market.

The two years in which Camille Dessaint shipped milk to Montreal was a period of prosperity for the farm. But that prosperity came to an end with the Depression. The price of livestock dropped to the point where keeping and feeding animals was a net loss. Producers Dairy, in which Camille had been a shareholder, went bankrupt and all the milk that had been sent there for some months was never paid for.

Jean-Noël described himself as a reluctant follower in his father's footsteps for he had not wanted to be a farmer. But as the only son remaining on the farm when Camille was ready

to retire, he could not allow a life's work to disappear before his father's eyes. What made Jean-Noël a great man was that he did not go along grumbling about his fate. He made a choice that he would be the best, most scientific farmer that he could be. He subscribed to agricultural journals, talked to the Ontario Agricultural Representative Ferdinand Larose, and took a mini-course at the agricultural school in Kemptville. In the end, he did more than put up with his choice for almost the last words of his memoirs are a paean to the farming life: "Je suis un homme de la terre ... Libre comme un oiseau, seul sur mon tracteur ... Mon estrade était la terre que je foulais de mes pas, mon toit le firmament, mes mûrs l'horizon. Mon maître et compagnon fidèle, le Tout-Puissant." [ed. transl: I am a man of the land ... Free as a bird, alone on my tractor ... my stage was the earth that I trod, my roof the sky, my walls the horizon. My master and faithful companion, the All-Mighty.]

Jean-Noël's life was that of the little guy who was open to the wider world but always insistent on receiving back respect and fair play for himself, for farmers, and for the Franco-Ontarian community. Because of his strong sense of responsibility to his neighbors, his memoirs take us into the history of agrarian associational and educational life in Eastern Ontario. As a leader of the local Cercle agricole and Union des cultivateurs Franco-Ontariens, he was involved in the interests and concerns of Franco-Ontarian farmers. He was also a community leader who worked to develop the Desjardins movement in Sarsfield.

He became the local representative to the province-wide Federation of Agriculture. During the second year of his mandate with Ontario Crop and Soil Improvement Association, he was particularly proud to have succeeded in having agricultural publications translated for the francophone community. In the late 1960s he was persuaded to give a course on dairy

farming as part of a lecture series given in Plantagenet.

But the book is also the story of love. For family and friendship are important in these memoirs. And then there are Jean-Noël's memories of courting and winning Germaine Lafrance of French Hill (now Germaine Dessaint) as his wife.

The best memoirs tell us a great deal about what is important to the individual writing them. Jean-Noël described himself as "un citoyen ordinaire issu d'une famille pionnière comme tant d'autres [ed transl: an ordinary citizen from a pioneer family that resembled so many others]. Monique Saint-Armand, as the editor of his book, is more accurate in describing the man who comes through the pages of *Les Sillons de ma vie*: "Chevillé à la terre, amoureux de son épouse, protecteur de douze enfants, Franco-Ontarien et chrétien engagé, passionné de savoir et fier Canadian, Jean-Noël Dessaint est un homme qui aura marqué tous ceux et celles qui l'ont connu." [ed transl: Jean-Noël Dessaint is a man connected to the land, a loving husband to his wife Germaine, a caring father to his twelve children, a committed Franco-Ontarian and Christian, a passionate life-long learner, a proud Canadian, a man who deeply touched all who come to know him."]

Jean-Noël tells us in his introduction that he wrote his book for his children and grandchildren. He had read biographies of the famous and also of some friends. But he only began to believe that his own story was worth writing about after attending an event centred on the autobiography of Marguerite Lescop, *Le tour de ma vie en 80 ans*. Then he heard Henri Bergeron on television encouraging older people to record the memories of their youth for the young people of today and decided that he too would take up the pen.

The result goes well beyond stories for the grandkids. It is an example of history-keeping that we wish more would emulate.

