

THE CABOOSE



NEWSLETTER OF THE CUMBERLAND TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY (CTHS)

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President's ramblings (by Randall Ash)

Have you had enough snow yet? As of late February we're in the range of 300cm—that's almost 10 feet! When not out shoveling snow, the Executive has been discussing the notion of a 'compendium' of The Caboose. We have 10 years of this valuable reference dating back to 1998 when Bob Serré was writer and editor. While many of you may have kept your newsletters over the years, others may not have, and we have new members who may not be aware that all issues of The Caboose are available from our website. Nonetheless, we believe there may be value in gathering up all the newsletters and publishing them in an attractive binding along with an index. Before we proceed we'd like your feedback on this idea. Is there interest in a compendium among our members? Do you believe that non-members might be interested? Is this worth our time and effort? Please take a minute to let me know either by phone or email (my contact info is on page 2). Lastly, our call for new Executive members has not gone unheeded. Bill Woodruff, one of our members, has volunteered to work with us informally until we can recommend him for a Directorship at the AGM in May. Bill, who lives in Rockland, is the son of Georgina Deavy Woodruff and is related to many Cumberland families. Welcome aboard Bill.

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

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



Spring Lambs
Bertha Lowe (Mrs. Maynard Fraser) on the
family farm in Bearbrook 1925

Next meeting of the CTHS

The next meeting of the CTHS will be held on Wednesday, March 5th, 7:00 pm at the Ottawa Regional Police Station on St. Joseph Blvd & Tenth Line Road. Our guest speaker, Verna Kinsella, will present "Trains in Vars." Be sure to bring a friend along. Light refreshments, as always, will be served.

Society calendar

For more information on these and other upcoming 2008/09 events, please contact a member of the executive committee or visit our website at www.cths.ca.



Heritage Power and Country Festival

Saturday, May 31 and Sunday, June 1
Cumberland Heritage Village Museum
2940 Old Montreal Road
Cumberland, ON

Activities for everyone! See the model train demonstrations and make sure to take a ride on the miniature train. View the exhibit of machines powered by gas or steam, from the old to the new! Enjoy the horse pull, cowboy western games, antique cars, music, telegraphers, flea market and children's games.

Organized in collaboration with the Lions Gateway Club.

Admission to be determined.

Information: 613 833-3059. 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:

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We've got mail!



Bob Serré was helpful to me two years ago in establishing the Morin link all the way back to Acadia in 1661. It's not proven yet, but Pierre Morin dit Boucher, the first of my grandma's (Sarah McNeely nee Morin) Morin ancestors to come to Acadia, married Marie Martin in Port Royal in 1661. I was just there to help move my mom (Therese Ann McNeely who married Conrad Boyer, then Charles Fouchard) into a senior citizen's home there. My sister Anne-Marie is the CEO of the town of Annapolis Royal. I'm researching the past of my great-grandmother Bella Morin (nee Cameron). I think her parents' names are Dan Cameron and Ann Quigley, but I've not been able to determine what her Cameron line is. Also, a small correction to your summer 2007 Caboose (page 6): Thomas and Sarah McNeely did not buy the McNeely homestead (Thomas was born on it). Thomas' father Francis teamed up with Jack Sharkey to buy it from the Cloffys. More to come. (May issue of The Caboose)

Gerry Boyer

Just browsing the "Caboose" and as usual enjoying the various articles. Great work. However my purpose today is to point out one small error. In the article on the Edith Wilson Award you mention Peter Harkness & Peter Sr. The late Peter Harkness (husband of Jean Hanson) was the son of Parry Ezra Harkness & Addie Driscoll. They were both from South Mountain, ON where they married in 1917. During their years in Cumberland, Parry was the OPP Constable. Parry's father was indeed also Peter Harkness but he never ever lived in Cumberland. Parry & Addie had but the one child.

Peter E. Andersen

One night I will never forget is when Wayne bought an almost new 1964 White Pontiac Parisienne convertible. Wayne and I drove to Montreal to pick it up, and he let me drive the new car home. He took off ahead and he lost me in no time. When I got onto the old highway in Cumberland, I headed towards what is now called Trim Road as Wayne lived on Watter's

Road, off Trim. I noticed an accident at the new highway and Trim. I drove down hoping it wasn't Wayne. Keith Millar and other Department of Highways men were directing traffic. Keith told me he had seen Wayne and that he was heading to the Edgewater. He let me go through, and I went to find my boyfriend. (We were married in 1966). That would have been 1964 and I would have only had my driver's license for a year. I was going east, and when I saw the first entrance, I turned in, not realizing it hadn't been constructed as an entrance, but was actually the exit. The front passenger wheel went over the culvert, but I stepped hard on the gas peddle, and managed to make it into the parking lot without getting stuck. I got out and looked at the front end of the car. The fender was dented and so was the bumper. I went into the hotel, and before I could say a word to him, Wayne started telling the guys inside to come out and see his new car. I almost died. Wayne didn't say a word when he saw the car. I am sure he must have been upset, but he got in and told me to follow him in the other car he had driven. We stopped at Massie's Body Shop (it used to be on the corner where the Home Depot now sits), and I stayed behind until he came back out. He didn't get cross as I explained what had happened, and told him I was sorry over and over again, however he loved to tell the tale for many years to all who would listen. That's one of my memories of the Edgewater Hotel.

Debbie Hansen Wright

I'm going to go through my Dad's (Dave Stewart) old photo albums as he is writing his memoirs! I'll pass them along as I edit them! I'm a middle school general music teacher in a school district west of Harrisburg-- West Shore School District, which is where we settled when we left Vars. My mother, Margaret Barclay Stewart, Bessie Garvock's 2nd daughter, was

Forging the Future

Proud and determined our forefathers toiled,
 From hard work they never recoiled.
 Necessity required that they be innovative,
 Land was cleared of trees from which farmsteads were created.
 They laboured and persevered to survive,
 Driven to keep their livelihood and their dreams alive.
 Despite hard times and increasing debt,
 Their progress wasn't finished yet.
 A variety of crops and livestock evolved,
 So that the growing needs of city folks could be resolved.
 As families grew and farms were mechanized,
 A need for knowledge and education was recognized.
 The future generation needs technical and management skills,
 In order to feed increasing cities still.
 With expanding production and determined mind-set
 Our progress isn't finished yet.

Rita Smits Dessaint

diagnosed with Parkinson's and Mayo and Johns Hopkins were the only facilities doing any research on it in the early 60's. Hence, we became Americans, since Harrisburg was closer to Baltimore Maryland. What is amazing is that Mom died in 1999 age 73, which is phenomenal for Parkinson's patients. Also, Mom's best friend while attending Bearbrook and Navan HS was Bea Griffith McTeer from Cumberland. Dad called me yesterday to find out when to expect his first Caboose! What a hoot! Thanks so much for your work!
 Wendy Stewart Swartley

The Civil War and Cumberland Township

by Jeannie Smith

When the States sneezes, Canada gets the sniffles and must wipe her nose! Whatever happens south of our border has always had a tremendous impact on events in Canada. The Civil War, with hostilities beginning April 12, 1861, left its mark on the British Colony before Confederation. Romantic dreams of southern belles, with large ribboned hats, sipping mint julep have gone with the wind. In reality, hard times beset all.



Raising the Taylor barn

Abigail Bennett Spaulding, born in Jericho, Vermont, 1831, moved with her family to Stowe, Massachusetts, later to Greenfield, near Saratoga, New York, and grew up in the 'blue' North of the United States of America. Canadian born, James Taylor (Dec. 16, 1827-Jan. 26, 1905), son of Isaac Whitney Taylor Sr. who had come to Canada from Northampton, Massachusetts, after the American Revolution with his brothers William and Amos, met his first cousin, Abigail, when he went to Greenfield to work at his uncle's lumber mill. Isaac Taylor's saw mill, on the Ottawa River near Clarence, burned, so he bought a mill and a 200-acre farm across the river at Lochaber, from a Mr. McDole, a loyalist whose family founded the Dole pineapple empire in the U.S. James and Abigail Taylor married Aug. 5, 1851 and settled at Luzerne, near Greenfield and their son was Edgar James (1854-1937). Isaac died in 1861 in Thurso and was buried at Clarence Cemetery and James returned to Canada to carry on his father's business. Isaac's brother Joseph remained in the States. His sisters were Louisa, Susan (married Phineas Gates), Lydia (married Alva Spaulding) and Betsy (married Calvin Fuller).

During the Civil War 1861-1865, relatives and friends came to Canada from New York State for refuge and some worked at the mill. In the northern states, feelings were rampant that the war was wrong, as well as unnecessary, so many young men preferred to spend the war years in Canada. (A hundred years later, American youth were dodging the draft to live north of the 49th parallel.) But, adventurous young Canadians fled south to enlist in the Northern Army and were paid \$100 to serve in the place of American lads who were not willing to wage war. Wages for a Union soldier were higher than those for hired farm hands and tempted many a naive Canadian who soon found themselves not in the glory of war but in the midst of battle line horrors:

brothers fighting brothers, fathers against sons, black against white...in the pursuit of happiness, for life and liberty! The British Legation in Washington was besieged with appeals for help in getting Canadians out of military service. Some say that fifty thousand Canadians fought in the Civil War, eighteen thousand dying. None-the-less, the war ended in April 1865 and the young men returned to Canada. Times were tough, the economy depressed and business slow with money being scarce and bartering became common practice. Store bills were charged all winter and by Spring, with business improving, debts were paid and cash began to flow. (Have we learned anything from history?)

James Taylor returned to Greenfield, New York, in 1880 with Abigail and two younger children. ____Taylor married Sarah Dwyer, great granddaughter of Sgt. Mills who served with General Wolfe at the Plains of Abraham. Sarah Taylor, began documenting weather and daily events in her diary from 1880 to 1915 and gave the little volumes to family members each Christmas so that the stories could be remembered. _____Taylor and his son Reg continued the Canadian mill operation. Reg Taylor went to work in the saw mills of British Columbia where he was accidentally killed in 1946. His son, _____overseas with the R. C. A. F., was a prisoner of war for two and a half years after being shot down over Germany in WW2.



The Taylor house

Isaac Taylor (born in Massachusetts July 25, 1791 died in Cumberland Jan. 24, 1861) and Elizabeth Thompson (born in County Monghahan, Ireland Dec. 16, 1804, died June 30, 1877) were married Dec. 25, 1824 in Chatham (Cushing) Quebec, near Lachute. They are buried in Clarence Cemetery with their son, William, who died May 12, 1861 age 15 years.



Isaac Taylor Jr.

Hope bids the anguished heart rejoice though earthly ties are riven. We still may hope to meet again in yonder peaceful Heaven.

James Taylor's younger brother, Isaac Jr., married Caroline Fraser, daughter of Robert Fraser and Louisa Hurdman and settled at 'Taylor Creek', Cumberland. (See Winter 2007 Caboose)

Letter from Abigail Taylor to her family in Greenfield, NY

Provided by Lois Russett and Lottie Taylor

Lochaber June 6, 1862

Dear Friends:

We received your letter in time and were glad to hear that the boys was safe yet. We have not heard of them drafting yet and hope they will not. It makes me feel bad to see how the north is getting beat. It looks discouraging: where will it end? So many poor soldiers have laid down their lives for nothing. We are all well and so busy I can hardly find time to wink. We have six men and some of the time I have done my work alone. The girl is back now but I don't know how long she will stay. Mary, I wish you was here to help me for I don't believe you have much to do. James has not got his harvesting all done yet. He has hayed and harvested until he is tired. He is sawing now. He wants to get enough sawed to send to Montreal this fall.

(Sunday Eve) I have been to meeting this afternoon, walked up and back and am not much tired either. I have scarcely missed a Sunday since I came home. I am as tough and hardy as a bear. It makes me feel sorry when I think how miserable I felt

when I was out there. I was disappointed in my visit. I want to see you now as bad as ever. Oh how much I wish you were all here but what is the use of wishing. I feel thankful that we are in Canada. I do hope that none of you will have to go into the army but who knows what may happen. If you were in Canada, I should feel easy. Susan was on this side to meeting and came down home with me. They are all well. They have sold their farm for \$1600 and bought Mr. Ramage's place for \$1200 that is near the Baptist Church. Edgar went over the river with Uncle___ today, if he can get over there, he is all right. He goes to school every day, has got into fourth book, he learns well. Poor little George, I often think how bad he felt that morning we came away. Do you hear anything from Melvin? Are they coming out this fall?

(Monday noon) Well I must finish my letter for James is going to Thurso. He does not think much of his run-away soldiers; Frank in particular. He is a slow drone. It takes him almost forever to do nothing. James is sick enough of him. His two months is out tonight and James is a-going to pay him off. They are on a spree to the tavern every Saturday night or Sunday night. Thomas paid Frank's passage out here; he had not a red cent. I am sorry to hear that George's arm does not get well. It would be a dreadful thing if it should always be stiff. Now Mary, write as soon as you get this. I shall look for a letter from Elvira and Kit this time, now don't disappoint me. Kiss all the babies for me. Oh, would not I give them a hug if I could see them. Little Charles with his good noble look and Carrie with her laughing eyes and Hattie saying, pretty, pretty. Mary, you said you was lonesome often. I left and was very lonesome for a while after I got home. I hope little Alice is not sick. I dreamed she was the other night. Does she ever talk about me or Edgar? Could not David get a pass to come to Canada? If he comes, won't you come with him, Mary? Mrs. Jones had a brother-in-law to visit her from Michigan two weeks ago. They came by the way of Vermont and they did not have to get a pass. Charles, I hope you have got smart as a cricket. If you come out here, you would get so fat you would hardly be able to see out of your eyes, for we are all troubled with dreadful appetites. I think Greenfield does not agree with me for I felt so miserable when I was out there this summer. I did not know what to do with myself. Mother...don't work too hard... My love to all, so goodbye A.P.T.

Letter from John S. Tinney from Thurso, June 28, 1863 to George Spaulding, Greenfield NY

It is with greatest of pleasure that I take the pleasant opportunity to address a few lines to you. I

am well and yes we are hoping you come this summer. I have got to go to work on the barn tomorrow. Thomas went down on the raft but not got back yet. I have done all the work on the place in 5 days. I have worked twice that for other people. We shall hire a man about a week that will cost \$13 or \$14... They say it costs \$45 to harvest the crops last year and we have more in this year. Health is all I ask for, I am forty-four, but well. July 9, 1863. As I have a little leisure time, I thought I would finish my letter. Thomas has got back now; James has not come yet. Think he will today or next week. We expect to go haying next week. We have about thirty acres to mow over. The grass on the low meadow is up under my arms. I am a brute, Thomas will get lost. I hope you or David pay Mrs. Spaulding to knit me 8 pairs of socks and send them out by Abigail this fall. George, take good care of my chain that Charles had of mine and some other things that is scattered about there, the britches to my harness. Sometime I will be with you again, I hope. Well I must end of a spell for have a few potatoes to hoe. We are a-going to sawing at the Mill for James while the water lasts, then our harvesting comes. We fill more barn room than Cottrel. Mrs. Abigail is just getting ready to go to church tonight. Tell David the place where he lived when he was out here is for sale. The price is \$500, four years to pay it. Uncle Jimmy's place lies right by



Dr. James Ferguson and his family
Dr. James Ferguson and his wife Susannah Rice
McLaurin and family, Willie, Minnie and baby Cecil
1868.

the side of it, he asks \$1000 for his. Perhaps it is cheap. The mosquitoes bite, so I can't write any more. So please write as soon as you get this. When is the war ending? Where is the 1.5.30 Regiment? Please tell me.

Letter from Dr. James Ferguson to his wife, Susannah Rice McLaurin, from Poughkeepsie, NY.

James Ferguson, born 1838 in Caledonia Springs, grew up in Vankleek Hill and taught in Almonte to finance his tuition for medical school at McGill. In those days, 1857, medical students had to produce cadavers for dissection practice. After a dance at Christmas 1859 in Vankleek Hill, James and two classmates stole the body of a young girl from a fresh grave. They were chased to Montreal, where they were hidden in an attic by a professor. Dr. James showed his grandsons, James Abner Ferguson (who became a doctor in New Hampshire) and Douglas Ferguson (a dentist, father of Jeannie Smith), a newspaper clipping that he had pasted in a lecture note book, "Scottish clansmen enraged at body snatching chase three young McGill College medical students out of town. McLeod was captured but Ferguson and MacDonald escaped." When the furor subsided, they slipped off to New York City, Columbia University School of Physicians and Surgeons, a graduate school in Manhattan. James interned at New York City Hospital and graduated in Spring 1861.

The Civil War erupted April 12-14, 1861 at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Shortly afterwards, James returned to Canada to look for a place to set up practice. He accompanied the old Buckingham doctor, Thomas Ferguson (no relation) across the Ottawa River to Osbourne (previously named Fouberville, later changed to Cumberland by Postmaster G.G. Dunning about 1864) to attend to shoemaker John Allan, who had broken his leg. The old doctor was ready to amputate. When James inspected the badly infected foot, he knew from his training in New York, that he could save the leg. Soon John Allan was mobile and James settled in Cumberland and gained in popularity as physician and surgeon, later Coroner until his death February 10, 1921.

Dr. Ferguson returned to the United States to write post graduate exams in January 1865 and the Civil War ended April 26, 1865. He wrote the following letter to his wife, Susannah Rice McLaurin whom he had married in Riceville, March 1863, and his son William, born in 1864, who became the doctor in Rockland from 1885-1912. (More info. Jan. 2003 & Jul. 2006 Caboose)



Poughkeepsie, January 3, 1865
My Dear Susie:

You will see that I am in Poughkeepsie. This is Tuesday evening 10 o'clock. I arrived at 9, have had my supper, find old Mr. Gregory as I left him years ago and my trunk safe. I have just paid him my bill \$28.00 in Green backs and will now tell what I find in it. All my class tickets for three years lectures in McGill, neatly folded up as I left them. One dissecting case with 6 knives and scalpels, a Bible. Two shirts, razor strap and brush, one or two books etc. in a good trunk. I am very much pleased in fact, I am happy that after 4 years and 6 months neglect, I should find my things so safe. I am now within 80 miles of New York City and will go down in the morning and see Professor Draper of the University. If not satisfactory, I will be in Boston in the evening.

I left Ottawa Monday at 12:30 reached Prescott at 4:00, crossed over to Ogdensburg in the evening after a good deal of trouble with the Custom House Office, got off this morning at 4:00 and have since come 450 miles, am a little shaky and will soon retire. I met with a gentleman and lady, Mr. Cowan of the Bank of British North America and his wife at Ottawa, and had their company to Albany which made it very pleasant. They go to Boston to take the English Steamer.

My dear Susie: I had no idea that I should feel so lonesome as I did on leaving Ottawa. I assure you

that it is only a weighty cause that could cause me to leave home thus, however, thus far, I have succeeded perfectly and have reason to believe that I will, until I return. I hope you will amuse yourself as well as you can. Keep up good faith in me this time. I want you to pay Paul McRae, the blacksmith, \$43.75, which I owe him. I settled with Mrs. Featherstone, whom I happened to meet in Ottawa. I could not get into Mowats, the tailor, and consequently did not pay him the \$3.00. I will write you after tomorrow evening, for tonight, I am your affectionate husband, James Ferguson...kiss Willie for Papa. You cannot write me until I write again.

I will not write much more, I have nothing new to write of about New York. My entire time is taken up with my studies and now that I am in my examinations, I will be kept at my highest degree of

nervous tension until it is over. The regular examinations will not begin for ten days to two weeks. If you have sent me the necessary letter before this reaches you, you need not write again, as I will start for home just as soon as the money comes, of course, I will have to remain until it comes. And now, until I see you, good bye and kiss dear little Willie for his Papa.

You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone!

By Jeannie Smith

What a shame that we don't realize that something has been lost until it's too late. That visit to interview an 'old-timer,' that plan to photograph a building before its demolition, or that promise to get together with pals never seems to come to fruition.

John Trethowan passed away last November. I always knew that he was a fine man, a great supporter of Cumberland Village activities and a beloved member of his family. I meant to spend an afternoon jotting down his recollections of coming to Cumberland to meet his bride, Vera Dale, but I only took the time to share a few laughs as I passed him walking his faithful collies along the 'back street' of the village. A few weeks ago, the lofty home of Ardyth Elliott, perched on Spring Hill, west of the village, welcomed friends of Norma Trethowan,

whom John married in 1981. Vera died in 1978. Boy, I wished that I had paid that visit to John before he died, but his wife Norma is an excellent story teller herself and she amazed me with her connections to Cumberland.

John and Vera Dale, married in the late 1940s, had Paula, Debbie, Bruce and Pamela. When John was a mechanic for the Canadian Air Force during the Korean War, Vera and her two young daughters, as well as her sister Fern, with her two daughters, (her first husband Peter Harkness being also overseas), moved into a little house on the corner of Market and St. John Streets. This building originally built between Sharkey's (later the home of Vic Dunning and his wife Pearl Brennan) and the home of Jack and Mabel Dale, housed the bakery of Ethel Hayes (1880-1915) and her husband, Hugh Camlin, (children Ella 1903-1922, Hazel 1905-1918 and Mabel 1908-1922). After Hugh Camlin's death in 1939, Jack Dale purchased the corner lots, comprised of two buildings on Old Montreal Road and St. John, and moved his family of daughters Greta, Vera, Fern and Amy to the house east of the bakery. He had been renting the Foubert farm along the river and when this was sold to Jimmy Morin in the early 1940s, the Dale family moved into the village 'proper'.

After his marriage to Vera Dale, John Trethowan bought the little 'bakery' house from his father-in-law and had it moved to the 'back street' corner. Vera hadn't wanted to live in Germany where John was posted, so she stayed in Cumberland. After Mabel's and Jack Dale's demise, Vera and John took possession of the house.

Norma and her first husband were posted to Ottawa with the Air Force in the early 1950's and rented a little cottage owned by Malcolm MacEachern. The house was not much more than a shack, resting on the gulley north of Old Montreal Road behind the MacEachern homestead (now owned by Jimmy Levesque and his wife Colleen Grimes). Malcolm MacEachern's two horse barns crested the flats just west of Quigley Hill. This farm, originally owned by the McMillans/Quigleys, then James Gamble, greeted Ottawa travelers as they approached Cumberland. Carleton Farmer and his wife Sybil Moffatt had the adjacent farm. Ernie Elliott, his wife Margaret Little, along with her parents (Robert Little and Florence (Fanny) Smith, produced top quality eggs on their farm on the very top of Spring Hill and here I found myself, at a farewell tea for Norma Trethowan, who was moving to live near her son Tom in Kingston. A friendship had sprung up between Vera and Norma, both having young children and husbands in the Air Force. Norma said that Vera always had the coffee pot on the stove and was glad to have company. Norma's little nest in MacEachern's woods offered few conveniences.

The bathroom consisted of an outdoor toilet, with a mirror nailed to a tree. When Norma and her husband were posted to France, Harry Baldwin took up residence in the little 'shanty'. Harry was a jack of all trades and he became the guard of the cross that marked the spot on MacEachern's quarry in Gamble's bush, where Mary and Eliza McGonigal were 'fouly' murdered in 1890.

I should have more memories of another spot, near a rock quarry, along the river...The Edgewater Hotel...but the partying of the sixties and seventies and the unwillingness to reveal identities and suffer recrimination prevent me from too much detail! But oh...if only those hallowed walls of 'The Edge' could talk. I fulfilled a 'rite of passage' by downing a pint, well under the legal age of 21, in 1965, at The Edgewater. Many a fun-filled night of laughter was enjoyed after hockey and ball games. Many a lazy liquored summer's afternoon was spent on the verandah watching hands of poker being cheated and played by the young and old men. One time, Cumberland's strongest man carried a chair holding a faithful sports fan all around the darkly lit room near the bar. Another time, two enthusiastic sports players fell into the bar and broke the bottles and glass amidst the roars and curses of the bar maid. Many a story could be told...but at another time...

In the 1940's, on the shores east of the rock promontory along the Ottawa River, cottages were built by Percy Carrier, and 'Lett's Rest' by the Lett Family. A little dirt road wound down the side of the hill from Meadow Lane and was the only entrance off old Highway 17. When the rock cut was blasted, the explosion not only cracked windows at Montpetites Store in Orleans sending sound waves to Buckingham and Rockland, but the crash crumbled cottages along the cliff. The Trans Canada Highway opened in 1952, offered opportunities for tourism and the little hotel with cabins provided rest for weary travelers as well as a watering hole for the local yokels!

Bert and Gertrude Shepherd constructed their hotel, with their living quarters above, at the same time as the 'new highway' was being built around 1950. Highway construction workers found shelter under the roofs of the half-built cabins during thunder storms. The Edgewater Hotel provided work for Cumberland teenage girls who cleaned, cooked and babysat the Shepherd children. It was a 'classy joint' with comfortable chairs and polished furniture and attracted visitors from the United States, as well as families from Rockcliffe Park. Some arrived by boat, others in big Cadillacs which swerved off the highway, pulling up to the front door to allow patrons to enter easily and socialize. A tiny entrance opened into a larger reception area, dark with walnut paneling, and had a counter upon which a popsicle

stick lamp and telephone rested to the left, stairway to the right, cigarette machine along the wall and washrooms under the stairs. The lounge was fairly dark, boding of the evils of alcohol. The mirrored stand-up bar was alight with bottles, beer and wine, later liquor when the license allowed. The corners always seemed to have a lone drinker who watched everything, forgot nothing and bothered everyone. The porch was lively, with games of pinball, poker or people pretending to be sober. At one time, the dining room, 'The Driftwood Lounge' served fine food. Years later, Tony's Chinese food and pizza were the norm. At another time, the dining room staged strip tease dancers, some who could move with artistic talent, others who made you glad that you had a day job. Always, there were the phone calls from women wondering where were their men. The response was usually, "Tell her I've just left!" as another round of doubles was ordered. Two small cottages were built along the west lawn that ran down to the river and later a large deck complimented the renovated hotel.

After Bert Shepherd's death, his wife Trudy and daughter Marlene attempted to maintain the dignity of the hotel but times were tough and Sam Beshara took over the operation, wheeling and dealing to make a profit. But it didn't last and Irwin Prescott, owner of the Lafontaine Hotel in Eastview (Vanier) bought the Edge in the late 70's. Prescott's 'Hillbilly Haven' was jam packed with country music and large crowds of dancers and revelers arrived from the city. The Prescott era was great fun ...sports teams celebrated, splashing glasses of beer onto friend and foe, jeering and cheering loudly and foolishly living life dangerously. Other owners earned a meager existence out of the Edge...living on the edge of sanity and safety, trying to stay on the right side of the law.

Edgewater was a place for all seasons. New Year's Eve drank out the old and 'drunk' in the new and once featured a young local, swathed in cloth diapers, laughing hilariously as he swung around the pole that held up both the ceiling and himself. There were arm wrestling tournaments, friendly fist fights, drinking toasts and bets and the occasional confrontation that got very rough. Many a happy couple entered the bar, only to leave in a tiff after hours of imbibing. Many a young heart was broken and pangs of jealousy felt only to be forgotten when a new love blossomed over a glass of 'Old Sailor' or 'Derby' wine. Once a table was set afire when a glass candle exploded, once a tray of dainty sandwiches was thrown into the air, after the big burly boozers refused to sample the tidbits and often, story tellers told too many tall tales. Then there was the time three brave Cumberland lads streaked through the lounge in a flash!

In Spring, hockey teams celebrated wins and drank to loses and of course, everyone was Irish on March 17th and tossed back green beer! With summer, many a couple dined and danced the beginning of their married lives at their wedding reception. Ball teams solicited support for shirts and equipment and promised to drink their share in return. The screened in verandah was the perfect spot for Saturday afternoon poker games and by evening, those wild young things who vowed never to grow old, partied, laughed, danced and drank...and thank God...managed to get home safely. By Autumn, the 'highwaymen' from MTO stopped for a brew and Blanche's home-made beans, and the 'regulars' popped in before and after bowling at the Normandy or came to watch one of the rare 'colour' televisions in the area. During winter, the Edge became the meeting place for skidoos and the starting place for the ice road that crossed the Ottawa River a bit to the east.

She was a fine lady, beautiful and classy in her youth in the fifties; swinging and sexy in the sixties, born to be wild, a haven for hillbillies in the seventies. Tired, old and worn out in the eighties, she became a dumpy, sleazy dive by her demise in the nineties. In 1995, the old Cumberland gang held a 25 year reunion at The Edgewater. Drinks were downed with flourish, stories exaggerated and cameras clicked but everyone knew that age had won out and the old days could never be recouped.

The Edgewater witnessed a variety of people; high class ladies sipped tea, respectable women chatted and gossiped; fallen women stripped on the stage and pretty gals belted out country ballads. In the bar, men drank too much, swore too often, passed out on the floor or fought over nothing, all the while believing that they were king of the castle. The Edgewater, the epitome of every local hotel, was just one of the many swinging watering holes in Cumberland Township. Every town had an Edgewater and every teenager yearned to enter and experience its rhapsody. For those of you who have tasted life at 'The Edge' ...take time to remember the fun and laughter but forget the hangovers and heartaches. For those of you who missed the opportunity to play out your youth in such an establishment...pity...

Memory...All alone in the moonlight... smile at the old days...we were beautiful then... remember the time we thought we knew what happiness was...Let the memory live again.

Do remember to speak to that old timer, take that picture and have that reunion...while memory allows.



The Edgewater

