

THE CABOOSE



NEWSLETTER OF THE CUMBERLAND TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY (CTHS)

ISSN 1203-147X

Volume XXI Number 6

September 2012

President's message (by Jean-François Beaulieu)

We had a busy summer preparing for the Navan Fair and lots of people visited our booth at the Navan arena. We sold a few of our new book, *The Domes of Navan / les Dômes de Navan*. Gerard (Gerry) Boyer built the booth and conducted one-on-one genealogical research for visitors as well as donating a framed map of Cumberland Township for a draw. A big thank you to Gerry. I would also like to thank the Navan, Ireland delegation to the Navan Fair who donated two books on Navan Ireland to our history room. Looking forward, we have more events coming up this fall and we hope to see you at our events and at those put on at the museums around town.

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

- 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



The Taylor girls celebrating the harvest

(collection of Kim Taylor)



Next meeting of the CTHS

The next General Meeting of the CTHS will take place on Wednesday, November 7th in the boardroom of the Ottawa Regional Police Station, Tenth Line Road and St. Joseph Blvd. Elaine Findlay will speak on "The 'Good Old Days of Education in Cumberland Township.'" Doors open at 6:30 for a start-time of 7 P.M. Be sure to bring a friend along. Light refreshments, as always, will be served.


Society calendar



For more information on these and other upcoming 2012/13 events, please contact a member of the executive committee or visit our website at www.cths.ca.

November 7 th	Elaine Findlay will speak on "The 'Good Old Days' of Education in Cumberland Township."
January 9 th	D-J. Smith: "Cumberland Township Between the Wars"
	Future meetings at the 10 th Line Road Police Station: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 6, 2013 • May 1, 2013
Just a Sampling of What's On at the Museum – 613-833-3059 / CumberlandMuseum@ottawa.ca	
September 29 th and 30 th	(10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) Culture Days with artist workshops offered by the Artist's Association Clarence-Rockland (AACR) (free admission)
October 20 th and 21 st	(10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) Pumpkin days – smashing pumpkins, heavy pumpkins, carving pumpkins and all other things pumpkin
October 12 th & 13 th , 19 th & 20 th , and 26 th & 27 th	(6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.) The Haunted Village
December 1 st & 2 nd ; 7 th , 8 th and 9 th ; 14 th , 15 th & 16 th ; 21 st , 22 nd & 23 rd	(3 p.m. to 8 p.m.) Vintage Christmas Village of Lights

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



Volunteers needed! We still have ideas for telling the stories of the local and family history of Cumberland Township. But we need more people to join the executive if we are to continue. Think about coming out and being part of the gang.

Writing the Domes

by D-J. Smith

We are happy to announce yet another product written and published by the Society—Domes of Navan: Yesterday Today Tomorrow / Les Dômes de Navan, Hier Aujourd'hui Demain. What it took to reach this point, however, was a team and a lot of time.

About four years ago the executive heard that the Cumberland Township Agricultural Society was seeking municipal assistance to renovate the domes. While some of us knew their history, knew how they started life as a covering for the papal mass on LeBreton Flats when Pope John Paul II visited in 1984, not all of us did. While we did not know what the project might grow into, or if it would grow into anything, the executive asked Ross Bradley and Verna Cotton to gather information and make a proposal.

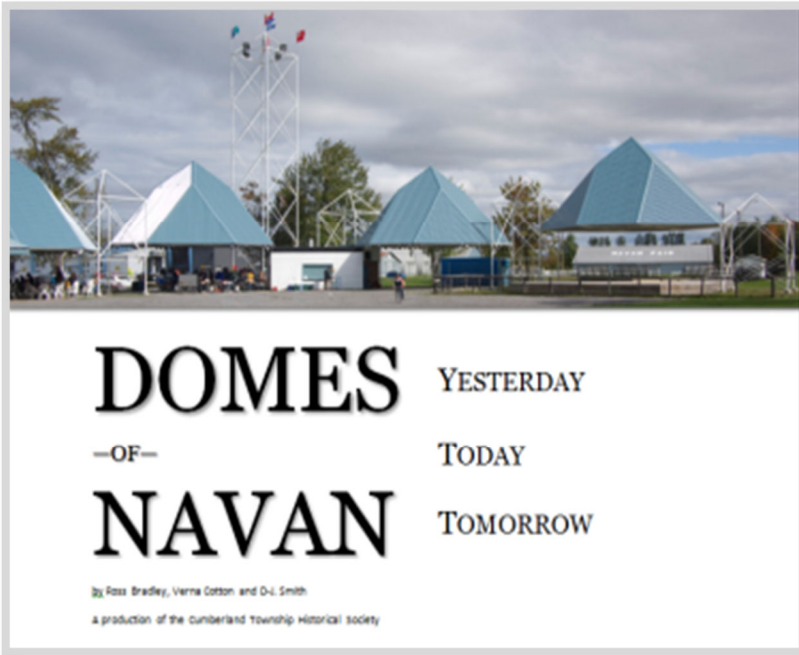
Off went Ross and Verna on what ended as being three years of research work. They looked at old newspapers. Gilles Chartrand showed them the Rockland Museum's collection of memorabilia from the papal visit. They met with Peter Clark who had been mayor. Each step led to another contact, another person to talk to, right down to locating the manager who had been the National Capital Commission's representative on the papal visit committee. By



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
- Dorothy-Jane Smith, Past President (225-3554), Caboose editor
- Verna Cotton, Director (835-2490)
- Randall Ash, Caboose production (833-3207) randall2620@rogers.com
- Dan Brazeau, Website (834-8336) danbrazeau@rogers.com



the Spring of 2011, Ross and Verna had a proposal. This story could make a booklet about not just the structures, but people and events.

By January 2012 the story line was complete. All we were missing was some detail and colour to bring the story alive. I joined the team for the last set of interviews and in May I began writing. We also chose the photographs that would illustrate the book. We had Verna's photos of the helicopter flying in the domes and of local couples square dancing to the music of The Moonlighters. Helen McWilliams brought her photos of the 1985 construction work. Tom Devcseri and John Ladds contributed their Fair photographs showing the domes in the context of both rock concerts and the Midway.

Bob Serré had offered us a price for translation that was extraordinarily low and so translation began in June. At last we were ready to bring in our "magician": Randall Ash whose technical knowledge and whose eye has been responsible for the high quality look of productions such as Murder in Navan. It was his job in June and July to make three disparate elements of photos, texts, and interviews hold together attractively and informatively.

Finally, with a layout that looked good and read well, we were ready for the printers. This was not the end of the work, though, for Randall. He visited Sureprint to review the first copy printed and then worked with them on

the adjustments needed to give the Society the best publication possible.

At the end of four years and the involvement of many people, the Society has produced a new book remembering the little-known history of a Township landmark.

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.

Did you know?



Talking to the Navan Ireland visitors to the Navan Fair galvanized me to re-look at my Irish research. The Irish visitors had

told us a new issue of Irish church records has just gone on-line so I went to the website of Ireland Genealogy <http://www.ireland-genealogy.com/>. The group behind this website is not identifiable but it does have good solid information in its background information. I did not find the church records but I did find other interesting material.

Both Ireland Genealogy and the National Archives in Dublin now have available a work-around for the lack of nineteenth century Irish census records. With compulsory registration of births, death and marriages only having begun in 1864, many claimants to the 1908 Irish Old Age Pension scheme had no means to prove their age. As a result the government had to extract census information from the 1841 and 1851 census returns for recording onto claimants' Old Age Pension Claim Forms. Ireland Genealogy researchers built a database from the claim forms held in the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (covering the counties of Northern Ireland and County Donegal). The database is searchable by surname. Unfortunately there is no preview so, once you find records you think relate to your family, you order and cross your fingers that they will be useful.



Another Irish site is that of the Irish Family History Foundation at www.rootsireland.ie. This is a not-for-profit umbrella organization that works with local genealogy groups. They provide an index of Irish records but not images of original documents. As well,

not-for-profit does not mean free.

I experimented here with my nephew's name – Valley (which in Canada had become Vallillee). This is a rare Irish name which I know from other searches can be traced back to two parishes in County Armagh. The index search told me that there were 1,637 baptismal records, 75 marriage records, 113 burial/death records, 256 census records, 20 gravestone inscriptions, 140 Griffith's valuation records, and 10 Irish ship passenger list entries for this name. Again there is no preview, or indeed any additional information, to let you know if it is worth paying to see a document. Given that my nephew's ancestor, George Vallillee, appears to have left Ireland in the 1830s, I expected that, even at a tiny fee per record, I could work up quite a bill and still learn nothing relevant. If some day I pursue yet another project I have thought of but not started – the one-name Vallillee/Valley database – then maybe. But not today.

One note on last issue's review of maps on-line. I recently discovered (by doing a slightly different word search) that the "David Rumsey Map Collection" belongs to Harvard University. Since it is not a commercial site as I had thought, I was much more comfortable with registering (although I could have continued to look without doing so). As a registered user I was able to download high resolution copies of the railway maps that I had been searching for, without cost or, even more importantly, without follow-up spam. The maps come pre-printed with their origin in the Rumsey collection which is perfect. As a researcher I need to track carefully the providence of all my sources. With this preprinted origin caption, I will not be wondering a year from now where this information came from. A map site that I highly recommend!



Golden Summers Past

From the pages of *The Ottawa Valley Journal*
August 9, 1912, p. 12

Bearbrook the Centre of Fine Farming Country

Much Hay Has Been Saved For Seed – Farm Help Scarce and Work Is Hampered On This Account – Crop Will be Up To Average

By a Staff Representative on the Trail

On Friday last a representative of the Ottawa Valley Journal got off at Vars on the G.T.R. line and took a drive north through the flourishing section of Bearbrook to Leonard, on the C.P.R., through one of the best farming portions of Cumberland Township, in the County of Russell. For two or three miles north out of Vars the land is sandy and low, and the crops are not good. There appears to be quite a lot of grain that was sown late, which, under the prevailing cool weather, will have little chance of ripening. A number of fields of buckwheat were seen here, another evidence of late seeding, owing to weather conditions. The buckwheat, however, appears to be doing well.

Having reached the four corners and following the 'phone road east towards Bearbrook, the traveller immediately enters into an entirely, different section, different in every way. Here he sees fine brick residences, very spacious barns and other buildings, noble farms and even a new traction engine standing in the yard of one of them, the homestead of Mr. Stephen Lowe and son, remarkably good crops of everything and fine, useful herds of cattle in the pasture. With Bearbrook as its heart and centre, there is a large section of fine farms and good farmers.

The soil is rich, varying from strong clay to loam, and the land is rolling, and with the beautiful farm houses, many of them standing on eminences and embowered in trees, it presents a charming, rural landscape, in which good solid farming prevails. It is because of the rolling nature of the land that the crops are so good and so well advanced. The fields, with plenty of excellent natural drainage, did not hold the water in the spring, and with very few exceptions, there was no late seeding. The oats are more advanced and longer in straw in this section than in any section yet seen. The grain, which in most places will be short and fall below

the average, will be an average crop here. The oats are ripening fast and will follow quickly on the hay. As elsewhere there has been a failure of the clover, but the timothy is a big crop and better in quality, perhaps, than for several years. It has been cut and harvested under ideal weather conditions, and the great bulk of it (August 2nd) is safe in the barn. Some straggling lots were yet seen in the field.

Judging from the amount of Timothy left standing for seed, timothy seed promises to be plentiful in this neighborhood for the next year. This is a proof of the quality of the hay. "It was so good," said a farmer, "that I let a couple of acres more go over for seed." A very fine big patch was seen standing on the farm of Mr. Stephen Lowe and another big field, all cut and in stook, that looked at a distance more like grain than grass, so large and full were the heads, halfway between Bearbrook and Leonard. In this section, as in many others in Eastern Ontario, old meadow hay is the best crop. The promises, too, of a good aftergrowth was seen, due to the opportune showers that have come recently and which have done so much to improve the crop prospects generally.

The corn is a little behind, owing to the long spell of cool weather that has prevailed, but most of it looks healthy and strong, and if the [heat] wave predicted around the 18th of August only materializes, the silos will yet be filled, around Bearbrook at least, with a plenteous supply of well-matured [...]. The farmers around do not grow proportionally a great deal of corn, although within the last several years about a dozen silos have gone up with an increasing acreage of corn. The reason is that although dairying and cheese factory are the centre of the system, a good deal of mixed farming prevails, resulting in a superabundant supply of hay, which is pressed and sold, and the oats in good season, with summer fed cattle and hogs. These are chiefly the market products. Hence, the dual purpose cow prevails, mixed grades of shorthorns and Ayrshires. There are very few pure-breds of the dairy breeds to be met with, but the herds have the appearance of being very useful animals and well adapted to the ways and needs of the district. It is a country with plenty of pastures, which do not look too bad, the recent showers having done much to freshen them up.

There can be no doubt that that the scarcity of efficient hired help militates against dairying on the farm. Farmers are tempted, if not actually compelled, to run their farms along the easiest lines and do the best they can under the circumstances, although they might do much more if only they had the hands to do it. The consequence of the prevalence of mixed farming, the farmer handling what stock he can, and running to meadow, pasture and oats.

The potatoes around Bearbrook promise to be a good crop, and indeed it is generally so throughout Eastern Ontario. Other roots look well.

A feature of this section is the number of new barns to be seen, either going up or in various stages of external or internal completion. This is a very healthy sign of a flourishing country.

The houses, too, as already mentioned are generally prettily situated, oftentimes with a shaded avenue leading up to them, and neat wire fences. They have the rural telephone, but not rural mail delivery. Near Bearbrook are the several churches of the different denominations, the school house and the cemetery, and at Bearbrook a general store, the post office and the Morning Star cheese factory, owned and operated by Mr. W. H. Olmstead, who is also a district director of the Eastern Ontario Dairymen's Association. A notice of this fine factory and its work will appear in another issue of the Ottawa Valley Journal.

A Short History of Early Bearbrook

by D-J. Smith

In a December 1980 speech to the Cumberland Township Pioneers, Grace Lowe described how the settlement of the Bearbrook area started with families from Hawkesbury and Vankleek Hill. Some, she said, came up the South Nation River to reach the Bearbrook. A Dunning historian has also described some of these earliest settlers walking in through the bush from the Ottawa River at Cumberland.

These families would have included James McRae who wrote from Hawkesbury to his relatives in Scotland that he was ready to jump off into the "bush." Julius C. Blasdell came from

Vankleek Hill and established a mill on the Bearbrook sometime in the early 1830s based on evidence in the Ottawa District Road Book.

Grace Lowe told her audience that the first settlement was called Eureka and was on the Walsh farm. As Eureka is Greek for 'I found it,' we are left asking who had found what. Still a settlement did grow in the interior of Cumberland Township even if it reverted to the less classical name of Bearbrook.

By the 1840s and 1850s the area around the Bear Brook began to grow as families came from the south and the east, from Metcalfe, Osgoode and Nepean Township. These were long settled Valley families needing farms for younger sons. But land had become expensive in their own neighbourhoods. Instead they looked east and swung in from "behind" the Township.

By 1873 Bearbrook was enough of a place to be recorded in the Dun Mercantile Reference Book. There were three general stores, one owned by Thomas Dagg, one by [Alfred] Hill, and one by John Rogers. In her speech, Grace Lowe described a place with all the accoutrements of an Ontario village. There was an Orange Hall, a blacksmith shop, a cheese factory and a church. Grace gave details: the blacksmith shop only made smaller tools, for mill and farm equipment was brought into the area. The cheese factory was call "Morning Star" and sold its cheese throughout the area and into Ottawa in the early twentieth century.

Bearbrook's potential as a village really came to an end with the coming of the railroad. In 1882 J.R. Booth built the Canada Atlantic Railway across the southeastern corner of Cumberland Township. Since the railway's purpose was to transport lumber to export markets, Booth ran the track with only a few stations along it. But Bearbrook residents had other plans for the line. In 1886 they collected \$1,000 to have a "station and freight shed" built on the line just south of them, in an area the Tweedsmuir History described as swampy with only two houses nearby. But the power of the railway attracted industry and people to create a new village, Vars, that eclipsed Bearbrook. The 1890 Dunn Mercantile reference book stated that Vars had a population of 300. This meant that in four years Vars had grown to be

as big and as developed as the oldest settlement in the township, Cumberland Village.

The railway came at a time when centres in southern Ontario were producing goods at a price that could not be matched by small village artisans. Vars was to prosper as a distribution centre where the railway brought manufactured goods into the district and shipped stock, hay and milk out. Meanwhile, the original location of Bearbrook settled into its new role of agricultural hinterland.

Memories of Bearbrook

by Verna Cotton

My early memories of Bearbrook Village are of going to Trinity Church, Sunday School, and Junior W.A. meetings for girls. I often walked to Sunday School and got a ride home after church. I lived four miles from Bearbrook on the Coburn family farm on the corner of Dunning Road and Magladry Road. Later on I learned to ride a bicycle.



Verna Cotton as a young woman with a fish that did not get away.

One thing I do remember. If you were thirsty, there was a spring on the east side of the Dunning Road. It was about half way to the

bridge, just across from my brother's bush on the west side.

Crossing the Brook Bridge you were able to look down and see if there was much water in the brook. The brook was large enough back then to float logs to the South Nation and Ottawa rivers. Dunning Road crosses the brook today by means of a steel bridge.

Bill Walsh's farm was on the south side of the road at the bridge. In 1911, teams of horses hauled gravel from the pit on the farm. There were four children in the Walsh family: Borden, Cecil, Dorothy, and Harold. Harold married Mildred Griffith and they live now in Vars.

Just before you enter the village you see a road to your left, which is Sarsfield Road. Tom Melvin and his family, as well as Herbert Walsh and family, lived on this road years ago as did other families.

At the edge of the village was a cheese factory which Bill and Tom Olmstead operated for many years. It was on the east side of Dunning Road. Rolland Sicotte also made cheese at Bearbrook. My father took milk to the factory for a period of time.

The Anglican rectory south of the cheese factory was built for Frank Hayes in 1898 and bought by the Church in 1908. It is now a private home.

The John Hayes farm was just east of the rectory and up a short lane. The house was built in 1860. The family consisted of three boys and three girls. Bessie Hayes, one of the girls, played the organ at Trinity Church for many years. The Charbonneau family is the present owner.

Looking south on Dunning Road, you see the Olmstead house on the left. I understand it was at one time a hotel.

Waldo and Vera Arbuthnot owned the store and worked the farm on the west side of Dunning Road. Vera was originally Vera Rivington from Navan. Hillcrest House, beside the store, was where various store owners lived. It was eventually severed from the store and became a separately owned private home. Waldo eventually sold the store and he and his family moved to Perth, Ontario. Miles Allison was yet another owner of that store for a period of time.

Further south on the east side of Dunning road was the home of the McRae family. It had been built in 1860. Albert McRae bought it from the original owner in 1882. He, and later his son David, operated the blacksmith shop next door. Mr. McRae started a bee yard in the 1920s and later his son David could be seen working with their bees. The McRae's also had two daughters, Thelma and Evelyn. I remember Thelma and I tried to fish in the brook but I don't remember catching anything.

Still further south from the McRae's was Loyal Orange Hall #395 which had been built in 1895. It was a busy hall, particularly on the July 12th yearly lodge celebrations. The hall later became a family home.

Holy Trinity Anglican Church is on Russell Road west of Dunning Road. The original Anglican Church was built in the 1850s on a hill northwest of today's church. In 1901 the congregation sold the old wooden structure to Charles Walsh. To replace it, they built a stone structure in a simple but elegant style. Over the years, the congregation improved the church, adding a bell tower in 1924 and gas lighting in 1925.

The History of Uncle Sam Lowe's Place on Russell Road and Rae Lowe's Farm on Forced Road

*By Sharon A. Wright
(daughter-in-law of Rae Lowe)*

When you go for a drive do you ever look out the window and wonder about the homes you pass? As you drive east on Russell Road from Rockdale did you ever notice there are three red brick farm homes which resemble each other? The first one is on the north side of Russell and is known as Toby Lowe's farm, hence the name of the corners to be 'Toby's Corners.' Continue east past the first curve and on the right you will see the original Lowe homestead, commonly known as 'Uncle Sam's Place.' The third home is just east of Dunning on the right side – not a Lowe farm but still has the distinction of being of similar style as the first two.

Thomas Lowe came to Canada from County Westmeath, Ireland in the early 1830's or 1840's. He married Elizabeth Hicks, daughter of Andrew

Hicks and purchased the farm from her father. This farm, which is known today as 'Uncle Sam's Place' at 8398 Russell Road, is still in the Lowe name, being owned by Rick Lowe and Sharon Wright. It is the original Lowe farm but the red brick farmhouse is not the original home. That home was made of logs and some say it was where the red brick home is while others say it was just north. Yet a third story is that it was located just west of the present home on the hill.

Records from Trinity Bearbrook show that Thomas died February 27th, 1869 at the age of 55. He and his wife, Elizabeth had a son, Stephen H. Lowe (1840 – 1916) who married Eliza Ann Anderson (1848 – 1934).



Grandpa Stephen H. Lowe and Gramma Eliza Anderson Lowe holding baby Osborne Griffith – before 1919

(Albert), Eldon, Dora and Horace (John T. was blinded by dynamite; he and Elizabeth owned the farm at Toby's Corner)

William Ernest (Uncle Bill) (1876 – 1958): he never married and lived his life on the original homestead

Stephen A. (1878 – 1922) – he had three children including Andy and Dalton E. (1911 – 1989) who married Rita Mitchell (1918 – 2003)

Eliza Ann (1883 – 1964) married George Walter Griffith (1881 – 1973)

Samuel James (Uncle Sam) (1887 – 1970): he never married and moved out west where he bought his own farm; eventually he sold that farm and moved back to the original homestead

Charles (Charlie) (1889 – 1971) married Dora Vivian Mitchell (1900 – 1983); two interesting tidbits – i) Vivian was a sister to Rita who married Dalton Lowe, son of Stephen A., and ii) did you know that the comic strip, Dennis the Menace is based on relatives of Rita and Vivian's in California – a story in the future for that piece of news.



William Ernest Lowe (Uncle Bill from generation 3) 1876 – 1958

Generation 3 - Stephen and his wife, Eliza, had six children:

John T. (1876 – 1954) – he married Elizabeth Angus (1872 – 1944); they had 4 children, Toby



Back porch at Uncle Sam's Place – Eliza Anderson Lowe and her son Bill standing in doorway

Generation 4 - Charlie and Vivian had six children:

Dorothy Olive (December 1919 – February 2012), Jimmie (1922 – 1923), Rae Mitchell (b. January 13, 1923), Russell Wigle (December 18, 1926 – July 28, 2012), Margaret Fern (? – November 2010) and Donald (b. June 10, 1936)

Charlie bought his own farm on Forced Road, just bordering on the farm that he grew up on (the original Lowe farm). The new farm was steeped in history.

When it was first built around 1835 the original owner was a Mr. Lemmon who sold it to a Mr. Johnston who then sold to Charlie Lowe. The farm was considered the halfway point between L'Original and Metcalfe for the church ministers as they travelled through the various districts and stayed at certain farms on a regular basis. The original part of this house was the eastern wing with the western 2-story part added on at a later time.

Just east of the farm on the south side of Forced Road there is a small cemetery, known as the Union or Methodist Cemetery. You can see that the headstones are standing grouped together. This is because the late Leslie Armstrong was the leader of a committee who were going to clean up the cemetery. Unfortunately Leslie passed away and the work has not been completed.

When Charlie's eldest son, Rae, came home from World War II, as a veteran he was allowed



Charlie Lowe – date unknown but believed to be early 1920's

a special veterans grant/loan to purchase a farm or start a business. He purchased the farm on Forced Road. This where he and his wife, Carol Audrey Parsons (April 1, 1926 – November 14, 1997), started their life together and raised three sons: Robert (July 26, 1952 – June 10, 2008), Rick (b. August 3, 1956) and Ross (b. May 9, 1960).

Over the years changes took place and Rae later acquired the original homestead from his Uncle Sam Lowe. The land from both properties are presently rented out for cash cropping but the original homestead was purchased by Rae's son, Rick and his wife, Sharon Wright, in 1995.



Samuel James Lowe (Uncle Sam from Generation 3) visiting Aunt Hattie (?) at Sunset Lodge in Calgary, Alberta

In talking with many of the neighbours they remember the haying and thrashing days where the farmers would gather at each farm and then move onto the next farm. Stories abound about the machinery and the milling equipment and how the machines were used to generate power for other machines on the farm at Uncle Sam's. Uncle Sam's farm was home to not only the immediate Lowe's but to many of the extended family such as the Smiths and was also rented out to other families until Rick and Sharon bought it.

At the recent funeral of Rae's brother, Russell stories were shared. There was talk of the big table in the kitchen with the long bench, the crocks of sauerkraut, the big cook stove in the kitchen that heated the house, the tin ceiling and the piano that used to be in the parlour. Just think if only the walls could talk what stories would be told!

Unfortunately, tragedy struck the farm that is owned by Rae. Early on the morning of August 21st, 2012, the farmhouse burned. By the time you read this article, the house will probably have been torn down, leaving just the sheds and the barn. Thank God no one was hurt! Throughout the day the neighbours stopped by, sharing stories with the family about the good times that were had at the farm – card parties,

skating parties, Russell landing his plane in the field and such. The home is gone but the memories will live on forever!

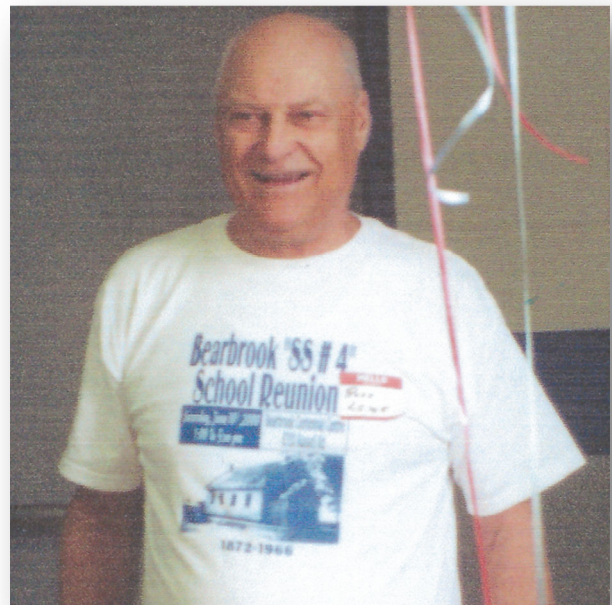
History-Keeping for a School

by D-J. Smith

Many Ontario children attended small rural schools in the years before their closure. So prevalent were such schools before 1960 that local writers today can still collect stories and publish books on school houses from across a region. Yet for any one school there would be only a handful of adults who spent their schooldays in a particular place with a particular set of experiences. Keeping alive the specific stories of a school by organizing a reunion of its pupils is yet another way to be a history keeper.

Russell Lowe is one who did this. In the year 2000, he organized a school reunion for Cumberland Township's S.S. #4. That school had been located at Bearbrook.

According to the Leonard Women's Institute's Tweedsmuir History there had been a school on the Forced Road south of Bearbrook since 1834. This school may have been the second oldest school in the Township for only

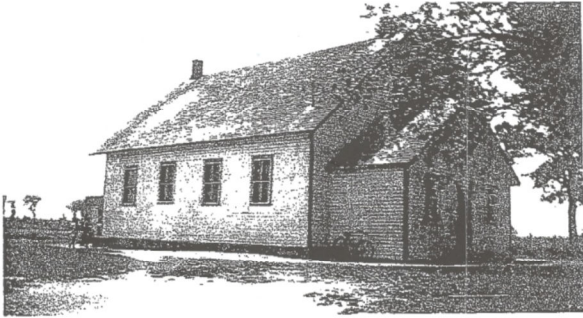


Russell Lowe on June 6, 2000

Bearbrook "SS # 4" School Reunion

Saturday, June 10th, 2000
1:00 To 5:00 pm

**Bearbrook Centennial Centre
8720 Russell Rd**



1872-1966

THE RUSSELL
VILLAGER

COMING EVENTS

SCHOOL REUNION SS #4
Cumberland, 8692 Russell Rd., will be holding its first reunion on June 10, 2000 from 1-5pm in the centennial building, Russell Rd. at Forced Rd. Anyone going to this school from 1872 to 1956 please contact Russell at 613-237-5093.

Cumberland Village is older, as a settlement, than Bearbrook.

But even the oldest person attending the reunion in 2000 would have remembered a different school from the original 1834 building. The school had been built in 1872 on one acre in the northwest corner of lot 21 in concession 5. The building layout varied over the years. It was

built as a one-room schoolhouse but was divided to become a two-room school as the number of children attending school rose. Then it was returned to its original state as the pupil count dropped.

In 1956 this second school house was replaced with a new two-room school house on what was then Stephen Magladry's farm on Russell Road at Forced Road. It served as a school for ten years and then in 1966 S.S. #4 was closed. The children were bussed to Navan's Meadowview School and the building became the Bearbrook Centennial Centre. It was at the Centre that Russell Lowe decided to hold the reunion.

Russell started with a search for former students. He placed ads in newspapers such as the Winchester Press, the Russell Villager and a section of the Ottawa Citizen called "Reader to Reader." His wife, Helen, helped in the organizing and others pitched in.

The event itself took place on June 10, 2000. A group photograph shows that about 67 people were on hand to celebrate and to remember their days at S.S. #4. Brian Coburn had made a scale model of the school building which was put on display. Russell and Helen had collected photographs which were placed in a binder for those attending to look at. The photographs of one class had some names typed on the accompanying sheet while other names were added later in handwriting. Photos of the event show people looking through the



Brian Coburn with the model of S.S. #4 he built for the reunion.

binder and no doubt having many memories triggered by what they saw there.

newspaper in which the students recorded snippets from the newspaper along with jokes, poetry and short stories they had written themselves.



People signed a guest book as they entered and received the t-shirt that memorialized the day. And, judging from the pictures, everyone talked and talked.

The event was captured in a binder, a copy of which is now in the CTHS History Room at the Cumberland Public Library. For an historian an event such as this has great value. The picture of the children lined up to parade in the school fair gives life to the written descriptions that have been found of school fairs. The school newspaper documents what rural children were aware of just prior to World War II. We can see their preoccupations and dreams in the stories and poetry they

wrote. But we can also see that these children were all too aware of the clouds that were looming in 1938. The news clippings they had reproduced spoke of war in Asia, the threat of war in Europe, and Nazi persecution of German Jews.

More photographs were on a table on which posters had been placed. One poster was a hand drawn map of the location of the school building on the Forced Road. Viola Dawson (nee Griffiths) gave a speech about her memories growing up next door to the school. Russell also included two copies of "The Monthly Review" written by the students in the school year of 1937-38. Dorothy Lowe, Russell's sister, and Jane Gifford had been the editors. The "Review" was a

**1940
and
2000**

The children of S.S. #4 attended a one-room rural school. But the teaching of the little school house connected them to the world.

