

The Caboose

Newsletter of the Cumberland Township Historical Society
Bulletin de la Société historique du canton de Cumberland
4560 Ruissellet Rd., R.R. #3, Navan ON K4B 1J1
Web site: <http://www.storm.ca/~jeanf>

Vol. XIII, No. 1
ISSN 1203-147X

July 2000

Published every two months

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LAST MEETING

Our annual general meeting was held on Saturday afternoon, May 6, at the Cumberland Public Library on Tenth Line Road, with six participants in attendance. Ruth Parsons presented her President's report, as well as a financial report. The new Board for 2000-2001 will be the same one as last year: Ruth Parsons, President (and Treasurer); Marjorie Hanson, Vice-President; Bob Serré, Secretary (and Editor of the newsletter); Verna Cotton, Director; Jean-François Beaulieu, Director.

NEXT MEETING

Traditionally, our Society has held public meetings on the first wednesday of September, November, January, March and May, but not in July. The next issue of *The Caboose* will provide details about our September meeting.

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Life and Times of Marshall Blasdell (1799-1862)

by Bob Serré

Marshall Blasdell was born in Vermont on the 29th day of October, 1799. He was the son of Ezra Blasdell and of Lydia Ramsdell. Ezra and Lydia had at least eight children between 1799 and 1817, and Marshall was the eldest.

Ezra had been born in New Hampshire in 1767; some of his children were born in Vermont, others in New York State, and the youngest in Lower Canada. Ezra, who was a foundryman, is known to have made scythes in Hawkesbury, for sale in the Ottawa Valley, in the 1820s [Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*, vol. 1, p. 254]. He died in December 1850, and was buried in Bytown.

Of the eight children born to Ezra and Lydia Blasdell (five boys and three girls), four of the sons and one of the daughters are known to have settled in the Ottawa Valley: Julius Clarke, born in 1803 in Vermont,

died in 1886 in Arnprior; Nathaniel Sherrold, born in 1801 in Vermont and a foundry operator in Bytown, died in 1870; Thomas M., born in 1817 in Lower Canada and a machinist in Bytown, died in 1901; Marshall, born in 1799, lived in Cumberland Township; Syena, born in 1805, married Lyman Perkins, of Ottawa.

The first trace left by Marshall Blasdell in Upper Canada may well be in the parish register of St. Raphaels Catholic Church in Glengarry County. Marshall had married Mary Blanchard, and two of their children were baptized on the 18th of June, 1826, in St. Raphaels Church: Erva was two years old, and William was fifteen days old. Marshall was described as a blacksmith.

We next meet Marshall in Cumberland Township. The year is 1836, and his name shows up on the township assessment roll: lot 19, concession 4. In 1837, he is assessed for lot 19 of concession 2. In 1839, he is living in a one-story house of hewn lumber on the western half of lot 19, concession 2, with 5 acres of cultivated land and 95 acres uncultivated. Lot 19 of concession 2 is in the Bearbrook area, and Grace Lowe has left us a seven-page typescript on Bearbrook, page 2 of which reads as follows: "(...) A saw mill which was run by water power was built by Mr. Blandell [sic] in 1846; this mill was sold to George Dunning (...)"

It is interesting to note that there is a Blasdell Street in Manor Park in Ottawa. The 1879 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Carleton* contains a map of Gloucester showing N.S. Blaisdell as the owner of a huge tract of land on the east side of present-day St. Laurent Boulevard, extending from Montreal Road to the Ottawa River. This was Nathaniel Sherrold, Marshall's younger brother, one of the owners of the Victoria Foundry at the Chaudière Falls, makers "of gearing, shafting, pulleys, and every other description of saw and grist mill irons, having furnished the iron work for a large portion of the principal Mills on the Ottawa and its tributaries" (Ottawa City Directory for 1866-67). Just as interesting is the fact that N.S. Blaisdell married Margaret, the sister of William Wilson of Cumberland.

Be that as it may, Marshall Blasdell was a resident of Cumberland Township at the time of the 1861 Census. He was still living on lot 19 of concession 2 (100 acres), and was described as a farmer and blacksmith, aged 62. His wife Mary was 59. There were nine children in the household: William, aged 30; Juliana, 29; George, 27; Elizabeth, 25; Haines, 23; Lydia, 21; Marshall, 19; Mary Jane, 17; Albert, 14.

Marshall died on the 24th of May, 1862, in Cumberland Township. In the Ottawa City Directory for 1869-70, there was only one Blasdell listed for Cumberland Township: Albert; address: lot 19, concession 2.

THEATRE AND HISTORY

Playwright Sue Flemming, a member of our Society, wrote and directed *Heavenly Plague*, presented by Vintage Stock Theatre at the 2000 Fringe Festival from June 16 to 23 last, in the Alumni Theatre of the University of Ottawa. Combining careful historical research with a fertile imagination, Sue has created characters, scenes and dialogue that are both realistic and captivating.

Heavenly Plague is about the Spanish influenza, a highly contagious disease that appeared in Europe in the spring of 1918. In the fall of that year, as soldiers returned from the devastation of the First World War, the "Spanish lady," as the influenza was called, established a reign of terror throughout the world, and claimed millions of lives. It then simply disappeared, within a few months, leaving the world stunned and humbled.

Vintage Stock Theatre, which had its modest beginnings in 1995, has found creative means of promoting the history and heritage of Cumberland, the region and Eastern Ontario. It presents original theatrical

productions (stage drama, murder mysteries, ghost walks, vignettes) that also raise awareness of the importance of heritage conservation. Hot line: 860-0603. Web site: www.vintagestock.on.ca

OLD OBITUARIES

The following obituary was found in D.A. McKenzie's *Obituaries from Ontario's Christian Guardian 1873-1880*, published in 1996. At the time of the 1861 Census, John Fraser was a plasterer, and his wife's name was Jane.

FRASER, John was born in County Sligo, Ireland, in 1816, came to Canada with his family some years later, and settled on what is now the Chelsea Mission, where he joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church at age 16. On November 22, 1877, he fell from the roof of a building, receiving the injuries from which he died the following Sunday; survived by his widow and children. The funeral was held in Bearbrook Church, November 26th.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Joyce Kennedy, a member of our Society, has just published a book entitled **Distant Thunder, Canada's Citizen Soldiers on the Western Front**. Joyce's father, Robert James Kennedy, served in that war. His diaries, kept in the midst of battle, and his letters home were the inspiration for this book. Joyce has had a distinguished career in education, and now lives in California (e-mail: canadagoose@earthlink.net).

Verna Cotton, following upon the success of her 2001 calendar showing scenes and people of Navan, has prepared a manuscript that will be published by our Society in time for this year's Navan Fair. Entitled **Navan of Yesteryear**, this book describes past and present buildings, and provides the names of people who have lived and worked in Navan. Our Society has been granted a publisher code by the National Library of Canada, which means that this book, as well as others we decide to publish, will be made known around the world in publishers' catalogues, national and international bibliographies, and library catalogues. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) for this, our first publication, is 0-9687196-0-0.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the 1830s, a quarter of a million emigrants poured past Grosse Island and up the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Source: Heather Menzies. *By the Labour of Their Hands. The Story of Ontario Cheddar Cheese*, 1994, page 15)

VIEUX REGISTRES

L'abbé Michael Power a été curé à Notre-Dame-de-Bonsecours (Montebello) de 1831 à 1833. Voici un extrait du registre de cette paroisse [bobine C-3023 aux Archives nationales du Canada à Ottawa].

« Le quatre juin mil huit cent trente-deux, après la publication d'un seul ban de mariage faite au prône de la messe paroissiale dans la Mission de Grenville, les parties ayant obtenu dispense des deux autres bans de nous prêtre dûment autorisé à l'accorder dans les diocèses de Québec et de Kingston, entre Amable Foubert, domicilié dans le Township de Cumberland, diocèse de Kingston, fils mineur de Amable Foubert du même Township et de feu Mathilde Dunning, ses père et mère, d'une part, et Paulite Morin, fille majeure de Willie Morin et d'Angélique Dusiaume, domiciliés dans le Township de Buckingham, dans le diocèse de Québec, d'autre part, nous prêtre soussigné autorisé à remplir les fonctions curiales dans les susdits Townships des deux diocèses de Québec et de Kingston, du consentement des parents, avons reçu le mutuel consentement de mariage des parties par paroles de présent et leur avons donné la bénédiction nuptiale suivant la forme prescrite par Notre Mère la Sainte Église catholique et ce en présence de George Dunning, oncle de l'épouse, de Michael Baudria et de Joseph Foubert qui ainsi que les époux ont déclaré ne savoir signer, l'oncle ne l'ayant pu faire dans le temps.

M. Power, Ptre »

VISAGES DU PASSE

François-Xavier Larocque est arrivé dans le canton de Cumberland dans les années 1850. Né le 14 décembre 1827 à Rigaud, il était le fils de François-Xavier Rocbrune dit Larocque et de Véronique Foubert, soeur d'Amable Foubert, un des premiers pionniers du canton de Cumberland.

François-Xavier Larocque était le petit-fils de Joseph Rocbrune dit Larocque, lui-même le petit-fils de Philibert Couillaud dit Rocquebrune, soldat originaire du Nivernais (France), qui avait épousé Catherine Laporte en 1675 à Contrecoeur, entre Montréal et Trois-Rivières.

Toujours est-il que François-Xavier a épousé Mélie Séguin le 14 juillet 1851 à Rigaud. Ils ont eu deux filles (Émélie et Marie-Emma) et deux garçons (Joseph Thomas et Procule). Mélie est morte jeune, et le 10 mai 1861, François-Xavier a épousé, en deuxièmes noces, Edesse Savage à l'église Sainte-Félicité de Clarence Creek. Ils ont eu quatre enfants : Edesse, François-Xavier, Elisabeth et Isaïe.

Joseph Thomas, né vers 1852 du premier mariage de François-Xavier Larocque, a épousé Louise Vachon à Sarsfield le 18 septembre 1877. Sa soeur Émélie, également née du premier mariage de François-Xavier, a épousé Pierre Savage le 12 février 1872 à l'église Saint-Joseph d'Orléans. François-Xavier, né en 1866 du deuxième lit, a épousé Adèle Brault le 2 août 1887 à l'église Sainte-Martine de Châteauguay. Mort en 1950, il a été enterré dans le cimetière de Sarsfield. Son frère Isaïe, né le 4 juin 1870, a épousé Adèle Lalande le 12 septembre 1904 à l'église Saint-Joseph d'Orléans.

Comme l'explique Jean Larocque dans l'**Histoire de la paroisse Saint-Hugues de Sarsfield**, c'est Isaïe qui a hérité de la terre paternelle. Il a eu six filles et trois fils, dont le plus jeune, Alphonse, a cultivé la terre paternelle jusqu'en 1970 (elle a été achetée par John Smits). Des deux frères d'Alphonse, Zénon est allé vivre à Ottawa et Zéphirin s'est installé sur un terrain près de la terre paternelle. Zéphirin a épousé Marguerite Martel le 25 octobre 1938 à l'église Saint-Thérèse-d'Avila de Marionville. En 1946, Zéphirin et Marguerite ont adopté leur fils unique, Jean Larocque, celui-là même qui a fourni les renseignements sur la famille Larocque pour l'histoire de Sarsfield. Zéphirin a vendu sa terre en 1966, puis il est parti pour la ville. Jean a lui aussi quitté la région, mais il y est revenu et il a épousé Nicole Wolfe le 30 août 1969 à Rockland. Ils ont eu trois filles. J'ai eu le plaisir de rencontrer Jean Larocque le 27 octobre 1999 chez Jean-Noël et Germaine Dessaint à Sarsfield.

Robert Serré