

# The Caboose

Newsletter of the Cumberland Township Historical Society  
Bulletin de la Société historique du canton de Cumberland  
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## LAST MEETING

Our last meeting of the season was a public lecture held on March 7th at the Public Library on Tenth Line Road. The speaker, Anicet Arcand, gave a lively, humorous and informative talk about his experiences working in Brockville as a railroad employee and telegraph operator in the late fifties.

## NEXT MEETING

Our annual general meeting will be held on Saturday, May 5th, at the Public Library on Tenth Line Road, between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. Come along and bring a friend; new members are always welcome.

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### **The Early History of Medical Care in Cumberland Township**

by Bob Serré

When the Township of Cumberland was established in 1799, medicine was still dominated by explanations and procedures that bore a stronger resemblance to the medical arts of Ancient Greece than they did to the scientifically-based profession we know today. The early settlers invariably brought with them a variety of home remedies and self-help recipes handed down from previous generations. They lived in isolated areas, and had to make do with a minimum of outside help. The services of a doctor were sought only in extreme circumstances.

Construction of the Rideau Canal between 1826 and 1832 brought a number of military surgeons and doctors to Bytown. On the other hand, lifestyles and public attitudes created a ready market for self-styled healers, as well as for unscrupulous profiteers who peddled useless and even dangerous potions, concoctions, mixtures, ointments and sure-fire remedies guaranteed to cure just about any ailment.

That was one of the reasons why, in 1788, legislation had been enacted to prevent unlicensed individuals from practising medicine, including surgery and midwifery. However, the law could not be effectively enforced, and midwives continued to play a key role, especially in isolated settlements. Established doctors felt a need to promote their professional interests, and in 1818 new legislation was passed, whereby licences to practise were issued to properly examined candidates by what was known as the Upper Canada Medical Board. The training of physicians had also become a major concern, since the only avenue for aspiring practitioners was an apprenticeship in the colony or studies abroad. The first medical school in the Canadas was opened in Montreal in the 1820s, and King's College, established in the 1840s, provided the first medical school in Upper Canada.

One of the first doctors to practise in the Cumberland-Buckingham area was Dennis Sheppard Leman; born in Bristol (England) in 1806, he married Honorinne Papineau in 1837. The Catholic parish register in Buckingham mentions that he was "a medical doctor of this mission" when his daughter Frances Louisa was baptized on August 29, 1844. Dr. Leman was barely 39 years old when he died on December 31, 1845, in Buckingham.

Another early doctor was A.O. Lacroix, born in Lower Canada around 1805. His name first appears in the account books of Bill Dunning's store in Buckingham as "Doctor La Croix" in 1845 [those books are now kept at the Archives nationales du Québec in Hull]. In 1851, Dr. Lacroix advertised his services in *The Packet*, a Bytown newspaper, and worked at the hospital established six years previously by the Grey Nuns under Sister Elisabeth Bruyère. Dr. Lacroix was living alone in Cumberland Township when the 1861 Census was taken.

Yet another early medical practitioner was Dr. Thomas Ferguson, born in Ireland around 1820. The proceedings of the Upper Canada Medical Board, as quoted in William Canniff's 1894 book entitled *The Medical Profession in Upper Canada*, show that T. McK. Ferguson, of Prescott, Johnstown District, received his certificate for a licence to practise in April 1849. Working as a physician and surgeon, Dr. Ferguson lived in Buckingham with his wife Minerva and six children.

A memorable event took place around that time. It involved a young doctor who had just finished his medical studies at McGill, in Montreal, and interned in New York. His name was James Ferguson, and as we are told by his grandson: "He returned home to Vankleek Hill in the Spring of 1861 and began looking around for a site of practice. He went up to Buckingham Quebec, then a thriving lumber town and saw an old Dr. Ferguson (no relation by blood) who told him he was crossing the river south to Osbourne (originally Foubertville, later Cumberland) to amputate a man's leg and asked James Ferguson if he would like to go too. Grandpa was all for it. So they drove down to the Ottawa River, through the Bassin du Lievre (Masson later) and crossed the Ottawa in a French bateau. John Allan, the shoe maker there had broken his leg and had a badly infected foot. When my grandfather saw it he told the old doctor that his knowledge of modern techniques acquired at the U.S. Army hospital fitted him so that he felt he could save that leg. Old Dr. Ferguson said "The case is yours!" So my grandfather treated it and in a short while, he had John Allan walking around on it, well as ever." Dr. James Ferguson set up his practice in Cumberland in that same year, and served the community until his death in 1921.

Curious readers will find much of interest in *Medicine for Ontario. A History*, by C.M. Godfrey (1979). Many thanks to Jeannie Smith for providing a copy of the description her father wrote of the life and times of his grandfather James Ferguson, M.D.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

The second and last of two renewal notices is being sent to regular members with this issue of *The Caboose*. The July issue will mark the beginning of a new membership year: 2001-2002 (volume 14 of *The Caboose*).

## EARLY PIONEERS

The name of Louis Dionne first appeared in the Cumberland Township assessment roll of 1847, but as early as 1844 entries under the name Lewis Yon were made in the ledger books of Bill Dunning's store in Buckingham. Born in Lower Canada around 1815, Louis Dionne was the son of Germain Dionne and of Marie-Rose Nadeau, who had been married in 1797 at Kamouraska, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River below Quebec City. Germain Dionne's grandfather Jean-Baptiste had been a grandson of Antoine Dionne, who had married Catherine Ivory around 1660 in France, before emigrating to the New World.

Louis Dionne and his wife Tharsile, daughter of Antoine Branchaud and of Geneviève Plante, eventually settled with a growing family on lot 15 of concession 8 (100 acres) in Cumberland Township. Tharsile's brother Antoine had already settled on lot 2 (south part) of concession 4 around 1842. In 1855, Louis was appointed Pathmaster in St. Andrews Ward, and in June 1857, when a list of subscribers was set up for the construction of a Catholic church in the village of Cumberland, one of the 33 names entered for the back settlement was that of "Louis Hion."

Louis and Tharsile had at least eight children, of whom two sons (Louis and Grégoire) and two daughters (Rosalie and Zoé) married into other Cumberland families. Louis married Philomène Lavergne, daughter of Olivier Lavergne and of Rosalie Larocque, on June 11, 1854. Grégoire married Margaret Swail, daughter of Thomas Swail and Martine Lefebvre, on July 15, 1861. Rosalie married Charles Morin, son of Guillaume Morin and of Angélique Jussiaume, on April 15, 1852. Zoé married Antoine Foubert, son of Amable Foubert and of Pauline Morin, on November 9, 1868.

[The above profile was prepared by Bob Serré, using, among other sources, the Catholic Mission register for Cumberland and the first two books of Township Council Minutes and By-laws.]

## BACK IN 1886

On Friday, January 29, 1886, the Ottawa newspaper *The Evening Journal* published the following report:

### CUMBERLAND CULLINGS

#### Interesting Items from the Down River Village

Mr. William Wilson, the popular postmaster of the village, is recovering from his recent severe and protracted illness.

The Presbyterians of this section recently built a handsome new parsonage for the rector, Rev. Mr. Crombie.

Mr. Nelson Dunning has erected a commodious two story stone dwelling and store on Queen street.

Mr. Robertson's team broke through the ice on the Ottawa River recently while crossing from Cumberland to Buckingham. They were rescued with some difficulty, Mr. Robertson himself having a narrow escape.

A very enjoyable concert was given recently in the village, under the management of the Rev. Mr. Baker, pastor of the Anglican church at Bearbrook. The principal feature of the evening was the performance of an Indian chief, who gave an interesting display of the warlike tactics of the red man in scalping his foes, etc.

## VIEUX REGISTRES

L'abbé Onésime Boucher a été curé de la paroisse Saint-Antoine de Cumberland de mars 1861 jusqu'à l'incendie qui a détruit l'église vers 1866. Voici un extrait du registre de cette paroisse [bobine de microfilm FHC-474 conservée au Family History Centre (Mormons) à Ottawa].

« Le trois juin mil huit cent soixante deux, nous soussigné, curé de cette paroisse, avons inhumé dans le cimetière de cette paroisse, le corps de Charlotte Berthiaume veuve de défunt Alexandre Laverne, décédée avant hier dans cette paroisse à l'âge de quatre vingt quinze ans. Etaient témoins Louis Savage, Téléphore Laroque et Louis Yonne.

O.J. Boucher Ptre »

## VISAGES DU PASSE

Séraphin St-Denis est arrivé dans le canton de Cumberland vers 1856. Lors du recensement de 1861, il avait à peu près 24 ans; sa femme, Adélaïde Martin dit Ladouceur, en avait 22 environ; ils s'étaient mariés le 23 novembre 1857 et ils avaient deux jeunes filles.

Séraphin avait une soeur appelée Odile, qui a épousé Sévère Daoust le 8 janvier 1855 à Coteau-du-Lac, dans le comté de Soulanges, à l'est de Montréal. Sévère et Odile et leur premier enfant sont venus s'établir dans le canton de Cumberland en 1856, d'après l'*Histoire de la paroisse Saint-Hugues de Sarsfield*.

Séraphin St-Denis était le petit-fils d'Antoine Denis dit St-Denis, lui-même arrière-petit-fils de Jacques Denis dit Saint-Denis, originaire de la Normandie, qui a été soldat et ensuite laboureur, et qui a épousé Anne Gauthier en 1689 à Lachine. Jacques Denis et Anne Gauthier ont eu douze enfants entre 1692 et 1723. Leur fils Jacques est l'ancêtre de Séraphin St-Denis et de sa soeur Odile. Un autre fils de Jacques Denis et d'Anne Gauthier s'appelait Louis, et c'est ce Louis qui est l'ancêtre d'Anthime St-Denis, arrivé dans le canton de Cumberland en 1878, d'après l'*Histoire de la paroisse Saint-Hugues de Sarsfield*.

Plusieurs membres de la famille St-Denis ont habité à Coteau-du-Lac, et c'est là qu'Anthime est né, le 2 mars 1842, d'après le registre paroissial. Anthime était le fils de Joseph St-Denys et d'Hélène Bré (Bray), qui s'étaient mariés à Vaudreuil le 18 septembre 1832. La vie d'Anthime St-Denis, de ses fils Hector et Damien et de leurs descendants est racontée dans l'*Histoire de la paroisse Saint-Hugues de Sarsfield*, publiée en 1986. Anthime faisait partie de la septième génération des descendants de Jacques Denis et d'Anne Gauthier.

Séraphin St-Denis, lui, faisait partie de la sixième génération issue de l'ancêtre Jacques. Il a fait baptiser sa fille Marie Lilia le 4 juin 1864 à l'église Saint-Antoine, dans le village de Cumberland; le registre paroissial mentionne que Séraphin est journalier à Cumberland. Quelques années plus tard, il a quitté le canton avec sa famille pour aller s'installer à Hull. C'est là qu'on le retrouve en 1875. Lui et Adélaïde ont eu plusieurs autres enfants, mais Séraphin est mort jeune et Adélaïde s'est remariée, épousant Félix Larocque le 23 septembre 1888 à Hull. Quatre enfants de Séraphin et d'Adélaïde se sont mariés à Hull : Anne, Albina, Poméla et Isaïe; leur fille Louise a épousé Thomas Lavoie à Burlington au Vermont le 18 juin 1894.

Robert Serré