

# The Caboose

Newsletter of the Cumberland Township Historical Society  
Bulletin de la Société historique du canton de Cumberland  
Web site: [www.storm.ca/~jeanf/index2.html](http://www.storm.ca/~jeanf/index2.html)

Vol. XV, No. 2  
ISSN 1203-147X

September 2002

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Published every two months

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## NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 4, at 7:00 p.m., in Room 5 of the Queenswood Heights Community Centre, 1485 Duford Drive at the corner of Amiens Street. Our speaker will be Ross Bradley of Navan, who will talk, among other things, of the family business, which dates back to 1898. This will be a public lecture, and everyone is welcome to attend!

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### Timbering and the Early History of Cumberland Township by Bob Serré

When Philemon Wright arrived at the Chaudière Falls on the Ottawa River in 1800, he was bent on establishing a farming community that would prosper in a peaceful and promising land. Initially, his resources were being depleted to build up the new settlement, which in turn could not yet produce enough goods to maintain itself. And so it was that Philemon floated his first raft down the river in 1806. He was hoping to deliver timber, cut on his own lands, to merchants in Quebec City, in return for much needed cash and provisions. The operation was only partially successful, but it proved that the idea had merit, and marked the beginning of massive timbering and logging operations that changed the face of the Ottawa Valley forever.

The Hamilton Mills in Hawkesbury soon became a key factor in the development of timbering activities in the Lower Ottawa Valley. As Patrick Irwin explains in a book entitled *The Hamiltons of Hawkesbury* that was published in 1997, George Hamilton, of Scots-Irish roots, and his partner, Charles Adamson Low, "held vast privileges on the Gatineau and Rouge rivers, and owned privately extensive timber tracts in Plantagenet, Clarence, and Cumberland townships in Upper Canada," so that by 1836 the firm of Hamilton and Low was "the largest firm on the Lower Ottawa."

For several decades, the magnificent trees of the region were cut down by teams of men living in shanties built in the bush. Hewers squared the felled trees, cutting them smooth and straight on four sides using a broadax. Individual pieces of squared timber were tied together into cribs, which were in turn assembled into rafts; these were floated to market by raftsmen. As Sandra Gillis explains in a paper entitled *The Square Timber Trade in the Ottawa Valley 1806-54* that was published in the Proceedings of the Forum on the Regional Identity of Western Quebec held in Hull in November 1981, "the 1840's were the high point in the square timber trade of the Ottawa Valley," and by the

mid-century, the future of that industry "was not to be in square timber, but in sawn lumber for the American market."

The Bear Brook in the back of Cumberland Township became an important route for bringing logs to market. According to *The Story of the Counties of Ontario* published in 1913, the lumberers worked their way through the region, "and stripped it of almost all the oak and pine fit for market before the Crown Reserves were bought by the Canada Company" (page 124). Timbering created many job opportunities throughout the Valley. Farmers could work part of the year in the shanties, earning precious cash that helped them sustain their farms. In addition, farmers could fairly easily sell their surplus production to the lumbermen. In pursuing their own interests, the lumbermen opened up new tracts of land for farming, as would-be pioneers found it more attractive to purchase partly cleared acreage on which to settle.

When the most valuable trees had been cut down in the Lower Ottawa Valley, timbering operations shifted to the Gatineau and Upper Ottawa valleys, though they remained an important part of local economies for several decades. An example of Cumberland men working in shanties outside the township can be found in the 1861 Census returns for Bowman Township, located north of Buckingham in Papineau County (Canada East). Those census returns name six shantymen who gave Cumberland as their place of residence: Louis Poirier, aged 23; Alexandre Poirier, aged 21; Adolphe Poirier, aged 19; J. McLaughlin, aged 21; William Low, aged 38; John Quiddley, aged 35.

Readers who would like to know more about timbering and logging, and life in the shanties, will find much of interest in Peter Adams' book *Early Loggers and the Sawmill* (1981) and in Bernie Bedore's book *The Shanty* (1975).

#### EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Our Society is proud to announce that it has published its second book. Readers will recall that Verna Cotton, a founding member and Director of our Society, wrote *Navan of Yesteryear*, published in the year 2000; about 275 copies of that book have been sold to date. Now we have published *Memories of Leonard and Other Recollections*, written by Gerald E. Poaps. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) for this, our second publication, is 0-9687196-1-9. Published in July 2002, the book has 58 pages, a map of the village of Leonard, and beautifully reproduced photos, showing for example the Leonard train station, the mill complex, the new school, the Baptist Church and the Township Hall. The author describes the mill operations in considerable detail, and takes us back to another world, rekindling memories of the past with some delightful touches of humour. Copies may be purchased (\$15.00 each) at our public meeting on September 4, or from Audrey Poaps-Moore, a member of our Society, who can be reached at 613-728-7466. Mail orders should be addressed to CTHS c/o Audrey Poaps-Moore, 532 Courtenay Ave., Ottawa ON K2A 3B3, with a cheque for \$15.00 payable to Audrey Poaps-Moore.

Since the Annual General Meeting held on May 4, 2002, there have been two Executive meetings. On Wednesday, May 22, the Executive welcomed a new Director, Randy Ash. On Wednesday, July 17, the Executive welcomed another new Director, Jeannie Smith. Randy and Jeannie bring precious new energy to our Society.

We were very well represented at the Navan Fair (August 8-11). Bob and Rita Dessaint organized our float for the Saturday morning parade, with help from Randy Ash and Jeannie Smith, and we won first prize in our class. The genealogical apple tree with family names inscribed on the apples that Carole Proulx-Lafrance designed last year, was used again this year, along with our Society's banner. Jean-François Beaulieu, Bob Serré, Jeannie Smith and Verna Cotton took turns attending to our stand at the Fair.

## REMINISCENCES - 1864

[The following reminiscences, written in 1896 by a superannuated public school teacher named William Bradley, were published in volume 28 of the *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada* in 1910.]

1864:— The first school in which I taught was in the Township of Cumberland, County of Russell, in 1864. There was in it a Blackboard, a Map of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres and one of Europe. The old fashioned Desks were in use, namely a Board attached to the Wall, and long Benches all around the School House. The Books in use were the Irish National Series and Sangster's Arithmetic. The School House was built of Logs, with a cottage Roof.

## EARLY PIONEERS

Launcelot **Jackson** was born in Ireland on July 23, 1819. He was the son of Edward Jackson and Rachel Astleford. His widowed mother emigrated to Canada in 1847 with five daughters (Rachel, Amelia, Ellen, Mary Ann and Elizabeth) and two sons (Launcelot and Samuel). When the 1861 Census was taken, Launcelot was working as a clerk for Brock Grier, a merchant in Bearbrook. He was also a Public School teacher in Navan. Launcelot married Mary Ann McCullough, whereas his brother Samuel married Susan Clarke, daughter of Thomas Clarke and Elizabeth Brown; they settled on lot 15 of concession 9. Launcelot's sister Rachel married Susan Clarke's older brother Richard. His sister Amelia married George McFadden, and Elizabeth married Edward Code. Launcelot's mother was 86 years old when she died in April 1884. Launcelot's wife Mary Ann was 60 when she died in January 1892, and Launcelot lived to the age of 87; he died in January 1907. All three were buried in the Anglican cemetery in Navan.

## OLD OBITUARIES

[The following obituary appeared on page 3 of *The Ottawa Evening Journal* of Monday, November 21, 1904.]

Mrs. Elizabeth Moffatt, relict of the late John Moffatt, of Bearbrook, died on Friday, the 18th inst., at the residence of her son, on the old homestead, at Bearbrook. She was 83 years of age and one of the pioneers of Cumberland township. She is survived by four daughters and five sons, namely Mrs. R.W. Granger, of Ottawa; Mrs. J. Cole, of Alexandria; Mrs. J. Hall and Miss K. Moffatt, of Bellmount, Man.; Messrs Samuel, Thomas and Richard of Bearbrook; George, of the Yukon; and Herbert Moffatt, of Bellmount, Man. The funeral took place yesterday at 3 p.m. to the Anglican cemetery at Bearbrook. It was very largely attended by relatives and neighbors.

[Readers will note that John Moffatt was born in Ireland around 1820. He married Elizabeth Welsh in Cumberland on March 6, 1843. He was 50 years old when he died in June 1871. He was buried in the Anglican cemetery in Bearbrook, as were his daughter Letitia and her husband, Benjamin W. Granger.]

## VIEUX JOURNAUX

[Un journal appelé *L'interpète* a été publié à Alfred de 1886 à 1900. Dans le numéro du 2 mars 1888, on trouve l'annonce ci-dessous, qui touche le village de Vars, connu au début sous le nom de Bearbrook Station ou simplement de Bearbrook.]

M. Charles Brisson tient à Bearbrook, Ont. un hôtel qui peut rivaliser avec ceux de la ville sous le rapport du confort et de l'accommodation. La table est tenue d'une manière soignée et les chambres sont chaudes, propres et aérées. Le bar renferme ce qu'il y a de meilleur en fait de cigares, boissons et liqueurs de toutes espèces.

Pour le dehors, de spacieuses et chaudes écuries attendent les chevaux des étrangers voyageurs — allez sans crainte au NEW WINDSOR HOTEL, ONT. quand vous irez à Bearbrook et vous serez satisfaits!

## VISAGES DU PASSÉ

Charles Brisson est né dans le Bas-Canada en 1845. Il était le fils de Joseph Brisson et d'Éloïse Gauthier dit Landreville, qui s'étaient mariés à Saint-Jacques l'Achigan, au nord de Montréal, en 1844. Joseph était l'arrière-petit-fils de Nicolas Brisson, originaire de la Lorraine en France; Nicolas s'était enrôlé dans l'armée royale en mars 1755; arrivé en Nouvelle-France, il avait eu deux fils de Marie-Josephte Paysan, veuve.

Toujours est-il que Charles Brisson a épousé Éloïse Gagnon à Embrun en décembre 1871. Née en 1848, Éloïse était la fille de François Gagnon et de Marie-Louise Martel. Éloïse et Charles ont eu dix enfants, dont quatre fils (Philibert, Philéas, Charles et Herménégilde).

Comme l'explique Luc Ricard dans son *Histoire de la paroisse Saint-Guillaume de Vars*, publiée en 1991, l'abbé Jacques-Casimir Guillaume, cinquième curé de la paroisse Saint-Jacques d'Embrun, a vendu à Charles Brisson un terrain à côté de la gare à Vars, en janvier 1891. C'est sur ce terrain que Charles a fait bâtir un hôtel qui, toutefois, a brûlé vers 1901.

Les parents de Charles, Joseph et Éloïse, ont été enterrés dans le cimetière d'Embrun. Joseph était mort en 1884, âgé de 58 ans environ. Pour sa part, Éloïse avait près de 98 ans lorsqu'elle est morte en 1921.

Charles Brisson est mort en 1934, deux ans après la mort de sa femme, Éloïse. Ils ont été enterrés dans le cimetière d'Embrun. Leur fils Herménégilde, né en 1880, a épousé Alfréda Grignon à Embrun en 1906. Alfréda était la fille de Joseph Grignon et d'Agnès Daoust. Alfréda et Herménégilde ont eu sept enfants : Conrad, Alice, Adrien, Rodolphe, Aurèle, Yvette et Réjeanne. Alfréda est morte en 1948 et Herménégilde a épousé, en deuxièmes noces, Dina Bourdeau, veuve de Jean Millaire; le mariage a été célébré en juin 1950 à Casselman. Décédé en 1969, Herménégilde a été enterré dans le cimetière d'Embrun.