



## 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 two times a year, spring and fall, by the Cumberland Township Historical Society.*

*Our newsletter is printed and distributed by Sure Print & Graphics, Ottawa.*

## Our address and local history room

*Ottawa Public Library, Cumberland Branch, Local History Room, 1599 Tenth Line Road, Orléans, ON K1E 3E8*

## Our World Wide Web Address

[www.cths.ca](http://www.cths.ca)

*Our Webmaster is Christine Boyer.*



## Message from the Caretaker Committee

WELL FRIENDS, AS A RESULT OF THE NEAR-UNANIMOUS VOTE by both members present (25) and members voting by email (21) at a Special General Meeting held on October 23rd at Maple Hall in Cumberland, the Cumberland Township Historical Society will continue operating, albeit somewhat differently, at least for now. We will continue with our core functions; the publishing of the Caboose (on a reduced schedule for now); we will continue to distribute and sell our numerous publications (reprinting them as needed); we will continue to hold our annual general meeting in May of each year; and we will continue our presence at the Navan Fair. Laurie Watson has agreed to assist us with The Caboose so the workload won't be onerous and with several of us working on it we hope to keep it fresh and interesting. If you, as a member have a story, family or local anecdote you'd like to share, or a story idea, please feel free to share them with us.

As you may know by now, the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum has a new Administrator. Tabitha Renaud's roots actually run pretty deep in the soil of Cumberland Township. She has a passion for local history and is a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic addition. We've asked Tabitha to do a regular piece for The Caboose to share stories from the Museum and to keep us all abreast as to upcoming activities.

Our **Annual Membership Dues** for next year were raised to \$25 at the meeting. Dues hadn't been requested for the current year because of the uncertainty of our future. Now that we are moving forward, we would ask that all members kindly pay their \$25 memberships at their earliest convenience. Please send your \$25 cheque or money order payable to CTHS (Cumberland Township Historical Society) to: Gilles Chartrand, Treasurer CTHS, Clarence-Rockland Museum, 687 Laurier Street, Rockland, Ontario, K4K 1E6.

**Exciting news!** The CTHS is now able to accept electronic payment of our annual dues. If you prefer to pay this way, the address is [treasurercths@gmail.com](mailto:treasurercths@gmail.com)

We discussed simplifying things by moving our fiscal year to January 1 - December 31<sup>st</sup>. Upon review of this we found that it is fixed in our constitution and our filings with both the City of Ottawa and the Federal Government would both be impacted. It was decided that it is best left as is.

A member at the meeting inquired about charitable status. While the CTHS is registered as a not-for-profit organization we do not have charitable status. In the years that Gilles has been our treasurer he has not had a request for a receipt for a charitable donation. This would also require a lot of extra work in annual submissions to the Federal Government at a time when we're trying to encourage volunteers to come forward.

Speaking of volunteers; if you or anyone you know might be interested in a position on the executive or even just to help out the Caretaker Committee on something specific, please contact us.

*Gilles Chartrand, Tom McNeely, Laurie Watson and Ivan Tanner*

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# Bears, Wolves, and Banshees!

WELL, FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVEN'T HEARD, the big news this summer in Bearbrook was ..... a bear! Throughout much of the summer a large black bear roamed around Bearbrook, Vars and reports had him as far west as Carlsbad. He mostly terrorized bird feeders, tearing them down and enjoying the bird seed. To access the bird feeders he roamed in very close proximity to peoples' homes and even ventured up onto their decks. His apparent lack of fear of people and his near continuous presence caused a lot of consternation but the general feeling was "this is really cool but please go back to Larose Forest soon." Unfortunately peoples' fears were eventually realized when he killed livestock. That is the end of the Bearbrook bear story of 2023.

As we are nearing the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bearbrook settlement the bear story brought to mind this story which I had transcribed from the Ottawa Evening Citizen from 1931. The Citizen had a regular feature called "Old Time Stuff" in which a reporter toured around the Ottawa Valley interviewing "old folks." I apologize that some portions of this 92-year-old article were damaged beyond recognition. I've indicated those portions but you can still get the gist of life in Bearbrook with the early settlers. I hope you enjoy.

*Ivan Tanner*

The Ottawa Evening Citizen  
Old Time Stuff

about 1931

## Should Have Been Called "Wolf Brook"

**Mrs. Thos. Brown says the Name "Bear" Brook Was Wrongly Applied. A Wolf Tale. Wolf Packs Were Large Even in Fifties. A "Banshee" Story. Of Long Lived Family. About Oxen.**

A couple of miles southwest of Vars in Russell county lives Mrs. Thomas Brown, a widow, aged 82, who knows a good deal about Bear Brook.

Mrs. Brown was born there in the year 1849. She is the daughter of Robert Walsh, one of the pioneers of the Bear Brook district. Her Christian name is Easter, she having been born at the Easter season. In 1873 Easter Walsh married Thomas Brown of Morewood.

### Back to 1859

Mrs. Brown has recollections of "the Brook" as it was called as far back as 1859. At that time, the village consisted of a general store kept by Lancelot Jackson, and a blacksmith shop, run by John Kearney. The Walsh home was just a mile from Bear Brook.

Mrs. Brown says there was a store at the Brook before there was one either at Navan or at Vars.

### Because of Bears

The Brook got the "bear" part of its name from the fact that there were so many bears along its banks, but in the opinion of Mrs. Brown the Brook should have been called "Wolf Brook" as even as late as the fifties, when she was a small girl, wolves were very numerous along the Brook and in the country round about.

### In Big Packs

Wolves used to be seen in the Brook country in packs as high as 50. To show how wolves were feared as late as the fifties Mrs. Brown tells that one evening <illegible...her uncle...> home from Kearney's blacksmith shop when between the shop and his home he heard the howls of an apparently large pack of wolves.

He went back to the shop and in the neighbourhood hunted up 5 boys who undertook to see him home along the tree-covered trail. The lads armed themselves with pitchforks. Guns were scarce then.

### Stayed All Night

The six lads got safely to Richard Walsh's but they had no more than reached the place when the howls of the pack came in the direction of the home.

By that time it was dark and Mrs. Walsh insisted on the lads staying all night, which they were, to tell the truth, not loath to do.

### Dog Was Torn

When the lads had left Kearney's they had brought with them a large grey dog. This dog had been left outside. Apparently the dog had later set out for his home. The next day its body, torn and mangled and almost all devoured, was found on the road, between the Walsh home and Kearney's.

### About Banshees

Mrs. Brown is a great admirer of the O.T.S. [Old Time Stuff]. She read with interest the story of Mr. Peter Gorman of March about seeing or hearing a banshee in 1871. Mrs. Brown says she never had such an experience, but that her uncle John Moffatt of the Brook claimed to have frequently heard one around his place in the fifties. Mrs. Brown does not recall whether deaths followed the hearing of the banshee at the Moffatt's but she knows that her uncle used to be greatly worried whenever he heard the peculiar cries of the banshee.

### All Oxen

When Mrs. Brown was a little girl at the Brook, nobody had any horses. Oxen did all the heavy work. Mrs. Brown recalls how she and her sister used to draw the grain from the fields to the barn with oxen. Reins were never used with oxen, a rod or a “goad” was used instead. The rod was laid against the ox’s neck, pressure being applied in the direction it was desired they should go. The terms “gee” and “haw” were also used.

Oxen had an advantage over horses in that they seldom tried to run away. They were patient and intelligent.

### Long Lived Stock

Mrs. Brown comes of a long lived stock. Her mother, Mrs. Robt. Walsh lived to be 96, and her grandmother on her mother’s side lived to be an even hundred. Mrs. Brown’s sister, Mrs. Thos. Hayes, is still alive at the age of 90. She lives at Bear Brook.



*This black bear visited the Bearbrook home of Mrs. Easter Brown’s great-nephew and CTHS member, Bob Walsh, three times in the summer of 2023.*

BEAR AND WOLF SIGHTINGS WERE COMMON in the mid-1800s, and were remembered vividly decades later. No doubt, the Bearbrook bear of 2023 will be remembered similarly!

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN’S OLD TIME STUFF editor interviewed Sarah Burns Minogue and her brother, Louis Burns Jr., in July 1932. Their father, Louis Burns Sr. had built a log home (located at present-day 1655 Cox Country Road, Cumberland) for his bride, Mary Ann Wallace, in the mid-1840s. They recalled their father’s challenges with bears:

### **New Settler in Cumberland Township Learned by Experience That ... Bulldogs Cannot Scare Bears Off.**

In the early days of Mr. Burns’ farming experience, the bears were quite troublesome. He came to Ottawa and bought a bulldog to scare them off. Soon after the bulldog came on the scene a bear appeared in the direction of the sheep pen.

“Sic him, Bull,” Mr. Burns called. The bull[dog] dashed for the bear. The bear reared on his hind legs. When the bull started to put his teeth into the bear’s left flank, the bear cuffed the bulldog on the head and knocked him twenty feet away. The bull wasn’t of much use after that. Later Mr. Burns learned to use a terrier for bears. The little fellows jumped in and out, snapping at the bears’ heels so that they moved off.

MRS. MINOGUE TOLD THE NEWSPAPER of “an exciting experience which she had with a wolf soon after her marriage [in 1862]”. She recounts that she:

### **Faced a Wolf.**

Very early one fall morning Mrs. Minogue went down the road to find a missing cow. She was going along with her head down. Looking up suddenly, she beheld a large wolf standing in the road not six feet from her.

She stood still and looked at the wolf thinking that her end had come, and wondering what her husband would say when she did not come home. It was a very tense moment.

Suddenly the wolf lowered his eyes, turned and ran the opposite way.

### **Wolf Called Pack.**

Mrs. Minogue tells how about the same period John McKee was followed for two miles by a wolf. He was unarmed. All the time the wolf kept up a howling—supposedly to call a pack. The pack, however, did not come.

### **Teacher Snowballed.**

When Mrs. Minogue was a little girl at home on the Burns’ homestead, she attended the public school. The school [presumably Cumberland S.S. #6, Ed.] was about two miles from the Burns’ homestead. The route was through a thick bush. Mrs. Minogue and her companions often saw bears on the way to school, but always at a distance.

Her first teacher (about 1852) was Miss Susan Taylor. Another teacher remembered was a Miss Mary Culbert. She recalls Miss Culbert from the fact that one winter day the boy pupils snowballed Miss Culbert and hurt her. A meeting of the trustees was called and the bad boys paid dearly for their prank.



## What's Happening at the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum

Tabitha has a doctorate in history from Queen's University and served as Director of the Murney Tower Museum. She is a former President of the Kingston Association of Museums, Galleries and Historic Sites (KAM) and was on that leadership team for over a decade representing around thirty

Since January, Tabitha has really focused on the General Admission experience at the museum. She has hired dozens of villagers and tradespeople to ensure there are always fully costumed "villagers" providing a living history experience to visitors. The museum was beautifully landscaped in 2023 and a new leather shop opened in Spratt House. The team added some new farm animals, a "schoolhouse experience" and regular wagon rides. The canteen and gift shop have returned. The gift shop is selling goods made by the museum's heritage tradespeople, alongside books for the Historical Society. There has been a large investment in marketing, including radio ads, and the hope is to build up daily visitation over the next few years. The museum continues to offer large special events such as the Vintage Village of Lights from November 24 to December 17 (tickets available online now). The Village was also busy with school groups all year and will build up its booked programming.

## Welcome to the new Museum Administrator

TABITHA RENAUD BECAME THE MUSEUM ADMINISTRATOR at the Cumberland Heritage Village in January 2023. Tabitha was raised on a seventh-generation family farm in Leeds County near Smiths Falls. This large mixed farm kept the old ways and was like stepping into the 1920s. Tabitha was drawn to the museum in Cumberland because it is the way she grew up and she can now preserve this way of life and honour the legacy of her grandparents. She is thrilled to join this community and is already a member of the Cumberland Township Historical Society and the Cumberland Community Association.

cultural sites. She taught history at Queen's and was the Programming Chair for the Kingston Regional Heritage Fair for seven years. Tabitha worked at the Museum of Health Care, the MacLachlan Woodworking Museum and the Delta Mill Museum. She has also served on boards for Parks

Canada, Beyond Classrooms Kingston, the Kingston Historical Society and Smiths Falls Heritage House. She received two awards in 2023 for her years of service in Kingston: The KAM Award of Excellence and the Kingston Historical Society Award.

Free admission was offered for children this summer and a free seniors' weekend was held in September. The Fall Market had a record count of over 8000 visitors. Lastly, the museum has started offering workshops in November, February and April.

Tabitha has reconnected with Vintage Stock Theatre, and they have booked some performances on site for March 2024. There's lots more to tell, so stay tuned for all the exciting things happening at the museum!

*Dr. Tabitha Renaud, Cumberland Heritage Village Museum Administrator*

