

THE CABOOSE



Newsletter of the Cumberland Township Historical Society (CTHS)

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Spring 2024

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.

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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

Our Webmaster is Christine Boyer.



Message from the Caretaker Committee

WELCOME TO OUR SPRING 2024 EDITION of The Caboose. We hope you enjoy our articles as well as the Cumberland Heritage Village section. The CTHS has been blessed with scores of interesting and educational articles by numerous authors over a period of several decades. It is something of a challenge putting our newsletter together with new and fresh material. Starting with last fall's edition we have begun to print it in our own local area and distribute it ourselves. Like all changes this has presented us with challenges and Laurie Watson has been working diligently to overcome them in an effort to streamline the process and make it easier and (hopefully) cheaper. Between Tom McNeely and Gilles Chartrand great strides have been made in giving our members the option to pay our annual membership dues by e-transfer.

LAST FALL, GILLES AND IVAN put a lot of effort into applying for the City of Ottawa Cultural Funding Grant that the CTHS has received for many years. Gilles has always been extremely conscientious in applying for only the minimal amount of funding that we require. Unfortunately, our application was denied and when we asked for more information such as who our "peer review" group was and why we were declined we were informed that information wouldn't be available until sometime this summer. We hope that when we do receive that information we will be able to rectify whatever our shortcomings were when we apply for the 2025 grant.

ON THAT NOTE, just a friendly reminder that your annual membership dues are due and that they have been raised to \$25. 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. If you prefer to pay via e-transfer the address is treasurercths@gmail.com

WE WERE SADDENED to learn of the passing in March of a longtime member of the CTHS, Emmet Carr. Emmet provided much information to our Local History Room, as well as authoring articles and contributing research to The Caboose.

WE HAD MENTIONED WITH GREAT EXCITEMENT the renewal of our relationship with the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum and besides their contributions to The Caboose and their willingness to sell our books and publications in their gift shop, they have offered the use of their wonderful facility to hold our Annual General Meeting.

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE that our AGM will be held on Tuesday, May 14th at 7 p.m. in the Church at the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum, 2940 Old Montréal Rd, Cumberland, ON K4C 1G3. The executive positions are still open and anyone interested in them is more that welcome to apply in advance or to be nominated at the meeting. Should a new executive not step up and if the desire of the meeting is for the Caretaker Committee to continue, volunteers are most welcome to join us. We will have an update from the Museum and the evening's presentation will be on **THE MILLARS, AN ORDINARY CUMBERLAND FAMILY**. We hope that by the end of the presentation you will have an entirely new outlook on "ordinary" as well as on Canadian history.

Gilles Chartrand, Tom McNeely, Laurie Watson and Ivan Tanner

Barn Building Tools – from days gone by

THE BARNs BUILT IN THIS PART OF THE COUNTRY relied on ages-old post and beam construction techniques imported from our European ancestors. I have long been an admirer of the joinery used masterfully in barns and carriage houses of bygone days. As a member of the Morin family, I have a number of tools handed down to me from my grandfather, George Morin, who built houses in Ottawa and barns on family farms including his own. The assortment of tools range from wooden planes, cross cut saws, adzes, axes, t-drills and oak pegs used in the McNeely barn which was torn down due to foundation failure in 1984. A picture of the structure as it stood in the late 1960s was captured forever in a sketch by Mary Kinsella.



I AM AMAZED at the accuracy and the strength of the post and beam construction techniques used by the barn building craftsmen using very basic tools and manual labour to create these works of art. The abundance of lumber (pine, oak, spruce, ash, beech, hemlock, maple, butternut, black walnut, and balsam) was an important factor in the barn construction business. The barn raising gatherings were made possible through the techniques of joinery which allowed the skeleton of the barn to be partially assembled on the ground and using horses and manpower raised into position and joined together and

pinned using oak pegs. The numerous joint techniques used by these master builders consisted of several different types:

Mortise and Tenon
Shouldered Mortise and Tenon
Dovetail Joint
Bird Mouth
Lap Joints

The joints were hand drilled and pinned together using hardwood pegs, usually oak or ash, hammered into pre-drilled holes using T-handled drills. The picture below shows the t-drills used during George Morin's barn building days.



THE NEXT INSTALMENT in the barn building history of our area will look into the type and style of barns that were built from the 1850s through 1950 using the post and beam techniques. I will also include pictures of other tools in the builder's tool chest.

By Tom McNeely

CTHS PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FOR SALE

Glimpses of Cumberland Township
 Memories of Leonard

Murder in Navan
 Navan of Yesteryear

Domes of Navan / Domes de Navan
 A Doctor's Tale / Dr. James Ferguson

Recollections / From Holland to Canada

Colour Map of Cumberland Township circa 1840, size 20" x 30"



Available at:

Cumberland Heritage Village Museum, 2940 Old Montreal Rd., Cumberland 613-833-3059

Da Artisti Studio & Gallery, 2565 Old Montreal Rd., Cumberland 613-833-2565

The Black Walnut Bakery, 979 Cameron St., Cumberland 613-884-6976



At the farm of Albert Marshall, Vars, Ontario, 1935.

BARN RAISINGS IN CUMBERLAND TOWNSHIP

A new barn was built in 1941 at the farm of Walter Griffith, Bearbrook, Ontario to replace one lost to fire.

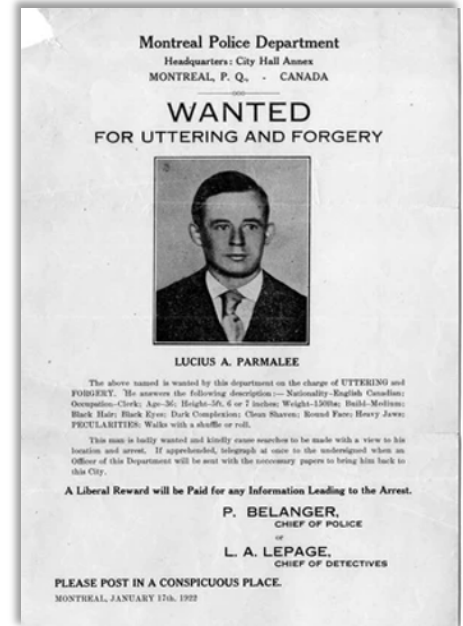


The barn's super-structure takes shape at the farm of Walter Griffith, Bearbrook, Ontario.

The End of the Santa Claus Forger

IT ENDED ON MAY 1ST, 1947 IN THE VARS TRAIN STATION when Ottawa Police sergeants Cavan and Pepper arrested Lucius Parmelee who was sitting quietly with a brown leather briefcase containing \$17,400 in cash; roughly \$270,000 in 2024 dollars.

MODERN DAY PSYCHIATRISTS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS WOULD HAVE A FIELD DAY with Parmelee. Much of what is known about him comes from his autobiography "Confessions of a Bank Swindler" subtitled *The Life Story of Christmas Parmelee The World's Most Successful Bank Swindler*". He'd been born in 1889 in Waterloo, Quebec to a successful banking family and by his own description he was smart enough to attend university but his family lacked the funds. He was taken into the family business and was then given a job as a junior clerk in the Union Bank of Canada in Cookstown, Ontario in 1909. Banks, like almost all jobs at the time, didn't pay well—\$200 a year—which increased to \$350. He was transferred to another bank and promoted to teller and accountant. After learning valuable details about banking operations he quit the banking business in 1912 to join a harvest crew in Saskatchewan. Once the harvest was finished he made his way to Winnipeg and soon went through his earnings. To make ends meet he took a job as a night clerk in a hotel where he met a young woman who he describes in romantic, flowery detail which roughly translates to a lady of the night. Through her he was invited to a house party with a number of underworld characters in attendance. A large amount of alcohol was consumed and after everyone had passed out drunk he lightened their pockets, wallets and purses of \$2,360 (more than \$50,000 today). Since he was the prime suspect he soon left town and headed back to Waterloo and then to Chicago.



AFTER THE MONEY WAS GONE we find him in the U.S. Army just outside of San Francisco in a coastal defence unit. The fact that Canada was at war might have influenced his decision. By 1916 he was bored with army life and purchased his release for \$100. He returned to Waterloo once again and considered going back into banking but quickly dismissed that idea. Instead he went into Montreal where he opened small accounts in two different banks. The following day he returned to the banks and wrote cheques on each of the accounts for \$5 then "adjusted" the amount by adding a 9 in front once the ledger clerk had approved them before handing them to the teller. Besides being a thief he was now a fraudster.



Molson Bank that Parmelee tried to rob in 1918

WITH HIS PREVIOUS BANK EXPERIENCE he confidently continued with this modus operandi with ever increasing amounts of money. Most of the time it worked, occasionally it didn't. He learned that the interbank transfer slips were simply left in drawers in the branches so he broke into the Molson Bank in Waterloo in 1918 to gain access to them. An employee who lived upstairs heard him and he barely escaped the police. He was now a wanted criminal. He continued his swindling using forged withdrawal slips.

PROHIBITION BEGAN IN THE UNITED STATES in 1920. Parmelee saw an opportunity and began bootlegging liquor to Maine from Montreal via Halifax. He soon left that career behind as, ironically, he became a victim of fraud.

RETURNING TO SCAMMING BANKS, the Union Bank on James Street in Montreal was his next target. He decided that the Christmas rush would both increase the chance of success with busy tellers and the chance of escape on busy streets. He used his usual plan of cashing a \$7 cheque which he turned into \$3,760.60 (approx. \$60,000 in 2024).

HE MADE HIS WAY TO NEW YORK CITY, and eventually Vancouver in 1923, but tellers were now aware of his methods and were becoming much more cautious. He began sending himself certified cheques from as many as four different banks in which he had accounts. The result was that he now had copies of the certification stamps and the manager's signatures. With these documents in hand he now began forging both the stamps and signatures and got away with another \$9,000 (\$155,000 in 2024).

AT ABOUT THIS POINT IN TIME he purchased a chicken farm near San Francisco. His flock contracted a contagious disease and most of them died. He sold the survivors and as he relates in his autobiography, "I sold what chickens remained," he wrote, "and, as any ordinary business man would, I turned to the banks for relief." In his case of course he meant that he would return to crime and he reappears in Toronto around Christmas time in 1927. Adding a new twist he begins dressing like a clergyman and presenting banks with letters of estate. After defrauding them of \$12,000 (\$210,000 in 2024) he headed back to the U.S. While riding on a ferry he was recognized by a bank teller who'd been one of his victims and he was arrested. You'd like to say in a stroke of bad luck but that really wouldn't be appropriate here.



HE WAS SENTENCED TO 14 YEARS in San Quentin but was extradited back to Canada after three years and an additional 12 years were added to his sentence for his Canadian crimes. From what should have been, by my math, 26 years in prison, he was released after serving five years in Kingston Pen. Returning to Waterloo, he got a factory job which he was able to stay with for three years. Between his low threshold of boredom and his criminal nature he had to try again. He stole blank cheques from the company, forged the certification stamps and headed to Ottawa to cash them.

WHILE MAKING HIS PREPARATIONS at each of the banks he took a hotel room. Shortly before noon on May 1, 1947, Parmelee visited four banks in about 30 minutes—The Royal Bank, the Bank of Toronto, the Bank of Montreal, and the Dominion Bank, all on

Sparks Street—and cashed a cheque for \$4,350 at each. Parmelee hailed a cab to take him to Alexandria but wanted to return to his hotel to pick up his luggage. While he was in the hotel, his cab driver, Lionel Trottier, called the cab company to let them know where he was going as he'd been robbed by an out of town fare shortly before.

THEY WOULD HAVE INTENDED to follow Russell Road to get to Alexandria. As those of us who grew up in this area know, Cobb Lake, just east of Bourget, floods in the spring and was always impassable at that time of the year before it was built up in the 1960s. To avoid the flooded road ahead, Parmelee decided to stop in Vars and take the train from Vars to Montreal instead. As he sat in the waiting room of the Vars station that cold, rainy day the stationmaster's phone rang. It was the Ottawa police. Once it was confirmed that Parmelee was there, the sergeants arrived shortly thereafter.

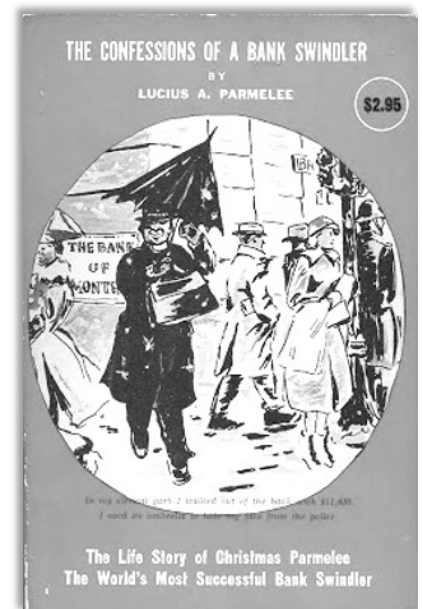
LUCIUS PARMELEE—'Christmas Parmelee,' 'the Santa Claus Forger'—was sentenced to 12 years in the Kingston Pen. He was released after eight years on June 15, 1955. He did odd jobs here and there, penning his autobiography in 1968. He died in 1974 at 85 years of age, unrepentant for his crimes and continuing to blame the banks; they had it coming since they paid their employees so poorly, treated them badly and didn't even have a pension plan.

Sources:

"The Confessions of a Bank Swindler," autobiography by Lucius A. Parmelee;

"Lucius A. Parmelee, the notorious Townships note forger" the Sherbrooke Record, Dec. 10, 2021 by Taylor McClure;

"After a 35-year criminal career, the Santa Claus forger was finally caught in Ottawa. But who was he?" The Ottawa Citizen, Dec. 29, 2018 by Bruce Deachman.



Morin and Martin Family Roots in Nova Scotia

SINCE I RESIGNED FROM THE PRESIDENCY of the Cumberland Township Historical Society a year ago, I immediately fell into an Annapolis Royal historical project. My sister Anne-Marie is the mayor of Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, and she was in need of a genealogy/historical researcher for a new grant that her town had received: Annapolis Royal was to establish an Acadian heritage room somewhere in town, and the Annapolis Heritage Society made the decision to use a room in their O'Dell museum. So I jumped on board and realized that the 2024 World Acadian Congress was being hosted next door in Clare and Argyle Counties in Nova Scotia. So why not also host two family reunions in Annapolis Royal celebrating the arrival of Pierre Morin sometime around 1660 and celebrating also the family that he married into, the family of Pierre Martin who had arrived in Port-Royal which became today's Annapolis Royal) in 1636.

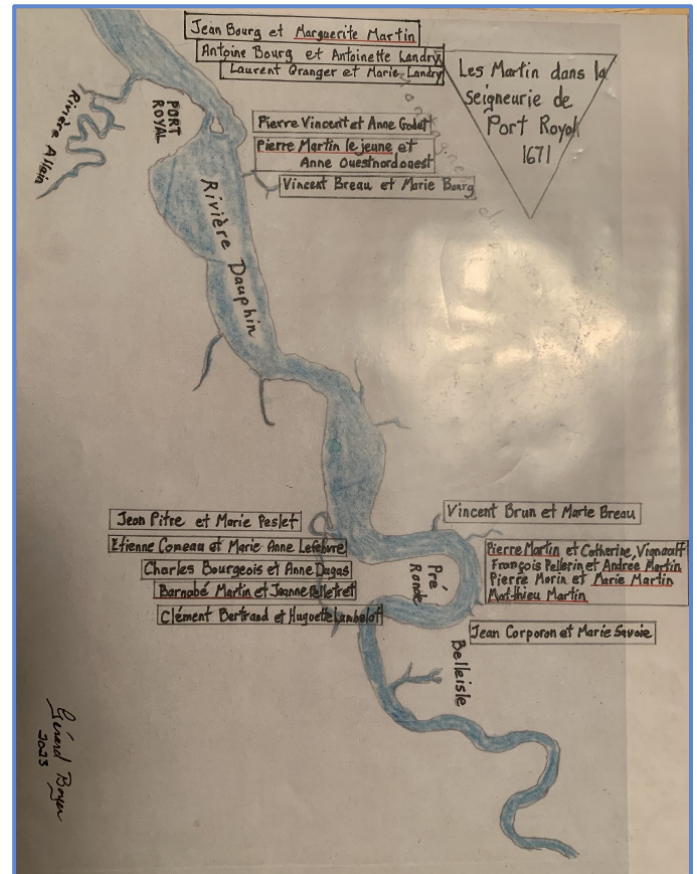
SOME READERS MAY REMEMBER that in 2010 the Morins created a Morintrek (yes, it's now a website for any interested Morins) by travelling from Cumberland (beginning at the Maple Hall) and travelling back in time over about 10 days through Québec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and revisiting where preceding generations of Morins had lived. Since that time the same group has been to Bourgueil, France where Pierre Martin had come from and to Normandy, France where Pierre Morin had come from. Another time we went to Scotland to visit the homesteads of Camerons, MacCraes, Macwhirters and MacDonalds who had married into the Morin clan.

THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO Cumberland families heading out this year to attend a family reunion for the Martin clan on August 16, 2024 and another the next day celebrating the Morin clan. Most attendees are descendants of both, a one-stop genealogical deal.

FOR THOSE OF YOU who are deep-seated historical fans, I am sharing a never-seen image of a map that I created for the occasion.

YOU MUST CONSULT your Google maps first to find the Annapolis River (Dauphin River on my map) in Nova Scotia and the location of Annapolis Royal (Port-Royal

on my map). With that, you will see that I believe I have located where the combined Martin-Morin families lived in 1671, based on a census conducted that year. You will see a cluster of names just above Prée Ronde on my map, just to the left of Belle-Isle. That's where I believe Pierre Martin eventually settled, as did two of his daughters, Marie and Andrée, and one of his sons, Matthieu. They would have joined other families in dyking the Belle-Isle marsh.



WITH A LITTLE COOPERATION from Nova Scotia's Ministry of Natural Resources, I hope to be brushing trails in overgrown fields and meadows at the end of April in preparation for this summer's family reunions. There is nothing as enjoyable as brushing in old tick-infested meadows.

By Gérard Boyer

MARK THE DATE!
CUMBERLAND TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 14, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.

Cumberland Village Heritage Museum, 2940 Old Montreal Road, Cumberland

Cumberland Heritage Village Museum

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE for supporting the museum last year! The Cumberland Heritage Village Museum (CHVM) returned to its roots as a living history site with lots of new villagers in costume offering new programming and interactive experiences throughout the year. Promotion and attendance both increased for 2023 and our villagers continue to improve our grounds with landscaping, crops, gardens and new animal enclosures. We added a new leather shop and reopened our pump factory. We also brought back our canteen and a gift shop program in which we sell the goods made by our tradespeople.



WE EXPANDED the museum's Departmental Consultative Group (DCG), a committee of community members that provide feedback to our museum team. We would like to thank Mazhar Choudhry, Anda Bruinsma, Russ Thomas, Wanda Williams, Steve Lecomte, Clive Horne, Yuri Locmelis and Vasanthi Pendakur for volunteering with us! Our dear friend Russ Thomas has stepped down as chair of the DCG after many decades of volunteer service at the museum. The museum team wants to thank Russ for his tireless commitment to the museum and surrounding community. The

museum would not be the place it is today without his efforts!

IN THE PAST, the museum operated seasonally. For 2023-2024, the museum has successfully expanded public programming into the fall and winter months to ensure we are serving our community all year long. For example, our new *Makers at the Museum* program has expanded to include several workshops in November 2023, February 2024 and now April and May 2024. These workshops have all sold out quickly and so far include leather working, print making, quilting and knitting. We have a lot of talented tradespeople and artists on our village team and look forward to rolling out many more unique opportunities that will fill our calendar with activities all year round!



WE ALSO EXTENDED our holiday programming in December 2023 with a new offering, the *Winter Solstice Stroll*. After the *Vintage Village of Lights* ended on December 17, we opened again to allow visitors to continue enjoying the beautiful lights at night for several more days leading up to Christmas. We ran the bonfire and canteen and charged entry by donation. This allowed families an affordable way to experience the lights during the holidays and take some great photos together. The program was well attended, and we hope to run it again this year.



THIS WINTER MARKED the beginning of a new partnership with The Haunted Walk. On Friday and Saturday nights from February to May 2024 the program *Alone in the Dark* is being offered on the museum grounds. Haunted Walk staff help visitors explore the museum in total darkness with flashlights, demonstrating historical methods of paranormal investigation. The program has been successfully attended so far and is a fun, lighthearted offering that uses the museum grounds at night in the winter when it would normally be closed. The program will return in Fall 2024.

THE MUSEUM ALSO PARTNERED with Vintage Stock Theatre (VST) on eight performances over four afternoons of *Tales from the Village*. A local community theatre company, VST Productions, tell original stories written and performed by local people, focusing on the social and cultural history of Canada, particularly the Ottawa Valley. *Tales from the Village* ran on the weekends of March 2, 3, 9 and 10 this year and was well received by our community. The stories were written by Jeannie Smith and John Cook, who both attended to see their works brought to life.

COSTUMED STORYTELLERS were spread throughout the village grounds. Stories featured were:

- Moonlight at Midnight (Foubert House)
- The Wind's Folly (Loyal Orange Lodge)
- On Doctor's Advice (Knox Church)
- The Story of the One Room Schoolhouse (Schoolhouse)
- The Golden Shovel (Bandstand)



THANK YOU to Francis Kenny, Gisèle Rivest, Shannon Bonenfant-Saturno, Diane Champagne, Barbara Allen, Sophia Sudnikowicz and Victor Lachance for their stirring orations. Lisette Major, Sanjiv Kalra and Sarah Kirton all worked as guides. Sarah Kirton did a fantastic job as

director! The museum offered blacksmith demonstrations, a bonfire and ran the canteen with hot drinks and baked goods available. It was great to reconnect with VST and we are looking forward to more collaborations between our teams in the coming years!



LASTLY, THE MUSEUM happily ran a March Break program this winter. We welcomed camps from four local community centres and assisted our friends in social services by holding a free day in which our team bused families in need to the museum for a special day to get some fresh air and enjoy

new experiences. Several partner organizations came to help out!

WE THANK VOLUNTEERS from Ottawa Fire Services, Ottawa Police, local Spinners, Weavers and Knitters guilds, and our local Search and Rescue unit. March Break was a huge success and our team plans to offer March Break programming annually going forward.

WE ALSO OFFERED programming at *Fête Frissons* in Orléans at the Shenkman Arts Centre that was attended by over 400 people. The museum's *Hop Into Spring* special event on March 30th was a hit, featuring baby farm animals and lots of chocolate. We had over 1400 people attend. For more information on the exciting things the museum is doing in 2024 visit our website and Facebook page:

Ottawa.ca/museums

www.facebook.com/cumberlandmuseum

By Cumberland Heritage Village Museum Staff

Dr. Ferguson Family Medicine Co.



John Ferguson drove this carriage throughout eastern Ontario and western Quebec, selling cure-alls and his father's patent medicines.

ON DISPLAY at the *Community Healers: Portraits and Practices* exhibition at the Shenkman Arts Centre from March 14 to April 16, the carriage pictured at left was owned by Dr. James Ferguson and his son John Ferguson of Cumberland.

THE EXHIBIT PLAQUE describes Dr. Ferguson:

Dr. James D. Ferguson (1838-1921) arrived in the Township of Cumberland in 1861 and dedicated sixty years to serving the community as doctor, political advocate, and coroner. He provided bilingual healthcare to isolated farmsteads in Ontario and Quebec, making him a lifeline for many. To reach his patients, he often travelled through dangerous terrains on foot, canoe, horseback, or carriage. He was sought-after for his sympathetic nature and capable medical knowledge. His accessible care and unwavering service to his patients profoundly impacted his community, persisting long beyond his passing.

YOU MAY READ all about Dr. Ferguson's life in the CTHS publication, *A Doctor's Tale: The Story of Dr. James Ferguson, Cumberland Township Doctor*, written by his great-granddaughter, Jeannie Ferguson Smith, of Cumberland.