

THE CABOOSE



Newsletter of the Cumberland Township Historical Society (CTHS)

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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,
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1599 Tenth Line Road,
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Our World Wide Web

Address: www.cths.ca

Our Webmaster is Ed Stevens,
RPM Creative Inc.

Executive Committee

President: Bill Woodruff
Secretary: Tom McNeely
Treasurer: Gilles Chartrand
Directors: Ivan Tanner,
Marcia Kennedy (History Rm),
Laurie Watson (Caboose)



Message from the CTHS Executive

Annual General Meeting



Please mark your calendar for our Annual General Meeting on **Tuesday, May 12, 2026**. It's at **7:00 p.m.** in the **Lori Nash Room** of the Cumberland Branch, **Ottawa Public Library**, 1575 Tenth Line Road, Orleans. Come and hear about the Heritage Grant we have received from the City of Ottawa—the money will enable us to purchase technology needed to digitize our precious documents. We will conduct an election of officers for the 2026-2027 year.

Hear our guest speaker, **Dorothy Jane Smith**, with her address on **Exceptional Women**. Her speech will tie in with articles featured in this edition of The Caboose about local women a century ago as they pursued higher education and employment. New opportunities gave women the chance to earn their own income and make their own financial decisions.

CTHS collection of oral history recordings

We are grateful for the foresight shown by our predecessors in the CTHS 35-45 years ago to collect more than 50 audio recordings of longtime Cumberland Township residents telling their stories on a variety of topics. The subject matter ranges from Christmas customs, stories of villages, people, homes and businesses, funeral customs, Second World War experiences, individual family histories, meetings, radio interviews and a church service. Listen to them here: <https://cths.ca/voices-from-the-past-voix-du-passe> A few of the recordings have been transcribed and we intend to do all of them to have a written record on our website.

CTHS at Touch-a-Truck Show - Saturday, May 30, 2026 – 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

The Cumberland Township Agricultural Society and Navan Community Association are hosting "Touch-a-Truck" at the Navan Fairgrounds on Saturday, May 30, 2026. A variety of vehicles and large equipment will be on display. The organizers have invited our Historical Society to set up a booth to offer a historical lens on the careers, machinery and equipment from long ago to contrast with those on display at the event.

CTHS Road Trip

Since the Ottawa River holds major significance to Indigenous, fur trade and settlement history of our Township, we are thinking of taking a road trip in the summer to see this grand river up close. Travelling eastward we would visit the Macdonell-Williamson House (circa 1817), pictured at right, near the Carillon Dam at Chute-à-Blondeau, Ontario. If we have a group of 10 or more we could receive a guided tour of this National Historic Site and enjoy a complete English tea.



Please let us know if you are interested in joining the excursion to the Macdonell-Williamson House:

historicalcumberland@gmail.com.

Further information will follow.

CTHS Website

Our gratitude is extended to Christine Boyer for her dedication as our webmaster for the past several years and we send our best wishes and sincere appreciation to her. We now welcome Ed Stevens aboard as our new webmaster.

Annual Membership

We invite you to join or renew your membership in the CTHS. The annual membership fee is \$25.00. The form is found on page 12 at the back of this Caboose. Your support is appreciated.

Volunteer with the CTHS!

If you are reading this newsletter you must have a passion for Cumberland Township history! You can help preserve our heritage in any of these ways: Transcribe an oral history—we will guide you. Staff our booth with a shift at the Navan Fair—meet interesting people and share knowledge of Cumberland history, or help set up or take down the booth. As a CTHS volunteer you will be doing your part to keep our history alive. Reach out to one of the Executive Committee (their names are at left) or email historicalcumberland@gmail.com

- **NEW BOOK coming soon!** A Walking Tour of Vars: A Railroad Town by Ivan Tanner (2026)
- Black Crosses Off My Wingtip by Dr. I.F. Kennedy (1994)
- Cenotaph of Navan (2021, reprinted 2023) - \$20
- Doctor's Tale: The Story of Dr. James Ferguson 1861-1921 (2021) - \$6
- Domes of Navan (2012) - \$5
- Early History of Cumberland Township 1798-1840 (2020) - \$30
- Family Ghost by Ken Dugdale (2004, reprinted 2025) - \$20
- Glimpses of Cumberland Township (2016) - \$25 // Regards sur le canton de Cumberland - \$25

- Memories of Cumberland Township (2006) – undergoing reprint this year!
- Memories of Leonard (2002) - \$15
- Murder in Navan (2005) - \$10
- Navan of Yesteryear (2000, reprinted 2025) - \$15
- Recollections: A Father and Daughter Share Their Memories - Holland to Canada (2008) by Plonia Bouwhuis-Dennee
- Secret Murder of County Constable John Morrison (2021) - \$6
- Stitching Hope by Hand: WWII Cumberland Blue Quilt (2023, updated & reprinted 2025) - \$40

Nurses, Teachers, Office Workers – the Ambitions of Young Women a Century Ago

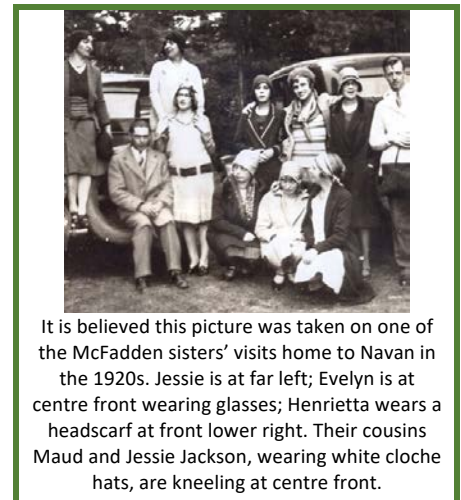
By Laurie Watson & Lorna Glennie



Sisters **Jessie McFadden** (1895-1979) and **Henrietta McFadden** (1898-1989), are pictured at left wearing white blouses, at the Navan Train Station in 1916 alongside their friend **Gertrude Bickerton** and young **Robert Cummings**, at far left. They are bidding farewell to six Navan soldiers: **Ira Cummings**, **Wellington Armstrong**, **Lowell Lancaster**, **Robert Kilrae**, and **Leonard Bird** at rear left to right, and **Byron Armstrong** at front right. Tragically, only one of the men, Ira Cummings, would return; the other five were killed in action in France. While the dreadful war raged on in Europe, young Canadian women yearned to do their part. They couldn't be soldiers but they could be nurses.

Just Call Me Eva (2006) tells the story of one Cumberland Township woman and her intention to volunteer as a nurse in the First World War. **Eva Farmer** (1894-1978) commenced her studies at the Metropolitan Hospital in New York City in 1915. When the war ended the hospital was short of nurses due to so many working overseas that Eva remained on staff at the Metropolitan. She returned to Canada in 1919 and married her sweetheart Robert Kennedy who had served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. For the rest of her life Eva Farmer Kennedy played a pivotal role in providing nursing and maternity care to countless Cumberland residents.

The war in Europe had ended by the time Jessie McFadden (1895-1979) of Navan completed her three-year program at the Connecticut School of Nursing (later incorporated into Yale Medical School). While in probationary training in mid-1918 she consented to “respond to an emergency call for nursing service” in a state military census surveying human and industrial resources available to support U.S. involvement in the war. However, nurses and doctors soon faced a deadly war on the home front in the summer of 1918: the great influenza epidemic, often called the Spanish flu, which killed millions worldwide. Jessie never forgot the chilling sounds of ambulances bringing influenza patients to the New Haven Hospital where she was training. Upon her graduation in 1921 she moved to New York City and worked at the Nursery and Child's Hospital in midtown Manhattan. Jessie married Martin Burns in Brooklyn, NY in 1931 and joined him back in Navan at his family farm where they raised their two children, Robert and Lorna. Jessie was active in church and community organizations, playing the organ in church for many decades, and was a charter member of Navan Women's Institute. Jessie assisted Dr. Major of Orleans at home births and provided private nursing care for people in their homes—going to hospital was much less common in those days.



It is believed this picture was taken on one of the McFadden sisters' visits home to Navan in the 1920s. Jessie is at far left; Evelyn is at centre front wearing glasses; Henrietta wears a headscarf at front lower right. Their cousins Maud and Jessie Jackson, wearing white cloche hats, are kneeling at centre front.

Jessie McFadden's cousin Maud Jackson (1902-1967) also became a nurse. Trained at Cornwall General Hospital, she was the village midwife at many home births in the Navan area, assisting Dr. David Irwin. When winter roads were impassable they travelled in Dr. Irwin's snow machine, forerunner to the snowmobile. A tireless nurse and church and community worker, Maud married William Newton and they had two daughters, Adelaide and Roberta. Maud Jackson's sisters Mary (1899-1977) and Jessie (1906-1997) made careers in education. Mary was a teacher, writer and speaker; she married Walter Collins of Manotick—they were parents of three daughters, Claire, Camilla and Anna. A whiz at arithmetic, Jessie tutored her nieces and their friends preparing for high school entrance exams. Jessie married Thomas Dagg of Navan. She taught piano for decades to many Cumberland Township children.

Jessie McFadden's younger sister Henrietta 'Ettie' McFadden (1898-1989) chose nursing as well, taking her training at the Lady Stanley Training Institute for Trained Nurses in Ottawa. Named after the wife of the then Governor-General, the Institute opened in 1891. Its pupils received practical training in the wards of the County of Carleton General Protestant Hospital located next door in the building now known as Wallis House at 589 Rideau Street. Henrietta graduated from the three-year program in June 1924. Hers was the final graduating class of the Lady Stanley Institute: the new Ottawa Civic Hospital was about to open in November 1924 and nurses would be trained and housed at its Carling Avenue site from then on.

Through poems, jokes and photos of nursing students and hospital doctors, Henrietta's hand-lettered class scrapbook illustrates a young nurse's life in the 1920s. The head of the graduating class is lauded: "Here's to Marjorie Graham / The most practical of our class, / She has a nice disposition, / She's quite the congenial lass, / She's great at copying lectures, / For studying, she takes the cake, / She hates to waste a minute, / But loves to say "For Glory's Sake."

A set of "Ten Commandments" illustrates the travails of hardworking student nurses:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thou shall not take the Matron's name in vain, Nor talk about the "Supr" behind their backs 2. Remember the bell that rings at 6 am, And don't thou be late. 3. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work, Then thou shalt again work on the 7th day, For all thy predecessors have worked 6 days and worked on the 7th And thou shalt not depart from this custom. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Honor thy Supervisors and thy Doctors, That thy scoldings may be few, And thy days pleasant, in the Institution fate has thrust upon you. 5. Thou shall not kill time on duty. 6. Thou shall not commit any offences that the "Grads" would not commit, But follow faithfully in their footsteps. 7. Thou shall not steal any article from the dressing trays, | <p>Until the Doctors have made their rounds.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Thou shall not bear enmity towards thy Seniors, For the bawlings out thou dost receive. 9. Thou shalt not burn the C.C.G.P.H. electricity after 10 p.m. 10. Thou shall not covet thy Matron's dignity, Nor thy Doctors learning, Not the good things thou knowest are in the diet kitchen. |
|---|--|--|

It was not all work and no play, however. Nurses enjoyed active social lives. Henrietta's friends reported that, "Our Mac, the senior of the class, / Who always looks so spick and span, / She is out most every night, / And we think there is some man." Another nurse is described: "Our Marjorie at first was religious, / But wait till I tell you my dear, / She flirts, and sings, and dances, / Gotten reckless! Since coming here!" Other rhymes remind us of the eternal predilection of youth to have fun and procrastinate in their studies:

A party – a party,
Oh what delight;
Ice cream & peanuts,
Late at night;
But oh in the morning
At six a.m.
We swear we'll never
Do it again!

Heard around Examination Time--

When ice cream grows on moccasin trees;
When Sahara's sands grow muddy;
When cats & dogs wear B.V.D.'s;
That's the time I like to study!



Henrietta
McFadden
photographed at
Marjorie Inc.
Portrait Studio, 396
Fifth Avenue, NY
in the 1920s

Henrietta and her sister Jessie nursed in New York City, joined by their adopted sister Evelyn McFadden (1912-1995) while she attended art school. The McFadden sisters and their brothers—Vinton, Andrew 'A.C.' and Milton—were the children of Edward McFadden and Mary Hamilton.

Upon marriage in 1940 to Edlow Lancaster of Navan, Henrietta became confidante and unofficial village nurse to Navan residents, advising and tending to wounds and dressings. Five Navan organizations are the beneficiaries of her estate, benefitting from Edlow and Henrietta Lancaster's philanthropy.

The age of compulsory attendance for Ontario schoolchildren was 12 in 1871, raised to 14 in 1891 and to 16 in 1919. Until the mid-1910s Prescott-Russell County students desiring secondary education beyond compulsory age had to travel to Vankleek Hill Collegiate Institute to receive it. Distance and expense were thus significant impediments to almost all but the most scholarly and affluent of Cumberland Township students. The establishment of continuation schools in the Township in the mid-1910s allowed students to obtain a high school diploma close to home.

Navan Continuation School opened in 1915. Its yearbook of 1931-32 lists 122 alumni and their occupations. Of the 54 males and 68 females who had attained a high school diploma since the school opened it is clear that many are taking advantage of opportunities available with a high school diploma. Of the 54 men, half are farming or 'working at home,' 15 are employed by banks, insurance companies, the CPR and the RCAF, five are in business, one is a clergyman, one is a teacher, two are studying for senior matriculation (Grade 13), and three are at university (Guelph & Queen's). Of the 68 women, half are married or 'working at home' and half are studying or employed. Teaching and nursing were the

predominant professions chosen by the women:

Eva Farmer's sister **Opal Farmer** is a nurse on Long Island, NY; **Ada Armstrong, Viola Collins, Hilda Dawson, Angeline Ebbs, Hazel Garvock, Winnifred Hueston, Dorothy Johnston, Stella Kenny, Janet Newton, Ethel Rothwell, Mary Scharfe and Sarah Watson**—all 12 are teaching in small Ontario towns. Two are receiving teacher training at Ottawa Normal School: **Margaret Garvock and Beryl Watson**. **Lucy Watson** is a graduate nurse of Pembroke Cottage Hospital and eight are nurses-in-training, six in eastern Ontario hospitals, two in New York state: **Helen Bickerton, Blanche Brennan, Janey Dagg, Mary Edwards, Myrtle Goodfellow, Elisabeth Wylie, Elizabeth Young and Laura Shaw**. Later Laura Shaw will use her musical talents as a music teacher in the Ottawa Public School system. **Joyce Johnston** is a student at Macdonald College, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, Quebec, and will become a teacher of dieticians at the College. Joyce's sister **Eileen Johnston** is studying for her senior matriculation at Nepean High School; later Eileen will train as a nurse at the Ottawa Civic Hospital. **Erma Bradley** is at business college in Cornwall. **Marguerite McGovern and Wilhelmina Kinnaird** are in the federal civil service, with **Violet Cameron, Margaret Spearman and Mabel Thompson** also working in Ottawa. **Jennie Murray** is Sister Miriam of Jesus, Congregation de N.-D., Montreal. And **Bertha Griffith** is working in Bassano, Alberta; her story is told in the following pages.

Sources: Canadian Encyclopedia <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/secondary-education>
Echoes of Navan School 1930-1931 Yearbook
Education in Upper Canada Online: <https://foundations.ed.brocku.ca/week06/6/>
State of Connecticut Military Census, 1917

Bertha Griffith

By Ivan Tanner

Bertha Eliza Griffith was born in a log cabin on the forced road halfway between Vars and Bearbrook, Ontario. Her father, Walter Griffith, at the age of 26, had purchased the farm from his father in 1907. Walter had driven his two horses, four cows and two sheep the mile-and-a-half from Vars to his new home at Bearbrook, where he settled into the rough log cabin lacking even a barn. He met and courted his neighbour, Eliza Anne Lowe, and on June 26th of 1907 they married. The Lowes, like so many in the area, had arrived during the Irish potato famine and had built a large prosperous farm in the intervening years. Eliza's mother's people, the Andersons, were of United Empire Loyalist stock. Eliza was the milk maid of the family and when Walter was to receive a cow as dowry Eliza directed him to choose the best in her father's herd. Their first child, Harriett 'Hattie', arrived on June 1, 1908 followed exactly two years later by Bertha 'Bert' on June 1, 1910. In all they would have nine children—seven girls and two boys. Besides continuously improving his land and buildings Walter regularly worked off the farm to earn the ever-scarce hard cash required to continue building. Because he had a team and a wagon, he drew gravel for road building in the Township of Cumberland and spent many winters 'working in the shanty' in western Quebec while Eliza and the children would keep things going and milk the one cow that wasn't allowed to go dry over the winter. In the early days Eliza worked in the house, the barn, the garden, doing whatever had to be done including, immediately after the birth of at least one of the babies, going out to the barn to milk the cows. In the spring Walter would arrive home with cash in hand allowing him to purchase a piece of equipment or additional livestock. His knowledge of and keen eye for cattle served him well as he built his herd and he gained a reputation amongst drovers for having good cattle to sell.

Bertha Griffith was expected to work from her earliest days. One of her great resentments was living just across the field from her school at Bearbrook (Cumberland S.S. #4). The rest of the kids could bring a lunch and play at lunchtime while she had to run home along the top of the stone fence to do more chores. Besides housework, milking, and chores in the barn and fields, she, like her sisters, learned to sew, knit and quilt. All the children were called upon to pick stones every spring. The entire family travelled the short distance to Trinity Anglican Church, Bearbrook on Sundays; something that Bert would continue for

her entire life. She had a good sense of humour and inherited a deep love for her family and a love of dancing from her father.

Bert always enjoyed school and was a good student.

Notwithstanding that her father had spent little time in school, he supported her education and she became the first of the family to gain entrance to continuation school (high school). The closest high school being at Navan—S.S.#3 pictured above—and too far to commute every day, Bert boarded in a private residence and drove her horse home on weekends.



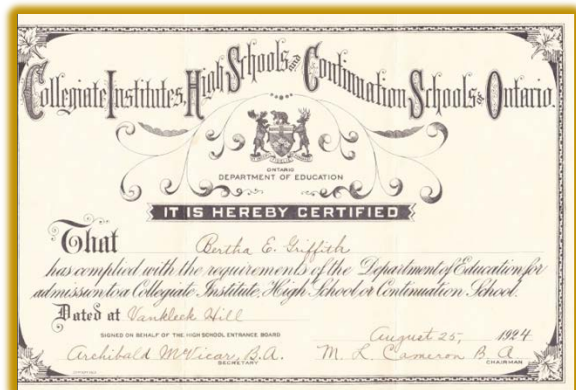
Navan Continuation School					
Monthly Report <i>Spring Term</i>					
Name <i>Bertha Griffith</i>					
H.M.		L.M.		P.M.	
Eng. Lit.	48		64	Geometry	95 77 77
Eng. Gram.				English History	
Composition	75		64	Canadian History	
Spelling				Com. Geography	
<i>Supplementary Writing Reading</i>	80		70	Phy. Geography	77 39
Art				Physics	
Botany				Chemistry	
Zoology				Latin	91 76
Arithmetic	56	49	57	French	90 57
Algebra	100	60	58	Ancient History	
Average	46.57			Class Standing	3
Conduct	Very Good			Absent	2 1/2 days

TEACHER'S REMARKS.
Very satisfactory
Elda McGee
Teacher's Signature.

PARENT'S REMARKS.
Mrs. Walter Griffith
Parent's Signature.

(OVER)

Younger sister Vera joined her at Navan Continuation School a couple of years later. Notwithstanding being quarantined for three weeks when Vera caught smallpox, Bertha went on to graduate with honours. Her favourite teacher was Elda McGee for whom she had a lifelong respect and admiration. (Elda McGee's story is told on pages 6 and 7, where you will find a 1927 class picture that includes Miss McGee and Bertha Griffith.)



Again with her father's support, Bert was the very first in the family to receive post-secondary education. After graduating from Willis Business College in Ottawa, she went on to work at Spratt & Ritchie, later Ritchie Feed & Seed.



In 1930 Bertha received a letter from a cousin working for the Canadian Pacific Railway in Bassano, Alberta, who was about to get married. Most large companies would not employ married women at the time, so her cousin was being forced out. Bert leapt at the chance for this adventure and on May 12th, 1930, two weeks before her 20th birthday, she began working for the Canadian Pacific Railway

as a stenographer in the CPR Natural Resources Department in Bassano. She loved it. She and a girlfriend from work boarded with a lady and she was able to do a bit of travelling courtesy of a pass from the CPR as well as being able to visit with family who had moved west years before.



Bertha Griffith at her Bearbrook home, above in 1927 and at right in 1928

Bertha's love for the West is tempered by nostalgia for home in this poem she wrote while living in Alberta in the 1930s:

JOYFUL MEMORIES
 As I wander over hill and dale
 I watch the moon grown wan, then pale.
 There's something in this dear old West
 That fascinates and grows more blest
 To these blue eyes and heart o' mine.
 But far beyond I read a line
 That calls me to a merry home
 Where as a child I used to roam,
 Where my years of childhood joys
 Were spent amidst the girls and boys
 Of Home Sweet Home.

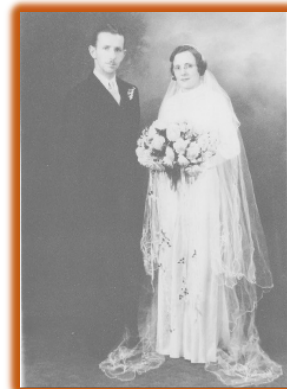
At this time Bert was corresponding with Harold Tanner, the eldest son of Frank and Elizabeth Tanner, successful merchants in Vars. She even went so far as to send him a “risqué” photo of herself and a girlfriend in bathing suits.



Wall Street crashed in October 1929 and by June of 1933 the effects of the Great Depression that ensued were being felt by even the mighty Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Bert received her layoff notice (at left) and got a train ticket home.

By this time Bert's brother Osborne was working full time on the farm and her younger siblings—Minerva, Viola, Florence, Ashton and Beatrice—

were all doing their share of chores. She was welcomed home, but she had to work. The social safety net that we take for granted today was non-existent. She spent many days treading the streets in the city looking for employment before she finally landed a job working for an elderly couple doing housework. Christmas at home on the farm was made special for the younger children as Bert and sister Vera purchased oranges and pencils for the younger children—actually one orange per child and half of a pencil. Eventually, she was able to land a job with the Royal Bank in Vars. Bertha wed Harold Tanner in June of 1935; pictured in their wedding photo above.



With her education and work experience she was a perfect wife and partner for Harold as he assumed the ownership of his father's businesses. Both her work ethic and her faith remained with her all of her 91 years along with her great sense of humour and love of her family. She raised her own five children and was instrumental in the lives of her 13 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren. She also took great pride in the lives of her many nieces and nephews. She was an active volunteer for countless church and community events over her lifetime.

I always found it somewhat bemusing growing up in the 1960s to observe the sometimes-frantic endeavors of the



Bertha Griffith Tanner 1910-2001

women's liberation movement at that time. In contrast to Bertha's approach it all seemed so theatrical. She was more than the equal of anyone I'd ever known but not in your face about it. If she saw something that needed doing, she just put her head down and did it. No fuss, no muss, no fanfare, no accolades required. She was just a person who did what had to be done, when it had to be done in a positive, competent manner.

How did Elda McGee end up in Navan?

With memories from my father Ross Bradley, my sister Carol Bradley, my cousin Kathleen Bradley Both, and my dear friend Shirley Dashney

By Heather Bradley

I was in complete admiration of my grandmother, Elda McGee Bradley. What made Grandma tick was different from most people. She and Grandpa lived beside the store, and walking into their house was always great fun. You were welcomed with a huge tray of candy and encouraged to help yourself. Often, both the radio and TV were blaring simultaneously on CBC. There were books everywhere including every copy of *National Geographic* back to the very first edition. The dining room table was covered with coupons Grandma would be sorting for the store. A huge desk piled with papers looked out over her bird feeders. There was a large farm kitchen, complete with her collection of milk bags and margarine containers, a refrigerator that opened on both the left and the right, and a washing machine that also dried clothes. Most often, she was baking treats, cookies, or her famous banana muffins. In fact, she was in her kitchen baking cookies when she passed away.

Grandma was the kind of woman who knew what was happening in the world, in the country, and in Navan. She was always keen to talk about substantive issues and equally curious about what was going on in our lives, in a matter-of-fact kind of way. She liked that her granddaughters had the opportunity to work if they desired, keep our maiden names if we wanted, and live with fewer restrictions than she had endured. We often say she was born before her time.

There were many cherished family traditions, in addition to the usual Christmas gatherings and backyard reunions. One of the most memorable was the annual store inventory. Once a year, the whole family would gather at the close of business on a Saturday and begin counting absolutely everything. Grandma, Grandpa, and Uncle Lorne would get things rolling. The cousins and the Dashney family would be divided into groups to count whatever needed counting—canned tomatoes, soup, cigarettes, chocolate bars, spools of thread...if it was on the shelves, it was counted. We watched in complete amazement as Grandma added long columns of numbers not using an adding machine but with impeccable accuracy. Years later, when we had handheld

calculators, we would play with her by giving her huge numbers to multiply while we raced to get the answer first. She was usually the winner.

Her brilliance always made me curious about her early days and how she came to be in Navan. We knew where she grew up in Hastings County in central Ontario as we spent our summers on Stoco Lake at the family cottage at Tweed. We knew where the McGees lived, great-grandpa McGee's tailor shop, the church where she and Grandpa were married, and familiar stops like Foster's Dairy and Quinn's.

But how did Elda McGee end up in Navan?

Our grandmother, Elda McGee, was born in 1905, the eldest daughter of Letitia and Samuel B. McGee. Her father was the tailor of Tweed, and her mother, Letitia "Lettie" Spry, grew up in Stirling, 30 km southwest of Tweed. Elda had two siblings, Helena and William 'Bill' McGee.

Grandma excelled at school from the start. She attended Tweed High School and graduated in 1923. In those days, students attended the same school from Grade 1 through the end of high school. To graduate, they studied Canadian history and civics, British history, English literature and composition, and she chose additional subjects in mathematics, physics, Latin, and French authors. Grandma loved mathematics most of all. She was also an accomplished athlete, winning the Senior Girls' Field Day championship and graduating with the Silver Cup. She shared this honour with a man named Will Bowers. We believe the Silver Cup recognized combined excellence in academics and athletics, though it has been difficult to confirm. With such success in high school, in 1923–24 Elda went on to Teachers' College at the Toronto Normal School in downtown Toronto. There, she thrived academically and excelled at basketball. She was very proud to have played on a team that won every single game that year. She also enjoyed playing at men-only Hart House at the University of Toronto.

Elda left her mark at Toronto Normal School. The yearbook described her as: "*Elda McGee, jumping centre, one of the fastest on the team. She played this strenuous position well and made many a goal possible.*"

Her friends wrote: "*Great thoughts, like great deeds, need no trumpet, and Elda is our basketball centre.*"

Elda McGee, top left, and the senior basketball team with Toronto Normal School principal Dr. Radcliffe and teachers Mr. Childs and Miss Hay.



Elda loved her year at TNS and understood the reality of her working future. In 1924, the school principal, Dr. S. J. Radcliffe, addressed the students with words that reflected the times:

I hope that the ranks of women teachers of Ontario may suffer many casualties by way of marriage to enable our women students of this class to secure positions at the same standard of remuneration of former years... This will be a trying year for our graduates in regard to securing positions. The etiquette of our profession will be as steadfastly observed as in the past; I hope that no young teachers will apply for a position till the present occupant of the position has definitely resigned or until trustees have expressed a wish for applicants.

The message was clear—women were to “wait their turn” and rein in any ambition.

Upon graduation, and presumably when the trustees of Cumberland Township School Section #3 “expressed a wish for applicants,” Elda was advised to apply and that is how her life in Navan began.

Years later Elda was asked to speak at an event at St. Mary’s Anglican Church about her first days in Navan. She recounted that she boarded the train with her father in Tweed at 3 a.m. in early September 1924. He wanted to make sure the place where his daughter would be teaching was suitable, so they made the journey together. After a short stop at the Ottawa station, they continued another 20 minutes to Navan. She apparently left her umbrella on the train—they even had the trainman wire ahead but it was never found. It was a disappointment she remembered well.

Elda McGee at the Navan CPR Train Station, 1926.



At the Navan station, they were greeted by Mr. George Shaw, secretary of the school board, and Miss Sybil Smith, the school principal, who had arranged for her to board at Mrs. Newton’s, the same place she herself had stayed the previous year. Elda recalled that Mrs. Newton greeted them on the verandah with the devastating news that Mrs. Thompson, daughter of Mr. Walsh, had died suddenly and tragically. Mrs. Newton thought they should attend the wake immediately. They left their luggage on the verandah, and Mr. Shaw drove them to the Walsh home—next door to Bradley’s store. So rather than Mrs. Newton’s house being the first home she entered in Navan, it was Mr. Walsh’s.

After the visitation, Mr. Walsh invited them to dinner. Elda remembered loving his large farmhouse kitchen and the delicious meal. He even arranged for her to meet some of her soon-to-be pupils. The kindness stayed with her, especially given the circumstances. Soon after, they returned to Mrs. Newton’s, and she finally stepped into her new boarding home.

That same day, the Bradley boys, Morris and his brother Borden, had been unloading coal. The Bradley family, in addition to owning a store, ran a coal business. This meant unloading railcars of coal over several days and delivering it throughout the village. That evening, still covered from head to toe in black coal dust, they stopped by Mrs. Newton’s to deliver coal and meet the “new teacher.” Mrs. Newton was thrilled to introduce them. This was the first meeting of Elda McGee and Morris Bradley, and she said she was “stymied,” managing only a simple hello as the young men were filthy.

Meanwhile, her father was exploring the village to be sure his 22-year-old daughter would be well situated. He visited one of the three stores, starting with Clarke’s, where the post office was located. He was impressed that everyone in the village “called at least once a day, at any hour.” He then went to Bradley’s and loved the energy and friendliness. When he returned, he told his daughter Bradley’s was the best place to meet people. When he mentioned the family name, her heart sank—there was a Bradley family in Tweed, and, as she put it, “they were from the other side of the tracks.”



Teacher Elda McGee wearing dark dress standing on the top step with the last class she taught in 1927.

Bertha Griffith, wearing glasses, is in the second row, second from the left.

Elda McGee began teaching at Navan School and loved it. She also came to like Morris Bradley (despite his surname) and they began dating. By April 1926 they were engaged. She taught for another year, then had to stop when she married. She hated leaving teaching, but that was simply “the way it was.”

She was an exceptional teacher, especially in mathematics, and was often asked to supply teach, something she gladly did whenever possible. But as a married woman, she was not allowed to teach full time.



Elda McGee and Morris Bradley, pictured above, were married on September 14, 1927, in Tweed, and honeymooned in Niagara Falls and Syracuse. She described it as a lovely road trip. When they returned to Navan, she moved into the very first home she had entered there, the Walsh house, now owned by the Bradleys, where she lived with her parents-in-law and two brothers-in-law. They went on to have three children, Lorne, Ross, and Marilyn, ten grandchildren, and fifteen great-grandchildren. She lived in that same home from 1927 until her passing in 1995.

Although she could no longer teach full time, Grandma poured her energy into her community. She was a tireless worker with the Navan Women’s Institute, the Navan Branch of the Canadian Red Cross Society, especially during the Second World War, and a proud, longtime member of the Ottawa Women’s Canadian Club. She produced community plays, stayed deeply engaged in village life, and was passionate about her work with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). Throughout her life, Grandma was constantly creating -- from baking to knitting, from crochet work to journaling. Her family, her friends, and the people of Navan all benefited from her skills and generosity. She was fiercely proud of the Bradley name, of the place she chose as home, and of the life and legacy she and Morris built.

Elda McGee Bradley was an impressive grandmother.



Macdonald Institute, at left, and Macdonald Hall, at right. Guelph, Ontario, 1919.

When 18-year old Bertha MacEachern climbed the wide stone steps of the imposing Macdonald Institute she knew she had come a long way from her farm home in Cumberland. Appreciating the opportunity she was being given and anticipating the knowledge she would gain at the Institute, she did not yet know that this experience would become her favourite time of life.



Bertha MacEachern on the steps of Macdonald Institute, Guelph, 1921

The eldest of 10 children, Bertha May MacEachern was born August 15, 1902 at Lochaber Bay, Quebec, to Robert MacEachern and Jemima MacLachlan. Her parents' families were among the Highland Scots settlers of Lochaber Township east of Buckingham Township on the north shore of the Ottawa River. Bertha's parents moved their family across the Ottawa first in 1907 to a farm on O'Toole Road, and then in 1919 to a farm in Cumberland Village.

A keen reader, young Bertha revelled in Miss Dunning's lending library in Cumberland. She loved the adventures and uplifting themes of the all-girls stories of the Mildred, Elsie, and Pollyanna series of books. She was

inspired by missionary books and impressed by the social reformer, Charlotte Whitton, who later became the first female mayor of Ottawa.

Always a plucky girl, Bertha walked the four miles from her home on O'Toole Road to participate in village activities. She walked through the field to a neighbour's farm, down through the bush and the old quarry south of Cumberland village. She attended Mission Band and Sunday School at the Presbyterian Church and joined the Young Women's Auxiliary, affiliated with the Women's Missionary Society, and Canadian Girls in Training. The minister recognized her leadership abilities and persuaded her to teach a boys' class in Sunday School.

Bertha was a sportswoman too: the Cumberland girls played hockey and once travelled to Maniwaki, Quebec to play a game. She deplored her team's lack of protective equipment and style of clothing, describing the bloomers they wore as "an awful disgrace" and wishing they could have worn slacks.

A good student, ambitious and a natural leader, Bertha had the opportunity to study at Macdonald Institute in Guelph. The Institute offered three-month short courses and one- and two-year training programs in domestic science. Bertha became a student in one of the short courses, namely the H.E.5 Short Course in Domestic Science.

Studies

Opened in 1903, Macdonald Institute was founded by Adelaide Hoodless, an education reformer who established the Women's Institute and sought to help families improve nutrition, maternal and child health, and Sir William Macdonald, a wealthy Montreal businessman whose main interest was funding education initiatives that supported the development of rural society in Canada. He provided funds for both Macdonald Institute and Macdonald Hall, the women's residence,

which contained a dining room, gymnasium, medical office and library.

After the end of the First World War there was concern that Canada's rural population was declining and domestic skills were being lost. Following the upheaval of the war there was societal desire to direct young people toward wholesome country life along economic, social, educational, religious and recreational lines. Macdonald Institute taught home economics courses "for farmers' daughters and other young women who desire to learn the theory and practice of cooking, general housekeeping, laundry work, sewing, dressmaking, millinery, home decoration, etc."

Candidates for the Short Course in Domestic Science has to be "at least 17 years of age, and have a good elementary education." Every student is to provide a physician's certificate, proof of vaccination, and is reminded that she is "required to take systematic physical exercise, including gymnasium classes. ... The girl who is not strong enough for the gymnasium work, is not really able for the work of any regular course in Macdonald Institute."

The students are to provide their own clothing, made to specifications: two blue work dresses whose "skirts must clear the ground at least two inches, but not more than four inches, be finished with a four inch hem and have no other frills or trimming." They are to bring plain white detachable collars, 30-inch white neckties "tied four-in-hand", four white aprons, one blue pinafore, and to purchase a "gymnasium suite" of clothes costing about \$4.50. They must bring four white towels, two pot holders and sewing scissors. The course calendar states that the "net cost of board, washing and fees may be estimated at \$85 to \$95 per term of three months"—a significant amount of money for a young woman and her farm family to expend in 1921.

Campus Life

The schedule for female students in the early days of the college was tightly controlled. Lights out at 10:30 p.m. Women were allowed out one night a week until 7 p.m. unless accompanied by a chaperone and then the deadline was 10:15 p.m. Dancing was not allowed until 1913. Before that, at a promenade, a gentleman from the nearby agricultural college would offer his arm to an Institute lady and they would march around keeping time to music.



Bertha, third from left, with friends at Macdonald Hall, 1921



Macdonald Institute Class of Domestic Science Short Course
Winter Term: January 4–March 25, 1921
Bertha MacEachern is in the back row at far right

The Future

Bertha married Archie Edwards at Cumberland on December 29, 1923. You may read about their farm life and family of five children in the Fall 2025 edition of *The Caboose* in which we profiled First World War veteran Archie Edwards.

Inspired by Adelaide Hoodless, the visionary co-founder of the Macdonald Institute, Bertha helped establish a branch of the Women’s Institute (W.I.) at Cumberland; the inaugural meeting was held in her home in 1937. When Bertha and her husband moved to Navan in 1944 she joined the Navan branch of the W.I. She was a stalwart member of her church and community. She insisted that her daughters were serious about their education. She was a fine cook, baker, seamstress, and orchardist—all skills she learned at the Macdonald Institute.

Macdonald Institute grew into a world-class academic institution for home economics, offering degree programs beginning in 1948. In 1964, the Institute amalgamated with the Ontario Agricultural College and the Ontario Veterinary College to become the University of Guelph. Bertha and her colleagues could never have foreseen that the campus where they studied in 1921 would become one of the three founding colleges of a university 43 years later, thanks to Adelaide Hoodless’ and Sir William Macdonald’s interest in educating young rural women in Canada.

Bertha was proud to be counted among the “Mac girls,” as they were called. The girls developed busy social lives on campus,

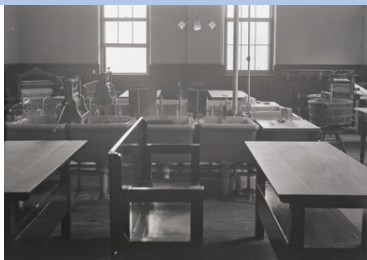


Bertha at right with friend

organizing musical and theatrical productions, clubs and sports teams, all the while forging close friendships. And so it was with Bertha, cementing lifelong friendships with girls from across Ontario. Indeed, Bertha named her first child for her dearest college friend Muriel.

Bertha took classes in cookery, sewing, laundry, foods, sanitation, home nursing and hygiene.

Macdonald Institute classrooms pictured clockwise from right: the laundry classroom; students at work; the sewing room; the food sciences lab, a practical kitchen where students could put what they learned about food and meal preparation to the test, including the techniques of canning and freezing.



Sources: Bertha Edwards. “I Remember When--Personal Reminiscences of Cumberland Given at St. Andrew’s United Church 150th Anniversary.” Sept. 17, 1978. Earl Sharkey. “Hockey.” *The Caboose*, January 2011, p. 5.

Family photographs courtesy of Lynda Rivington and Wayne Edwards.

Angus Campbell MacLachlan. “Lochaber Bay: My Well-Loved Country Home.” Published by his family after his death in 1990.

University of Guelph Archival & Special Collections, McLaughlin Library. Photographs and Macdonald Institute Calendar 1920-1921. Used with permission, March 2026.

Cycling Routes in Cumberland Township

My cycling group, Ottawa Easy Riders, tours the roads and trails of eastern Ontario, following roughly 30-kilometre routes. When we ride in Cumberland Township I provide my cycling companions with some historical background on the places we see.

As we cycle through Cumberland Village I show how the area was a prime trading location being at the confluence of the Lièvre and Ottawa rivers.

Indigenous tribes of this area were the Algonquin and Iroquois peoples, and it is the unceded territory of the Anishinabe people.

Historical records indicate that Amable Foubert and his brothers began to set up a trading post here in 1798. The earliest permanent settlers were the families of Amable Foubert and of Abijah Dunning. The families settled along the shores of the Ottawa and the Lièvre rivers. They built a flourishing trade network and made family, church and social connections between the Cumberland settlement on the south shore of the Ottawa and the Buckingham community on the shores of the Lièvre.

By Tom McNeely
moved by horse and wagon to its current site on Old Montreal Road in the village—quite a feat in those times.

St. Andrew's United Church was originally a Presbyterian church known as the Old Kirk. Built of stone in 1828 on the river shore, it burned in a fire in 1844 along with a neighbouring lumber mill. It was rebuilt but burned once again in 1878, and finally was rebuilt in 1879 away from the river in its current location on Old Montreal Road. Interesting fact: its church bell came from the Empress of Ottawa—a freight and passenger ship which plied the Ottawa River from Ottawa to Grenville between 1886 and 1932. The ship's bell was given by the shipowner to George Dunning for the church belfry.

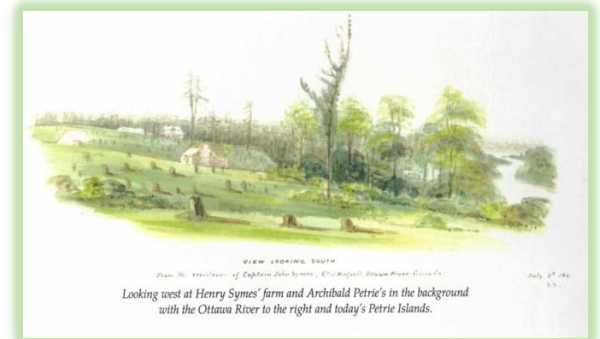


The Empress of Ottawa. Built in 1886 in Hawkesbury. Decommissioned in 1935

Petrie Island

Another route we take begins at **Petrie Island** and explores west to the old Rockliffe air base. Petrie Island was part of an original land grant to Archibald Petrie as a reward for his military service to the Crown. He was a prominent citizen in the 1820s through the 1840s, serving as a councillor, clerk and first member of the parliament of Upper Canada.

Check out four beautiful watercolour paintings, including the one at right, of Petrie Island scenery in the CTHS book, *The Early History of Cumberland Township 1798-1840*. Painted in 1841 by Sandham Symes, an Irish architect, artist and relative of three of the families living next to Archibald Petrie, these paintings are the only visual record we have of early settlement in our township.



Trains

Touring the interior of the township we have discovered the Prescott-Russell Trail Link that connects Ottawa to Rigaud at the Quebec border. The 72-kilometre trail is part of the Trans Canada Trail network and is a flat, peaceful, easy ride. On our outings we cycle the trail from Leonard in the centre of Cumberland Township eastward to Bourget in Clarence-Rockland. The trail is built on the abandoned Canadian Pacific Railway line (CPR) that once operated between Ottawa and Montreal. Opened in 1884 the CPR line served the area until passenger service was discontinued in 1981 and the last freight train went through in 1986. The tracks were taken up later that same year. One of the worst rail accidents in our township occurred at the Leonard CPR crossing in 1964 when a Montreal-bound passenger train collided with a stalled dump truck. Eight people lost their lives and over 60 people were injured. Read more about the Prescott-Russell Recreational Trail as part of the Trans Canada Trail at: <https://tctrail.ca/stories/trail-profile-sentier-prescott-russell-recreational-trail>



We also take “Curd Runs” from the Cumberland Arena to Sarsfield, and from Navan's Perrault Winery to Sarsfield, where we pick up delicious St. Albert Cheese curds.

I hope you have enjoyed this short look into some historical facts about the locations we travel in our cycling outings, showing that there are many interesting places to explore in Cumberland Township. See you out on the roads and trails!

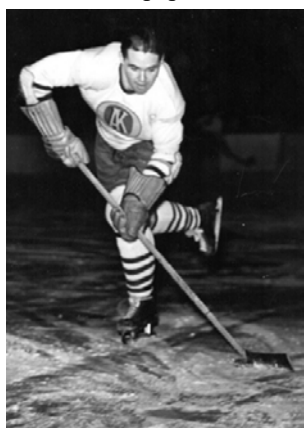
Finding Cumberland Historical Hockey Treasures

Prior to the development of the Camelot golf course on the site of the Cameron-McMillan farm just west of Cumberland (Lot 19, Concession 1 Old Survey), my brother Gordon Moore and I managed to salvage some odds and ends from the Cameron-McMillan family home that related to hockey in Cumberland in the early 1900s. There was a pair of skates, a hockey stick and a pair of shin pads.



Growing up, we heard many stories of how our grandfather James McMillan was a good hockey player and that our mother Barbara McMillan was a beautiful skater. We knew skating was in the blood and that hockey was enjoyed by the Cameron and McMillan boys. On the shin pads we found a label that identified them as being owned by J.R. Cameron, dated 1914. We traced the hockey stick to the manufacturer, Hermes Proulx, of Ottawa. Hermes Proulx made custom hockey sticks for professional players from the NHL teams in Ottawa, Toronto, Boston and Detroit from 1912 to 1944.

In addition to the hockey artifacts, we found an envelope addressed to Mrs. J.C. Ross, 382 Frank St., Ottawa, Ontario from John Ross, 838 S 35 Ave, Omaha, Nebraska. Inside was a picture, below, presumably of the sender. The envelope also contained a newspaper article from

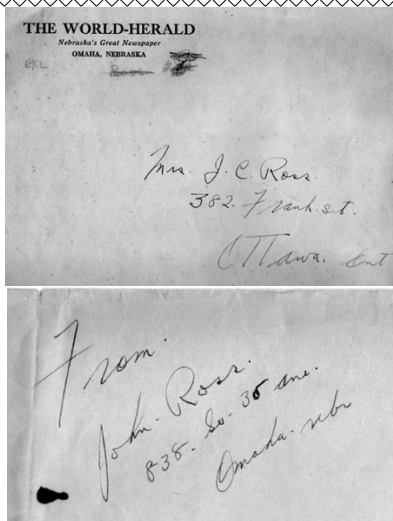


The Ottawa Journal dated January 30, 1946, transcribed as follows:

The Ottawa Journal
Wednesday, January 30, 1946
Page 19

Former Tech Star 'Sandy' Ross on Visit

A former star with the Ottawa Tech hockey team and Perth Blue Wings, Hugh "Sandy" Ross, of Omaha, Neb., is visiting his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Ross, of 382 Frank street, Ottawa. Ross, who played with Detroit Pontiacs, Omaha Knights and Indianapolis, after leaving the Ottawa district arenas, enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1943, but suffered arm injuries which kept him from active combat duties. - Now in the sporting goods business in Omaha, he predicted a big future for hockey in the United States, and declared Hank Blade and Alan "Bud" Kuntz were playing good hockey for Kansas City and St. Paul respectively.



What was the connection between the Rosses featured in this article and the McMillans who had owned the property before the coming of the Camelot golf course? I enlisted some genealogical help from Gerry Boyer, whose Cameron ancestors are linked to the McMillans. On the Ross side, Mr. Boyer explained that Anne Quigley and Daniel Cameron had married in 1878 and had six children

By Harold Moore

including two daughters, Isabella and Mary Cameron. Isabella 'Bella' Cameron married George Morin; their daughter Sarah Morin married Thomas McNeely—Mr. Boyer's grandparents. Mary 'Minnie' Cameron married a railway worker named John Cameron Ross and they had eight children. Among those eight children was their eldest son, **John Hugh Ross**, born in Alberta in 1917. As for the McMillan side, when Daniel Cameron died in 1888 his widow Anne married Archie McMillan and went on to have four children with him. One of their sons was James Carroll McMillan. James C. McMillan married Ellen Somerville and one of their daughters was Barbara McMillan—my mother. And so the link was made between Mrs. J.C. Ross (Mary Cameron), her half-brother James C. McMillan, my mother, Barbara McMillan, and her cousin, John Hugh Ross.

John Hugh Ross, nicknamed Sandy, was also known as Jack Ross in the 1921 census of Canada residing with his parents and five sisters in the village of Ryley, Alberta; as Hugh Ross in the 1931 census of Canada living with his parents, five sisters and two younger brothers in the city of Ottawa, Ontario; as Hugh 'Sandy' Ross—the Ottawa Technical High School Star of The Ottawa Journal article; and as John Ross, the sender of the envelope and in the online Hockey Data Bank.

John Hugh Ross played amateur and professional hockey in several leagues in the United States: Michigan-Ontario Hockey League, International-American Hockey League, American Hockey Association, American Hockey League and Illinois Ice Hockey League.

John Ross		Regular Season											Playoffs				
Season	Team	Lge	GP	G	A	Pts	PIM	+/-	GP	G	A	Pts	PIM				
1938-39	Detroit Pontiac McLeans	MOHL	--	7	10	17	69										
1939-40	Detroit Pontiac McLeans	MOHL	Statistics Unavailable														
1939-40	Indianapolis Capitals	IAHL	29	3	6	9	24	5	1	0	1	4					
1940-41	Omaha Knights	AHA	47	6	10	16	65										
1941-42	Indianapolis Capitals	AHL	36	3	4	7	33	10	1	3	4	2					
1941-42	Omaha Knights	AHA	2	0	1	1	0										
1941-42	Fort Worth Rangers	AHA	1	0	0	0	0										
1942-43	Indianapolis Capitals	AHL	43	7	17	24	30	7	1	1	2	2					
1945-46	St. Louis Flyers	AHL	1	0	0	0	0	--	--	--	--	--					
1959-60	Chicago Vikings	IIHL	Statistics Unavailable														

Sources: 'Alexander Cameron,' The Caboose, May 2019, <https://cths.ca/2019/05/caboose-spring-2019.pdf>; Hockey Data Bank found online at <https://www.hockeydb.com/ihdb/stats/pdisplay.php?pid=4664>; 1921 Census of Canada ecopy no. e002966179; 1931 Census of Canada ecopy no. e011666339.

Cumberland Heritage Village Museum

By Andrew Boisvenue

Spring has sprung and soon the winter will be nothing more than memory, and Cumberland Heritage Village Museum opens for another season. Despite the cold and so, so much snow, everyone at the museum has been working hard, refreshing exhibit spaces and getting things ready for our visitors. So, without further ado, let's dive into the 2026 season.

Exhibit Space Refreshers – This year three exhibit spaces at the museum are being updated. We partnered with Carleton University students in Curatorial Studies to create exciting new exhibits. The first will allow visitors to immerse themselves in the work life of the conductor and brakemen. The next space being refreshed is the general store. The store



now explores other facets besides the products on the shelves. Additions include a community space, expanded shopping options, and a post office. The last refreshed space, pictured at left, is upstairs of Duford House. This space will explore the relationship between

generations that lived in the home and how this changed during the era. Another change you will notice is the expansion of the museum's boutique. New products include items made in Foubert Kitchen.

Special Events – Cumberland Heritage Village Museum has a full schedule of events again this year. The classics are back again, with **Firefighters' Day** on June 7, and **Vintage Vehicle Experience** on July 12. After a very successful first time, **Animal Helpers** is returning this year, on June 28. August 30 will see a new event that looks at rural fairs and will have lots of activities for everyone. In addition to these events, the museum hosts workshops in its refurbished Village Trade School. More information on these programs is posted on the museum's website (Ottawa.ca/cumberlandmuseum) as the events approach. Information can also be found on the museum's Facebook and Instagram accounts.



General Admission – Building on last year's program for general admission, the museum continues to bring history to life. Visitors can participate in a variety of activities around the museum as part of Village Life. This year, Sundays take on a different twist, Social Sundays. During these days, museum staff invite visitors to join them in different community social gatherings – from house parties to sporting events. Then, in September, the focus turns to the harvest, and so does the program. Visitors can see, and in some cases, join in the harvest of the fields and gardens. Each Sunday in September will also feature a corn boil.

Partner Programs – Cumberland Heritage Village Museum continues to partner with many different groups, and this year is no different. **Ottawa Valley Live Steamers and Model Engineers** are back, operating on the last Sunday of the month from May to October. **Vintage Stock Theatre** returns with another murder mystery in late summer. For more information on events and programs with our partners, please visit the museum's website.

One Last Thing – Among all the new and exciting things taking place at the museum this year, it is easy for the biggest change to get lost in the shuffle. The museum is adjusting its admission hours to 9 am to 4 pm. This comes after data shows that an earlier start time makes the museum more attractive to families with infants and young children who need their nap time.



CUMBERLAND TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY - MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FOR MEMBERSHIP YEAR 2026-2027 An annual membership is \$25. Please send cheque or money order payable to: CTHS Cumberland Township Historical Society, c/o Gilles Chartrand, Treasurer CTHS, 1157 Laurier Street, Rockland, ON K4K 1J5.			
NAME:			
ADDRESS:			
TOWN/CITY:		PROVINCE:	
POSTAL CODE:		PHONE #:	
EMAIL ADDRESS:			
Your membership includes our Society newsletter, The Caboose. New members will receive The Caboose by email. We encourage all members to receive the newsletter by email to save on printing and postage costs. Renewing members may check here if they need to continue to receive The Caboose by mail. <input type="checkbox"/>			
<small>© 2026 Cumberland Township Historical Society</small>			