

Cornwall Township Historical Society Newsletter

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A Lifetime of Farming: Township Resident Stuart Clark Reflects on the Changes He's Seen



A cold crisp day in mid March is a perfect time for Stuart Clark to reflect on the changes in farming that he's seen take place in his life time. "Too early in the season to do outside work", he says. "Besides, I'm getting older and it's time to slow down a bit." At 87 years old, slowing down is all Stuart will consider doing. He says he will never completely quit farming. He's been farming exclusively all his life; never had the need to take an off-farm job to make ends meet.

Stuart's earliest recollections on the farm are helping his father clean out a creek with hand scrapers in 1926. The land at the south end of the farm was low and drainage had to be improved. Work with horses and a scraper was hard but about the only way to get the job done.

A strong work ethic is an inter-generational characteristic of the Clark family. Stuart's father Ed ventured off the farm at the tender age of 18 years old, doing custom work with his own horse-treadmill thrashing machine. He collected every thirteenth bushel of grain thrashed as payment. No money was exchanged with farmers. In those years, horses were used to power threshers where steam power was not practical or unavailable. Some power units were treadmills while others were powered by a rotary sweep. A pair of horses

was always used: one worked the treadmill while the other rested. The treadmill consists of a belt of wooden slats with rollers at each end. The belt and rollers are enclosed in a stall and the entire contraption is inclined. The horse's weight causes the belt to move backward so to keep up, the horse walks up the incline. The treadmill in turn drives an attached pulley which propels the threshing machine. It's a true one horsepower machine.

Until 1905, the Clark farm was split between Ed and brother Chester. Chester held the north 60 acres and Ed the south 40 acres. With these two small farms Ed did his thrashing and Chester worked in a quarry near Moulinette to supplement their farm incomes. In the early 1900s, Chester had a serious accident in the quarry. A rock fell on his leg resulting in its amputation. Unable to farm any longer, in 1905 Chester sold his 60 acres to Ed for \$6,000! A huge sum of money in those days. This was the beginning of the present day Clark farm that runs from Headline Road to the north and Cornwall Centre to the south. Today, the farm is 500 acres and Stuart's son Dwayne and grandson Jamie carry on that same strong work ethic, working alongside Stuart.

The inconvenience of two small barns, one at the back of the farm and one at the front, forced Ed to build a new large barn; the one that currently stands on the farm. This one was built in 1914. Stuart says that all the concrete for this barn was mixed by hand using shovel and wheel barrow. Besides building the barn and taking care of the threshing business, Ed was kept busy clearing the land of stumps and rocks. The popular method of doing this was with dynamite. A lot of farmers worked with dynamite. It was used often in those days and readily available at A.J. McPhail's in St. Andrews or hardware stores in Cornwall, no license required. Stuart recalls picking up several sticks of dynamite in Cornwall with his uncle and young cousin. While loading the dynamite, his cousin wasn't as careful as he should have been handling the stuff, so his uncle cautioned him on the dangers and the consequences of mishandling dynamite. On the return trip home, his cousin sat backwards at the rear of the wagon with his feet hanging off the end. His uncle questioned the kid why he was sitting back there. "In case the dynamite

blows up”, he says, “I want to be able to run out of the way!” It must have been comforting for him to think he could out run a dynamite blast.

In 1939 the Clarks took possession of their first tractor, a brand new Farmall “A”, the year they were introduced. The tractor was the first of its kind in the area. The dealer, Howard Newton, operated a small shop on Fourth St. West in Cornwall. The tractor was ordered in especially for the Clarks after their Wisconsin stationary engine that was used on the farm blew a piston. With no lights and hand crank to start, the tractor was primitive by today’s standards but proved much more productive than a team of horses. With the tractor, plowing could be done



at a rate of five acres per day compared to one acre on a good day with a team. This increased production came at a cost though. A selling feature of the Farmall “A” was that the old implements that the horses pulled could be fitted to the tractor after minor modification. The implements pulled by the tractor saw more wear and wore out much sooner than when pulled by a team of horses. Just like today, it seems there was always something in need of repair or replacement, as farmers struggle with financial hardship.

In 1943, Stuart took over the family farm. He married Elaine in 1944 and raised seven children; six girls and one boy. “Everyone helped on the farm,” says Stuart. “They did whatever had to be done.”

Through the years, equipment improvements were made. A hay baler was acquired in 1956, but it would be a few years before an elevator was purchased. On hot summer days bales were lifted by hand up to the oven temperature hay mow. Milking machines were in place in 1939 but it wasn’t until 1965 that a bulk tank was added and in 1980 the pipeline. The bulk tank was mandated by the Ontario Milk Marketing Board under the new quota system.

Stuart acknowledges the quota system as a good thing. In the early 1960s, farmers were producing about 10% too much milk, keeping prices low. Under the Ontario Milk Marketing

Board, farmers were allowed to produce 90% of previous production under a quota system. The system proved successful. Farmers made a reasonable return on investment and the market vagaries that milk farmers endured in the past were eliminated. Milk is classed as Pool 1 and Pool 2. Pool 2 milk goes to factories and Pool 1 milk to dairies. Pool 1 is produced year round and meets a higher standard. The Clark farm produced Pool 1 milk. In 1994, Stuart sold his milk quota and converted the barn to finish beef



steers and heifers.

Through the years, Stuart always played a key roll in the beef industry. In 1963 he founded the Stormont County Cattlemen’s Association. He is a founding member of the Ontario Cattlemen’s Association (OCA) and has been involved in both the county and provincial organizations for many years. He recently retired from the OCA after 45 years of dedicated service. Stuart has seen difficulties in the beef industry in the past but with the BSE crisis behind us, things have to improve. During the BSE crisis, beef producers were caught: they couldn’t afford to sell and they couldn’t afford to keep their livestock. The current shock wave hitting producers is fertilizer cost. Directly related to petrol-chemical prices, farmers are facing unprecedented price increases in fertilizer.

What future does Stuart see for the agricultural business? “You have to be an eternal optimist,” he says. “The greatest challenge beef farmers face is finding a steady market for their animals. Markets are unstable. Calf prices can vary by as much as 100% over a short period”. If markets do become more difficult, one thing for certain is that Stuart will be there to provide meaningful assistance to friends and neighbours, just as he’s done throughout his life time. After all, slowing down a bit means he’ll have to do something with this free time.

By: Don McIntosh



New Members: Two new members have recently joined the CTHS. They are Suzanne Grant and Stephanie White. Special thank you to Dale Duncan for recruiting them.

Can you help with information?

CTHS member Ray O'Collin is looking for information and/or material related to the S.D.&G. constables which were active in the Tri-Counties prior to or near 1926.

He is also trying to locate a Mr. Hugh Allen McLean who may have some information on the subject.

You can contact him at rocollin@cogeco.ca

The following article was submitted by Ken McDonald. It's the obituary of his grandmother and grandfather who died from influenza within days of each other in March 1919.

St. Andrews

Allen J. A. McDonald & Mrs. J.A. McDonald
A particular sad incident occurred when the Grim Reaper, Death, laid his heavy hand on the home of A.J.A. McDonald, of the ninth concession Cornwall taking away a kind and loving mother and father. Mrs. McDonald was taken ill on Sunday, passing away the following Saturday morning. Mr. McDonald developed pneumonia on Tuesday and lived but a few hours after his wife's funeral.

An unusually large cortège followed the remains of Mrs. McDonald to St. Andrews's church on Sunday morning where the funeral service was conducted by Rev. John E. McRae. The pallbearers were Joseph Valade, son-in-law: A.D. Cameron, Wilfred and Gerald McDonald, nephews R. J. Barker and D.J. Chisholm. Mrs. McDonald, who was formerly Mary Josephine, daughter of the late Donald D. McDonald of Harrison Corners, was born on March 25, 1864. She was an exemplary wife and mother and her death alone was a serious blow to her family.

Besides the immediate members of her family, Mrs. McDonald leaves her three sisters Mrs. A. P. McDonald of Summerstown, Mrs. J. A. Cameron of South Branch and Miss Annie M. of Cornwall, and two brothers Joseph and George of Harrison.

Again on Tuesday morning the sorrowing friends and neighbours were called upon to attend the funeral of Mr. McDonald. The double bereavement served to show in what extreme the respected couple was held as friends from far and near were present. Rev. D.A. Campbell of St. Raphaels, a cousin of the deceased, chanted the Requiem high mass which was offered for the repose of their souls. The pallbearers were John A.

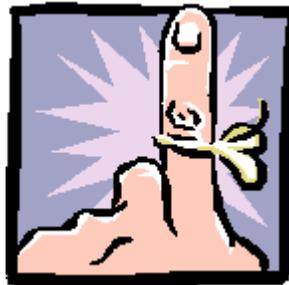
Cameron, R.J. Barker, L. B McDonald, H. A. McDonald, George Rahad and ?

Mr. McDonald was born here 65 years ago residing on the homestead until his death. He was a devoted husband and father and of a kind disposition. They leave to mourn their three daughters- Miss Mae of Montreal, Mrs. Joseph Valade of St. Andrews and Miss Bessie at home and three sons William, Duncan and Eugene at home. Mr. McDonald also had one brother D.A. of North Dakota and one sister Miss Katherine at home. Spiritual offerings were received from Mr. and Mrs. A. P.

McDonald and family, Mr. and Mrs. J. D. D. McDonald, Mr. and Mrs. A. Dancause of Apple Hill, Miss Sadie McDonald of Montreal and Mr. and Mrs. B P. Wood.

Some people have expressed an interest in receiving the Newsletter via email rather than Canada Post. We have that option available if you wish. Just let us know your preference by email at: info@cornwalltwphistorical.ca .

Incidentally, if you do opt to receive it by email, you'll be saving the CTHS about \$1.00 per copy in postage and copying cost. It will be in living colour too! If you wish to print it at home, you'll need legal size paper, 8 ½" X 14".



Remember.

Spring is here so getting out and about is much easier. If you are looking for something to get out to, our next meeting will be held April 28

at 7:30 pm. Please try to attend.

We thought you'd like to know that our Heritage Day display at the Cornwall Square on Saturday February 21 was a great success. Volunteers who manned the booth report that

many people stopped by to look at displays and chat. Many thanks to the all the volunteers who made the day a success.

The following poem was written by Carolyn Goddard, our guest speaker at the March meeting. It beautifully expresses the experiences that settlers must have encountered as they were caught in the middle of Crysler's Farm Battle.

11 November 1813

Coming to this land as refugees, with little but determination.
Out of the wilderness, carved a home, helped to build a nation.
Many of them spoke a language, foreign to the English ear.
And when war came, rallied round to protect their homes so dear.

"We saw the boats coming, amid the water's roar,
And soon the soldiers landed, more and more and more.
They marched onto our farmlands, trampled grains and corn.
What fantastic sights met our eyes, that cold November morn.
Voices started yelling, in a language we didn't know,
They broke our wooden fences, trampled down the snow,
Made their camp out in the field where Nellie liked to roam,
All the while laughing, talking, singing songs from home.
The moon arose, stars sparkled, day passed into night,
Silence grew as darkness fell and fires made the light.
The flames slowly died out; soldiers huddled to keep warm,
And many tried not to think about the battle the next morn.
We woke early the next morning, and in that cold, grey dawn,
Saw strangers cooking, eating, and dressing on our lawn.
The bugle called out to the men, 'Come and meet your fate.
The battle will begin soon, hurry, hurry don't be late.'
Two armies met that fateful day, two armies brave and strong,
The fighting fierce, casualties great, the battle was not long.
We saw a clash of nation, heard the drum's sad beat, and
When it ended we had won; the enemy was in full retreat.
We left our hiding places; found our soldiers brave and true,

Then to us the wounded came, led by the red, white and blue.
We served the hungry, soothed the dying, lay to rest the dead,
Working all night we didn't stop till all were helped and fed."

Years march on, the veteran's die, battlefields disappear,
And it's easy to forget, the cost of our freedoms so dear.
Let us take some time each year and vow we will remember,
Those who fought on Crysler's field, that cold day in November.

November 11, 2007 Carolyn Goddard

President's Pen



In the February 10th edition of the *Ontario Farmer*, June Flath had an interesting article on Ontario Heritage Week Feb. 15-22. The writer indicated that Victor

Suthren would be appearing at Fulford Place in Brockville. Mr. Suthren, former director of the Canadian War Museum, was to talk about the local history of the War of 1812. Using the 800 number, I called *Ontario Farmer* but this was to no avail. Who could I turn to for the information I sought? I gave David Anderson a call and he promptly informed me that Vic Suthren had already given his talk in Brockville, but there was a seminar to be held in Ogdensburg on Saturday May 2nd that sounds interesting. Later, I received from David a five page description of what is advertised as the "First Annual War of 182 Seminar". When talking to David around this time he thought the idea of organizing a bus trip to Ogdensburg was a great idea. After our initial CTHS meeting in March, Sheila Dow-Cadieux indicated she might be interested in canvassing members to determine if we had sufficient numbers for a bus. This pleased me immediately. At that time I called David again and he informed me that those organizing the seminar want to limit it to forty five people in total. So a bus load from our area is now out of the question. If you still have an interest in attending the seminar and can provide your own transportation, the cost is US\$55.00. Sheila has agreed to provide members with further details and registration forms. You can reach her at 613-932-5469. Since space is limited, forms should be returned A.S.A.P.

President Ranald McDonell