



Newcastle Village and District Historical Society Newsletter

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Coming Events

February 7th 2005 Annual Meeting – This meeting will commence at 7:30 PM in the Historical Room at the Newcastle Community Hall. As in the past we will have our annual “Show and Tell” where everyone is encouraged to bring an item with a story or just a good historical story. Refreshments will be served and a collection will be taken. This is always one of the most popular meetings of the year.

March 7 General Meeting, Paul Arculus, author of *Murder to Mayhem* the story of the “Markham Gang”.. Apparently, he will focus on some of the Newcastle connections and stories too. This meeting will be held in the Lions Room at the Newcastle Community Hall and will commence at 7: 30 PM Refreshments will be served and a collection will be taken.

Rambling notes from the Editor

Well here we are entering another new year, 2005. Only one year away from the Village of Newcastle’s 150th anniversary of being incorporated as a village. Wouldn’t it be great if we could find some of those early village minutes to see just how our community came about? My challenge to our members would be to unearth some of those records for me to publish leading up to our anniversary.

Another task that comes along with the new year is renewing your membership to the Historical Society. Of course some of you have your memberships paid ahead and we appreciate that, but for the ones that don’t we will include a reminder with this issue. Seems that as soon as we throw the old calendar out the new one fills right up.

You will find two articles by Myno Van Dyke in this issue, first the final chapter on the Elliott’s Museum and secondly an interesting insight into Simon Baskerville. Simon was as astute business man here in Newcastle in the early years of the village, but not a lot is known about him, so this article opens a small window into his world and life in Newcastle. The third article comes to me by way of Hilda Tamblin, who receive it from her cousin, John Rowlands, who in turn copied it from “The Chinoak”, a newsletter of the Alberta Family History Society and is written by Adrienne Horne. Adrienne has researched Samuel Wilmot quite extensively and writes a fine article.

Simon Baskerville Testifies at Newcastle in 1902

By

Myno Van Dyke

Back in 1902, there was an inquiry regarding the “Equalization of the Assessment of the United Counties of Northumberland and Durham”. The objective appears to be to equalize the taxes in the various municipalities in the United Counties. Certain people, as well as the Reeve or Mayor and members of Council were appointed as “Evaluators” or “Assessors” to come up with fair values for the properties. On July 17th, evidence was taken in the Village of Newcastle and a witness testifying was a Newcastle resident and entrepreneur, Simon Baskerville. He was being “examined” by Mr. W.F. Holland who represented the United Counties of Northumberland and Durham. The presiding Judge was His Honour Judge Benson. And representing the Village of Newcastle was Mr. E.H. McLean. Also examined after was Francis Gibson who was an “Assessor”. These excerpts are from a typed transcript donated by Lynn Lovekin.

Later in his testimony, Mr. Baskerville advised that he felt that the assessment for the Village was fair so it doesn't appear that he was trying to keep his taxes down by downplaying the value of his properties. This testimony does provide an interesting insight into life in the Village in 1902. Here is some of his testimony;

- **Holland:** You live in the Village of Newcastle?
- **Baskerville:** Yes, Sir.
- **Holland-** What is your occupation?
- **Baskerville.-** My occupation? I don't do a great deal. I suppose they will call me a gentleman. That is the way it is termed. I have property and I look after that.
- **Holland-** You own property in the Village of Newcastle?
- **Baskerville:** Yes Sir, the tavern. The one opposite the Post Office, and one down at this corner. I have a butcher shop on the front street.
- **Holland-** Do you know of any recent sales of property having been made in the village (in the past year or longer).
- **Baskerville:** Yes, I know of a number of sales. Mr. Pockinghorn bought that brick store block.
- **Holland-** What did it consist of?
- **Baskerville:** A store
- **Holland-** Was there a dwelling house with it?
- **Baskerville-** A store and drug store, two stores and music hall overhead.
- **Holland-** How much land?
- **Baskerville-** 1/5 acre lots
- **Holland-** What did that sell for?
- **Baskerville** sold to Mr. Pockinghorn of Ottawa for \$1000
- **Holland-** How was the property sold, privately or by auction?
- **Baskerville-** I have done a little business in this town selling property for anyone that wished. I had it in my hands for quite a long time. They first asked \$1300 and then they came down lower, and could not get it and they wanted to dispose of it, the ladies, two sisters (Miss Fothergal and Mrs. Croger), and Mr. Pockinghorn made an offer of \$1000 and the thing came to him.
- **Holland-** What was your idea of what was realized for it?
- **Baskerville-** We considered it small, but property in this town has gone down so in value that we cannot sell it for a great deal. The time Massey was here, twenty two years ago, property would fetch more than twice what it will today. There is no business now Your Honour.
- **Holland-** What other property do you remember being sold?
- **Baskerville-** The corner opposite the Post Office. I bought that at \$800 a year ago last May
- **Holland-** How was that sold-private sale or public auction?
- **Baskerville-** A Mr. McLean had it for a time to sell, and then the baker wanted to get the property, and he went to Toronto and saw the gentleman that owned it, or rather his wife owned it, a Mr. Howe, and Mr. Mason wanted Mr. Howe to make improvements and he would rent the shop, he wanted some repairs done, and Mr. Howe would not lay out the money, and he says if you can get someone at home to make a bid for this property I will sell it reasonable.

He came home and came to me and I told him I understood that Mr. Bonathan had made a bid of \$800 for it. I am not going to undermine him. It is all the property is worth. It is all that I would give for it anyway. His brother was in with him on the matter. He came back to me and I bid \$800 which was accepted.

- **Holland-** You are not willing to take \$800 for it now?
- **Baskerville-** I cannot say I would like to take quite \$800 but if anyone will advance- I can say I will give the property one with the other. If any person will pay what I have paid for them I will take it today.
- **Holland-** What other property has been sold?
- **Baskerville-** The James Foster property at the corner
- **Holland-** That was the old hotel?
- **Baskerville-** Yes, I paid \$275 for it.
- **Holland-** I suppose that was no longer used as an hotel, probably they could not obtain a licence and it had depreciated?
- **Baskerville-** Yes.
- **Holland-** You got it at a bargain?
- **Baskerville-** Yes sir, in one sense of the term, and another was it had been in the market for a long time
- **Holland-** You converted it into a machine shop?
- **Baskerville-** Yes, repairing.
- **Holland-** What other properties do you know of having been sold?
- **Baskerville-** The Post Office. That was sold for \$1000.
- **Holland-** What kind of building is it?
- **Baskerville-** A brick building, 33 feet on King Street. The width I don't know. There is an old stone-house. I paid \$1000 for it..
- **Holland-** Now some other properties if you can mention them.
- **Baskerville-** The butcher shop. Coulson's butcher shop. My own property but rented to him. I purchased that at \$300.
- **Holland-** What else can you specify as having been actually sold and purchased?
- **Baskerville-** Charlie McIntosh wants to sell his. We cannot get any offer for that. There is trouble to sell. I cannot get purchasers.
- **Holland-** You might mention a number of properties in your hands which you are unable to get purchasers for?
- **Baskerville-** Mrs. Wright's, McIntoshe's, Darby's, Hill's, Lovekin's, Tamblyn's, McCoy's. They are all dwelling houses. We cannot get any offers for them. There are seven. There is no work. There is very little day work in town.
- **Holland-** You have no factories?
- **Baskerville-** No, no more than a blacksmith shop



Simon Baskerville- born (about) 1845-
Died March 11, 1932- Buried Bond Head
Cemetery.

Front left- Simon Baskerville, his wife, Martha, daughter Minnie Rear left Alice, William, Jesse.

The Elliott Museums

Last Half

by
Myno Van Dyke

After the Hwy 401 was built, there was a noticeable drop in traffic on the old Hwy 2. Now it was more of a local road and certainly no need for four gas pumps out front and the cabins they rented out. . The auto wrecking business thrived , as well as the towing part of their enterprise. Bruce continued to acquire wrecks and worn out cars and trucks and park them in the large field on the north side of the highway.

In 1969, Bruce passed away and his three sons, Jack, Don and George continued the business. Jack retired a few years later and Don and George, both licensed mechanics continued to do a good business repairing vehicles. Both Don and George had a strong interest in antique and collectible cars and before long people came from all over Canada to purchase old parts and vehicles from them.

Don and George both started restoring a number of their favourite vehicles and needed a place to display and store them. Eventually, they built several large buildings on the north side of Hwy 2 to accommodate this growing collection. Also, they had a number of restored antique motorcycles, gas pumps, hood ornaments and other memorabilia. At one time, this was to be a museum open to the public, but for a number of reasons they decided to just keep it as a personal display area .

As well, another large building houses a large collection of Canadian military trucks, tanks and other items. Again, this collection is quite extraordinary but not open to the general public.

Recently, George and Don completed the restoration of a 1935 Ford tow truck. This is almost identical to the one that their father had. This labour of love took them 12 years to complete. The sign on the side even has the old Newtonville phone number “Clarke 4020”. George is now 73 and Don who is 70 are still actively restoring a number of old vehicles and even selling the odd modern one from their lot. Ironically they are now back in their father’s old shop on the north side of Hwy #2. They tend to take life a little easier now, still enjoying each other’s company and living just a few houses away from the shop. Don says people seem to have trouble getting hold of them now. Especially when they try to phone the number on the tow truck....



1935 Chevrolet Tow Truck



Elliott's Garage Today



The Museum



Elliott's Old Shop



Old Shop from East Side

Out of the Mists, A History of Clarke Township

A limited reprint is available, either at the Historical Society Room on Tuesday mornings, or from Helen Schmid in Orono (905-983-5837). Be also advised that if you already have a copy, and your dust jacket is torn or otherwise in poor shape, Helen has them available at \$3.00 each. The new dust jackets have a coating making them more durable.

The Wilmot's Newcastle Hatchery

by
Adrienne Horne

Samuel Wilmot

Without a doubt the most famous son of Samuel Street Wilmot was his youngest, Samuel, who was born on August 22nd 1822, at the Belmont Farm in Newcastle. Because of his success, Sam was asked to write his autobiography for Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography, which after much delay was finally written. (1) This autobiography provides most of the following information but it is also supplemented with a letter written to the Editor of the Canadian Statesmen, by Mrs. Marjorie Gray. The Gray family owns the farm next to the Wilmot land and has farmed the land there for a hundred years.(2)

Sam "was educated in his early youth at Upper Canada College, entering it when the institution was just established, where he obtained prizes for efficiency in Classics and English studies". (1) His military duty during the rebellion of 1837-38 was as a Commander of a small troop of horsemen, as a home guard for the village of Napanee. "This boyish troop when on night duty, captured rebel teamsters in the act of carrying arms and ammunition from the neighbourhood of Belleville, to their confederated, who had planned an attack on Kingston". (1)

Sam held the office of Justice of the Peace for about forty years. He was elected as Executive Head of the Municipality of Clarke and he also held the Office of Reeve for Newcastle. Sam represented both townships at the "Counties' Council of the United Counties of Northumberland and Durham". (1) But his fame would come with his work in the breeding of salmon. (1)

Sam's Life in Pisciculture

Sam was always connected to farming as he grew up on his father's farm in Newcastle, the Belmont. This interest lead him to be the President of the Township of Clarke and Durham Agricultural Society, on and off for about thirty years. (1) As well as excelling in the Classics and English, Sam was also "an acute student of natural history and became fascinated by the spectacular runs of salmon that ascended Wilmot Creek (which ran past the house) each autumn and spawned in large numbers on the clear clean current washed gravel beds of the creek". (2) This led him to become interested in pisciculture and the process of artificial breeding of fish.

The Newcastle Hatchery

Sam's natural history education and experience with the Atlantic salmon that swam in Wilmot Creek allowed him to set up his own artificial propagation project in the early 1860s. At first this was done in the basement of the Belmont. Sam set up a wooden trough through which he piped fresh water, from a nearby spring in Wilmot Creek, into the basement. There he began his work on spawning salmon. Sam "attempted to simulate natural stream conditions" in his troughs. (2)

In 1866, Sam moved the operation to a building on the bank of the Wilmot Creek, just downstream from the house. (2) In that year Sam took "15 adult salmon from the creek and, despite the fact that poachers stole 11 of them, managed to hatch nearly 15,000 eggs in the following spring". (3)

The next year he received a government grant to build permanent buildings and to excavate rearing ponds. "A full scale fish culture operation was launched and thus became the Newcastle Fish Hatchery, which over the next

fifty years produced over 155 million fish of a variety of species". (2) Some of the other species (other than Atlantic salmon) Sam successfully preserved were the black bass, lake trout and pickerel. (3)

Sam then built another building, called the Reception Room where mature salmon would freely move through the steep troughs from the creek to the building. The salmon were held here until their eggs and milt were taken. "The spent fish were placed in a long trough through which they were able to swim back into Wilmot Creek and out into Lake Ontario." (2) There were some salmon kept in the rearing ponds for public display. The fertilized eggs were put into trays that were placed in troughs that had clean water flowing through them. The eggs would hatch in the winter and the fish were feed ground liver until they were ready to go into natural waters. (2)

Expansion

This operation made quite an impression on the government, so much so that Sam was promised more money for his fishing interests. To increase the supply of salmon eggs to the hatchery another *Reception Room* was built in the nearby Grafton Creek (8 miles west of Cobourg). "The Newcastle hatchery was founded on the optimism which the Canadian Government had shared with Wilmot, that plantings of the hatchery reared fish would restore the rapid declining Lake Ontario salmon population to its earlier abundance." (2)

In 1870, Sam suggested that hatcheries be built in the Maritime Provinces. This was well received and in 1873, along with the Newcastle and Restigowche Fish Culture operations, hatcheries were also being built on the Miramichi River in New Brunswick. (2)

The design of the Canadian's award winning working model of a hatchery was widely copied, where many of the current government and private hatcheries look very similar to the Newcastle Hatchery, which closed in 1914. "One of the first museums of natural history in Canada was developed at the Newcastle Hatchery". (2) Wildlife (such as moose) and mounted fish species were on display in one of the original hatchery buildings.

With the great success of the Newcastle Hatchery, in 1863, Sam was given the job of Inspector of Fisheries, (2) and in 1873, the Societe D'Acclimatations of France presented Sam with a silver medal, "for his efficient service rendered in that department of practical science". (1) Three years later he was appointed Superintendent of Fish Culture for Canada, and held this post until 1895. (2) In 1879, he was elected President of the Provincial Association, and he presided over the first "Dominion Exposition of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufacture for Canada", held in Ottawa, where he received a gold medal in connection with fisheries. For many years Sam was also the Commissioner of Fisheries for Canada. (1)

London's Great International Fisheries Exhibition

As could be expected, Sam took an active part in the 1883 Great International Fisheries Exhibition in London. He became the Chairman of the Executive Commission in charge of the Canadian exhibit. Canada excelled in this event; they were "unique in [their] practical demonstrations of hatching fish eggs and growing young salmon". They were able to grow their salmon six and seven inches long during the six-month exhibition. For this achievement Canada was awarded "The Gold Medal & Diploma", it was said at the time, "Canada, by Wilmot's system, was the best and most complete fish breeding establishment in the Exhibition". (1)

In addition to the Gold Medal, Sam was awarded an honorary diploma “for the exhibit of hatching and growing young salmon from eggs brought from Canada”. Canada received a total of 31 gold medals and numerous amounts of silver and bronze medals. They ranked second overall for the Great International Fisheries Exhibition. Because of his great work, by 1886, Sam held the office of Chief of Fish Culture Operations for Canada under the new Dominion Government. (1)

Salmon Lose to Development

Although Sam’s hatchery was a success, there was too much change to the waterways around Lake Ontario, with all the mills and dams being built for the growing communities in the area, for the salmon to reach their spawning grounds. This, with the over fishing of the Atlantic salmon, resulted in the species never reaching its earlier populations and eventually becoming extinct from the lake.

Sam tried to fight the decline of the populations by developing fish *ladders* so that the fish could bypass the dams, allowing them to reach their spawning grounds. (3) However this did not work, and it was not until the 1970s when Lake Ontario saw salmon again, but this time they were Pacific species. (4)

The Electric Plant

Sam’s other great contribution to his community was the Belmont Electric Works.

Another feature of the Newcastle Fish Hatchery was the dam above it from which the village of Newcastle drew its first electric power In the year 1896, Samuel Wilmot installed an electric generating plant in connection with the Fish Hatchery; he secured a franchise from the municipal council of Newcastle to serve the ratepayers with electric energy That same year the first electric power was delivered into the village of Newcastle. (2)

The first service of electric power for Newcastle consisted of 10 streetlights, which cost \$1.00 per light per year. There were also 80 house services, which were on a flat rate of 40 cents for each outlet per month. The power was provided from dusk until midnight each day. (2)

After Sam’s death in 1899, his son-in-law, D.J. Gaibrath, took over the operation of the power company. In 1911, the Seymore Light and Power Company bought the company. The power company went through many owners over the next century until it was finally taken over by the Newcastle Public Works Utilities Commission. (2)

The Belmont, the Hatchery & Wilmot Creek

After the hatchery closed in 1914 the building eventually fell prey to road construction. All that was left was “a row of antiqued but stately willows standing along the creek banks, and Wilmot Creek returned to nature’s course”. (2) Wilmot Creek and its surrounding grounds served as a recreational site for many years. It was a great place to picnic, with the lovely gentle rippling of the creek and the fun swimming hole. Where there was a rope hung from a tree over the creek so the children could swing out into the water. “Many learned to swim there, and many will recall the odd dip in the nude (after dark of course)”. (2)

On September 13th, 1967, the Clarke Township Council and the Ontario Archaeological and Historic Sites Board unveiled a plaque in memory of Ontario's first full scale fish hatchery; The Newcastle Fish Hatchery, established by Samuel Wilmot over a century before.

The *Belmont* home had many owners since Sam Wilmot; the last known owners were Alfred and Lena Graham (1982), who had lived in the house since 1939. They were able to retain 24 acres of the original 400 acres of land. On these 24 acres lies the original spring Sam used to run the hatchery, with pipes still carrying water into the basement, where the first hatchery experiments were done.

In the early 1980s, Alfred Graham sold the land south of the hatchery to the road, to the Department of Lands and Forest. The area, now overgrown, is not a nice place to picnic anymore; quite unlike the way the Graham's maintained the land. The plaque that stood in memory of the great work that was accomplished here is now covered with overgrown and unattended land. (2)

There is no longer any sign of the hatchery. There is a small dirt road going from the house down to the creek, ending at a rickety bridge. The plaque and the creek are visible from this road but the site of the hatchery is not. To see the site one must venture into the overgrown wilderness trying to stay on the small animal trail. Ironically, there is now a "No Fishing" sign along the creek bank!

Sam's work made Wilmot Creek one of the most famous salmon streams in Ontario. (2) His extremely successful hatchery venture...

has earned for himself well-merited notoriety throughout Canada, and the United States, and a/s/o in parts of Europe. From a very small beginning which originated with himself as an amateur in his private residence at Belmont Farm, to the Science of Artificial Fish Culture through his personal enterprise, and official zeal, had become an established Industry throughout Canada. (1)

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3. Unknown Abt ¹⁹⁸⁵ U.S. Fisheries Society Names Samuel Wilmot to the Hall of Fame, News Article.
4. Stanley, James ¹⁹⁸⁹ Atlantic Salmon Once Teemed in Lake Ontario, Canadian Geographic; Aug/Sep