2010

Spotlight on Essex County: 2010 Fall

Essex Free Press

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Essex County's rural outposts

Pages from the Past
Historic Essex County newspapers go online

Dancing on Laughter-Silvered Wings
Local aviators top the wind-swept heights of Essex County

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A LITTLE EFFORT GOES A LONG WAY

The spirit of Essex County travels around the world

By Jennifer Cranston

We have all, at some point, heard our heartstrings pulled by images of extreme poverty, the aftermath of war or natural disaster in another part of the world. Some of us even make the sacrifice of a “cup of coffee a day” to save a child affected by these conditions.

Fewer still take it upon themselves to make a substantial and tangible difference in the lives of many by giving thousands of their own dollars, days or weeks of their own lives, and foregoing confidence in their own personal safety. It takes an unusual level of dedication to travel to a developing country or disaster area to build a school or clinic, to lend your services to the improvement of health and quality of life for hundreds.

Humanitarians come from all walks of life. Every age from teen to senior, every profession from doctor to farmer to housewife, every mission from orphans to education to simple clean water are represented among the humanitarians who call Essex County home.

People who do this kind of work invariably say that the personal rewards far outweigh the sacrifices. These endeavors are addictive and contagious.

John Blair of Kingsville is a retired Chrysler employee who has been visiting God’s Littlest Angels (GLA) orphanage and the Calabasse Christian School in Haiti regularly for about eight years. In total, he has taken twelve trips to the tiny impoverished nation and will make his thirteenth this fall.

Much of the work of GLA and Blair, who recently took a place on the organization’s board of directors, has been focused on earthquake recovery. While the earthquake that hit the struggling nation in January caused only minor injuries and damage to the school orphanage, staff and children, many homes in the village were leveled. Food and basic supplies became sparse for a time and remain more expensive.

“The last trip I spent sorting and delivering supplies,” says Blair.

In February, he and other volunteers loaded several shipping containers full of supplies in Colorado. Blair then traveled to meet the supplies when they arrived in Haiti to see that they were distributed.

He says the hardest part of leaving Haiti is coming home and re-adjusting to the relatively affluent and luxurious lifestyle we are accustomed to.

“The first time I came home I was angry at people complaining about nothing,” he says.

People who consider doing this type of work, he cautions, need to be aware that, in many cases, they will be walking into poverty that is beyond our imagination.

“I never knew what we’re walking into,” he says. “Words don’t do it justice. Pictures don’t do it justice. People have nothing. You have to see it to believe it. Many of them don’t even know what money looks like.”

Blair explains that his work with GLA has allowed him to meet and form friendships with people from all over the world. He keeps going back, he says, because of the children.

The kids grow on you. As a father and grandfather how do you not love these kids?” He has had the joy of being able to watch the children grow up and has seen firsthand the difference that is being made.

“When I first went, the kids weren’t very healthy, anemic, open sores on their skin. Now they are healthy and happy — with proper nutrition and medical care that we make sure they get.”

GLA is an organization that is very successful in its efforts to aid the children and families of Haiti. They have been able to support the school orphanage and surrounding village by sending about 65 pre-fabricated earthquake-resistant proof houses, each worth $1,000, and digging five wells at a cost of about $28,000 each. In Haiti, it is often necessary to dig a thousand feet through solid rock to get to water.

Neil McBeth, centre, helps restore well water to a small Nigerian village during a 12-day visit in 2008.

Clean water is something that most of us take for granted, but in many parts of the world it is a rare commodity.

Neil McBeth is a Rotarian from Essex who has made it a priority in his life to bring wells to Nigeria.

His humanitarian journey began in 2007 when he and his wife, Cheryl, traveled to Ghana as part of RELAY — Rotarians Enhancing Learning for African Youth.

The following year, McBeth went to Nigeria as a Rotary volunteer, to renovate a school and part of a hospital, as well as investigate possible “project sights.” During that trip he found several worthy projects, but one in particular caught his interest.

“One of the last stops was a ‘settlement village’ called Sharada,” he explains.

Sharada is about one square mile in size, with about 800 million people living in it. When McBeth first visited the place, they had water but it wasn’t safe to drink. The school had no building and there was no real medical clinic.

“I came away from that village thinking ‘what can I do?’ he says.

As Rotary District Governor at the time, it was his responsibility to visit all of the clubs in this district.

“I told them of the village and provided them with the opportunity to donate what they could afford.”

In conjunction with the Rotary Foundation and the Rotary Club in that region of Nigeria, enough money was raised to put in 12 borehole wells. The village only had room for six to the others are to be dug throughout Nigeria at hospital compounds, schools and other places in need.

This project has created hope that Rotary in Nigeria will be able to raise more money and dig more wells.

McBeth will return to Nigeria and Sharada some time this fall, when he will look at other potential project sights.

“I have promised to take on one of the (projects) and find other partners to help,” he explains.

He and Cheryl will also be going to India as non-medical volunteers on a Rotaplast team.

Rotaplast focuses on providing reconstructive surgery for children.

Rotary International provided McBeth with the opportunity to fill a need he and his family have always had.

“We’ve always been community-minded. I’m part of Rotary because of the opportunities to serve the bigger community,” he says.

The emotional rewards are well worth the effort, for McBeth.

“You can’t help but be touched by what you see and the friendships you make,” he says.

Essex optometrist Julie Ricci has also been able to use the vast infrastructure of Rotary to make a difference. Ricci, who lives in Leamington, first worked with a partnership between The First Baptist Church of Leamington and Rotary to bring a vision clinic to Haiti in 2007. She held another vision clinic in Haiti in 2009, and earlier this year she travelled to India to work with an immunisation program.

During the vision clinics, Ricci says, it is impossible to see everyone who needs help.

“It’s amazing how many people feel when they find out you’re coming,” she explains.

Even though she needs two or three days being about 100 people a day, many more end up being turned away.

“You feel like you’re not even touching the iceberg,” Ricci says.

Ricci has made it a habit to serve a week to two weeks a year in developing countries.

“It brings you joy you can’t get anywhere else,” she says.
One of her most moving experiences was bringing a young Haitian boy to London, Ont., for cataract surgery. He was five years old when he was brought to her team's attention in 2009.

"When I saw that he had cataracts, I jumped. I was so excited because that's something we can fix."

It involved finding a surgeon in London to do the procedure, raising about $18,000 and cutting through reams of red tape to get the boy and his mother to Canada. The surgery was a success and Ricci is still in regular contact with the family.

People considering leaving the safety of Canada to serve in less developed, foreign countries should know that parts of their experience will be scary and disturbing.

Ricci says that in Haiti she was simultaneously moved by the multitude of stars she could see at night, and made a little uneasy by the voodoo chanting that she could hear. She found it disconcerting that the doorman at a restaurant she visited carried an automatic firearm.

"I don't know what happened to him," she says.

Ricci's travels have given her a moving respect for the freedoms, standards and effective government we enjoy in Canada. People complain about our government we enjoy in Canada. People complain about our government, but they can't truly appreciate how good we have things until they've seen the results of real corruption and deprivation in other countries.

Construction of a new school in Mafereka, Sierra Leone, was completed in July 2010, about four months ahead of schedule.

"Seeing the stories of the people and the appreciation they have for what little they have," explains, "it's just down to earth, basic stuff."

While you are physically serving others, the pair says it brings with it an inner reward that is difficult to explain.

"You learn how significant small things are. You feel part of the bigger part of humanity," Yantzi says.

John Garinger of Essex discovered the power of humanitarianism through his work with Essex District High School.

After speaking to a Civics class on global awareness, Garinger began looking for a more effective way to reach the kids. After two weeks of research he found "Schools for Salone." The organization works to build schools in Sierra Leone. Garinger was so moved by the destruction civil war brought to the country that he was moved to do something more.

He sent an email to the organization and committed to building them a school. Then he went about getting the school community of Essex involved. Community organizations like Rotary and the Kinsmen also helped out.

The "Mafereka Raiders" were born. Led by EDHS students and supported by area elementary schools, the Mafereka Raiders raised $42,000 that helped build a school in the village of Mafereka in record time.

Garinger inspired the students to get involved and make a difference. With his guidance and the hard work of the children of Essex, the money was raised faster than planned. Although the school's completion wasn't expected until November, it was finished by the end of July. The children of Essex will continue to support the Mafereka school indefinitely.

Garinger plans to visit "the school that Essex built" this fall.

"This has been a huge learning experience," he says. "Part of my future lies there. I just don't know how.

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Rotary is not the only organization with an admirable track record and excellent international infrastructure. The Mennonite Central Committee is a worldwide relief organization that began shortly after the Second World War. It started with the Mobile Meat Cannery, which still comes to Leamington on its annual tour and helps to feed people around the world. MCC has grown to include disaster services and aid in all forms, everywhere.

Through this organization Greg Yantzi and Kathy Vohrenk, of Hannon Mennonite Church, were able to go to New Orleans in April 2009 to help in continuing recovery efforts following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. They are both hoping to return this fall or next spring.

"MCC is able to respond to disasters because they are set up for that," says Yantzi. "But the intention is to do long-term recovery work."

Vohrenk says that it is very hard work but well worth it.

"It's exciting to be honest. Part of it is the adventure," she says.

Yantzi likes the knowledge that his work makes a difference in difficult lives.

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If you have the desire to help, the following contacts can help find a mission that's right for you.

God's Littlest Angels, GLSang
Rotary International, rotary.org
Mennonite Central Committee, mcco.org
Schools For Salone, schoolsforsalone.org

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Joe McLeod has played a lot of hockey. A defenceman with the Essex 73's Junior C Hockey Club from 1988 to 1993, McLeod is now playing the great Canadian sport a long, long way from Essex County.

The 38-year-old from Maidstone, a corporal with the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment, has been serving his county in Afghanistan since May. His love for the game of hockey, however, has not waned. He and his fellow Canadian forces soldiers regularly engage in a conflict that is decidedly Canadian, courtesy of the very competitive Kandahar Ball Hockey League.

"I don't know who started the league but there are 24 teams," McLeod explained.

Military personnel representing countries from all over the world participate in the league. McLeod's team's lack of success on the concrete rink led him to think that perhaps the equipment was contributing to the problem.

"They were using these sticks that you use in the driveway when you're five years old," he said.

Struggling to pick up wins, the Canadian team was desperately in need of new equipment. That's where McLeod's good friend Jamie McDermott was able to lend a hand. McDermott, a former assistant coach with the 75's, and now with the Leamington Flyers, organized an equipment drive.

"Joe called Jamie and said, 'Can you get us some hockey sticks?' said Scott Miller of Miller's Source for Sports in Essex.

In June, the local sports store became a collection spot for the hockey equipment that included everything from sticks and balls to tape and even goalie equipment. Glen O'Neill's LaSalle Zone was another drop off spot. In addition, McDermott confirmed that the Flyers would be donating all of their field hockey gloves.

"Support Our Troops" is a slogan that has become very well known and the sign posted in the window at the local sports store gained quick attention.

"People came in with some money to buy sticks and the Bill Jones 3-on-3 Tournament bought the tape," said Miller. "One gentleman brought in a set of goalie pads and gloves and a few people brought in balls. The response was quick. Everyone thinks a lot of Joe," Miller added.

"When you have a guy like Joe who is respected, it sparks a lot of interest," said McDermott.

On August 13, McLeod and Jamie McDermott left during McLeod's military deployment to Afghanistan to raise funds for the cause.

McDermott sat at a table at the Grand Central Tavern in Essex, recounting stories from their days together in minor hockey and with the Essex 73's.

"McLeod was proudly wearing his 73's ball cap, which he has with him all the time in Afghanistan," said McDermott.

"He called me out of frustration because he didn't have a hockey stick," said McDermott.

The two buddies communicate regularly through e-mail. It was McDermott who let McLeod know all the details about the recent birth of McLeod's new son, just before his August leave.

McLeod says he is very grateful for the support he gets from his wife, friends and family. Being a soldier takes its toll mentally and physically. Being away from your family and the ones you love for several months at a time is, to say the very least, difficult. Finding ways to relieve the stress at times can be tough.

"It plays on your mind all the time," said McLeod.

Canadian Forces troops based in Kentalak are kept very busy. Recreational time is generally limited, but when the troops do get to relax there are lots of activities to enjoy.

Captain Steve Ball, an officer with the 31st Service Battalion in Windsor, said most soldiers have laptop computers and can therefore stay in touch with family and friends.

"For the people on the main base, we have a House, which shows movies," said Ball, a Windsor native.

"There is a recreational volleyball league and the Americans have a football league," he added.

Well-stocked libraries, visits from NHL players and celebrities, access to fitness facilities, DVD rentals and even charity casinos are some of the things that help pass the time.

"It is real hard to get bored over there," said Ball.

Since his first tour of duty to Afghanistan, Ball says the range of recreational opportunities and the ability to communicate with friends and family back home has improved.

"They want to take care of us. It's a very stressful time," said Ball.

One local organization that thinks highly of the Canadian Forces is the Woodlsee Friendship Club, which has been supporting the troops since 2007. That year they had a yellow ribbon campaign.

"We decided to decorate our (flower) barrels and we had a troop campaign. It was to support the troops," said Donna Roubos.

After that, the group made troop boxes that were filled with personal items including magazines, granola bars and Tim Hortons cards.

"Last year we decided not to do that. Instead we had a get-together of the mothers of the soldiers," said Roubos.

The Milne Centre near Woodlsee is the location of a Wall of Heroes on which all the Canadian soldiers who have been killed in action are honoured.

Another way in which the Woodlsee Friendship Club has shown its support is by making more than 400 scarves to be shipped overseas to soldiers, including Woodlsee's Sgt. Duane Adams who has completed seven tours of duty, two of them in Afghanistan.

"We accepted donations and we had 443 scarves that were sent to the troops," said Roubos.

"The word spread and people were sending in letters with money in it."

When it comes to supporting our troops, people are happy to contribute in any small way – from writing letters to knitting scarves to donating hockey equipment. Every selfless gesture is meaningful. But perhaps McDermott said it best.

"The work we do here does not compare to what they do over there."
Dancing on laughter-silvered wings

By Andy Comber

Elsie had flown as a passenger in a commercial jet, but never in a small plane. Billing convinced her that one day she would surely like to fly with Rick, and when that day came she should know something "as a backup."

"I thought maybe he is right," Elsie said.

When Billing let her take the controls one day, Elsie discovered she had "the feel for flying."

"I was hooked - that's how it all started."

Elsie started flying lessons with Billing late in the summer of 1979. And on November 16, 1980, she experienced her first solo flight in Billing's Aeronca Champ, call sign CF-GWW.

In 1981, the Barnetts partnered with Billing to buy another Aeronca Champ, this one with the call sign CF-DFL. Then, when Rick got his flying licence, the couple decided to buy their own plane, a 1973 Bellanca Decathlon, call sign CF-GRO. The 150-hp two-seater with dual controls is capable of aerobatics; its inverted system enables it to climb 1,000 feet per minute and fly upside down for two minutes.

Elsie said Billing urged her to pursue her pilot's licence, something she achieved on March 7, 1984. Billing was a tough flight instructor, but one to respect, she said.

"With Jerry, you learnt from the best," Elsie said. "I learnt off a grass strip - a little grass strip."

Elsie had learned so well and so much, in fact, that she was urged to take part in air shows. Her first public air show was over the Detroit River for the Freedom Festival, just over three months after getting her licence. She repeated the performance the next day.

"I flew to the music The Rose, dedicated to my daughter Annajayne," Elsie said.

A sound system was set up so she could hear the same instrumental of the song (written by Amanda McBroom in 1978) in the cockpit, as the audience was hearing on the ground. This way she was able to choreograph her aerobatics, including loops, to the music.

Elsie's flight presentation of The Rose became her trademark performance and numerous shows followed.

There was some celebrity status attached to being "The Rose of the Sky," Newspapers, magazines, radio and television took an interest. A local CBC television broadcast in 1984 paid a visit to the pigs, and an article pub-
lished in 1996 hailed Elsie as the "Amelia Earhart of Southwestern Ontario" after the renowned American aviatrix.

In 1986, the Barnetts built their own grass strip at the family farm, located southeast of Essex on County Road 27. They moved the Decathlon to a hangar there.

Elsie made numerous performances leading up to the Windsor Air Show in 2000. But the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001 caused insurance costs to rise for all pilots and air shows. Many shows shut down, including the Windsor operation, which was only restored last year.

The Barnetts recently built a new hangar for the beloved Decathlon. Elsie, now 68, still takes to the sky. There, like the seed that becomes the rose in the song, she is not afraid to dream, to take a chance, to live, to dance "on laughter-silvered wings."

"It is a different world – the feeling is unbelievable," Elsie said. "You see the Earth in a whole new way."

Despite the passage of time and changes in people's perceptions of male and female roles, there are still many more flyboys than flygirls. Perhaps that's because it was men who first inspired boys to dream of flight. Take the thoughts of France's JacquesCharles, who took part, in 1783, in the first free flight in a manned hydrogen balloon:

"Nothing will ever equal that moment of exultation which filled my whole being when I felt myself flying away from the earth. It was not mere pleasure; it was perfect bliss."

As aircraft became a more common sight in the skies, boys started looking skyward to dream. That was the case for Walter Sellick of Harrow, who, as a young man in 1941, enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force to serve his country. But he also had a desire to fly.

"I was delegated to ground crew," Sellick said. "Still, I thought eventually I would have an opportunity to learn to fly. Unfortunately, with the war, I never got the chance."

During the war, Sellick served at a number of Canadian airbases, most notably Gander, Newfoundland, where thousands of planes made the jump off to Europe.

"There were accidents every day," said Sellick. "It was one big hop over the Atlantic."

After the war, Sellick still dreamed of flying. In 1950, he joined the Windsor Flying Club and began to live the dream when he took his first solo flight in 1951. Sellick clearly remembers the day the instructor sent him aloft for a circuit around Windsor Airport in a low-wing Piper aircraft – alone.

"I was just a bit nervous," he said. "But everything went perfectly."

In 1968, Sellick established Sellick Equipment Ltd., building heavy-duty, rough-terrain forklift trucks. As the company prospered, Sellick was able to buy his own airplane in 1970 – a low-wing, four-seater Beech Sundowner. He would use it for business and pleasure.

In 1998, when Sellick turned 80, he joined a select group of flyers – the United Flying Octogenarians (UFO). Started by 25 aviators in 1982, it now boasts over 600 members around the world. Sellick served as president for two and a half years.

Sellick always kept his aircraft hangared at Windsor Airport. At age 87, he built his own hangar there to house his latest aircraft, a 1997 Zlin, a two-seater featuring rugged all-metal construction.

Annual social events for pilots called "fly-ins" have always been a favourite pastime for Sellick. Over the years he has flown to numerous locations in North America. In November, he plans to fly to Long Beach, California, to attend the annual UFO Convention.

"You meet an awful lot of nice people in flying," said Sellick, who, at 92, believes age is only a number.

"As far as I know, I am the second-oldest pilot to be still flying in Canada."

Today, flyboys and flygirls of all ages continue to fulfill their dream of flight. Look skyward some day and you might just see them dancing in the sunlit sky "on laughter-silvered wings."
Essex County's rural outposts

By Andy Comber

Large towers reach into Essex County skies, like the turrets of a mighty castle. But it was grain that built these castles – silos that stand as monuments to the co-operative movement.

The idea of co-operation dates far back in human history, to a time when people organized for mutual benefit. Founded in 1844, the Rochdale Society is considered the first successful co-operative. A group of weavers in Rochdale, England, established the society and opened their own store to make food items more affordable. Within ten years, there were over 1,000 co-operative societies in the United Kingdom.

After World War One, farming remained the primary industry in Essex County. It was the farm community that was at the centre of the local co-operative movement.

Successful co-operatives were developed in large agricultural centres, Harrow and Essex standing out among them. The Harrow Farmers Co-operative Association was formed by 44 members in 1919. Essex Farmers Limited got its start that same year.

Harrow Farmers expanded rapidly into all sorts of ventures, including coal, hardware, grain, feed and livestock. It was, at one time, the agency for the Essex and Hudson motorcars. Essex Farmers was much the same; they sold Ford farm equipment and cars.

In 1947, Essex County saw the formation of the first Francophone co-operative – La Co-operative de Pointe-aux-Roches – known to the English-speaking community as the Stoney Point co-op.

As times changed, co-op products and services changed. Fuel was offered, and large grain silos and dryers were constructed. At harvest time, long lines of tractors with their grain wagons would assemble at the grain silos. These were the rural outposts of Essex County.

Many grain operations were located in the centre of local towns. This became a problem as urban development closed in around them. Most co-ops were also located along the railroad tracks for easy shipment. This was true even in the small communities of McGregor, Oldcastle, Staples, Comber and Maidstone.

Over time, farming evolved and co-operatives evolved with them. Farms and their farm equipment, combines and harvesters, became larger. But there were difficult times too. Fires and other tragedies – and tough economic times.
Essex Farmers became a victim of the 1980s recession, going into receivership in 1981 and closing its operations in 1982. Only the large grain silos stand today.

Many of Essex County’s railways were hurting too. The last train passed through Harrow in 1991 on the Chesapeake and Ohio line. Trucking was replacing rail as a cheaper and more versatile mode of transportation.

By 1992, the only independent co-operatives were Harrow Farmers and Pointe-aux-Roches. The latter prevailed. Some co-op properties were sold to private enterprises. Others closed as grain operations were consolidated. Location near major highways became more important than rail.

In 2006, La Co-opérative de Pointe-aux-Roches merged with Orford Co-operative Limited to form Agris Co-operative, which is still a farmer-driven organization. Today, grain operations are fewer in number but modern facilities can handle far more volume. Co-operatives continue to evolve with the times.

Castles of grain – those from bygone days and those at the new rural outposts – continue to dot our local landscape and stand tall as monuments to the co-operative movement.
Spotlight on the Past

Lost communities of Essex County

By Chris Carter and Andy Comber

You arrive at the crossroads and close counties. Sounds of yesterday traveled on the wind. The blacksmith strikes rivets, horses exhale, their hooves heavy on the ground, wagons creak, a saw slides back and forth on wooden logs. In the distance, a ship's bell rings and a train halts, steam hissing.

These are the sounds of the past. They belong to lost communities—places that are merely shadows of their former selves or ghosts of the thriving centres they once were.

Essex County has numerous such places—Amherstburg, Colborne, Union, Spithead, Ellford, Olinda. Located at crossroads, sometimes at a port of call, or inland by the rail, many of the communities boasted services that no longer exist—schools, churches, stagecoach stops, general stores and post offices. Today, for some, their small populations are no longer allowed dots on the map. They are becoming shadows, ghosts of the past.

Two hundred years ago, Essex County was dense with trees. Its flat interior terrain was marshy, discouraging settlement anywhere but close to the shoreline. Ports along Lake Erie hummed with activity in the 17th century, developing wherever there was trade and commerce—wherever there were goods, crops, and resources to fill the holds of ships.

By 1835, a Lake Erie port had developed at the end of Graham Side Road, a ready-supply route in Godspeed Township, which gave it its name. Leamington and Kingsville did not yet exist and Colchester was too far away to serve local farmers.

When the post office opened on October 16, 1831, under Postmaster Peter Schatz, the post was named Albertville, in honour of Queen Victoria's beloved husband, Prince Albert.

By 1835, Albertville's population had reached the 100 mark. It was a thriving community with a school and many small businesses including a blacksmith's shop, a gristmill, a tannery, and a carpenter's shop. A Mr. Strong owned the general store, and a Mr. Lovelace operated the boat and shoe shop.

To the north, the interior of the township was gradually being cleared and occupied. Much of the work was being done by discharged soldiers who were given land to reward them for their service to the Crown. Families with names well known today—Bruner, Tollemere, Fox and Wigle—were among the first to settle the area.

The increased trade meant larger cargos, and largerships to carry them, would arrive and depart from Albertville. The water was too shallow for the larger ships to reach the docks, so they would be loaded or unloaded from barges, doubling the work.

Albertville reached its peak in the 1870s and a new dock was established in deeper waters less than two kilometers to the east. Ruthven, only a kilometre to the north, lent its name to the dock. But the community would be known as Union-on-the-Lake, or simply Union.

Thanks to a federal government grant, Henry Wigle was able to build a more substantial dock at Union in 1874. It meant prosperity for Union and the demise of Albertville. In 1881, a Capt. Davey improved Union's dock, adding to its length and structure.

Developments just north of Ruthven were also driving the economy of the region. About eight kilometres inland, at the "Back Settlement," landowner George Bruner had discovered an iron bog. He promptly invited the Colbourne Iron Works Company to set up a foundry. They did, and, in turn, the growing hamlet became known as Colbourne.

The iron business brought nicknames for the community. It was known as "Furnace," for obvious reasons, and "Stag Town," supposedly referring to the many single men that lived and worked there.

The community thrived in its early years. Located on a natural gravel ridge, it was on the Indian trail that stretched from Sandwiche Towne at the Detroit River to the Niagara Peninsula. During the 1820s, Col. Thomas Talbot laid his overland route, the Talbot Trail, at Colbourne's doorstep. By the 1840s, there were about 800 residents at Colbourne—a population that rivaled many other Essex County communities.

When the post office came to Colbourne around 1836, the furnaces were gone. There were richer ore deposits elsewhere. One resident, Michael Wigle, had been reading about Indians and suggested a new name for the community, Olinda; an Indian name, is said to mean "land of plenty."

Olinda was a land of plenty, but with the ore depleted, industry shifted to agriculture. Unfortunately, distiller Hiram Walker's railroad did not come to the community. By the late 1880s, the federal government decided the best places for its docks were in the growing communities of Kingsville and Leamington. Both had natural harbours, rail and many other services. Everything added up to decline for Olinda and Union.

Olinda is Essex County's only true ghost town. Although
other communities have vanished from the map. It is a severe loss of population that creates ghost towns, by 1940, the dock was in ruins but the community grew as a residential area, with cottages and homes. More a bedroom community today, it is Union's once thriving port that has slipped into the shadows.

Essex County holds many more lost communities - Albuna, Bugle crown, Klondike, New California, Salem, Zion. The list is long. Although our hamlets, towns and cities continue to evolve, history teaches that the future is always uncertain. Some communities may thrive, others may vanish like ghosts.

Inland, numerous communities tried to establish themselves by mid-century. For many, a crossroad was all that defined them. They served the local farmers, perhaps boasting a general store with a post office, a school and churches.

In 1873, the Canada Southern Railroad laid tracks diagonally across the county, from Tilbury in the northeast, through Essex and McGregor, to Amherstburg in the southwest. Railroads meant prosperity. This dramatically changed the development of Colchester Township and operated the interior. Farmland was wanted, but first the vast forests in Essex County would have to be cleared.

John Edgar founded a lumber centre, first called Kilroy, but later known as Edgar Mills, or simply Edgar. It was located on the Canadian Southern line, between Concession 12 and 13 in Colchester North. A store and a railroad station were built.

Prosperity seemed certain, but as the trees disappeared so too did the community's reason for being. It is interesting to note that Edgars still appears on some maps in local telephone directories - but you will only find shadows of the community it once was.

A map of N. Colchester from 1880

An unusual mound of earth marks the site of Edgar Mills, a thriving lumber centre in the late 1800s

Tobacco Farm - Olinda (Photo Chris Carter)
From Weak Blood and Miraculous Pills to Supporting the War Effort

Some of the most interesting materials in historic newspapers come from advertisements. These announcements, especially for improving blood quality, dealing with nervous conditions, and overcoming fatigue. These "medicines" were typically endorsed with letters from happy customers who often lived well outside of the community. For example, Paines Health advertisements from the late 1800s and early 1900s - "The Essex Free Press."
Abolitionist Newspapers in Essex County

In 1851, Henry Bibb, a former slave from Kentucky who escaped via Detroit and founded a newspaper called The Voice of the Fugitive in Sandwich, persuaded a remarkable teacher from Delaware named Mary Ann Shadd to set up a school in Windsor. Shadd had a strong track record as a teacher in African-American schools and had been a frequent contributor to abolitionist publications. She soon saw great promise in Canada and, in her writings, she encouraged Black Americans to pursue a future north of the border. Shadd's strong belief in integrated schools soon clashed with Bibb's support for separate schools for Black children. Partially as a result of some unflattering description of Shadd in The Voice of the Fugitive, the first issue of The Provincial Freeman was printed in Windsor in March 1853. With this newspaper, Shadd became the first Black female publisher in North America and the first female publisher in Canada. She was aware of how groundbreaking her publication was, and the newspaper was careful to list one of the frequent contributors, Samuel Ringgold Ward, as the editor in the first year. Ward was a well-respected writer, but it became clear that the force behind The Provincial Freeman was Shadd. Soon, nearly all correspondence to the newspaper would be addressed "To the Editor of the Provincial Freeman."

In her newspaper, Shadd would report on slavery issues in the United States, the activities of abolitionist groups, and highlight the successes of Black Americans in Canada. She never wavered in her opinion, and her strength of character would impact many lives even after closing down The Provincial Freeman in 1857. Shadd would return to the States and become a recruiting officer for Blacks for the Union Army at the outbreak of the Civil War. She would later graduate from law school and work for the women's suffrage movement, becoming the first Black woman to cast a vote in a U.S. national election.

A Sometimes Fragile and Brittle Record

Newspapers, like most paper products, can deteriorate quickly and are highly susceptible to factors like dampness and humidity. Our Ontario begins the conversion as the stack of microfilm reels, some of them containing pages that are in very poor condition. Loren Fantin, project manager for Our Ontario, points out that microfilm quality and volume are very significant when working with newspapers:

"The quality of the microfilm source can vary widely. The reel can be scratched from constant use, and the images on the microfilm itself are subject to lighting conditions and the sheer physical quality of the newspaper at the point it was photographed to make the microfilm."

Fantin estimates that a newspaper page can represent 2,000 to 5,000 words, and a century-old weekly publication can require many thousands of pages. The volume of data can be overwhelming for computer systems and the people who manage them. So "The key is to find ways to stay aloof when the numbers start adding up. Only e-mail creates more text than newspapers today, and nothing matches newspapers for the amount of text included in previous decades."

Looking Forward to Pages from the Past

For those interested in local history, gaining access to historic newspapers will be a boon and a much-welcomed alternative to spending hours staking at microfilm. For anyone exploring family connections, newspapers will offer a wealth of data on family marriages, deaths, and public gatherings. For researchers in general, newspapers capture the profile of a community in unique ways and are primary source materials for the day-to-day activities of previous generations. As they are preserved, they offer a unique and illuminating insight into the events that shape a community. The words of William Ballfour and John Auld, founders of The Amherstburg Echo, continue to guide many of this county's oldest newspapers. In their publications' introductory description in 1874, they wrote:

"It shall be the object of this journal to promote the best interests of the community, and to guide the sentiment of the people on every subject of importance."

On August 2010, about 50,000 pages have been made available. Some holdings are incomplete. The digitized newspapers are appearing at the following sites as they are processed:

- **Our Ontario Community Newspaper Site** - , and other Ontario newspapers.

**South Western Ontario Digital Archive** - (Website to be launched Fall 2010. Also includes books, postcards and other historical materials, as well as a list of newspaper titles published in Essex County before 1960).
The virtues of a village called Essex Centre were published in the October 3, 1872 edition of the Essex Record. Yet, in 1881, when the Essex Chronicle published a history of Essex, there was not one reference to the man who had extolled its virtues so highly just nine years earlier.

Alexander Cameron had laid out the streets and property lots in Essex, had opened two sawmills and built a train station. He had moved Mr. Thornton’s hotel at Gosfield Townline to the property beside the railway tracks, the founder of the town had he not built the tollgates in Essex?

Would Alexander Cameron have been given some recognition as the founder of the town had he not built the tollgates in Essex?

"Four blackened patches of earth mark the sides of four tollgates on the old Talbot gravel road at and near Essex, and today the traveller journeys free along the roads. In the vicinity of the scene of the destruction there are no signs of grief at the devastation wrought; there is indeed a merry little twinkle in the eye of the average wayfaring man as he passes with impunity the spot where formerly he had to dive into his pocket."

- Toronto Globe, July 25, 1896

In the late 19th century, toll roads were not new to Essex County. The old Talbot and Sandwich road was built in the 1850s to connect Sandwich – then the administrative and political centre for the district that included the Counties of Essex, Kent and Lambton – with communities to the east. The first tolls along Talbot Road were taken in 1856.

The company that built the road – the Sandwich Street Plank Road Company – was sold first to Charles Baby of Sandwich, and later sold to an associate, Alexander Cameron, following Baby’s death. In 1878 or 1879, the company became a joint stock company known as the Talbot Street Gravel Road Company.

Holding the lease to Talbot Road, Cameron collected tolls at Grand Marais and also at Walker Road. In 1872 he made the decision to build two more tollgates – one at Gosfield Townline in Essex, and another at Malden Road in Maidstone. Cameron, and later his estate, collected a five-cent toll from users of the road, which was neglected and often impassable in wet weather. Townspeople and area farmers grew to resent his name. Mr. Lovelace, editor of the Essex Free Press in 1895, referred to Talbot Road as ‘‘Cameron’s Creek’’ – too dirty for bathing and not deep enough for navigation.

The tollgates were so despised that, in 1895, two years after Cameron’s death, John Milne provided land to build a ‘‘bypass’’ which was completed in record time before anyone from the gravel company could get to Essex to stop it. That bypass is the part of today’s Irwin Avenue, from Fairview Avenue to Gosfield Townline and then east until it hooks back up with Talbot. Once the bypass road was built, receipts at the tollgate dropped to about 50 cents a week and, for the remainder of 1895, it appeared that the Talbot Street Gravel Road Company had abandoned the gate.

In January 1896, Essex Mayor P. A. Dewar received word from the Cameron Estate that Talbot Road had been leased to a man named Cornwall, who had been given orders to build “check” gates at every street in town crossing the creek to catch those using the bypass.

Work began on an Arthur Avenue tollgate, but every morning the workmen arrived only to find all the work they had done the previous day torn down. They persisted for one week and then, with no progress made, abandoned the plan.

The burning of the tollgates is memorialized in a mural painted on the back of Grand Central Tavern in Essex, facing the public parking lot.

**LIGHTNING DID IT.**

The New West End Toll Gate A Victim of the Elements.

About eleven o’clock on Wednesday night, the cry of fire rang through the streets. A few people heard it but as the official alarm was not given, not much attention was paid to it. It proved however that the new toll house at the west end was being consumed. It is said as a visitation of the powers that be, by the devouring element. The agony was not long drawn out, and no regrets are recorded. Various opinions are hazarded, as to the origin of the blaze, but all good people unite in saying it was ‘‘struck by lightning.’’ Other dark hints are afloat, but they are dubious, and it is dangerous to repeat them.

News clipping:

Essex Free Press, May 29, 1896
Cornwall's next plan was to build a new gate at the west end of town by moving a small 12x14-foot house to Maidstone Avenue crossing. This location would not be as easily avoided as the eastern gate and would cut off free access from the more populated west end of town.

At 11 o'clock on the evening of Wednesday, May 27, the cry of ‘fire’ rang through the streets of Essex. The new tollgate was consumed with fire as everyone, including the Essex Fire Brigade, ignored the alarm.

“The agony was not long drawn out, and no regrets are recorded,” stated a brief article in the Essex Free Press (May 29, 1896). “Various opinions are hazarded as to the origin of the blaze, but all good people unite in saying it was ‘struck by lightning.’ Other dark hints are afloat, but they are libellous, and it is dangerous to repeat them.”

The west end tollgate was gone, but Cornwall defiantly declared his plan to build a stronger, fireproof one at Maidstone Avenue. It was completed on July 16 and Cornwall, with a stable by his side, happily collected tolls for six days—but not without tension.

Churchgoers were exempt from the five-cent toll, but that didn’t stop Cornwall from allegedly cross-examining a couple of ladies on their way to church. Paying tolls. At Maidstone Cross, tensions mounted further when the priest went through the tollgate without being served alcohol at local hotels. Welch was reportedly “well drunk before they headed out to burn the next tollgate at Walker Road. The two ladies at the Oldcastle tollgate were so frightened at the sight of the disguised men that they ran off into the woods. It would take two days to find them.

The men left the east gate at Essex for another day, as the new gatekeeper, Mrs. Gasco, was ill. Mrs. Gasco moved out of the end east tollgate the next day. Cornwall threatened the priest with prosecution if he didn’t stop Cornwall from allegedly cross-examining a couple of ladies on their way to church. He questioned the honesty of one woman and threatened another with prosecution for trying to avoid paying tolls. At Maidstone Cross, tensions mounted further when Father McGee took steps to prevent tollgate keeper Edward Welch from being served alcohol at local hotels. Welch was reportedly “well drunk” at the west end tollgate the next day. The plan to eliminate the tollgates in and near Essex was completed on Sunday, July 25 when the final tollgate was burned to the ground.

Cornwall and a representative of the Cameron Estate said they were determined to prosecute the offenders but not one person, young or old, could be found who would identify any of those involved. No charges were ever laid.


The destruction continued at Maidstone Cross. The men climbed on the roof of Nace Halford’s store and Harry North’s building. It was completed on July 16 and Cornwall, with a stable by his side, happily collected tolls for six days—but not without tension. Cornwall threatened the priest with prosecution if he didn’t stop Cornwall from allegedly cross-examining a couple of ladies on their way to church. He questioned the honesty of one woman and threatened another with prosecution for trying to avoid paying tolls. At Maidstone Cross, tensions mounted further when Father McGee took steps to prevent tollgate keeper Edward Welch from being served alcohol at local hotels. Welch was reportedly “well drunk” at the west end tollgate the next day. The plan to eliminate the tollgates in and near Essex was completed on Sunday, July 25 when the final tollgate was burned to the ground.

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From Forgotten Past to Future Possibilities: The Pawpaw

By Dan Bissonnette

Pickin' up paw-paws, put 'em in a basket.
Pickin' up paw-paws, put 'em in a basket.
Pickin' up paw-paws, put 'em in a basket.
Way down yonder in the paw-paw patch.

Some of us may know this old folk song, which originated in the American south. What many people may not know is exactly what this song is referring to. Many more might be surprised to learn that the subject of this song is a native plant species found right here in Essex County.

The Pawpaw (Asimina triloba) is a small, slender tree found throughout much of the eastern United States, as well as southern Ontario. The name “Pawpaw” likely originated from early American settlers, who sometimes mistook its fruits for papayas. This name can be applied to the tree or the fruit that it produces. This species also goes by other names, including Custard Apple, Hooser Banana and Michigan Banana, as well as the names of several other American states that each lay claim to it.

The Pawpaw is usually found in protected wooded areas, typically in deep, loose, organic soils. These trees can slowly colonize and form groves or patches. Pawpaws were, no doubt, more plentiful before the widespread clearing of forests, but there are still several sites remaining in Essex County. Indigenous specimens have been documented in the municipalities of Amherstburg, Kingsville, Leamington and Lakeshore, and there may yet be undiscovered Pawpaws elsewhere in the county.

The fruit of the Pawpaw is one of this species’ identifying features. When ripe, it has a yellowish-green colour with a variable oval shape. A mature Pawpaw has an average size of 10 centimetres (4 inches), making this the largest of any native fruit in Canada. Its flavour is both distinct and complex. Those who have tasted this fruit have used a variety of descriptions, with comparisons that include custard, banana, apple, strawberry and peach.

Although this fruit has been largely forgotten throughout its Canadian range, it continues to be a recognized food source for aboriginals, farm families and rural residents throughout the eastern United States. Unlike apples and other orchard fruit, however, Pawpaws do not ripen consistently and the shelf life of the raw fruit is limited. As a result, Pawpaws have never caught on as a large-scale agricultural crop.

Despite their limitations in conventional agricultural, Pawpaws have some admirable characteristics. The tree’s restrained growth and large, tropical-looking leaves make it a unique landscape option. It is remarkably free of pests and diseases and requires practically no pruning. Furthermore, research conducted with-
in the last 20 years has cast this quiet species in a more prominent light. Based on findings from Kentucky State University, we know that Pawpaws are high in vitamin C, magnesium, iron and other vitamins. They are also a rich source of essential amino acids and have been found to have antioxidant properties that are comparable to blueberries.

With these recent discoveries, could the Pawpaw have a place in the backyards of Essex County? Henry Driedger, who has been growing Pawpaws and other native plants on his family farm in the Municipality of Leamington for over 20 years, feels they do. Although he cautions against planting them in heavy clay and recommends some wind protection, he has seen these trees flourish in a landscape setting. A young Pawpaw he planted in his yard 12 years ago has since grown to a height of 3.5 metres (12 feet). It started bearing fruit after several years and now provides abundant fruit each year.

"My Pawpaws don't have any disease problems," says Driedger. "Last year I picked enough fruit from that one tree to fill two 11-quart baskets."

Yet more than simply an option for the backyard, this species has shown promise as a source of income. The Pawpaw has found renewed interest among small-scale and alternative growers in Ohio, where the fresh fruit is sold at roadside fruit stands. Its pale orange flesh can also be preserved as a puree that can be sold throughout the year for use in pies, puddings, sauces, cakes, muffins and even ice cream. Here in Essex County, a region known for its favourable growing conditions, fresh, farm-fresh produce and an emphasis on shopping locally, could our own indigenous Pawpaw provide the basis for a new food industry?

"This is an ideal tree for a small property and its large leaves give it an exotic look," he says. "If a homeowner can grow Apple or Cherry trees, why not Pawpaws? This could be useful for small-scale farming or as a specialty crop. Considering the locavore philosophy, it's a great fit."

Like many of our native plants, the Pawpaw is waiting to be re-discovered. For those willing to give them proper care, they can provide a new addition to our landscape, a supplementary source of nutrition or even local economic opportunity. In doing so, we can re-connect with our past and celebrate our natural heritage.

Dan Bissonnette is the Program Coordinator for The Naturalized Habitat Network.

(Photos by Dan Bissonnette)
Coffee with...

Linda Wonsel

Some people will go the extra mile for good food

By Laurie Brett

The café is buzzing with customers as I enter Crêpe Temptations in Cottam. Every table is occupied and a woman I recognize appears to be ferrying glasses of water to diners. For a moment I’m confused. Linda Wonsel, the owner of Natural Earth Organics, is supposed to be my coffee date but here she is serving people and clearing away dishes.

As she smiles past, she says that she’s just helping Daniel. The owner, Daniel Choquette, is shorthandled. In fact, he’s all alone in the kitchen today and managing as best he can while about a dozen pair of hungry eyes watch for the next batch of crêpes to slide onto a plate. He really does need Linda’s help.

When her bustling duties are done, Linda locates two menus and writes down our order. Two cheese lattes with organic whipped cream – forget the coffee! – the Chicken Crêpe-sa-dilla for me and the Smashed Potato Crêpe for her. She’s not fond of meat, she says, but does vegetables.

It’s a warm and muggy day, but Linda reports that the breeze on the outdoor patio is lovely. We move outside.

Daniel’s father-in-law appears at the back entrance to the patio and tosses a cherry tomato in Linda’s direction. He’s picked a handful off a plant hugging the walkway. She misses, so he tosses another. This is the jumping off point for our discussion about organic food.

“My dad had a garden,” she says. “It was a wonderful garden and he never put any chemicals into it. I don’t think back then that we knew that much about chemicals.”

The garden, it turns out, was located in the Garson-Falconbridge area just outside Sudbury. In a moment of naiveté, I express surprise that anything grows in Sudbury.

“You can grow everything, it’s just that it’s a shorter season. Of course, you aren’t going to grow watermelon, although we tried…. But carrots and tomatoes and all sorts of things grow there. Kohlrabi – do you know what kohlrabi is?”

I admit that I’ve never cooked with it, but I know what it looks like.

“Oh, it’s so good,” she says, then adds, “but broccoli is the best for us.”

Although she’s always been a gardener, Linda’s interest in organic food didn’t peak until she and her partner, Bill Drouillard, moved to Woodlawn. Bill’s nephew showed Linda how to grow wheatgrass and sunflower sprouts. “Wheatgrass is very good for you,” she explains. Juicing the grass of young wheat plants concentrates the nutrients for better absorption by our bodies.

A fascination with wheatgrass led to an abiding interest in organic food and a change of career. Six years ago, Linda left her job in finance at the University of Windsor and partnered with Normo Weaver to buy an existing organic food business. Natural Earth Organics is the renamed business that delivers fresh organic fruits, vegetables, meats, poultry and eggs directly to consumers’ homes.

But it’s not as simple as it sounds. Sourcing out organic products requires a lot of time and travel. “I go far and wide,” she says, listing a few organic farmers in Essex County – one in Cottam, one in Leamington, another in Woodlawn. Because availability at home is “spotty”, she also drives to London, Dresden, Parkhill, Rodney, Wallaceburg and Tilbury to complete her store of products. She then drives some more to deliver orders to her customers place through her website.

Daniel at Crêpe Temptations is one of Linda’s customers and Linda is one of Daniel’s customers. It’s a mutually advantageous arrangement that explains her willingness to go the extra mile for good food.
Let the Games Begin:
My Life with Olympians, Hockey Heroes, and Other Good Sports

Ralph Mellanby and Mike Brophy

Reviewed by Laurie Brett

If you've ever had the privilege of listening to Ralph Mellanby speak, you'll know that the legendary producer of Hockey Night in Canada is full of stories that he's willing to share. He's rubbed elbows with athletes, team owners, broadcasters, television networks executives, entertainers and world leaders - many times under humorous circumstances or at moments of historic importance.

Forty years of traveling throughout the world of sports has yielded a wealth of experiences, ranging from meeting Fidel Castro during the 1991 Pan-American games in Cuba, to earning multiple Emmy Awards - one for his own - for his efforts to liven up hockey intermissions by bringing Don Cherry on board. He also reminisces on events leading to the selection of Dolores Claman's theme song for Hockey Night in Canada and why CBC gave up the rights to use it. He doesn't mince words when he describes his disappointment in the Toronto Maple Leafs: "The Maple Leafs were one of the NHL's most successful franchises and had just claimed their fourth championship in six years (1966-67). Who could have imagined at the time that the most important franchise in the league would then embark on a more-than-forty-year odyssey of incompetence and become a laughingstock?"

Let the Games Begin is available at bookstores and retail shops throughout Essex County.

Tour Colchester: The Way We Were

Chris Carter

Reviewed by Connie-Jean Latam

Learn to treasure the "way we were" as far back as the 1970s, in this guided adventure through Colchester using old and new maps.

Chris Carter, researcher and author, tells the tales of the early settlers' trials and tribulations, including how they staked their claim to land, built home sites, overcame the challenges of Mother Nature, and stayed long enough to die and be buried in memorial cemeteries. Many of these original settlers' generational families still reside in the area. Because of this, they were able to contribute to the pictures contained in the book.

The tour is broken down into what Chris calls "trolley stops" - 15 in all - that allow the tourist to start from the beginning of the book and follow along the path, or select one of the stops of interest. With many stops along the way, you may wish to do it all in a day or take each stop as a separate tour of interest. If you have relatives or friends that stem from the original settlers, you will find this book to be an exciting reminiscence. Enjoy the tour!

Missy Meerkat and Me

Barbara Brothers-Kipp

Reviewed by Connie-Jean Latam

A playful day in a Florida park leads Lamont, an inquisitive Old English Sheepdog to discover a new fearless and brave friend, Missy, a meerkat from Zambia, Africa.

Lamont is fascinated by the lifestyle and unique conditions that Missy and her clan have to maintain for their physical well-being, often comparing it to their former home in Africa.

Lamont asks many of the same questions that children do. In doing so, he realizes the value of how he is treated and well fed by his master, Jeb. Life's values and diversity are the message in this book. How well are you being treated in your clan or family? Hopefully, you have all the necessary basics in your home without having to move. You can see how two unlike creatures can form a unique friendship within these pages.

Barbara Brothers-Kipp is a first time author and illustrator of Missy Meerkat and Me. She is a retired Language Arts teacher and a member of the South Coast Writers of Essex County.

Connie-Jean Latam is the author of Everything Is Food! Words of Wisdom From a Small Child. She is also a Certified Trauma, Loss and Addictions Counselor.

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The Devil in Green

Mark Chadbourne

Reviewed by Annette Gabrielle

Jump into the future where the evil deposited upon the world has erupted and we the humans are no longer in control. We are no longer able to continue life as we know it! Civilization has had the big fall! People have no fuel, no hydro, no food. Imagine crouching in a medieval cathedral starving for a pizza, but nowhere on earth can you get one.

The characters in The Devil in Green, the first book in Mark Chadbourne's Dark Age series, are holding on to whatever they can, including religion. The demons of the earth abound and, as usual, men—demons themselves—have taken advantage of the situation and are using religion as an excuse to do more harm and gain control in a futile situation. The new religious power is torturing and staving its own people, and still its sins are feeding the creatures outside the church walls.

Our slightly tarnished hero delivers a very thrilling ride through a now unrecognizable world, fighting with swords and bow and arrow, while occasionally finding a car with fuel still in it. We relive a bit of the past in this novel—fire-breathing creatures and the revival of the Knights Templar, Now Age witches and mythological creatures, all in one action-packed read! Yes this is a sci-fi thriller (not my usual choice in reading material), but character development, the storyline that meanders through this labyrinth of thrills and chills, is too good not to talk about!! Save this one for Halloween, and don't go out after dark! No one is safe then!

Annette Gabrielle, Essex County Library.

I am Nujood: Age 10 and Divorced

Nujood Ali with Delphine Minoui

Reviewed by Elly Takaki

Sometimes you find a book of nonfiction that is just as gripping as fiction. The story of Nujood Ali of Yemen is just such a story. It's hardly imaginable from a Western perspective: a girl married at age 10. Imagine this girl. Her favourite things are school, drawing, and playing with her brothers and sisters. But there are too many mouths to feed, and her father decides that she is old enough to be sold into marriage, something not uncommon in Yemen.

Young Nujood has never been given the facts of life, wonders what marriage means for her, and fears leaving the safety and security of her family. The day of celebration arrives, and then she is whisked away to a remote mountain village to live with a stranger and his family. More disturbingly, this man, her husband, who promised her family that he would not consummate the marriage until after Nujood reaches puberty, abruptly and violently breaks this promise on her first night in his house.

After months of living a nightmare, on April 2, 2008, Nujood decides to end her suffering. A frail wisp of a girl, she walks into a courthouse and demands a divorce. Out of all the child brides in Yemen, a country with a tradition of marrying girls off at a young age, she is the first.

The subject matter may be disturbing, but Nujood's courage and perseverance are uplifting, as is the determination of those who help her. Her allies include an activist lawyer, sympathetic judges and the international press. Named Woman of the Year in 2008 by Glamour magazine, Nujood was also called "one of the greatest women I have ever seen," by Hillary Clinton. This brief and riveting book provides a startling glimpse inside another culture.

Elly Takaki, McGregor Public Library.

Incarceron

Catherine Fisher

Reviewed by Lynda Schlichtcher

Incarceron was initially an experiment. It would be a world that would provide everything—education, balanced diet, exercise, spiritual welfare and purposeful work—a paradise for those who would survive. Could it be done? Who should go?

It is decided that all criminals, undesirable, political extremists and degenerates will be transported there. The gate is sealed and the location of Incarceron is known only by one person, the Warden. One hundred and fifty years later, the Warden reports that the progress is excellent.

The decay was gradual. The paradise has become a prison. The prison is alive. Year by year it tightens its grip, watches and listens to everything. Conditions inside are livable... barely. Four people decide to make their escape. Finn the star seer, Keiro his oathskeeper, Gildas a Sepient (a wise one) and Attia, devoted servant to Finn. The task of finding the door to the Outside is immense but they have the help of the crystal key.

Lynda Schlichtcher is a member of the Essex Public Library's Book Club.

Tales of the Heartily Homeschooled

Rachel Starr Thomson and Carolyn Joy Currey

Reviewed by Barbara Brothers-Kipp

Combine 12 children from one family with their two parents. To this mix add eight children (cousins of the first 12) and their two parents. Put all of them into a camper van and send them on a cross-country road trip with the family pets. Toss in numerous life experiences and you end up with hours of fun and laughter between the covers of this book.

Cousins Rachel Starr Thomson and Carolyn Joy Currey share stories of their families who have been home-schooled and quite independent. They also share a deep abiding love and respect for God, although they don't belong to any specific church. Although they move several times, their roots in family go deeper than most families. Their experiences fall under four categories: Make Way for Living, Family and Other Oddities, War Against the Machine, and According to Plan B. As you read, you will go from smiling, to side-splitting laughter, to a real appreciation for large families.

From trying to match socks and pantyhose for 12 children, to exploding barbecues and Christmas trees falling over, to what happens when the children try to mop up a leaking water heater with a shammy cloth, you will feel blessed to read this entertaining book.

Rachel Starr Thomson is the author of two books in the Seventh World Trilogy—Unseen and Burning Light. She is the author of several novels and many articles, some of them available for free from Little Dog Press at www.rachelstarrthomson.com.

Barbara Brothers-Kipp is a retired Language Arts teacher and author of Messy Moerkat and Me.
Winemaker John Fancy's invitation to sit in the kitchen at Viewpointe Estate Winery is hard to refuse when the sweet butterscotch scent of warm orange cake greets you at the door. Amid trays of fresh mushrooms, tomatoes of all sizes, and sweet Hungarian peppers, Chef Mary Ann Marshall starts to prep for Tuesday night's Lakeside Patio Dinner. This week it's all about corn for the "Sufferin' Succotash - Southern Summer" menu: Tomato salad with cornbread croutons, grilled bourbon glazed pork with creamy grits and succotash, and peach-blueberry salsa. To finish off, creamy grits and succotash, and peach-blueberry salsa. To finish off, Peach-BBQ Pork, Georgia Cornbread and a grilled corn cob.

The culinary approach at Viewpointe, Marshall says, is to marry local flavours with globally inspired cuisine. From its idyllic position along the north shore of Lake Erie, the winery's proximity to local flavours could not be better. Although she keeps an eye open for seasonal produce all along County Road 50, Marshall jokingly notes that she frequently shops "in Steve's pantry," referring to co-owner Steve Fancy who lives down the road and regularly delivers the bounty of his garden to the Viewpointe kitchen, including the tomatoes for the night's salad.

Learning to approach food and cooking from a winemaker's perspective has been key to Marshall's evolution as a chef.

"If you come to cooking like a winemaker would come to wine, you think about balance, texture, aroma, blending flavours. You think from the perspective of structure.

Having a more expansive view of what you do — what the winery's slogan refers to as "a different pointe of view" — is integral to Viewpointe's entire operation. As the region's first destination winery, Viewpointe not only contains winemaking facilities and a retail store, but Fancy and his partners also thought to include a hospitality building, banquet facilities and a culinary arts centre, allowing them to offer cooking classes and host a master taster course accredited by Niagara College.

But thinking expansively doesn't apply only to the facilities and business model. In 2002, the fledgling winery became involved in an experimental grape-breeding project that ultimately isolated three new varieties of grapes from a field of almost 2,800. Fancy says the three unnamed varieties are "totally and wholly" local — infused with homegrown flavour. The end result is Colchester Cuvee, a 2008 vintage red wine made from a blend of all three grapes.

"How do you know when you've found "homegrown flavour" in a wine? When you match it to the food of the area and you find some harmony," says Fancy.

The difference, he explains, comes from the "terroir" — the taste of a grape or a tomato or a green pepper gets because of where it's grown. The soil, climate, precipitation and sun exposure all influence the flavour of the grapes as much as they influence the flavour of our food.

There's no better time than harvest time to experience Essex County from "a different pointe of view." This fall, take a drive along County Road 50, visit Viewpointe Estate Winery, and learn about some of the local treasures hidden along the way. It will change your perspective on just how well food and wine go together right here at home.

Wine Pairings

Serve Pesto Grissini with Viewpointe's 2005 Cabernet Franc, a medium-bodied red, or their 2006 Riesling.

**PESTO WITH HEMP**

| 2 cloves garlic, peeled |
| ½ teaspoon salt |
| ⅓ to 2 cups (very tightly packed) basil, cleaned, stems removed |
| ⅓ to 2 cups (very tightly packed) parsley, cleaned, stems removed |
| ¼ cup ½ teaspoon black pepper |
| 2 to 3 teaspoons hemp seed |
| ½ to ½ cup olive oil, plus more for storing |

Parmiggiano Reggiano, approx. 1 to ½ cups (to add when serving)

Place garlic and salt in a blender or food processor and process until finely chopped. Add basil and parsley, blend for 10 - 15 seconds, scrape down the sides and process again for another 20 seconds. Scrape down the sides. Add the black pepper and hemp seeds and blend for 15 seconds. Add ½ cup of olive oil and process into a thick paste.

To store — spoon the mixture into a clean container and pour more olive oil to cover the entire surface.

When using, mix equal parts of pesto and grated cheese. You may use less cheese if desired.

**PESTO GRISSINI (ITALIAN BREAD STICKS)**

**MAKES ABOUT 30 BREAD STICKS**

| ½ box(es) (125 grams or ½ ounces each) of Grissini (Italian Bread Sticks) |
| ½ cup pesto (one 190 gram jar) |
| ½ cup olive oil |
| ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese |
| ½ cup hemp (see recipe above) |
| ½ cup finely grated parmesan reggiano |
| ½ cup olive oil |

Pre-heat the oven to 375 degrees F. Lay two 18-inch long pieces of plastic wrap lengthwise, with the top layer overlapping the bottom layer by half. Spoon pesto, olive oil and cheese onto the plastic wrap. It should be the consistency of a medium thick dressing.

Spread the mixture width and lengthwise, leaving a couple inches clear around the edges.

Place the bread sticks on top of the pesto and bring up the sides of the plastic wrap.

Coat and roll the bread sticks gently every few minutes for 10 - 20 minutes. Try to coat all of the bread sticks with the mixture.

Transfer to a baking sheet, lining them up without touching each other.

Bake for about 10 minutes, turning the bread sticks at mid-point.

Let cool on a rack.

May be kept in an airtight container for 1 - 2 days, wrapped in foil.
By Andy Comber

It had been a long and difficult journey for the Jesuit missionary. Aided by native guides, he had explored a seemingly endless shoreline that stretched as far as the eye could see. He pondered whether he might be the first European to see these waters, these lands.

There in a clearing, marveling at the richness of the earth, the missionary planted a pear seed, a living token of his homeland. He would probably never know that his tree would rise with the dawn of New France. It would mature and bear fruit over centuries to become a part of history and folklore in a new nation called Canada.

Although there is uncertainty over the story of the original planting, there is no doubt that a magnificant pear tree stand on the historic Ille des Grands Ponts near Harrow, not far from the shores of Lake Erie. Historical accounts agree that American cherry, apple, and plum trees were once a striking feature in this region, a living symbol of French settlement in North America.

Marcel Bénéteau, an associate professor of French folklore at the University of Waterloo, and a native of River Canard, has done extensive research on the Jesuit pear. In May 2007, he made a special trip, a pilgrimage of sorts, to see the Jesuit pear.

Local records and writings testify to the enormous size of the original Jesuit pear trees, which reached heights of over 10 meters and girths of up to three meters, providing 40 bushels of pears a year, Bénéteau said.

The Jesuit specimen is estimated to be between 200 and 300 years old. It measures 12 meters high with a trunk measuring over five meters in circumference. Even with its great age, and some advanced state of decay, it produces a good number of small sweet pears that ripen in mid-August.

History and folklore have perpetuated the common belief that Jesuit missionaries brought the first pear trees from France, planting pits, the seeds, or cuttings along our waterways, Bénéteau said. Although the pears are not mentioned in the Jesuit Relations and other volumes of records from missionaries in the field—a strong link with the Jesuits has survived the centuries through verbal and written history.

It is said that the early French settlers planted Jesuit pear trees in groups of twelve to represent the twelve Apostles, mixing them among their orchards of apples, cherries, and plums. The twelfth tree, representing Judas, the apostle who betrayed Jesus, was supposed to be planted apart from the others.

Articles published in The Detroit Free News in April and May 1941 declare this planting practice to be an established fact. They chronicled events at Detroit’s Glascow Park, where a crowd, including members of the Jesuit order, had gathered to pay homage to “St. Peter”—a tree.

“No common tree by any means, but a tree tied up with the earliest history of Detroit and the lone survivor of an ancient orchard of 12 giant pear trees planted in the park by an early French settler and named after the 12 Apostles,” Carmel Warfle reported.

The crowd became somewhat surprised and applauded when the master of ceremonies, George W. Stark, an “old timer” with the News, announced this tree was in fact the Judas tree. Warfle wrote:

“...to say the news was a surprise is putting it mildly, for in the faces of the men, women and children, came looks of consternation as if the very mention of the name Judas robbed the occasion of some of its glory.”

The Detroiters planted 20 seedlings cultivated from cuttings of the original tree, be it St. Peter or Judas, so it would “live anew.”

Bénéteau has noted a renewed interest in the rare fruit tree in recent years. In 2001, during the 300th anniversary celebrations of the founding of Detroit, the City of Windsor planted three Jesuit pear trees on the Canadian side of the Detroit River to commemorate the 1749 arrival of the first settlers on the south bank of the river. As part of the celebrations, a group of area French speakers founded a tree nursery, in order to provide pears to anyone interested in propagating the species.

There is a growing interest outside the French-speaking community in the fate of the Jesuit pear trees; many consider them to have considerable value. Bénéteau said.

“It is a cultural object as much as an agricultural one,” Bénéteau said. “It is a species well worth preserving.”

Despite a number of commercial shortfalls, including its small fruit size, the Jesuit pear has attracted the attention of researchers from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. It is preserved through the Harrow Research Centre’s Canadian Clonal Genebank, under curator Maggie Lufman. At present, research biologist Roberto Michelutti is acting curator.

The mandate of the genebank is to protect and preserve the genetic diversity of Canadian fruit crops and their wild relatives.

“There is a huge diversity,” Michelutti said.

The Harrow horticultural store, maintains and reproduces living samples of fruit crops numbering over 3,500 unique accessions. The diversity is evident in the categories, including 825 apples, 122 pears, 277 peaches, plums, cherries and apricots, 1,701 strawberries, 100 currants and gooseberries, 173 raspberries, 12 elderberries, 7 blueberries and 28 roses.

Preserving the Jesuit pear is important in view of its qualities, including a natural resistance to insects and fire blight, its robustness and extreme longevity. Michelutti said.

“It carries important genetic material sought by breeders.”

Great efforts are made in the laboratory to be sure all plant material in the genebank is free of viruses and other maladies. Sharing plants with breeders also helps maintain availability of different varieties.

Efforts are underway to find and identify, old fruit trees in Essex County, particularly Jesuit pear trees, as less than 40 are known to exist here. Michelutti said. The Essex Region Conservation Authority is assisting in mapping the tree locations.

Material from the trees will be DNA-tested—what Michelutti calls “finger printing.” The first idea is to establish the trees’ relationship to each other in the region and hopefully, in the near future, locate the origin of the trees in Europe possibly in France or Belgium.

Michelutti said he is very interested in seeing which trees may be related to the Jesuit pear on the Ille Farm and where the age-old tree has its genealogical beginnings.

“We hope to shed a little bit of light on that puzzle.”

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Fruit, folklore and the Jesuit pear

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SPOTLIGHT ON ESSEX COUNTY 24

FALL 2010 EDITION
Diane Bédard of Windsor is a jill-of-all-trades. She's an educator — with 25 years of previous work experience with the Windsor Essex County District School Board — who participates in an educators' project that has her posting a photo a day on a flickr page (flickr.com/photos/windsor). In the third year of the project, Diane hasn't missed a day of posting photos that "speak to our learning or education that day."

She's also a librarian who now works for Knowledge Ontario as the Learn Ontario project manager, providing virtual technology support province-wide. "We're building the digital citizen," she says.

It goes without saying that she's also a technology expert who owns every Apple gadget ever made. Her new iPad tablet computer is so integrated into her work and personal life that she carries it like a book, using it to make phone calls, read e-books, map her next destination, or find stores that sell hardware kits for her latest project.

Most importantly, for our purposes, Diane is a passionate woodworker whose attention to detail has "turned" many a pen into a lovingly crafted gift for friends and family.

It was Diane's tip about the Osage orange tree on Highway 3, just north of the Sexton Sideroad, that led Spotlight to investigate the tree and feature it in our Spring 2010 issue.

In this issue of Spotlight, Diane's interest in the Osage orange goes beyond curiosity: It tackles the most difficult task of turning the citrus, sticky and inedible fruit into something that is not only functional but also beautiful to behold.

This photo documentary was compiled using photos and information provided by Diane. Not only does she pursue some interesting hobbies, but she also documents them as she goes. Diane is a "Saturday morning regular" — one of about 12 woodworkers who meet at St. Clair College's main campus every Saturday morning. She's perfected her craft through patience and persistence, but credits Harrow's Larry Robertson as "the master who taught me."

"Woodworking is a very soothing art," she says. "Making sawdust is very rewarding; it's always interesting to see what the lathe reveals."

"And, if you're frustrated," she adds, "hitting something hard with a hammer is very liberating."

Collecting — Diane collects the raw Osage orange fruit after it falls. "With those thorns on the tree, you wait for it to fall," she says. Only the largest oranges will do; each fruit loses 75 percent of its weight and just over half its size as it air dries.

Sawn Blanks — The dried oranges are cut into one-inch core cubes with a bandsaw, then thoroughly soaked with Cyanoacrylate adhesive, more commonly known as instant glue or CA glue, to stabilize them. In their natural state, the cubes are too porous and fragile to work with... and the lovely white seeds drop out! Many layers of CA glue are needed — a time-consuming but essential step.

Each stabilized cube is then capped with a pouring form and "inlace" — a hardening resin mixed with ground stone and coffee grounds — is poured into the form to extend that section's length. These extended ends serve two purposes: they add the length needed for a pen section, and they provide a stable end point to work on the lathe.
Turning Starts - The core sections are centre-drilled lengthwise and a brass tube is glued in. This tube slides over a steel rod, called a mandrel, which mounts between the centre points of a lathe. The lathe then spins the mandrel and very sharp skewes (or chisels) allow the woodworker to slowly turn away (or peel off) surplus material.

Sometimes the work on the lathe gets a bit messy. As seen here, the shavings shoot off a fine string of plastic as it is turned. In addition, the orange is still very porous closer to the centre and frequent stops to dribble on more CA glue are needed to prevent it from "blowing off" the brass tubes.

As they're being turned, the blanks need frequent stabilization. Whenever a void opens, Diane must stop the lathe, unmount the section, drip in a drop of thick CA glue, pack it tightly with finely powdered coffee grounds, let it set until hard, then remount the blank and continue turning.

She uses coffee grounds ("Fine espresso grounds, dried after I've already drunk the coffee, of course") as a natural rich dark wood filler. The coffee bean has lots of woody fibre, so it turns, sands and finishes like wood. Any dark areas you see on this blank are actually filled with coffee grounds.

The thickness of the remaining blank is measured with a micrometer to ensure accurate dimensioning. Micrometers measure to within thousands of an inch!

Filling voids - The blanks are finally down to the precise dimensions needed to fit the pen hardware and are ready for the finish.

The "finish" consists of building up many layers of CA glue and then sanding and polishing progressively from 800 grit up to 2400 grit. The finest levels of sanding use the same micro grits and buffing compounds as used in high-end auto body finish detailing.

Orange Orange Pen - The completed pen is perched among some of the remaining outside slices of the dried Orange oranges. The average pen takes about three hours to complete. This one took about 30 hours.
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