

WILKES FARM HISTORY

Lot 4, Concession 13, South Plantagenet Township

Written by: Orville and Marie Wilkes - November 1990

The Wilkes family farm traces ownership of their land through 6 generations back to a crown grant of land dated 1852 issued to Mr. Samuel Hunter.

Sam Hunter and his wife Jane McClaverty and infant son William emigrated to Canada from Belfast, Ireland in 1822. Ten more children were born here. The Hunters were lumbermen who owned large tracts of land in this area. A Hunter monument erected by a lumber company and shaped like a tree stump still stands in Franklins' Corners cemetery. Two of Sam Hunter's daughters, Jane and Sarah were the first teachers in Fournier Public School. (Jane - first six years - Sarah - next 4 years.)

In 1892 and 1903 Albert Wilkes, grandson of Sam Hunter (son of Margaret Hunter and John Wilkes) acquired ownership of the land - west half lot 4 - from his aunt, Elizabeth Hunter (Mrs. John Stephens). The land had been willed to her by her father, Sam Hunter.

Albert Wilkes also purchased 30 acres from William McDonald, 12th Concession, south of the Nation River. Albert and his wife, Emily MacMillan farmed here during their lifetime. Hops were a major crop grown. They had 4 sons and 2 daughters.

Following the death of Albert Wilkes in 1951, ownership of the land passed to his son Ernest who, with his wife Mildred Clemens, had managed the farm since their marriage in 1925. Hops continued to be an important crop supplementing a mixed dairy farm. Milk was shipped to the local cheese factory. Ernest purchased an additional 50 acres from the estate of James Lynch in 1945. The farm now consisted of 180 acres. Two daughters, Sheila and Lorna, and one son, Orville were born. Their son, Orville farmed with them.

Following Orville's marriage in 1953 to Marie Judd, Ernest and his wife moved to a new home built on the western perimeter of the farm. Much of the lumber used came from trees harvested from the farm bushlot.

It should be noted that Marie was the last teacher at Fournier Public School when it closed in June 1954.

Orville purchased the farm in 1965 and at the same time bought the east half of Lot 4, Concession 13 from Alton Kinnear. This land, 108 acres, was originally a part of the Hunter homestead. Now the farm consists of 286 acres. The last crop of hops was grown in 1957. Potatoes became a replacement cash crop. A few years later, with access to the fluid milk market, dairying became the main enterprise. A new stable to house 50 milking cows was constructed in 1979. In 1968, a cement silo and in 1979 and 1981, two sealed storage units were erected. Additional land is rented.