

The Corby family was involved in many facets of community life. In 1867 this involvement reached extraordinary peaks: Henry Corby became the mayor of Belleville and was elected to represent East Hastings in the Legislature of Ontario. That same year the dedicated mayor stood on the steps of the courthouse and read to the citizens the proclamation which created the Dominion of Canada. In his obituary, from the Belleville Intelligencer, a list of Henry Corby's contributions to the community is detailed: "He was a member of the first board of police commissioners established in Belleville, and was also captain of the fire companies for several years. He represented Ketcheson ward for some time at the city council, and was for a long time president of St. George's society, being an honorary member at the time of his death. He was mayor of Belleville...was returned for the legislature and was re-elected... For many years Mr. Corby was a prominent figure in the social and business circles of Belleville."

Henry Corby died in 1881. His namesake son took over the management of the business and carried on the family tradition of contributing to the city, the province and the country.

The young Henry Corby, also known as Harry, was elected to the House of Commons in 1888, and was later named to the Senate. In 1893 a parade and a banquet honoring the new Senator brought the Prime Minister, Sir John Thompson, and his Cabinet members to Belleville.

Some of the contributions the Corby family made to Belleville can still be seen. Henry Corby Jr. donated Corby Park, the Corby Library, a pavilion and public baths at Victoria Park, and developed a pleasure park at Massassauga Point. He also established the Corby Charitable Fund for the needy, the administration of which was taken over by the Women's Christian Association. In addition, Corby was active in promoting the original bridge across the Bay of Quinte. In recent years the Corby company has continued to donate valuable time and ideas to the Corby Canadiana Collection and the Wisers' Fine Arts series.

The Corby Park of today was once Henry's garden. The vegetables which

were grown were donated to the needy and later the entire garden was donated to the city on July 24, 1905.

In 1907, Henry and Maria Corby presented the city of Belleville with the public library. The offer was first mentioned in 1905 when Mr. Corby stated that he would donate \$10,000 to the library cause. This amount was not enough money for a suitable library. The construction of the library ended up costing closer to \$25,000. Henry and Maria Corby remained firm in their desire to provide a public library despite the increased cost. Mr. Corby stated that he would donate a building "for the use of the Citizens of Belleville for their sole and only use forever as a free public library." The library building was a remodelled version of the former Merchants' Bank building. There was only a small collection of periodicals and books belonging to the Belleville Mechanics' In-



Drawing tobacco to the smokehouses at Corbyville circa 1914.

stitute. Henry Corby provided an annual endowment for books. The opening ceremonies were described in the Belleville Intelligencer as "a most representative gathering; all classes, all creeds, all politics were represented, the main desire of all being to listen to and do honour to the gentleman whose love for and pride in his native city are well known, and whose reputation as a doer of good deeds is a household word." At one time the head librarian was a Mr. Mowat. He lived in the library building itself with his family, including his rather well-known son, Farley Mowat.

The Wisers' Fine Arts Series, which is promoted by the Quinte Arts Council, brings world class talent to the Quinte area and has been doing so since 1977. Corby's is known for its Wisers' Deluxe and this series benefits from the prestige associated with the product.

The Corby Canadiana Collection is comprised of more than 100 examples of early Canadian furniture. The collection was first put together in 1965 and consisted of only a few small pieces. Other pieces have been regularly added with choices made with professional guidance.

The Corby name has been prominent in the Belleville area since 1832 and has become an integral part of the area's history. Though corporate mergers and the 90's have changed the Corby business, the Corby history remains to be admired.

## Lives & Times

DOUG MACLEAN began working for Corby's in 1941 at the Lindsay plant, which produced methyl alcohol. He spent one year in the armed forces overseas, then, in the fall of 1946, MacLean began work at the Corbyville plant. Over the years he was active in several different positions: in production, as paymaster, distillery manager and finally as the Vice President of technical services. "It really was a family oriented plant," he comments. "Mothers, fathers, grandmothers, and grandfathers all worked there together." Doug MacLean retired in 1986.

In early 1935, BOB FARQUHARSON began his 47 years with Corby's. His family's involvement had begun with Bob's father, who had been employed with the company as the chief engineer. The Farquharson family resided in a "big frame house" just inside the distillery's main gates. As a young boy Bob would swim in the river by the dam at Corby's. He can recall the days when horses were used to pull the barrels full of whiskey. The house where Mr. Farquharson grew up has since



been torn down. "I get a sad feeling. I can't quite believe it—that it's all gone, you know." Bob's daughter, Sally, was one of the first tour guides that Corby's employed. The Corby's tradition of family involvement is well exemplified by the Farquharsons.

For more on the Corby story, see page 15.