NORTHUMBERLAND TODAY   FEB. 4/11

Ancestors' stories tell a lot about their communities as well

CECILIA NASMITH
Northumberland Today

COBOURG — The mementoes and memories our ancestors leave behind can offer wonderful glimpses into our local communities as they once were.

At the Lakeshore Genealogical Society's annual Mystery Ancestor night recently, four members shared a glimpse of what life was once like in Edville, Wicklow, Port Hope and Campbellford.

Nancy Gibson wonders what her paternal grandfather Frederick William Pearson must have thought — growing up in urban London, then moving to Cramahe Township and having to walk wherever he wanted to go.

Still, Edville seems to have been a good fit for him and his wife Una after they came to Canada in 1905. There they would raise a family of seven sons and two daughters.

He began working at the village's first cheese factory in 1908, a building whose foundations can still be seen about one mile west of Waite's Cemetery. He would work there until it closed, though he left between 1916 and 1919 to serve in England and France during the First World War.

Once the cheese factory closed, he worked with Cramahe Township in roads maintenance. He and his wife were also caretakers of the Edville school (called the Sharon School) and Edville United Church.

In 1949, they moved to Norham to live near one of their sons. He died in 1951, and is buried in Waite's Cemetery.

Anne Tryon said frankly that Jesse William Winney married into her family just to gain a wife who would look after his mother. Still, she said, he was a gentleman who was well thought of by all.

Born in England in 1890, Winney came to Canada in 1913. It wasn't long afterwards that the First World War began, and he was in one of the first groups to leave Cobourg for training in Halifax. He would later serve in France and get a shrapnel wound to the right shoulder. It became infected, and he had to be hospitalized in Kingston.

He graduated from Kingston Business College in 1922, with training in shorthand and bookkeeping. Thereafter, he owned and operated the Wicklow General Store until 1944. During his years in that community, he was treasurer for SS #3 and #4 in Haldimand Township, as well as treasurer for the Haldimand Red Cross Society and the local Masons lodge.

Winney moved to Chapel Street in Cobourg in 1946 and became bookkeeper for Fowler and Thomas Motors in Cobourg and, in 1951, became secretary-treasurer of Cobourg Public School.

He died in 1974, his wife following three days later.

A literal look at Port Hope — its toll gate, anyway — came from a photograph provided by Jim Lowe, whose great-grandfather of the same name had left behind a photo album of this and other sights he enjoyed with three of his four sons in a 1908 auto trip along the King's Highway from Ottawa to Port Hope.

The Scotland-born patriarch was taking a break from the carpentry business he had set up in Ottawa. His only connection to this area was that trip, where they left the car in Port Hope, took a steamer to Niagara on the Lake, and a train to Niagara Falls and Buffalo.

Fred Long has entertained the club in previous years with tales of his father, a magician who later operated a candy store in Campbellford and became mayor of the town. This year, he focused on his Uncle Frank and offered a crash course in making candy canes and taffy.

It all depends on the hook, Long said, displaying the one that had hung shoulder-high on the wall of their family store.

Long described how the piping-hot gunk that would become either candy canes or taffy does not get its final colour or consistency until it is pulled repeatedly through the hook to introduce air into the mixture. For candy canes, part of what has become a white mixture is set aside for artificial colouring of red or green, and it is twisted together with the white.

"When our family sold its store in Campbellford in 1974, this is one of the things I rescued. It had been made by a blacksmith around 1910," Long said.

"My uncle probably used it for 60 years, and probably it was used 30 years before that by my grandfather."
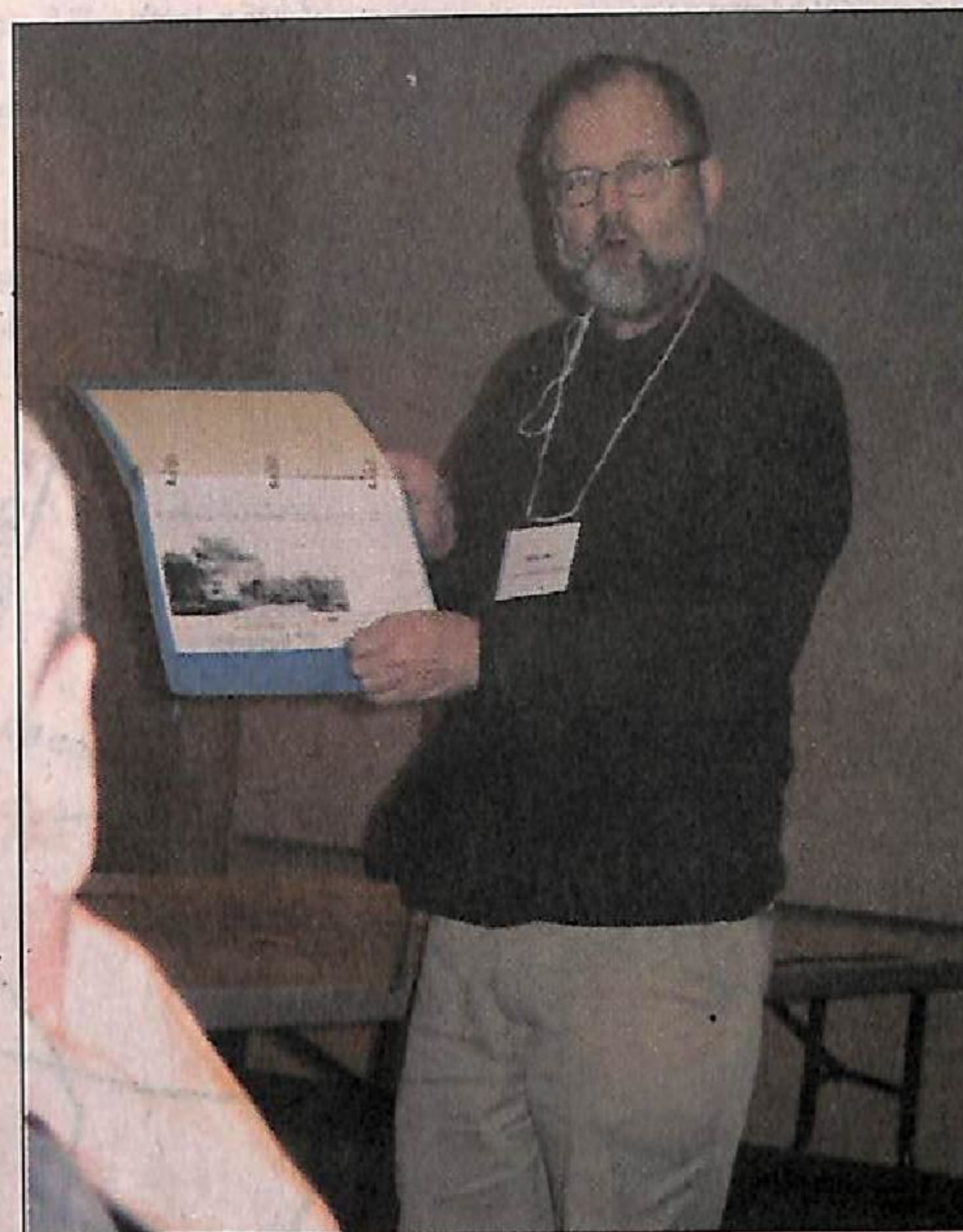
Uncle Frank is 90 years old now, Long said, and he lives at the Cobourg Retirement Residence.

"My uncle was at the Presbyterian Church in Campbellford about three years ago, and they said they wanted Francis Long to come and make some fair taffy. He took the hook and we have pictures of him making fair taffy," Long said.

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Lakeshore Genealogical Society member Jim Lowe shares photos from his great-grandfather's 1908 motor trip.

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Frederick William Pearson took time off his job at the Edville cheese factory to serve in the First World War.

Lakeshore Genealogical Society member Fred Long rescued this hook for its sentimental value when the family store in Campbellford was sold in 1974.

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This is a photo from SS #9 Cramahe, of which Frederick William Pearson and his wife Una became caretakers.

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Una Pearson looks down from the second floor of the old Edville cheese factory to check on a flock of hens.