

COLUMN

Don Massey family lived in Newcastle

Northumberland's Massey saga



CHARLES BEALE

Flashbacks

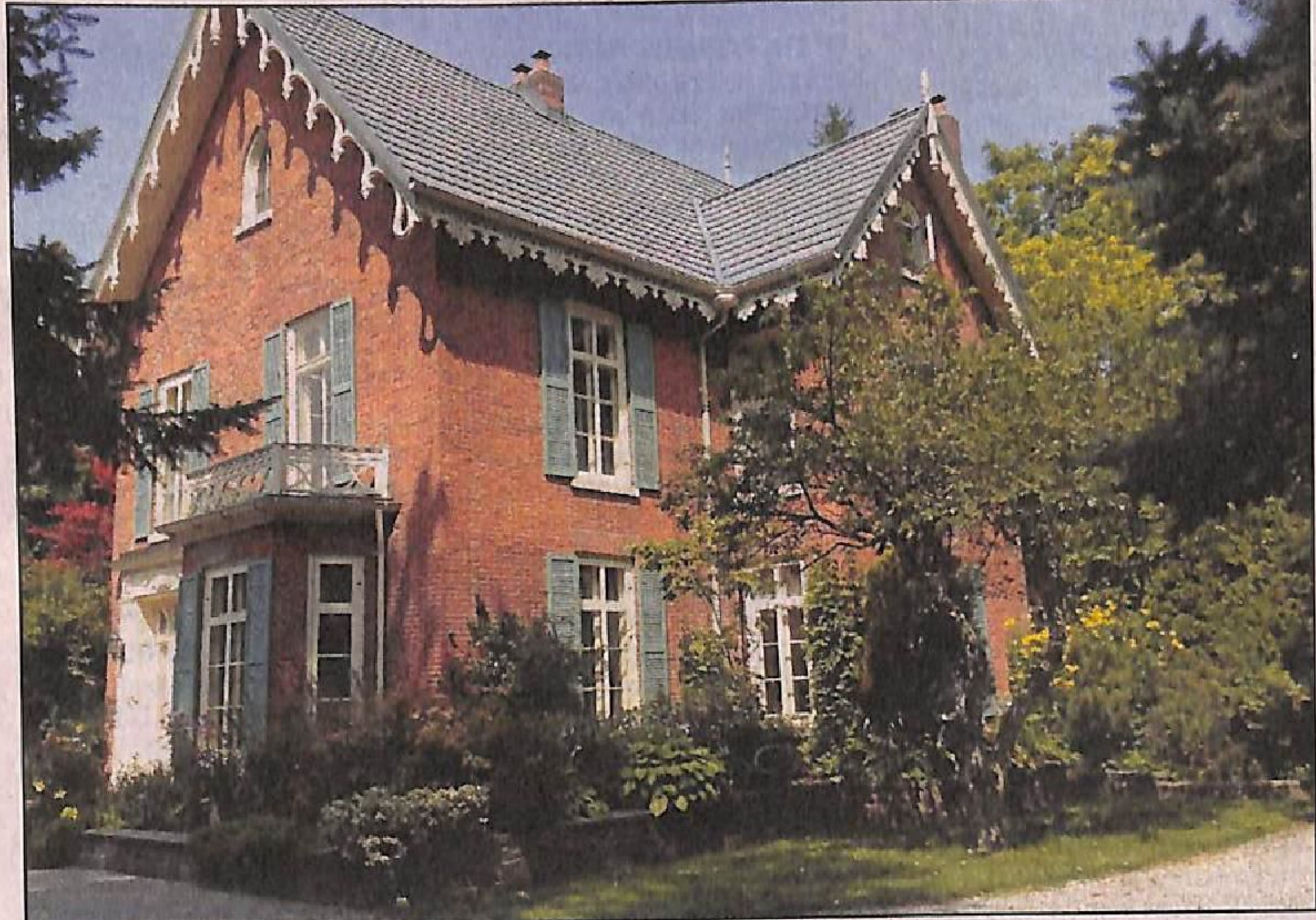
There are masses that have been written about the Massey family of Canadian folklore, but it is the connections to Northumberland County that may intrigue readers.

Charlotte Gray's latest book, *The Massey Murder*, is a must read Canadian historical drama with its roots in Northumberland County. The sensational shooting of Charles Massey of the Massey-Harris and Massey Ferguson dynasty in Toronto in 1915, draws us ever back to this area.

The crime was committed by Massey's young housekeeper who was eventually cleared of the charges. The company that would eventually become an international giant was little affected financially at the time, but the verdict did result in advancing the rights of women in what had been a male-dominated Ontario and Canadian judicial system.

The story actually begins in Grafton, Ontario when Charles' grandfather, Daniel Massey (1798-1856) moved his family from Vermont in 1802 to the village in Haldimand Township when it was known as Grover's Tavern. He built a round log home on cleared land in the beautiful rolling hills north of Grafton; a farm that would eventually cover some 1200 acres near the present day St. Anne's Spa Resort.

The War of 1812 saw Daniel and his two eldest sons, Samuel and Jonathan fight for their adopted Upper Canada. Samuel would die in 1813, possibly as a casualty of the war and be the first person buried in what



The Massey home in Newcastle.

would become the Massey Cemetery on Academy Hill at the crossroad of the present day Massey Road. There are thirty-five Masseys buried in the Academy Hill Cemetery.

While Daniel senior would blacksmith and repair machinery, the importation of the same intrigued him.

There are differing stories as to how some of the Masseys ended up in Newcastle, Ontario, however, it was Daniel's son Hart Almerrin Massey who arrived in 1851 and built the Newcastle Agricultural Works and Foundry. Being strong Methodists, the Massey clan were responsible for erecting the church opposite their homes on Mill Street. Newcastle is now part of the Municipality of Clarington in Durham Region.

In 1855, Hart Massey moved to Toronto and renamed the company Massey Manufacturing and

formed part of the backbone of Toronto's society at the time. In his will a foundation was established and among its charitable gifts was a student centre for the University of Toronto known to this day as Hart House. The foundation also contributed to the establishment of Massey Hall, which remains a cultural landmark in the city.

Hart Massey died in 1896 and is buried in the Massey Mausoleum at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, leaving four sons to carry on the family business, namely Charles Albert, who was murdered, Frederick Victor, Walter Edward Hart and Chester Daniel. It would be the offspring of Chester, who became legendary in different ways; one in our local area.

Chester's son, Raymond became a well-known Canadian actor, starring in such films as "East of Eden" and as Dr.

Gillespie in the 1962 NBC series, "Dr. Kildare."

The local legend I refer to however is his brother, Vincent Massey. Raymond and Vincent, along with sister Alice and Margery were were born and raised in Toronto at 519 Jarvis Street. At the time of Charles Albert's murder in 1915, Vincent was a Professor of History at the University of Toronto. That same year he married Alice Parkin and would have two sons, Lionel and Hart.

In 1916 Vincent enlisted in the First World War, but was never sent overseas. Instead he became a staff officer in Canada and then joined the war cabinet in Ottawa, such was the clout of clan. In 1921, Vincent was briefly President of Massey-Harris. He would fail in his attempt to become an MP in Durham during the 1925 campaign.

In 1932 he was the first



Samuel Massey, son of Daniel and Lucina, died May 3, 1813 during the War of 1812-14, buried in the Academy Hill Cemetery once known as the Massey Cemetery in Alnwick/Haldimand Township.

president of the National Liberal Federation of Canada, the forerunner of the Liberal Party of Canada. But it was his appointment as Canada's first Canadian born Governor-General and Canada's 18th in 1952 that set him apart and would bring local notoriety. He maintained this regal post until 1959 when he retired to Canton at Batterwood, in the former Hope Township. Alice had died previously in July, 1950.

But before he retired he hosted Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip at Batterwood with a service at St. Mark's Anglican Church in Port Hope. Massey would go on to establish Massey College at the University of Toronto in 1963 where author Robertson Davies would be its first master. The Rt Hon. Vincent Massey died in 1967 and after a state funeral in Ottawa was buried in the cemetery of his beloved St. Mark's in Port Hope along side his wife Alice and where his son Lionel would later be interred.

In October, 1969, Vincent's surviving son, also called Hart, hired the Robert Simpson Company to auction the contents of his father's estate at Batterwood. He and his wife Melodie would move to Durham House in Canton.

Melodie, before her marriage to Hart, was one of 55,000 women who enlisted in the Women's Division of the Royal Canadian Air Force in World War Two and trained in Toronto as a motor mechanic. Mrs. Massey who is now 92 and her family live in Port Hope.

Out of sheer will and determination a Canadian company with its earliest beginnings in Northumberland grew into an international success and along the way the Masseys enriched all our lives.

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