

MILLENNIUM

William Gibson made an impact on the community

The following people have all made a significant impact on the communities that make up Lincoln. Space limits us to only featuring a handful of people, so the Weekend Edition apologizes in advance if you feel someone else should have graced these pages. If you have ideas for a future issue, please call us.

NORMAN BARTLETT

It used to be that peaches were purchased as they came off the tree, with all their fuzz intact. But nowadays, most store-bought peaches are smooth and silky.

Who figured out how to de-fuzz a peach? Norman Bartlett of Beamsville.

In the 1930s, a grower near Lake Erie had a problem. Winds off the lake were blowing grit into his peach orchard, and the dirt was sticking to the peach fuzz like Velcro®. He asked Mr. Bartlett, who was well-known for agricultural innovation, to figure out how to de-fuzz his peaches before they went to market.

Mr. Bartlett learned about innovation at an early age while working on his parents' farm. In 1912, after noticing how much farmers



Senator William Gibson



William F. Rannie

were paying to import lime sulphur spray from the United States, he figured out a way to buy local lime and sulphur and boil it together to create a locally-made, cheaper spray. That was the start of the N.M. Bartlett agricultural chemical company.

But chemicals weren't Mr. Bartlett's only interest. When presented with a problem, he felt compelled to invent a way to fix it. While still a boy, he created a mechanical egg-counter so his father would know how many eggs the family hens were laying. In the 1930s,

he created a fruit grading machine to sort all sorts of fruit, including cherries, peaches and apples. The graders caught on very quickly, and growers were thrilled by the gentle and efficient way the machines treated the fruit and the quiet operation. Orders poured in from all over the world from South America to Europe to China to New Zealand. It was because of the graders that Mr. Bartlett was asked about a peach de-fuzzer. Sure enough, he figured out a way to use horse-hair belts to gently brush the fuzz off without damaging

the skins of the fruit. Even today, some of the very first graders and de-fuzzers are still in use, and Bartlett graders are an industry standard.

Mr. Bartlett died in 1970, but the firm is still known for agricultural innovation. Today, two more generations of Bartletts are maintaining the reputation established so long ago.

SENATOR WILLIAM GIBSON

The Gibson family had been an important fixture in Lincoln since the mid-1800s as a result of their stone quarry business. The most prominent member of the family was William Gibson, who served as a Member of Parliament and later was appointed to the Senate. Senator Gibson School in Beamsville is named after him.

Sen. Gibson was born in 1849 in Scotland, and joined his uncle in Ontario at age 16. When he was 35, he took over the Gibson Quarry in Beamsville upon the death of his uncle. He built a large house named Inverugie on King Street in Beamsville, and there he entertained members of the peerage and well-known

politicians, including Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

As the largest employer in the area, the quarry and its owner had a huge economic impact on Beamsville. To ensure a supply of water for fire protection in the town, he gave a lot of his own money to bring running water to Beamsville.

He was elected to Parliament in 1891 and 1896 as a Liberal candidate.

After losing the 1902 election, he was appointed to the Senate and accompanied Prime Minister Laurier on a railway trip across Canada. He also attended the coronation of King George V and

Queen Mary.

Sen. Gibson brought the first chartered bank to Beamsville, and was either president or a director of dozens of corporations and organizations. He gave generously to Knox Presbyterian Church, and was a 33rd degree Mason who in 1903 was elected Supreme Grand Master Sovereign, Grand Priory of Canada.

Senator Gibson died at Inverugie on May 4, 1914. In 1951, his former home was purchased by Great Lakes Christian College, which still owns it today.

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William F. Rannie loved Beamsville

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WILLIAM F. RANNIE

Few people have had as much influence, and at the same time earned the friendship and respect of so many people, as the late William F. (Bill) Rannie.

The Queens University graduate worked as a reporter for the Ottawa Journal, then in the fur trade division of the Hudson's Bay Company, and served in the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps during the war. He arrived in Beamsville right after World War II, bearing in his pocket a two-year-old, well-thumbed option to purchase the Beamsville Express newspaper. Buying his own newspaper was the culmination of a life-long dream.

In those early days, Mr. Rannie made a point of becoming part of the

community by attending all council meetings, taking part in many local activities, pushing for the installation of sewers in town, and helping to organize the Chamber of Commerce.

In 1957, he purchased the Vineland-Jordan Post and later added the Smithville Review, creating Rannie Publications in 1958.

In 1969, the three papers were sold to Bill Burgoyne of the St. Catharines Standard, but Mr. Rannie stayed on as editor of the amalgamated Lincoln Post-Express until he retired in 1980, and after that he continued writing columns, editorials and news stories.

Mr. Rannie affected the town in many ways. He was the main player in the creation of many Lincoln institutions, including the Twenty Valley Golf Club, the Lincoln Citizen of the Year awards, the Lincoln Choir,

Albright Gardens (a retirement community for United Church clergy) and Albright Manor for senior citizens.

He also served as Beamsville Reeve and was an Ontario Hydro commissioner for 35 years. For his community work, he was named the 1984 Citizen of the Year.

Mr. Rannie was the author of many books, and worked especially hard to promote, preserve and record the history of Lincoln. He died on April 22, 1995, at the age of 80.

At the end of his book, *Stone From the Mountain*, Mr. Rannie summed up his feelings for the town.

"Beamsville has been good to me, as a place to work, to make friends, and to raise a family," he said. "Given a choice in any re-incarnation, I'll opt for weekly newspapering and a return to Beamsville."

Smithville got its name from first area settlers

We live in Smithville but why is named Smithville? According to *Our Links With the Past* the first settlers of Smithville were Richard and Mary (Smith) Griffin.

Richard and his wife Mary left Nine Partners, New York in 1787 to move to Canada.

They took ten of their eleven children with them. The eleventh child stayed behind because she had married Solomon Hill. She followed her family to Canada in 1795.

Griffin was a miller and had loaded his milling stones onto wagons in hopes of finding a new location for his grist mills.

Their first home in Smithville was located where the home of John and Ruth Nicol is located now.

For further details about the settling of Richard and Mary Griffin you can pick up a copy of *West Lincoln Our Links With our Past* at the Smithville Historical Train Station or check it out at the Smithville library.