

Family reunions reveal fascinating histories

Janet Duval's article on "Family Pursuit," a game for family reunions, sounds like a lot of fun and a vehicle to disseminate knowledge about one's family. It came too late for our family get-together which was held on the July 1 holiday weekend.

Last year we held it in the United States where family pedigrees wandered and we celebrated the birthdays of our two nations. This year it was held in Guelph on Canada's birthday and we raised the flag, sang O Canada and cut a cake to celebrate the occasion. In deference to our American relatives we also sang The Star Spangled Banner and ladled out pieces of the friendship cake to all and sundry.

It is about the only occasion all my five brothers and sisters and their progeny can all get together to renew ties and vow to see each other more often. This year we were able to have the two-day event on the grounds of Ignatious College in Guelph, next door to the cemetery where our mother and dad are buried. The significance was not lost on us and we hope to have another there next year, God willing.

As Janet noted in her article, family reunions are good occasions to help children become more aware of their roots, especially when families live miles, countries or provinces apart.

Of course, we did the usual, put together a family tree starting with our grandparents and ending with the newest family entry. We trace the family name back to its "patronymical" origin.

Coles is believed to be associated with the English, meaning "descendant of Cole, a pet form of Nicholas" (people, victory). There's apparently several variations of the name including Cole, which in Scotland is part of the MacLeod clan.

Of course that puts my theory of being descended from coal miners out to pasture.

One source also maintains the family is descended from Old King Cole who again, apparently, really was a minor Sultan king, obviously merry and who liked fiddling.

There are a number of distinguished people with the Coles surname including the naval officer who invented shatter-proof rafts or floating batteries which led to the "turret system." A Coles from the Maritimes also was part of the Confederation of Canada deliberations.

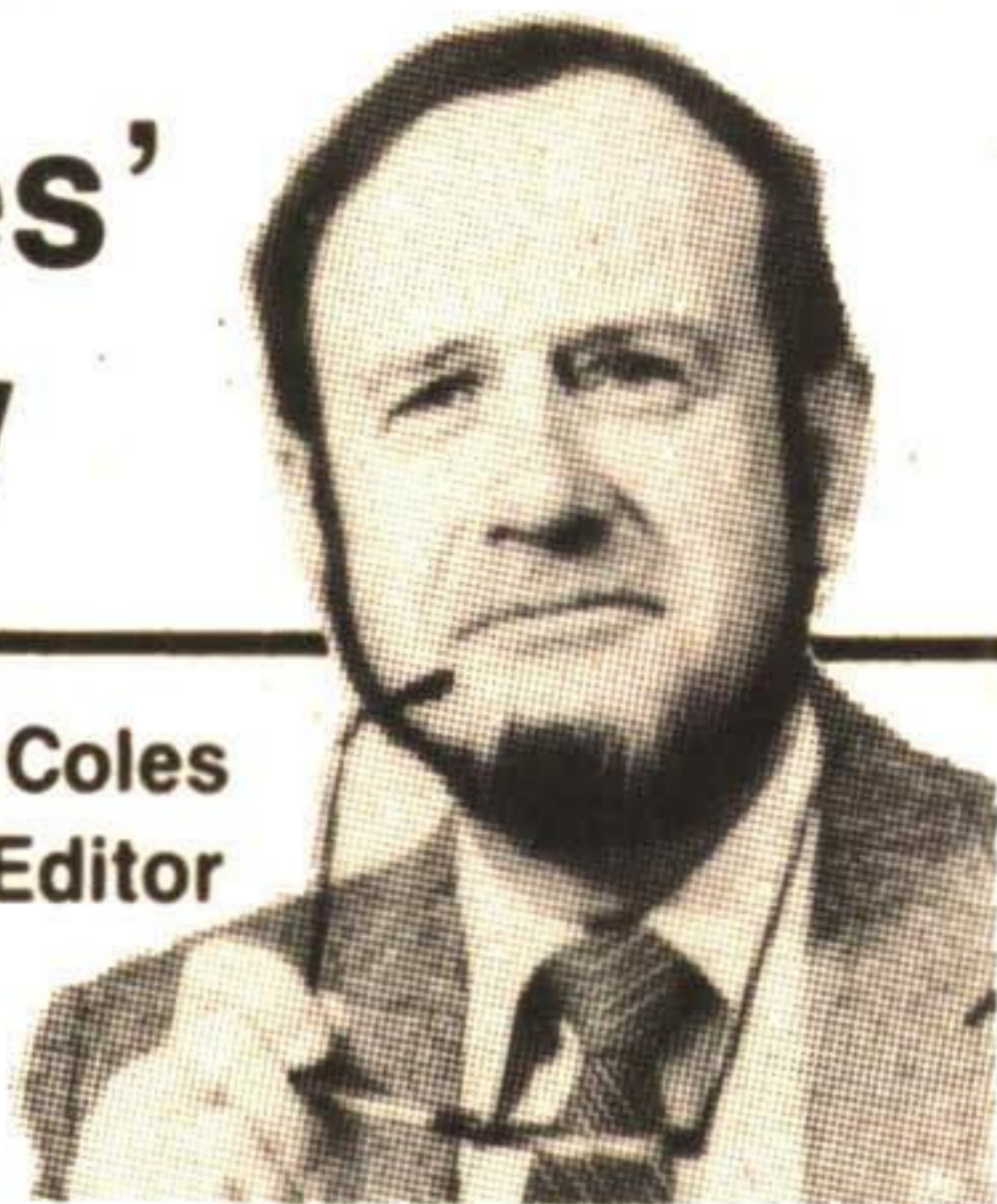
After that reunion I drove my wife and her cousin Shirley (Kentner) McKeown to a Kentner reunion near Thornbury on Georgian Bay last weekend where a 105 year old woman, matriarch of the family, presided. The Kentners of this area, Acton, Georgetown and district, are all descended from Jere

Tyron Kentner (1779-1867) who settled in Ballinafad early in the 1800s. (Jere apparently is a short form for Jeremiah.)

No one now knew that one of Jere Tyron Kentner's sons had walked from Ballinafad through the wilderness to the Collingwood area where he homesteaded until Irene Lawson was working on a Kentner family

Coles' slaw

by Hartley Coles
Managing Editor



tree from her home in Fredonia, New York. She made the discovery and Shirley established ties with the Kentner family there and let them in on information Irene Lawson dug up.

Mrs. Lawson's information indicated this area's branch of the Kentners are descended from a family who left the Ruhr Valley of Germany sometime in the 1700's during a time of religious persecution. They went

to Holland first, then to England from where they immigrated to North America and seem to have settled in Connecticut where Jeremiah T. Kentner was born to John P. Kentner.

John P. served with the British in the French-Indian wars in the 7th Company, 1st Regiment, between 1758 and 1759 and in the American Revolution. It is speculated he was the father of Jere T. Kentner who was born May 18, 1779 in Middletown, Conn. and baptized at Christ Church May 23. "It would appear he went to Canada directly from Connecticut since he took the Canadian Oath of Allegiance May 23, 1801, in the Niagara District."

He settled in the Grimsby area which then was called "The Forty." Americans made up the bulk of the population of Upper Canada then and by 1812 when war broke out between Britain and the United States, there were almost four times as many Americans as there were British and Loyalist settlers then, records Mrs. Lawson.

That fact bothered British commander General Sir Isaac Brock when hostilities broke out, knowing there was much

sympathy for American invaders. But Jere Kentner served as a private with Capt. Abram Nelles' Flank Company from July 24 to August 24, 1812 so he obviously did not share any American sympathies. He married Alice Boughner, a loyalist family also with German roots, and they had 10 children: John, Mary Christopher, Tyron, Matthias, Martin, Erastus, Briant, Joseph, Anne and Jeremiah

In 1815, after hostilities ceased, Jere and family (there were seven children then) moved to Elgin County where the notorious Col. Talbot held sway. It was after that the family moved to the Ballinafad area where the Halton Hills of 1877 shows a Kentner farm at the southeast corner of the Sixth Line and the Town Line. From there the Kentners prospered and spread throughout the district.

There's much more to the story which this column has neither the time or space to include but it gives some inkling of the struggle and strength of the people who settled this land. Family reunions help us to understand who and why we are what we are.

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