

MEMORIES OF A MUSICAL FAMILY

BY DEBORAH QUAILE
ARTS EDITOR

The Bands Played On is Jean Somerville's account of her musical family. The book is a document of the Frank family from the late 1800's until the 1970's.

As Jean states in her foreword, "Community

musicians provided entertainment and played an important part in the social life of the residents in rural Ontario before the days of radio and television." Jean's grandfather, William McLaughlin Frank encouraged his son, Andrew and daughter June to share their musical talents for the enjoyment of family, friends and neighbours. At first, the Franks entertained around their home in Nassagaweya, then broadened their performances to distant areas of southern Ontario. They also formed The Sod Busters and performed on station CKOC, Hamilton, in the early 1930's.

Jean has put her father Andy's account books, newspaper articles, photographs, posters and other memorabilia together to tell a tale of one family's love for entertainment. Copies of old invitations, posters and tickets illustrate the book, as well as shots of William, Andrew and June throughout their entertainment careers. The reader is also given a brief history of the social activities that were common in years past, such as house parties, community hall dances, school events, literary societies, street dances and more. While present day towns may hold one or two dances per year, it was common for square dancing to be a weekly event, even during the depression. Residents were looking for an inexpensive outlet, and could have a full night's food, dance and music for little outlay (usually about 25 cents).

The Frank family not only entertained and farmed, but William was a plasterer as well, and employed a team of men to assist him. At this point of the story, I had to wonder if William may even have plastered my house, since he worked in Eramosa at the time.

It's interesting to note that Andy reported receiving an average of \$6 per event in 1929; by ten years later reimbursement had dropped to an average of \$5. Yet Andy recalled that it was his musical talent that enabled him to pay off his mortgage and provide for his family during the Depression. In comparison, a second job for a present day family would not pay off an average mortgage and provide through a full-blown depression.

Jean can be justifiably proud of her family, for they were a truly remarkable group of musicians. Her love of their generous talent and work ethic shines through in her well-written tale. This unique work should interest not only music lovers, but local historians as well.

The Bands Played On is Jean's first book. She is the eldest child of Andy and Elsie Frank, born and raised on the family farm in Nassagaweya Township. Jean was a full-time school teacher at one-room schools in Halton, part-time in Georgetown and Norval, and a former full-time teacher at Rockwood Centennial. Now retired, she enjoys writing, and gardening at her "second home" in Sauble Beach.

THE BANDS PLAYED ON
MUSIC AND THE FRANK FAMILY
JEAN SOMERVILLE
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- Idle Pursuits -

GREEN IS GONNA GETCHA!

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Perhaps they wanted to camouflage the house. Or perhaps, due to their Quaker heritage, they didn't want to stand out in the crowd, and decided a neutral colour, that is, one that is neutral to a natural landscape, would be best. In any event, the family that built our house really liked green.

We have a green tin roof and green windows and doors. The interior woodwork was green and another greyish shade, rather like the colour of a sick lima bean. The owners had even added a white sheet metal rain cover at the front door but painted it green to match the rest of the house.

In her book *Letters from the Country*, Marsha Boulton recounted the hideous green paint discovered in many old farmhouses in her township. Well, it wasn't just hers. We must have had the same shade in our house and we're several townships away in rural Ontario. All I can say is, it must have been a very popular colour.

For the life of me I don't know why; it looked pretty ugly to me. I know Marsha hated hers just as much as we did. In fact, there's only one thing that I can think of that is worse than that particular shade of green paint.

The matching wallpaper.

Yes, Marsha, it's true. Whoever dreamed up that hideous hue that causes ordinary people bent on renovating old houses to shudder and gasp, also had a vision for paper in various patterns. Ours was stuck to the plaster

walls with horse glue and we came close to wearing out our Black and Decker stripper just on the downstairs alone. And our house, I might add, is not one of the largest in town. All told, the size is just a smidgen over 1,000 square feet. However, this dark, solemn paper decorated (and I use the term loosely) the ceilings as well as the walls. We had to spend hours holding the stripper over our heads, balanced on a ladder, with steam and the scent of hot horse glue assailing our nostrils.

Luckily, I was pregnant with our son and was excused from most of the above-the-head work. It was probably the only time I didn't argue with my husband that I was perfectly healthy for such a task. Balancing at the top of a step-ladder with a scraper in one hand and a steamer in the other was not my idea of fun.

The walls of the living room were covered with a hunting scene, ladies and gents astride great steeds, with dogs cavorting around them and a sort of Southern mansion in the background. The ceiling of the living room and the rest of the downstairs, kitchen and dining room, had a matching print. In all, the first floor of our home must have been a gloomy, depressing place. When removed from its shroud of darkness, the rooms felt completely different and appeared much larger. My husband and I often wondered how the first own-

ers could stand being cooped up inside during the long dark days of winter with those hideous green prints closing in on them.

When we purchased the house, we had visions of stripping all the woodwork to its original rich warmth, but because lead based paint is dangerous to strip, we decided to cover it with a bright, clean white instead. Besides, the enormity of the task was simply too much for parents of two very small children who had more pressing renovation work to be completed.

I did hear of another woman who took her wainscoting off the kitchen walls to strip it, to discover the other side perfectly untouched. So she turned it around, added a couple of coats of polyurethane, and voila! Beautiful woodwork! I wish you could do that with baseboards as well.

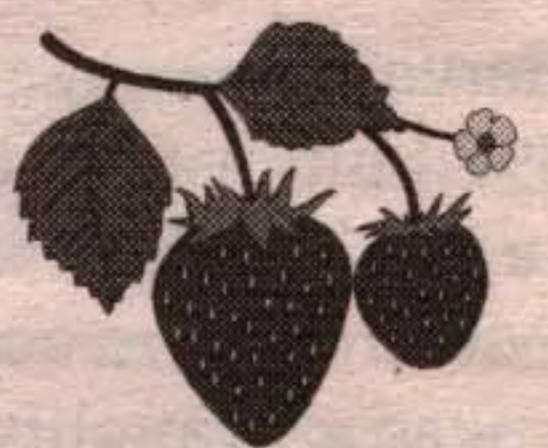
Luckily all that grotesque green hasn't put me off the colour entirely. I simply stick to rich evergreens, clear emeralds and soft mossy tones, and I feel in touch with my natural surroundings. I will not have hounds poised after imaginary foxes outside Southern mansions or little green prints over the walls and ceiling that make my eyes attempt to decipher a 3-D holographic image. I will try to create space and light and calm, and hope that future occupants will come to love this quaint little house as I have.

Now, if only I could cover up the roof...

Strawberry Festival Pioneer Days

Friends of the Halton Region Museum will team up with Andrew's Scenic Acres in presenting their annual Strawberry Festival Pioneer Days Event. The event will take place at Andrews Scenic Acres as a celebration of Canada Day from June 27 until July 1.

This is a family event. Children are sure to enjoy the farm animal corral, playground, wagon rides, pony rides and old fashioned toys. Along with a barbecue, volunteers will be serving up fresh strawberries in shortcake, lemonade, yogurt and ice cream. Complete your day with home baked goods, the farm market and of course, the highlight of the day, the pick-your-own or ready picked strawberries. The Festival will open at 8 a.m. for those who like to pick early and close at 8 p.m. each day. For more information call the Halton Region Museum at (905) 875-2200.



THE BANDS PLAYED ON



Local history book available at area bookstores or through the author:

JEAN SOMERVILLE

519-853-1549

BARRELING INTO SUMMER

Lawn Chair Gardening

catch the fine wines that flow from the heav-

ens during those sudden summer storms. A good barrel with a lid, painted a light colour to stop the sun from heating the water, set under the down-spouts of the eaves is a good start, especially to use for watering those sensitive deck plants. Always remember whether it is well water or rainwater, never water plants during the sunny part of the day, they burn just as easily as we do.

THE VON CUBE BROTHERS
1ST LINE GARDENING GURUS

And while you are watering your plants fill the birdbath, they'll thank you for a serving of their favourite beverage. If there are Orioles in the area, try slicing the peel off the side of an orange, push a stick in below it for a perch and hang it in a nearby tree.



Who knows, maybe they'll stop by for a drink.

For those people that insist on watering lawns remember a healthy application of organic fertilizer coupled with infrequent deep watering is

healthier than those 10 minute nightly routines. This is also a good time to do the coffee can test for chinch bugs on your lawn, before they do their damage. Push a bottomless can into the soil and fill with water, if they swim to the surface you can expect problems in the near future, see your local garden centre for the cure.

As you walk around your garden pointing out the fruits of your labour to your neighbours, remember to pinch off all spent flowers whether on annuals, peonies, lilacs or any flowering shrubs to encourage new buds to form for next season.