

# Authentic breed coming home to historic site

The cows are coming home to Sainte-Marie among the Hurons this summer. Like other interpretive components of this historic site in Midland, Ontario, the breed is authentic to the 17th century.

The Canadiennes - dark brown to black in colour - will arrive at Sainte-Marie early in May. They are expected to calve shortly after.

The French Jesuits and

laymen who built Sainte-Marie in 1639 aimed at self-sufficiency in their wilderness community. They built shelters in the style of their native Normandy. They planted gardens and learned how to preserve fish for the winter in the Huron way, by smoking them.

Seventeenth century records tell us about the transport of pigs, cattle and chickens to Sainte-Marie

from Quebec in 1645, '48 and '49.

How do you persuade animals to travel 1,250 kilometres in a canoe, a journey of eight weeks or more? The Jesuits never revealed their techniques, but research suggests that the livestock were probably tied foot-to-foot for the journey. The voyage was blocked with numerous portages, but calves trussed this way would have been relatively easy to

transport overland.

The presence of pigs, cows and chickens at Huronia's 17th century mission has been further verified through archaeological evidence. Excavated garbage pits have revealed the bones of all three creatures.

The native Wendat of 17th century Huronia used their word for moose (tsondarenta) to describe the cattle brought into their land by the Europeans.

At Sainte-Marie the animals would have added nutritious variety to a diet which in the winter months especially might have seemed monotonous to the European palate.

In 1649, the Jesuits burned and abandoned Sainte-Marie and struck out for nearby Christian Island where they hoped to found a new mission. They took two bulls and two cows with them, as well as chickens and pigs.

Sainte-Marie researcher, Louise Pothier speculates that the Jesuits may have occasionally used Canadienne cattle as work animals. The breed is notoriously sturdy and sure-footed in rough terrain.

meat was tasty and well marbled.

Those original 17th century bovine debutantes did well in their adopted country. By 1667 there were 3,107 Canadiennes on record in New France. By Confederation that number had increased by almost 300 per cent.

Cross-breeding in the 19th century proved disastrous, but some of the original Canadiennes remained as a pure strain and it is from this stock that the Sainte-Marie cows are descended.

There they will join the Houdan chickens and domestic pigs which form the animal staff at Sainte-Marie. The black and white Houdans are one breed thought to be popular in 17th century France.

The Canadienne cows belong to Steve Ogden, a Waverley utility contractor who combines a love of farming with a love of history. Five years ago Ogden was part of Destination Sainte-Marie, a historical reenactment of the perilous canoe journey between Quebec and Sainte-Marie. "When I heard that they actually brought cattle on that trip, it got me really interested in finding the right kind of animal," says Ogden. "The Canadienne

breed has always been popular in Quebec, and I can understand why they would do well at Sainte-Marie. They can stand extreme temperatures, and they have the ability to turn low quality feed into rich milk."

At Sainte-Marie, Ogden imagines the cattle would have browsed outside the palisades a good deal of the time. "They would graze on the wild grasses, and the small trees. Their tastes are a lot like those of wild deer."

With the aid of friend Bill Byrick (a fellow DSM participant and the Co-ordinator of programs at Sainte-Marie) Ogden contacted Robert Beaudry, a Canadienne breeder in St. Marc, Quebec. Earlier this spring, he bought the beasts, and transported them to his barn near Waverley.

Sainte-Marie curator Jeanie Tummon is readying the stall on site where the Canadiennes will live for the summer. She and the historical maintenance staff are boning up on the care and feeding of brown cows with aristocratic lineage.

Within a few weeks, the Canadiennes will move to their new home and begin their roles as bovine historical interpreters.



**In the barn**

Sainte-Marie curator Jeanie Tummon is readying the stall on site where the Canadiennes will live for the summer. She and the historical maintenance staff are boning up on the care and feeding of brown cows with

aristocratic lineage. Within a few weeks, the Canadiennes will move to their new home and begin their roles as bovine historical interpreters. The rest will, as they say, be history.

## Healthy beasts

Canadiennes were first brought to New France by Samuel Champlain circa 1610. The breed, a cross between French Norman and Breton stock was ideally suited to the rugged Canadian climate. The beasts were healthy and hardy, and developed heavy coats in cool weather. Their milk was rich in butter fat and their

## Like provincial program

The Town of Midland doesn't mind if the Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre administers a federal urban residential rehabilitation assistance program in the town.

The federal program is similar to a provincial program which the town does administer. The programs provide money to lower income families to renovate.

The Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre has ap-

plied to Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to start the federal program in the town. Since the municipality has first refusal rights on the program, CMHC asked the town to give its position.

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