

## Off to l'Original? —

## History hunt continues

Russell Postmaster Pierre Robinson who has been leading research into the puzzle surrounding the village's birthdate, says he is prepared to accept 1898 as the "big year", almost.

Mr. Robinson said that weeks of extensive research, including pouring over shelves of dusty files and contact with at least a dozen official sources, has failed to unearth any document ratifying a change from Duncanville, the original name of the village.

However, as indicated in the last issue of the Castor Review, documents are on file officially proclaiming Russell a police village in 1898. Although these documents don't mention Duncanville, he said it appears that civic fathers of the day may have expected the name change to be understood.

"In the absence of legal evidence to the contrary, it seems we may have no choice but to take 1898 as the year of our birth," he said.

But, he added, a last effort may be attempted to make certain that no stone has been left unturned in establishing the date of the village's christening.

Mr. Robinson has been investigating the possibility of obtaining grant money for the hiring of at least one student to dig through county records at l'Original.

"L'Original is really the last source left to be tapped," he said. "Even if a student didn't turn up anything new on the Russell puzzle, the records in l'Original are apparently in a mess and it's time they were straightened up anyway."

He said the township has responded favorably to a program under which a summer student from Algonquin College could be hired part-time to carry out the research. Under the program, the province would split the cost with the township.

Russell was taken by surprise in February when an old souvenir booklet surfaced, strongly indicating that the village was about to turn 100 without any notice. Residents dove for old family documents and official records in a rush for confirmation. So far, the date has proven unfounded and, unless any research at l'Original proves differently, Russell residents may have to wait another 20 years to celebrate their centennial.

## Neighbors



Katherine Hamilton

## Come a-callin', by golly!

"We don't have neighbors anymore," laments the 93-year-old owner of Russell Village's Duncan House who recalls a time not so long ago when the main form of entertainment was social calling.

"People just don't have as much time now," says Katherine Hamilton after receiving a visitor recently at her historic Mill Street home. "By golly, I remember when we'd fix up just to go to the neighbor's for an hour or two."

Although she receives less callers than she would like, the spry, little native of Scotland still keeps active, her latest project being a patchwork quilt which her daughter Mary of Edwards is helping put together.

Born in Glasgow in 1886, Mrs. Hamilton was orphaned and shipped out to Canada with hundreds of other homeless waifs before the turn of the century.

She ended up in a Brockville orphanage until the Mahareys of North Russell sent for her. After collecting her in a horse-drawn rig at Vars train station, the family placed her with Mary Maharey. Young Katherine tended to aged Mary's needs until she passed away nine years later.

She has some dark memories of those days. "I don't know why they would have a young girl live with somebody that old. I wasn't used to old people and I was afraid of them."

After Mary's death, the or-

phan went to live with the woman's nieces Emma and Janet. She eventually married William Nathan Hamilton, a cousin of the Mahareys, and bore daughters Mary, married to dairy farmer John Osgoode James, and Muriel, living in New York City with her husband Steve Campanella. Mrs. Hamilton is a grandmother three times over.

The family farmed in North Russell for several years until Mr. Hamilton's health forced him in 1948 to give up his life-long occupation and move into the village. He died in 1953.

The Hamiltons rented an assortment of homes before buying 130-year-old Duncan House which bears the name of village founder William Duncan. The large frame house overlooking the Castor river cost \$1,000 which was considered expensive 30 years ago, Mrs. Hamilton recalls. A smaller house was available for \$500.

"You could only get a bit of lumber under your arm for that now," adds daughter Mary as she adjusts her mother's treadle sewing machine.

In her younger days, Mrs. Hamilton would come into the village for piano lessons from Annie Duncan in the house she now occupies. The piano teacher also operated a court office out of the house for many years.

Mrs. Hamilton takes her visitor on a brief tour of the house, showing off the downstairs rooms

including the huge back kitchen no longer in use. She still has some things from the old Hamilton farm including a set of four chairs and an "eighty-day" clock which is wound routinely twice weekly.

A table in the parlor is crowded with family pictures. The walls support such momentos as a letter of congratulations from Ontario Premier William Davis marking her 90th birthday and an award citing her as "the best grandma in the world."

She opens a cupboard containing such curios as miniature tin trunks in which travelling salesmen used to deliver tea.

Mrs. Hamilton seems quite satisfied with the way her life has unfolded. Had she been given the opportunity, she would have enjoyed nursing. Despite being shut up with Mary Maharey at a tender age, she enjoyed taking care of the bedridden and did so several times after moving to the village.

Her failing eyesight makes reading difficult even with an electric magnifier and she broke her foot last summer which has slowed her up a bit. She stays in most of the winter but in the nice weather she bustles about the village doing her banking and other errands.

And she loves a chat. So if you're passing by Duncan House this summer and Mrs. Hamilton is sitting on the front porch, take a little time to be neighborly.

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Fall for  
bridge

Construction of a \$725,000 bridge over the Castor River at Embrun is expected to start late in April with completion scheduled for early fall.

The bridge, to replace the dilapidated structure on the St. Onge Road south of Latremouille's, will be done by Bertrand et Freres of l'Original.

Russell Reeve Gaston Pate-naude, a member of the counties road committee, said the cost estimate is very close to what was anticipated.

Construction will be a little tricky, the reeve said, because the location is at the junction of two branches of the Castor. There's an island with a farm house on it and access will have to be provided to the owner.

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