

*Tribute cont'd from pg. 8*

for other than passing comment. No, the celebration of the town's two hundredth birthday was almost upon them, and there was still a great number of things to be done and many plans to be finalized. Of course Agnes's contribution would be missed, for she was one of the town's best organizers. Being practical, it was a pity this had to happen when it did, for it meant parceling her work out to others and everyone that could be involved had been, and no one was interested in taking on anything extra. Hiram Osier, the druggist, expressed it all, if somewhat tritely, when he said, "Tempest fugit. Can't just stand around and talk about Agnes and Charlie with all the things that have to be done." He returned to preparing a prescription, adding with some ambiguity, "Anyway, that's what we have police for."

Glasses perched on her nose, Hilda Hamstead sat in her sun porch, a cup of coffee in one hand and a sheaf of papers from the pile on the table beside her chair, in the other. She was proof reading the text of a local history that was to be released in book form as part of the bi-centennial celebrations. They had been delivered the evening before from the typist, left between the front doors, wrapped neatly in paper, causing her to almost fall over the parcel when she unlocked her door on returning from Jeremy's. The text had been compiled from the family histories that filled the genealogy section of the Weaver's Mills Library, by a committee of three young people from the high school working during the summer holidays. Hilda had written or edited the anecdotal stories that brought these dry histories to life, and now had the chore of editing the final manuscript.

She glanced through the family trees of the twenty-eight families considered to be the founders of Weavers' Mills, starting with Samuel Steele and his brother Jedediah, who had come from Ireland, first to Upper New York State, then in 1785, to Upper Canada with the growing flood of United Empire Loyalists. They had felt no particular loyalty to the English king, but had found the unrest in the American colonies bad for business, and wanted to settle where there was greater political and economic stability. With that in mind, they had moved from one side of the Great Lakes to the other and been rewarded for their loyalty by being given a grant of land.

This new location, with its plenitude of clear, running water, its proximity to the lakes and their shipping lanes, had seemed ideal. With refugees seeking work, it was not difficult to recruit a work force. Then too there was the forest from which to obtain plentiful and near at hand, building materials. All that was needed was a supply of wool, and they would establish, in this new land, woolen mills that would soon be able to ship woolen cloth back to England.

As the timber and stone was cut and quarried for the mill, Samuel returned to Ireland, where he purchased the beginnings of a flock of six pregnant ewes and two rams, their breeding being Cotswald bred to Spanish Merino. The rams were pure Spanish Merino from stock brought

to Ireland in the late 17th century. With these as a beginning, further sheep could be bought from the domestic flocks being brought up from the colonies to the south by the loyalists. The sheep would provide a ready source of both food and income for these refugees and would provide employment for many more. As old Jedediah had been quoted as having said, "'Twas a grand scheme. Worthy of an Irishman." And it had worked.

Weavers' Mills had grown and prospered under the benevolent dictatorship of the Steeles. Land was cleared around the settlement, first for timber to cut into lumber for the mills and houses, then for wood to heat the mills and houses. The land thus cleared was broken up and crops were planted on the hundred acres farms that soon lined the roads that had been surveyed in this lake hugging township. And of course, almost every farm, as well as having a couple of cows, a couple of pigs and a flock of chickens, had a flock of sheep. In ten years, the settlement of Weavers' Mills and the surrounding township had a look of prosperous permanence that it would enjoy for the next two hundred years.

Not just satisfied to establish an industry, the Steeles recognized that they were also responsible for the health of their workers, and the community generally. With this in mind, they had recruited a young doctor, one Alexander Wesley Fegan, who came out from England with the latest 18th century surgical training and a young bride. They had settled, produced a family of three, and to the best of their combined abilities, for Sarah Fegan became not only her doctor husband's helpmate, but also his assistant, cared for the health needs of the settlement. It was said that during the War of 1812, when the raiders came up from the newly formed United States, Sarah Fegan treated as many of the wounded as did her husband, and as she was much accomplished in needle work, produced much neater scars with her stitches than did her husband. Sarah Fegan had also acted as mid-wife at the births of all the children of Jedediah and his wife Josephine Asselstine, and Samuel and his wife Abigail McMurtray; five children in all, three for Josephine and two for Abigail. And her husband deferred to her in matters of birthing, leaving even the most complicated to her, for although he was a good surgeon, childbirth terrified him. It was something of a joke therefore, when his own children were born, two fine sons and a daughter, each with the assistance of a mid-wife trained by his wife, while he paced the hall and gulped a calming glass of brandy, during his wife's travails.

As befitting his position in the community, and because he wanted his wife to have as large and comfortable a home as their circumstances permitted, he had built the house now occupied by his direct descendent, also a doctor, Jeremy Fegan.

Hilda smiled as she read these words, remembering that as she had written them, she had speculated on what the house looked like in the present, little thinking she would be not only given a tour of it, but also offered the prospect of being mistress of it, as Jeremy's wife.

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