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THE CROP THAT SOOTHED ACHES AND PAINS, LIFTING SPIRITS AS WELL AS FARM INCOME

Throughout the 19th century, and well into the 20th, Georgeville was overwhelmingly a farming community: the countryside centered on the village sustained at its peak as many as 100 family farms, ranging in size from twenty to two hundred acres, producing such products as milk and butter, apples and maple sugar, wool and beef for local and even distant markets.

The story of Georgeville's family farms is detailed, in part, in dusty statistics compiled by local enumerators for agricultural censuses, particularly those for the years of 1861 and 1871. Bernard Drew has examined these census records, among other sources, for the story they tell, bringing to the task his own experience of nearly 60 years farming the homestead that his great-great-great-grandfather Richard Packard first settled in 1798.

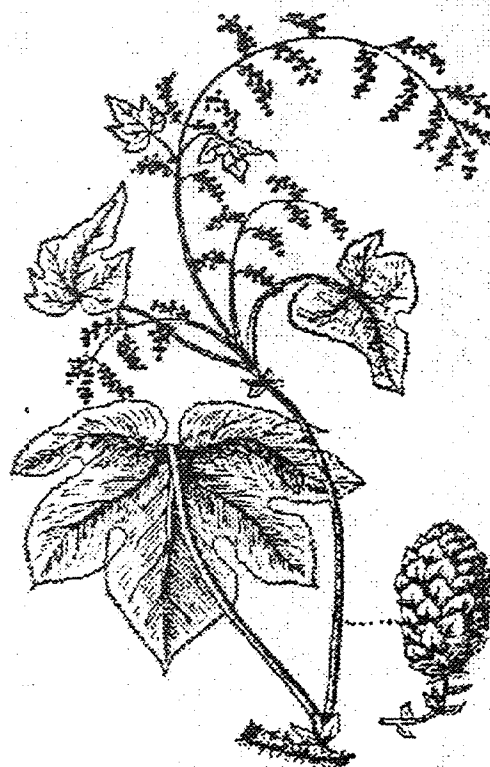
This article is first in a series on aspects of farm life that Bernard is preparing for The Enterprise. It centers on the production of hops – a household staple that was also once a valuable cash crop.

By Bernard Drew

In the early 1940s, when I came to work for my grandfather, William A. Packard, he was then the fourth generation of the same family on this land. This fact reflected a continuity – and way of doing things – that stretched well back into the previous century, both on our and most neighbouring farms. On my arrival in 1942, for example, horse power was still the mainstay. At haying time, we still relied on a

team of horses, using a horse mower, a horse rake and horse-drawn hay wagon.

As far as farm equipment is concerned,



Hops (Humulus Lupulus)

it is clear, from the 1871 agricultural census, that little if anything had changed in seven decades. This situation, far from unique, was typical of farms of the time. So I am writing about things and activities I have encountered and experienced first hand, as well as farm methods and machinery that are perhaps archaic and thankfully forgotten, but are, I think, well worth recording for posterity.

Among the farm practices that had disappeared long before my time was the growing of hops. The importance of this crop is largely lost in the era of pre-packaged goods in food stores and pharmacies. For the early settlers, and for many years later, hops were an essential crop, pressed into service in a variety of products useful in every day life.

Hops are the fruit of a perennial vine that grows well in the climate of the Eastern Townships. The part which is harvested is mainly the flower, a cluster of small yellow blossoms, in the configuration of a cup. The right time to gather them is when the hop is full blown, and when the yellow dust at the base of each of the thin petals that make up the blossom is well formed, of a bright yellow colour, and a little glutinous to the touch.

Key ingredient

There were many uses for hops, besides the obvious one of beer-making. According to *The Canadian Settlers' Guide*, published in 1855, hops were a key ingredient in making substitutes for brewers yeast used to leaven bread. The *Guide* went on to list recipes for hop-rising, hop yeast with potatoes, sugar yeast and leaven cakes that would keep for months.

Another home-makers' guide entitled *Consult Me*, published in 1866, provided recipes for the use of hops in brewing ale, light beer, strong beer and a variety of medicinal preparations to ease fever, indigestion and intestinal complaints. And a strong dose of hops was held to be just the cure for toothache and as well as aches and pains in general.

Hops were harvested by hand in late August and early September. Regular pickers returned annually for the harvest, many coming to the hop fields of Georgeville from Fitch Bay and the Under Bunker neighbourhood. It was important to have a reliable, experienced workforce to ensure hops of good quality.

Because hops were both light and bulky, they would be picked directly into a sack – probably a linen sack since flax was grown, spun and woven into fabric on many farms. Once full, the sacks would be picked up by a wagon and delivered to the upper floor of a farmer's hop house. The hop house on our farm on the East Road measured 24 ft. by 24 ft. and was built into the side of a hill. It was a rough, barn-like structure, with two levels. The top of the hill gave access to the upper floor, through a large, hinged door. This level had a slatted floor, with openings of perhaps half an inch between the slats. Here the hops were spread on the floor to dry. The hops would then be baled and lowered through a trap door to a wagon on the lower level for delivery to market.

Who were the main local hop growers? One would judge from the 1861 census for Stanstead Township that commercial hops-growing in our area was then just getting off the ground. Only four farmers reported significant production – Adams Boynton harvested 200 lbs. on his 200-acre farm on the Magoon Point Road (where his barn survives as the Elephant Barn). Stewart Magoon, further out on the Point, also harvested 200 lbs., supplementing his production of lime; and the Wilsons, Chester and Luther, whose farms were at the top of Narrows Hill, produced 210 and 200 lbs. respectively.

While this may seem a relatively small amount, it should be remembered that a few hops went a long way – for domestic purposes, for example, just one or two ounces were ample for most recipes. So production of 800 lbs. or so required a ready market. That there was such a market is made clear by the dramatic increase in local production by the time the next decennial census in 1871.

This was the first year that my grandfather William Packard's grandfather, Hollis Sampson Packard, appeared as a hops producer, and he alone matched the production of all four of the 1861 producers.

And by 1871, those four producers had grown to eleven, their combined harvest rising to 6,100 lbs. A harvest on that scale possibly returned on the order of \$20,000 in today's dollars to the producers – no small sum in the farm economy of those days. One assumes regional breweries were the main buyers. One could well have been Sherbrooke's Spring Brewery, established in 1859 with Henry Phillips as its proprietor and M.H. Taylor, a Cookshire farmer, as brewer. Pierre Rousseau's *Les Brasseries de Sherbrooke* (1981) includes an ad, promoting the Spring Brewery's "l'India Pale Ale" and "le Porter Silver Spring," that boasts of using "le houblon plus aromatique." Other breweries and brasseries were soon to follow.

Farewell to a landmark

Yet as with so many local farm products, the high, labour-intensive cost of production eventually outran the returns for small-scale farmers, and local cultivation dwindled. The hop house on the Packard farm stood for many years after cultivation ceased. During the hard times of the Depression in the 1930s, the structure fell into disrepair and was used as a tool shed for small implements. By the late 1950s the structural damage was so severe that it had to be taken down. It was a last connection to the hop-growing era and the passing of a landmark for neighbours and others who grew up here.

Now the only reminder we have of that era are hop vines that escaped from the fields and found fertile spots where they continue to thrive, often around perimeter stone walls. They still go through their yearly cycle of sprouting and sending out creepers in early spring, blooming in early summer and lying dormant all winter to start the cycle over again. This has been going on, unaided, for more than a century. Hops have of course, also been preserved in the Bigelow Pioneer Garden.

Today, few people realize how important this crop was for the early farmers. It provided, in one plant, nourishment, comfort and relief from pain – and a brew of fine ale to lift the spirit.

COMING ATTRACTIONS AT BIGELOW GARDEN

The Bigelow Pioneer Garden will mark its 8th season this spring with two demonstrations of interest to Georgeville gardeners.

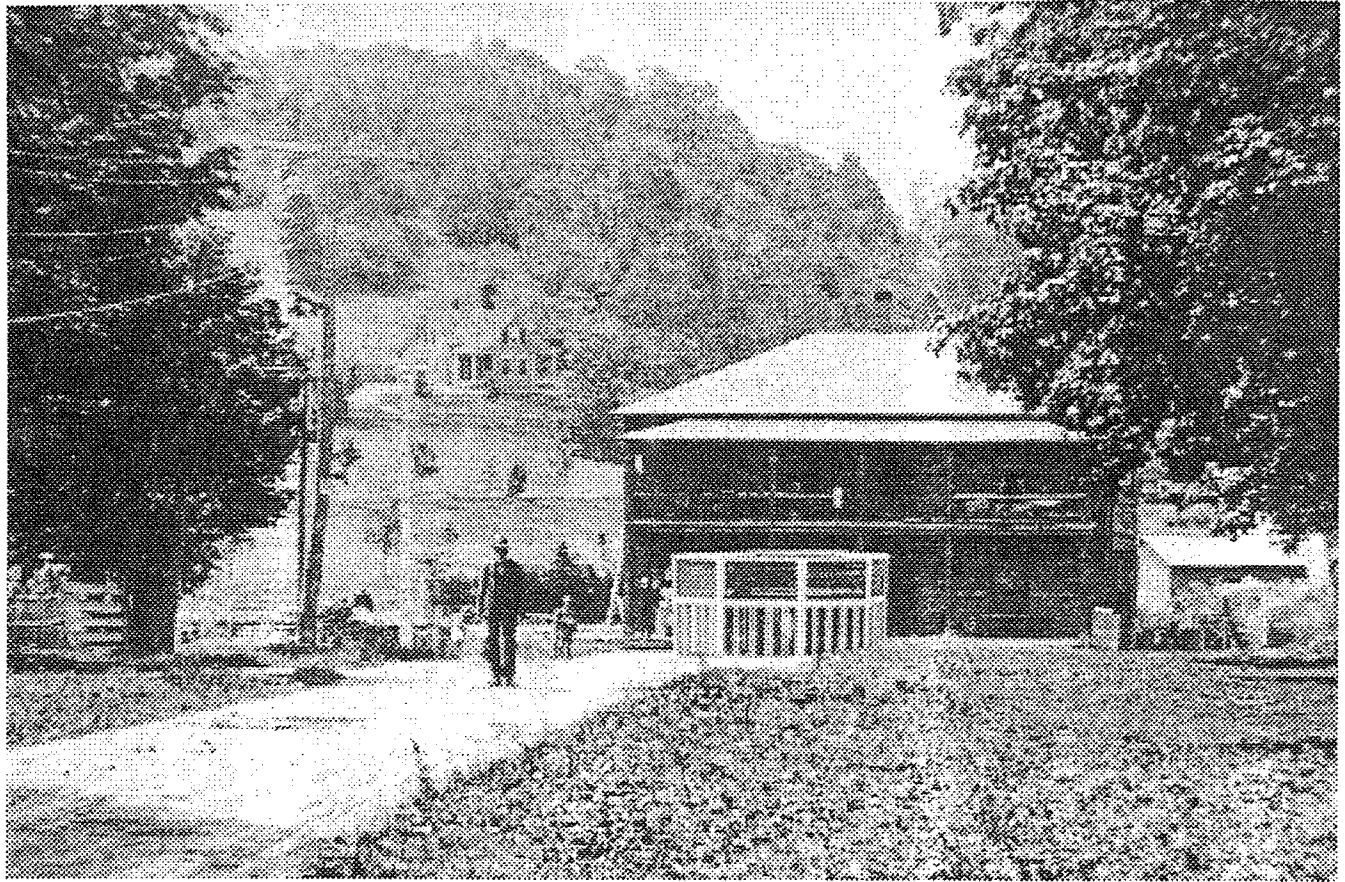
At a date to be announced, probably in March, Arthur Jones has volunteered to prune the apple trees in the garden. Anyone who wishes to learn how to do this job, from an expert, is invited to be present. There will be no charge for this welcome experience, but a donation to the garden would be appreciated.

A little later in the spring, Marie-Josée Laurin will show volunteers who would like to lend a hand the proper way to open a garden. This will be a one-day course at no charge, though again a small donation to help with the garden's summer upkeep would be appreciated. Please watch an announcement of both events in the Town Crier and at the mail box shelter.

Maurey Devlen kindly dug up his beautiful irises for anyone who asked for them, asking in return for a contribution to the Bigelow Garden. The donations came to just over \$300. We were lucky to get such splendid irises, and the results will show this summer. Maurey also grew and planted the red oak trees that edge the grounds of the Murray Memorial Centre by the road. He has now cut out the grass in a circle around each tree, with the result that they are now safe from the mowers and doing very well.

We are thinking of replacing the spring plant sale with a local garden tour, and would appreciate any ideas or suggestions on this subject. Please call me at 843-6755.

-- Katherine Mackenzie



A GRAND TOUR OF THE VILLAGE IN 1901

This century-old photo shows the Georgeville Brass Band's bandstand prominently occupying center stage, perhaps where one would least expect it. The bandstand was placed at the foot of the narrow Mago road leading down into the village, in front of Wolfred Nelson's Ives newly-built "Ives Block" (now the Georgeville General Store). Horse-drawn traffic was obviously a good deal less discommoding in those slower (and truck-less) days.

On Oct 1, 1901, Mabel Barrows, enjoying an autumn visit with her mother to the family camp at Cedar Lodge, wrote to her father, Samuel June Barrows, at home in New York: "This morning Mamma and I drove to Georgeville. First we went to see the sights, the bandstand, the Union Hotel, the Ives store, Bullock's glass front, Dr. Keyes' alterations and new wing, the

'Shack', the Meat Market and Bakery, the ruins of the Camperdown and the Hotel Elephantis and Miss Chamberlain's 'Ladies Furnishings Rooms.' I hope she appreciated the sights, though a short shower was upon us at the time.

"We had a present while there from Mr. Douglas Lindsay -- of a piece of venison. He shot two deer this week in the field on the corner where the road turns off to Fitch Bay village as you go towards the Narrows."

The "ruins" -- and they could not have been much -- of the New Camperdown and the Elephantis were all that was left of Georgeville's two grand hotels after the Great Fire in July 1898 destroyed nine buildings in the centre of the village.

But, including the bandstand, there was much that was new. The sights Mabel and her mother Isabel took in were Levi Bigelow's old Stage Coach Inn (just out of

the photo to the right). It was now owned by John Taylor and took in summer boarders as the Union Hotel. At the centre of the photo is W.N. Ives' store, which he built -- and equipped with the latest in acetylene gas lighting -- to replace the old Joshua Copp store, destroyed in the great fire.

Mabel Barrows' "Bullock's glass front" refers to the competition -- Albert (Bertie) Bullock's general store and post office, which he had recently improved by installing two large plate glass windows. The Meat Market and Bakery were operated by William Henry Rediker as an adjunct to the Bullock store.

Across the village green from the Bullock store, William Keyes, the long-time village doctor (as well as druggist, chemist, bookseller, stationer and grain merchant) had also been caught up in improvements in the wake of the fire. He had renovated and added a wing to his popular summer boarding house, "Lake Hall," its grounds reaching down to the lake.

"The Shack" (or "Shak" as it was more usually spelled) appears in the photo on the flank of the hill behind the Ives store. It, too, was a new addition to the Georgeville scene. Built by W.A. Murray, the Shak was occupied as a summer cottage by his

wife's sister, Katherine Macduff, and her husband Allan Gilmour Sheriff, an Alabama lumber dealer. This cottage burned in 1972.

Mabel Barrows' reference to Miss Chamberlain's "Ladies Furnishings Rooms" is a slight misreading of the sign that Ellen Chamberlain posted on her own new store, built in 1899 on what is now the grounds of the Murrery Memorial Centre (and hidden behind the large tree to the left in the photo). From another photo of the time, we know that Miss Ellen not only sold ladies' furnishings, but also offered rooms to summer boarders now that the two hotels were gone. Her sign read:

MISS E. CHAMBERLIN LADIES FURNISHING
MILLINERY FANCY GOODS ROOMS

Miss Ellen's store was later occupied as a dry goods store by Miss Maggie Quinn, and still later moved to its present location on Carre Copp, where the ground floor is now the Historical Society's Exhibition Gallery.

And the band stand? At the turn of the century, villagers regularly gathered around it for concerts by the Georgeville Brass Band. It enlisted the talents of no fewer than 18 musicians, among them Gordon McGowan, George Cass, Clayton Packard and W.H. Rediker.

GEORGE WASHINGTONS SLEPT HERE

In its last issue, *The Enterprise* profiled George Washington Fogg, the builder of the Georgeville's *Mountain Maid* who went on to a long career as master of that steamer and *The Lady of the Lake*.

Some readers have asked if there is a particular story that goes with his name. As far as the record shows, he never said. Yet in the early days of settlement on the lakeshore, he was far from alone in bearing the name of the commander of the Continental Army

during the American Revolution and first president of the United States.

It was hardly the case, to be sure, that every Tom, Dick and Harry in early Georgeville was named for a leader of the young republic. When it came to choosing names for their children, most of the early settlers favoured biblical names reflecting their roots in Puritan New England -- for boys names like Elijah and Isaiah, Jeremiah and Levi, Moses and Simeon. Similarly, popular

names for girls were Abigail and Hannah, Huldah and Lydia, Miriam and Ruth.

Yet in the first decades of the 1800s, a remarkable number of George Washingtons appeared. For example, George Washington Brown, a homesteader on the Magoon Point Road, named his first-born son George Washington, Jr.

Among the Browns' neighbours, David Jewett and his wife Laura Rexford named their first two sons Benjamin Franklin and George Washington. Just north of the village, at Judd's Point, Osburn Judd and his wife Malinda welcomed George Washington Judd into the world. And George Washington Huse, the eldest child of Franklin Huse and Anna Collins, farmed at the Narrows.

A little later, two of Georgeville's more colourful characters were William Burbank, who called himself "Colonel" (though no one knew of what), and his son James Burbank. Both named sons after the American president.

Colonel William was among the most successful fisherman on the lake. William Bryant Bullock recalled, in *Beautiful Waters*, that in the 1870s he "was always among the reception committee at the wharf to greet the new arrivals brought by the *Lady of the Lake*."

The Georgeville Enterprise

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The Colonel was ... decidedly garrulous and his tall, gaunt form could ever be seen sauntering among a bevy of summer boarders to whom he would offer fishing advice voluntarily, accompanied by wise wagging of his nightcapped head."

Somewhat dilapidated

While Colonel William's son George Washington Burbank has disappeared from local records, son James Burbank raised *his* family of eight children – including George Washington Burbank II – in the village in the 1870s. According to Samuel June Barrows, James Burbank was as much of a village fixture as his father. He was, Barrows recalled, "a loquacious, off-hand fellow, somewhat dilapidated himself, like the [Georgeville] wharf. He knew every rock and snag along the shores of the bay, even in the dark. His brain, when not artificially irrigated, was as good as a coast survey map."

One often reads, or hears it said, that Georgeville was a loyalist village, settled by New Englanders whose devotion to the British Crown prompted their flight from the new republic to the south. This is a durable myth – but historical nonsense, as the village's positive congregation of George Washingtons (and the parents who named them) attest.