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The St. Joseph & Area
Historical Society
presents

NARCISSE

a new play about St. Joseph



by Paul Ciufo
directed by Duncan McGregor

July 19-30, 2011 | St. Peter's Catholic Church, St. Joseph



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Ben Lobb
Member of Parliament for
Huron—Bruce

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Narcisse – a new play about St. Joseph

It is with great pleasure that I bring greetings from the Government of Canada and welcome you to Narcisse – a new play about St. Joseph.

I want to extend a warm welcome to everyone and wish you a memorable stay here in St. Joseph. I would like to recognize all of the dedicated volunteers for the hard work that went into planning and implementing this impressive outdoor community play project. This performance will provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the local history of St. Joseph and Huron County.

As the Member of Parliament for Huron-Bruce, I take great pride in the local culture and tourism that Huron-Bruce has to offer. Congratulations and best wishes on what I'm sure will prove to be a successful event.

Sincerely,

Ben Lobb, MP
Huron-Bruce



On behalf of the Municipality of Bluewater, I want to convey to the St. Joseph Historical Society our best wishes for a very successful presentation of the “Narcisse Cantin” story. Narcisse was a fascinating Canadian who had a great vision for

St. Joseph. We are honoured that the Historical Society also had a great vision to have this play produced.

On behalf of the Council of the Municipality of Bluewater, I congratulate and thank all the volunteers and professionals who worked so hard to make this production a success.

Mayor Bill Dowson

Greetings from the Historical Society

The St. Joseph & Area Historical Society welcomes you to our play *Narcisse*, where we showcase our unique and interesting heritage. Our director, Duncan McGregor says that his production has been quite a ‘ride’ for him. Well, it has for us too! Just as it takes a village to raise up a child it has taken a community to bring *Narcisse* --- *The Play* to life.

We, the St. Joseph and Area Historical Society are so proud of how our community has embraced this production. We have been impressed with Paul Ciufo’s research and writing skills, and watched with delight and amazement as Duncan organized, held auditions, cast and lead rehearsals. Under the guidance of Duncan and Karen Stewart (our play co-ordinator), our Society has sought and found cooperation of volunteers, corporate and individual donors, and support from all levels of government. We thank all who have helped to make *Narcisse* a reality. It has been an amazing project for a very small community. And now on with the show - this is it!

Executive and Board of Directors

President:	Mike Miller
Vice -President:	Marc Cantin*
Treasurer:	Liz Ihrig
Secretary:	Gerry Ballantine
Directors:	Frank Ihrig, Joan Karstens, Martha Mungar, Pat Rowe, Mark Tucker, Joseph Wooden

**great-grandson of Narcisse Cantin*

“Narcisse Cantin was an exciting figure in the history of Huron County. It is commendable for the St. Joseph Historical Society to create a production about him. It shows that our local history has colourful individuals who have big dreams, who have put their mark on our communities.

Congratulations to all those who have worked to bring this part of our history alive.”

Carol Mitchell, MPP, Huron-Bruce

Narcisse, a play about a Man and his Vision

Starring

Narcisse Cantin
Josephine Cantin
Nap Cantin
Fiddler, Salesman, Industrialist, MP Sherritt
Oliver Cabana

Rob Bundy
Susan Armstrong
Mathieu Burdan
Capucine (Cappy) Onn
Cam Laurie

...

Brother André, Musician, St. Joseph citizen
Secretary to Oliver Cabana
Spencer, Salesman, Industrialist, Musician, Women's Chorus
Speaker of the House of Commons
Young Nap Cantin, St. Joseph boy, Brick Picker, MP
William Walsh, Cantin Supporter, St. Joseph boy, Musician
Schwab, Salesman, Anderson, Hess, Women's Chorus, MP, Citizen
Waiter, St. Joseph Citizen, Women's Chorus, MP
Foster, Strongman at Fair, Priest, MP, Brick Picker Manager
Musician, Mr. Walsh, St. Joseph Citizen, MP
St. Joseph Citizen, MP, Women's Chorus
MC at the Fair, Stewart, Salesman, Industrialist,
Citizen, MP, Bartender
Citizen, MP, Women's Chorus
Salesman, Industrialist, Reed, Bissonette, Citizen, MP
Willis, Industrialist, Citizen, MP
St. Joseph boy, MP
Musician, Vocal Soloist, Citizen, Women's Chorus, MP
Server, Sergeant at Arms, Citizen
Salesman, MP Tartre, Citizen, Women's Chorus
Salesman, Industrialist, Citizen, MP
Musician, Wheel Chair Victim, Corriveau, Fair Organizer, MP
Citizen, Daughter of Wheel Chair Victim, MP, Women's Chorus
St. Joseph girl, Cantin Daughter, Citizen, MP
St. Joseph girl, Cantin Daughter, Citizen, MP
Musician
Musician, Bartender, Louis Cantin, MP
St. Joseph girl, MP, Citizen
St. Joseph girl, Fair Heckler, MP, Citizen
St. Joseph girl, MP, Citizen, Women's Chorus
Citizen, U.S. newspaper kid, Cantin Supporter, MP
Citizen, U.S. newspaper kid, Cantin Supporter, MP
Positive Exeter Investor, Cantin Supporter,
Balmoral Employee, MP
Valerie Cantin, Citizen, MP
St. Joseph girl, Citizen, MP
St. Joseph boy, U.S. Bicycle Rider, Brick Picker,
MP, Unit Organizer
St. Joseph girl, Brick Picker, Citizen, MP
Citizen, Cantin Supporter, Brick Picker, MP, Women's Chorus
Musician, U.S. Bicycle Rider, Citizen, Women's Chorus
St. Joseph Girl, Citizen, MP
Citizen, Cantin Supporter, MP
St. Joseph girl, Citizen, MP
Citizen, Balmoral Employee, Brick Picker, MP
Citizen, Negative Exeter Investor, Fair Heckler, Brick Picker, MP
Citizen, Cantin Supporter, MP, Women's Chorus
St. Joseph's boy, Wilfred Laurier, Cantin Supporter, Citizen
St. Joseph's boy, older Jean Cantin, Brick Picker, Citizen, MP
St. Joseph's boy, younger Jean Cantin, Brick Picker, MP

Marcel Richard
Racheal Regier
Lora-Lea Paulger
Nathan Paulger
Elliot Paulger
Aimée Rau
Veronica Rau
Dave Siebert
Martin Gelinis
Cosette Gelinis
Bev Shea

Larissa Shea
Barb Pepper
Christa Ducharme
Lucas Ducharme
Roberta Walker
Brendan Walker
Claudette Léger
Tania Harvey
Shawn Harvey
Sydney Harvey
Olivia Harvey
Amelia Harvey
Scott Bradford
Jamie McClellan
Sara Nogueira
Rachel Bundy
Katrina Steckle
Jillian Bjelan
Robyn Bjelan
Faith Robinson

Skylagh Robinson
Emma Laporte
Donovan Jeffrey

Monica Jeffrey
Courtney Groot
Courtney Conway
Charlotte Hartman
Caroline Regier
Anastasiya Kubrak
Amanda Pittao
Ally Connelly
Abby Parsons
Tyler Parsons
Isaac van Aaken
Nigel van Aaken

Playwright - Paul Ciufo
Director - Duncan McGregor
Project Co-ordinator - Karen Stewart
Technical Director - Ross Barnett

...

Musical Direction - Arlene Darnbrough
Costumes and Set Decoration - Sherri Milburn
French Canadian Advisor - Claudette Léger
Production Stage Manager - Steve Allen
Prop Organization - Dianne Miller

...

Costumes - Sherri Milburn, George Blackwell, Cecilia Fauker,
Lin Marsden, Veronica Hotchkiss

Sound - Travis Teed

Props - Ray and Maureen Langridge, Dianne Miller, the children

Set Carpenters - Dave Siebert, Steve Allen, Ross Barnett

Great Lakes Map Creator - Paul Coustiels

Set Painters - Sherri Milburn, Kim Dahonick,

St. Joseph Models Creators - Marc Cantin, Pauline Cantin

Wheelbarrow Creator - Shawn Harvey

Outdoor Site Preparation - Mike Miller

SUPPORTING ROLES ... Thank you

Bayfield North Antiques · Hensall District Co-op · Mr. Hosang · Heather Klopp · Bruce Richmond · Mike & Terri's No Frills · Zurich Mennonite Women · Sherry Richmond · each and every volunteer including the cast, the ushers, stage hands, concessions, greeters, parking attendants, sewers, prop builders, painters, and the parents of the children who have responded whole-heartedly to this project.

Notes ...from the Playwright



Paul Ciufo ~ I first heard this marvellous story twenty years ago. As a summer reporter for The Lakeshore Advance, I was sent to interview Napoleon "Nap" E. Cantin, son of Napoleon "Nap" A. Cantin, and grandson of Narcisse. Nap had preserved the family history very well and spoke about it passionately. Narcisse and others at the heart of the story really captured my imagination and I was amazed that sleepy little St. Joseph had once been a boomtown. Also, there's something quite poignant about big dreams that fail. I empathized with the heartbreak Narcisse and many others must have felt. This could make a wonderful play, I thought.

In 2002 I finally got around to doing the research and writing. I'd been urged to pursue it by Joan Karstens who took her cue from her aunt, Pat Cook. Financial resources came from the St. Joseph & Area Historical Society thanks to a Trillium Foundation grant garnered by an application ably written by Pamela Hall-Grusska. I interviewed people who generously shared their memories and knowledge of St. Joseph including Velma Cantin, Jean-Paul Cantin, Marc Cantin, Jules Cantin, Phil Durand, Andy Rau, Adeline Denomy, Kathleen Rydall, Tony Laporte, Alphonse "Pitou" Jeffery, John & Peter Jeffrey, Florence Masse, Marguerite "Margie" Johnston, and Rosemarie Regier. Aimée Rau showed me a statuette of Brother André and impressed upon me how much he means to the community.

I spent hours in the treasure trove of an archive preserved by Nap E. and relocated to Hessenland Country Inn. Even more valuable than the charts and maps and ledgers and newspaper articles were the epic letters written by Narcisse to his wife Josephine, his son Nap A., and his business partner Oliver Cabana. The letters revealed what made Narcisse tick – his ambitions, his strengths, his values, his insecurities. Archivist Tracey Whitson-Bahro shared her valuable insights into the material with me.

Tony Laporte invited me to his home to hear French Canadian fiddling by Maurice Desjardine. Tony also loaned me Derek Blackburn's thesis proposal *"The Life and Work of Narcisse M. Cantin, Early Promoter of The St. Lawrence Seaway"*. I read and re-read Joe Wooden's fine book, *"A Drum to Beat Upon"*.

All of the above went into the first draft. Then we had public readings of the script with talented actors now involved in this production and others including Wes MacVicar and Gil Garratt. I listened carefully to everyone who offered feedback and attempted to make the script better, more true.

For years the play sat on a shelf. I bugged and bugged Duncan McGregor to direct the show and I finally wore him down. Duncan got the great idea to create an outdoor production with a big cast, so I did some major re-writing, attempting to make the play grander, more visually compelling. The Ontario Arts Council came to the table with funding to support the development of the script and production. Norm Tufts told me several key historical details I hadn't uncovered in my research.

Eric Coates and everyone at Blyth Festival – a cultural jewel of this area and indeed the country – offered plenty of direct help with *"Narcisse"*. They also assisted indirectly as I improved as a playwright through re-writes, workshops and productions of my plays *"Reverend Jonah"* and *"A Killing Snow"*.

The community jumped aboard with sponsorship and enthusiastic participation. Heather Klopp, Pat Rowe, Mike Miller, Frank & Liz Ihrig, Marc & Pauline Cantin and many others gave me a new appreciation for the importance of the story to this area. I was inspired all the more in my efforts to make the script the best it could be.

There are a few important things I need to state about the final script. I have taken artistic license to serve the dramatic needs of the play. However most of what is in the script is fact, or at least my best estimation given the available information. A notable exception is that William Walsh and his father are fictitious. The boy really cured of stuttering by Brother André was Charlie Rau; I heard the story from Charlie's sister Florence Masse who witnessed the healing first-hand. Foster -- the man who confronts Josephine in the post office -- is fictitious as well. Also, I don't know for sure that Nap A. Cantin struggled with alcoholism and was cured by Brother André. And I don't know that Nap formally and explicitly cut business ties with his father. I don't know if switching the ownership of properties to avoid creditors was Cabana's idea.

So to everyone who helped: merci beaucoup. To the entire community: I sincerely hope I have served your story well, and that you enjoy the play!

Paul Ciufo

...from the Director

Duncan McGregor ~ What a ride this has been!!!! The Historical Society of St. Joseph and Area has been a very active task master with their community's heritage. They created a Commemorative Park to pique our interest in this community and every year they give a breakfast in the park to share their passion for the St. Joseph Heritage. They created an excellent website which is very user-friendly. They even have a splendid book about the area, *"A Drum To Beat Upon"* written by Joe Wooden.

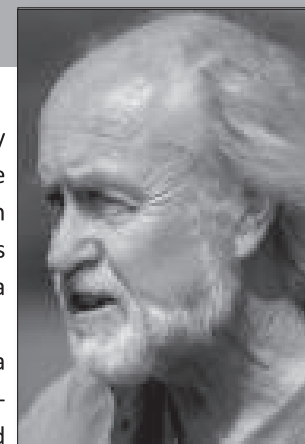
What they didn't have was a play. So, they decided to have one written. They commissioned playwright Paul Ciufo from Grand Bend to research and write one, which he did. Then they decided to have it produced in an outdoor local setting with involvement from the whole community. However, they needed funding for the production, so they went out and raised the large target amount, and then some.

And here it is!!!!

Welcome to *Narcisse* - a community play with attitude - in a local outdoor setting, with live music, live actors and actresses, with humour, with respect, and with a ton of action. Oh yes, and it's about the historical heritage of St. Joseph and area too!!!

This has been an extreme pleasure as a director to be a part. The support, cooperation, enthusiasm, commitment and talent are unsurpassed in my theatre career.

Duncan McGregor





Time and Location

ACT I

- Scene 1:* The French Settlement , Huron County – 1889
Scene 2: Buffalo, New York – Oliver Cabana’s Office – 1890/Zurich, Ontario - 1887
Scene 3: Buffalo, New York – Cantin Buffalo Residence – 1892
Scene 4: Buffalo, New York – Statler Hotel – 1892
Scene 5: St Joseph, Ontario – Cantin Family Home – 1896
Scene 6: Buffalo, New York – Oliver Cabana’s Office – 1898
Scene 7: Mont Royal, Montreal
Scene 8: St. Joseph, Ontario – The Fair – 1901

ACT II

- Scene 1:* The House of Commons – Ottawa – 1902
Scene 2: St. Joseph, Ontario – Balmoral Hotel – 1912
Scene 3: St. Joseph, Ontario – Balmoral Hotel – 1914
Scene 4: St. Joseph, Ontario – Post Office/Balmoral – 1915
Scene 5: Buffalo, New York – Oliver Cabana’s Office – 1915
Scene 6: St. Joseph, Ontario – Nap and Valerie Cantin’s Home -1917
Scene 7: St. Joseph, Ontario – Outside Balmoral – 1919
Scene 8: St. Joseph, Ontario – Nap and Valerie’s Home – 1919
Scene 9: Buffalo, New York – Oliver Cabana’s Office – 1919
Scene 10: Buffalo, New York – Statler Hotel – 1919
Scene 11: St. Joseph, Ontario – 1919
Scene 12: St. Joseph Ontario – 1940 to Present Day

ST. JOSEPH MEMORIAL PARK AND HISTORICAL

WALKWAY tells the history of St. Joseph through narrative and pictorial signage. The Park began with a request from St. André, known healer and founder of the famed Oratory of St. Joseph in Montreal. He requested that a statue honouring St. Joseph be placed in the Park. It was the early 1900’s when he took a metal pipe and pounded it into the ground where the statue now stands. The statue was placed in the Park in 1972. A Provincial Plaque was also erected in St. Joseph Memorial Park honouring Narcisse Cantin (1870-1940). Free admission. Walkway stones for sale. Open year round, weather permitting.

Brother André - friend of Narcisse Cantin, visitor to St. Joseph, founder of the St. Joseph Oratory on Mount-Royal, Montréal, Québec and recently canonized (October 17, 2010), Brother André continued to visit St. Joseph until 1922.

Photos: Brother André | Statue of St. Joseph holding Baby Jesus located in the St. Joseph Memorial Park

Time in this play moves forward from 1889 (the year of Narcisse Cantin’s wedding to Josephine Denomme) to 1940 (the year of Narcisse’s death) and to the present time.

The story is narrated through the memory of Napoleon “Nap” Cantin, Narcisse and Josephine’s second son (1891-1953). In Act I, you’ll find him talking directly to the audience, or being a silent member as he observes the scenes.

In Act II he becomes a living active character in the events of his parents. However, he is still able to separate himself from the action to make his comments. He is, in essence, our friendly travel guide through this adventure. He’s the one who tells us when and where things are happening besides giving us his ever-present opinion.

The play moves quickly from setting to setting. We go from St.Joseph to Buffalo, New York; from offices to hotel bars; from outside the Balmoral Hotel to inside the Balmoral Hotel, from farmsteads to porches. The pace can be a little overwhelming despite our sincere efforts to keep everything clear.

Local events were never meant to be simple so for your reading pleasure (only if you get lost) we’ve included the list of scenes, places and approximate times.



Meet the Professional Team



Duncan McGregor - Director

Duncan has extensive experience as a professional theatre director and more recently with ambitious projects at Goderich Little Theatre, including a recent sold-out production *Dr. Barnardo's Children* and *Betty Bylorski Finds a Home*. These were both very popular historical epics with very large casts including a large number of children. Duncan also dramaturged and directed Tim Cumming's *The Tiger's Lion*, a story about Tiger Dunlop and *On Convoy*, Ciufu's enormously successful play.



Ross Barnett - Technical Director

Before leaving Toronto to be a stay-home dad in Goderich, Ross worked as a lighting designer and technical director at a number of theatres in the GTA as well as summer theatres in Barrie, Grand Bend and Gananoque. Since coming to Goderich in 1994 Ross has been doing lighting designs for Goderich Little Theatre, Stage West, and Meadowvale Music Theatre and of course the many projects that Duncan comes up with both at the Livery Theatre and the Blyth Memorial Hall, and now a grave yard. This is by far the most challenging lighting assignment Duncan has given me yet.



Sherri Milburn - Costume Designer/Set Decorator

A girl from Goderich, Sherri found herself fresh out of college working in the wardrobe department of the Stratford Festival. After 2 seasons, Sherri stopped to have a family, returning after 10 years to the comforting atmosphere of the Blyth Festival and staying for 7 seasons, even while moving to Woodstock. It was a short drive to The Grand Theatre in London and a new experience in soft props. A return to Stratford in decorating followed, furthering Sherri's education, which then benefited numerous productions at the Woodstock Little Theatre and the Goderich Little Theatre. Sherri has found this to be both a privilege and a challenge to explore some of her local history by designing the look and feel of *Narcisse*.



Arlene Darnbrough - Musical Director

Arlene received her Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Toronto at the very young age of 15. Since that achievement she has been a musician and teacher along with being a registered nurse. In Goderich she founded Cactus Jam, an all-female band 18 years ago and was an essential part of the fundraising children's and adult plays for the Blyth Festival in the mid 90s. As the soundscape designer for Paul Ciufu's first play *On Convoy* and the music director for this past Fall's *Doctor Barnardo's Children*, both performed at The Livery Theatre in Goderich, Arlene's playing and arranging talents have been much appreciated and admired by her co-artists and audiences.



Steve Allen - Stage Manager

Steve is an Honours Graduate of Sheridan's Theatre Arts - Technical Production Program. Experience includes: eleven years with the Celtic Roots Festival, many of them as a Crew Chief; Technical Director for The Livery Theatre in Goderich (Goderich Little Theatre); Board of Directors of the Goderich Little Theatre for the last 2 years; Stage Manager/Tech. for two plays with Duncan before (*Doctor Barnardo's Children* & *Betty Bylorski Finds a Home*, or *Settling of the Great Canadian West*); Stage Manager & Technical Director for Warren Robinson's *How High The Moon*, an original musical about Goderich in the war.



Karen Stewart - Project Co-ordinator

As a project manager and administrative director with the Blyth Festival, Karen's experiences included managing large cast, multi-venue, complex productions - *the Blyth and District Community Play* (1993) and *The Outdoor Donnelly's* (2001). Karen works now as a freelance project co-ordinator. She is the Past President of the Huron Tourism Association.



ST. JOSEPH ARCHIVE & MUSEUM

St. Joseph Archive & Museum is located at Hessenland Country Inn amidst 40 acres of peace and tranquility on the shores of Lake Huron. Spend an afternoon and step back in time. Read and learn about the great plans of "the Father of the St. Lawrence Seaway" Narcisse Cantin (1870-1940) to turn St. Joseph into a thriving international port. View pictures, articles, maps and other original documents depicting the story of his great dream, meticulously researched and compiled over a lifetime by Narcisse Cantin's grandson Napoleon E. Cantin.

Historical St. Joseph Archive and Museum, c/o Hessenland Country Inn, #72981 Bluewater Highway, R.R.#2, Zurich, Ontario, N0M 2T0
Phone: 519-236-7707 or toll free 1-866-543-7736 www.stjosephmuseum.ca Open by Appointment



... and the Cast



Capucine Onn - *Musician/multiple:*

Cappy was born and raised in Huron County, attended the University of Toronto and Sheridan College for acting and is also a Suzuki Violin teacher. Past credits include for the Blyth Festival, *The Outdoor Donnellys* and *Spirit of the Narrows*. She has two beautiful children and is grateful for them every day. Cappy is thrilled and honoured to be working with her buddy Duncan again on this project and hopes you enjoy her music!



Rob Bundy - *Narcisse*

No stranger to area audiences, Rob is a verteran of local theatre as both an actor and playwright. Lately, he has found great joy in portraying historical characters: Tiger Dunlop, Dr. Thomas Barnardo and now Narcisse Cantin - one of Huron's most colourful characters, brought back to life to tell this amazing story.



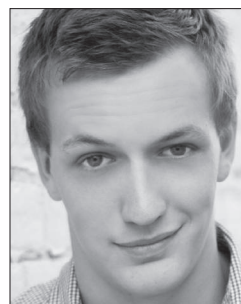
Susan Carradine Armstrong - *Josephine*

"*Narcisse*" is the 11th new Canadian play I have had the privilege to act in. Other Canadian theatre premières include *Innocence Lost: a play about Steven Truscott* (Blyth Festival), *How High The Moon* (Goderich), *Last Man Hanged* (Goderich), *The Great Storm* (Goderich) *The Tiger's Lion* (Goderich), and *Familiar Circles* (Port Stanley). New plays present a big challenge; explore the script and find out what makes a person "tick". Paul

Ciufo's *Narcisse* is a story full of remarkable people. Josephine is special and unique and I feel privileged to tell her story to you. Susan lives in Goderich with her daughter Bronwyn and her son Alan. She is the Manager for the Business Improvement Area of downtown Goderich.



Materials on the Dock
at St. Joseph



Cameron Laurie - *Cabana*

Cameron is a native of Huron County. He recently graduated from the Professional Acting Program at Sheridan College and the University of Toronto Mississauga. Favourite theatre credits include *The Winter's Tale*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Clandestine Marriage*, *Don't Drink the Water* (Theatre Erindale) *Angel's Trumpet*, *The Russian Play* (Erindale Fringe) and three seasons with the Blyth Festival Young Company.



Mathieu Burdan - *Nap*

Mathieu's family arrived in Huron County just 3 years ago from France looking for farm land that would provide grain for their bakery. A graduate of St. Anne's Secondary School in Clinton, Mathieu comes to his role as Nap Cantin with wonderful language skills (fluent English, French and German) plus a charm and humour that have won the admiration of the whole cast. He says, "You could call me inexperienced in theatre. I've only been in 3 school plays in France." Experienced or not he brings a wealth of natural skill, emotional understanding and energy to the pivotal character of Nap.



Claudette Léger - *French Language Specialist*

I am passionate about writing, singing, learning piano and drawing. Teaching French is also a passion and my vocation. My pastimes are: walking, biking, golfing and babysitting my grandkids! "Acting" became a dream come true. Passion and determination are my key words for living! All my thanks go to Duncan McGregor, Paul Ciufo, Joe Wooden, the whole *Narcisse* crew and the St. Joseph Historical Society for believing in my contribution to *Narcisse*. Thanks to my three children, in-laws, grandkids and family including all my friends - their encouragement, support and understanding were an asset in the accomplishment of this great challenge!

Official Project Videographer - **Taylor Gingerich**



GUEST ARTISTS:

Director, Duncan McGregor and Capucine Onn appear under special arrangement with Canadian Actors Equity Association.

"Lake Huron is the hub lake of the North American Continent. More freight is borne on its waters than passes through the Suez Canal."

Narcisse Cantin





**Jillian Bjelan
Hensall**



**Robyn Bjelan
Hensall**



**Scott Bradford
Bayfield**



**Rachel Bundy
Summerhill**



**Ally Connelly
Goderich**



**Courtney Conway
Goderich**



**Christa Ducharme
Zurich**



**Lucas Ducharme
Zurich**



**Cosette Gelinas
Zurich**



**Martin Gelinas
Zurich**



**Courtney Groot
Zurich**



**Charlotte
Hartman, Zurich**



**Amelia Harvey
Staffa**



**Olivia Harvey
Staffa**



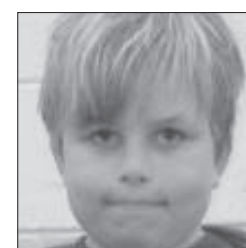
**Shawn Harvey
Staffa**



**Sydney Harvey
Staffa**



**Tania Harvey
Staffa**



**Nikki Holland
Exeter**



**Donovan Jeffrey
St. Joseph**



**Monica Jeffrey
St. Joseph**



**Anastasiya
Kubrak, Exeter**



**Emma LaPorte
Bluewater**



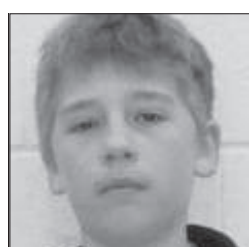
**Sara Nogueira
Exeter**



**Abby Parsons
Exeter**



**Tyler Parsons
Exeter**



**Elliot Paulger
St. Joseph**



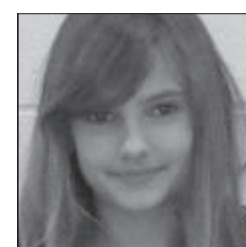
**Lora-Lea Paulger
St. Joseph**



**Nathan Paulger
St. Joseph**



**Barb Pepper
Bayfield**

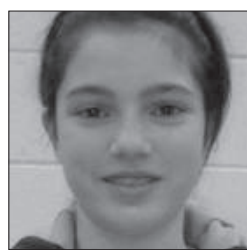


**Amanda Pittao
Grand Bend**





Aimée Rau
St. Joseph



Veronica Rau
St. Joseph



Caroline Regier
Zurich



Rachael Regier
Zurich



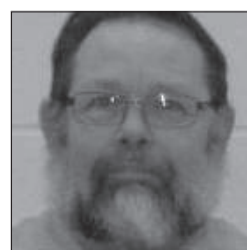
Marcel Richard
Goderich



Faith Robinson
Zurich



Skylagh Robinson
Zurich



Dave Seibert
Zurich



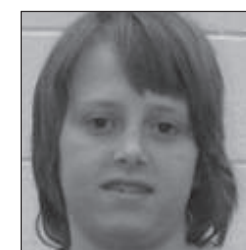
Bev Shea
Seaforth



Larissa Shea
Seaforth



Katrina Steckle
Zurich



Isaac van Aaken
Bayfield



Nigel Van Aaken
Bayfield



Brendan Walker
Grand Bend



Roberta Walker
Grand Bend

Our Community Play

— a community within communities

Our Local Community: From the beginning **Bluewater** and **South Huron** have supported this project. The **Municipality of Bluewater - Zurich Complex** gave us use of its large meeting room as we began our rehearsals. **The Friends of Hay Township Hall** allowed us the use of their beautiful old building for early rehearsals, meetings and as the costume depot when we got close to the play's opening. **Mike Miller**, owner of **Lakewood Garden Centre** prepared the outdoor site for our production. **Hessenland** gave us the use of their lovely Coach House for early public readings and auditions. **St. Peter's Catholic Church** let us the use of its Parish Hall for all our indoor rehearsals and granted us this marvelous outdoor property for performances. **Hensall Co-op** loaned us a transport truck as an outdoor storage unit on the play's site. **Zurich Mennonite Church Women** are co-ordinating concessions. Newspapers and Radio Stations also became part of our voice celebrating a community within communities.

The Theatre Community: We have been very fortunate to have the support of both the professional theatre and the local community theatre. The **Blyth Festival** has been involved in this project since the beginning and has loaned us costumes, props and set pieces. We've also used their box office facilities for full ticket sales for this production. The **Goderich Little Theatre** has also been very supportive allowing us to borrow costumes, props and use their marvelously flexible stage units.

The Education Community: The schools in Huron County have been very supportive of our project as well. **South Huron District High School** has loaned us all our seating plus the side audience risers. **Goderich District Collegiate Institute** has provided us with their interlocking audience tiers that give the audience a wonderful raised view of the performance area. These resources are essential to the look and function of our production.

Government Community: Incredible public support has been received showing a commitment to Canada, culture, community and volunteerism from the local, provincial and federal government departments and councils: **Canada's New Multiculturalism Grants and Contributions Program, Inter-Action**, administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada; the **Ontario Arts Council** assisted with the development of *Narcisse*; the **County of Huron** supports preservation and activities of cultural importance through their **Huron Heritage Fund**; and the **Municipality of Bluewater**. Each endorsed the project with their financial support.



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The French Settlement

Within a decade or so of the Canada Company's first activity in the Huron Tract there seems to have been early visits to our Lake Huron shores by some of the French Canadians who a little later took up farms. Local tradition has Claude Gelinas, Abraham Bedard, and Baptiste Durand visiting the area in the late 1830's and being so impressed with the land, the climate, and the rich catches of fish that they returned to their home townships in Quebec convinced that a better life beckoned in the Lake Huron area. Their enthusiasm was contagious and a number of the people in their home rural areas also felt that the poverty on their small farms in Quebec offered them nothing except low prices for their crops, the threat of starvation, and no future. So, a number of families abandoned the small poor farms in Quebec and joined the hundreds of thousands of French Canadians who chose migration to various parts of Canada West, that is Ontario, and to New England as well as other areas.

Among the first to come to our Lake Huron area arrived in mid-July, 1846. Among the first groups to arrive included the initial group which spent their first nights and days on the beach, now called Ducharme's Beach. This group named the area Pointe-a-Bouveau. This group included Elie Ducharme, Christophe Ducharme, Norbert Denomme, Oliver Mousseau, Basil Geoffrey Basil Durand, Pierre Corriveau, Joseph Laporte, Pierre Masse and Francoise Papillon (Papineau). Other names which appear in the other early groups include Cantin, Desjardine, Tetreau, Gratton, Aucil, Etue, Charette, Ayotte, Gravelle and Brisson.

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These and others became pioneer farmers on land which they acquired from the Canada Company for prices ranging from two to three dollars for an acre. At such prices the farms were necessarily small. They cleared the land; built houses and barns; planted crops and tried to make a life. Life was hard and the farms were small so that they were still poor but they persevered. Surplus grain was carried to Francistown a distance of 14 miles to the mill there in the north end of Exeter. Mills in Seaforth and Goderich were eventually patronized as well.

Food was often in short supply but the fish from the lake and wild fowl and game supplemented the food which was grown. These folks survived on their own ingenuity and with the help of neighbouring farmers. The French community on these shores has survived for 165 years but did not expand in numbers very much because many had to leave for the neighbouring cities and towns of Michigan and Ontario cities as well.

This French community makes up part of the ethnic settlement pattern that has characterized the south part of Huron County. Joining the French are German, Irish, Scots, English, and later Dutch and Belgian groups. Place names in Huron reflect this pattern, including one of the names of our area: French Settlement.

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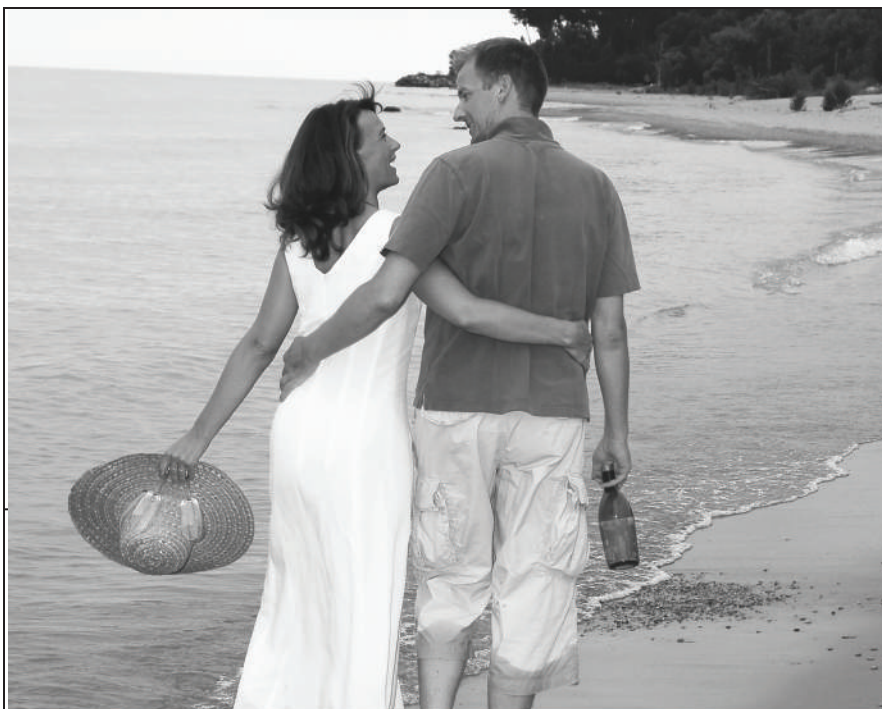
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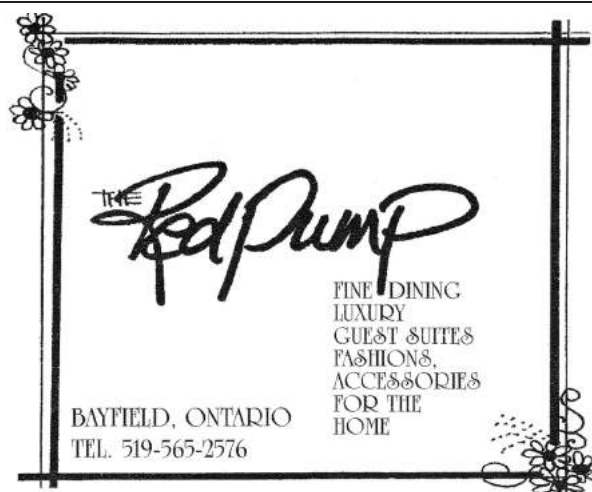
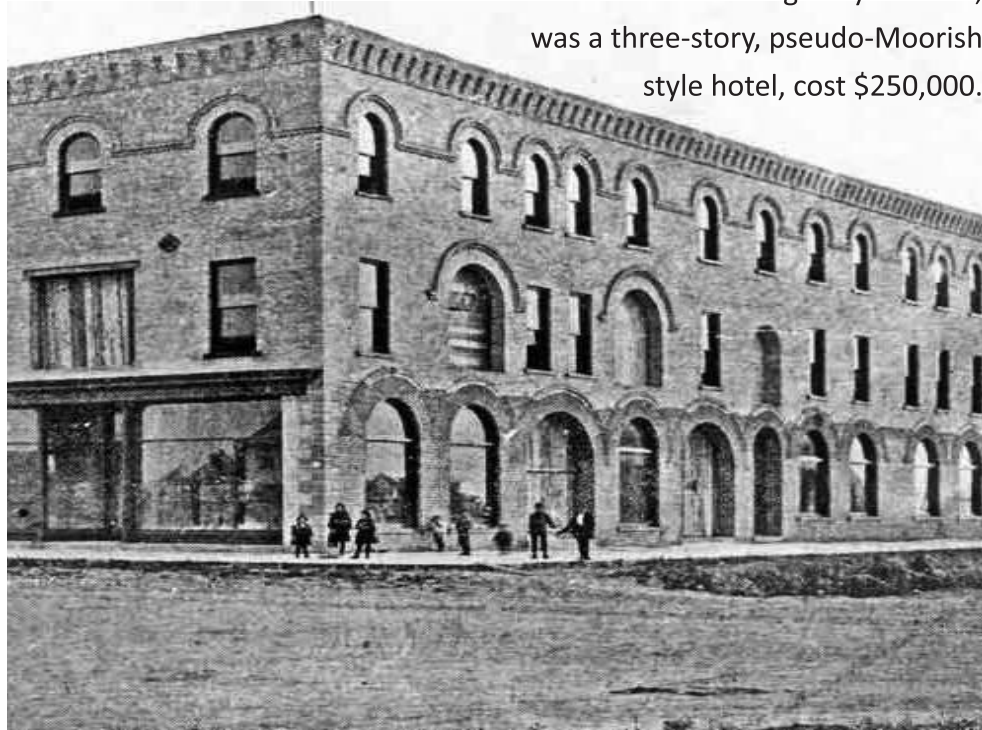
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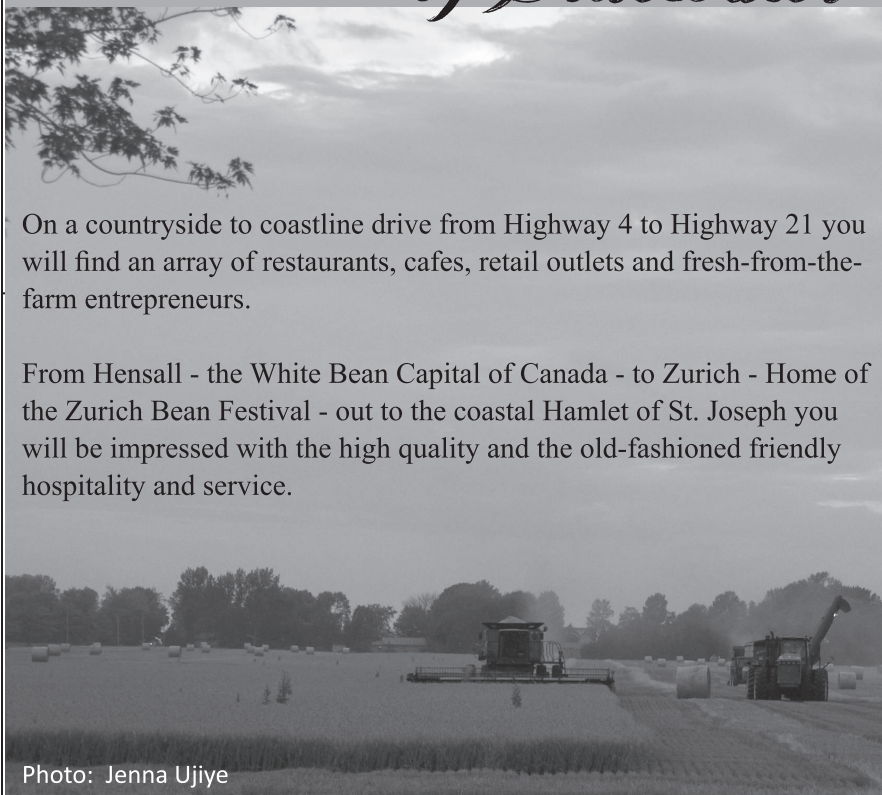


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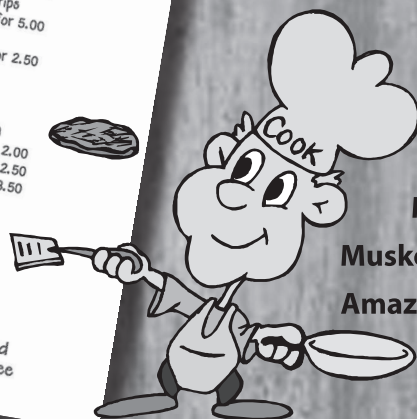
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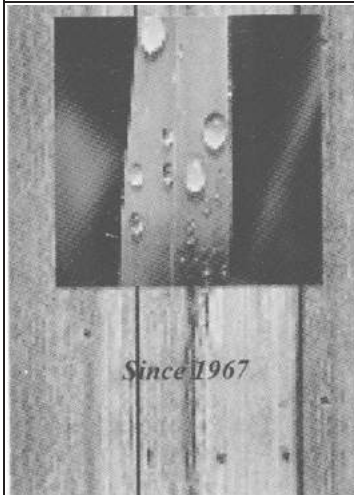
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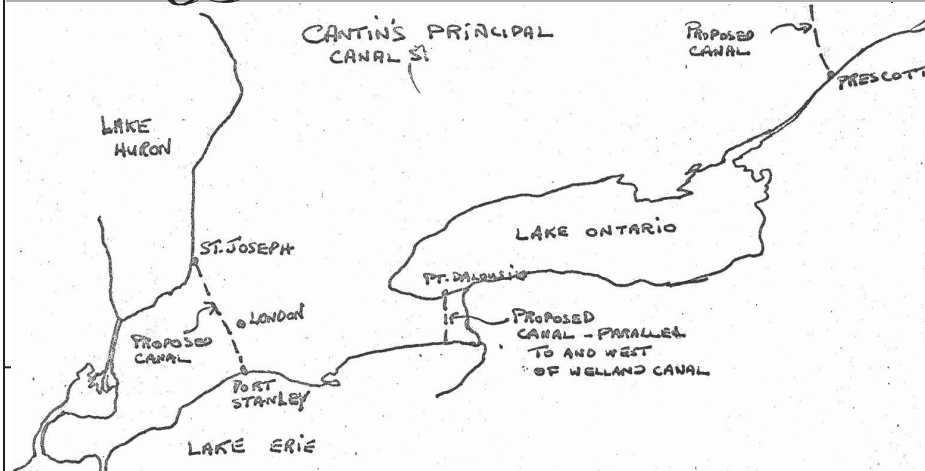
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Cantin's vision included a canal paralleling and located west of today's Welland Canal, entering Lake Ontario between Hamilton and Port Dalhousie.

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Canadian federal engineers were satisfied with Cantin's canal proposal. Unfortunately, Cantin faced political, financial and competitive challenges. For more information visit the website at:

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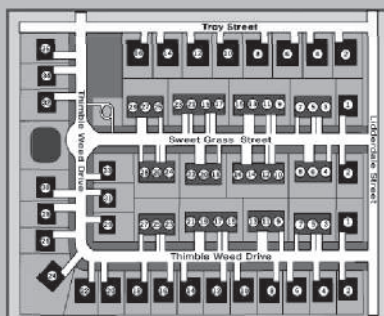
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They purchased land from the Canada Land Company for about \$3 an acre, which then needed to be cleared for crops and livestock. Homes were made of logs, using mud to block drafts instead of mortar and bark or small logs for roofing. Open-stone fireplaces were used for heating and cooking.

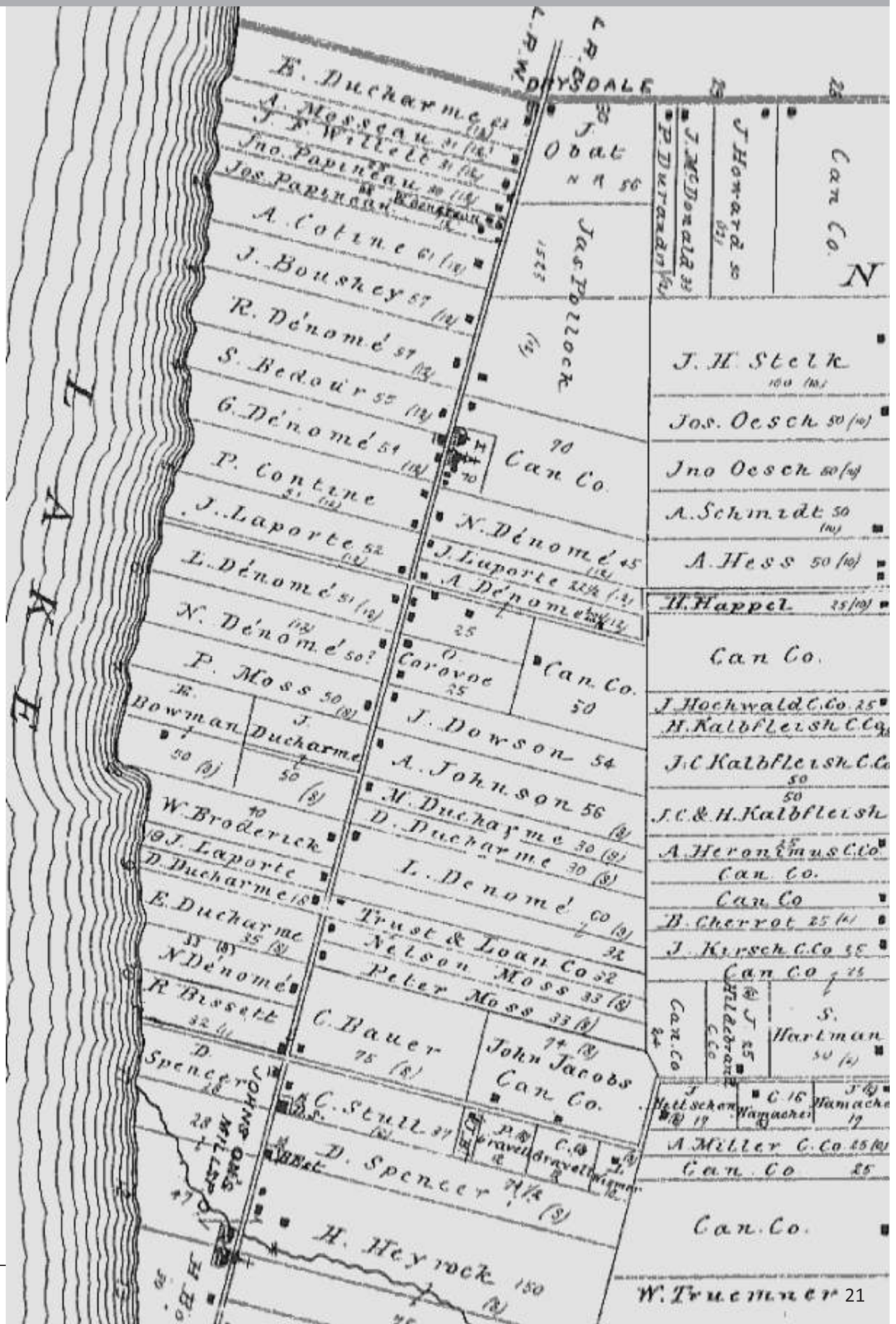
After land had been cleared and the soil broken using spade, plow or dragging heavy tree boughs over the ground, the first crop sown and harvested was buckwheat. Home-made sacks were used to carry harvested grain to McConnell's Mill at Francistown for grinding to flour. Francistown is now the north part of Exeter. This was a fourteen mile (22km) journey carrying hundred-pound (45kg) sacks. Generally, two men would take turns carrying the sack.

Buckwheat flour was reserved for special occasions, while the daily diet consisted of fish, wild fowl, game and berries. Even after fifteen years, life remained difficult. The settlers were helped by their English and German neighbours inland. Stories have been passed down of prosperous settlers bringing wagonloads of food to the poverty-stricken French-Canadians along the lakeshore.

By the 1860s, the acreage in crops had increased and the settlers took their grain to Seaforth or Goderich, where they would exchange it for goods or have it ground to flour for their own use. Like most pioneers, they purchased no more than necessary from merchants. As much as possible, furniture, implements, clothes, soap, candles and mattresses were home-made.

During one particularly bad crop year, known as the Famine Year, settlers were forced to survive on pigweed and roots, with several settlers actually dying of starvation. If natural food supplies (fish, birds, deer) had not been as plentiful as they were, this fledgling settlement would likely have disappeared.

These settlers left Quebec because of poverty. Their experience in the Huron Tract was not much different for at least 60 or 70 years. Small surpluses gathered from farming, fishing and home industry were sold in Goderich, Seaforth or Francistown (Exeter) – the nearest settlements of any size for 10 to 15 years.





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Jobs were often turned into games. One story tells the need to move a large anvil from a barn in St. Joseph. Narcisse Cantin provided the amusement by offering \$50 to the man who could lift the 410 lb. (186kg) object to his shoulder (annual wages at the time were about \$453). There were several unsuccessful attempts, including one by a Black-Canadian man named Mousseau. Mousseau succeeded in getting the anvil to his shoulder, but the effort was too much and he dropped it. The anvil then crashed through the barn floor killing a calf below. Cantin paid Mousseau the \$50 and paid for the calf as well.

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PHOTOS: (top) The Queens Hotel and (bottom) workers in the Novelty Factory. Photos: St. Joseph Archives & Museum



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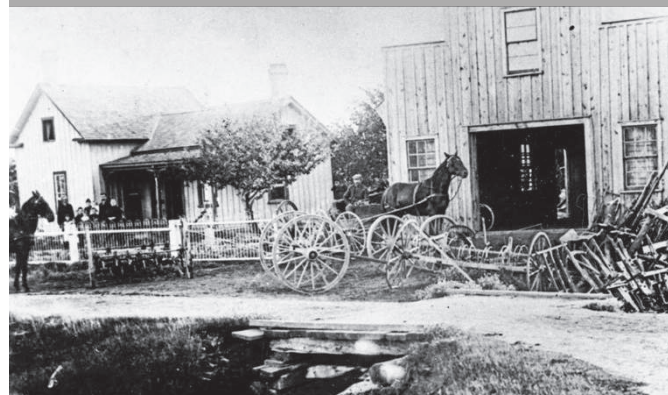
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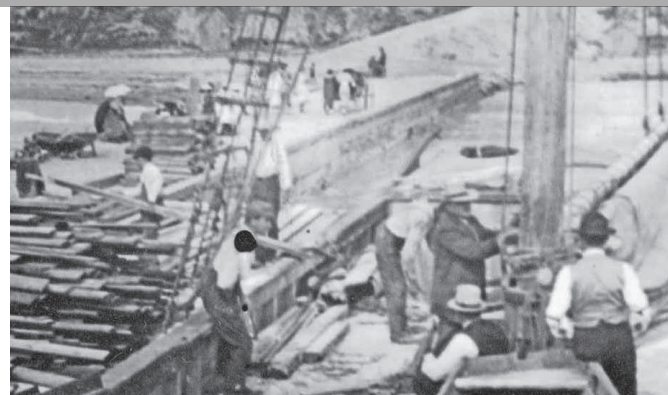
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