Title: The Village that got Canada Buzzing. Page 1/2

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There's more in a name than you might think, especially in the case of Beeton, Ontario. Originally called Clarkesville, the village later became known as Tecumseth, before it got its present name. STAN McNEILL found out the history of these names — and met some interesting people in the process.

The village that got Canada buzzing

MA and Pa Kettle are alive and well and living in the village of Beeton, Ontario.

And when I dropped in to see them one afternoon this week Pa Kettle was watching the exploits of Ma and Pa Kettle on his television screen.

Honest, that's just the way it happened.

The Beeton Kettles have no connection with the movie Kettles, of course. They're originals, Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Kettle, a grand couple whose combined ages add up to 183 years. At 93 — and a remarkably spry 93 — Mr. Kettle is Beeton's oldest resident, and he and his wife form the oldest married team in the village.

It's 60 years ago that they were married, 60 years ago they came to Beeton, and 60 years ago they moved into the house they still occupy. That must constitute something of a record.

Unfortunately Mrs. Kettle was away for the afternoon when I called — attending a meeting at the Beeton Women's Institute, a group she helped form 50 years ago.

Married

"Oh, she keeps pretty well does the wife," Mr. Kettle said, with an accent that after all these years is still unmistakably English. "Now and then she gets a bit of rheumatism in her legs. . . but she still does all the washing and housework."

Mr. Kettle was brought up on a farm in Essex, England, but left to spend four years with London's Finest — the Metropolitan Police Force. Then he came to Canada, and still remembers the day he was in Toronto with 25 cents left in his pocket.

"A fellow came up to me and asked if I knew anything about farming. . .then asked if I'd like a job. That's how I happened to come to Beeton. And that's when I met my wife. She was over here 'on holiday — but we got married and she never went back."

Farming in those days was a tough, chancy business, and purely seasonal, so every winter the Kettles, like

Pa Kettle at home

hundreds of others, had to exist on what little could be picked up by doing odd jobs.

But after a year or two Mr. Kettle went to work at the Beeton grist mill and remained there until he retired at 65. Shortly after he left, the mill was burned down and never re-opened.

"No, I've never had any hankering to live in the city," he said in reply to a question. "I've got to have open spaces — and I've got to have some land."

In Beeton he has plenty of both. There's a wonderful view from every window and plenty of garden space — five lots to be exact — for Mr. Kettle to grow his flowers and vegetables every year.

"I get someone to cut the grass, and in winter to clear the snow," he said, almost as though admitting a weakness, "but apart from that I do all the gardening myself."

Winter is TV-watching time. "It goes on at 11 o'clock every morning and doesn't go off until eleven at night — it's real good company."

Of course there isn't much else to do in Beeton, except take a trip now and then to the community hall and to join other senior citizens in a meeting, then a game of cards.

"There's nothing much to do here. . .this town has no get-up-and-go."

History

Still, for a village with a population of only 965, things aren't too bad. There's a community park, a community hall, and arena — and a hotel — and that's more than many larger places can boast.

Then it has its rather odd history.

The people of Beeton are a fickle lot when it comes to choosing a name for their village. Not only are they fickle, they're inaccurate.

Way back at the beginning the village was named Clarkesville in honor of the first settler — naturally, a fellow with the name of Clarke.

But then along came the War of 1812 and the great Indian chief, Tecumseh, made a name for himself by fighting for the British and indulging in a variety of heroic deeds.

Right away the villagers switched their allegiance and decided to name the village after Tecumseh. But for some reason they added a "t" and made it Tecumseth. At the same time the township in which the village is situated also became Tecumseth Township, a name that still stands today.

Well, for 60 years or so things stood that way, but around the 1870s disgruntled mail deliverers began to complain that two municipalities with the same name were getting them all confused — so once again the village was faced with a decision — what name this time?

It was a stroke of providence that in 1867 a fellow by the name of David Allanson Jones appeared on the scene and began experimenting with bees.

In time he came to be recognized as the pioneer of the North American beekeeping industry and is credited with the start of commercial honey producing.

Editor

By 1874 he was world-renowned and became the first president of the newly organized Ontario Beekeepers' Association. In 1885 he became the founding editor of the Canadian Bee Journal.

Here was a ready-made solution for the villagers — their community became Beetown. Over the years the "w" fell by the wayside and the village became simply Beeton.

Today there is a plaque in honor of Jones in Beeton's Community Park, another in Cornell University, Ithica, N.Y., and still another in London, England.

Bees aside, Beeton has produced several other people who, if they haven't quite achieved the prominence of David Jones, have gone on to become leading figures in their fields.

Kate Aitken, well known writer and broadcaster, was born there, and at one time lived in a huge white frame house, Appledell, that stands in the middle of an extensive apple orchard.

Soon the orchard will be gone, and with it most of the trees, some of which were planted over 50 years ago by the late Jacob Hannah. Probably the house, too, will go under when bulldozers arrive to turn the property into the subdivision that has already been planned.

"I know things have to change," said Mrs. Mary Smith, a writer and sometimes historian who has lived alone in an immaculately kept white frame bungalow since her husband died some years ago, "but I sometimes wonder if progress is really worth while."

It was Mrs. Smith, wading through a huge pile of old newspapers and clippings, who supplied much of the information about Beeton's past.

"But I'm a newcomer here, you understand," she said. "I've only been here 18 years — and that's nothing by Beeton standards." Through the years though, she has learned a lot, partly because she was interested, and partly because she did a lot of writing for the now-defunct Beeton World and more recently for the weekly newspaper in Tottenham, a few miles away.

The Beeton World was founded in 1883 and was published continuously until 1968. The last publisher was the father of Wayne Carleton, the NHL player who was born in Beeton and played minor hockey there.
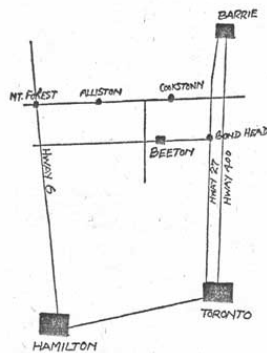
Farmers

Another hockey player who was born and grew up in Beeton is Larry Gould, left-winger for the Hamilton Red Wings. He will finish his stint with the Wings after next season and is expected to go on to bigger and better things.

Beeton is still primarily an agricultural community. Its main street has that dusty half-asleep look, and instinctively you know that it will come alive only on Friday nights and Saturday afternoons when the farmers come into town.

What few industries the village has also reflect the rural scene — Parsons Seed Company, International Nutrition Products Co., Maple Leaf Milling Company. Odd man out is the Borden Metal Products.

A fair variety of stores caters to the needs of the area, but the village's only drug store closed its doors in recent weeks.

"Now if you want a bottle of aspirin," Mrs. Smith said, "you either go out of town — or you go to your catalogue."

BARRIE
MT. FOREST ALLISTON COOKSTOWN
HWY 9 BEETON BOND HEAD
HWY 27 HWY 400
TORONTO
HAMILTON

The last resting place of David Allanston Jones, world-renowned beekeeper for whom Beeton is named.