

# Doncaster Ballyhoo

FOR LAURENTIAN WATERFRONT AND RECREATIONAL PROPERTY

Number 28

Spring 2002

**O**ur twin city, Saranac Lake, New York, is actively cultivating relations with us. Sheila and I visited Saranac Lake during their Winter Carnival and were treated wonderfully, as all the Ste. Agathe visitors have been. Jamie Whidden has organised a monthly French luncheon to help improve their French language skills so that they can communicate with our members when we visit or when they come up here. Dr. Tony Waickman is organising a bicycle adventure for his family and friends that will leave Saranac Lake on August 8<sup>th</sup>, come up through the Adirondack Park, cross the St. Lawrence at Valleyfield then go up the Ottawa River on the Ontario side to cross at Montebello. From there they will head up to St. Jovite then down the Linear Park to join us in Ste. Agathe on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August where we plan to hold a welcoming event. They will then continue along the park before heading off to cross the river again at Oka. Some members of the Friday Wheelers will be joining them (and us) for the part of the trip through our area. We are looking for other bicycle enthusiasts to join us, as well as places for them to stay overnight. Please call if you are interested.

*The Heritage Committee is in the process of taking orders for the monograph on the history of Ste. Agathe being written by Serge Laurin. This new book is designed to fill in the holes in our knowledge of the town's history. Up until 1912 the parish is fairly well documented in the book "Album Historique de la Paroisse de Ste-Agathe-des-Monts, 1849-1912". Unfortunately, it is long out of print, so the period covered in it will be included as well. Serge Laurin is an historian teaching at the Cégep de St. Jérôme and is the author of Histoire des Laurentides among others. The book is offered at \$20.00 per copy or \$100 for a deluxe limited edition. The committee is also looking for donations to help finance the venture, which is paid for in part by the Ministère de la Culture and by the Town of Ste-Agathe-des-Monts. For more information please contact Terry Turcot at (819) 326-2476 or by email at patry.turcot@sympatico.ca.*

The Laurentian Canadian Club will be hosting the Raging Grannies at its annual luncheon at the Manoir Alpine on May 7<sup>th</sup>. It promises to be an entertaining and stimulating affair. The Raging Grannies are a singing group of social activists who make sure they get out and let their feelings be known on a variety of social and environmental issues. Tickets are \$22 for members and \$25 for non-members and all are welcome to join us. For more information or to reserve a ticket, please contact Phil & Pauline Allen at 819-424-5348 or Fran Evans at 819-327-5200.

*Alliance Quebec Upper Laurentians Chapter, The Laurentianers, will be unveiling its new Directory & Map of English Language Services at its Annual General Meeting on April 21, 2002 at 2:00 PM, at St. Francis of the Birds Church Hall in St. Sauveur. Come discover what this community organisation is doing and meet other members of the widely dispersed community. Catharine McKenty, co-author of Skiing Legends and the Laurentian Lodge Club, will be speaking on the importance community building and representatives of other community initiatives will also be there to speak and meet with you. For more information, look in the April edition of Main Street or call community organiser Margaret Ann Adams at 819-321-3943.*

**(819) 326-4963**  
**www.doncaster.ca**



# Osias Renaud

## Mill Hand, Photographer, Model Farmer

From sixteen years of age, in 1905, Osias Renaud worked at the sawmill built by Anaclat Marier on the Tour du Lac. The water flowing out of Lac des Sables drove the mill. It is hard to imagine today that the outflow of the lake could keep 12 men working; twelve families fed. The Parent brothers, who had acquired the mill, installed a new 40 horsepower turbine around that time, and milled flour as well as wood. The Parents also maintained a full general store selling animal feed, hay, flour, groceries, metal work, piping and even dry goods. In the winter, the men would log. Altogether, they kept 55 men working year-round. Eventually, their mill even drove the first electric generator in Ste. Agathe. Today we watch the water run bucolically under the bridge and can only imagine the busy scene that took place here 100 years ago.

When Osias Renaud started working he was paid 50¢ per 10-hour day, but within a few years his salary doubled to one dollar per day. He started off as a clerk but soon began working on the machines. While working there, he milled the wood that would become the benches in the new stone church that was being built on Rue Principale.

By 1910 Ste. Agathe already had a railroad station, hotels, vacation homes, a multitude of businesses, schools, churches and two tuberculosis hospitals were being built. It was a full, real town, almost a city and it swarmed with vacationers coming to all the hotels. In the winter there were bobsleigh and dog sled races, and people were even skiing over the farms. There were 6 men's clothing stores, 4 barbershops, 6 butchers, 3 shoe stores as well as 2 separate shoemakers and 6 milliners. This was in sharp contrast to the town of Osias's recent childhood. As he recalls in his memoirs, only a dozen years before he would go off to school in shoes fashioned from the treated hides of his own family's cattle. The youngsters would skate on these same cowhide shoes with reject blades from the blacksmith tied underneath.

By the time he was twenty, he had saved up a little money and, encouraged by his brother-in-law, he went to Montreal to study photography. When he returned he continued to practice it with friends. Around 1910, he took over a small building on St. Vincent Street, and, living upstairs, he set up a photographic studio on the main floor. The tiny building still stands and is the pet shop called *La Maison des Petits Animaux* today.

The photographic technique that he had mastered involved preparing his own collodion-coated glass plates one by one prior to each shot. By this time George Eastman's Kodak was a popular camera for amateurs, but professional studios used a much larger camera, and these individually prepared glass plates allowed the photographer a lot more control. Osias mastered these techniques and over the next ten years his subjects included Senator David, Edouard Montpetit, Henri Bourassa and Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

During the Great War, the Laurentian Sanitarium became a sprawling military complex housing both TB and gas victims, and business was good for local entrepreneurs, but Osias Renaud closed his business in 1921. Osias was 32 years old, in the prime of life and owner of a successful business, but in April his second child, Yvette, was born and his little studio and upstairs apartment may have begun to feel a bit small. He decided to leave photography behind, and a month after his daughter was born, he acquired the Lee farm in Ivry for \$4500. Years later, when queried by his children about why he had chosen the life of a farmer, he simply responded that man was made to earn his living by the sweat of his brow.

Whatever the reasons he left photography, within a few years the Renaud farm would become Ste. Agathe's Model Farm, designated a *ferme de demonstration* by the Ministry of Agriculture and Osias Renaud would go on to win other honours in his new profession. In a farm produce contest, his farm came in second place behind the farm of Senator Raymond and one can imagine that, if the Senator's farm was in the contest, there were many other wealthy gentleman's farms vying for the honours. In 1935, his milk cows were producing at almost four times the average rate for Quebec cows, and he kept 150 pigs and 350 chickens as well as producing potatoes, cabbage, carrots, hay and oats. He was a member and one-time president of the *Coopérative agricole de Ste-Agathe*, something that is hard to imagine ever existed when we look at the Ste. Agathe we live in today.



# What's it Worth

or

## A Seller's Market? Here?

The local market has rebounded from the years of doldrums that we experienced. Today, the classic waterfront property that is ready to move into is rarely available. As a result, we can tentatively declare ourselves to be in a seller's market, at least on the waterfront.

Together with the low exchange rate for the dollar, low interest rates, a fairly good employment picture, the shyness regarding the stock market, September 11<sup>th</sup>, the demographic shift to the Baby Boomer generation, the quiet politics and the Tremblant phenomenon, we are experiencing a period of confidence in the future, and demand. At the same time, all of those points listed above are encouraging owners to be grateful that they have places, and to hold on to them.

Looking at the long picture, if your plans are to sell the country property over the next five years or so, your best move might be to play to the current market. Night always follows day, and, up here, the market has been dark for a while.

In 1987 to '89, we experienced a strong market period, but sellers who waited for the spring of 1990 ended up selling at reduced prices over the next four years. In 1980, rapidly increasing prices were quickly absorbed in a period of runaway inflation. Lucky vendors got out during the summer of 1976, but who could say that they were smart? Who knew?

A few years ago, it was possible to look at four to six houses before making a purchase decision. In some cases, buyers would base the decision on which vendor accepted their low offer. Many buyers were overwhelmed by the number of choices, and did nothing. The prices that people paid then are simply not available today. Three years ago, we had numerous sales of large waterfront properties on mid- to large-sized lakes with houses that sold under \$200,000. Today we simply don't have them.

The Laurentian market follows its own cycle, especially in the greater Ste. Agathe area. It is hard to predict and has been a buyer's, more often than a seller's, market for most of the last 26 years. Even before that, factors like Expo '67, which kept so many people in Montreal for the summer, had a negative impact on our market. Properties tended to pile up for sale because so many potential buyers were doing something else. It doesn't take much.

Locally, a seller's market can be defined as one where the seller has the confidence that another buyer is out there, nearby, waiting. In a buyer's market, the seller doesn't have that confidence, and knows that the next offer may be a year away, or more.

In summary, if your country house has become more important to you as an investment than as a destination, it is a good time to consider cashing in.

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### Osias Renaud (continued)

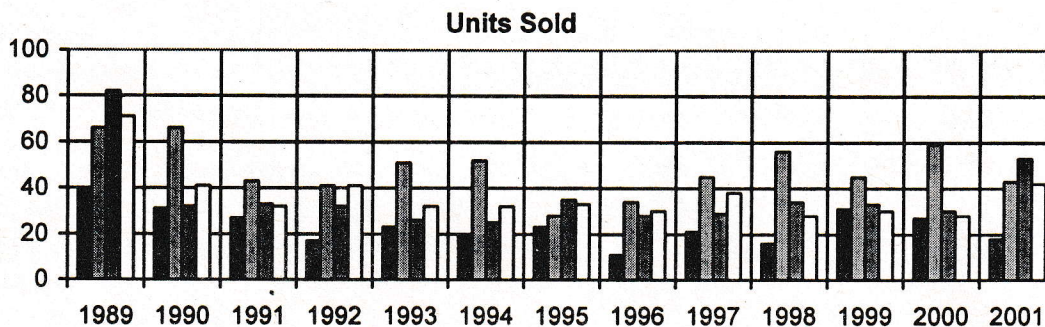
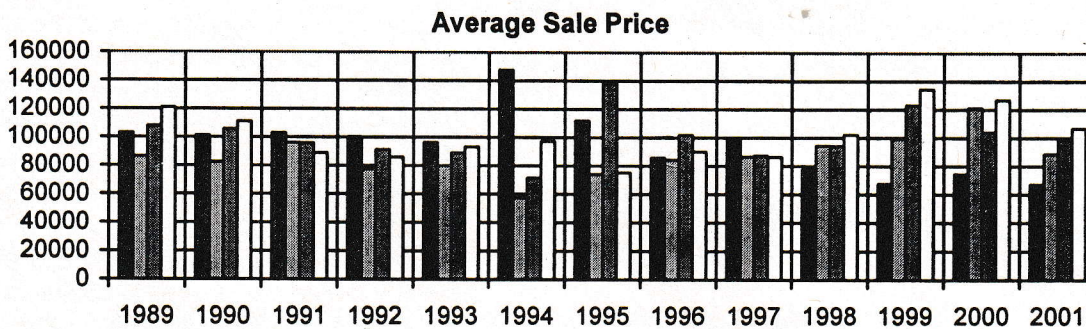
He farmed actively until he was 60, when he sold to his daughter and son-in-law, Yvette and René Lortie, but he continued to live on the farm for some years after. Osias Renaud lived to 93 and his many children and grandchildren still live in Ste. Agathe. A part of his photo collection is stored in the Musée du Québec à Montréal, and a part is in a private collection. His farm belongs to his grandson, a successful local businessman who will surely have a story to share with his own grandchildren.

#### References:

Les Mémoires de Osias Rénaud with special thanks to Mrs. Yvette Renaud Lortie and Normand Lortie.  
A History of Photography by Dr. Robert Leggat



# MARKET TRENDS



The number of sales in the area of study continued to rise steadily during the year 2001 and continues through the first quarter of 2002, although the statistics for this later period are not yet available. The average prices are also showing more continuity. What the graph does not show is that, during the years of a slow market new housing starts have been lagging, creating an imbalance and a need to catch up. This is particularly evident on the waterfront where the demand for land has increased to the point where people are willing to demolish and rebuild just to get a waterfront lot.

If you would like back issues of the Doncaster Ballyhoo, give us a call or drop by. We will happily add the names of your friends or neighbours to our list if they would like to receive their own copy. Please let us know if you change your address. Having an accurate mailing list helps us keep our costs (and waste) down.

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 (Not intended to solicit properties currently listed for sale)