

NUNN / RENNIE LOT 4, CONCESSION 11

Submitted By: Alan James Rennie

Charles Nunn was born in Suffolk, England, in 1855, where he was, according to his obituary which appeared in the Huntsville Forester in 1935, "a large farmer." He was my great grandfather. He came to Oxtongue Lake in 1901 and lived there for most of his life. Why he left his estate in England and came to Canada with his wife and three daughters is not clear. He was an avid sportsman and my father said that he immigrated here because of the hunting. My father remembers him teaching my father how to snare rabbits when he was a little boy.

On October 8, 1907 Charles Nunn purchased 33 acres of land from the Crown in the Township of McClintock, in the County of Haliburton, for the price of \$33.00. This tract of land was the northern part of a broken lot, number 4 in the eleventh concession. According to his deed the southern portion of the broken lot 4, comprised of 26 acres, was granted to Edwin Augustus Lewis on September 19, 1902. These two parcels made up all of lot 4, concession 11 as the remaining 41 of the 100 acres was in Oxtongue Lake itself. It was during this period of time that he built and lived in a very small log "house" measuring approximately 16 ft. x 12 ft. It was a one story building with a shed roof and one window. He and his daughter, May, my paternal grandmother can be seen standing in front of his house, surrounded by flowers and vegetable gardens in 1907.



Charles & May Nunn, not sure if wife or daughter (both named May) on hill behind community centre - 1907

Charles Nunn and his daughter May, at Oxtongue, 1907

During these years he became a close friend and eventually a business partner with a Mr. Charles Harlock. It is likely that they met in Toronto and came up to Oxtongue together. According to Mr. Harlock, they "were able to grow all kinds of vegetables for the lumber camps, and when they were done the tourists were glad to get the fresh vegetables." According to my father, he did not charge pretty young ladies who stopped at his stand. He was experienced in the raising of both fruits and vegetables and in the management of farm animals. My father remembers his grandfather's grafted trees at Oxtongue that had different types of fruit growing on them. Once, because of his extensive horticultural knowledge, he was offered a position working at the botanical gardens in Queenston. He considered the thought of working for wages an insult. Mr. Harlock also stated that "Mr. Nunn was a good help to the settlement (Oxtongue) having handled livestock in the Old Country."

On February 23, 1922, Charles Nunn was granted an additional 100 acres, that being all of concession 11 lot 3, by the Crown in accordance with the "Public Lands Act of 1913". There was no charge for this piece of property. Apparently the Crown was encouraging British citizens to settle in Canada. During the intervening years between 1907 and 1922 he built a large, two storey wood frame house near or possibly in back of the present Helsel's store where he lived with his wife and three daughters, Dorothy (Doll), Ethel, and May. May Nunn, later to become May Rennie, was my paternal grandmother.

James Rennie, son of Archibald Rennie and Elizabeth Angus, was born in Glasgow, Scotland on Aug 12, 1883. Although not a lot is known about his early years, it is known that he played tennis well and was an accomplished piano player. His apparent genteel upbringing was to change dramatically when he came to Canada at the turn of the century. As a young man, James Rennie was apprenticed to the firm of Mapin & Webb in Glasgow as a silversmith. A good portion of his duties involved polishing silver items made by the firm. Due to the continual exposure to polishing compound (jewelers' rouge) he developed a respiratory ailment and was forced to leave the company. He left in good standing and was given a letter of introduction and recommendation for employment to one of their branches in Toronto. For an unknown reason he did not gain or seek employment with this firm. In 1912 he met May Nunn, my

grandmother, who was living in Toronto with her mother and two sisters. From there they moved to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan where they married on July 12, 1912. Here they homesteaded for three years in a sod house on the prairie. Their first daughter, Dorothy, was born in July of 1915. My grandfather was a tall man for the times and extremely strong. When seeking employment he was asked if he could drive a team. Being familiar with horses used on his family's property in Scotland, he answered in the affirmative and accepted a job as a teamster delivering fuel oil. Sometime between July, 1915 and January, 1917 James and May Rennie moved to Oxtongue where May's father was living. He built a log home on part of his father-in-law's 33 acres where his second and third daughters, Jean and Ethel and one son John were born. It was here that my father, John James Rennie grew up and went to school in the one-room log school house with his three sisters until 1923. While his family lived at Oxtongue my grandfather made his living working as a lumberjack in "the Park" during the winters. During the summers he was the fire ranger at Oxtongue. He also guided fishing and hunting trips in Algonquin Park.

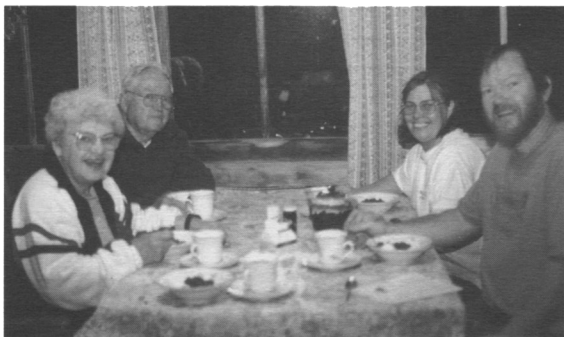
Many of the people whom my grandfather took on fishing expeditions were wealthy Americans. One of them, the superintendent of the Niagara Power Authority, offered him a job working for the power plant in 1923. Seeing an opportunity to make a better living for his family, he left with them for the United States. The log home he built and two acres, on which it sat, were sold by Charles Nunn on July 9, 1923 to a Ms. G. Winifred Armstrong for \$750.00.

On April 12, 1932, at the age of 77, Charles Nunn sold the remaining 31 acres of the original 33 acre parcel to his son-in-law James McClymont, husband of his daughter Ethel, for \$100.00. Here they built a cottage where they spent the summers while maintaining their year round residence in Toronto. Although my grandmother, May Rennie, visited her sister at her cottage at Oxtongue she loved the property where she raised her young family and longed for a place of her own. In 1945 her husband, James Rennie, copied Ethel's cottage exactly.

Charles Nunn died in late August of 1935. He left his three daughters, Ethel, Dorothy and May the 100 acre parcel, concession 11 lot 3. On December 16, 1935 the three sisters deeded the property over to Charles Harlock for \$15.00. On November 30, 1935, Mr. Harlock signed a lumber contract with a Mr. Albert Hawke, which would allow timber to be removed from that property within 5 years for \$50.00—apparently 16 days before he owned the deed to it!

On May 17, 1948, James McClymont, son-in-law of Charles Nunn, sold 1.03 acres of the remaining 31 acres to the Trustees of the School Section No. 2 for \$100.00. He also sold an unknown number of acres to Frank Hubbel (the mill property), part to William G. Keown for \$30.00 and the remainder to Donald Seal on October 28, 1950 for \$4,000.00. This latter piece is the property on which Ethel McClymont's cottage stood and is now owned by Ms. Susan Seal Beemer. It was on this same date, October 28, 1950, that Donald Seal deeded a small piece of the former McClymont property, and a right-of-way to it, to James and May Rennie, my grandparents. The cottage was enjoyed by them, their four children and many grandchildren throughout the 50s and 60s. It was our summer Mecca. In 1969, after the deaths of James and May, the property was passed on to the four siblings. Due to a lack of interest in the property by the three sisters, my father John James Rennie purchased it on August 15, 1969.

I have been coming up to Oxtongue to enjoy its peace, solitude and natural environment since 1950. It is my father's fondness for the place of his birth and his love of nature combined with teachings of park naturalists that draw me back every year. It is here I played on the mill beach and listened to the steam whistle signal noon. It is here I learned to swim and paddle a wooden canoe. It is here that I first became fascinated with birds. It is here, at the cottage, that my wife Barbara and I now spend much of our summers. It is here that we search for simple things. The cottage remains as my grandfather built it—uninsulated, with no electricity or running water. It is our



Jack Rennie with wife Dorothy on left. Alan Rennie with wife Barbara on right enjoying tea at Nunn/Rennie homestead (now Tapawingo Place) - 1997

refuge from telephones, televisions, computers and all other forms of modern technology. Our music comes from the loons and the wood thrushes; our entertainment from the chipmunks and the red squirrels. Our time is occupied by exploring logging trails, watching birds and picking raspberries. In the evenings we paddle to the dam to watch the young beavers play, or read by lantern light, or talk with friends. It is a place to relax, rethink and reenergize. This cottage, the place that my father loves so well, draws my wife and me back every year.

Richard Harlock, brother of Charles Harlock, lived with my great grandfather, Charles Nunn, for two years during the early part of the century. Many of the feelings that I have for Oxtongue are expressed by him in the following

tribute, which appeared in the Huntsville Forester on Thursday, October 17, 1935:

A Tribute to the Late Charles Nunn

The Editor,
The Huntsville Forester,

Dear Sir:

I was very much grieved to read, in your issue of August 29th, of the passing of Mr. Charlie Nunn, of Oxtongue, for to him I owe a debt of deep gratitude for having made it possible for me to discover how many simple pleasures one may find by living a life more true to nature than the fevered existence led by the majority of people in this age of speed.

I have heard people say that it is selfish to live in solitude in one of the earth's quiet places but, during my two years' stay with my old friend at Oxtongue, I found the life very satisfying, giving as it did a clearer knowledge of the things which really matter in this old world of ours. Surely there is some praise due to the old pioneers and settlers who opened trails and made things easier for those who followed in their wake. Nature is none too generous to those who first invade her sanctuaries, and those who have had the way prepared for them know little of the privations of their predecessors. During my stay in the woods, I remember, we took little notice of the printed calendar, which roughly divides the year into four parts separated by holidays, but we did take a very keen interest in nature's almanac. In the early days of the year we looked forward to Spring as the time when the mournful cry of the loon would let us know that the ice was leaving the lake; the maple sap would shortly be rising, and that we must not delay in sending our seed orders to the florists. As Summer approached we began to think of digging, fishing, mosquitoes and black flies; and as Autumn drew near we knew we must get busy making preparations for the longest, and in many ways the most trying season of the lot – Winter. It was thus that, for many long years, my friend and erstwhile companion lived his life, nor desired any other, and his dearest wish, had such a thing been possible, would have been to rest among the beautiful surroundings he loved so well.

In conclusion I will quote a verse which I think might have been appreciated by one to whom the simple life made such a strong appeal:

In the mesh of the world's great snare
He heard the call of the wild
He struggled forth, his freedom gained
And lived once more – a child.
Then deep within the forest shade
He read life's open book anew,
And from the story of each page
A deep contentment grew.

Yours faithfully,
Richard Harlock.

Respectfully submitted,
Alan James Rennie
June, 2000



James Rennie, Charles Harlock, Charles Nunn, Carolyn White
(Siegfried) - 1930's



Charles Harlock looks like tobacco,
grown on Mill property - 1930's