

THE WILLIAMS STOPPING PLACE

Submitted by Julien Bulmer.



DIRECTIONS

- In the village of Foresters Falls.

HISTORY

The story is written as told by Mrs. Maurice Bulmer, nee Harriet Rubina Williams, in 1991 at the age of 92.



“I vividly remember, when we were very small children, our mother was always very busy cooking and cleaning, not only for our own family but also for the many people who stayed overnight at our stopping place in the little village of Foresters Falls. Our farm was situated in the village in such a way that the house was on the main street. It was a large house and my parents, Robert and Harriet Williams, saw this as an opportunity to help supplement their farm income so they opened a stopping place there about the year 1900. It was well situated because the Main Street in Foresters Falls was and still is a part of the Government Road .”

“The Government Road, built in 1852 was opened as a through road the entire distance from Bytown (Ottawa) to Mirimichi (Pembroke). Jason Gould's transportation between these points in his day was a wonderful achievement by land and water but in the name of progress a land road was needed as an alternate means of transportation. After this road was opened the traffic on it was terrific. Horse drawn vehicles were the way to travel and they would take three or four days to go from Ottawa to Pembroke and vice versa. Stopping places were opened all along the road at intervals of about a day's journey as a place for travellers and their horses to stay overnight as they journeyed overland on the west side of the Ottawa River. We do not know how many stopping places might have been established on this particular road but a guess of about fifty on the full length of the road might be close according to Mr. Herb Ross who was clerk of the Township of Ross from 1952 to 1972 and wrote the book History of the Township of Ross, which was published by the Zion Line Women's Institute in 1984.”

“Many travelers used our stopping place and I would like to tell you about some of them. When the lumbermen from the Shawville area were on their way to the lumber camps they found that one days journey from their home was about Foresters Falls, and a good place to stay for the night was at the Williams Stopping Place.”

Meals included beans, pickles, home made bread and butter, pie, cake and cookies. All this for 25¢ a person! There would also be a charge for the accommodations and feed for the horses. Some of the men slept in the stable with the horses for different reasons. Some didn't have the extra money for a bed, and sometimes, in the spring coming back from the lumber camps some of the men would have body lice and some of them were conscientious enough to sleep in the barn so they wouldn't bring the lice into the house.

In the house there was a large room which we called 'The Bar', where the guests would visit. Sometimes there would have music, violins, mouth organs and singing were enjoyed by all. No intoxicating beverages were served but mother would very often bring in tea and cookies for them.

There was a big jovial Irish lad who came from Montreal once a year, bringing with him webs of material which were set up in 'The Bar'. His name was Mr. Flannigan and he would sell the material to the people of the community who would make a special trip into the village to buy some material from him. It was often sold in suit lengths. A suit length was a pre-cut piece of material of sufficient length to make a suit for a man of average size. Peter Danlin, the tailor in Foresters Falls bought his material from Flannigan, Mr. Danlin had a tailor shop where he employed two of the local girls to help him and they were busy sewing the year round. I was a small child at that time but I remember Flannigan well for his good stories and jokes.

The people who took traveling shows from place to place putting on a show and selling their medicines 'that would cure all aches and pains' would stay at our stopping place. There was at one time a Mrs. Jimminy who sold all kinds of 'cure all's'. She set up a competition for the most popular baby. Tickets were sold and the baby who sold the most tickets won the competition which was quite an honour! I didn't win, there were no real prizes, just the honour. Later we realized that Mrs. Jimminy was the real winner, she pocketed the money from the sale of the tickets.

Then there were the Pack Peddlers who travelled from house to house, farm to farm selling their wares. They needed a place to eat and sleep and used the stopping places quite often when they were working in the community.

Tragedy struck our home in 1906 when father died. I don't ever remember him not being ill, but we were never told why he was sick. I was only seven but can even now recall the sadness of

our home at that time. We were very fortunate, however, that mother was able to carry on the work of running the stopping place in order to make a living for herself and her children.

There were other people who used the stopping place. Wagons or sleighs would come down from Pembroke to Jamieson's lime kiln on the Grant Settlement Road for a load of lime. They often stopped at the stopping place for meals and sometimes over night accommodations.

When the C.N.R. went through this part of the country in 1914 some of the surveyors and workers boarded at the Williams Stopping Place. There was a group of 'foreigners', probably Italians who got the rough jobs in the building of the railroad and were called 'Degos' by the residents. They also boarded there.

The Councillors would come for their dinner at noon once a month to deal with the business of Ross Township. I think they enjoyed coming to our house for their meal.

Hockey teams who came across the river from Quebec to play a game with the Foresters Falls team would ask mother to make a supper for them after the game. She usually served them home made beans baked in a huge black iron pot and home made bread and butter. These hockey games with supper lasted into the 1930's.

Now you understand why stopping places were necessary in the days when horses were used as the fastest way to travel before trains and motor cars made traveling easier and faster. I consider we had a good way of life in our little village when I was young. We had our fun times but we also had our work to do. We carried in wood and water and cleaned the lamps.