

Author sheds light on local history in new book



By Nate Smelle

A three-year long labour of love came to a close over the Thanksgiving weekend as co-author and editor Barbara Gunter-Anderson released her book *Flames of the Past*. Originally authored by her father Rev. Samuel Gunter who is now deceased, *Flames of the Past* takes the reader back in time to the mid to late-1800s to see the world through the eyes of the book's original author, her father Rev. Samuel Gunter. Growing up as the son of Ephraim Gunter, who was one of four brothers to first settle in Gunter in 1858, her father's memoirs provide the reader with a glimpse at life in North Hastings in a very different and difficult time in its history. When Gunter-Anderson's son Sam began retyping her father's memoirs with the intention of publishing them, she decided to take up the project as well.

?I had poems of my fathers and discovered more and decided to publish the poems along with some of the early memoirs to make it more enjoyable for the reader.?

Gunter-Anderson said she spent a great deal of time trying to find the right pictures for all the poems and making sure that I included some from Ontario. With friends still living in the Gunter area, Barbara Anderson says she still feels a strong connection to the community here in North Hastings. Over the years she and her family have returned to the area many times to keep this connection strong.

?The Gunters have always had close family ties in this area as well in New Brunswick and we would visit all our relatives in the area and miss the ones that passed away before our next visit,? she said.

For generations her family has remained close with some of the other families who originally settled in the area such as the Applebys, the Kemps, the Mcraes and the Potters. Although she now lives in New York she says it always feels like a homecoming when she returns to the area for a visit.

Both my grandparents on my father's side are in the Gunter cemetery along with some of his brothers and other relatives," Gunter-Anderson said. "My father's brother Harve was well known in the area. A trip here would always include Weslemkoon Lake to visit relatives there."

This past weekend she and her son Sam kept the tradition alive, revisiting Weslemkoon Lake as well as the place where the school once was, the cemetery at Gunter Lake, and the old Potter farm while promoting her new book *Flames of the Past*. Her first event in North Hastings was held at the Old School House and Tea Room in Ormsby on Friday, Oct. 10 where she signed copies of the book and also read from it to the audience. On Oct. 11 Gunter-Anderson headed over to the Bancroft Public Library for another meet and greet with her readers. Throughout the writing process she has learned many great lessons from her father's stories.

"The greatest lesson I learned from my father's stories was that we are all lucky to live in the times we live; and to be thankful for the hardships our forefathers endured to forge a good life for us. Being a person who loves to read; designing *Flames of the Past* gave me a greater appreciation of authors and all they go through to create written word for us to enjoy."

The struggles faced by Gunter-Anderson's family and other settlers of this area at that time were seemingly endless. Working out of town, weather and wildlife are a few of the major obstacles for these pioneers to adjust to. The long commute just to travel for food staples that they couldn't hunt or grow was another issue for them to deal with. Luckily for them they had helpful neighbours. In many cases if it wasn't for the Algonquin people already living here many more settlers would not have survived. According to Gunter-Anderson's father the Algonquin were friendly and generous people always willing to lend a hand. At one point, an Algonquin man named White Duck lived with her family for awhile and taught my grandmother how to identify, harvest and use many of the native herbs and plants as medicine.

"White Duck was an Indian doctor who spent much of his time with us," said her father. "The old doctor was a very kind Indian. We as children liked him very much. White Duck taught my Mother the use of herbs as medicine. Mother became an expert herbalist, and often took us children to the woods in the fall to gather wild herbs and roots, such as princess pine, tansy, wild onion, cherry bark, gold tread, and bone-set."

For more information on *Flames of the Past*, or to buy a copy of the book contact flamesofthepast@gmail.com.