

The Spicer Family History, The Granite Stone Farmhouse and The Rock of Ages.

Note: Marlean and Wayne spoke to the CDHS on May 15th, 2023. Below is a summary of Marlean's presentation. Several photos were shown, a sampling is included here.

Special thanks to the Cloyne and District Historical Society. Ken Hook for his time and kindness with the slide show. Shirley Sedore for never giving up on having our story told. Thank you to Elaine and Ralph Lawlor, my father-in-law Wayne McLean, my husband Gord and many others who have shown an interest in our Family history.

A wise member of CDHS once told me, I had a story to tell, Ian Brummel

Margaret Ann Vance married Solomon Spicer and they had 9 children. Please see the hand scribed Rock of Ages.



Some dates are missing because Henry passed away in 1955 at the age of 62.

Including our boys there are six generations connected to our farm. Seven generations if you include Solomon Sr. Where do we begin?

2023! This year marks the houses centennial. This is the perfect time to tell a story. Our story is dedicated to the memory of Reta May McLean (Spicer) who would have celebrated her centennial if she was still with us. Grandma often spoke of her love for the farm and how happy she would be, to see the farm returned to family. No one expected that to happen.



The farm was Grandma's favourite place, where she spent her young life, a good life. A spoiled life. However later life was hard. Reta was the only child of Madolin Spicer (Sedore) and Henry Spicer. She grew up in the farmhouse with her Grandparents; Margaret Ann Spicer (Vance) and Solomon Spicer and her father Henry Spicer.

Reta was barely two when she lost her mother to Diabetes. Grandma used to tell stories of her mother asking for water. Her Grandmother had told her. She was always thirsty. However back then they didn't know how to treat diabetes and withheld water or too much of it.

Grandma was born in 1923 when the house was completed. It took 3 years to place each 2-foot-thick solid granite stone, in the 2-story house. That is why the house is hand scribed 1923, upon its completion.

When we think of history we are intrigued. For myself, I love old photos, old documents, and old newspapers. When I was deciding on a format for today, I realized how much information (data/genealogy) I had. My goal was to make the presentation interesting and fun for all of you. The old photos and documents (drivers license and automobile ownership) and the handwritten letter from Henry Spicer to his daughter Reta will help to form our story.

I will aim to take the additional information in my possession and provide as much as possible to the Historical Society.

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO 1925

MOTOR VEHICLE PERMIT No. **234490**

Issued for the Motor Vehicle described as follows:

Make of Vehicle	Style	Serial Number	H.P.	Fee Pd.
<i>Chev.</i>	<i>Truck</i>	<i>44230</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>\$12</i>
	Model No.	Motor Number	No. of Cyl.	
	<i>470</i>			

To *Solomon Jones*
Flint. ONT.

Toronto, *April 11* 1925 Geo. S. Henry,
Minister of Highways

(See Instructions on other side)

Countersigned.....

THIS LICENCE MUST BE CARRIED BY OPERATOR. NOT VALID TO OPERATE A MOTOR VEHICLE AS A CHAUFFEUR

MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATOR'S LICENCE

1955 **Nº 882531**

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

GEO. H. DOUCETT, MINISTER OF HIGHWAYS

ISSUED PURSUANT TO THE HIGHWAY TRAFFIC ACT AND VALID ONLY WHEN SIGNED BY THE LICENSEE. THIS LICENCE MUST BE PRESENTED FOR RENEWAL.

	R	1954 LICENCE NO. 818342	APPLICATION FOR 1956 RENEWAL ON REVERSE HEREOF
NOTIFY DEPARTMENT IN WRITING IF YOU CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS	O OR R	SIGNATURE OF OPERATOR	
NAME HENRY SPICER			
STREET AND NUMBER OR LOT, CON. & TWP. 22-4 KAL			
POST OFFICE FLINTON			SEX M AGE 61
CITY, TOWN OR VILLAGE			HEIGHT 5'8"
COUNTY ADD			
L.24	OFFICE Nº 121	DATED Mar 3	COUNTERSIGNED <i>W. Dickell</i> REGISTRAR OF MOTOR VEHICLES

We purchased the property in 2017. A power greater than us meant for us to be here. I still get goose bumps thinking about it.

We raised our family South of Marmora. We listed our custom log house for sale with the intentions of purchasing a farm and more land for our teenage boys. Our home sold quickly (in March) with a long closing in June. We thought we had ample time. The kids would finish the school year. From there we placed several offers on farms around Madoc, Marmora and Tweed.

In 2017 the market was hot with bidding wars and closings with no home inspections. I had to view many properties alone as my husband was working out of Province. We were down to about a month before closing and we hadn't found a home.

Then came a phone call from my father-in-law, Wayne. He said Pauline Brown had contacted him and the Brown estate was wanting to sell the property to family. They didn't want it to be turned into a hunting camp and they didn't want the stone house to be destroyed or demolished. There was no real estate agent involved. It was a private deal. My experience as a law clerk came into play. We took an Agreement of Purchase and Sale, and we signed the deal in the summer kitchen of the house, sworn to secrecy until the deal had closed.



The stone house is as solid and square as the day it was built. Solomon was a stone mason and Henry a master carpenter. Our building inspector was impressed by how well the house was made including the staircase and the fact that the upper original wood floors didn't creak.

To this day my husband is surprised that I went for the deal considering the condition of the property.

We had to live in a trailer on site from July to Christmas Eve. Our log home deal closed a few weeks earlier, so we had to put everything in storage. We parked the trailer at a local campground and then moved it to the farm when the deal closed. There was a lot of extra work involved. We immediately took out the proper building permits and got to work. Our boys started school that September from the trailer. That was also a challenge with 2 young men. There were many laughs and some tears, mine! It was not easy!



We left a larger home with 4 bedrooms and 4 bathrooms, 2 living rooms and a massive kitchen. Here we were crammed into a small trailer with little to no personal space. We had to haul water from our neighbours. The Lax family who was close personal friends were always kind in offering water. My son would fire up the old diesel International tractor and go for a water run down the road.

The modern amenities and luxuries that we all enjoy didn't exist. There was no usable washroom. We didn't know if there was septic or water. The plumbing was literally garden hoses inside the house. Ted Brown, a local teacher at one point and one of the founding members of Lions of Land O'Lakes was said to be creative in his doings. That was evident in the house.

The stone house itself was never plumbed. There were extension cords everywhere, a leaky roof, no conventional heating but exposed copper tubing, little to no insulation. The property was a disaster. My Father-in-law had warned me that it was something like a scene from a horror movie. He told his son to prepare Mar.

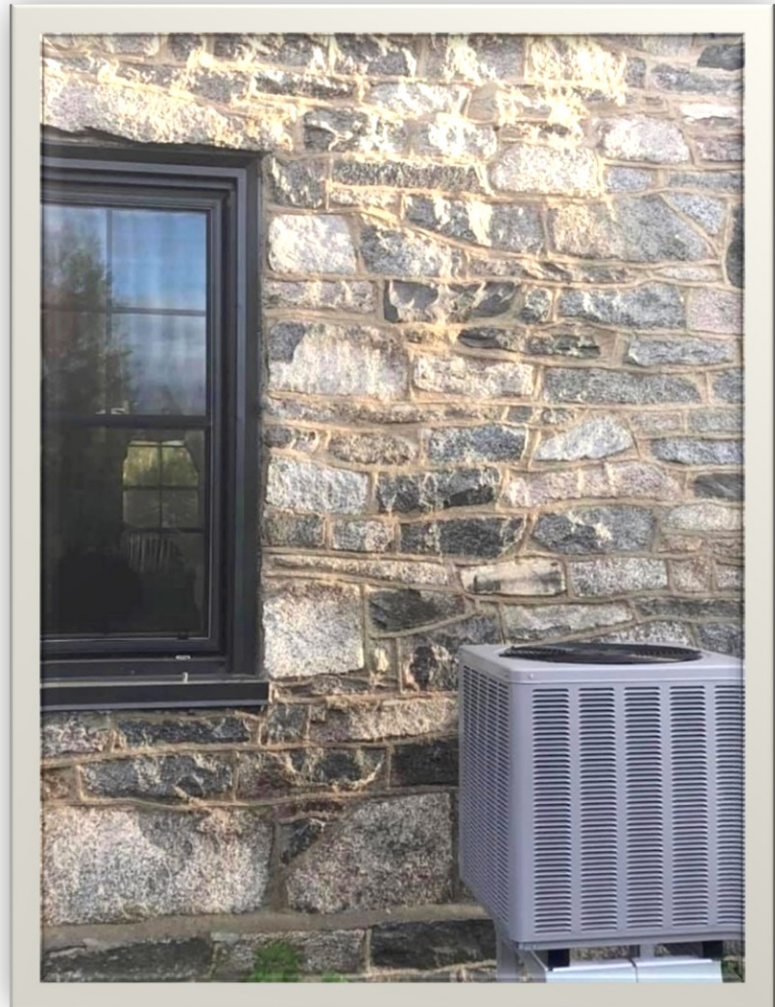
Amid all the chaos of the surroundings and the reality of the situation and condition of the property I fell in love. Each day when I see the stone work I fall in love all over again.

Those who have seen the stonework are amazed in the beauty. Our insurance company sent several people out to inspect the stone and retrieve a piece of the mortar. Our home was inspected by stone masons who had years of experience with Parliament buildings and government buildings but none of them had seen a solid granite stone house. Granite is more difficult to work with than limestone and other stones. Also, much heavier.

The home had been abandoned for 2 years. Mrs. Brown and her son Robert had passed away. There was estate taxes and property taxes owing. There was no insurance on the property. The garburator had mangled some trees at the end of the driveway which was quite fitting to the state of the rest of the property.

The Estate wanted the home/property to return to Family and for that we are forever grateful. If that grand gesture and that call hadn't happened, we probably wouldn't be here. No mortgage company was going to touch the property. We were in the right position in our life, at the right time for this to happen. Grandma would be so proud knowing that her Grandson was able to buy back her family farm. I get emotionally thinking about it. When my father-in-law used the stairs and the handrails for the first time, he was overcome by emotion and tears. He looked at me and said "My Mother used these stairs". There is a stain in the corner of the hardwood floor where a pickling crock sat. We have the crock and the antique gingerbread clock.

Almost 6 years later and we are far from done. Everything takes twice as long costs twice as much especially when you are dealing with a Century home. We have tackled all major items;



plumbing and wiring, well and septic, windows and doors, roof, heating. The first winter in the house was cold. We had a wood stove in the basement and a cookstove wood stove on the main floor. We cooked all the meals on the cookstove, but I was used to that. I had done so for 20 years. On cold nights we had to feed the fire every few hours. There were times like during bug season that we would have to use a mosquito coil indoors or be eaten alive. That changed after we spray foam insulated the entire house including basement.

While most people were happy to see that the home and property were no longer abandoned and had returned to family others didn't understand how we obtained it. There was bitterness,

jealousy and demands. I went from a welcoming homeowner to one that hide a few times hoping they would go away quickly. Even now we get messages like, you are living in my family's house! The antiques don't belong to you! That house was promised to me! There were even a few threats of violence.



I love old buildings including my barn which I pray for daily. Our barn is dated 1914. At some point someone decided to pour a cement floor on the upper level of the barn. The barn was in a poor state when we obtained it. I love my barn and pray that it stays. It has made it over 100 years now. The old sugar shack remains, the dry shed and the old farm equipment. My husband and boys made the mistake of telling me that they found old farm equipment in the woods. Trees had grown up through them and they were not easily accessed. At first they told me that they couldn't get them out but with some pleading they salvaged them for me. We have them on display. When I stand in my favourite place in the yard, I can look up and take it all in, the farm equipment and the barn. I know it was a lot of work for my fellas but they bring me so much joy knowing they did that for me. I don't like to part with much from the farm.

While the house didn't come with modern amenities it came with appliances, the portable toilet and the ringer washer were unlike any I have ever seen.



The large solid piece of granite stone above the front door was hand scribed to read; 1923 Built and Owned by Solomon Spicer. When the property was sold out of family one owner tried to erase that history. You can see in the photos provided that part of Solomon and the Spicer name has been removed. The story about that stone is that Henry was going to milk the cow and told his Dad (Solomon) to wait for help, to set the heavy stone. Solomon set the stone alone and gave himself a hernia. That was the last stonework he did.



There are many stories to tell in the Spicer family history and I hope that other stories will follow mine.

My story is the focus of family. When we are young and raising our families, we have a school family and sports family. As our kids grow, leave home and we age, we understand the importance of service clubs and community and organizations like The Historical Society. Those become our extended families and we see that come full circle among those who attend funeral services like that of Henry Spicer and the names that appear in his service book.

Two Brothers settled in the area.

Solomon and David; both sons of Solomon Senior. David's lineage is strong with family owning the farm on Hwy. 41 and what is referred to as The Spicer Flats. The historical society touched on that lineage, there was an article written by The Frontenac News in 2010 entitled "An Utterly Friendless Spec", with reference to Rhena Pollard Cole and Charles Dickens and a CBC special "Fame Comes to Harlowe" There are many living descendants of David and perhaps they have some stories to share. Thank you to the Historical Society and Marg Axford for this story.

The Rock Of Ages connects many families;

Vance, Sedore, Clark, Wood, Tebo Thibault, Bryden, Lawlor, McLuckie and many others.

James the oldest son of Solomon and his wife Jane had a large family. They owned the farm at the end of Freeburn Road where the road ends. Their lineage remains strong. Lawlor's camp is there and still enjoyed by family. There are many stories to tell, and I hope they will follow mine.

The Spicer men were stone masons and master carpenters. Masters of their trades, definitive craftsmen, and work that you don't see anymore. The work of Solomon is evident in many other homes and barns within the Township. Solomon often hand scribed his initials and dated the buildings. I am working on a follow up to this that I hope to share with the historical society.

My father-in-law Wayne will now read the handwritten letter that his grandfather Henry wrote to his mother Reta.

Flinton Dec. 17th 1904

Dear Daughter Peta:
I got your letter last night and was
glad to hear from you and that
you are all well I sure worry about
be sure and take care of your
if I was down to Belleville last
day that was the 11th and I saw
Mie she wanted me to go down
her place and stay a week but
is too cold and stormy to be
any so far: I would sure like
to go to Ashawa and have Xmas
dinner with you but you know
there is no place for me to stay
Mie's house is all filled and you
not in your own home so I
I wrote until you get in your
home we sure got lots of snow
now it snowed and flew all
yesterday last Tuesday they didnt get the
road open to Flinton until 11

yesterday and it snowed some more
last night if the wind blowed it will
fill the road more than ever but I
have a pair of snow shoes and I
have enough - chuck in for the
winter I got 50 lbs pork from
Harvey Bryden and 60 lbs Beef
from Daymond I canned most of
the beef and a bag of potatoes and
some turneps and cabbage and onions
and a basket of beenes and when I
was in Tweed I seen about tickets
for canned milk and I go to Flinton
once a week and get Bread and there
is about 50 lbs of flour here I
got a box yeast cakes if I get
snow bound I can bake Bread
So dont you worry about me I have
a cord and a $\frac{1}{2}$ of wood in the kitchen
and 3 in the wood house and lots
more to cut piled in the wood house