

**Cloyne and District Historical Society Talk
February 17, 2025**

**The History of the Northbrook Hotel (1915-1994) by Cindy and Elaine Bolton
Part 1 of 3 PDF Documents.**

Acknowledgements

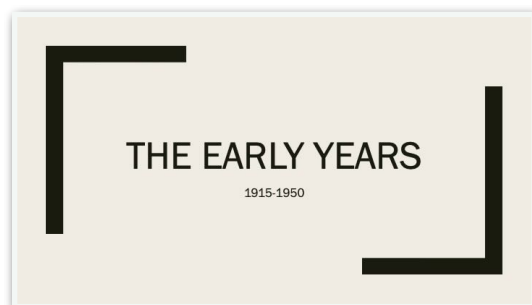
Thank you to the Cloyne and District Historical Society for inviting us to share this history of the Northbrook Hotel.

We dedicate this talk to all the hardworking men and women who have worked at the Northbrook Hotel over the years.

Photo credits: the Bolton Family Album, the Mary Lloyd Johnson collection, Dennis Forbes and Ken Hook.

Before beginning, please note that we won't be naming names in many of the stories but will say that "if you know, you know".

The early years (1915-1950)



The Northbrook Hotel was built around 1915 by Lulu and Casper Thompson who also had built and operated the general store on the lot to the south of the hotel. They sold to Hugh Saul and the property changed hands several times over a few years operating as a Tourist Hotel until 1934 when George Both bought it and obtained the first beer license.

The earliest photo we have of the Hotel is from 1929. The next photo shows the general store next door. These photos from the 20s, 30s and 40s show the original building at the north end of the existing building. We think the photos are in order. The later photo shows more advertising signs on the building.

Much of what we know from those days is based on oral history shared by Mrs. Thompson. She told us that a dentist used to



Our earliest photo - 1929



Casper & Lulu Thompson's Store on the lot south of the Hotel

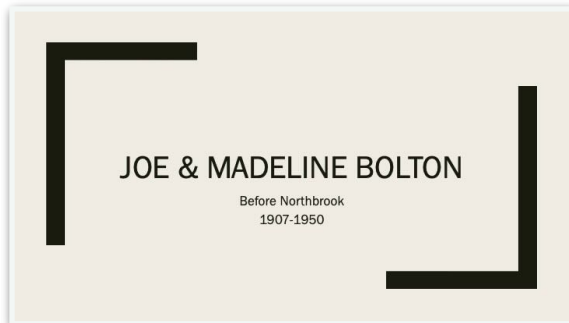


1930s postcard when the Hotel operated as a Tourist Hotel



set up once a month in the Hotel Dining room and a local doctor rented a room upstairs.

Around 1940 a small log cabin was moved to the lot north of the hotel. It was set on a basement and a kitchen built on in front. George McNeil was the owner at that time and he and his family lived in the cabin. The cabin property was retained by the McNeil family when the hotel sold to Ted and Vern Cournyea. The Cournyea brothers would later sell the Hotel to Joe Bolton in late 1950 (with the deal closing in February 1951).



Joe & Madeline Years (the early years)

Joseph (Joe) Bolton was born in England in 1907 and

was orphaned around 1913 just before WW1. He and his older brother were sent to an orphanage and their younger sister Mary was taken in by relatives. This photo was taken of the children just before they were separated. Joe is the small boy in the front. In 1923, Joe was sent to Canada as a British Home Child. We found his records in the Canadian Home Child database and learned that he travelled on the ship SS Montcalm leaving from Liverpool enroute to the Port of Montreal. He travelled to an Orphanage in Ottawa and eventually ended up as a labourer on a farm near Campbellford. He never spoke of those years but like many British Home Children, he was ill-treated and ran away as soon as he could to get a factory job. Being an entrepreneur at heart, he established a tourist supply business near Campbellford.



Bolton children before they were separated 1913. Joe is the boy in at front

Madeline Bibby Bolton was born in 1912 as the second daughter of a hardscrabble farm family in Seymour Township near Campbellford. She is shown in this photo in the front row on the left. She learned the value of hard work and ingenuity early in life. In the early 30s, her parents lost the family farm in the Great Depression, and she used her wages and savings to buy a house in Campbellford for her parents and younger siblings. Madeline was engaged at one time to a friend of Joe's and upon hearing of their breakup, Joe visited Madeline to do some relationship building and get them back together. When it was obvious that

wouldn't happen, he started courting her himself. Madeline always reflected that it was a good thing as the first fellow was a bit boring and had no backbone and that she and Joe were well matched. John said his mother never stood up to Joe but was known to vent her frustration on unsuspecting customers, salesmen, and on more than one occasion, a liquor inspector. If anyone here knew Madeline, she was known to have a bit of a temper!



The Bibby Family circa 1922 - Madeline is front row left with the white collar.



Bolton business on the Trent River, Hastings

Joe and Madeline married in 1937 setting up house and business on the English Line near Campbellford. Gram said they returned from their honeymoon trip with \$1.37 to their names.

In the war and post war years, the Boltons owned a business on the Trent River in Hastings. Joe suffered terribly from arthritis which was made worse by the dampness

of the river. He was on the lookout for a new enterprise.



Joe and Madeline (1951-1965)

Joe and Madeline had always worked as a team, but it is said that Joe bought the Northbrook Hotel without telling Madeline until the deal was done. In a courteous gesture he sent away for a mail order course in Hotel

Management for her! We still have copies of these manuals with his handwriting and notes in the margin. We thought this excerpt from one for the housekeeping staff was quite funny:

"No employee is permitted to decide that the slippers or other articles left are 'no good'. Guests are frequently much attached to old slippers and will write back for them." Joe had underlined and noted it as important.

We don't know if Madeline ever read the manuals or if she threw them at him!

Joe and Madeline took over the Northbrook Hotel in 1951 enlarging the premises to provide more seating and six more rental rooms. In this great photo of Mary Lloyd Johnson's from that time, you can see the work being done on the upstairs addition. Joe's beloved Dodge truck was parked in front of the Hotel. We noted that the Hotel sign says *"Rooms, Meals and Running water"*.

Joe and Madeline didn't move with their boys John (aged 13) and Mike (aged 8) until the 1951 school year was over. John always remembered that he and his Hastings friend Wayne Marsh slept under the stars in the new addition that summer. We found invoices from the renovation from the Kimmerly Lumber Company and Sawyer Stoll.

In this one receipt 225 board feet of white pine shiplap was \$25 less 10% for cash.

It is important to note that Joe and Madeline also brought Ferg McCarthy with them from Hastings where he was a trusted friend and employee. He was to work at the Hotel from 1951 to 1968 and was a much beloved member of the team living on site in Room 13. In this photo you can see him in his usual spot behind the bar and later in the kitchen getting a haircut from John's barber uncle.

According to the LCBO rules of the time there were separate beverage rooms "Men Only" and "Ladies and Escorts". The bar had to close daily from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and no beer could be sold on Sundays.



Mary Lloyd Johnson photo



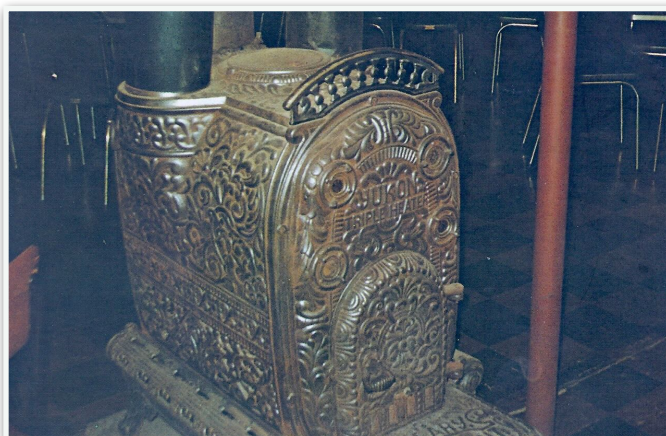
Folk Art map by travelling artist - 1950s

The origin of the folk-art maps

In the early 50s a travelling artist stopped into the hotel and Joe commissioned him to paint two signs showing the features of the area. They hung on the walls in both beverage rooms until 1972 and to this day they are still in the family, and we often laugh at the scale of the map and the phonetic spelling of some of the towns and lakes. Imagine making your living as a travelling artist.

Wood Heat

The building was heated entirely by wood – there were two large box stoves in each beverage room and a cookstove in the kitchen. The box stoves remained in use until well into the 2000s but electric heat was added in the 1970s. Wood was delivered to the north side lawn every fall and John and Mike and their friends, and subsequently son Mike and his friends tossed it in through the basement window and piled it neatly in the basement. In Joe and Madeline's day there was also a big wood pile in the back shed as shown in this photo with Cindy and Jimmy Dicks playing in the pool. It was a daily or twice daily task to carry the wood up the basement stairs and pile it beside each stove. By spring most



Hotel wood stove

was gone. There is a family story about a time John got suspended from school for a week in late fall just after the wood went in. His father asked him to reflect carefully on what he had done as he moved the wood from one side of the basement to the other all week long. In the fall that was a lot of wood! We never heard what caused the suspension, but we heard about the punishment many times during the annual wood delivery.

The building was freezing cold in the days before electric heat. On Christmas night after returning from the farm when we were small, John would start the fires in both stoves, and we would gather with Alec and Sal Buchanan and their family for some Christmas cheer while the building warmed up.



Woodpile. Cindy and Jimmy Dicks

Ferg won the white car that features prominently in the photos of 1956 and beyond. It provided the backdrop for the annual photoshoot for the letters home to England to Joe's sister Mary. We found the photo of the building across from the hotel interesting as a second story has been added since that time. It is also interesting to see in one photo the area where the bank now sits was cleared and flooded for a rink.



Joe and Madeline at the south side of the Hotel



Rink, looking toward the Hotel

The infrastructure of the Land O' Lakes was developing during this time and there was a lot of lumbering, hydro development, surveying and road construction underway. The business operated as a boarding hotel where crews got a room, 2 meals and a packed lunch. The main business was beer sales, boarding workers and the occasional event like catering for a wedding.

Here you see photos of the wedding lunch for John and Elaine and on the front steps of the hotel Bride & Groom Lucy Hawley & Frank Matacheske and attendants Cecily Hawley and Ken Matacheske from 1961. In the distance you can see that the gas pumps at the General Store were Esso by 1961 (previously Imperial).

The times were not easy, and the work was hard, but the social fabric of the area was strong. Joe and Madeline loved Northbrook and Northbrook loved them. Their work ethic, frugality and generosity had been shaped by the Depression and WWII years.



Lucy Hawley & Frank Matacheske,
Cecily Hawley and Ken Matacheske