



Friends of the Central Experimental Farm

Winter 2022 Newsletter

Volume 34 No. 1

Our Invaluable Farm

By Robert Martin



R. Hinchcliff

(Excerpts from a speech delivered at the launch of Building Canada's Farm, the new book from the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm.)

Conservation theory and practice with regard to buildings and landscapes recognizes that heritage value is both tangible and intangible. In reading *Building Canada's Farm*, it became apparent that a number of themes and messages are repeated throughout the chapters.

The Picturesque: pleasing the eye and the emotions

The picturesque does not refer to a specific architectural style but more to aesthetic values of scenery and landscape design. It was a movement that began in the 18th century, that "aimed at pleasing the eye and the emotions, over satisfying the intellect." (Janet Wright, *Architecture of the Picturesque in Canada*, Parks Canada, 1984) Contained within the Central Experimental Farm is a veritable catalogue and reservoir of Canadian architectural styles over 130 years.

Pure research mixed with community functions

Today, we talk a lot about mixed-use buildings and sites, and it is amazing that within a functioning farm, there were and are residential buildings, offices, laboratories, agricultural buildings, and industrial production facilities, as well as educational, museum, and cultural experiences. Pure research is mixed with community functions. The buildings, the landscape, and their outputs have all been used as demonstrations and exemplars for both professional and lay people, of how it could and should be done right, all across this country.

Continuity and resilience; adaptability and change

Within a dense urban area, a campus of approximately 80 buildings on land owned originally in part by lumber baron J. R. Booth has lasted 130 years.

This speaks to a theme of continuity and resilience.

Adaptability and change have been evident in responding to building fires, new building uses, and the introduction of new programs within the campus and in the fields. There have been significant investments in conservation, as well as improvements for sustainability in most buildings that will assist in adaptation to climate change. These responses are core to the values of heritage conservation.

Ingenuity and technical innovation is another theme that can be discerned in the various barn types and the Farm's experiments with hygiene and ventilation. This speaks to the idea of the container and the contents within, all of which serve the Farm's mission. The buildings have facilitated the nationally- and internationally-celebrated achievements of the Central Experimental Farm.

Delight and whimsy

Lastly, consistent with the picturesque style which embraces a variety of design expressions, the Farm exemplifies and demonstrates the importance of delight and whimsy, as can be seen in its catalogue of ironwork, sculpture, craft and material details, weathervane wheat sheaves, and 4-H and bee symbols.

Importance of stories and storytelling

Both the book and the Farm underline the importance of stories and storytelling. The Farm's history is rich with the accomplishments of women and men and the book

Continued on Page 3

"The book is a remarkable accomplishment, one that so beautifully demonstrates that heritage value is inextricably woven into the site and buildings, in both tangible and intangible ways."

Looking Forward at the Farm

The Central Experimental Farm (CEF) was designated a National Historic Site in 1998 by Parks Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). As part of this initiative, AAFC committed to engage the public in the future management of the CEF site and set up an Advisory Council (CEFAC) to help make that happen. AAFC also adopted a National Historic Site Management Plan in 2004 after extensive public review.

Public input is more important now due to recent changes and challenges caused by:

- the choice of the CEF as a site for the future Ottawa Hospital and the plans laid out in the Master Site Plan that was approved by the City of Ottawa and the NCC in October; and,
- the City's plans for greatly increased population density in the vicinity of the CEF.

AAFC has now engaged a consultant to review this Management Plan. The Plan's vision is "To sustain a cultural landscape of national historic significance through a reinvigorated and ongoing agricultural research program." The Plan's key objectives are summarized as follows:

- to strengthen the CEF's research identity;
- to develop appropriate governance models;
- to provide clear rules of engagement for other agencies and partners;
- to protect the integrity of the cultural landscape and its resources;
- to interpret and present the site to the public as a scientific landscape of national significance;
- to develop appropriate patterns of access, circulation, and open space; and,
- to establish clear and sustainable relationships with the adjacent urban

context.

It is clear that these objectives are as relevant as ever given the challenges noted above, but it is also timely to strengthen and support them so that the Farm can be defended properly against further threats.

The Advisory Council will set up a subcommittee to interact with the consultant as the review of the Management Plan gets underway. If you would like to provide input to this process through the Friends of the Farm, please contact us at info@friendsofthefarm.ca.

The link to the NHS Management Plan can be found below.

Eric Jones

President, Friends of the Central Experimental Farm

<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/contact-agriculture-and-agri-food-canada/central-experimental-farm/about-central-experimental-farm/central-experimental-farm-national-historic-site-management-plan-1-20>

Tournés vers l'avenir à la Ferme

En 1998, Parcs Canada et Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada (AAC) ont désigné la Ferme expérimentale centrale (la Ferme) comme lieu historique national. Dans le cadre de cette initiative, AAC s'est engagé à impliquer le public dans la gestion future du lieu et a créé un conseil consultatif à cet effet. De plus, le ministère a adopté ce qui constitue le Plan directeur du lieu historique national de la Ferme en 2004, à la suite d'un examen approfondi de la part du public.

L'apport du public s'avère plus important à l'heure actuelle en raison des récents changements et défis occasionnés par :

- Le choix de la Ferme comme l'emplacement du futur hôpital d'Ottawa et les plans énoncés dans la version officielle adoptée par la Ville d'Ottawa et la Commission de la capitale nationale en octobre dernier;
- Les plans de la Ville en vue d'une densité de population largement accrue dans le voisinage de la Ferme.

AAC a récemment sollicité les services d'un consultant (expert-conseil) qui procédera à l'étude du Plan directeur du lieu historique national de la Ferme. Telle qu'énoncée dans le Plan, la mission est la suivante : « assurer la durabilité d'un paysage culturel d'une importance historique nationale, au moyen d'un programme de recherche revitalisé et permanent en agriculture ». Les principaux objectifs de ce plan sont résumés ici :

- Renforcer l'identité de recherche de la Ferme.

- Élaborer des modèles de régie appropriés.
- Établir des règles d'engagement claires à l'intention d'autres organismes et de partenaires.
- Garantir l'intégrité du paysage culturel et de ses ressources.
- Assurer l'interprétation et la mise en valeur du site, en tant que paysage scientifique d'une importance nationale.
- Aménager des voies d'accès et de circulation ainsi que des espaces libres appropriés.
- Créer des rapports clairs et durables entre la Ferme et ses abords urbains.

Il est clair que ces objectifs sont plus pertinents que jamais compte tenu des défis indiqués plus haut, et le moment est bien choisi de les maintenir et de les appuyer pour défendre la Ferme comme il convient contre des menaces futures.

Le Conseil consultatif réunira un sous-comité qui travaillera de pair avec le consultant (l'expert-conseil) au moment d'entreprendre l'examen du plan directeur. Si vous désirez fournir des commentaires sur le processus par l'intermédiaire des Amis de la Ferme, veuillez communiquer avec nous à info@friendsofthefarm.ca.

Suivez ici le lien vers le Plan directeur du lieu historique national de la Ferme.

Eric Jones

Président, Les Amis de la Ferme expérimentale centrale



Botany Building (74)

R. Hinchcliff

<https://agriculture.canada.ca/fr/coordonnees-dagriculture-agroalimentaire-canada/ferme-experimentale-centrale/propos-ferme-experimentale-centrale/plan-directeur-du-lieu-historique-national-ferme-experimentale-centrale-1-20>

Our Invaluable Farm ... (continued from Page 1)

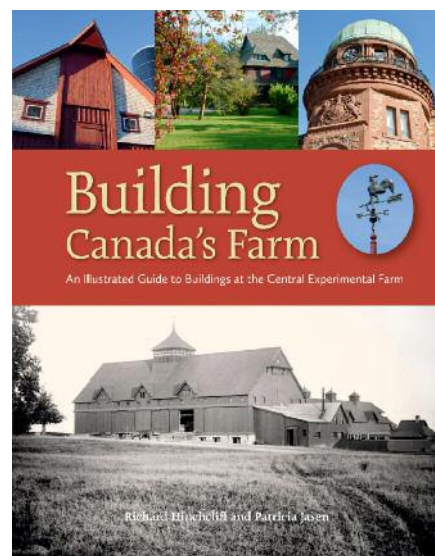
excels at interspersing the descriptions of the buildings with their stories. In many cases the people and their personalities were the drivers of new buildings on the site. The stories and events are part of the heritage value of these buildings.

One of my favourite examples is the Public Records Building, the original part of the K. W. Neatby Building, designed to accommodate heavy floor loading and possessing suitable HVAC for preservation requirements. It became a repository for treasures rescued from Poland during World War II, including a Gutenberg Bible, Chopin manuscripts, and 17 million dollars in gold.

In an era of urban intensification, all the pressures on the Farm, its buildings, and the landscape are acute and will only continue.

Building Canada's Farm is a timely response, providing greater appreciation of this gem within our city and the larger country. The book is a remarkable accomplishment, one that so beautifully demonstrates that heritage value is inextricably woven into the site and buildings, in both tangible and intangible ways.

Robert Martin, Principal Architect at Robertson Martin Architects, was introduced to the Farm through his father, who was a plant pathologist for Agriculture Canada, working at the Neatby and Saunders buildings. His earliest exposure to heritage buildings was at the Farm, in an investigation of the beautiful woodwork of some of the former residential buildings.



Donation by the Central Canada Exhibition



Doug Shouldice (left), former President of the Friends of the Farm, presents a cheque for \$10,000 from the Central Canada Exhibition (CCE) to current President Eric Jones. On Doug's recommendation, the Trustees in the dissolution of the CCE selected the Friends as a recipient of this most-welcome gift.

Doug was on the Board of Directors of the CCE for many years. He also served on the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Farm and was President for three years beginning in 2005.

On behalf of the Friends, Eric thanked Doug and the CCE for their generosity, stating that the funds would be used in an upcoming project to be determined by the Friends' Board of Directors.

(See "The Farm and the Central Canada Exhibition" on Page 6.)

Building Canada's Farm

The new book "speaks to the unique architecture and heritage value of the buildings within the property." It "helps us maintain and educate on the significance of this property within the city of Ottawa." **Joel Wilkin, Director, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.**

"We certainly appreciate the documentation and research that went into this book. It will serve not only as a great publication to help our staff better interpret our site, but it will also inform generations to come of the interesting evolution of a National Historic Site and the buildings that have evolved with the city and the audiences around us." **Kerry Leigh Burchill, Director General, Canada Agriculture and Food Museum.**

"A beautiful book." "We have a book now that chronicles the very important and diverse history of the Farm ... it provides the vital history that we need to know in terms of Canada's Farm, as it is so appropriately dubbed in the title, and the important contribution the Central Experimental Farm has made to the wellbeing, growth, and food security of Canada." **Yasir Naqvi, Member of Parliament, Ottawa Centre.**

"This is truly a treasury that everyone in Ottawa who cares about the Farm should buy and read ... a fantastic book." **Riley Brockington, Ottawa City Councillor, River Ward.**

Building Canada's Farm is now available at www.friendsofthefarm.ca/boutique and from these fine booksellers:

- Perfect Books, Books on Beechwood, World of Maps, Octopus Books, Coles Billings Bridge, Coles Carlingwood, Indigo Pinecrest, Indigo Innes, Ingenium's museum boutiques, Mill Street Books (Almonte), and White Pine Books (Arnprior).

Gobsmacked Glassblowers at a Delightful Gathering

Our first annual “Autumn at the Arboretum” was a great success with an estimated 400 people in attendance. The Friends of the Farm hosted the outdoor event in the Arboretum on October 2, with the Ottawa Glassblowing Cooperative (OGC) as the featured vendor.



OGBS

The big attraction was 225 beautiful glass pumpkins on display and for sale, courtesy of the OGC. In all sizes and colours, they were snapped up and sold out in 45 minutes. “We were gobsmacked to say the least,” wrote Yvonne Avis of the OGC (www.ottawaglassblowing.ca). “As the event date approached and the weather prediction darkened we started to make plans for where to store our leftover blown glass pumpkins. By 10:45 am there were no leftovers!” Orders were taken for 84, making a total of 309 pumpkins sold.

While rain and cold did not affect the glass pumpkin patch, it did put a damper on fun family features offered by volunteers from the Friends, such as a photo booth. Nevertheless, the kids craft and activity station was hugely popular, and the entertainer, Dr. Orkestro, kept people singing and dancing. Volunteers at the Friends’ promotional table were busy, and the Master Gardeners were thrilled that 40 people had questions for them. In spite of the weather, most folks agreed it was delightful to be able to get together once again, even

with COVID precautions still in place.

Susan Kehoe, who organized the event for the Friends of the Farm, reported that both organizations considered it a success and hope to do something similar in 2022. She was especially grateful to the members of the organizing committee, to the many volunteers who were there before, during, and after the event, and to the participating sponsors who helped make it a successful day. She also thanked Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada staff for their support and for permitting them to temporarily take over the Arboretum. “Such events,” she wrote, “are a great way to raise public awareness of the Farm and build community relations.”



Photos by R. Hincheliff



Friends of the Farm volunteers Jeannine Lewis (left) and Linda Moreau at the kids’ station; Dr. Orkestro (right).



Tours of the Arboretum, 2021

Text and photos by tour guide Owen Clarkin.

Volunteer Trees and Shrubs – July 11

This tour explored the theme of wild plants "volunteering" to grow in the cultivated setting of the Dominion Arboretum. We explored wild plants common in Ottawa such as American Elm and Green Ash, and the less-common types we encountered such as Siebold's Spindle and Amur Corktree. Concepts such as naturalization, invasive species, threatened native species, and habitat specialists vs. generalists were also discussed.



From left to right: American Elm, Linden seedling, Amur Corktree.

Wildlife and Trees – September 19

This tour showed how wildlife (often taken to be "animals") utilize the environment at the Dominion Arboretum. We witnessed many of the usual common birds, rodents, and other animals found in this urban greenspace such as robins, cardinals, squirrels/chipmunks, and toads. We also observed the feeding track of an insect that is new to the city (Elm Zigzag Sawfly).



From left to right: Night Heron, Elm Zigzag Sawfly, Blue Heron.

Arboretum Woodland Tour – September 26

This tour illustrated the remnant of a woodlot habitat in the area east of the circle driveway. We showed how there is some "natural" habitat at the Arboretum, and discussed themes such as conservation, biodiversity surveying, and exotic species naturalizing.



From left to right: Figwort, Bitternut Hickory, Hornbeam.

The Farm and the Central Canadian Exhibition

By Patricia Jasen



Bird's-eye view of the Exhibition grounds, 1900.

During its first half century, the Farm's lavish displays and crowd-pleasing demonstrations were star attractions at the Central Canadian Exhibition (the "Ex") in Ottawa, even as they shared the spotlight with ostrich races, performing elephants, trapeze acts, freak shows, burlesque shows, and drama-filled hot air balloon ascensions.

The Central Canada Exhibition Association, dedicated to the promotion of "industries, arts, and sciences," was incorporated by the Province of Ontario in March, 1888, and mounted its first fair on September 24, 1888. In preparation, the City of Ottawa funded improvements to the 60-acre site at Lansdowne Park. Structures that had been intermittently used in earlier fairs were refurbished and new machinery and floral halls were built. The introduction of electric lighting brightened indoor displays and allowed festivities to carry on late into summer evenings.

Fairgoers arrived by paddle steamer along the Rideau Canal or by horse-drawn bus. By 1891 an electric streetcar line linked downtown Ottawa to Lansdowne Park. The farmers of eastern Ontario and western Quebec, from Kingston to Montreal, now had their own yearly exhibition at which to show their wares

and compete for substantial cash prizes.

For the Central Experimental Farm, founded in 1886, the timing of this major new enterprise was ideal. James Fletcher, Chief of the Entomology and Botany Division, became the first in a succession of top Farm officers to be appointed to the Central Canada Exhibition Association.

The Exhibition fostered a strong cooperative link between the surrounding communities and Experimental Farm staff, whose mission it was to bring farmers up-to-the-minute information on all fields of agriculture.

Impressive displays by the Farm

Each of the Farm's divisions, from Animal Husbandry to Bees to Tobacco, was represented by a separate display. In 1915, a new Division of Extension and Publicity, headed by F. C. Nunnick, assumed responsibility for preparing and staging the Farm's entire presence at the Exhibition. Public interest reached new heights in the 1920s and 30s, and the local press waxed enthusiastic about the Farm's impressive offerings.

The fair took place at harvest time, and the Horticulture Division's exhibits were a celebration of sheer abundance. One fall, "a



From the *Ottawa Citizen*, September 7, 1920.

Department of Agriculture, 1924



A model barn in the display of the Central Experimental Farm at the 1923 Central Canada Exhibition. [From the book *Building Canada's Farm*, p. 105.]

mile of apples" highlighted the Farm's production of improved varieties, and five of the most promising apples bred by W. T. Macoun, including 'Melba' and 'Lobo,' were on show with their McIntosh "parent." Food crops shared space with new ornamental hybrids, such as the 75 varieties of gladioli raised at the Farm which formed "a group of rich and gorgeous colour unsurpassed anywhere." Division staff were on hand to provide demonstrations in the art of canning fruits and vegetables, a subject of special importance to gardeners and homemakers.

Keeping chickens was a popular hobby and a profitable farming enterprise, and both urban and rural visitors were keenly interested in the Farm's **poultry** exhibits. Different types of poultry houses "full of lively chicks" delighted children, and fairgoers could view the fascinating phenomena of natural and artificial incubation. Each afternoon, reported

the Ottawa Citizen, large crowds assembled to see demonstrations of "killing, plucking, and drawing poultry" performed "with almost lightening rapidity"—showing the advantage of doing such tasks in a scientific manner. An indoor pond displayed both domestic and wild water fowl.

Models of farm buildings and facilities—such as barns, stables, hog cabins, and ventilation systems—were an excellent means of educating farmers about the most efficient methods of caring for their animals and producing safe food. The production of "clean milk" was a major focus of the **Animal Husbandry** Division for, despite the development of pasteurization, contaminated milk was still making its way to Canadian markets in the 1920s. Models of sanitary dairy barns and cold storage facilities, along with displays of milking utensils and techniques, were all aimed at ensuring a hygienic milk

supply for the nation's children.

The **Botany** Division also placed an emphasis on "safety first." Collections of both edible and poisonous mushrooms were "a particular attraction to city folk," who learned how to take advantage of this free and succulent food source without making deadly errors. For farmers, the division provided information on the latest research on plant diseases, so that they would know "what to look for when their crops go wrong."

The Farm's exhibits also educated fairgoers about its vital contribution to Canadian growth and economic prosperity. World-famous 'Marquis' wheat, introduced by Charles Saunders, was a perennial feature in the **Field Husbandry** display. In 1923, its role in transforming Canada's agricultural industry was illustrated "by a miniature 'Wheat Fall,' showing that out of four million bushels of wheat over 89% will be Marquis, the variety for which the Central Experimental Farm is responsible."

Invaluable instruction and inspiration

During most of World War II, Lansdowne Park was used for military training. The Central Canada Exhibition resumed operations in 1947 and, over the following decades, attendance figures ballooned. Agriculture gradually ceased to be the fair's raison d'être, however, as the midway and star-studded musical shows took over as main attractions. Nonetheless, the solid partnership between the Farm and the Exhibition during the fair's first half century had given farmers, gardeners, bee keepers, and backyard poultry enthusiasts invaluable instruction and inspiration, and had made a significant contribution to food production throughout eastern Canada and western Quebec.

Patricia Jasen is co-author of Building Canada's Farm, recently published by the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm.

Master Gardener Spring Lectures

Tuesday March 8, 2022 – **Getting a head start on the summer growing season**, with Rob Stuart.

Tuesday, April 19, 2022 – **Gardening with native plants in Ontario**, with Candace Dressler and Fran Dennett.

Tuesday May 3, 2022 – **Biodiversity at the crossroads**, with Julianne Labreche.

Tuesday, May 17, 2022 – **Paint with blooms**, with Nancy McDonald.

To register and obtain more details ...

www.friendsofthefarm.ca/fcef-annual-events/master-gardener-lectures/

Inspired by the Farm

www.ottawasocietyofbotanicalartists.ca/gallery-botanica-2021



An online exhibition inspired by Ottawa's Central Experimental Farm

Magnolia | Kristin Rothschild

OTTAWA SOCIETY OF BOTANICAL ARTISTS

BOTANICA

NOVEMBER 24, 2021 TO MARCH 20, 2022

This year's exhibition by the Ottawa Society of Botanical Artists, entitled 'Botanica', was inspired by the flowering trees, shrubs, and plants of the Central Experimental Farm's Ornamental Gardens, Arboretum, and Fletcher Wildlife Garden.

Artists selected plant specimens of interest, and visited the Farm over several months to research, write, draw, and paint their chosen plants. The watercolour, coloured-pencil, and graphite artworks in the exhibition are the artistic results of their study.

The online exhibition, launched in November and running until March 20, 2022, is at www.ottawasocietyofbotanicalartists.ca/gallery-botanica-2021

A New Hospital on the Farm: Brief History to Date

Construction of a new hospital at the Farm was first proposed in 2014, to be sited on research fields across from the current Civic Hospital. Among those who opposed the location were the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) scientists using the land for research. A citizen's coalition, including the Friends of the Farm and many others, was formed to oppose the loss of important research land, part of a National Historic Site, while supporting the need for a new hospital.

With a change in government in 2016, the National Capital Commission (NCC) was tasked with assessing 11 federally-owned properties, including two areas on the Farm, for a new location for the hospital. The NCC selected Tunney's Pasture as the best site and offered a portion of the property at that location. The Ottawa Hospital (TOH) board declined this offer and, at a press conference in Mayor Watson's office in December 2016, a group of federal, provincial and municipal politicians announced that the hospital would instead be located on a 25-hectare parcel of land at the north-eastern corner of the Farm.

The site selection was not open to public debate, so the planning process began. A number of stakeholder groups were invited to participate in a Campus Engagement Group (CEG), created by TOH to provide public input on its plans for the

new hospital. The Friends of the Farm took part in this group until it was dissolved in 2020. The process was abandoned without the group being consulted on the actual hospital design plans.

In June 2018, a by-law was enacted to rezone the 25-hectare parcel of land to allow for its use for a hospital. A Holding Provision required that a master plan, transportation study, and cultural heritage study be first approved by the Ottawa Planning Committee and City Council.

The Master Site Plan for the hospital was submitted to the City on May 10, 2021. It included transportation, environment, and cultural heritage impact studies. The Friends were one of many organizations expressing concerns about the new hospital design and the potential impact it will have on the Farm.

Because the site is on federal property, the Master Site Plan needed the NCC's approval, which was granted on October 5. On October 13, City Council voted 19-4 in favour of the Master Site Plan and the lifting of the Holding Provision. Councillor Riley Brockington, who had sought legislative protection for the Farm for many years, moved that the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to federal ministers responsible and the NCC requesting that the Government of Canada pass legislation that would ensure the long-term protection of the remainder of the Central

Experimental Farm, and that a new Master Plan for the Farm would be developed, seeking local input and the input of expert scientists. Council unanimously passed the motion.

With the Master Site Plan approved, the TOH will next submit individual site plans for City review and approval to implement the project's various phases. City staff have the delegated authority to approve these applications unless a ward councillor decides to withdraw this authority. Staff have already committed to bring the site plan for the hospital parking garage — part of the development's first phase — to the planning committee for approval.

Newly elected MP Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre) pledged during the federal election campaign to introduce a law to protect the Farm in perpetuity, either through federal legislation to protect federally owned heritage properties generally, or failing that, through a private Member's bill. At a post-election Friends of the Farm event, Mr. Naqvi reaffirmed his intention to seek legislative protection for the Farm.

The Friends of the Farm hope that this chain of events will lead eventually to a better understanding of the Farm's importance to the city and to Canada, and improved status for maintaining it as a National Historic Site.

A Gardener's DNA

By Blaine Marchand

I often wondered where my passion for gardening originated. It did not appear to come from my father or mother. In working on *Becoming History*, my recent collection of poems about my mother's life, I researched her parents, Hewson and Ida Harris, who had abandoned her and her brother shortly after her birth in 1913. I came across some 1950s photos of her father in front of my grandparents' Montreal house, which featured plant-laden front steps. On one photo's back, he had written "Wish I could claim I was the gardener but it is Ida who wins the prizes." Could my plant fervour have come from her?

I began to explore genealogical websites and early 20th century directories for Ottawa. To my complete surprise and delight, I found entries for Ida's father, my great-grandfather Stephen Vaughan. His profession was given as gardener, Experimental Farm. Further, I found that his brother, Thomas Vaughan, who lived blocks from my present home, was also a gardener at the Farm. Was this why my grandparents insisted on visiting the Farm on their rare visits? Now, my work with the Friends of the Farm and in the peony garden has taken on much more meaning. It seems the Farm is a deep part of my DNA.

Syringa vulgaris

*Not those common lilacs in your side yard,
Nana, with a shake of her finger, scolds you,
clutching my hand, as we stand by the lilac walk
in the Experimental Farm, a short drive from our house.*

*Nana wears a print dress with faded red roses
that pucker when she reaches up and pulls down
the pink tubular blooms, lilac after lilac,
as if she were powdering her nose.*

This is Audrey. This, Bellicent. And here is Charm.
The skirt's floral pattern swells across her behind
as she stoops to read the markers. The names bunch
on her tongue and my arm shakes as you fidget.

Father close by doesn't notice, so attentive to Grandad
in a white shirt, silver garters puffing up his sleeves,
straw hat angled raffishly on his head. Awkwardly he bends
forward, cups his ear's corolla to catch Grandad's brogue.

Owz't ga'an? Grandad greets me on his and Nana's few visits.
I scrape the side of my shoes, not sure how to reply.
Father tugs at his watch, turns its face up toward him,
notices Uncle Bob and Aunt Mildred step away,

down the foot-worn stones into a recess of rock garden.
His shoulders sag. He mumbles, grimaces at you
whose hand lets go of mine to brush away
an insect trapped in a fold of your plain dark dress.

These lilacs, so triumphant, Nana praises the flourish
she cups in her hands like the face of a baby.
The branch lurches away from her,
its flower shielded by a safe green haven.

(From *Becoming History*, by Blaine Marchand, Aeolus House, 2021)

Tennis at the Farm

By Catherine Ridout

Photos courtesy of Catherine Ridout



(The tennis courts alongside Maple Drive are on the site of the new hospital. A central utility plant and parking lot are planned for the vicinity of the current facility, with a new set of courts and clubhouse proposed by The Ottawa Hospital in the newly designed Queen Juliana Park. We look here at the history of tennis at the Farm and the future of the DARA Tennis Club.)

The Central Experimental Farm is known for agricultural research, but recreation has always been a key part of activities on the Farm as well. Even prior

to the Experimental Farm Athletic Association (EFAA) being established to manage athletic and social activities of Farm employees in 1923, various recreation and sport activities were held on the Farm. "An interesting tennis tournament was held on the Experimental Farm courts on Saturday afternoon," the Ottawa Journal reports on July 12, 1921, "when the Experimental Farm Club defeated the Seed Branch Club, both of the Department of Agriculture."

At EFAA's first annual meeting in November 1923, success in tennis was noted, with the association having won the championship of Section C of the Ottawa District League. That same year, an EFAA team had entered a city basketball league, and winter sports, such as hockey, skating, and skiing were to be taken up. Softball, lawn bowling, golf, broomball, volleyball, and horseshoe pitching were also played.

Over time, management of recreation and social activities for federal employees, including those on the Farm, evolved from the EFAA to the Recreation Association (RA) Centre and the Department of Agriculture Recreation Association (DARA). The tradition of recreational activity on the Farm has remained to the present day, however, and tennis has been prominent throughout.

The DARA Tennis Club

DARA (which by this time had only the tennis and softball clubs still active) was dissolved in 2016 by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), officially ending the affiliation of organized recreation with the Department. However, in July 2017, the DARA Tennis Club re-incorporated itself as a non-profit organization. Given the long history with the Farm, and name recognition with members, it was decided to keep its name ("DARA Tennis Club") although it is no longer affiliated with the Farm or AAFC. The formal affiliation may be gone, but the DARA Tennis Club has maintained a strong relationship with the Farm, whose staff



The Experimental Farm Athletic Association chose orange and black as its colours in 1923.



Affiliation of the Department of Agriculture Recreation Association with AAFC ended in 2016.



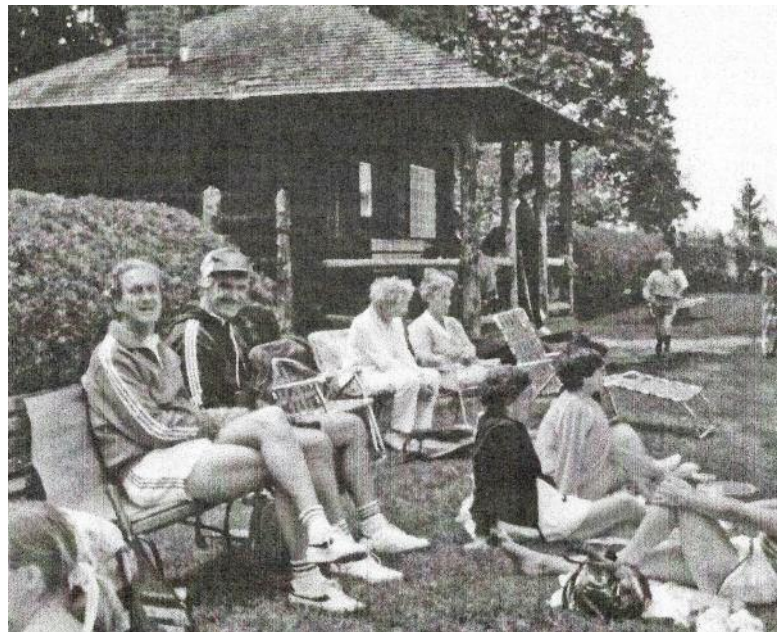
A picturesque setting for the DARA Tennis Club's facilities. The clubhouse is at the top left. Maple Drive runs across the top right.

continue to help drain the clubhouse pipes in advance of each winter season and restart everything in the spring, as well as providing security in the area.

The current DARA Tennis Club provides affordable tennis for all levels of tennis players in the community, and had 250 members this year. Members ages range from six to 90+. Almost one third of members (75 members) are aged 60 or older, with 14 of those members 80+ years old. Some members have been part of the Club for more than 40 years, with a few key people also acting as volunteer Board members for more than 20 years at a time. While membership at the Club was originally limited to Farm and AAFC employees, membership was expanded to include anyone in the community around 1970.

One reason that many people have remained a part of the Club for decades is its social activities. Although the pandemic has made social events difficult to hold since the 2020 season, many friendships were created through events like monthly pizza round-robin nights, to Canada Day festivities, strawberry social teas and daily informal drop-in round-robins. The latter is a long-standing tradition at the Club, where any member can show up at 9 am, put their racket in a line along the fence, and be paired up to play a set of doubles with three other members whose racket is alongside them. This has been the core of tennis activity for most of the seniors in the club for at least the last 30 years, with many coming every day to play with the friends they've met over the years.

Another reason for memberships lasting decades is the membership fee, which has been kept at an affordable rate to enable everyone in the community to enjoy tennis. DARA Tennis Club is able to keep its fees low thanks to a large group of member volunteers who help to keep the club in good shape. These invaluable people range from board members to individuals who put



'The love of the game' (from *DARA Moments and Memories*).

The log-cabin clubhouse in the photo, now at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, was replaced in the mid-1980s.

Tennis at the Farm ... (continued from Page 11)

up and take down the nets and wind screens, repair the nets when needed, do minor court surface repairs, and even regularly weed whack the court perimeter.

The Courts

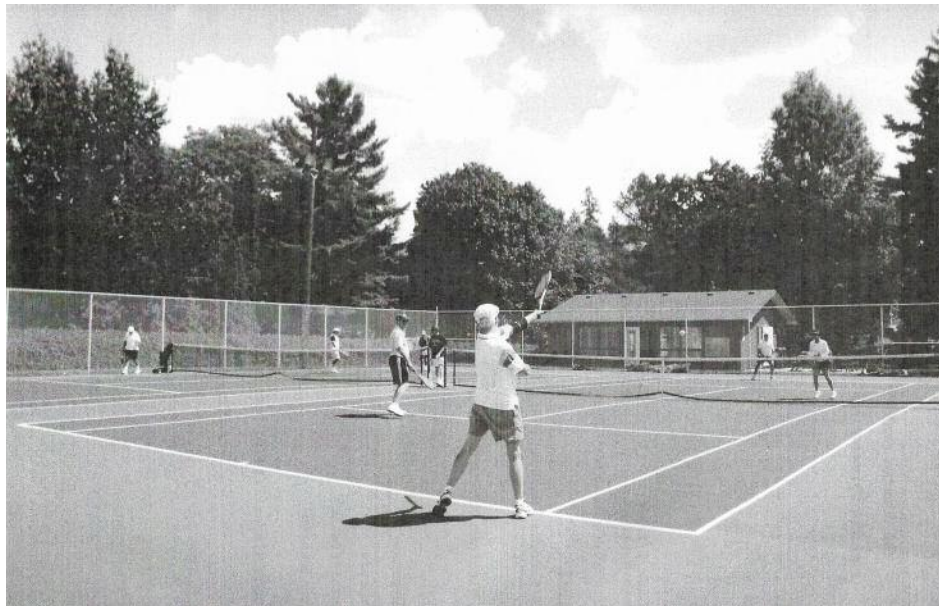
The tennis courts were originally near the roundabout on Prince of Wales Drive, where the parking lot now is behind the Nutrition Building (No. 59) and the Heritage House (No. 60) on Birch Drive.

In 1932, when the traffic circle was built, the courts were moved to their current location. In the early years, the courts were iced over in the winter to create a skating rink for Farm employees and their families, and for hockey and broomball games. The clubhouse—a log cabin—was built and served the tennis club for many years until it was decided in the mid-1980s to build something requiring less maintenance. The log cabin was moved at that time to the Fletcher Wildlife Garden where it became the clubhouse for the softball league for many years. It still sits there beside the parking lot.

Currently, the DARA Tennis Club has 3 courts and one practice court with a back board, as well as the small clubhouse, all on slightly less than an acre of land, sitting adjacent to the William Saunders Building (No. 49), alongside Maple Drive.

Future of the Club

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened interest in the community for accessible, affordable, and safe outdoor recreation. In 2021 membership was increased to 250 (from 225) to accommodate increased interest. Demand was so high that the cap was reached within 24



'Game, set, match' (from *DARA Moments and Memories*).

hours of opening up registration to the general public, and a waiting list was established that continues to grow.

Construction of the new Ottawa Hospital will soon get underway in the northeast corner of the Farm, and the DARA Tennis Club Board of Directors is looking toward a new opportunity to provide tennis to the community – on the new Civic Campus of The Ottawa Hospital. Recognizing that one of the guiding principles of the new hospital is that patients, families, staff and volunteers have “access to outdoor landscapes, and recreational areas for optimal performance and personal

restoration,” the DARA Tennis Club and the Ottawa Hospital are currently developing plans for a new clubhouse and four new courts in what will be a newly designed Queen Juliana Park. It is hoped that tennis and recreational activities will continue there for many decades to come.

Catherine Ridout joined the DARA Tennis Club as a novice tennis player in 2013 and has been the membership secretary since the fall of 2019. An employee of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, she is the Club's Experimental Farm liaison.

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The Friends of the Central Experimental Farm is a volunteer organization committed to the maintenance and protection of the Ornamental Gardens and the Arboretum of the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

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