



Dairy farmers

DEEPLY ROOTED FOR A STRONG FUTURE



CANADA 150





"Dairy farmers have been a part of our nation's rich history for over 150 years..."

- Wally Smith



FOREWORD

Dairy Farmers of Canada is proud to showcase the contributions of Canadian dairy farmers in the building and growth of our country as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Canada.

Dairy farmers have been a part of our nation's rich history for over 150 years, and as you read through these pages you will see that the passion that drives Canadian dairy farmers will ensure that they will be an integral part of Canada for the next 150 years. By feeding the country in a sustainable way, dairy farmers have withstood the test of time, from even before Confederation, to produce Canadian quality milk.

Canada is vast and dairy farmers across the country are as different and unique as the regions in which they reside. While different regions of the country may shape the way in which each dairy farmer produces milk, there are also many ways in which every dairy farmer, regardless of where they live and farm, are similar. They share numerous values and face many of the same challenges. The values that they share are woven throughout this booklet in each of their stories—a great love for the environment and for their animals, a sense of pride in feeding Canadians, and a strong commitment to sustainability.

By featuring a different dairy farm from every province we have captured the unity of a sector that has fed our country in the past and that is committed to doing so for the future.

Dairy Farmers of Canada is honoured to share these stories with Canadians.



Wally Smith
President
Dairy Farmers of Canada

SUSTAINING A NATION

Centuries before the founding of Canada, two passengers who would profoundly shape the emerging nation arrived in a small port that would become Quebec City. The ship *Don de Dieu* carried Samuel de Champlain credited today as the founder of Quebec. Also aboard the vessel, known in English as *Gift of God*, was a largely unheralded trailblazer—the first domestic dairy cow to arrive in New France. Her descendants survive to this day and the aptly named *Canadienne* is Canada's only native breed.

Canada's earliest dairy farmers left behind all they had ever known to pursue a new life in a vast and often harsh new world. In most cases, the decision to immigrate meant they would never again see their families or take comfort in familiar surroundings.

Some had left farms in their countries of origin; others had never farmed before they purchased land and livestock in the New World. However, the basic survival instinct was common to all. These small homesteads sustained their families and fed their communities throughout two world wars, the Spanish Influenza, and the Great Depression.

A turning point that ensured the survival of Canadian family farms was the introduction in the early 1970s of the supply management system, which matches dairy supply with consumer demand and provides farmers with a reliable income. After years of economic hardship, this newly found stability has allowed farmers to invest in livestock health, adopt sustainable practices and guard the environment for future generations.

Today, there are 11,280 dairy farms located in each province across the country. Dairy farms were never established in Canada's territories due to colder temperatures.

Some of Canada's dairy farms in operation today were founded long before Confederation. These heritage farms, along with their family traditions and knowledge of the land, have been passed down through generations of descendants for over 150 years. Dairy farming is also attracting newcomers, one couple in particular, who have taken up the reins of one heritage farm and plan to uphold a Canadian tradition for the next 150 years.

To commemorate a Canadian milestone, Dairy Farmers of Canada has prepared this booklet in honour of the men and women who have sustained our nation from its earliest days to the present. This booklet traces the emergence of dairy farming in each of Canada's provinces in the order in which they joined Confederation. The four provinces that formed Canada in 1867 were Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, and Quebec. The pages that follow profile 10 heritage farms and families that have been providing us with Canadian quality milk day after day.





A Canadian Cow

The Canadienne is the only breed of dairy cow native to North America. It is a small to medium-sized cow and generally has a black coat with a pale fawn topline stripe and muzzle. She is hardy, alert and gentle. The Canadienne gained a reputation for its reliability and resilience to the harsh climate of the New World.

The Canadienne represented the majority of dairy cows in Quebec until 1850, when newly imported breeds were introduced. In 1886, when faced with the threat of extinction, breeders created the Canadienne cattle breed's herd book.

Today, there are only about 250 females with purebred status as most Canadiennes are mixed with the Brown Swiss. However, a current trend toward the traditional Canadienne has spurred conservancy of its genetic make-up. This is crucial to guarantee the future of this breed which is a part of French-Canadian heritage. Today, dairy cow breeds on farms include the Holstein, Jersey, Ayshire, Brown Swiss and Canadienne.



NOVA
SCOTIA

"What I'm most proud of, looking back over 35 years of changes and accomplishments, is that we're still here."

- Jim Burrows



French colonists raised cows in the Minas Basin in Acadia as early as 1606 when Sieur de Poutrincourt brought cattle to Port Royal (Annapolis, Nova Scotia). The native Mi'kmaq were not farmers but hunters, fishers, and gatherers. French settlement further developed in the Minas Basin near the Bay of Fundy. Due to its isolation from other French settlements, the colony was quite self-sufficient. The territory passed to British hands in 1710 but remained populated by French Acadians until 1755. When the Acadians were expelled, there were about 1,500 cows and young cattle

in the Minas Basin of Nova Scotia. The Acadians left behind enough cows to provide breeding stock to further develop dairy herds during the British colonization period which followed. In the middle of the 18th century, settlers from New England moved to the vacated area. In 1761, 53 families of Irish descent from New Hampshire settled in the Truro area with 117 heads of cattle. By 1764, dairying had developed so much that six tonnes of cheese were exported from Nova Scotia. Today, Nova Scotia counts 221 dairy farms.

The Burrows

AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CANADIAN LANDSCAPE

For 251 years, Clover Crest Farm has been a mainstay in Green Oak, Nova Scotia. Part of the Clover Crest property was granted to James and Susan Moore in 1765.

The Moores were part of the first significant migration of about 8,000 men and women who left New England for the Atlantic colonies of British North America. The Burrows ancestors immigrated to the region amidst the U.S. Civil War, and when William Burrows married Laura Moore in 1871, he was given the farm since property wasn't transferred to female descendants.

Today, Jim and Leslie Burrows milk 90 cows and are in the process of transitioning the farm to the next generation—their son Alexander and employee Jason Nelson.

The Early Years

In the early days, farming was about subsistence. Families produced enough to eat and sold what they could, but most farmers sought supplemental income. In the 1930s, Percy Burrows drove a gravel truck and collected milk cans from the surrounding communities and drove them to Truro. In the winter months, the milk truck was converted to a snow plough and they were paid \$100 to clear the milk route. Jim's father Clifford ran a woodlot and sold wood in the winter to make ends meet. It wasn't until the late 1960s that Jim's family farm fully immersed itself in dairy.



Prior to World War Two, the original land of Clover Crest was a mixed farm with cows, pigs, sheep and chickens. However, Clifford had an aversion to sheep so one day, while his father was out of town, Clifford sold off all the sheep. Percy resigned himself to the loss when he returned to discover that his sheep had been sold. It would prove to be a turning point for the farm. In 1945, Clifford bought a neighbouring farm and set up a dairy while his brother remained on the home farm.

Clifford's son Jim never intended to follow in his family's footsteps. In 1978, he graduated from Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, and spent that summer debating whether he should pursue a master's degree at Queen's University in Ontario. In the end, his love for the farm won out and he returned home. By then, his brother had taken over the family farm so Jim purchased some property nearby in 1980 and over the next 35 years, he bought his uncle's property and land from his brother's farm which, along with his farm, make up today's Clover Crest.

Jim met his match when he married Leslie. A town girl by birth, she took to farming as though she were born for it. Leslie says she's "always had the heart of a farmer." The couple now have three adult children.

Sustainability and Growth

Farming, like society, went for many years without changing—decades even, says Leslie—and suddenly, it exploded, grew and changed. Jim says it probably started with electricity and mechanized machinery like hay elevators, barn cleaners and tractors. Over the last 35 years, Jim marvels at how much farming has changed. "It's become much more of a team approach," he says. When he started farming, he had to be a jack of all trades; today he focuses on his strengths and works with crop and cow nutritionists to grow the right food for his cows.

Jim's son Alexander is a veterinarian and has become one of the farm's most important experts. With Alexander on staff, Jim says herd management has improved tremendously—from breeding, to milk production, to cow comfort and raising the healthiest cows. "Alexander has more expertise than Jason and I could ever dream of having," says Jim. Alexander is living out his childhood dream as, Leslie says, growing up he would ask whether he



"The family farm is still a very integral part of the Canadian landscape and important to the thread and fabric of our country."
- Leslie Burrows

could be both a farmer and a vet. Being a vet gives him plenty of animal knowledge but it's also allowed him to visit many farms and, in the process, learn from other farmers. The Burrows installed a free access milk feeder so calves have access all day long after Alexander saw it work so successfully on other farms.

Jim thinks of farmers as the earliest environmentalists because they realized if they don't take care of their land and their animals, they won't be around long enough to stay in business. "What you do with your land has to be sustainable and when I look back over the last 50 years on this farm, we've made such huge improvements," he says. "People are much more conscious of doing things properly."

"I often think of my father who died in 1980, he probably wouldn't comprehend most of what we're doing," says Jim. "I think he'd be very impressed when he figured it out, but it would be foreign to him. Farming has changed that much since then."

A Stable Future

Prior to the late 1960s, the insecurity of the dairy market prevented many dairy farmers from investing in their farms, leaving the industry unstable and farmers wondering whether they could continue. That changed with the arrival of supply management.



With their newfound stability, farmers like the Burrows feel confident investing in technology and automation for their farms, creating a viable future for the family farm, and allowing it to grow and adapt to a changing society. For Leslie, the family farm is still a "very integral part of the Canadian landscape and important to the thread and fabric of our country."

After years of waking up for morning milking, Jim finally gave up his shift to Jason a few months ago. Jason now rises at 4 a.m. to milk the cows so he can spend his afternoons with his kids. Farming is very much about family but the bonds of family aren't always tied by blood. When Jason joined the farm, he did so hoping he could eventually become a partner. He loves dairy farming and is grateful to have found a farm to call home with a family that has embraced him.



The Conroys

FINDING NEW LIFE ON AN OLD FARM



The story of Kevin and Diana Conroys' journey to dairy farming is a Canadian fairy-tale: spanning years and provinces, moments of joy followed by bitter disappointment in their quest to find a farm until they stumbled upon one of the oldest farms in New Brunswick. Theirs is a story of the past and the present—a centuries-old farm and fledgling dairy farmers, brought together to keep a Canadian tradition alive for future generations.

Early Beginnings

The origins of Dixon Valleyview Farms can be traced back 247 years. Its history is intertwined with the emergence of New Brunswick as a province.

In 1783, Daniel Smith, a former prisoner-of-war in the American Revolution, fled to what was then British North America on a ship that sailed to Saint John. He soon made his way to Hoyt, where he purchased what is now Dixon Valleyview Farms. While few migrants were able to survive the harsh northern climate, Daniel Smith thrived.

The Smith family ran the farm for almost a century, selling it soon after Confederation in the early 1870s. The farm then passed from owner to owner, underwent several name changes and was even held in trust by the town, after the Depression left people too poor to buy the farm.

In 1943, Albert Voirinen purchased the farm and converted it into a dairy operation. He transported the milk by horse and buggy to the train station for shipping because there were no milk trucks.

The farm underwent more changes in ownership until 2014 when Kevin and Diana purchased it—fulfilling Kevin's life-long dream of becoming a dairy farmer.

01 Map of the land grant, 1784



"We are really proud to be part of a little piece of the history of this farm."
- Diana Conroy

NEW
BRUNSWICK



The history of agriculture in New Brunswick began with the colonization of Acadia by the French in 1604. Old records show the settlers grew rye, flax, barley, hemp, and corn on the marsh for themselves and their livestock. Two Algonquin nations, the Maliseet and the Mi'kmaq, occupied the territory but like most aboriginal groups, they did not raise cattle.

Farming was already a family affair at the time and its main goal was self-sufficiency. When New Brunswick officially became a province in 1784 under British rule,

the development of dairy as an industry lagged because of a focus on timber. However, as the population grew, so too did dairy production.

By 1900, 54 cheese factories were operating in the province, buying milk from 1,890 farmers. Butter was also produced in abundance with 33 creameries in operation. There was even a provincial dairy school in Sussex, founded around 1898 where farmers and manufacturers would go to learn about butter production, cheese making and animal husbandry. Today 199 dairy farms operate in New Brunswick.

The Journey to Dairy

Kevin grew up in Ontario on a farm with cash crops and beef cows but he always wanted to be a dairy farmer. He saw dairy as more reliable due to Canada's supply management system. About seven years ago, he and Diana began to seriously look into purchasing a dairy farm. Their search met with one disappointment after another as they were outbid by other buyers and were unable to sell their own property. Diana came close to giving up on their dream. "I'd had enough with the disappointment and I was thinking it wasn't meant to be." However, Kevin saw an ad for a farm in New Brunswick and six months later they owned one of the oldest farms in the province. "When we found out we could buy the farm, Kevin cried. It was surreal," says Diana.

Purchasing the farm was the first challenge, moving halfway across Canada with their four children and learning to be dairy farmers were others. The Conroys received a two-week crash course in dairy farming by the former owners before they were left to run the farm on their own. The biggest challenge, Kevin says, was learning to breed livestock. "If you don't have calves, you don't get milk."

Sustainability – Moving Forward without Forgetting the Past

It says a lot about the generations before the Conroys that they continued to farm this same piece of land and that it has survived all this time, while some farms have not. Every owner took advantage of new technologies to improve the farm to keep it sustainable. Albert Voironen introduced the first milking machine in the early 1950s, the next owner John Hall built a tie-stall barn and a milk house in 1980 and Garrett and Marlene Groenenberg built a free stall barn and milk parlour in 2003 and 2004 respectively. Inspired by all those who came before them, Diana hopes to build on their contributions.

Kevin and Diana have a vision for the farm that includes producing their own quality feed for their animals which requires expanding their farm operation. They have ploughed the fields, planted corn, and have plans for corn silage and corn meal next fall. They have also cleared ditches and creeks on their property to improve their crop land.

The Conroys also plan to invest in a robot milker one day. "We want to work smarter, not harder," says Diana. Robots allow for flexibility, which may encourage younger people, like their children, to choose a career on the farm. "I hope the dairy industry continues to grow. You hear about people leaving but then there are people like me just getting in," says Kevin.

Farming has evolved but Diana worries that in the process Canadian society has begun to overlook the role farms play in sustaining communities. She stresses that schools should be teaching kids about where their food comes from and feels strongly about hosting open farm days to educate the community. "We are one of the few farms in the area so it's our responsibility to educate our neighbours."

Whatever the future holds for Dixon Valleyview Farms, Kevin and Diana are proud to be part of a little piece of its history. "We feel lucky to have this farm and put its history out there. I'd love to see it continue to survive and thrive," says Diana.





"When we saw the cows out on the pasture during our first summer, it all set in: this is our farm."

- Kevin Conroy

The Marandas

BUILDING ÎLE D'ORLÉANS

Nearly 270 years have passed without a change in the view from the front step of the ancestral Maranda home overlooking the majestic St. Lawrence River.



In the 17th century, life was hard in France. Impoverished and fearful after a succession of wars and popular uprisings against those in power, Jean Maranda, his wife Jeanne, and their five children—Elizabeth, Jeanne, Michel, Jean-Baptiste and Marie—left the old continent in search of a better future in New France.

In 1666, after an arduous crossing that began in La Rochelle two months earlier, on a ship scarcely 25 metres long, the family landed in Quebec, less than 60 years after it was founded. As soon as they arrived, these pioneers rolled up their sleeves and, with considerable effort, cleared and then cultivated the land they were granted by Bishop de Laval in return for ground rent and a promise to develop and enhance the value of Île d'Orléans.

Today, the house built in 1736 that proudly stands at the heart of the Roémax farm—owned by Éric Maranda, spanning nearly 50 hectares with 67 heads of cattle in Saint-Pierre-de-l'Île d'Orléans—is home to three generations of Jean and Jeanne Maranda's descendants.



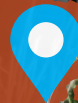
01 The ancestral home built in 1736


"Dairy farmers like us
understand that our lives
depend on nature."

- Roger Maranda



QUEBEC





"For a dairy farmer,
protecting the environment
and the well-being of his
animals is nothing new."

- Roger Maranda

The history of dairy in Quebec dates back to the beginning of New France. Around 1608, Samuel de Champlain brought the first domesticated cow to North America since indigenous peoples on the territory did not raise cattle. The first farmer was an apothecary from Paris named Louis Hebert, who established himself on the hills above Quebec City in 1617. Between 1660 and 1665, some of the best dairy cows of Normandy and Brittany were brought to New France to help promote the development of the industry in the young colony. From these cows originates the only Canadian breed of cows—the Canadienne.

The dairy industry expanded when Loyalists migrated to the south of Quebec a few years after the British took over New France in 1763. Years of bad crops at the beginning of the 19th century led farmers in the rest of the province to turn to cattle raising and dairy. At the time of Confederation, Quebec's prosperous dairy industry produced more than 700,000 pounds of cheese and 16 million pounds of butter, on top of producing milk. Today, the province counts 5,546 dairy farms.

An Exceptional Leader

At the Marandas', women have undisputedly played an important role in milk production. "As far back as I can remember, it was my mother who ran the farm. My father, Rosaire, preferred to work in construction, in Quebec," recalls Roger, Éric's father. Even though Rosaire returned the following year to make sure the Marandas' traditional land stayed in the family, his wife, Aurore took care of the farm.

Aurore Roberge was an exceptional woman. Not only did she make sure everything was in order with the family household as well as with the well-being of her loved ones, she was also an expert when it came to running the farm operations.

At the time, the barn housed 14 cows that had to be milked twice a day. At a very young age, Roger and later Éric were expected to tend to the task. "In those days, all the cousins lent a hand," says Roger. "We needed helping hands!" Éric recalls seeing Rosaire and Aurore bursting with pride while watching this fine group of youths, 10 to 12 years old, unloading load after load of hay, their brows dripping with sweat. "Even after all these years, there isn't a single family get together where my cousins and I don't look back fondly on the delicious drinks and sandwiches that my grandmother brought to the barn so we could get our strength back. We've never eaten such good sandwiches again!"

Passion and Sustainability

When asked how the Marandas lasted so long in the milk production business, Éric instantly answers, "We love what we do." Last year, he took over the farm from his father Roger. Even though being a dairy farmer is a demanding job, it never crossed his mind to do anything else.



Roger Maranda's son is a man of his time. With an entrepreneurial spirit, Éric stays up to date on the latest trends in the dairy industry to increase production. To achieve his vision of the future, he needs to be able to invest in the farm, and supply management allows him to do so. "When I go to the bank hoping to get a loan to upgrade my facilities, they take me seriously because I always come with a detailed investment plan," he says. "I'm able to develop my plan because I have a good idea how much money I can expect to make in a year. With supply management, I can count on the fact that I'll still be here tomorrow, producing the best milk I can, on an increasingly efficient farm. Farmers in some agricultural sectors aren't as fortunate to have such stable conditions."

Roger is very pragmatic about the necessity for sustainable development. "For a dairy farmer, protecting the environment and the well-being of his animals is nothing new. Here, we take care of the land and animals because if we don't, we're the ones who're going to suffer. This farm is our livelihood. Dairy farmers like us understand that our lives depend on nature."

In 1979, the Maranda family celebrated Jean's 350th birthday as a way of honouring their ancestors and the values they passed down—perseverance in what you do and a profound sense of joy for what you have accomplished. Thanks to Roger and Éric, the long line of Marandas can rejoice that their ancestral land remains a testament to their family's presence on Île d'Orléans since 1666.

02 The long parcels of land are a remnant of the French seigneurial system



The Werts

PILLARS OF THE COMMUNITY

Throughout the turbulence of the 20th century, four generations of the Wert family have provided succor to the village of Avonmore, Ontario. Although the Wert's farm is older than Canada itself, the forces of history that shaped the nation also shaped the family's own heritage.

In 1864, Roderick McLennan purchased a 100 acre parcel of land that would become Stanlee Farms. Roderick passed the farm down to his daughter Hattie and her husband Stanley Wert. Their son Sesel and his wife Mavis bought the farm in 1953, and passed it on to Jim and Nancy Wert, the current owners. Jim and Nancy have four sons, Nick, Patrick, Chris, and Ryan. Ryan currently works full-time on the farm.

The Bonds of Community through History

The fortunes of the Wert family and Avonmore were intertwined through two world wars, the Great Depression, and personal loss. During the First World War, Hattie Wert helped feed many of the young men from the area before they left for basic training. During the Depression, Hattie found herself once again providing meals to men riding the rails in search of work. The unwritten rules were that the farm would provide a meal at night and the men could sleep in the barn but in the morning, they had to move on.

The Second World War brought labour shortages to farms when most men went overseas to fight, so Hattie's sixteen-year-old son, Sesel, travelled out West to help bring in the harvest.






"I think Canadian
dairy has a
tremendous future."

- Jim Wert



A young man wearing a blue jacket, a cap, and gloves is working in a barn. He is holding a long wooden handle, possibly a pitchfork or a tool for moving hay. In the foreground, the back of a dark-colored cow is visible. The barn has wooden walls and metal railings. The lighting is warm and natural, suggesting an indoor setting with light coming from a window or opening.

"The industry is vibrant because young farmers are engaged and want to be part of it."

- Jim Wert

The first cattle to reach what is now Ontario was brought by Jesuit missionaries to Sainte-Marie (near Midland) between 1639 and 1649 when it was still part of New France. The Algonquin who first settled the territory were mostly nomads and generally did not practice agriculture. Following the American Revolution, Loyalists moved north into newly acquired British territory and helped set up the dairy industry along the St. Lawrence River, the Bay of Quinte, and the Niagara Peninsula. Another wave of Loyalists moved

north between 1796 and 1812. They were mostly Quakers, Mennonites, and German immigrants and they brought healthy cattle, establishing dairy farms along Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, and the north Capital of York (now Toronto). Dairy production flourished and half a century later, at the time of Confederation, there were over 200 cheese factories in the newly named province of Ontario. Today, there are 3,731 dairy farmers in Ontario.

Through two wars and the Great Depression, the farm sustained both the Wert family and members of the community. "I can remember my mother talking about selling eggs for eight cents a dozen and we always had eggs to eat. Sugar and butter were rationed because we were sending them to Britain," says Mavis.

In the fall of 1953, the community of Avonmore rallied around the Werts when disaster struck their farm. Sesel and Mavis had just been married and taken over the farm when an electrical fire destroyed the barn and, with it, all the feed necessary to sustain their livestock over the winter.

"We didn't have much money so we were trying to decide what to do because my husband could have gotten lots of good jobs," explains Mavis.

They were weighing their options when volunteers from the village offered to help milk their cows in the mornings and afternoons. One evening their neighbours came by "they had already collected money and hay and everybody offered to help, so we really had no choice," recalls Mavis. "The neighbours decided for us."

With the help of the entire community, including the town's minister, the barn was rebuilt and the farm saved for another generation. "We may not be sitting here today if it had not been for those neighbours!" says Nancy Wert.

A Stable Life

The implementation of supply management ushered in an era of economic stability previously unknown to Canadian farmers. This stability has allowed dairy farmers to invest in new technologies to improve their farm operations.

In 2005, the Werts built a new free-stall facility and continue to improve their farm today. Ryan is an example of a new generation of farmers that has embraced technology. Jim is encouraged by this generation and by his son's ambition.

For Ryan, the goal is not "meeting the standard, it's surpassing the bar." While he embraces advances in technology he also understands that it has to be combined with hands-on experience and the hard-won knowledge passed down from earlier generations. "It's about having the greatest know-how."

While technology has greatly improved efficiency, the most important attribute of Canada's supply management market model is that it is sustainable economically, environmentally, and ethically. Those three factors are unique to the Canadian dairy system. That stability allows dairy farmers to support programs such as *proAction*, the dairy sector's sustainability initiative.

While Jim takes care of the day-to-day operations, Nancy keeps the books and takes care of the calves. Now that her sons are grown, she jokingly talks about how her role has changed. "Now I have the calf department as sort of my nurturing role. It transferred to four legs instead of two!"

Advances in technology and a stable dairy industry has helped farmers like the Werts remain viable into the 21st century. "We understand the land better and understand cattle better," says Jim. "I think Canadian dairy has a tremendous future."



The Philippons

A DAIRY LEGACY IN MANITOBA

Philippon Farms, established in 1912, is intimately tied to the founding of a dairy industry in the small town of St. Claude, Manitoba. Like many other French immigrants escaping poverty in France, the farm's founder Alexis Philippon left behind all he knew to start a new life in Canada. Today, his grandson Alain Philippon owns the farm and is the third generation of Philippon farmers.

A New Start

Alexis Philippon was 19-years-old when he left his impoverished family in Brittany, France, in 1909 to travel to St. Claude, Manitoba, where a brother had immigrated years earlier. He left behind a country mired in century-old grievances—a legacy of the French Revolution that perpetuated the persecution of Bretons who had remained loyal to the King. Oppressed and poor, knowing he would never see his parents again, Alexis crossed the Atlantic in the hope of starting a better life.

He spent five years saving money by working on farms in the summer and as a lumberjack in the winter. Finally, he saved enough money to buy land but had to work another five years before he and his new bride, Marie Philippe, could start farming. They were livestock farmers and they gradually expanded their farm to include 1,800 acres of land, which was later divided among their six sons.

01 Alexis Philippon and family



"My grand-father used to say: taking care of the soil is the art of being a farmer."
- Alain Philippot



Farming in Manitoba has been practiced by Aboriginal and First Nations peoples for centuries, but European settlers were the first to raise cattle. Until the last decade of the 19th century, farmers in Manitoba produced milk to feed their families and would sell any surplus to a local purchaser, usually a neighbour or local store owner.

The province of Manitoba joined Canada in 1870, but there is little information available on early dairy production in the province. We do know that with the growth of Winnipeg and the creation of the Canadian Pacific Railway, demand for dairy products grew, leading to the birth of the dairy industry in Manitoba.

The Mennonites were the first to produce dairy products for sale. In the late 1880s, they would travel to Winnipeg to sell their surplus in cream, butter, and other staples such as eggs, wheat, and beef. In 1880, W.A. McAllister of Stoney Mountain created the first strictly dairy herd in Manitoba consisting of Ayrshires. Before long, cheese factories and creameries opened in developing communities settled by European immigrants. Today, there are about 285 family-owned dairy farms in Manitoba.

"Farming is my passion. I love walking around the barn every single day."
- Alain Philippot



From the Birth of St. Claude's Dairy Industry to Supply Management

The 1930s was a very difficult time for Manitoba. The Great Depression was compounded by a severe drought in St. Claude. No crops would grow, only wild grass, which grew like weeds but turned out to be great for feeding cows. As a result, many families turned to dairy farming to survive. "That's why there's a dairy industry in the area," says Alain. "These were the biggest impacts in the area, the Depression, and the drought of the 1930s." Luckily, Alexis Philippot had bought a new barn in 1932 and was well established when the Depression took hold. He would continue to farm until 1957, at which time his son Raymond and daughter-in-law Laurette took over the homestead.

When Raymond and Laurette took over Philippot Farms in 1958, the land was depleted. "The first year hay was scarce and the pasture was also exhausted," says Laurette. They had to get rid of their sheep because they were grazing too early in the spring and the hay could not grow. In 1958, the Philippots were only shipping three cans of cream a week, which generated very little income—about \$25 a week. "In the winter, we couldn't go to town, there was no road. We had to cross the field with horses to sell our cream," Laurette says.

Things started to change for them in 1967 with the arrival of supply management, when they started shipping milk. With the abundance of dairy farms in the area, investors from Winnipeg expanded the existing creamery in the 1960s. With the expansion, the creamery had to fill the demand for milk and sold bulk tanks to farmers so they could ship industrial milk. After making their payment on the bulk tank, Laurette still remembers clearing over \$400 for the first cheque—a big jump from when they were selling cream!

The implementation of supply management transformed the local economy. "In the town, they brought in sewers, natural gas, water, and they needed all this for the dairy plant," Alain explains. "It spearheaded the development of the town."

Alain is amazed that the misfortune of the 1930s shaped the emergence of the dairy industry in St. Claude. "Because we had bad soil, we had cows. Because we had cows, it brought dairy. Because it brought dairy, we got a butter plant. Because we got supply management, then all of a sudden these farms were profitable!"

Sustainability through Caring

For as long as he can remember, Alain wanted to be a farmer. His parents had magazines with pictures of tractors and, as a child, he would sit on the pictures. He followed his dad everywhere and slept on the bulk tank while his mom worked in the barn. After he finished university, he bought cows and quota and bought the rest of his father's farm five years later.

In 1994, Alain married Michelle and they have two sons, Nicolas and Patrick, and one daughter, Chantal. Today, they milk 68 cows. Alain loves walking around the barn and feels connected to the cows. "Cows have personality, some will even lick you," says Alain. "They're all different and they remember you."

Alain's love and passion for farming is evident when he talks about continuing his father's renewal of the land. Since 1958, the Philippots have worked hard to improve the land so it can be passed on to the next generation. They

increased organic matter, started crop rotation, and rotational grazing. His grandfather Alexis would look at the soil and say, "the land had life in it and it lost that and now that life is coming back."

Technology makes farms more efficient, but experience and passed down knowledge remains important. Sustainability is nothing new for farmers, "it's the art of being a farmer," Alexis used to say. The farm's productivity has increased incredibly over the last 40 years. Today Philippot Farms produces five to six times more milk than it used to.



The Porters

FAMILY, SELF-SUFFICIENCY, AND INNOVATION

The Porter family left England behind, the island of their birth, to begin anew. In 1883, George and Anna Porter immigrated to Chemainus, British Columbia, to take up work in the Vancouver Island sawmill. It was the family's resiliency and perseverance that led them to found Porter's Dairy Farm. The farm provided for the family and has fed the community for the past 120 years.

Making Ends Meet

While George worked intermittently at the sawmill, the rest of the family homesteaded 150 acres and cleared land on an oceanfront property to support themselves. Their son Walter Porter and his wife, Lily, built a barn with living quarters on one end where they raised their four children. A small milking herd was housed on the other.

When Walter's son Charlie took over the farm in 1938, he decided that bottling and selling milk door-to-door was the best way to support his family. He began his milk run that same year. His fledgling business flourished and his herd increased to about 55 cows.

For 10 years the Porter family hand-milked cows, but in 1947, Charlie brought in their first milking machines. His son, Don, remembers carrying the machine from cow to cow and manually hooking it into the line.

When Charlie ended his milk route in 1975, it marked the end of an era in Chemainus. The Porters were the last farm with a registered license to deliver milk in the area. After 37 years, Charlie was more than just a familiar face in the community, he was beloved.

In 1978, the dairy moved to a larger location less than two kilometres away from the original farm.

01 The last door-to-door milk delivery truck on Vancouver Island



"The land is our living so we've always looked after it."

- Karen Porter





"Farmers are your
biggest conservationists
in the world."

- Karen Porter

The dairy industry in British Columbia is tied to the days of gold mining and the Canadian Pacific Railway, which respectively created a market for dairy products and opened the West for settlement. The first recorded dairy farm in present day British Columbia was the Hudson's Bay Company farm founded in the early 1830s, near what is Fort Langley today. In 1848, the company moved to Vancouver Island and three farms were established near Victoria.

In 1858, British Columbia became an official colony and the year coincided with the discovery of gold in the Fraser River. Large numbers of miners passed through

Victoria, changing the makeup of the colony. By 1860, five milk sellers were included in the city directory. With the influx of people, farms began to take root on the banks of the Fraser, on Salt Spring Island, in the Okanagan and the Kootenays.

In 1891, the Dominion Census listed 6,500 farmers living in the province, most of these mixed farmers producing milk, butter and other staples to feed their families. Today, there are approximately 417 dairy farms in the province.

A New Generation

Today, Porter's Dairy Farm is run by Charlie's son Don and his wife Karen, their son and daughter-in-law, Ian and Brianne, and nephew Travis Waller. They milk 250 cows on 400 acres of cleared land. Don's daughter is also keeping the family farming tradition alive. She married a dairy farmer from the island and farms with her husband and children.

The Porters are a tightknit family and their sense of kinship extends to their staff and some of the old-timers Don grew up with. Although many are now in their 70s, they still come to work on the farm every day. Retirement is unthinkable here. "People don't understand quitting time. Quitting time is when a project is finished," says Karen.

Sustainability and Innovation

The Porters have embraced science and technology to ensure their farm remains viable for the next generation. This includes regular testing of their soil by agronomists so they know what to plant to be successful.

Brianne calls the cows the true bosses of the farm and they are the biggest beneficiaries of new technologies. "Today we weigh every component of the cows' diet and we mix everything in a nutritionally thought out way. That's a huge change in the 20 years that I've been at Porter," says Brianne.

The Porter family also built most of the barns with wood they milled themselves. They fix their own equipment, clear land, and they even designed and helped build their new milking parlour. Don and Ian made sure the modern milking parlour fit the needs of their family and their farm, but they also wanted to maintain a human connection to the milking process, which is why their milking equipment still requires manual attachment. "It's not always easy to find balance between modern expectations and keeping the traditional family environment. We think we are able to do just that, and we are proud of what we've accomplished," says Brianne.



The farm has undergone many changes over the last century and the parlour was a major transformation. When it was completed three years ago, a very moved Don told Karen that he wished his dad and grand-father were here to see how far the farm had come.

The Porter Women

The women of the Porter family have been as integral to the running and growth of the farm as the men. Charlie may have been the face of the farm, but his wife Anne was an equal partner. She milked cows until she was 65 and her strength is embodied by both Karen and Brianne.

Karen and Don met at school when she was 16. Although she wasn't raised on a farm, she was milking cows and doing the milk run soon after they started dating and knew what to expect when they married.

Raised in Chemainus, Brianne met Ian when she started working at Porter in her teens. She immediately embraced the farm lifestyle and has become one of its greatest champions. Gifted with animals, Brianne says she loves the life cycle of the farm and never tires of seeing a calf born.

Looking to the Future

The Porters are aware that consumers will determine how the next generation farms. Brianne is excited by the growing farm-to-table movement. Most of the high quality milk produced at Porter's Dairy remains on Vancouver Island.

"It's a great feeling when you can go to the grocery store and see, wow, my family probably produced that milk," she says.

The Porter's dairy farming legacy is secure as the family prepares for its sixth generation of farmers. Brianne and Ian's three boys are already working on the farm and can't think of a life without farming.



"If you look after
the land, it will look
after you."
- Ronnie MacInnis



PRINCE
EDWARD
ISLAND

The MacInnises

PERSEVERANCE, PERSISTENCE, AND SUCCESS

Patrick MacInnis set sail from Scotland in 1803, landing in St. Peter's Bay, Prince Edward Island, where he established what is now MacInnis Brothers Farm. The farm has remained in the MacInnis family for five generations, surviving a succession of tragedies that would defeat most people. Today, Ronnie and Karen MacInnis milk 50 cows on the same piece of land their ancestors first set foot on 213 years ago.



The Turn of the Century

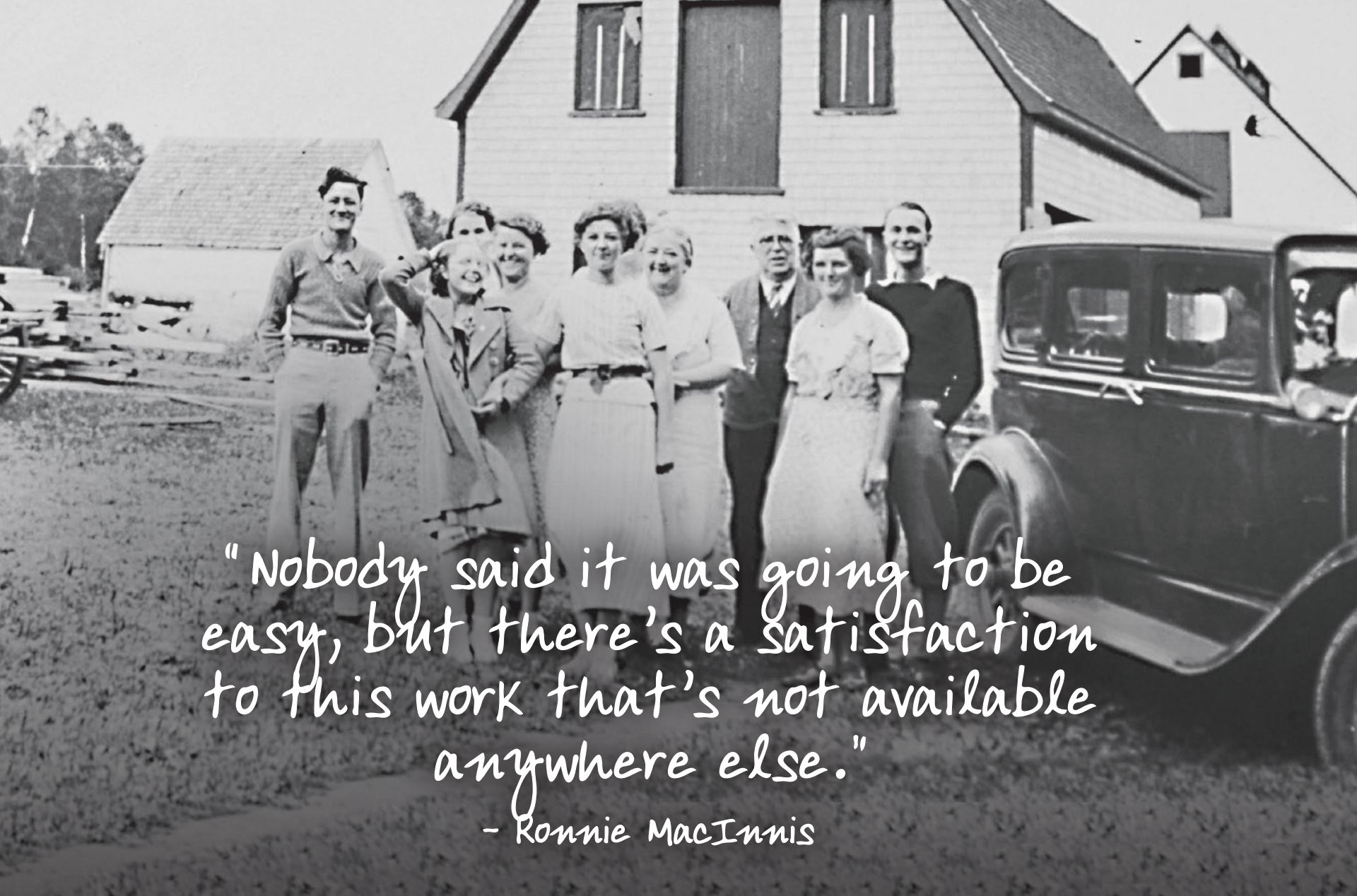
Not much is known about the first 100 years on the farm, but we do know that the farm wouldn't be here today if it weren't for the dedication and perseverance of Ronnie's grandmother, Kate MacInnis.

In 1906, Kate's husband John died of tuberculosis and her 11-year-old daughter passed away of diphtheria soon after. Determined to save her remaining children, Kate burned the family home to the ground to prevent the spreading of disease. Kate, newly widowed with six young children, rebuilt the family home and successfully ran the farm operation.

Her son Joseph was only three when his father died and a decade later, he was taken out of school to help run the farm. Soon after, he contracted and survived the Spanish flu. His subsequent immunity to the virus enabled him to care for the sick and bury the dead in his community.



01 Original barn, built in 1850



"Nobody said it was going to be easy, but there's a satisfaction to this work that's not available anywhere else."
- Ronnie MacInnis

The history of Prince Edward Island is closely tied to agriculture because the land has been, and continues to be, one of its primary resources. The French first introduced dairy farming on the island as the native Mi'Kmaq were not farmers but hunters, fishers, and gatherers. The French first settled in Port LaJoie across the harbour from Charlottetown in 1720. By 1740, the population of the island had grown to 890 people who owned 337 cows. Most of the early farmers kept a few milking cows to meet their own needs and produced butter and cheese for their families on their farms.

The island passed to the British in 1763 and was named Prince Edward Island in 1799. It is the only Maritime province that can boast of being an agricultural colony before Confederation and New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland depended heavily on the small island for provisions. By 1827, it had 23,000 horned cattle. The first creamery opened in 1887, followed over the next several decades by a number of cheese factories across the island. Today there are approximately 168 dairy farms in Prince Edward Island.

World War Two brought the next upheaval to St. Peter's Bay as their small community lost many young men, including a generation of farmers. But the community and the MacInnis family persevered and things took a turn for the better after the war.

In the late 1940s, Joseph started delivering fresh milk to the village. He was still only milking about four or five cows at the time, sending them to pasture in the summer which helped clear the land.

When supply management was introduced in the 1960s, the stable income helped the MacInnis family invest in their dairy operation and turn it into the farm it is today.

Forward Thinking Sustainability

The industrial revolution and the introduction of the first hay mower changed farming practices dramatically. Before he got sick, John had the foresight to invest in this machine, which sped up hay making and allowed him to feed more cows. Ronnie thinks this is when farming became more of a business as cheese and butter factories started to pop up and dairy farmers had a place to sell their excess milk to be made into cream or butter.

The next big change was the arrival of powered equipment like tractors and milking machines. While these improvements have changed farming, Ronnie doesn't think they've made farming any easier. He remembers an older farmer in the area telling him that when the first tractor came to the community, he thought life would be easier, "but then, they put lights on it!" The addition of lights lengthened the working day for farmers who had previously been constrained by daylight. Ronnie says farmers run a year-round operation and it's hard to step away. "Nobody said it was going to be easy, but there's a satisfaction to this work that's not available anywhere else," he says.

Ronnie credits his father for showing him the importance of caring for the land. Joseph planted trees and taught his sons how to farm the fields in an ethical way. "It's always been our priority to look after the land," says Ronnie. He proudly mentions that after all these years, his land is still very fertile.

For a time, Ronnie imagined a career other than farming. He took an electrician course in Charlottetown but continued to work on the farm in the summers. "The farm kept pulling me back and eventually, I answered the call. It was always in my blood," he says.

Ronnie speaks about his cows with deep appreciation and care. Although he joined the farm in 1976, he only recently took over responsibilities for the herd after his brother Tom passed away three years ago.

Although it's been difficult to lose his brother and partner, Ronnie has refocused his attention on dairy and has developed a keen interest in genetics and breeding.

Canada and Prince Edward Island are leaders in genomics and genetics, an industry which Ronnie says has rapidly progressed over the last 15 years. He stresses that innovations in cow comfort start with breeding strong, healthy cows.

The Future

The MacInnis' first barn was built in 1850 and the structure is still in use today. There has been some expansion and add-ons, but as the industry continues to grow and change, the original barn is a reminder of the farm's history. Mindful of the past, Ronnie is also looking forward and while he has yet to invest in robots, he knows it is the way of the future. "Robots are something I've seen coming for quite a number of years," he says.

Ronnie is quick to point out that he can't predict the future, but he hopes Canadian consumers continue to feel confident about buying Canadian milk products, not only because of its quality but because of how farmers care for their cows and their land.

As for the next 150 years, Ronnie can only imagine where the industry is headed. "Almost everything we use today to farm wasn't invented or wasn't common practice when my dad was born," he says.



The Ells

WESTERN TRAILBLAZERS

The Ell family arrived in Canada in 1899. Originally from Germany, they travelled to Russia lured by promises of land but these proved empty. They ventured further afield and found themselves settling in Kronau, Saskatchewan, where there was land to spare. Shortly after arriving they began milking a few cows.



A dairy industry in Saskatchewan was established after pioneer farmers wanted to move away from wheat farming. Since most farmers settled in Saskatchewan with a few cows, they sold their surplus of milk locally. William Miller, who moved to Prince Albert in 1873, realized the need for dairy and was among the first to commercialize dairy products in the province.

Saskatchewan was established as a district of the Northwest Territories in 1882, coinciding with a period of increased settlement. The Canadian Pacific Railway reached Moose Jaw and cattle travelled with settlers

in higher numbers. The increased number of dairy cows in Saskatchewan was reflected in attempts to establish cheese and butter factories. Since pioneer families all had cows and supplied themselves with milk, surpluses had to be transformed into cheese or butter. By the time Saskatchewan joined Confederation in 1905, dairying was well established amongst settlers. Today, there are 159 dairy farms in Saskatchewan.



SASKATCHEWAN

"It's still a tough life
but we love what we do."

- Gord Ell

From these humble beginnings, the Ells became dairy pioneers in Western Canada and their family-run operation shows no signs of slowing down. Today, fifth generation farmers, Gord and Tiffany Ell milk 200 cows on 3,000 acres of land.

Not much is known about the earliest Ell ancestors; all that remains to mark their existence are their gravestones. Gord Ell believes they must have started farming almost immediately after they arrived in Canada because work was scarce and farming was cheap. Regardless of the reason, the farm grew quickly to feed the couple's 13 children.

The Ells' self-sufficiency helped them survive the Depression as they produced enough milk and grew enough wheat to make their own flour. However, years of eating pasta took a toll on his grandfather, John Ell, and "until the day he died, he refused to eat macaroni," says Gord.

The Ells began shipping cream in the 1940s, transporting cans by horse and buggy to the train station to be shipped to Regina, Saskatchewan's capital. Soon after, they began shipping milk.

Many farmers in the region, including four Ell sons, went off to fight in World War Two. The younger children, including Gord's father Joe and his uncle Adam, stayed home to help their father look after the farm. When the older boys returned home from war, they realized the farm was running well without them and most moved to the city to raise their families. When Joe was 20, his father died and he and his brother Adam took over the farm. At the time, the Ells were doing a bit of grain farming but the boys decided to focus their attention on dairy.

They built a milking parlour in the mid-1950s—the first in Western Canada. By 1970, the family was the first farm in Saskatchewan to milk 100 cows.

"It's gratifying to take care of
our animals and to be producing
food for other people."

- Gord Ell





Forward Thinking Innovation

The Ell ancestors were ahead of their time, something upheld by Gord, his brother and two cousins, which continued when Gord and Tiffany purchased the farm in 2007.

In 2000, the Ells built a computerized barn that measures things like how much milk a cow has produced each day—right down to the last drop. Gord marvels at how much things have changed, not only in the barn, but also in the fields.

Over the years, Gord's father shared stories about the past when making a simple bale of hay could take an entire day. "As you can imagine, it was a lot of hard work," says Gord.

Today, technology has turned a full-day job into a two hour task, and has drastically changed the quality of life on the farm. "It's still a tough life," says Gord, but "we love what we do."

Cows' lives have also improved due to innovations in farming. The Ells have increased the size of their stalls, added new mats, and re-grooved the floor in the barn this year so cows wouldn't slip. "Basically, everything you can think of to make our cows comfortable, we do," says Gord.



The Bonds of Community and Family

The Ells are well-loved in the community, a bond that was created when Joe and Adam first took over the farm. They became community pillars—helping others through tough times. When people struggled, they gave them milk free of charge or traded something for the milk. "I'm not sure how much money they lost in that deal, but it was just something you did for the community," says Gord. "Big families needed help and they knew they could get milk from us."

Everybody milks cows at Ells' Dairy Farm—it's a true family operation. Gord says the only time in probably 100 years that someone from the immediate family didn't milk their cows was when Gord married Tiffany 26 years ago. Even then, it was their cousins who milked the cows, maintaining the family tradition.

The Ells are proud to be part of a Canadian dairy family.

The Croziers

ALBERTA BOUND

The story of the dairy farming Crozier family of Alberta began in 1849 with the birth of David Crozier near Stratford, Ontario. In 1871, David's family moved to Missouri where he married and took up farming on his own. This was followed by a move to Kansas with his wife and children in 1890.

Hearing of the opportunities with land opening up in Western Canada, David was once more on the move. In 1896, he ventured to what is now Sturgeon County, just north of Edmonton, where he purchased Cutbank Farm from William Cust. This land, which lies on the shores of Cutbank Lake, has remained in the Crozier family for 120 years. Today, David's great-grandson Lenard owns and operates Cheslen Dairies with his sons, Jason and Brett, on the same piece of land.

Pioneering Days

In the early years, David farmed with the help of his sons, Lloyd, John, and Kenneth. Transforming unbroken land into productive soil in which crops could be grown was only one of the challenges they faced. With no gas or electricity to heat their home through Alberta's harsh winters, David and his sons spent endless days chopping firewood. As time progressed, there was enough work to require farmhands as well. With no money to pay them, helpers were satisfied to receive room and board in the Crozier's home in exchange for their work. Neighbours helped neighbours, and slowly a community was born.


The original farming operation was comprised of horses, hogs, chickens, and enough cows to be considered a small dairy farm. All work was labour intensive. In the beginning, the Crozier's sold their farm products locally, including butter made and packaged under the "Cutbank" brand.

01 Crozier family, 1960 recipient of the Alberta Master Farm Family Award



"I'm proud of
producing a clean
product so I can feed
people every day."
- Jason Crozier





"I'm very proud that our family stayed in dairy farming. I realize all the hard work past generations had to do for me to be successful."

- Jason Crozier

The establishment of the dairy industry in Alberta is directly linked to the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The railway was part of Sir John A. Macdonald's plan to settle the west and create an agriculture industry to feed the new country. Although the two main sectors were wheat farming and cattle ranching, settlers did follow the main line of the railway and established dairy herds around Calgary and Edmonton. These farms supplied local demand for butter and cheese and in 1882 when Alberta was officially named, it had a small dairy industry which kept growing.

The 1885 census records 3,334 dairy cows in Alberta for 4,878 settlers. By the late 1880s, the supply of butter had exceeded demand which called for the creation of dairy factories and broader market outlets. The first dairy factory was opened by Ebenezer Healy in 1888, who set up a cheese factory on his farm. Today, there are approximately 531 dairy farms in Alberta.

Tending to livestock, milking cows by hand, separating cream, and transporting milk cans to Woodland Dairy in north Edmonton with a Model T Ford compounded the workload. Woodland was established in 1908 and the Croziers were one of their early suppliers of raw milk. Lenard remembers Woodland's workers removing each lid, checking that the can was full and doing the "sniff test" to ensure the milk was good.

New Generations, New Ways

In 1933, upon the passing of David at age 83, his sons John, Kenneth, and their families continued to operate the dairy farm at the original location. In approximately 1940, when rural electricity became available in Alberta, the Croziers' milking operation advanced to electric milking machines, bringing about the expansion of the herd. This ultimately led to the splitting of the herd of 60 milking cows between John and Kenneth in 1954.

Kenneth and his sons, Hugh and Clayton Crozier, remained on the original location, operating under the name Crozier Dairies. Hugh and his sons, Lee and Leslie, continued to dairy until 2014. Lenard's father, Chester Crozier, moved with his father John to an adjacent property on the original farm, operating under the name Cutbank Farms.

John Crozier was instrumental in helping introduce artificial breeding to the Edmonton area in the mid-50s, through a producer-owned co-operative, Edmonton Artificial Breeding. Artificial breeding remains to be one of the most important technological advances in the dairy industry. While dairying, Chester also worked in the Edmonton area as an artificial breeding technician for 15 years. Lenard and his sons have never housed a bull on their farm.

The dairy industry progressed quickly in the 1950s. John and Chester built one of the first raised platform milking parlours in Alberta. This four-stall parlour enabled workers to stand upright to operate the milking machines. In the late 50s, bulk milk handling and electric cooling was introduced in Alberta. This eliminated the manual process of filling, closing and cooling each can in a water tank. It also reduced the back-breaking manual labour of lifting 100-pound cans onto the transport truck for delivery to the processor.

Supply Management and New Technology

In the late 1960s, the supply management system was adopted, and brought a level of stability to the dairy industry that earlier generations could never have imagined. By this time, Lenard had decided to become a fourth generation dairy farmer. He saw this as an opportunity for expansion and modernization, building a barn that accommodated up to 150 milking cows for the next 40 years. In the late 1990s, Jason, Brett and their sister Lindsay became fifth generation dairy farmers, operating Cheslen Dairies in the old barn until it was replaced in 2012 with an ultra-modern milking facility.

The Croziers were among the first farms in the province to adopt robotic milking technology. The new barn focuses on cow comfort, natural ventilation, high efficiency motors and lights, and is heated by harnessing the body heat of the animals it houses. Water used to pre-cool the milk is ultimately used to water the herd. In other words, the barn is energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

Although the Croziers grow all their own feed for the livestock, they contract custom operators with specialized equipment for annual seeding, corn silage, and manure handling. All of the waste on the farm is recycled back into the soil for growing better crops.

Passing the Torch

In recognition of Lenard's involvement in the dairy industry for over 20 years, representing milk producers on various milk boards and committees, he was awarded the Alberta Dairy Achievement Award in 2012.

Lenard's dairying days have taken him from riding on a "stone boat" loaded with milk cans and multiple Crozier kids to robot milking and cell phone alerts from the milking barn. His passion for dairying continues as he passes the torch to his sons, Jason and Brett, with the hope that someday Cheslen Dairies may continue through one of his eight grandchildren, Cole, Jeg, Connor, Rylan, Barrett, Beck, Jett, and Autumn. The Crozier family is proud of its' dairy farming heritage and would welcome a sixth generation.





NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

"Farmers are looking
after the animal's
well-being first
and foremost."

- Denise Walsh



Newfoundland and Labrador's climate and soil are not conducive to agriculture. In the early 1800s, fishing families raised livestock for their own use and traded the little surplus they had with neighbours. Early commercial farming started around the 1840s and proved most successful around St. John's.

Two agricultural communities emerged: Goulds and Kilbride. They were situated along the road from St. John's to Bay Bulls and farmers brought produce

and milk by cart to town to sell. When Newfoundland and Labrador joined Confederation in 1949, the province focused on the industrialization of agriculture and shifted towards more large-scale commercial farming. The 1966 census reported only 60 farms with more than 13 cows. Today, there are 23 dairy farms in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Walshes

FEEDING THE FAMILY, FEEDING THE ISLAND

Prior to Confederation and long before Newfoundland became a part of Canada, the Walsh family was feeding the island. Much has changed over the last 150 years, but what remains is the family's tradition of providing safe, quality food.



Welcome to Glenview Farms

Little is known about John Walsh's origins and yet he has left a legacy that has been passed down through generations. Sometime between 1830 and 1850, John purchased a 30-acre piece of land in Kilbride, Newfoundland, becoming the first in a long line of Walsh farmers working the land.

Two of his sons left the small island for the big city—one for Montreal, the other for Chicago, but his son Richard saw the potential of the farm and purchased it from his father in 1904.

Back then, there weren't many goods being shipped to Newfoundland, so islanders relied on locally-produced food to survive. Richard seized the opportunity to expand and became one of the most successful mixed—dairy and vegetable—farmers on the island. In 1904, he launched a door-to-door milk delivery service.



His foresight allowed him to invest in the earliest innovations, such as electricity and running water. Electricity also brought about changes in milking and in 1940 Richard installed bucket milkers to milk the cows—the precursor to automated milking systems.

During the Great Depression, the Kilbride area survived because they were isolated and their micro-economy sustained them. However, the Walsh family was always aware of their good fortune and when people from St. John's came knocking at their door in need of food, the family helped out. Richard's grandson Robert remembers his parents saying it was important to give to those who were less fortunate.

Once Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada, difficulties for the Walsh family began. Overnight, throughout the island there was a surplus of food from across the country. Richard's son Patrick, and his two brothers Richard and Leo who had taken over the family farm, found themselves waiting for months to be paid for milk.

The introduction of the supply management system, hard work, and a passion for farming has allowed the Walsh farm to flourish. Today it is owned by siblings Robert, David, and Denise and is home to 450 cows and 560 acres of land. Their late brother Wayne, who passed away three years ago and took great pride in the farm, was also a partner and his absence is still felt by the family today.

Robert credits Canada's supply management system for allowing his family to keep farming, stating that without it, "we wouldn't survive, we wouldn't be able to compete." Today, residents of St. John's have access to local, quality milk, produced sustainably, right in their own back yard.



"We value farming. We have a passion for it."
- Robert Walsh

Agriculture in their Blood

Farming has never been easy, but farming in Newfoundland is especially challenging—it's an isolated island with limited land and a shorter growing season due to its climate. Despite its challenges, the Walsh family wouldn't want to do anything else, and none of them are. Patrick's nine children have pursued careers in agriculture, whether on farm, with the provincial government, or within the industry. "I think for all of us, most days, what we like is the challenge. You know it's not easy but you're always striving to do your best," says Robert.

The Walsh siblings say they inherited their drive and vision from their parents, especially their mother, who Robert describes as someone who could look at the farm and see the bigger picture and know exactly what was needed.

Downtown Farming and Sustainability

It's rare to find a dairy farm in the city, but St. John's has expanded since the late 1800s to engulf the once rural Kilbride.

Rather than fight urbanization, the Walsh farmers have reached out to their neighbours. "One of the positives of farming in a heavily populated area is the people can actually see what we do," says Robert.

The Walsh family has been very successful in part because they are so open to change. They see it as necessary. "One hundred years ago, everyone probably had their own farm," says Robert. "Now, only two percent of the population produces food and they are responsible for feeding the country, so you can imagine the technology that had to be implemented to make that work."

Denise marvels at how much cow comfort and care has changed, and laughs that her cows gel mattresses are more comfortable than what most people sleep on. She notes that farmers and dairy nutritionists have become gourmet chefs, carefully testing different feeds to find healthy combinations to keep the cows happy. The investments in their animals have not only made healthier, more content cows, it has also doubled their production since 1980.

Farming machinery on the Walsh farm has evolved from the milking machine installed by Richard, to the parlour found on the farm today. Innovation has changed how people farm but, for the Walsh family, farming remains about the love of the animals and the love of the land. All the siblings still cherish the early mornings, alone in the barn with cows. "It's so peaceful," says Denise.

Talking to Consumers

Consumer education has become an important part of farming, as "people need to realize that without farming, there is no food," says Robert. People want to learn about food production, something the family tries to foster. David is the first to admit he's more comfortable in the fields with his crops, but when neighbours come over with questions about the cows and the farm, "we are here to talk and give them a tour because that kind of conversation bridges the disconnect," he says. That is the family's biggest hope for farming in the next 150 years—that people feel connected to their food and the animals and farmers who work so hard to provide it.



01 The spirit of Wayne Walsh, now deceased, is still felt on the farm

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