

People - Lemuel Hogue

Many lessons can be learned from the past

By JOE BARKOVICH
Tribune Reporter

Lemuel Hogue is one of those people who has maintained a link with the past.

He has a healthy crop of silver-colored hair which, in a way, adds to his credibility as a local historian and story teller. He was born in 1904 in Marshville, Ontario, and he was perceptive enough to notice that the name did not register when he said it. "Where's Marshville?" he asked, answering my question with another question. "Marshville is now know as Wainfleet".

Mr. Hogue spent much of his life working in the blacksmith shop that his father started in Welland. It was called M. H. Hogue, after his father, and it was the last blacksmith shop to operate here.

"There were six in Welland at one time," he recalled, thinking back to the day when milk wagons, bread wagons, fire wagons and other service vehicles were all pulled by horses. "Blacksmithing was the big thing, you know."

PAINTING

Mr. Hogue and his wife Elizabeth live on Oakland Avenue in a home that is somewhat crowded with examples of another of Mr. Hogue's interests: painting. There are paintings hanging on the walls, paintings in the corner by the entrance way, paintings in the hallway.

One of his paintings, dealing with his view of the scheme of Creation, is hanging permanently at McMaster University; another, a semi-abstract called Spirit of Welland, is hanging at Nigara College and two others are at E. L. Crossley Secondary School.

Mr. Hogue says he always enjoyed painting, even as a boy. You know he is telling the truth when he offers to show you some of his early works: "I have stuff here that I painted before I went to kindergarten," he said, "paintings done with cocoa or mustard. It was a way of expressing myself, and that's one of the reasons I've liked it so much."

He says though, that he kept painting as a hobby, even though he has taken some correspondence courses about it.

"I never refer to myself as an

artist," he said, "but I wouldn't mind calling myself a historian without any hesitation. To call yourself an artist; that's a big mouthful, you know."

Mr. Hogue was named after his grandfather on his father's side of the family. He said his grandfather came to this area with the Michigan Central railway to build a trestle at the Forks Road pumping station. His great-grandfather on his mother's side of the family came to Canada from Ireland to work on the old Feeder Canal.

Mr. Hogue started helping in the blacksmith shop when he was a boy. His father owned one in Wainfleet before moving to Welland, when Mr. Hogue was three years old.

"After school," he recalled, "I used to go down to the blacksmith shop and hold the light so dad could see what he was doing. In those days they worked from daylight to dark."

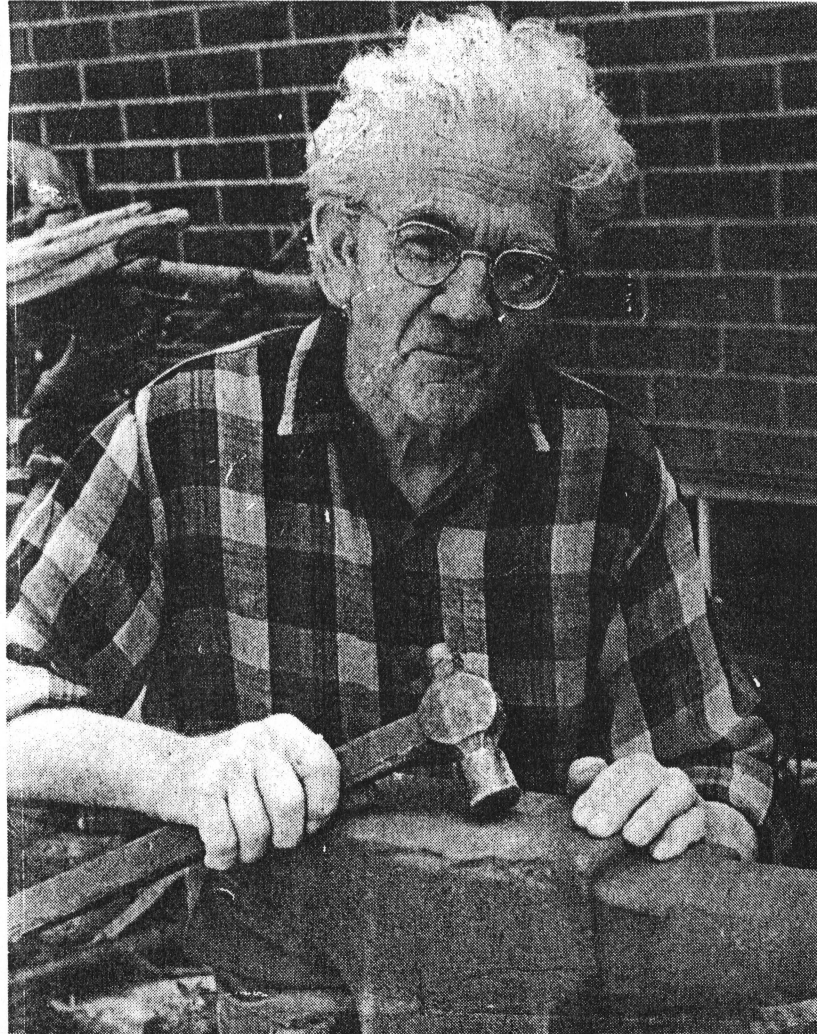
He remembered that it used to cost 10 cents to set a shoe, which required using eight nails.

"On a slippery morning, dad would get to the shop and he'd find a line-up of bread wagons and milk wagons waiting there because the horses had to get sharpened up so they wouldn't slip."

VASTLY DIFFERENT

Things were vastly different even in the business world during that day, according to Mr. Hogue's recollections. "You had your customers, and there wasn't so much competition as I remember it. Why, there was Benson's (another blacksmith shop) down the road and before we put in a power drill, we used to go down there and drill stuff. He'd come down and get a favor or two from us."

But the introduction of rubber shoes "pretty well spelled doom" as far as the blacksmith business was concerned, Mr. Hogue pointed out. He said one of the reasons the changeover was made was because the rubber shoes were more quiet: "There wasn't none of this clippety clop clippety clop," he explained. "Then, after the rubber shoes came in, some of the blacksmiths went for the race horses because they, of course, didn't change. But dad didn't bother with the race horses."



Lemuel Hogue with old hammer, anvil

-Tribune Photo

As the horses became fewer and fewer, the business started to change. Cars were becoming more and more plentiful and so the Hagues turned to re-arching springs, repairing radiators, and straightening axles. Still, the last horse shod by the Hagues was in 1954.

He has several memories about working in the blacksmith shop. One of them is about a horse called Freddie, owned by a dairy that was across the street from the Hagues' shop.

"Freddie was a mean one," Mr. Hogue said. "I remember that when we worked on him, we had to put a strap around his hind foot, then up, and a half hitch around his jaw. When Freddie lifted his foot to kick out, somebody would take up the slack so that when Freddie kicked, he kicked himself in the jaw. After a couple of kicks, Freddie would be all right for a while."

OTHER JOBS

Mr. Hogue said that when the business was finally closed, he

tried a variety of jobs, including selling stainless steel pots and pans.

"It seemed like such a nice way to make a living, just walking around, talking to people. But I wasn't pushy enough for that."

His wife said, "We nearly starved to death while he was trying to do it," and she laughed.

Mr. Hogue also worked for a dredging company, was a deckhand on the S.S. Charles Dick for one season and joined

Whiting Equipment from where he retired four years ago.

During much of his life, Mr. Hogue has made a practice of spending some of his free time with other people. He was Sunday school teacher a First Baptist Church, still sings in the church choir, spends one morning each week helping the people at Sunset Haven to paint, and talks about local history or art to students in local schools.

He started speaking to students almost by accident. One of his daughter, a teacher, was trying to explain how the aqueduct works to her class and decided to call in her father. Mr. Hogue went, and eventually found himself being invited by the school principal to talk to his class.

"One of the reasons I've stayed at this," he said, "is that at Bridgeview School, I was invited to talk for 15 minutes to a class and when it came to recess, the principal said we ran out of time, and would have to go through recess to continue. All the kids applauded, and the principal couldn't believe it. I came back at the end of recess and ended up staying until the afternoon."

FIRST NAME

Few people are aware of it, he said, but the first name Welland had was Burgar's Bank. Something else the students find fascinating is the fact that four communities vied to become the seat of Welland County: Port Robinson, Cooks Mills, Fonthill and Welland. Mr. Hogue said Welland was chosen when the Michigan Central Railway came to the community. "And that was where we got our motto, 'Where Rails and Water Meet,'" he said.

According to Mr. Hogue, things were different in the past because there wasn't the "hustle and bustle" that characterize this day. He said he thinks it is good for people to know about the past and local history.

"I think it's good that they do and I find that a good number of kids at school really gobble it up. I try to job their minds. I think we should learn lessons from the past, and we've got to look ahead too. But there are lessons to be learned and it does us good to know them."