

“Nace” Halford

Ignatius “Nace” Halford was long a figure in the life of Maidstone Cross. Born in 1860, the son of John Halford II and Ellen Barrett, he and his wife Christine (Rourke) ran a general store, the post office and first telephone system in the village. They had nine children - Frank, Agnes (McPharlin), Bernadette (McLean), Dennis, Pauline (Quinlan), and Mary (Walker) - in the home next to the store. Although that store was demolished to make way for the present Post Office, their home still stands, and is presently the residence of the Reverend and Mrs. Roy Dowdy.

A staunch supporter of the church, it was he along with Eugene Sullivan who carted the cornerstone for the present church from Windsor, a matter of great pride to his last surviving daughter, Pauline Quinlan. As well, he also hauled brick from the Lennon farm - later the farm of his son-in-law, Ed Sexton - for the building of the church itself. In his era, there was certainly no question of “thirty and out.” In 1945 he was honoured with the King George V Service medal for fifty-five years of service as postmaster of the village; he died the following year. The store and post office, however, continued to serve the community for another two decades: his youngest daughter Mary and her husband Johnny Walker carried on the tradition until 1964.

Nace certainly seems to have been an advocate of communication. Not only did he assure the mail, he also supported telephone links in the early days. The first telephone exchange in the village was installed in the store in 1909, was later moved to their home next door and then was moved one more house west to Annie Markham’s house, now the home of Hugh and Luanne Hebert.

His role in facilitating communication, however, was not limited to the mail and the telephone. A number of the older members of our community remember the wider role of a store before such giants as Zehrs and A&P. The store not only provided staples and postal services, it was also a centre where people lingered to get “the news” of the area. As well, it provided a convenient shelter for those traveling on the electric railway, or later the bus. Mrs. Myrtle (Daniher) Crowder remembers that she “traveled to and from the City of Windsor to obtain a higher education and who lived with her parents on a Maidstone farm, Concession 9, often stopped in this store waiting for someone to come from home to pick her up. There were no buses in those days that picked up students....”

Of Nace’s many descendants, Nancy (Quinlan) Cook continues the tradition of service to the parish and Clare (McLean) McCarthy has provided a number of photos for this publication.

Ignatius “Nace” Halford, postmaster and storekeeper, with Charles Stowe of Woodslee.

