

Personality Profile Of The Week

W. Howard Waddell

Beside the driveway entrance of 58 Mineola Road West, grows a fine old white pine towering above the neat cottage home of Mr. and Mrs. W. Howard Waddell. No single thing could be more fitting to mark the home of a man who has devoted much of his long and busy life working with trees.

Born in Chatham, Ontario, in 1882, Howard Waddell completed his early schooling there. His teenage summer holidays were spent working on the schooners which plied Lake Ontario at that time, and he remembers clearly the passenger steamers of those days before highways and train travel, and the fishing fleets that worked the Lake before pollution took its toll.

His love of outdoors and travel soon interrupted his high school business course and sent him away to the first of many construction projects that were to provide him with rich experiences and memories.

For the next 18 years Mr. Waddell worked with MacKenzie & Mann Construction Co. in Canada, Cuba and Mexico. The projects in which he took part, read like excerpts from pages of a history book. His fascinating scrapbook could well be used as a reference source for the study of early heavy construction work, in power dams, water projects and the like, that laid the foundation for industrial development in Canada in the early 1900's.

Space here is insufficient to record them all. In 1904, at the age of 22, he was working on the Kakabeka Falls power project, becoming an expert in concrete construction work; using every spare moment of free time to travel and prospect through the rich Thunderbay District over the trails of early survey parties.

In 1907, he travelled to Monterey, Mexico, working here as chief inspector of all concrete work on this immense fresh-water storage project. An old letter in his scrapbook reveals that for this job the men were paid in gold. His next move was to Cuba, where he added some experience in citrus fruit growing to his knowledge.

He returned to Canada to marry the former Irene Pat-

erson of Chatham, on January, 1, 1910. The couple had three children, a son, Patterson, of Haliburton, Ontario, and two daughters, Patricia (Mrs. F. Connon of Lorne Park), and Miss Barbara Waddell of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

When Mr. Waddell returned from the First War in 1919, he joined the Welland Canal project, and it was here in the years until 1930, that he left his signature in trees along that man-made waterway.

At Port Weller, the Waddell's lived in a house set in a grassless, treeless, wilderness of sand and rock. As a concrete specialist, he managed a crew of several hundred men, engaged in work that marred the land with every move they made. When men dig a canal, they make a desert. The trench of the Welland varied from 200 feet to a mile wide and about 150 feet deep. From Lake to lake, it was a 27 mile, ugly incision in the beautiful vine-lands and orchards of the Niagara Peninsula.

He conceived the idea of making the canal right-of-way a beauty spot, and at his own home planted the first trees. In a few years, as the canal work proceeded, these few became a grove. He took a course in forestry at the University in Toronto, and, with the backing and encouragement of the authorities, changed his vocation from concrete specialist to forestry specialist.

Literally millions of trees were planted under his direction and guidance, providing windbreaks and shelter zones for the passing vessels; binding the soft banks of the canal against slides and erosion, landscaping and refurbishing the land of the one to three mile right-of-way. There were no tree-supplying nurseries at that time, and all had to be started from seed. The great quantities of seed were supplied by Ontario Forestry Stations and interested private citizens, who gathered seed from their own mature trees and sent them to Mr. Waddell.

He also established ponds and wild life sanctuaries, so that by the time he left this work in 1930, the man-made scar was healed.



W. Howard Waddell

The next two years were spent, again as a concrete specialist, on the Abitibi Power project, before he found the opportunity again to work his miracles with trees; this time in Schumaker, Ontario, at the McIntyre-Porcupine Gold Mines.

In the years from 1932 to his retirement in 1957, acres of land devastated with the clay-like muck dumped from the mines, were reclaimed, fertilized, planted, and turned into one of Canada's outstanding public parks. Banks of flowers, ponds, stands of fine trees and shrubs, stretches of lawns and walks, picnic shelters and a ball park spread out from the mine-head, and drew thousands of admiring visitors. A cherished, hand-tooled leather wallet records: Howard Waddell - Creator of McIntyre Community Park - Schumaker, Ontario.

Throughout these years, Mrs. Waddell has shared her husband's love of trees, people and travel, challenging projects, rich memories and many friends.

On moving to Port Credit in 1957, the Waddell's, as always, joined in the community life, becoming active members of First United Church and forming many new friendships. Their garden, shaded by the tall pine, shows Mr. Waddell's experienced hand, in the fine trees, shrubs, and flowers, walks and lawns.