

GERTRUDE PARKER: A WOMAN OF CLASS AND DETERMINATION

Gertrude Parker's life began when she was born the daughter of Gordon and Adelaide Fletcher, on the twelfth day of October 1891, in Westmount, Quebec.

In her youth, she very much enjoyed an active lifestyle. She thoroughly enjoyed the outdoors, in particular water and winter sports. Canoeing and snowshoeing seemed to be the two activities she treasured the most. When not engaging in recreational activities, Gertrude found the time to serve her church as a Sunday school teacher.

Gertrude married Richard Thomas Henry Hewlett Parker in 1915. The two moved frequently. Until the time they called Sackville home, they lived in Saint John, Montreal, Toronto, Halifax, and Bedford. The Parker's had six boys and one daughter.

Wartimes were particularly hard on Gertrude, as her husband and six sons all served at one point in the wars that waged in 1914 to 1918, 1939 to 1945, and 1950 until 1953. One Parker child was lost to the war cause during the Second World War.



It has been said that Mrs. Parker represented "...the human touch, the caring for the individual, true personal involvement in the community, and outstanding courage through many adversities."

~ The Halifax Chronicle-Herald

Early in the year 1946, Mrs. Parker took over the Sackville telephone switchboard from a Mrs. Daisy Weir. She operated an old magneto type switchboard with a crank for the Maritime Telephone and Telegraph Company. She received a salary of thirteen dollars a month to provide a service from Bedford to the Hants County line, including Beaver Bank and Lucasville. The switchboard was kept open twenty-four hours a day. Gertrude often handled the overnight calls, charging twenty-five cents to anyone making one then. When she took over the Sackville Telephone Exchange it had less than fifty members. By the time she finished in 1963, Mrs. Parker had around three hundred lines to look after. She held her position with the telephone company until the dial phone system was introduced in 1963.

The Halifax Chronicle-Herald once wrote an article on Parker, stating: "Until the dial system was introduced in 1963, Mrs. Gertrude Parker was the telephone operator, the brains, the human component, through which every call in the area had to funnel. She was as far removed from the computerized dial system, or the nasal recording, as the human heart is removed from the robot."

When not dealing with calls, Gertrude Parker and her family became involved with the formation of the Sackville Fire Department in 1955. In thanks to her service and dedication, she was named an honorary fire chief of the Sackville Fire Department.

In honour of this kind and caring lady, the school board named an elementary school after this Sackville pioneer in 1975. She passed away in 1980 after a struggle with health issues.

There are many stories to be discovered about the history of Sackville and its many notable citizens. Visit the Fultz House Museum on the web @ www.fultzhouse.ca or call 865-3794 to learn more.

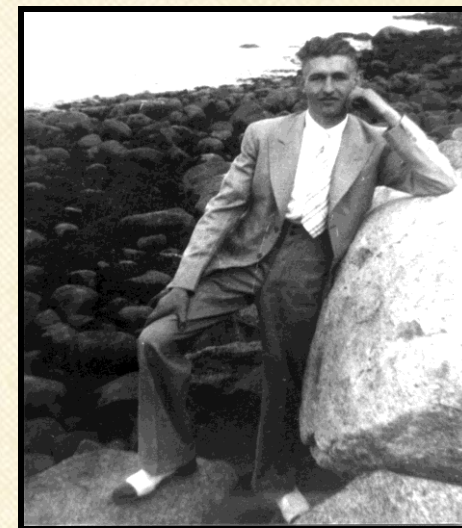
CITIZENS WHO HAVE CARED

THE STORIES OF

TED B. BLACKBURN

AND

GERTRUDE PARKER



Ted B. Blackburn

FULTZ HOUSE MUSEUM

MEET MR. SACKVILLE... TED B. BLACKBURN

Ted B. Blackburn settled into Sackville nicely after arriving in a beat up truck from the Prairies in 1934. He was known for his diversified brand of commerce in Sackville.

Mr. Blackburn operated a general store on the main highway and Cobequid Road intersection. He would later open the Blackburn Shopping Centre, which was the first shopping centre in Sackville. Furniture, appliances, clothing, dry goods, hardware & building supplies and groceries were sold out of the three-storey building by the early 1960's. He would later sell the centre in the early 1970's.



In 1935 local entrepreneur, Ted B. Blackburn, began his first store with his sister, Florence, in the building pictured above.

A group of kids taking a break from sliding outside the Blackburn Shopping Centre.

A roast in Ted's honour revealed that he was also an avid supporter of television when it came out in the early 1950's. In fact, he bought hundreds of sets and was determined to make sure that every home from Sackville to Ecum Secum had one. He dropped off samples for free, saying he would be back in a couple of weeks to either pick them up or arrange payment. He always claimed that none of the televisions came back.

He once told friends he was closing up his business, but fifteen years later the cash register was still ringing up sales. Blackburn was a man who listened and followed what the public wanted. It has even been said that his store was the K-Mart of the day.

He was an instrumental force in the formation of the Sackville Fire Department, in the founding of Hillside Park School, the Acadia School and in the planning and building of Sidney Stephen High School, which was to become the area high school.

Blackburn, when not pursuing community interest projects, served as a local councillor in the fifties, representing the communities of Sackville, Bedford, Windsor Junction, Waverly and Mount Uniacke. He was also known for his love of politics and always kept chocolates and silk stockings on hand during an election.



A group of employees and residents gathered in front of the Blackburn store (circa 1950).



When not helping friends and his neighbours, he was known for relocating his homes. It has been said that he once moved his home off the Cobequid Road corner and it appeared two weeks later on Hillside Avenue. It is even joked that because of Blackburn moving buildings around, this was why the Old Sackville Road became so wide.

Being a patriotic soul, Blackburn gave everyone who worked for him the day off when it was announced that World War II was over.

Blackburn, a founding member of the Sackville Heritage Society, unfortunately lost his fight with diabetes and other ailments in 1987.

Mr. Blackburn was known as Mr. Sackville to many area residents for his radio ads to draw people to a then rural community.

Ted B. Blackburn helped create a new identity for the community and was a catalyst for change. He was also the kind of man who always lent a helping hand.