

The Emerson

We've lived in the same house for fifty years and gradually learned a lot about our neighbours. There were about five families that came from New Brunswick in the early part of the 1900's. Apparently, all five families settled within earshot of each other.

One family, the Batemans, established a grocery store on 99th street. Tubby Bateman, the patriarch, was an amputee who shared information about the neighbourhood with me while he watched the construction of the Catholic Social Services building, which he had financed, from a lot next door where he played as a child.

One of the things he said was that on Mondays, the five families had a race to see who could get the washing hanging first and the squeak of the clothesline would announce the winner. Down the street east of the Bateman home is a brick house on a double lot. A number of times, I was entertained by Mr. Scully while visiting him on his front porch. He asked me where I lived and I told him across the lane and up the block on the next street and he said that I lived in the Emerson place.

Scully had owned a dray company that hauled ice in the summer from the river valley and coal in the winter from the mine where the convention centre is today. I found the building with double doors on the lane interesting and found that they had housed horses and a wagon in the building at one time. Scully said that Emerson had been a driver for the dray company, but the Emersons had moved to the United States in 1929.

I had ferried the Scullys to the election polls a few times. They were NDP supporters. One time, after old man Scully had passed away, I ferried his wife and her sister - Ida and Iris, to the polls. On returning, they discovered they were locked out of the house and I got a friend's teenage son to climb in the window and let them in.

I had gotten to know these little old gals with their large coke bottle lens glasses and their muskrat coats - "the muskrats".

On a cold winter afternoon, I saw Ida, Mrs. Scully, in the Bateman store. I said, "Afternoon, Mrs. Scully," and she looked up at me, peering, and said. "Who are you?" And I answered, "I live in the Emerson place." And she replied, "You Emersons never did like us much, did you?"