

# Canadian Chestnut Council

. . . on the Chestnut Trail

1332 Suncrest Road  
Kingsville, Ontario N9Y 3H3

NEWSLETTER #14  
October 1996

## ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday November 2, 1996 • 1:20 pm - 4:30 pm

at

ADVISORY SERVICES BUILDING (Rittenhouse Hall)  
Horticultural Experiment Station • VINELAND ONTARIO

*See pages 7 & 8 for details and directions.*

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### Editor's Comments

The newsletter attempts to keep members of the Canadian Chestnut Council (CCC) informed about the activities and interests of the CCC. As well, because the executive maintains a close association with the American Chestnut Foundation (ACF), a serious effort is made to keep Canadian readers informed about what is taking place in the U.S. and elsewhere in the chestnut growing areas of the world.

In Newsletters 11, 12 and 13 stories from our members have been recounted to tell of early boyhood experiences with the Chestnut tree. In this newsletter the distaff side has not been neglected for a story by Nerissa Archer McInnis has been used. The story was copied from a letter to the editor of the London Free Press, January 27th, 1940. Hopefully all readers will find it a very interesting story.

The major objective of the CCC and the ACF is to restore the American Chestnut, Castanea dentata, to our woodland areas. It is also a beautiful tree in hardwood landscapes. Charles Darwin remarked "A traveller should be a botanist, for in all views plants form the chief embellishments."

Your interest and support is much appreciated. Individually we can do much; collectively we can do much more. Let us not be daunted by the great challenge facing us.

Colin D. McKeen, Editor  
62 Westmoreland Ave., Orangeville, Ontario L9W 3B6

## **The Last Chestnut**

*(Correspondent regrets that some children today have never seen a chestnut in bloom.)  
London Free Press, January 27, 1940.*

Editor of London Free Press:

A few weeks ago I noticed an article by your roving reporter on the disappearance of Chestnut trees and it impressed me very much. In fact, I felt very sad over the whole affair.

Twenty years ago and a great many years before that there were always a number of boys and girls from Newbury and the district north of the village of Wardsville attending the Wardsville High School. Our favourite sport in the fall was gathering chestnuts from the trees in Mr. Peter O'Malley's woods, also from the old trees in the fields on up the old Hagarty Road (road now paved between Wardsville and Newbury).

In the fall we often took extra lunch in our lunch boxes so we might have something to eat after four o'clock before we started our search for chestnuts. I might add that we usually kept a safe distance away from a little beautifully kept cemetery in the woods. Once in a while my sister and I would venture near because some of the gravestones had our surname engraved upon them. The deceased were, however, no relation to us, just bore the same name.

The chestnut trees in those days were huge, very much gnarled and always bore quantities of nuts. The boys often climbed the trees and shook the limbs, others would throw up sticks and the nuts would simply shower down. Particularly after a frosty night, there would be many nuts on the ground and those left on the trees just ready to fall out of the half-opened burrs.

After the Great War there seemed to be a demand for chestnuts, and then the boys and girls in this section used to gather them in large quantities and sell them by the quart. So you see it came as a great shock to me when I read of the disappearance of those trees.

Rows of Dead Trees. Last fall I drove down through that district and found it was all too true. I saw those same chestnut trees from which we used to gather such quantities of nuts, standing out like sentinels, but dead and leafless. One huge monster was being cut into firewood.

On the farm of my grandfather, Amos Fennell, near Newbury, there were three very large Chestnut trees which, I venture to say, nearly every boy and man in the village visited at least once every fall. In fact, we used to get up early in the morning, after a frosty or windy night, to be the first there, but we seldom ever were.

On making further inquiries, I found that when people discovered that the Chestnut trees were dying, they hastened to the local lumber mill and a man was sent out to investigate. The investigation proved that only a very few trees remained alive. The disease, or whatever it was that attacked the trees, seemed to come, as it were, like a thief in the night and destroy the Chestnut trees before the owners realized it.

I do not think that the people in that section appreciated what a rare tree they had growing at their very doors, because I have met boys and girls (in my teaching days) who never saw a chestnut let alone a Chestnut tree.

Sad to say, it looks as if the Chestnut tree will have to be classed with the passenger pigeons, which were so plentiful in this section about sixty years ago.

*Nerissa Archer McInnis  
January 1940.*

## **The Annual Meeting of the CCC**

On Saturday, November 2, 1996 the annual meeting of the CCC will be held 1:20 to 4:30 p.m. in Rittenhouse Hall, Horticultural Experiment Station, Vineland Station, Ontario. The site is just off the Queen Elizabeth Way at the Vineland exit thence north on Victoria Street about 300 meters.

The guest speaker will be Herbert F. Darling, President of the New York Chapter of the ACF. He will bring us an account of what New York State is doing to ensure that the American Chestnut is restored.

Melody Melzer of the University of Guelph will bring us up to date on where the American Chestnut now exists in Ontario. Diana Mooij from the same institution will describe some new developments in understanding hypovirulence and what it offers by way of blight control.

Did you know that Chestnut trees are growing in Nova Scotia? Professor Greg Boland will bring us a few surprises about Chestnut growth in that province. This promises to be a thrilling aspect of the Chestnut saga in North America.

In addition there will be opportunities to ask questions... make comments about Chestnut growth in your area and meet other enthusiasts who have similar interests. If you have any Chestnut artifacts, bring them along for display.

## **Dr. Greg J. Boland Receives Scientific Award**

At the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Phytopathological Society held in June at Saskatoon, Dr. Greg J. Boland was given the Gordon J. Green Award.

This award is reserved for young scientists who have made outstanding contributions to Plant Pathology in Canada through research scholarship, leadership and disease management. Dr. Boland has been a member of staff of Environmental Biology, University of Guelph, since 1984. He was appointed a full Professor in 1996.

Dr. Boland has been closely associated with the Chestnut blight project in Ontario since 1991. He and his students have done excellent research in studying the hypovirulence phenomenon. Congratulations Greg!

## **Chestnut Trees in Conservation Area, Orangeville, Ontario**

A year ago, the editor was pleased to learn of a nut tree planting near Island Lake in the Conservation Area, Orangeville, Ontario. All the details of the planting are not yet available to the editor, but the planting is thought to have been made in the late seventies or early eighties. In this planting to evaluate cold hardiness of several species of nut-bearing trees including Black Walnut, Butternut, Hazelnut, etc. there are a dozen or more Chestnut trees. The Chestnut trees range in height from five to perhaps twenty-five feet.

I have been able to identify a few trees as being native American Chestnut, *C. dentata*. Others show Chinese Chestnut (*C. mollissima*) characteristics... they are probably hybrids.

Burrs have formed on several of the largest trees and I presume that some burrs may contain plump nuts. Nut fall in early October will tell the tale.

This is one of the highest altitudes in southern Ontario. Tree survival here should be an excellent test for cold hardiness of nut species.

## ***Chestnut Growth During the Current Season***

Depending upon different environmental factors, the growth of Chestnut trees has been variable across southern Ontario this growing season. To begin, the growing season started late and flowering was very late. Some trees were still flowering late in July.

In full sunlight, where moisture was adequate, growth of Chestnut trees has been amazingly good. The greatest variability in growth has been shown by young trees three to six feet in height.

On some sandy soil sites with acid soil conditions (ideal for Chestnut) some seedlings have been slow to take-off. It has been concluded that the proper mantle of fungi (mycorrhiza) has not accumulated around the root tips to augment the absorption of nutrients. After this occurs growth "takes-off" and stem elongation of two to three feet annually becomes normal. Abundant moisture is necessary to enable a good mycorrhizal flora to become established on Chestnut tree roots.

In some of the more northerly plantings a late May frost froze the young leaves. This delayed the onset of regrowth by two to three weeks.

At several sites, caterpillars were prevalent and they virtually defoliated some small trees.

## ***13th Annual Meeting - American Chestnut Foundation (ACF)***

The ACF is holding its 13th Annual Meeting October 19 - 20, 1996 at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, New Haven, Ct.

Here, the Chestnut research program has been ongoing for more than 55 years. What a record of continuity! Dr. Sandra Anagnostakis, a stalwart in Chestnut blight research, will lead a tour through the orchards in which breeding for blight resistance began. There will be an opportunity to see the famous Clapper and Graves Chestnut trees that have formed the parentage of two-thirds of the current breeding stock at the ACF Meadowview Farm in Virginia. Hypovirulence inoculations made more than a decade ago will also be described and observed.

## ***The CCC Income***

Thanks to the many persons who have mailed in their contributions for 1996. We also welcome several new members. As well as your financial contributions, we enjoy receiving your commentaries about Chestnut activities in your areas, and your letters re seedling progress in your personal plantations. These **do not** go unnoticed!

Member contributions have been the main source of income for the CCC. Our membership has been the lifeblood of our organization. Prior to 1993, the CCC received small grants from World Wildlife (Canada) and the Ontario Ministry of Renewable Resources. More recently, grants have been going to the University of Guelph in support Dr. Greg Boland's research program "Hypovirulence in the Chestnut Blight Fungus and Application of Hypovirulence in Biocontrol of Blight."

It cannot be stated too strongly that without our members the Chestnut restoration program would be little more than an idea in the heads of one or two individuals. With your constant support you are making a dream into a reality.

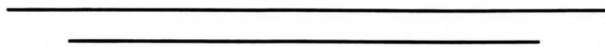
The CCC is currently considering the advisability of getting involved in a blight resistance-breeding program. Should such a program be undertaken, additional financial resources will have to be obtained. Meanwhile, we solicit your wholehearted support and hope that the CCC will remain one of your charities.

### **Chestnut Pamphlet Available**

A new pamphlet entitled "Recovery of the American Chestnut" has been produced by the Grand River Conservation Authority. This outlines the History of the American Chestnut, Possibilities for the Future and Current Research Programs. GRCA has also established Ontario's only American Chestnut museum at their Burford Tree Nursery. This small museum is described in GRCA's newsletter: *Agrophile*; summer 1996 edition. Copies of both publications can be obtained by Bruce Graham, Superintendent, Burford Tree Nursery, 25 Wight Road, Burford, ON, (519) 449-2265. Bruce is the Director of the Canadian Chestnut Council.

### **Canada Postage Features the American Chestnut**

Did you know that a 71¢ Canada postage stamp features the American Chestnut? A flowering Chestnut tree is depicted on the stamp. This should be a collectible item and one that can be used for the publicity of the CCC.



### **The Canadian Chestnut Council**

Membership: Regular \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_, Contributing \$25.00+ \_\_\_\_\_.

Make cheque payable to:

**Canadian Chestnut Council, 1332 Suncrest Road, Kingsville, Ontario N9Y 3H3**

Name .....

Address .....

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Telephone .....

Do you know of unrecorded Chestnut trees? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please give location, size and condition.

Do you have a suitable site and are you interested in growing a planting of Chestnuts on your property? \_\_\_\_\_ How many? \_\_\_\_\_

Other comments and suggestions .....

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