

The Besses of Stayner

by Norm Besse

Reuben Besse moved to Stayner, the Town of Friendly people in January 1926 with his wife Mary, and their family of Howard, Joe, Helen & Jim.

Reuben Besse purchased a Creamery from the Campbell family; the building he purchased is still at the same location on Main Street today. The Campbell's had purchased this building which had been a movie theatre, and started a creamery.



The evolution of milk delivery.



Reuben rebuilt the building, and added the dairy in 1935. The dairy was equipped with the latest new technology, which included the pasteurizing of milk, the first such plant in Simcoe County.

The Reuben Besses lived in two houses on John Street, and then moved to the big house with the turret on Sunnidale Street. Joe built a tennis court on this property.



Reuben Besse's home on Sunnidale St.

Reuben & Mary later moved to Main Street in the home that later was occupied by the Brownridge family. Helen Besse who was a teacher in Lorne Park, Ontario lived with her parents when in Stayner.

The Howard Besses lived in a large red brick house on John Street. This house had formally been a Hospital, and Norman Besse was born here.

Howard married Laura and they had 5 children, Douglas, Donald, Mary Helen, Bob & Joan. The Howard Besses moved to Orangeville in 1947.

Jim Besse married a Collingwood girl Dory Nicholson; her brother Ken was a reporter for the Stayner Sun for many years. Jim & Dory had two children Marion & Paul. Jim & Dory purchased their home at the corner of Cherry Street & Sunnidale Road from Joe & Annie when they moved to their home at 395 Main Street East. Jim & his family moved to Seaforth in 1950.

Joe Besse went to work in the Besse's Creamery in 1927; he married Annie Buie in 1936, and they had five children; Norman, Ronald, Alex, Alan, and JoAnn.

Reuben retired in 1940 and Joe eventually bought out Howard in 1947 & Jim in 1950. Joe expanded the business with the addition of the Powder Milk Plant in 1964.

Besse's Dairy was famous in Ontario for their quality ice cream & butter. Besse's butter won several awards at the Royal Winter Fair. "It's always better with Besse's Butter".

Joe was involved in sports, especially lawn bowling & curling and was instrumental in the building of the Stayner Curling Club.

Joe was also a musician. He played the piano in a dance band that included other Stayner boys, Jim Wheeler on drums, Buck Buchanan on banjo & Bill Beg on the sax. Joe also played the organ at Stayner Baptist Church, and he sang in the choir.

Annie was a very loving wife and mother who was very active in the community and especially in the Stayner Baptist Church.

All of Joe & Annie Besses children worked at the Dairy at one time or another; either behind the bottle washer, working in the Ice cream parlour or



Joe and Annie Besse.

driving a milk truck at Wasaga Beach in the summers. Alan passed away in 1960, Annie in 1972 and Joe in 1996.

None of the Besse family presently lives in Stayner, but all the Besse children have fond memories of this wonderful little town. Norman (Rosemary) is retired, and living in Alliston, Ronald (Barbara) is retired & living in Toronto & Florida, Alex (Sharon) is practicing law & living in Collingwood, JoAnn (Bill) is retired and resides in Muskoka & Florida. The siblings get together often and still enjoy singing the great Baptist hymns, telling stories of Stayner and sharing a good glass of Butter-milk and a dish of Orange Pineapple Ice Cream.



Besse's Dairy, Main St., Stayner, Ontario.