

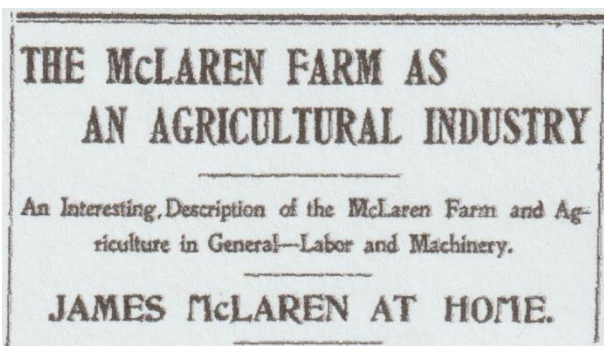
# McLAREN PERTSHIRE STOCK FARM

## Dominion Government Experimental Station and Model Farm

Over a period of about fifty years, beginning in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an expansive model farm, established by millionaire lumberman and Senator Peter McLaren (1831-1919), operated on the northeast limits of the Town of Perth. Although the McLaren Farm was a private enterprise, in its latter decades it was also “one of the Dominion Government’s Experimental Stations, a model farm noted chiefly for the raising of an excellent strain of Belgian and Percheron horses”.<sup>1</sup> Formally named the ‘Perthshire Stock Farm’, it encompassed the area now bounded on the west by Drummond Street, on the north by Highway-7, on the south by North Street and County Road-10, and on the east by a lot line several hundred meters east of Perthmore Street.

In September 1903 the *Perth Courier* published a feature article describing, in some detail, the farm and its operations. The *Courier* report, transcribed here, provides a window into the practice of agriculture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, although few local farms would have had the financial resources the McLarens clearly poured into their project.

The article did not carry a by-line, but the *Courier*’s publisher and editor of the day was Walter William Walker (1870-1942) and we may assume he probably authored the piece.



*Let us never forget that the cultivation of the earth is the most important labor of man.*

There are numerous quotations that are suitable as an introductory to an article of this kind, and the above was selected at random. The sentence which is made prominent is taken from Daniel Webster<sup>2</sup> and was used by him more than 60 years ago. The American jurist enunciated a sound theory, and in these days

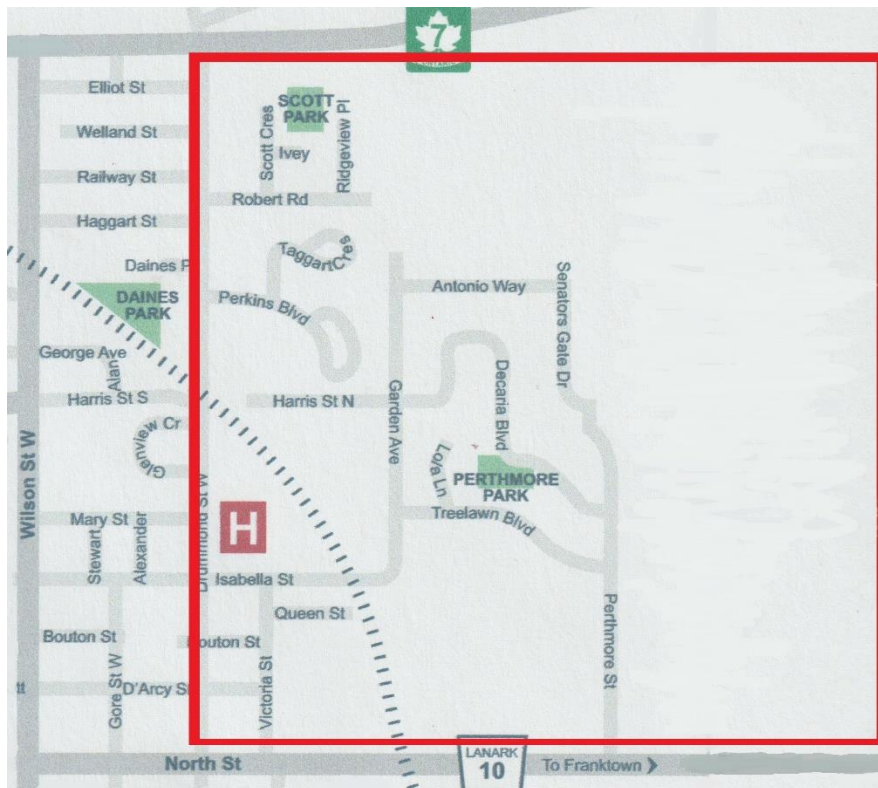
when a country’s progress is too often estimated by the state of the stock market or the foreign trade returns, the position of the farmer is frequently overlooked.

<sup>1</sup> *Perth Courier*, September 21, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Webster (1782-1852), American lawyer, congressman and U.S. Secretary of State serving three Presidents.

## McLaren Farm Seen One June Day

It was the pleasure and privilege of the writer to visit the McLaren Farm for the first time one bright afternoon in the merry month of June, when the landscape was clothed in verdant green that made a pleasing delight to the eye. The reporter was impressed with the neatness that obtained around the large barnyard, the good conditions of every building and the straightness of the fences. Usually, barnyards are found to be a web of confusion, and are often not given the care and consideration they should by the owners thereof. But at the McLaren Farm, everything has its place and there is a place for everything. On the day in question a force of men were engaged in repairing a fence that required attention. This fact in itself, while not worthy of any special prominence, is indicative of the careful management and tidy habits that actuate the young owner. A subsequent visit was made the other day when the reporter found Mr. McLaren and his men in the midst of haymaking, but more of this anon.



### Acreage of the Farm

The acreage of the McLaren Farm is seldom beaten in extent by any farm in this section of the country, and on this count, it holds a premier position. Some idea of its dimensions may be gathered when its boundaries are given. From Drummond Street it extends to the cross road at the top of the 'Long Swamp' and lies in between the second and third concession of Drummond Township. In area, the farm consists of 600 acres outside of the homestead which

occupies some 25 acres<sup>3</sup>. The first addition was made on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1871, when 300 acres was purchased from Agnes Bell<sup>4</sup> and others. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of the following month of that year the farm of Mr. Francis Davis, consisting of 100 acres, was purchased, and on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1882, the 200 acre farm of William Hicks was acquired and brought the grand acreage total of the McLaren Farm up to 600.<sup>5</sup> Two years ago, Mr. McLaren bought the 200 acre farm of Mr. John Thomson which borders on the Tay and is used for pasturing his stock and horses.

<sup>3</sup> The 'homestead' was Nevis Cottage, 61 Drummond Street West, now a Bed & Breakfast.

<sup>4</sup> Agnes Smith-Bell (b.1805), widow of Mathew Bell Sr. (1791-1867).

<sup>5</sup> The farm was comprised of Drummond Concession-2, Lots-3,4,&5.

## Farm Buildings

Perhaps there is no farm in this neighborhood that has as many and as large farm buildings as the McLaren Farm. They consist of a cow byre, 300 X 32 feet; two horse stables, one 60 X 32 and the other 100 X 32; a hay barn, 70 X 32; a wing to the byre, 70 X 32; a pig pen, 60 X 32; a henhouse, 40 X 20; an engine house, 40 X 32; a workshop, 24 X 20 and 100 lineal feet of shed. Besides there is a root house that will hold 4,000 bushels of roots, a couple of silos that hold 400 tons of ensilage<sup>6</sup>, and mow space for 300 tons of hay. The byre will stall 80 head of cattle, while 50 horses can be easily accommodated in the two stables. The barnyard in all takes up about seven acres.

An estimate of the extent of farm and buildings can be made from the facts and figures given in the above two paragraphs, but to fully appreciate the force of both a visit has to be made to Mr. McLaren's estate. The buildings were added to as the needs of the farm required, and each was erected on a substantial framework. They are kept in first class condition, and all are painted red with other colored facing. The paint gives them an attractive appearance and arrests the eye of the traveller as he speeds by in the CPR express<sup>7</sup>. Each building has the latest appointments convenient to their several uses, but this will be touched upon later in detail.

## Farm Improvements

No year has been allowed to pass by the management without some marked improvement being made, and in consequence the condition of the farm today is very much better than it was when the amalgamation of the three was effected. As was noted in the foregoing paragraph, new buildings were erected as the demand called for. Additional land was gradually brought under cultivation. The famous 'Long Swamp' is now but a shadow of its former majesty. The march of time demanded that its alluvial soil be drained and put to cultivation, and today 200 acres are tilled. There are still about 300 acres in bush, which include a five-acre sugar bush, but a decade hence will probably see another hundred of the noted swamp furrowed with the plow.

This year Mr. McLaren has about 200 acres of hay, 40 of oats, 14 of barley an acre of roots and an acre of potatoes. It will be noticed that there is no wheat or corn. This may seem extraordinary, but there are different explanations which are quite reasonable and easily understood. Mr. McLaren makes a specialty of horses and beef cattle, and the produce he raises is all used in home consumption. His pantry and larder are supplied almost entirely from the farm, and naturally he has the cream of everything. At the present Mr. McLaren happens to have on hand a supply of 1900-1901-1902 wheat, which will answer all domestic purposes, and explain why none was raised this summer. Last fall his silos were filled with corn ensilage, but Mr. McLaren believes in changes and decided to have clover silage this autumn, and hence no corn was planted [*this*] spring. And thus, it is at the farm: the land is made to produce sufficient to supply both man and animal. The hay, oats, etc. are not converted directly into cash. They are made to serve a double purpose: firstly, they make flesh and muscle which leave the farm in the shape of first-class horses and prime beef cattle; and secondly, the manure is kept on the farm.

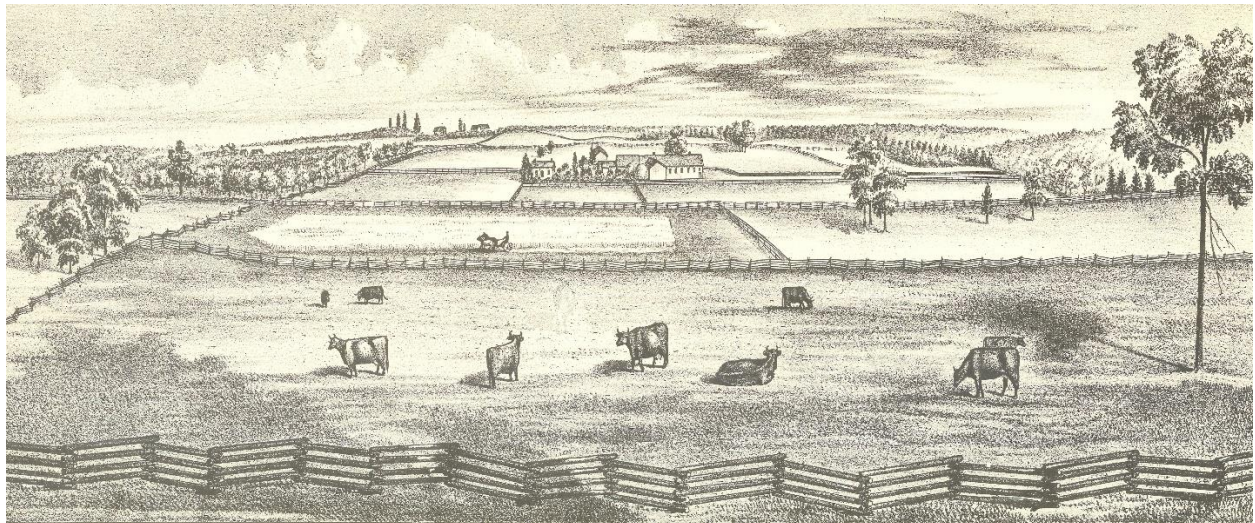
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<sup>6</sup> An out-of-date term for 'silage'. Technically silage is the product formed when crop vegetation of sufficiently high moisture content, liable to spoilage by aerobic microorganisms, is stored anaerobically. Silage is produced by 'ensilage', that is, the placing of crop material inside a vessel or a structure called a silo.

<sup>7</sup> The CPR rail line cut across the southwest corner of the farm.

## A Good Internal System

While it is not claimed that the internal system of running the farm buildings is perfect, Mr. McLaren has a good workable one which is constantly being bettered. The ordinary reader will hardly conceive how complete each building is fitted with the necessary appointments, and it will be the aim of the next few paragraphs to give an intelligent description of them.



RESIDENCE & FARM of PETER M<sup>c</sup>LAREN Esq PERTH, ONT.

*The McLaren Farm as illustrated in the Belden Historical Atlas of Lanark & Renfrew Counties of 1881*

The engine-house ... is visited first, for from it is generated the power and steam that is used in the other buildings. The building is 40X32 feet in measurement and is used for three purposes. An office and horse hospital constitute the front portion, while the engine-house is to the rear. The engine is used to generate heat and power. A couple of coils are found in the front portion of the building which make it a very desirable resting place in the wintertime. A long belt connects the engine to the shafting in the adjacent feed room, off of which shoots the long byre. Here is kept the machinery for hashing grain, cutting corn and for threshing. The silo is run in connection with this room, and all the feed for cattle and horses is mixed here. Capacious carts carry it off to the feeding troughs.

As an adjunct to this engine-house is run a never-failing well. The well is 60 feet deep and 14 feet in diameter and cemented from top to bottom. There are three ways to pump the water. First, there is a large windmill; second a steam pump worked from the engine; and third, an ejector. Mr. McLaren has found that he required the three for, if one of the pumping apparatuses was temporarily disorganized, the other two are called into play. It would indeed be a serious question to water such a large stock in the winter as Mr. McLaren generally carries, were he depending on either one of his pumping machines and it was to get out



*McLaren Farmhouse, Nevis Cottage, 61 Drummond Street West*

of gear. The well may be termed the reservoir, and a complete system of pipes supplies water to all the buildings. Steam pipes are also run to the stable from the engine and the steam is used to heat the water for the cattle and to steam their feed.

### **Cow Byre, Stables Etc.**

The cow byre shoots off the feed room and is 300 feet in length by 32 in width. It is a light airy building properly ventilated, and warm. A platform passage extends the entire length of the building and on either side facing it, are the cattle stalls, uniform in size and capable of stalling about 80 herd. There are also a number of box stalls which are used on special occasions. Every spring the byre is given a good coat of strong whitewash which keeps down all infectious diseases. The feed for the cattle is put in long boxes and there is a rather novel method used to prevent the feed from being pulled out into the stall. Two water pipes are stationed at both rows of stalls and a fresh supply of water is always kept in easy access of the cattle.

The total horse stable space amounts to over 5,100 square feet, the stables being two in number. The oldest one is used to stall the farm teams and all the surplus stock that is kept for sale. In the new stable which adjoins the granary, Mr. McLaren keeps his stallions 'Gay Shales' and the Cleveland Bay. Both stables are kept in first-class condition and the appointments in each are up to date.

The other buildings are given the same care and attention and kept in the best of condition. The granary is in easy reach to all buildings, and the description would not be complete without mentioning the blacksmith shop and harness room. A hospital room, as stated before, is located in the engine-house where a sick horse's needs are attended to quite handily. The blacksmith shop is a very necessary place with Mr. McLaren who does all his own blacksmithing, and the harness room also is conspicuous for the care lavished upon it. The machinery building is replete with new and up-to-date implements, all of the Deering make, and when a machine's work is over for the season or for a month it is away out of a storm's reach.

## **Prime Stock and First-Class Horses.**

One would naturally expect that the two premier animals -- the horse and the beef cow -- that Mr. McLaren makes a specialty of would be in keeping with the excellent condition of his farm and buildings; and such is the case. It is his aim to have the best, and he knows it is to his interest. His ambition is to excel. His cattle are for beef purposes and are bred and fed accordingly. They are always to be desired by the butchers. The breed is the Shorthorn Durham which is admittedly one of the best beef types in cattle.

Perhaps there is not another bunch of horses in this district that can equal Mr. McLaren's in number and quality. At present he has about 40, which are of trotting, running, hackney and coach breeds. The stock consists of some excellent colts which will mature into extra carriage horses, and these will be put in the market when their age permits.

Prominence has come to the McLaren horses through the fame of the farm's two noted Horses 'Gay Shales' and 'Noble Mack'. 'Gay Shales' is a dark bay, with near hind cornet white, with black points. He stands 15.2 ½ hands high<sup>8</sup>. He was foaled in the fall of 1897, sired by 'Hayton Shales'; imported and bred by M. H. Cochrane<sup>9</sup>, Hillhurst Farm, Hillhurst Station, Compton, Quebec. 'Noble Mack' is a blood bay, with black points, and stands 16.2 ½ hands high. He weighs 1,450 pounds. Both horses have very creditable records and are very valuable assets in Mr. McLaren's inventory. Their offspring bring good prices, which is one of the chief ends of the horse breeder.

## **Garnering the Crops**

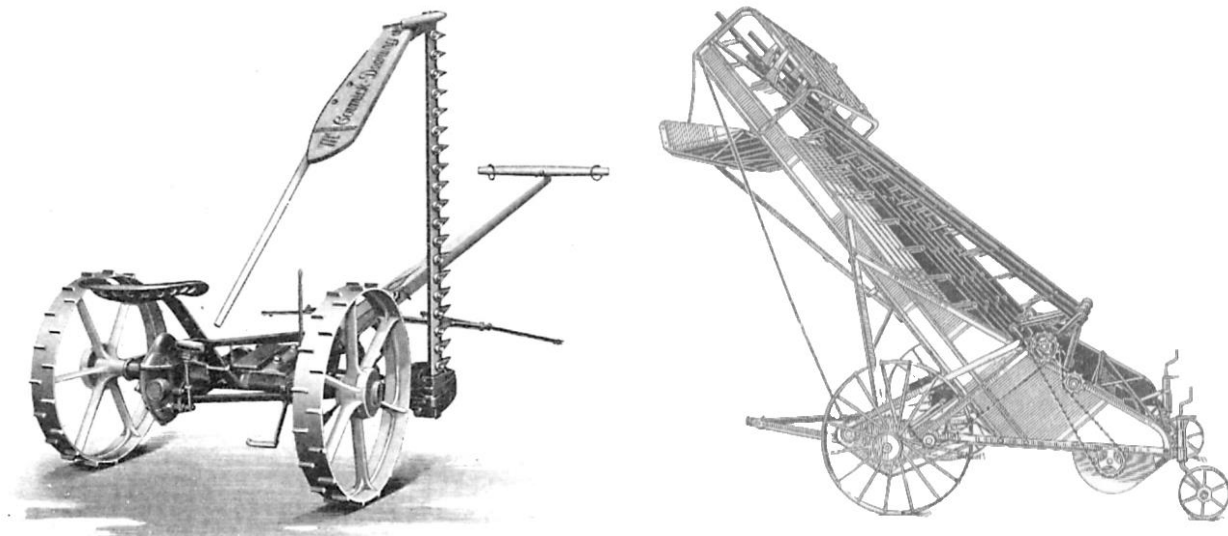
When the *Courier* representative visited the farm on Saturday last, he found activity to be king. Mr. McLaren with a force of men was engaged in making hay. The season is very late this year, a fact which every farmer is experiencing. The cause is attributed to the drouth of May and early June. Mr. McLaren has cut all his barley and has it safely put away, and his oats are commencing to ripen, and yet his hay is not all cut. On Saturday two teams were working faithfully at a 15 acre field which would be cleared that evening. But that would not be the end as there are still some fields to cut. Labor is scarce and considering that there are 100 acres to be cut, the question becomes quite serious.

Machinery, of course, goes a distance to solve the knot, but the seriousness is not all removed. Two mowers are put in a large hay field, and they easily level it in a day. One mower, which was just recently installed, cuts a seven-foot swath, while the other cuts six. The seven-foot mower is the largest in the district. A hay loader loads the wagon, while rope slings to the unloading in the barn. Modern inventions certainly have made the task of mowing away hay much easier, and to the *Courier*, Mr. McLaren said if it were not for the machines, he did not see how they could get through in time. With fair weather, he hopes to get through of his hay in a week or 10 days. The quality is turning out well, and the crop will be a better one than was anticipated in the May bulletin.

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<sup>8</sup> The height of a horse is measured from the ground to the withers (top of the shoulders). One 'hand' equals four inches (10.16 cm).

<sup>9</sup> Mathew Henry Cochrane (1823-1903) was better known for breeding purebred famous Wetherby and Warlaby Shorthorn cattle imported from Cumberland and Yorkshire, England. Cochrane also sat with Peter McLaren in the Dominion Senate.



Deering Hay Mower and Hay Loader c1905

### Mr. James McLaren

The article would not be complete without a few words on the debonair proprietor, Mr. James L. P. McLaren. He is the eldest son of a worthy father, and his whole life is in his farm which he has run for the past eight years. The farm was deeded over to him on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 1900<sup>10</sup> by his father, Senator McLaren.<sup>11</sup> It was a worthy gift, and the successful state of the land today shows that the present owner was deserving of the confidence placed on him.



James L. P. McLaren (1878-1934)

Mr. McLaren is a keen observer of the times and takes every opportunity to better his estate and stock. The market is followed closely, and its demands are catered to. An instance in point: A few years ago, Mr. McLaren ran a dairy farm. He made his butter and shipped it to Ottawa. He got good prices for a time. But labor became scarce, and the bottom fell out of the trade for a while. He changed his plans and went into the beef trade. His move was a success.

The farm requires careful attention, and it is managed as a mercantile business. Mr. McLaren brings all his natural ability to play and has confidence in his resources. The greater is his success the great becomes the value to Drummond Township, and a greater inspiration to his neighbors to do likewise. He enjoys the confidence of his neighbors, who wish him well, and this wish is shared by the *Courier*, for if his efforts meet success there is that much more property in the community.

<sup>10</sup> December 29, 1900, was James L. P. McLaren's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

<sup>11</sup> Peter McLaren had purchased Nevis Cottage, then on the northern outskirts of the town and now a Bed & Breakfast at 61 Drummond Street West, in about 1870. The substantial stone home had been built in 1842 by Anglican Priest Reverend Michael Harris (1790-1855). At about the same time McLaren also purchased the 300-acre Bell farm adjoining the Nevis property to the northeast (Drummond Township C-2/L-3&4).

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## Addendum

James L. P. McLaren, the son of lumberman and Senator Peter McLaren (1831-1919) and Sophia Elizabeth Lees-McLaren (1845-1923), was born at Nevis Cottage, on his father's Drummond Township Farm, on December 19, 1878. He was educated at the Perth Public School; Trinity College, Port Hope; Upper Canada College, Toronto; and Loretto College, Edinburgh, Scotland<sup>12</sup>. Shortly after returning to Perth from Scotland, he took over management of the Perthshire Stock Farm in 1895 and became its owner in 1900.

James L. P. McLaren operated the farm until 1916 when, at age 38, he was commissioned a Captain in the 238<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Forestry Corps. At the end of WW1, after service in England and France, he returned to Canada and took a position with the Ontario Forestry Department in Northern Ontario. In 1929 he moved to Wakefield, Carroll County, New Hampshire, to manage a stock farm owned by C. H. Bancroft.

McLaren died, aged 54 years, at Springfield, New Hampshire, on September 14, 1934, but his body was returned to Perth for a funeral from 'Nevis Cottage' with burial in Elmwood Cemetery.

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<sup>12</sup> Founded in 1827, Loretto is today Scotland's oldest boarding school.