

THE LAPIERRE LEGACY

By Dave Belt

It is often said that farmers are the backbone of a farmers' market. No farm family personifies the unique character of the Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market better than the LaPierre Family. These tenacious East Preston farmers have provided fresh farm produce to Haligonians since 1892, overcoming many challenges along their 123 year journey.



"I remember hearing my father say he helped my mother load the wagon on Thursday night with eggs and fresh veggies. He then hitched the horse to the wagon so we could leave right at midnight," recalls Mary Ann LaPierre, who has been coming to the market every week for the past 68 years. "We travelled all night, in order to catch the first ferry from Dartmouth over to the market on the Halifax side at 6 o'clock. You see, whoever got to the market first got the best spot."

Mary Ann's grandmother, Catherine, and father, Seymour, were the first family members to take fresh produce to the market.. The horse-drawn wagon was replaced by a 1939-model Ford pickup truck in the late 1940s. Even with the improvement in method of conveyance, the LaPierre Family still faced difficult physical obstacles. They had to drive completely around the Bedford Basin from their Eastern Shore farm twice a week (four times a week during the summer months). There were no street lights and roads were unpaved, limiting them to a speed of just 30 miles per hour. Even with the relatively faster pace at which they could travel, the LaPierres nevertheless still had to leave East Preston in the middle of the night, in order to greet market shoppers, eager to purchase farm-fresh produce directly from them.



Tragedy struck in 1964 when Seymour suffered a heart attack on his way home from the market. He died a few months later, leaving Mary Ann, along with her mother and siblings, to carry on the family tradition. From 1994 to the present day, Mary Ann continued the LaPierre legacy, farming on her own and selling at the Halifax Farmers' Market singlehandedly, ensuring her loyal customers continue to receive the same high-quality produce they have come to expect for over a century now.

