

## LOCAL HISTORY

# Tom Fuller remembers working on Marsh with Professor Day

*Tom Fuller is one of many long-time Bradford residents who has a wealth of information about the town and surrounding area's past, as well as a few good anecdotes.*

*This article is the first of what is hoped to be many featuring some of our long-time residents who have a good story to tell.*

Mr. Fuller was one of the early workers on the Holland Marsh. He knew and worked for, and later alongside Professor William Day, who is generally credited with "creating" the rich farmland of the area.

When Professor Day died in his fields on July 5, 1938, Mr. Fuller was nearby. He served as pall bearer at both Professor Day's and his wife Ethel (Williams') funerals.

The first job Mr. Fuller had in the marsh was in 1927 as a diver, swimming down under the dredges that had been used to construct the canals. His job was to undo bolts, in order to dismantle them.

"I'd dive down, take the wooden deck plates off, come up and have a cigarette, and go back down again," Mr. Fuller said, in an interview at

his home in town.

He got the job because he knew how to swim. He had arrived from Australia on "Friday, the 23rd of May," he says, and he needed a job.

He was 19 at the time, hav-



Professor William Day was the man who believed the marsh could be drained. He lived to see his dream of extensive farming on the rich muck soil.

ing arrived in Australia three years earlier from his birthplace of London, England.

He left for Canada with friends, and ended up in Bradford because his older brother Bill lived in town.

At that time, the canals that outline the farming area had been dug, and all that was left was to build a dam to link the two, he says.

"They buried old car bodies by the dozens to get a footing, then planting willows to anchor it," Mr. Fuller says. "That's when I met (Professor Day) and found out he'd planned and supervised the draining of about 10,000 acres."

Mr. Fuller remembers how the marsh came to be drained and eventually became one of the richest agricultural areas in the province. He doesn't think enough people remember Professor Day's part in making a dream he and a few others shared, become a reality.

While there had been plans as early as the late 1800's to drain the area to use the peat for fuel, it was not until about 1910 that a Bradford grocer, David Watson, approached Professor Day at the agricultural college in Guelph. See Tom, page 8