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# Joe Doyon - neighbor

David Chase

*none - town of Whitefield*, davidachase@gmail.com

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***Joe Doyon*** was as French a fellow as I had ever known. He and his wife were our next door neighbors until I was about 10. I never knew her first name.

I have no memories of others before them in that poor little 19th century cape where Sally Cote now lives at 79 Grand Army Road where Ike and Gwen MacDonald and Mr. Hanscom before had lived.



Ma told me that when she and Dad moved to Whitefield in Nov. of 1941 a family by the name of Conrad lived there. Bill Conrad and his wife Laura and Laura's sister Eva. Laura in her younger days worked for a company making wigs which she called transformations and she wore one. Laura would go out walking about every afternoon, weather permitting. calling on neighbors. She carried a little bag with her and the story was that she would accept anything you had to give away. Usually edible things. i.e. bacon fat etc.

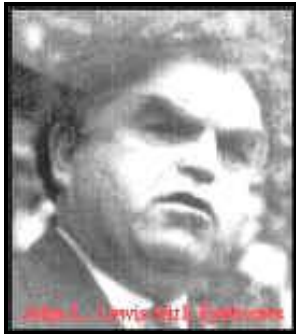


I don't have a picture of Joe or his wife but when I saw this image of farmer with his harvest of tobacco in a picture book, it seemed exactly as I remember Joe. They both were very short people. I used this image in the 1995 fall issue of our Sheepscot Valley Tree Pool Catalog as sort of a homage to the beloved Doyons of my youth..

They loved us kids. Mrs. Doyon would appear at her green sliding shed door waving her apron and beckoning us in. She spoke no English. We knew what was in the offing. She had just removed 4 honey colored loafs of bread from the wood fired cookstove's oven and there on the red patterned oilcloth covered table were white ironstone plates of thick steaming bread slices with the last traces of the Doyon's own rich yellow butter just disappearing.

These were good times.

I read in several 1930's and 40's era Town Report where the Doyons were reimbursed from the Town's Poor Relief fund for their aid to "tramps". (in 1939 the humble Doyons were reimbursed \$61.25 and Dr. Odione only \$30 more for his professional services).



Joe had several men friends and so it followed that they were my friends. There was Clarence Costin with his fantastic John L. Lewis style eyebrows that looked almost like feathered wings. Clarence used to hang out with Grace Benson who once told me that as a young women she got in a horsewhip fight with her cousin

Anna on the platform at the WW&F station on Hilton Road; there was Pete Sanderson who would pick me up in his horse and cart to accompany him on the trip from or to his other buddies on either side of Grand Army Hill. It was Pete who had created that wonderful red crayon rendering of a team of Percherons in harness on a wide pine board that Dad had nailed up in the shed wall next to the outhouse. It is only today that I realize how fortunate I was to have friends like these.



Joe smoked a brier pipe, one of those with a bend downward like a calabash, only brier. More remarkable is the memory of his tobacco patch right here in Whitefield! There were two very straight rows in the vegetable garden about 15' long and the huge green leaves seemed to be two feet tall. Joe hung the tobacco in bundles to dry from the joist in the shed between the kitchen and the barn. It seemed he always had a blue haze around his head. I, too smoked a pipe for almost 20 years.



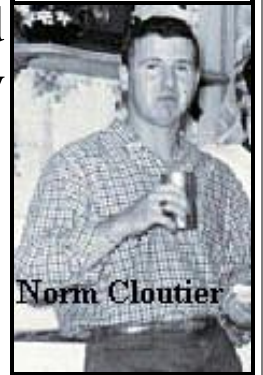


Why at less than 10 years of age did I call this kind and stern old man - Joe ?

I was quite a serious Brook Trout fisherman in my youth.



At least I thought so. Lore Ford and Norm Cloutier didn't think so. They covered more territory and therefore got more bigger fish.



Anyway, I can't credit Joe with any positive inspiration in this sport. It

was always on April 1st that Joe would emerge from the shed with a 12' bamboo pole with a big wad of twine wound on its end. (The Aprils of my youth were something very much less the spring I would read about!) Off we'd stroll to the river, a river always high in spring, and with sheets of thin morning ice around the trunks of the still submerged gray alder trunks. Here I'd watch patiently as my old friend crept carefully to the edge and lowered bait into the closest opening. I never, ever remember Joe catching even one fish! But, every spring, on this day, we'd repeat this fruitless ritual. Today, I often think of this annual event when I want to remind myself why people repeat a behavior in response to a number on a calendar page. Evolution has much more to accomplish in our species.

I never knew what became of my friends the Doyons. They just left, and Mr Hanscom showed up. I'll tell you about him some day.

Lore and Norm still fish for brook trout.

I gave up smoking in 1982.

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