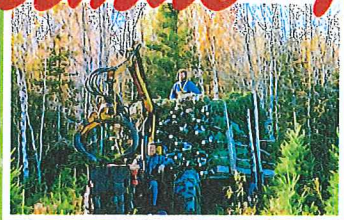
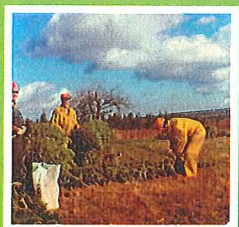
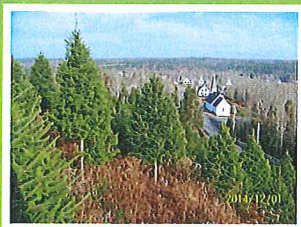
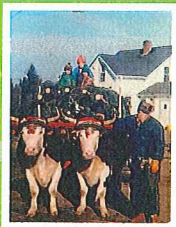
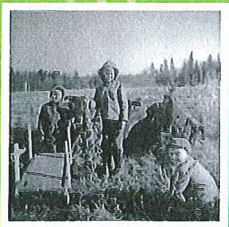
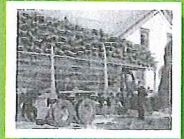
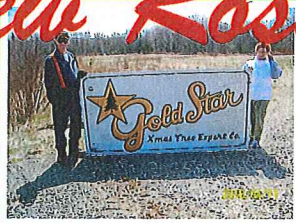




The Christmas Tree Industry



in New Ross to 2016



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For many people, Christmas is one of the most exciting and special times during the year. The three months leading to Christmas have been particularly busy ones for many residents of New Ross for many decades. Since the 1920s, the Christmas tree industry has played an important role in the lives of many families, some spanning back four generations. Having encountered many changes and survived many challenges over the decades, the demise predicted by many has eluded the industry here as it remains important, to varying degrees, to many families in New Ross, as the community turns 200.

Farms and forests have sustained lives here from the community's 1816 beginning and maybe that's why so many here seem to have a special attachment to their land. Logs for lumber, softwoods for the pulp mills and trees to support a once vibrant coopering industry are part of our past. While considerable demand still exists for pulpwood and trees for lumber and other building materials, farming here continues to be a struggle on lands not well suited for most crops, with one notable exception- the balsam fir tree. With a local climate ideal for its growth and many residents here retaining farming skills handed down through the generations owning lands previously harvested of larger trees and abandoned pastures, it's not surprising that as long as there's demand for the balsam fir Christmas tree, New Rossers will supply it.

About four hundred years ago in Germany, the tradition of a decorated tree at Christmas began. The balsam fir grows in eastern and central Canada and the northeastern United States and its pleasant aroma is likely its main selling point as a Christmas tree. Its oil is believed by some to have anti-inflammatory and other healing powers. American Civil War soldiers used its resin on their wounds. Turpentine and tea are among the other uses for the tree. Its wood has value as lumber and it is a food supply and habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Although the Christmas tree industry began around 1900 in the Maritimes, likely the ease of shipping by rail and water from other communities like Chester Basin and Bridgewater resulted in New Ross' delayed involvement. Around 1915, trees were exported from Bridgewater and likely from 1922-24 Arthur Manual and Robin (Bob) Hennigar were shipping from Chester Basin. Around 1924, New Ross made its entry.

Until the 1960s, the market was for the natural tree- a tree untouched by cultivation techniques such as shearing, butt pruning, thinning and fertilizing. Today we might refer to it as the "Charlie Brown" tree. In the 1940s and '50s, U.S. demand spiked for these trees and the industry in New Ross was flourishing. The first New Ross trees were likely sold to Bob Hennigar in the 1924 and for the next 50 years many trees from here started their U.S. journey with a trip to the Chester Basin rail siding. There were also opportunities to sell to buyers representing or working through the big U.S. companies that had a presence in the area. These companies had direct contact with American wholesalers and retailers, resulting in large orders. In 1933, Hofert's was the first U.S. company to have a presence in New Ross with the Kirk company soon to follow. In the early 1950s, the M. Walter company arrived to be followed by Gold Star in the early 1960s. Not unlike today, a grower in the 1920s would be disappointed to know that a tree he sold for 3c to 10c would retail in the U.S. for \$1.75 to \$3.00.

In 1957, the provincial industry peaked with 3.8 million trees sold. Quality issues arose as early as the 1940s as the increasing demand convinced some growers to adopt an "anything goes" attitude. For

comparison purposes, Nova Scotia's 2015 production is estimated to be 1.3 million with a market that demands that the quality of tree promised is what's delivered.

Selling to or working for the large companies resulted in much employment here for many years. Much was learned, convincing a few enterprising locals they could do it all themselves and prosper even more. A number of local men who owned or could hire a truck decided to avoid the costs of shipping by rail and seeing profits diminished by the middle levels of business. Around 1955, Edgar Russell (formerly employed by Bob Hennigar and Hofert's) and Rex Meister were the first New Ross truck owners to head for the U.S. with their loads of trees. Rex's brother Orrin lived in the Boston area and could help Rex connect with American buyers, his very first load going to an Italian family business. Around this time, Creighton Sanders hired truck owner Don Reeves to ship his first load across the U.S. border in 1955. Eugene Elliott and Creighton accompanied Don on this daring journey with a truck that left New Ross with a dead battery that would have to be parked on a hill in order to get started after any stops. Interestingly, Karl Meister states his father Rex said he met the Sanders' load headed to the U.S. on his way back to New Ross as they were both doing their first loads to the U.S.! Over the years, others here began shipping and trucks became bigger and longer, often progressing from a single axle to trailing axle or tandem to 40 foot or longer trailers. Local craftsman Asaph Lantz sometimes built or assisted building the wooden racks for hauling trees on some local trucks. Asaph tackled various building projects including wooden caskets for babies and coffin shells. Karl Meister recalls that Rex had a tree rack built at Asaph's shop on the Lake Ramsey Road because Asaph had plenty of tools and knowledge to build them well. Asaph also built racks for log trucks and as the barrel industry diminished, Asaph's daughter Heather Penney recalls him converting barrel hauling racks to Christmas tree racks. Some other larger shippers to ship to the U.S., but not necessarily with their own trucks and in some cases by rail, in subsequent years were Floyd Jollymore/Phil Barkhouse as partners; Ernest Veinott with some of his orders later picked up by Brian Acker, Miles Veinott and Gilbert Hughes; Ted Bezanson; George Hughes; Bernard Hughes; Fred Naugler; Roscoe Potter; Neil Meister; Harold Reeves and son Maurice Reeves & his sons Tommy, Glendon & Jeff. Also shipping were brothers Gerald and Mike Keddy; Hibbert, Bub and Peter Keddy; Harris Hiltz; Trevor Hiltz; brothers Basil, Barry and father Webster Lenihan; Clifford Reeves; Murray Reeves; John Reeves; Gordon Reeves; Colin Hughes; father and son Ray & Sterling Gates; Chester Keddy; Karl Meister; Marshall & son Marty Reeves; Scott Melvin; Elmer Lantz hired Dean Reeves to drive his truck to the U.S. and load rail cars at Chester Basin; Sidney Hiltz; Danny Hiltz; George Cornelius; Gerald Russell; Leon Turner & sons Bruce and Craig.

Edgar Russell was well known not only because he was one of the first to truck trees to the U.S., but also because he had his own tree business of impressive size very early on, producing not only on several hundred acres he owned in New Ross but also on lands leased from The Riversdale Lumber Company in the Mount Thom-area, located east of Truro. Son Miles indicates his father had a 99-year lease there on possibly as many as 10,000 acres of previously cut off timber land which was ideal for the wild type of trees the market demanded at that time. Edgar had a very large crew of workers hired and living camp-style during harvest. In New Ross, Edgar purchased trees from growers such as Ron Hughes, George Keddy and Robie Levy while employing locals such as Chester Turner and Ernest Veinott to work his own New Ross lots. Ernest and Chester also worked on Edgar's Mount Thom area land. Ashton Reeves states he worked for his brother Arthur in the Mount Thom area who was under contract with Edgar. Leonard Keddy worked for Edgar in New Annan (Tatamagouche area) where he met his wife Norma (MacRae), boarding with her parents. Norma states that Paul Gates, Ronald Legge, and Chester Keddy worked there with Leonard and that Ernest Veinott was Edgar's truck driver.

In later years, Ernest had his own large business, with a yard on his Highway No.12 property by his residence around 1970, just north of and within viewing distance of the Sanders yard. Before that, Ernest had his very first tree yard at his father's, Malcolm Veinott's, property on the Lake Ramsay Road where brother Cedric recalls a stone wall along the driveway was pushed back to make a loading area. Cecil Lenihan states that he too worked for Edgar in Tatamagouche and Edgar was cutting trees there for a man named Jake Edwards. A very unfortunate fatal accident occurred at Edgar's work site at Riversdale in 1969, when a fire in a camp there resulted in the death of John Harris of New Ross as he went back into the burning structure to recover his clothes. Another man from that area also died in the fire while several workers from New Ross escaped from the former two-storey school. Apparently, the cook was attempting to start the morning stove fire and mistakenly doused it with gas rather than kerosene, according to Delbert Levy. The building had no insulation or gyproc and was suddenly engulfed in flames. Royce Leopold recalls that the building was located only a short distance from a railway siding where trees were loaded; at the time of the fire, Royce was employed by the recently independent Ernest Veinott who also used the siding to load his trees. Royce knew and liked John well and describes him as an older man who liked playing cards and telling stories in the camp. Edgar's sons Miles and Barry and grandson Devry still participate in the industry on family lands in New Ross with relatively large production numbers.

In November 1964, another mishap occurred in the Campden, Colchester County area. A Truro-area hunter mistook Paul Levy for a deer while working there for John Seaboyer, who was cutting for Walter's. Paul was carrying a metal saw over his shoulder that got hit by the bullet and his skin got grazed as the workers walked out a woods road after lunch. Paul had tied trees that morning and had a ball of twine in one hand and an ax in the other. The shooter transported Paul to hospital and John found out later that day about the incident when a policeman stopped to ask him about the location of the shooting and then suggested to John it might be one of his own employees. Son Ken Seaboyer still owns the damaged saw frame and notes the outcome was so close to being much worse. Paul spent time in Truro hospital recovering. Another Christmas tree harvest-time tragedy occurred on November 22, 1963, but this time in the United States, with shock waves felt in New Ross. Sterling Gates tells how he and father Ray had their horse and wagon delivering trees to the Hofert's tree-yard location at Emery Murphy's, when workers devastated them with news that U.S. President John F. Kennedy had been shot and killed.

Basil McDow states he was only 13 when he started working for George Hughes, and to his recollection, all or most of George's trees were sold to American Willis Clark. Gene Daniel recalls that at one point, George was paying 18 cents a bunch. In the 1950s, George Hughes bought tree land in the Nutby Mountain area of Colchester County. Basil McDow says George Hughes cut trees for Clark in the Musquodoboit area. Ashton Reeves remembers working at Musquodoboit as a dragger for George Hughes under boss Fred McDow, who also cut along with other workers such as Con and Ralph Hughes, Ernest Veinott and Foster Gates around Shubenachadie and Stewiacke. Ashton Reeves takes delight in telling the folksy stories from years gone by and he recalls how, when he and fellow tree workers boarded in Upper Stewiacke at Mr. and Mrs. Henry Brown's, Ernest Veinott got some laughs by getting clothes from Mrs. Brown's closet and used a few pillows to dress up as a woman, with the amused Mr. Brown commenting "there was no cure for a fool." While in Shubenacadie, Ashton recalls the workers daring one another to swim across a still water in a meadow that had been iced over earlier that day; Foster Gates went across and back first, followed by Ashton, who both then decided to throw the reluctant Ernest into the water so he too could boast of successfully completing the cold swim. Details will be withheld about how Ernest ended up in a pile of goose poop at the MacDonald's farm

when the men boarded there! Ken Seaboyer believes that George Hughes also dealt with a Kings County buyer/shipper named Boates. Basil McDow recollects working at Brookfield, near Truro, as a supervisor for F.I. Boates of Kentville, with crew members being Leo Keddy and Ashton Reeves and Basil's wife Ruth as camp cook. The camp was owned by Creelman's, which owned the large lumber mill there. George Hughes hired George McDow to manage a crew in the Londonderry/Westchester Station area; several of those crew members were also McDows including Maurice, Carl, Gerald and Basil. Around the same time, Hennigars also had a large presence in the Westchester area using New Ross workers such as Charlie Reeves, Ira McDow and Rob McDow. In the mid 1950s, George Hughes left New Ross to reside in North River, near Truro. His youngest son Ken ran the Antigonish Gold Star yard and became well known in the tree business in the Truro area. George worked closely with brother-in-law Bruce Swinimer of Western Shore, who shipped as many as 50 carloads a year from there for Clark. Gene Daniel and brother-in-law Harry Eisnor once cut a load for Bruce Swinimer and loaded them at Mahone Bay. Harold McDow recalls Bruce's wife Viola once employed him around 1958 to cut three carloads, two in Walden and one in Coldbrook, and he recalls being paid very well for his efforts and it appeared Bruce had no or very little involvement with this arrangement.

Bernard Hughes, father-in-law of John Seaboyer, cut in New Ross in the early 1950s for Lipsy, an American. Basil McDow says that Arch Hatt bought trees in New Ross for Hennigar's. Theodore (Bub) Keddy of New Ross ventured to the Maitland area, near Truro, and employed some New Ross men there. Around 1955, Philson Turner met his 18-year-old future wife Muriel in East Noel while working there for Dick and Bub Keddy. Murray Brown and Ashton Reeves had a contract in the Maitland area and boarded in the hotel there, but Ashton can't recall who the contract was with. Dean and Parker Reeves were also in Maitland. Ashton also recalls working with Paul Hiltz in Hardwoodlands, Hants County. According to Roger Meister, Harley Hiltz had a crew in the areas of Old Barns, Princeport, Green Oaks, Pleasant Valley and Brookfield from the mid 1950s to early '60s. Harley was cutting for Georges Hughes and Boates' and the trees were loaded on railcar at Brookfield.

Roscoe Potter, a relatively small producer, started shipping through Fred Naugler around 1951 or 1952, his first load going to Highland Park in Chicago to a buyer named Leo P. Wolferding and he also shipped by rail to the Boston area in the mid-1950s, making him one of the earlier New Ross shippers. Rex Meister did some of his trucking. Roscoe once purchased a piece of land from Alfred Barkhouse for \$1.00 per acre. Roscoe was known to tell the story of a telegram he received from an American buyer who wrote that he "received the poles and was now waiting for the brush to arrive". His daughter, Linda, says that in the fall of 1963, he shipped a load of apples to Newfoundland and while there, bought a load of trees and brought them back to Nova Scotia to resell. These trees were of poor quality so the deal was not a particularly good one. Every tree season he suffered from severe itching but neither he nor his doctor realized it was possible to be allergic to trees. The last place he shipped was to New England, where he lost \$4,000 when the buyer tried to argue the trees he received were not the ones loaded on the truck in New Ross, even though the buyer, who was a long-time customer, was in New Ross when they were loaded.

The Raymond L. Kaizer company had a major presence in this area as well, ending in the early 1960s. Kaizer was a Halifax businessman and Charles Meister of New Ross worked as a buyer in New Ross for him, though a yard was not established here. The main Kaizer yard was in Hebbville. Charlie's son, Wade Meister states that Ivan and Orrin Lenihan sold a large number of trees to Charlie for Kaizer. One of Kaizer's large U.S. orders in St. Louis with a man named George Tremmel was eventually turned over to Creighton Sanders' operation in 1967 and retained by Dwight Sanders' operation right up

to 2014, when Dwight let the order go with a piece of land he sold to George Rhodenizer. Wade recalls his father loading railcars in New Germany, Chester Basin, Bridgewater and near Brooklyn, Hants County. He also recalls that Charlie carried huge amounts of cash around at tree time to pay growers and that the great pressure of it all changed his personality for the worse during those weeks. Two local truckers hired to haul trees for Kaizer's were John Collins and Ray Reeves. In the early 1960s, Charlie also cut his own trees for Kaizer's off about 100 acres of land he owned in the Blomidon look-off area and made the dangerous trip down the mountain with his tractor loads headed for the Port Williams' rail siding.

Holiday's Christmas Tree Speciality Company of Chicago bought some trees in the area in the 1950s and early '60s and shipped by rail out of Chester Basin, but never set up a yard in New Ross. Holiday's closest yard was in the Whynotts Settlement/Oakhill area, according to Dwight Sanders.

Creighton Sanders' first yard was at the present location of the Bell Aliant office at Charing Cross in the mid 1950s and later relocated to the more recent better-known location around 1965, with many loads of fill first removed from the site as Highway 12 was being built to standard around 1960. Sanders operated another yard in Nictaux, near Middleton, in the early 1970s and Hiram Keddy and (Little) Howard Keddy worked there. Dwight describes it as more of a collection yard for the New Ross site. Creighton's death in 1973 resulted in Dwight taking over the business. The highest number of loads ever shipped by the Sanders' operation was estimated by Dwight to be about 70-plus, with a high of 4,000 to 5,000 wreaths. The Sanders' operation purchased an impressive wreath making machine with an adjustable table from the U.S. that was a first for New Ross. This machine, when retired, was on display at the Christmas Tree Interpretive Center in New Ross for several years and in 2015 Dwight took possession of it again and he put it back in service with long-time employee Janet Acker operating it. Creighton also opened a supply shop in the 1960s out of a small building in the back corner of the tree yard selling things like shears and axes to growers. This grew into the large, modern road-side store and shop by the fire hall. One of the last to disappear, the last few years leading up to 2015 saw the once bustling Sanders' tree yard turn into little more than a landing area for some of Dwight's own diminished production. Owen Lenihan worked at and managed the Sanders' tree yard operation for many of those busy years. He was there from 1978 to 2012.

The arrival of a U.S. tree company to New Ross did not necessarily mean the immediate or eventual opening of its yard here. It wasn't until about 10 years after their arrival that Hofert's established their first yard in 1944 on the Glengarry Road, on the site where Leo Keddy built a house some years later. This piece of land was owned by Harold Meister. Basil McDow recalls working there. Webster Lenihan says that Ted Skerry was the first to run Hofert's when it was at the Glengarry location. At one point, Charlie Meister ran it there, according to Basil McDow. Hofert's occupied that location only a few years. The next known location was at the Emery Murphy property on Porcupine Hill. Basil McDow uses his marriage in 1948 as a reference point to remember working at Hofert's Porcupine Hill yard in 1947. Doug Lonergan of East Dalhousie ran the yard there for many years in the beginning. New Rossers to run the Hofert's yard at that location for short periods in later years were Emery Murphy, Paul Russell and Vaughn Russell. Doug is still fondly remembered by former workers such as Ron Sweet and tyers John Collins and Basil McDow. In the earlier years, Ernie Russell was night watchman, Donald Morton was book keeper followed by Charlie Kaulback and the trucker was Murray Barkhouse of Dalhousie, assisted by Owen Bezanson. Webster Lenihan recalls himself working in this Hofert's location for 10 years. Hofert's left there around 1973 and returned to it again around 1978 for a few more years, then relocated to Beatrice (Jim) Larder's field around 1980 for a few years. After

that, they had a yard at the New Ross Fairgrounds where it was operated at one point by Ron Sweet's son Robert . When Hofert's closed their Fairgrounds yard for good around 1990, Robert went to Bridgewater to run their yard there. Ending a long history between New Ross and Hofert's going back to 1933, Robert bought 3,000 acres of their land in the Pleasant River-area as they abandoned their business altogether. Robert eventually resold all but 1,000 acres.

In 1952, the M. Walter Company hired Harold Meister to manage its first yard in New Ross which, in the beginning, was located on the Glengarry Road on the site best known at one time as the local outdoor hockey rink. John Seaboyer ran the Walter's yard there for a few years after Harold ran it. Then Walter's relocated the yard to the property of Jim Collins and Jim's son John managed the yard for several years in the 1950s. John Collins now recalls himself having disagreements with Mr. Walter over grading and conflicts arose between the Caledonia and New Ross sites. Walter's main operation was in Caledonia, with New Ross more of a satellite site. Walter's had a period with no yard in New Ross but still bought trees here and trucked them to the Chester Basin siding. Randy Naugler, a former Walter's employee, states that in 1979 he worked at a "well established" Walter's yard at the Fred Naugler property in Seffernville, which had previously been used by Gold Star in 1966 & 1967. Walter's operated there into the 1980s. John Collins recalls that Walter's purchased 10-15 carloads one season in the 1950s from local forestry businessman Harold Reeves. Harold had an arrangement with the Joudrey forest company to cut trees off their previously logged land on the New Russell Road. Harold also had a large tree-cutting operation at Ponie Lake, in the Three Mile Plains area, where workers employed included Garnet Keddy, Aldon Turner, Bob Reeves and Oran Reeves. Harold had a mill and large logging operation at Ponie Lake with camps which could also house the tree cutters. Garnet Keddy said trees were hauled out with oxen and this was in the 1950s. Harold's son Maurice Reeves bought and cut trees in the Musquodoboit area and sold them to Walter's. Gary Murphy and Murray Russell each had their own crews hired to cut for Walter's, Gary in the Truro area and Murray near Windsor, according to Garnet Keddy who worked for Gary.

Fred Naugler was well-known in the tree business and he had a good knowledge regarding who in New Ross had trees to sell. His actual name was Wilfred Laurier Naugler, as a result of his family's admiration of that famous Liberal Prime Minister, but everyone called him Fred. For four or five years beginning in the late 1950s, Fred bought trees for Peter Nardalla, an Italian man from Chicago. Nardalla bought 35 to 50 carloads a year that were loaded at the Chester Basin siding. Fred's son, Grant, still has the old "Nardalla and Carusso" sign in his basement that Fred had posted in front of his tree yard at his Seffernville residence. Nardalla's business got hit hard financially by snowstorms in the U.S. that hurt sales. In the mid 1960s, Fred decided to go on his own, taking son Terry and nephew Maurice Naugler to the Parrsboro area, using some American contacts he had, including ones in Washington, D.C. and Bristol, Connecticut, but he found himself on the hook for \$10,000 to \$12,000 through some of these deals. On one return truck ride home from Connecticut, Fred came across a Boy Scout group near the highway and approached them about buying trees from him, which they did for several years. One day, likely in the late 1960s, buyer Ed Walters dropped by Fred's home, being sent there by John Seaboyer, who thought Fred would have no trouble finding trees to buy. Ed opened an operating account at the Chester bank so Fred could run a yard at his Seffernville residence. Sanford Redden supplied the perfect office for the yard- an old schoolbus he had previously used as a camper that was large enough for a lunch area. At one point, Fred had 27 workers employed at his yard. Grant recalls that Clayton Levy was an employee who could fix anything that broke in the yard and that truck owner Gene Daniel was very reliable and dedicated and hauled many loads to the Chester Basin siding. Gene recalls that in either 1974 or '75, he trucked 16 carloads to Chester Basin rail siding. Fred's wife

Doris stood by him through the years and handled payrolls, payments, shipping paperwork and other office duties. Toby Sode hauled to the U.S. for Fred. Tree growers Fred bought from over the years included John and Ken Seaboyer, Harley, Robie and Arnold Levy, Chester Keddy, Waldo McDow and Edgar Russell. Grant states that Fred first saw sheared trees after receiving a call from Aldon Turner one day, who had some to look at. Fred liked what he saw and paid a flat price for each tree.

Fred helped Ernest Veinott get an order in the earlier years. Fred and Creighton Sanders had a close working relationship that started early. Grant states that Creighton told Fred at one time that he never wanted to become too big in the tree business. Remembrance Day and tree harvest always coincide and Grant recalls how one day when Fred and Creighton were travelling together, they pulled their car to the side of the road to pay a moment of respect at 11 A.M. Ed's brother, Don Walters, who focused much on a roofing company he owned in the U.S., took over from Ed in later years and things wound down. Fred died in 1988 after several years of declining health, so there was no yard at his place several years leading up to his death. A few growers looked forward to "refreshments" provided at Fred's yard and this clever tactic likely resulted in a few more trees being brought to his operation. After Fred was finished with Walters', he and Grant sold their own trees to Donnie and Ruby Seffern at Gold Star. George and Shirley Hiltz worked with Fred for Walters' at first, then ran a yard for Walter's for a few years at the location of Russell Skerry's residence in the mid 1980s. Randy Naugler, not a close relative, took over what remained of the Walters' business elsewhere.

Grant recalls how when Randall McInty hauled a load of trees to the U.S. for Fred one trip, it was thought best to hand over a few bales of trees a police officer wanted for himself in order to get the shipment back on its way without further delay. Grant also recalls how Elmer Lantz called Fred late one night for help from the Houlton, Maine border crossing after being detained for a simple oversight on the paperwork, resulting in a long drive to the border for Fred to help his friend.

The Kirk's company trucked trees from New Ross to Bridgewater in its earlier years without having a local yard. Merlin Wright of New Germany was a Kirk's manager well-known in the New Ross area. According to Jeannie Bezanson, Alice Acker hired a group of local ladies to supply numerous wreaths to Kirk's. New Ross brothers Dick and Douglas Keddy bought and graded trees here for Kirk's with Dick later having a small Kirk's yard behind his Forties home. In the 1960s, Kirk's opened a large yard at the New Ross Fairgrounds site with Jack Keddy managing it in the beginning and then Dick Keddy. Kirk's stayed at the Fairgrounds location for about 30 years, until the Farmers Association put rental of the site up for tender. In the following years, the Fairgrounds site was rented for short periods by Hofert's and Claude O'Hara. Forrest Higgins used the Fairgrounds site as well in the early 1990s and he also had a yard in the Forties.

When the Gold Star company from Lexington, Massachusetts, represented by Arthur Gaklis of the Boston area, arrived in New Ross in 1966, they set up for two seasons at the Fred Naugler property in Seffernville. They were absent from New Ross in 1968, then moved north up the highway to the Blair Seffern property in 1969 where they improvised a yard. In the winter of 1969, land they purchased from Blair was cleared by Donnie and Blair and in 1970 the well-known site below Blair's house was a busy yard until 1995. Donnie and wife Ruby Seffern worked closely together running the operation. The Gold Star yard in New Ross also operated a satellite yard in Pinehurst in the late 1980s for three or four years, but the yard there did not meet expectations. According to Ruby Seffern, Gold Star intended to return to New Ross for several years after their 1995 final season here, but poor market

conditions prevented this from ever happening.

Harold Reeves sold to Walter's in the mid 1950s. Leo Swinimer states his father, Bruce Swinimer, who had a yard in Western Shore, also bought from Harold. Interestingly, Leo still has a copy of a tree seller's license from the 1960s belonging to his father who also bought from growers in the Casey Corner area and loaded in boxcars in Kentville. Bruce's daughter, Betty Long, recalls tagging trees for him and that Clark's bought many of his trees. Harold also had at least one U.S. buyer he shipped to. Harold was a well-known logger and set up his own lumber mill sites. His son, Basil, worked at trees in the Parrsboro area, but died young in a vehicle accident. His other son, Maurice, shipped a high of 25 loads of trees and four loads of brush to the U.S. in the mid 1980s, the majority of the trees bought from other growers. In his earlier years, Maurice began by thinning balsam fir off Bowater timberland and selling them for trees. Around 1974, Maurice cut in the Guysborough area because he could not find enough trees in New Ross to fill orders; prior to that he hired local crews to work in Cape Breton and even Newfoundland. Gene Daniel once worked as a spare driver for Maurice and recalls trips with Maurice's single axle truck to Boston and New Jersey. Another son of Harold, Clifford Reeves, headed to the Mount-Thom area and his wife Myrna states they considered moving the family there in the mid 1970s, but never made the move. She says that area is particularly good for growing quality trees. Clifford had his own arrangement with the Holiday Speciality Company from Chicago, a company which bought not only trees but various seasonal products from other places throughout the year. Unlike Edgar Russell, who leased a huge tract of land from a big company, Clifford had legal agreements with a number of local land owners, allowing him to produce trees on their land. Myrna states that land layouts there were "helter skelter", making it a challenge to identify the lots. While there, Clifford encountered a problem with porcupines damaging trees and he worked with Lands and Forests to remedy the problem by releasing fishers. His crew also came across an old cemetery in one of the lots and the locals there believed the tombstones were from passengers of the famous ship "Hector" and the community celebrated the discovery.

Marshall Reeves started out working for Harold Reeves in 1951 in the Brooklyn/Scotch Village areas of Hants County. He recalls some of Harold's trees being sold to George Hughes and Bruce Swinimer. Starting in 1957, Marshall sold through Charlie Meister for Kaizer's for three years, with some of those Kaizer loads of Marshall's going to buyer George Tremmel in St. Louis, who one time toured Marshall's tree lot and liked what he saw. Marshall also sold for one year to Holiday's and those trees were taken to a Holiday's yard at the Truro exhibition grounds. In 1962, Marshall started shipping his own orders to the U.S. Today, Marshall's son Marty makes it possible for this family operation to continue doing business.

Ray Gates, who died in 1978, would've had many experiences with several of the few economic mainstays of New Ross. Like his father and grandfather, he coopered. Ray's cooper shop was located on Gates' family property on Broome's Hill (now known as Mack's Hill) and the building was the former first Baptist church in New Ross. He also supplied his own staves and hoops for the barrels. Ray's coopering skills helped him acquire employment at the Ross Farm in its earlier years and while working at the Ross Farm, Foster Gates introduced him to Oscar Via Jr. from Mechanicsville, Virginia. Foster was no longer interested in supplying trees to Via so the order was passed to Ray. Therefore, it can be said of Ray that he worked at coopering, Christmas trees and the Ross Farm. He also did some small scale farming for his own use along with small sales of milk and potatoes. Ray's son Sterling continued with the order and other orders resulting from it in Virginia for many years after his father's death. Allan Hiltz, Ashton Reeves, Sterling Gates, Grant Reeves, Scott Reeves, Stephen Workman,

Gene Daniel, Miles Russell, Alex Hiltz, Paul Brown and Shirley Hiltz were others who worked at the Ross Farm, Christmas trees as well as farming and/or forestry. These examples demonstrate how participants in the New Ross tree industry over the years often made a living by also working at the few other limited opportunities for employment in the community.

To span four generations of participation in the Christmas tree industry and to still have a least one living family member from each generation is rare, but this is the case of Webster Lenihan's family. Webster, age 97 in 2016, remains a source of information about years gone by. In 1985, he and sons Barry and Basil started shipping to Hugh Rodell in Maryland. Barry's son Andrew still ships to Hugh's son Cliff Rodell and Andrew's son Adam helps out a bit. Basil's grandsons Evan and Spencer also earn a little extra cash doing tree work with their father, Paul Williams, who has a 50 acre tree farm.

Mary Windrow (Reeves), wife of Murray Reeves, has compiled a history of her family's involvement with the Christmas tree industry. It spans four generations, up to present day, and she has shared some of these memories. In 1929, her father, Edward Windrow, sold trees to George Hughes and George's brother-in-law, Bruce Swinimer that were loaded at the Chester Basin siding for shipment to the U.S. Edward and others in New Ross cut trees for the American market through the Depression years. From 1937 to 1946, Edward sold to Frank Swimimer of Western Shore and Bob Hennigar of Chester Basin. Mary recalls that in 1948, at age 13, she and her brother, Lowell Windrow, aged 11, cut their father's trees while he was away working with a portable sawmill crew. He told the children they could cut the trees and have the money, so they did. Mary recalls they were cutting trees in the pasture and dragging them to the field when Elmer Cook, who was working in his own lot nearby, heard the noise and came to see what was taking place. He told them to be careful and said to let him know if they needed help.

Murray also got an early start, according to Mary's history. In 1946, at age 12, he cut from the pasture belonging to his father, Ira, and sold them to George Hughes. In the early to mid 1950s, Murray partnered with Douglas Keddy. They cut on lots belonging to various people and sold the trees primarily to George Hughes. One time, when they bought trees as stumpage from the then elderly Henry Windrow of Glengarry, Mr. Windrow was amazed at how much money they paid him for what he termed as "fir bushes". In the late 1950s, Murray and Douglas started working on their own. Murray continued to harvest trees from the family pasture as well as stumpage from other tree growers. Up to 1960, Murray's trees were totally natural, but from then on, he attempted to get a better bottom ring of boughs by butt pruning and hardwood bush removal. Treeing was a family affair and Mary recalls how one time in 1961, when a big snow storm was expected, Murray rallied the troops by getting her and the three children Debbie, Ruth and John along with his father Ira and mother Bertha to head to the pasture to get the trees out. Trees were much lighter then, so the children were able to drag them while Murray tied them all by hand and Ira hauled them to the yard. By dark, all the trees were home in the yard before the storm. In 1962, Murray started shipping his own trees to Boston and then to places in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey as well as one year to Newfoundland. Over the years, he received many notes from people who bought his trees, expressing appreciation for the wonderful Nova Scotia Balsam Fir Christmas tree. Murray's brother, Gordon Reeves, had been trucking trees for Creighton Sanders and Edgar Russell, so Murray hired him as well to truck. Many children in the family, as well as men from the community, accompanied Gordon on his trips to the U.S. Mary states that in 1963, she and Murray made the first large wreath in New Ross. It was made on a 60-inch ring which Murray had Jack Morley make in his blacksmith shop with one-quarter inch round iron. Two rolls of rabbit wire purchased at the hardware store were used to wind the brush on the ring. Mary made the wreath on the kitchen floor and the men rolled it out the door, carried it to the

truck and put it on top of the load by hand. This wreath graced the Prudential building in downtown Boston that Christmas. The Reeves' operation exported trees and wreaths until 2009. During some years in the 1980s and '90s, Murray shipped as many as ten loads of trees, baled brush and wreaths. In several years, as many as 12,000 hand-made wreaths were shipped. Wreath-makers came from such places as Windsor Road, Canaan, Springfield and New Germany. Murray purchased trees from various producers in the Annapolis Valley, Springfield, New Germany and Caledonia. He operated a U-Pick in his pasture from 1993-1996. The company, Murray Reeves Forestry, still has approximately 100 acres of land in production.

Floyd Jollymore shipped an impressive high of 98 loads from New Ross and area during one year in the mid 1980s, buying from various growers under his company name of "Evergreen Balsam Products". He had a small congested area behind his house in New Ross for processing trees as well as a site a little farther up the Forties Road at the Winnie Keddy property. He also used a large field in the Pleasant River area to handle trees bought there. Son Greg recalls that Clifford Reeves worked for Floyd on this side of Caledonia and in the mid 1950s, Greg recalls his father working in the Kennetcook area. According to Wade Meister, Floyd at one time had an order for spruce trees. Without a highly visible local yard, it may surprise some to hear that this mild mannered man had once shipped such a large number of loads. Floyd had a connection with Bill Stewart from the Antigonish area. Bill had a large tree farm and also operated a large buying yard for Floyd in the Antigonish area. Floyd and partner Phil Barkhouse at one point trucked trees for Roy Harnish who had a tree operation in the Hubbards area where Roy also operated the Shore Club and beach. Ray Gates of New Ross graded and son Sterling tied for Harnish around 1968/69 and loaded cars at the Chester Basin siding for him. Possibly a good way to summarize Floyd's treeing career would be to say he started from scratch, built a large and successful business and had an ideally timed exit from it. Paul Williams was Floyd's right hand man with the trees but as Floyd was ready to wrap up his tree business, he advised Paul to steer clear getting his own orders and to stick to the more profitable forestry business. Instead, Floyd set Paul up with some sales to Kirk's. Paul states that Claude O'Hara and Farmington resident Willard Wagner took over many of Floyd's orders. Meanwhile, Paul continued to focus on his forestry business and limit his tree business to a 50 acre lot. Quite possibly, Floyd gave sound advice to Paul.

Brothers Gerald and Mike Keddy began their adult years of participation in the tree industry when they fixed up the family lot, once worked by father Jack. They began selling their trees to local yards. Gerald's first wife was originally from the US which indirectly lead to sales connections across the border. Mike later bought tree land from Uncles Bub and Hibbert Keddy as well as Roscoe Potter's tree land. A more recent six year lease of Kirk's land by Mike did not yield favorable results. Mike recalls when Hofert's started buying sheared trees in the early 1980s, the type of tree required was a far lighter density and lower quality than is the case today and he and Gerald sold about 8,000 trees in the \$8 to \$10 range to Hofert's one very memorable fall. The two brothers' involvement in the industry continues to benefit many other growers in New Ross and beyond. Mike is now a major producer and buyer of trees in New Ross with some large orders destined for chain stores and he sits as President of the Lunenburg County Christmas Tree Producers Association. Gerald, the long-time Member of Parliament for the region, worked tirelessly for the industry during his years in Ottawa.

Around 1960, new challenges were taking shape that would require growers to change their practices. The market for the easily grown wild tree was becoming threatened, but not immediately eliminated, by the dense and shapely Scotch pine, while the artificial tree was also gaining popularity. Companies like Kirk's were first to respond by introducing practices like shearing, fertilizing, butt pruning and

more aggressive thinning to grow a tree with qualities similar to the Scotch and artificial competitors. Some growers resisted and vowed they would never shear a tree, but most eventually realized it would be necessary to implement the new practices. As late as 1987, Ernest Veinott told a newspaper reporter he preferred the natural tree over a sheared one. These new procedures resulted in greater labor requirements and other higher production costs. Previously, most work was performed during the weeks of harvest- now work was necessary in the spring and summer to fertilize and shear. Sterling Gates recalls how around 1970, Elmer Lantz had just returned from the US on tree business and was reporting back home that sheared trees were going for 50c a foot there, information that likely made its way to other New Ross growers, convincing them to start shearing. The days of being able to sell the "Charlie Brown" tree seemed to be drawing to a close. On the brighter side, the market for wreaths and brush around 1960 was strong and growing. Around this time, government began getting involved and growers could get grants and other types of assistance to improve their lots by building more or better roads and other tasks. Tom Ernst was well known by many as the information and contact person with the Department of Lands and Forests and he visited many lots in the community advising and assisting growers. Boxes of Tom's logs and records from over the years still exist in storage and he feels in the future they'll offer valuable insights into many details about the industry during those years. The Lunenburg County Christmas Tree Producers' Association (LCCTPA) was formed giving growers a united voice and other types of support. The Seffernville lot would soon be created, Tom Ernst estimates around 1970, where research could be done and new and better procedures taught to growers, as is still the case today. In the mid 1960s, Creighton Sanders purchased a wreath making machine in New York and transported it to his New Ross operation and it was thought to be the first such machine in Nova Scotia, helping the Sanders' operation become one of the earliest large, if not largest, exporters of wreaths in New Ross at that time. The tree business ended the 1960s in New Ross on a high note. Surprisingly, trees were even hauled to Port Williams for shipment, according to a Chronicle Herald newspaper article, likely from the late 1960s or early '70s, showing New Ross truckers Gordon Turner and Clinton Keddy with a load of Christmas trees, which were part of a 4,000 tree order being shipped with a cargo of Annapolis Valley apples on the refrigerated vessel "Eskimo" headed for Barbados. Another article from around the same time shows members of the Lenihan family, Laird and father Ivan and uncle Fred. The article states that this family will harvest about 12,000 trees "mainly to the United States but also to an increasingly attractive market in Venezuela". Local trucker Murray Walker started hauling trees to the United States in 1949, going as far south as Richmond, Virginia. In 2015, retired and in his mid seventies, Murray remains a very busy man making and selling sauerkraut and pickled beans. Edgar Russell enticed Murray to haul his trees by providing him with a new 1969 three ton Chev truck to drive. Murray also hauled trees for Roy Harnish with Edgar's truck. Over the years, Murray recalls driving for Rex Meister, Ernest Veinott and Brian Acker. Murray also recalls trucking trees destined for the United States out of Belmont for Fred Naugler.

Through the years, there were always growers who can now be recalled as the first to try something new or different. In the late 1950s, Webster Lenihan was one of the first, if not the first, who aimed to grow the "special" grade of natural tree that was singly baled and would yield a higher price. The extra work required to do the thinning, butt pruning and spacing resulted in a tree which exporters knew they had a market for. We now see that this tree was a forerunner to the sheared tree. Webster's great fear of running into a wasp nest did not deter him from spending the extra time in his trees, something he still jokes about today. Roger Meister recalls how Webster would tie up a branch of a growing tree to eliminate a hole. Leland Veinott's roadside tree lot stood out because he too took the extra time to thin and space and "Lee" always seemed to have an idea up his sleeve for how to do something better. Charlie Meister liked to experiment and took great pleasure in sharing useful information with others

about his discoveries. He even grafted a Scotch pine onto a fir and this unusual tree still lives today. Charlie created his own balsam fir seed bed and planted and cultivated pine. He owned and operated likely the first pine U-Pick in New Ross at his Forties Road plantation. Grant Naugler recalls his father buying Aldon Turner's sheared trees- these trees seemed to be in a class of their own. The "sheep sheared" trees grown by Chester Keddy also looked very nice. As well, there were the trees grown by Robie and Harley Levy that Grant recalls had a special appearance that was easily identified. In more recent years, Jeff Reeves became notable for entering numerous tree and wreath contests and skill competitions. He won many of them, with a large collection of trophies and other awards to show for it, including two Canadian national awards for #1 tree and a long list of wins at the South Shore Exhibition. Over the years, a number of New Ross growers attended conventions and competitions in the US and other provinces to keep up with the latest trends, make business contacts and enter competitions. Grant Reeves, son of Percy Reeves, recalls an unusual first sighting while helping his father as a young boy along with sisters Valerie and Barb around 1955 or 1956. The family spotted mayflowers blooming during Christmas tree harvest and the story got reported in one of the local newspapers.

Neil Meister deserves recognition for his innovative approach to the industry. Neil's shearing techniques raised eyebrows of growers who thought what was learned from manuals and courses was what you had to do when shearing a tree. Neil started shearing a tree several years sooner than the information suggested was necessary and when he sheared, he cut the tree in very narrow, almost to the point where his young sheared trees looked like little more than green fuzzy poles. It would appear to some growers that a tree sheared by Neil was mutilated to the point that it would be lucky to even survive, but Neil recalls how Tom Ernst was amazed that such nice harvestable trees would be the end result of shearing this way. Neil also stood on the front battle lines when combating insects and weeds, armed with a good knowledge about the various pests as well as an understanding about the best pesticide or method to use in the battle. He realized that mounting a sprayer on a front end loader worked better than rear mounted sprayers because it could be raised up and down and gave a constant view of where the spray was going because the operator was facing the spraying at all times. Neil also had a good mechanical knowledge of his sprayers and the ins and outs of calibrating them, so the correct pesticide mixtures would be applied to his tree lots. He also had a solid knowledge of fertilizers and when his son studied at Dalhousie and had access to a science lab, Neil had him analyze the twigs and needles of his fertilized trees to see how the application of the nutrients played out. He was also early out of the gate designing mechanical (motorized) shears and presently has a few sets still in the design stage, progress on them now delayed by poor health. Neil also went the extra distance to keep his trees fresh. He dug a large hole in the ground containing about four feet of ground water and covered it with a metal mesh, then within 24 hours of cutting trees, he would stand them on the mesh, allowing them to draw water from the well below. This also helps hydrate trees after a dry fall growing season. Neil discovered each of these trees contained about two gallons of water and the process worked so well that the extra moisture could make his loads overweight at U.S. truck weighing stations where there are lower weight allowances than in Canada. Now in his seventies, Neil wants to work as long as possible. He notes all the challenges the industry faces today, but states his biggest problem is his own poor health while he retains the good markets he has established over the years. So with the aid of "two canes and morphine" when necessary, he will continue on as long as possible to do the work he so obviously enjoys and takes pride in.

The once male-dominated tree industry in New Ross had several female participants who knew a great deal about it. Leitha Sanders and Violet (Bud) Veinott worked the front lines of the business along with

husbands Creighton and Ernest. Bud paid meticulous attention to every detail of the operation and one didn't need not converse with her for long before realizing this. Both of these ladies had remarkable lasting enthusiasm and pride in their contributions to their respective businesses and the industry in general and willingly provided information and photos for this project before their deaths. Phyllis Hughes still enjoys working with pride at son Colin's tree yard every fall, usually tagging trees, and very much enjoys a chat covering her forty years of book keeping and other activities, starting with husband Gilbert. Ruby Seffern played a very active role during the years Gold Star operated in New Ross and had a broad knowledge of the daily affairs of the business and might be best remembered as the lady who handed over the instant cash, while working closely with husband Donnie.

The 1970s and '80s were good years to be in the tree business. Most growers responded well to the need to keep up with the changes that the market demanded, while the government support and participation that began in the 1960s did as intended- it encouraged people to have lots and grow as many quality trees as possible. The currency exchange rate was often very attractive when the American dollars were converted, increasing revenue as well as causing a bit of boasting at times by some of those shippers in a position to receive it. The mid 1980s was a peak period for Hibbert, Theodore (Bub) and later Peter Keddy with a sales high of 50,000 trees to a new market Aruba in the Carribean. A good price was paid for a tree that could be of light density and on the lower end of the quality scale. High shipping costs to that location did not make it profitable to ship heavy, dense trees there. Ironically, some growers today remember that the dollar amount the Keddys paid to growers at the time for a tree for that order is about the same as the dollar amount paid in 2014 for a similar tree for the Panama market. Bub and Hibbert got their start by dealing with Atlantic Traders in Halifax. Brothers Hencie and Foster Hiltz worked together as one of Bub and Hibbert's important suppliers. Frank and Philson Turner also sold to Bub and Hibbert. Frank recalls Hibbert hauling about 150 bales of trees to the port in Halifax on his pick-up truck that had a rack going over the cab. Rick Turner recalls Hibbert also hauling to the Chester Basin siding. Another tragedy occurred on November 8th, 1998 when Peter Keddy was involved in a fatal single vehicle highway mishap at the Twenty River bridge on the Forties Road while traveling for Christmas tree related harvest tasks. Hibbert's wife, Francis, donated her compilation of clippings and other information about the Christmas tree industry in New Ross to the community.

Around 1980-81 Marie (Neil) Meister operated a store at the Cross called Charing Cross Gifts. She states she wanted to create something representative of New Ross that would sell in her store. Thinking the Ross Farm was already well-promoted, she hired the Enco Company of Toronto to make pins and T shirts which sold well, stating "New Ross Christmas Tree Capital". Tom Ernst recalls the work he was involved with over the years to have Lunenburg County designated as the "Balsam Fir Christmas Tree Capital of the World" and the eventual placement of the blue signs on Highway 103 as the county is entered, possibly making some New Rossers feel a little closer to home as they drive past them.

An event that occurred during tree harvest activities on November 21, 1983 is still very vivid in the memories of many in New Ross today and for some, it is a reference point for where they were or what they were doing when the news was heard, just like the November 22, 1963 JFK date. The Maurice Reeves operation, Reeves Logging and Tree Farms, and entire community were devastated when Maurice's son Thomas (Tommy) was severely injured in a highway mishap on the Forties Road. Undeterred by the severe injuries and resulting paralysis, Tommy and future wife Debbie Oickle undertook construction of greenhouses for a nursery in the winter of 1987-88. Their first batch of

balsam fir seedlings was ready for sale in 1989. This spin off business of the Christmas tree industry has consistently produced 60,000 to 70,000 trees for sale across the province and also advanced the local industry by giving New Ross growers quick and easy access to genetically superior trees from carefully chosen seeds. Trees for reforestation and ornamental purposes were also grown and sold as well as vegetable and flower plants. Demand for products from their T & D Nursery remains steady with demand for balsam seedlings in 2015 exceeding their supply.

Early into the 1990s dramatic change for the worse was upon the local industry. There were a few bright spots, but opportunities to sell all the trees you harvested seemed to be disappearing fast. Whereas only a few years before, buyers might be pleading on doorsteps to get a grower's trees, now some growers were pleading to sell. The number of local tree yards and buyers was dwindling quickly. The previous good years encouraged widespread production in the U.S. creating high supply. Also, growers in the U.S. and some provinces were getting government assistance not available to growers in Nova Scotia. To make matters worse, large chain stores were displacing numerous smaller retail outlets in the U.S. and Canada- stores that could force prices paid for trees downward with the leverage they had from such large orders, and brokers acting as middlemen taking a bite from some of what might otherwise go to growers. The Gold Star yard's closure was rumored to be imminent and by 1996 its white sign with gold lettering no longer beckoned growers to come and sell. No longer was there a yard where you could leave fully paid, with cash if you wished, for your entire load. It was the last large American company yard to leave New Ross.

The outlook heading into the 1990s was indeed rather dismal. Floyd Jollymore pretty much wrapped up his business around 1990-91, according to wife Ada. On September 11, 1990 a letter of condolence was written by Tom Ernst of the Lunenburg County Christmas Tree Producers' Association to Mrs. Ernest Veinott, regarding the recent loss of her husband, described in the letter as "a very prominent exporter of trees, wreaths and brush who was always well organized and calm during the busy times". Although many of his orders went to a few family members, the Ernest Veinott yard would disappear- a yard which in 1987 sold 65,000 trees, 12,000 locally made wreaths and 2,000 bales of loose brush, according to a newspaper article in Bud's collection of clippings. Another clipping from her collection described the May 23, 1998 event about crowds gathered outside the New Ross Anglican Church watching nine teams of horses parading 73 year-old Maurice Reeves to his final resting place, another loss to the industry, although early in the 1990s Maurice sensed the tree business was changing for the worse and he started giving some of his orders to other growers. His orders eventually were given to shippers such as Murray Reeves, Trevor Hiltz, Harris Hiltz and Sterling Gates. His sons Glendon and Jeff still run a smaller version of his operation. In 1991, the sudden death of major buyer Gilbert Hughes seemed to be another blow to the local industry.

On a more positive note, local grower Gerald Keddy served a term as president of the Nova Scotia Christmas Tree Council and in 1997 made a successful run for MP for South Shore. He worked hard in Ottawa for the Christmas tree industry and his efforts were noted and appreciated by growers everywhere. Gerald played a major role in acquiring federal government financial support for the on-going Smart Tree program that aims to develop a longer lasting tree. In 1996, Acadia University student Blake Brown wrote "When Christmas Came to New Ross: The History of the Christmas Tree Industry" as part of the requirements for a BA degree with Honors. Although not easily available to readers because of the limited number of copies, this impressively researched brown hard cover book contains invaluable information about the industry, especially as it played out in New Ross, from its beginning to the mid 1990s. There is a copy of his book at Acadia University and at least one copy in

New Ross.

Many growers found ways to survive the 1990s. The Sanders' yard continued to buy, but the intensity of previous years was gone. For some, it seemed almost of a privilege just to be able to sell there and you would likely be wrong to assume they would buy all of your trees. Dwight would often direct desperate growers to check with Forrest Higgins or Claude O'Hara at the Fairgrounds to see if they might buy the trees. Guy Fortier of Quebec hired New Ross native Arlyn Turner to buy in the area for shipments to the Carribean, while Enjoy Tree from Quebec bought loads here as well. Neil Meister, Brian Acker, Jeff and Glendon Reeves, Harold and Osborne McDow, Wayne Millett, Scott Melvin, Danny Hiltz, and Miles Veinott would have need of buying some from others while growers like Leon Turner and sons, Harris Hiltz, Barry and Basil Lenihan, Sterling Gates, Laird Lenihan and Marshall Reeves often had good orders for many of their own trees. Karen Rhinehardt from the Bridgewater area bought a few loads from several New Ross growers in the 1990s as well. Kirk's also purchased some loads in the area after they closed their yard here. Some growers had small local orders in Halifax and nearby towns while individuals like Wade Meister and Chester Keddy had lots in New Minas and Duncan Walker and Jeff Reeves had lots in the city. This listing is not complete, but it likely includes the majority of selling opportunities in the 1990s with one major omission- Colin Hughes.

After the death of father Gilbert in 1991, Colin took over the business. He seemed to have a rather optimistic view of the future and some valuable family connections reaching to the past. Gilbert was Ernest Veinott's nephew and Gilbert was hired to do trucking for Ernest in the Mount Thom area. As was previously mentioned, Ernest was employed by Edgar Russell in that area and eventually Ernest developed his own tree business there using that connection. Through the trucking of Ernest's trees which began around 1970, Gilbert also gained connections with American customers and he also was handed or knew of some customers of his Uncle Ernest. Some of these orders were of little interest to others but they were an opportunity for Gilbert to get a start. By about 1975, Gilbert had a small tree yard at his home near the corner of Lake Lawson Road and Windsor Road, the current location of Colin's tree yard, and Colin recalls helping his father and mother that year as a young boy load their first truckload from there. After being away, Colin returned to New Ross in 1985 to help his father with eight to ten loads and by the time of Gilbert's death in 1991, they had orders for about 15 loads. At this time, they were able to pick up a few more loads from the recent death of Ernest Veinott, although the majority of Ernest's former orders went to Brian Acker and Miles Veinott. So in 1991, Colin had his deceased father's trucking and tree businesses to take over along with a logging operation. Trained as a heavy duty mechanic, Colin built a large garage for a repair business and also opened a small engine repair and supply shop. He seemed well positioned and motivated to achieve in the tree business and throughout the 1990s Colin grew and developed his businesses and provided a well needed place for growers to sell some trees.

Brian Acker shipped a high of about 10 loads around 1990-1991. Following the death of Ernest Veinott, Brian states that Bud handed some of Ernest's orders over to him. Up to this point, Brian had no orders of his own to ship. Brian had previously worked for Ernest and trucked some of his trees. Brian stopped shipping his own orders around 2007. Brian's parents, Bev and Alice Acker had once worked for Kirk's. Brian recalls his father once went to Noel and Kennetcook with Dick Keddy in the early 1950s. Brian also worked for Kirk's in the fall of 1967 or 1968 in the Londonderry area with Grover Fancy, Jack Keddy and others. Kirk's had a base at Brookfield at that time for that area and also cut in Economy and Five Islands. Over the years, Brian also trucked trees for other shippers, sometimes with his own truck while other times he was hired to drive trucks belonging to others such

as Gordon Reeves and Sanders. Brian recalls he also hauled trees for Murray Reeves and Rick Lord. Brian always took great pride in the trucks he owned and he still keeps his truck well-polished and maintained with many photos taken of them. He claims he is still using a set of wooden stakes that are now 30 years old. When Brian shipped his own orders, his main yard was located at Keddy's Hill. In the beginning years, he used his father's property to ship from. In 2014, Brian used his own truck to haul five loads for Mahoney Evergreens of Winchester, Massachusetts. Mahoney's own about 700 acres of mostly Christmas tree land in the East Dalhousie area and they have a recreational lodge in Nova Scotia where they sometimes vacation. Two of Brian's favorite stories and certainly the ones he is most sentimental about, had beginnings in the early 1960s when his family sold trees to Kirk's and placed notes in the trees that went to the Illinois area. A young girl from the Johnson family responded, sending the Ackers notes and photos of her grandparents, parents and dog. The girl from the other family was the future wife of a Lutheran minister and this family came to visit the Ackers in New Ross. Contact was maintained with these families until recent years and Brian enjoys showing the collection of photos and notes that were sent to the Ackers over the years. Brian's hauled trees again in 2015 making 46 years at trucking them.

Mary Ann Turner, daughter of Shirley and Ashton Reeves has a story similar to Brian Acker's about putting a note in a tree shipment. In 1955, Mary Ann's parents put her name in trees belonging to her Uncle John Brown that were shipped to Illinois by Hibbert Keddy. A young boy in the Meyer family wrote back and eventually his older brother LeRoy Meyer took over the letter writing. LeRoy visited Mary Ann's family in New Ross about thirty years ago and the letters have not yet ceased coming.

Around 2003, Dwight Sanders worked out a side arrangement with DeLong's of New Germany to work together to fill a large Canadian chain store order, creating opportunities for some New Ross growers to supply a nice medium density, seven-foot tree, loaded by the grower on a trailer sent to the grower's yard, with an attractive price paid. The Canada Green company was also taking some loads out of New Ross with George Rhodenizer doing the buying; a few years later, Rhodenizer bought the Canada Green company and the tree land that went with it, then started filling his orders mainly with trees from company lots. Leo Hamel, owner of Amanda Joe Plantations in Quebec bought in New Ross for a few years. Some of the other selling opportunities that existed in the 1990s continued at least a few years into the new millenium, but it was still a challenge at times to sell trees. Then in 2007, Colin was able to break into the Puerto Rico market and in 2009 Panama, through an arrangement with the Northern Lights company operated by Wayne and Matthew Priest. Northern Lights in turn, sold to Kirk's. Eventually, the remains of the former "Kirk Forest Product Company" would be renamed, reorganized and sold to a new owner but retain the "Kirk" part of the former company name. These orders required large numbers of trees and Colin was of the opinion New Ross alone could not supply the orders. Prices paid to growers weren't huge, but the order allowed growers to sell a wider range of trees, in particular numerous lower end trees that would yield a few dollars to the grower and provide a place to sell trees that no other order would take, while creating an opportunity to improve the tree lot by removing inferior trees of little potential otherwise. The "Charlie Brown" tree was again in high demand. Ironically, removing these poorer trees resulted in better trees in future years that were at times not easily sold. During harvest, it was not uncommon to see long lines growers' trucks and tractors from New Ross and all over the county waiting at Colin's to sell at one of the very few remaining traditional tree yards in the entire county- and the largest exporter in Nova Scotia. Maybe selling there wasn't as profitable as things were in the 1970s and '80s, but New Ross had something many other tree communities probably envied and the number of New Ross growers selling at least some trees there was high.

In 1993, the New Ross Regional Development Society organized the first New Ross Christmas Festival as a way to highlight the Christmas tree industry in the community. Events usually include craft fairs, an ecumenical church service, community tree lighting and suppers, a concert, firefighter breakfast, local Christmas tree U Picks, tree decorating competition, tours and demonstrations and a full weekend of family events at the Ross Farm. In recent years, the Christmas Carollers made by Linda and Darrell Hiltz have become an added attraction in front of most businesses and public places and many homes. In 2015, the new learning center building at the Ross Farm impressed many visitors at the festival. In May 2005, the Nova Scotia Christmas Tree Interpretive Center was opened on Highway No.12 across from the school in a small building owned by the Ross Farm, under a leasing arrangement between the New Ross Regional Development Society and the Ross Farm and with the cooperation of the Lunenburg County Christmas Tree Producers' Association (LCCTPA). Some parts of the display were previously exhibited at the DesBrisay Museum in Bridgewater. It was open to the public for two summers and for five more years after that, it was open each December during the New Ross Christmas Festival. High operating costs and Ross Farm expansion plans resulted in the transformation of the Center into the video 'The Return to Family Values' being produced by Robert Hutt and posted on the social media. There would also be a mobile display which in 2015 was relocated from the craft fair at the school to the new learning center at the Ross Farm during the festival. A few other items were displayed at the Parkdale-Maplewood Museum and the original wreath making machine previously donated by Leitha Sanders went to the LCCTPA office in New Germany for temporary storage.

By 2010, the Sanders' operation had pretty much wound down to handling trees grown on their own land while Colin's order numbers stayed strong. But with only one large buyer remaining in the community, the situation was precarious. Fortunately, Mike Keddy was making significant market gains. His tree yard on his New Russell Road property was relocated in 2013 to a more spacious and improved yard on Highway No.12, just south of Russell Dorey's.

The problem of low prices for growers that began in the late 1980s and early '90s was a trend that, with a few exceptions, continued to worsen through to present day. These days, having a place to sell, even though there are not many options, isn't as much of a problem as the price to the grower. With the main exception being trees sold in local towns and cities by grower retailers, some of the higher quality trees now fetch a price that is only a fraction of what was paid a quarter century ago. A "Charlie Brown" tree for the Panama market brings the grower the same \$3 that was paid by Bub and Hibbert Keddy for their Aruba market in the mid 1980s. Meanwhile, production costs for fertilizer, fuel and labor have increased substantially. Making matters worse, many workers of the younger generation prefer not to perform hard manual labor in the rain, snow and cold. Harris Hiltz commented that his 2014 harvest likely would not have been possible without enlisting the help of family members and in recent years he hasn't always been able to sell all of his crop and prices aren't high enough. He ponders ways to get out of the business. Orley Rafuse exits the tree business with a tone of bitterness in his voice- a grower who started around 1970 and over the years developed large, well maintained lots with superior and extensive road systems that would not yield acceptable returns in recent years. Gone are the days when Gold Star would pay cash instantly to growers. Now it's not uncommon for growers to have to wait until Christmas or even well into the new year before full payment is received, while production bills can't be treated likewise. In essence, the grower, in many cases must absorb the costs of financing the others. Although there are government programs to assist with some of these problems, most smaller growers shun them because of the conditions and complexities.

For some growers from Lunenburg County and neighboring counties, creation of the All Nova Scotia Green Christmas Tree Co-Op a few years ago seemed a good way for the approximately 30 grower members to pool resources and have their own company, through which they could market their trees at a good price and sell directly to buyers with orders too large for an individual grower to supply. It would also help counter the dwindling number of local yards and buyers. About 10 New Ross growers joined after the required purchase of a \$500 share. Positive results to date have been limited in number, with too few good orders for too many members, but it is another example of growers devising innovative means to combat the challenges.

Colin Hughes and Mike Keddy also found it necessary to respond quickly to changing requirements. In order to take orders for trees going to large chain stores and some other markets, it would be necessary to ship trees on pallets. Equipment necessary to do this is costly and only feasible for a large business to own. This is an example of the evolution of the business moving away from the small grower/shipper toward small growers having to rely entirely on a few large buyer/shippers, further reducing opportunities for smaller growers to sell directly to retailers. Regardless of this, the trend toward more trees being retailed through the large chain stores puts these huge orders out of the reach of all but only a few very large shipping operations. Shippers to some export markets can be burdened with the task of having to shake each tree in an expensive shaking machine to remove bugs and weeds. After shaking, special care must be taken to keep the tree standing to avoid reinfestation. Slow payments by brokers and chain stores is frustrating for the large shippers too. Colin Hughes, Mike Keddy, Dwight Sanders and James DeLong do not hesitate to express how stressful it is for them to make growers wait for months to be paid and, indeed, to have to wait to be paid for their own trees.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges of making a living in the tree business today, there's another list of what might best be described as 'irritants' when one thinks about how simple and straight forward things were a few decades ago. But these irritants also require time and effort and ultimately chip away at the grower's bottom line. For some export markets, color-coded and numbered grower identification tags must be attached to each tree by the grower for phytosanitary purposes- should the exported tree be a carrier of an undesirable insect or other pest, the authorities would be able to track the origin of the tree. This tag also serves the purpose of tracking the grower of a tree that sheds its needles too soon and if this happens, the grower might not be paid for that tree. Shedding is not necessarily always the grower's fault, such as in cases of improper handling and storage of the tree after it has been sold, but the grower will likely get docked regardless. The ID tag can help tree quality by discouraging any grower from cutting trees too soon and this is good for the market. Unfortunately, early shipping requirements for the Carribean sometimes means having to cut on some very warm days in October resulting in shedding and the grower may end up being penalized for this, through no fault of his own. Another recent cumbersome task for the grower can be having to attach the chain store's price /product code tag to each tree. Growers for some export countries such as Panama must now set and regularly check traps throughout their lots to monitor certain pests such as the gypsy moth and keep records of pests spotted. Federal government inspectors may be required to check growers' lots for pests and meet with growers. Puerto Rico has particularly stringent requirements and growers for this market may have to open numerous previously tied bales if suspected of carrying too many tussock moth cocoons. In some cases, a shipper's load is rejected at a U.S. border crossing and may have to be unloaded and reloaded at the shipper's expense, the latter an example of what happened to Dwight Sanders a few years ago at the Houlton, Maine crossing with a Mississippi bound drop-deck load, costing him thousands of dollars.

In addition to these tasks, there are other fees, dues and payouts, some which were unheard of a few decades ago. The Nova Scotia Christmas Tree Council collects a 1% levy from all trees produced in Nova Scotia, mainly to support Operation Real Tree which has promoted the natural tree over the competing artificial tree for about 30 years. In recent years, the Lunenburg County Christmas Tree Producers' Association collected from its members a base fee plus an extra penny for every tree sold. In 2015, in an attempt to balance the books, the fee structure was changed to higher flat fees only. Growers are strongly encouraged to buy at least one \$500 share in the Smart Tree Co-Op to match government funding covering important research being done by Dr. Lada and his team in Bible Hill at the Dalhousie University campus. This research into growing the best balsam fir possible focuses on needle retention, which is so important today with chain stores and Caribbean markets demanding trees so early in the season. Shareholders hope that this valuable research will result in technologies and products that will also find applications outside the Christmas industry, which could add value to the shares and pay dividends. A few New Ross growers who have their own shipments to the U.S. opt to pay membership dues to the national American tree association. Although pesticide use in the industry is reduced through integrated pest management and other practices, growers wishing to apply pesticides must take courses and pay a licencing fee. Members of the All Nova Scotia Green Christmas Tree Co-Op must buy a \$500 share to belong to the co-op. There is considerable resistance from some growers to paying some of these fees and this is problematic but understandable.

As New Ross turns 200, the Christmas tree industry can boast being part of nearly half of the community's history. On December 6, 2014, New Ross was likely the first community in Nova Scotia to proclaim the first "National Christmas Tree Day" during the annual New Ross Christmas Festival. The first Saturday in December was the day chosen by the Canadian Christmas Tree Growers' Association to promote the real Christmas tree in this way. Support and cooperation from the New Ross Regional Development Society made it possible to join the celebration, as well as undertake other promotional activities for the industry during the past 10 years. Three New Ross men have been president of the Nova Scotia Christmas Tree Council over the years: Dwight Sanders, Gerald Keddy, and Charlie Yeaton.

Presently, the importance of the Colin Hughes and Mike Keddy operations here is immense. The Hughes' operation has responded to the labor shortage by using Mexican workers who arrive in New Ross in the spring to work on Colin's own tree lots and return home when the tree yard closes a few weeks before Christmas. A few Mexicans have been coming to the Hughes' operation for several years and have integrated well into the community and growers visiting the Hughes' yard might, at times, find English has become the second language. These workers are highly regarded and possibly necessary for that operation's survival. Mike Keddy must also find creative ways to get help in the fall, such as using workers from a friend's landscaping company.

Happily, by mid October, the trees begin rolling on the roads of New Ross heading to the Hughes' yard to fill the early Panama or other southern orders, along with a few trucks hauling containers for orders of a few other smaller shippers. Colin owns or leases about 1,000 acres on which he produces his own trees, while still buying many trees from growers in New Ross and beyond. Beginning in early November, a new wave of activity begins as the Colin Hughes and Mike Keddy yards and a number of other growers and shippers with their own orders start cutting for markets in the U.S. and Canada provinces. A few of the other selling opportunities are with DeLong's of New Germany, Enjoy Tree from Quebec, the ANSG Co-Op and Forrest Higgins of Musquodoboit. A few growers here have success with U Picks on their lots including the Millett's Rocky Top in Fraxville and Balsam Country

Farms at Cyril Hiltz's at the Forties, with the annual New Ross Christmas Festival weekend creating a spike in sales for local U Picks. Travis Hiltz and Anna Skerry still employ a number of wreath makers as they have for several decades. In 1998, 23 of Anna's wreaths went to U.S. Vice-President Al Gore's home. Anna started in the 1970s making wreaths for Kirk's and at one time had large orders from Loblaws stores. She now has four wreath making machines, but she has reduced her production numbers. Tammie Cook makes unique products like 'kissing balls', as the four generations of wreath making plays out in her family. Some tree shippers such as Jeff & Glendon Reeves make their own wreaths to accompany some loads of trees. They might also send 'brush crosses' and 'grave pillows' and sometimes send an entire load of brush early in the season. Jeannie Bezanson, a wreath maker for over 50 years, still makes and hangs wreaths and specialty items that can be seen decorating local businesses and cemeteries.

A few New Ross growers have farms with output of 4,000 to 5,000 trees or more, but the majority of today's growers produce much smaller numbers and for them, treeing is a secondary income or a few extra dollars for Christmas. Dorin Veinott now recalls how when he was nine years old, his father Leland paid him one cent per bundle to butt trees with a hand saw and he spent the entire \$1.88 he earned, at a store in Chester to buy a battery powered toy car; many New Rossers today still use their tree money to buy those special "toys" and for many older people, their first money earning jobs came during tree cutting season. Some growers today have small farms or woodlots for other income while others may have outside jobs or other kinds of self employment. While the number of tree growers in New Ross is still significant, only a small percentage of them are under age 50, with no indication of a future reversal of this trend. When Colin Hughes holds a meeting for all of his growers, one only has to look across the crowded room to conclude that many faces in the aging group will not be attending many more of these meetings. Some retiring growers lease their lots to Hughes or Keddy but others have left or intend to leave their lots grow up in forest. The short term future of the tree business here appears to be a continued prominent presence of the Hughes' and Keddy operations producing many of their own trees for their orders, with a heavy reliance on foreign workers, while purchasing decreasing numbers of trees from the dwindling number of local aging growers. The once mighty Lunenburg County Christmas Producers' Association recently scheduled a special meeting to discuss how to respond to drastically declining membership. The Seffernville experimental lot trees now are regarded as critical money makers to offset diminished dues from the smaller membership.

Ironically, on the one hand, there is a growing upbeat sentiment within the industry that there will be a spike in demand and increase in prices in the near future, based on evidence that production in the U.S. will drop while more consumers will purchase real trees, partly because of aggressive advertising and promotion. At the end of the 2015 season, Mike Keddy felt that some of the talk of things getting better in the industry were beginning to play out with a very successful year for his own operation. The fact that the natural stands in Nova Scotia can respond more quickly to sudden increases in demand than the mainly plantation lots elsewhere, gives our growers an advantage. On the other hand, as Harris Hiltz puts it, "We've heard all of this before".

Whatever the case, it appears the story of tree industry in New Ross still has at least a few more unwritten chapters. It will probably remain the roller coaster ride it has always been, with one thing remaining certain- as long as people somewhere want real Christmas trees, New Rossers will overcome the obstacles and find a way to supply them, for you see, the desire to grow them is in our blood. Happy 200th birthday New Ross!

Resources and References

Alice Acker's collections, Brian Acker, Janet Acker, Jeannie Bezanson, Blake Brown's "**When Christmas Came to New Ross**"- Acadia University BA with honors in History Thesis on the Christmas tree industry in New Ross, John Collins, Tina Connors (printing logistics), Matthew Cooper's school project on the Sanders' operation, Gene Daniel, Tom Ernst, Matthew O.K. Gates (cover design/graphics/printing), Merlin and Sarah Gates (printing logistics), Sterling Gates, Wanda Gates-Murphy (proof reading), Danny Hennigar, Colin Hughes, Phylis Hughes, Muriel Hughes, Blake Hiltz, Cyril Hiltz, Harris Hiltz, Pansy Hiltz, Shirley Hiltz, Dorothy Hirtle, Ada Jollimore, Greg Jollimore, Alberta Keddy, Brenda and Vernon Keddy (printing logistics), Douglas Keddy, Francis (Mrs.Hibbert) Keddy's collection, Garnet Keddy, Mike Keddy, Norma Keddy, Cecil Lenihan, Mona Lenihan, Owen Lenihan, Webster Lenihan, Royce Leopold, Delbert Levy, Betty Long, Basil McDow, Harold McDow, Osborne McDow, Karl Meister, Wade Meister, Marie Meister, Neil Meister, Carole Meister (information and proof reading), Craig Meister (proof reading), Roger Meister, Barb and Grant Naugler, Randy Naugler, Nova Scotia Christmas Tree Journal, Glenda Oickle's clippings, Betty Olmstead, Heather Penney, Brian Potter, Linda Potter, Wynn Potter, Orley Rafuse, Ashton and Shirley Reeves, Dean Reeves, Debbie and Mary (Murray) Reeves, Dot Reeves, Glendon Reeves, Grant Reeves, Marshall Reeves, Mary Ellen Reeves, Myrna Reeves, Jeff Reeves, Roy Reeves, Thomas Reeves (information and proof reading) and wife Debbie information, Donna Rushton, Miles Russell, Dwight Sanders, Leitha Sanders' notes, Ruby Seffern, Ken Seyboyer, Ron Sweet, Leo Swinimer, Bruce Turner, Frank Turner, Leon Turner, Mary Ann Turner, Muriel Turner, Ricky Turner, Marie Walker, Murray Walker, Nancy Walker, Paul Williams, Cedric Veinott, Dorin Veinott, Violet Veinott's clippings and collections, Charlie and Marsha Yeaton.

Additional Contributions

"Things are Different Now"- a poem composed by Sterling Gates in 2015 with his memories of the tree industry when things were simpler.

"The Tree Grower"- a poem adapted for the Christmas tree industry that a family member gave to Wade Meister who then passed it along for inclusion here.

THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW

I remember back a number of years ago
When back in the woods Dad, my brothers, and I would go
With an axe and ball of twine in hand
We would cut Christmas Trees in the old Burntland.

Dad would cut the trees, we boys would drag and tie
The work seemed easy as the days went by
We would stop for lunch and steep tea over the campfire
We had lots of help so no men to hire.

The trees were tied two, three or four in a bale
The twine was carried in an old metal pail
We piled them along the side of the road
So they would be easy to get when it was time to load.

After being cut and tied it was time to haul them out
The horse and wagon was used without any doubt
Dad would trim the butts with the old "Swede saw"
As the horse moved ahead he would "gee" or "haw".

When the rack was full we called it a load
Then headed out the old woods road
In places the road was rough and had bad ruts
Being shaken around we would hold on the butts.

When we got out we stood them around the apple tree
With the butts to the ground and as straight as could be
They were all natural trees and didn't seem that heavy
When sold to the buyers we didn't pay any levy.

Later the truck would arrive with a wooden rack
Which extended out over the cab and out the back
A three-ton truck with a trailing axle
And a five-speed transmission with a ruxel.

We would load the truck all by hand
Sometime we'd use a bit of a stand
To reach the top when the load got full
Then on the ropes we all would pull.

We would tie her off then down the road they'd go
To a destination in the U.S. we did not know
When Dad received his money it would bring him a smile
That's when we knew treeing was all worthwhile.

Sterling Gates
Sept. 10, 2015



THE TREE GROWER

(FATE)

The tree grower stood at the golden gate,
His head was bent and low.
He merely asked the Man of Fate
Which way he ought to go.

"What have you done" St. Peter asked,
"To seek admission here?"
"I grew Christmas trees down on Earth
For many and many years."

St. Peter opened wide the gate
And gently pressed the bell.
"Come in," he said, "and choose your harp,"
"You've had your share of Hell."