

Jesse Doan: Musician, Rebel, Reeve

Born in 1814, Jesse was the youngest son of master carpenter and Sharon Temple builder John Doan and his wife Elizabeth Stockdale. In 1834, he married his wife Waite Ann Brooks. They began to accumulate a considerable amount of property around East Gwillimbury. They settled on Concession 3, Lot 9 where they built a two story brick house. By 1865, they owned 247 acres worth over \$5600, and Jesse held an additional \$2000 in property with his brother Charles. He was considered one of the wealthiest men in East Gwillimbury at the time. The Log House from the museum was moved from one of his properties to the site in the 1950s.

Jesse was a bit of a renaissance man. While he was listed farmer in the official census, he was very involved in local politics. He also was an important figure in the Children of Peace, as the band leader of the Sharon Band for over 30 years. It was said that he led the band with a flute rather than the traditional baton. He also played the clarinet, and had an incredible ear for music.

In the fall, after the harvest was all in, he would travel to Boston, which was the musical centre of North America at the time. All of the best new music was introduced in the first few weeks of the season, and Jesse was there to hear it all.

Once the concert was finished, he would return to his room and write down the theme or feel of the numbers he felt were the best.

After two or three weeks of this, he would return to Sharon and write out the different parts for the various instruments of his band. This meant that the Sharon Band was playing the newest music long before it was released for publication in Canada.

As someone who had his finger on the pulse of things, he found himself embroiled in the politics of the day. Like others from East Gwillimbury, he followed Samuel Lount down Yonge Street to join William Lyon Mackenzie and



MEGAN
HOUSTON



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the other 'rebels' at Montgomery's Tavern. After the skirmish, he was arrested like so many others, and spent over 7 months in gaol in Toronto. From gaol, he carved intricate wooden boxes with messages of equality, liberty, and hope for a better society.

It was his principles which made him a popular local politician in the years following the rebellion. He was first elected to the township council in 1850. He served as Deputy Reeve in 1863, 1864, 1866 and 1867. He was elected Reeve in 1868.

Despite all of his considerable economic and political accomplishments, it appeared that Jesse most wanted to be remembered as a music maker. His grave marker towers over the Sharon Burying Ground at the south of the village. The marker features a carving of a female figure in front of a weeping willow, a trumpet in her right hand and a harp leaning

against her thigh, with the following verse:

This marble tomb our father dear
Shall thy rare genius long display
Thy melodies have charmed the ear
On many a social hallow day.
May we thy faculties retain
On generations still descend
Thy talents bright with us remain
While chords of music sweetly blend.

A fitting tribute to a man of many talents, well-respected and principled, whose legacy is honoured in the music still played in the Sharon Temple today.

Learn more about music at the museum by visiting our website: www.sharontemple.ca.

Megan Houston is the Education and Outreach Co-ordinator at the Sharon Temple Museum. Megan is available for onsite tours and outreach within the community. If you are interested in booking a school field trip, group tours or a talk for your organization, please call: (905) 478-2389.