



Pilot James Wade

(1909 – 1974)

A Sussex Corner hero

A resident of Sussex Corner who brought honour is James Wade, born in England in 1909, the son of Mr and Mrs. Robert Wade. He attended the Village Elementary School and graduated from Sussex High in 1928.

A pioneer in the early days of flying, he was a bush pilot in the North and he served during the Second World War as a ferry pilot flying military planes to Greenland. Also, he pioneered private plane flying and was K.C. Irving's personal pilot for several years.

He was best known for his many mercy and rescue flights. Before 1943 one could read of airmen rushing serum through the night skies to a critically ill patient, or airmen braving angry weather hurrying a passenger to the bedside of a dying mother or wife, but even among such illustrations, the following feat of Jimmy Wade in Greenland stands out like a brilliant light.

Three times he safely landed his amphibian plane on a “dime-sized” spot of open water in the frigid river, where moving ice-floes and bobbing cakes of ice constantly threatened to crumple the craft, and every time he managed to take off again without mishap – a demonstration of resourcefulness and know-how that won the unreserved admiration of fellow fliers. With other aviators he stayed on the job until after Christmas, despite lack of rest, until he was certain that all survivors had been brought ashore.

Once, before this hazardous rescue mission, he spent three months, including Christmas, in the Arctic wastes, trying to find his way to civilization after being forced down on a rescue flight. These two deeds perhaps symbolize the real spirit of Christmas as truly as anything that has happened in Canada.

A green field in ice, an ice-floe off Greenland, drifting ice in the St. Lawrence River and his residence with his family in Saint John were all “home” to him. He received two distinguished awards for his flying ability. One was the British Empire Medal; the other, the Distinguished Flying Medal for deeds which few others would even try.

In recognition of this outstanding man, the Bicentennial Committee of Sussex Corner had a commemorative monument mounted and set in place on the Sussex Corner School grounds. Ceremonies were held on June 6, 1984, when the unveiling was done by Captain Wade's widow (the former Florence Lillian Mingo) of Charlottetown, PEI, and his sister, Mrs. Ronald Bell, Peterborough, Ontario.

Outstanding guests included Mr and Mrs. K.C. Irving and Mr. Henry Irwin, Deputy Minister of Transportation.

He died at his home in Saint John in January, 1974.

(A History of Sussex Corner, edited by W. Harvey Dalling (July, 1984)

