

100hearst



PROM. FONTAINE DR.

ENTREPRENEURS



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Fontaine Drive

Greetings to local entrepreneurs!

This artery, known as Fontaine Drive, is nearly three kilometers long and runs parallel, along an east-west axis, to the north side of Highway 11 (Trans-Canada Highway).

From the first glance, the landscape bordering Fontaine Drive sets the tone for the area's utterly industrial vocation. Walking through it, one will see a railway, tanks, lines of wagons, striking steres of full-length logs, the giant and phantasmagorical shape of a yellow crane, mechanical and mobile, whose claw transports to the nearby sawmill the material to be transformed.

Following this path, we find ourselves in what was, from the 1960s, the industrial heart of the town. It swarmed, roared, teemed with wagons, trucks, tractor trailers and workers spanning the "track" with their lunch boxes in hand. Even today, the sector remains active with its mill, transport companies and distributors. Every hour of the day, impressive trucks pass through to dump the long timber that feeds the sawmill.

Fontaine Drive takes its name from an industry pioneer, Noé Fontaine, who left Quebec for Northern Ontario with his wife (Phébé Côté) and family, in the early 1920s. Sons, cousins, brothers-in-law and friends soon followed. Among these people were Lavoies, St-Jules, Bélangers and Fourniers who married Noé's daughters. Originally from Weedon, in Quebec's Eastern Townships, on the edge of the American lines, sawyer Fontaine made his debut in wood processing. He then moved to Sully in Kamouraska County. It was the successive fires of three of the sawmills he had built as well as the French-Canadian migratory movement to northern Ontario, a movement encouraged by the Quebec clergy, that convinced all these people to set out for the boreal forest of Ontario.

In the early 1920s, the troop reached Kapuskasing. Noé Fontaine established, north of the city, a small mill that operated for about four years. Then, in 1926, the family moved to Harty. In 1934, they relocated to Mattice. Finally, in 1936, Noé Fontaine was the first sawyer in the Hearst region to obtain a "license"¹ and cutting rights on crown land. From that moment, Patriarch Fontaine's industrial activity, taken over by his relatives, gravitated around Hearst: Ryland, Lac Ste-Thérèse, Passe-à-Fontaine...

The current sawmill, located on Fontaine Drive, was built in 1965 by the direct descendants or by marriage of Noé Fontaine. The inauguration of a modern mill in the very heart of the town marked a notable change in the mid-sixties: the forest now comes to us. The means of cutting, transporting and processing took an accelerated, mechanical and industrial turn.

Fontaine Drive reminds us of the memory of a pioneer, of the importance of the lumber industry and of those who started it². Fontaine Drive is also one of the many arteries, roads or streets of the region, which take the name of entrepreneurs like Noé

¹ At that time, people used this term, borrowing from English, the "logging" permit.

² For more information, we invite you to consult the Municipality's website, which tells the story of the Hearst sawmills. <http://www.scierieshearst.com/>

Fontaine. Amongst other pioneer entrepreneurs are the Selins, Levesques, Lecours, Doucets, Alarys, Payeurs, Lacroix, Gosselins, Hamans, Villeneuves, ...

- *Marie LeBel*

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