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'ALL HANDS ABOARD' SIGNALS NEW LIFE AND NEW OWNERSHIP FOR THE OLD WHARF

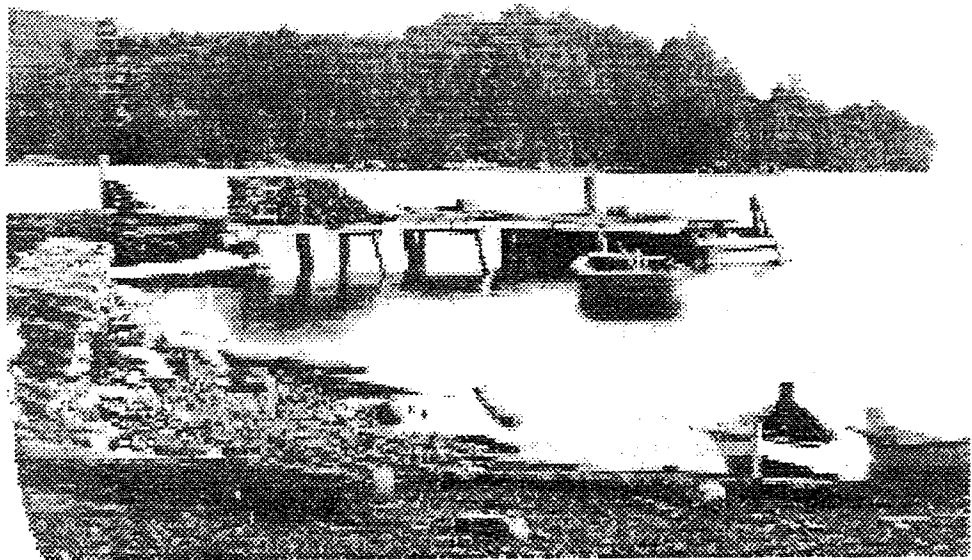
Summer has come, and with it the usual throng of swimmers and strollers, sailors, yachtsmen, and camera-toting visitors to the historic Georgeville wharf. The bad news is that, from early August, the wharf will be closed to visitors. But that is a distinctly minor inconvenience compared to the good news: after decades of neglect, the crumbling old wharf is to undergo a \$750,000 restoration.

The major reconstruction is the result of an agreement between the federal government, which owns the wharf and will pay the lion's share of the cost of the repairs, and the Municipality of Stanstead Township. The Municipality will contribute \$100,000 to the cost and buy the wharf for \$1 when the job is completed next spring.

The agreement was not easily come by. Under a federal program announced in the 1980s, Ottawa decided to get out of the business of maintaining scores of small craft harbours across Canada, by negotiating their disposal to local authorities. The government successfully managed to divest itself of the five other federally-owned wharves on Memphremagog

– at Byrant's, Perkin's and Knowlton's Landing, Cedarville and Magog.

Because of cost, the Georgeville wharf – the oldest on the lake – was a tougher case. It was built to accommodate the *Mountain Maid*, launched at Georgeville in 1850 as the first steamer on the lake. In the century and a half since, the wharf has continued to play a pivotal role in the social and commercial life of the village and the lake. As if to underscore its contribution, some of the cribwork of the original wharf still underpins today's federal wharf.



The first photo of the wharf by William Notman (1860).

Despite repeated pleas from Stanstead Township over the last 25 years that its underlying wooden cribs were rotting and shifting, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans responded that that it did not

have funds for the major repairs required. As the concrete surface began to break up in the last few years, it became clear that parts of the outer "L" of the wharf were near collapse.

In 1998, as would-be sellers of the wharf, Fisheries and Oceans and Public Works Canada finally moved to sound out the views of the municipality on alternative solutions for its future. The DFO and Public Works floated three solutions for discussion: simply to stabilize the wharf by surrounding it with boulders (at an estimated cost of \$300,000), to rebuild a much-shortened wharf (\$475,000) or restore the wharf at its present size or "footprint" (\$600,000).

To help assess the proposals, and undertake further discussion with the federal officials, the municipality appointed a wharf advisory committee, chaired by Peter Kohl, and composed of Mayor Eric Evans, Councillor Mary Partington, Paul Amos, John Boynton, Dick Hornby and John Scott.

"The committee concluded, given the full range of activity that centers on the wharf and its importance to the community, that we retain the wharf in its existing size and shape," says Peter Kohl. "This choice also had the unanimous support of the Township Council and the Community Association"

Based on the Township's undertaking to contribute significantly to the project, Herb Dhaliwal, the minister of Fisheries and

Oceans, announced last August that his department had approved \$500,000 for the restoration. In a letter to Paul Amos, president of the Community Association, Dhaliwal wrote: "The dedication and ongoing support you and your colleagues have demonstrated in promoting the merits of this project, your municipality's financial contribution of \$100,000, and its willingness to accept ownership of the wharf, were important factors in our decision to fund this project."

With that go-ahead, the DFO proceeded with detailed environmental and technical studies. These showed that several additional expenses would have to be incurred, including repairing the north wall into the shore. All told, the new estimates raised the projected cost of the restoration to \$750,000. As a result, the federal government increased its contribution to \$600,000. With the municipality's \$100,000, the gap of \$50,000 will met by generous private donations.

During the reconstruction, the outer portion of the wharf will be removed and surrounded with H-shaped steel beams, anchored to the solid rock bottom and encased in concrete. Precast concrete slabs will then be dropped into the H-beam slots and topped with poured concrete above the high water line.

Inshore from the boat house, the surface will be excavated to allow repairs to the north wall from its inner side. The entire wharf will then be filled with rock and paved.

When the job is finished, the wharf will look much as it does now, though the outer "L" will be five feet longer and ten feet wider. There will be new steps to the small swimming beach to the left of the wharf and to the Community Association's docks, new safety railings and new cleats and bollards for boats. The entrance to the wharf from Carre Copp will allow for easy pedestrian and wheelchair access, and a drop-pole will prevent access by all but authorized vehicles.

For Your Calendar

The GHS/SHG's 10th annual meeting

Saturday, July 7, at 2:30 p.m.

at the Murray Memorial Centre.

Speaker: Monique Nadeau Saumier

"Lake Memphremagog,

A Painting Place"

Exhibition opens at the Gallery

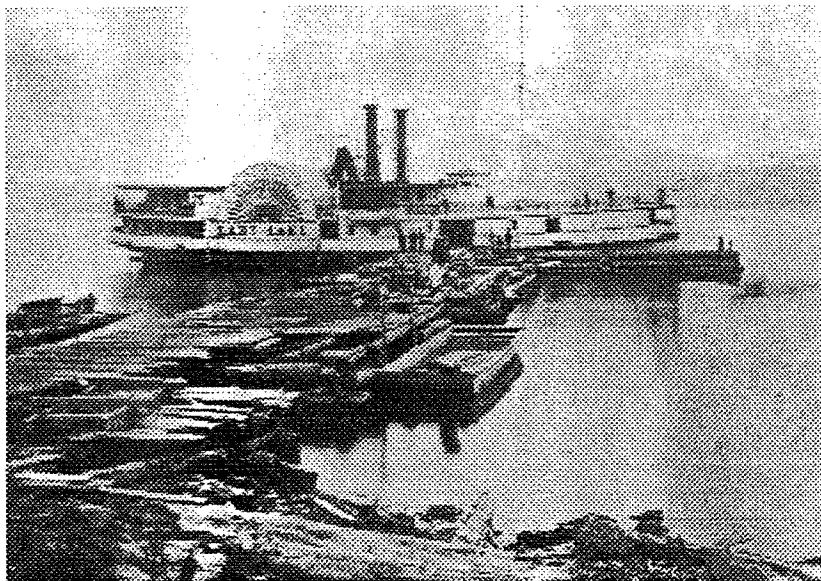
following the annual meeting

"Summerfolk: Discovering

a Sylvan Solitude"

DUNKED IN THE LAKE, MR. BARROWS URGED 'THE ELEVATING INFLUENCE OF DYNAMITE'

During the era of steam on the lake – from the launching of the *Mountain Maid* in 1850, through the reign of the *Lady of the Lake*, to the last call of the *Anthemis* a little more than a century later – the main event on a sleepy summer's day was the arrival of the steamer at the Georgeville wharf. It brought in the mail, news of the outside world and, in good years, tourists who filled every available bed in the village's hotels and boarding houses.



The Lady and the wharf, still in rickety condition (1867).

Yet the ramshackle, wharf – at least in its early years -- did not itself earn the best of notices. In his whimsical account of his summers on the lake, *The Shaybacks in Camp*, the Unitarian minister Samuel Barrows wrote: "Next to the pleasure of seeing that wharf sink, nothing would have been so exhilarating as to see it go up through the elevating influence of a charge of dynamite."

The wharf's arrival on the scene as a landing for the *Mountain Maid* also occasioned a petticoat revolt in the village.

The first recorded mention of the wharf appears in the minutes of the Stanstead

County Council for June 1850 when Marcia Packard Chapman, the wife of a village teamster, and "other Ladies of Georgeville" presented an aggrieved petition to the council.

What aroused the ladies' protest was the roof of hotel-keeper Levi Bigelow's carriage shed -- they wanted Bigelow to move the shed because rain from its eaves was "continually dropping upon them as they passed." As their petition pointed out, the carriage shed "stood in a certain road leading to a certain water where a certain wharf was to be built" – about where the Pioneer Garden now is on Carré Copp. The all-male council was unimpressed, possibly because Bigelow himself was a councillor.

Whatever the risk of being drenched on the way to the wharf, in Samuel Barrows' account this was as nothing compared to hazards posed by its roughly planked surface. In 1879, Barrows was camping near Birchbay with family and friends from Boston when he decided to sail his newly-acquired, 30 ft. steamer, the *Nymph*, to the village.

"The condition of the wharf at Georgeville was so precarious that it needed to be treated with all possible consideration," Barrows wrote. "The steamer struck with a somewhat rude shock against the wharf. There was a prevalent opinion on shipboard that the steamer could stand it if the wharf could."

After tending to some errands in the village, Barrows and his crew reboarded the *Nymph* and headed for Gibraltar Point. And promptly discovered that the steamer had sprung a leak as a result of its brush with the

wharf – “the same old wharf through which on account of a rotten plank.” Barrows wrote, he had fallen a year earlier “and taken an involuntary bath in his Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes.”

Given “the certainty that the *Nymph* would sink if something were not done immediately for her relief,” there was nothing for it but to return to the village for help. “There stood the dilapidated old wharf grimly showing its teeth and challenging us to another encounter. We glided in peaceably and amicably tied up to one of its logs.”

First photos

That this was a reasonable characterization of the wharf is confirmed by early photographs. On a visit to Georgeville in late May or early June 1860, the Montreal photographer William Notman took the first known photos of the village, including two exposures of the wharf.

The Notman photos of “Georgeville, Canada East, romantically situated on the East side of Lake Memphremagog,” were marketed in a catalogue of “Stereoscopic Views” (“40 cents each, \$4.50 per dozen”). They not only helped to draw attention to the village as a tourist destination, but undoubtedly attracted other photographers and artists to the lake as well.

Although Georgeville became a customs Port of Entry in 1854, it was not until the later decades of the 19th century, when the fleet of lake steamers grew to include smaller vessels like the Georgeville-owned *Nora*, the *Minnie* and the *Memphremagog*, that the federal government took over ownership of -- and gradually improved -- the major wharves on the Canadian portion of the lake. The government also installed a series of lighthouses – including one on the Georgeville wharf – as aids to navigation.

Yet even after the turn of the century, the wharf could still show its teeth. In October 1903 the *Stanstead Journal's* Georgeville

correspondent reported laconically: “D.A. Bullock has recently been doing a government job of repairs upon our wharf, after people and animals have fallen into the holes where the decayed planks gave way.”

At the GHS on July 7

THE ALLURE OF ‘A PAINTING PLACE’

The Georgeville Historical Society’s 10th annual meeting on Saturday, July 7, is in for a treat – an engaging speaker on a particularly engaging and appropriate subject. Monique Nadeau Saumier will be this year’s guest speaker, presenting a talk, illustrated with slides, on “Lake Memphremagog, A Painting Place.”

Wearing her hat as the director and curator of Stanstead’s Colby Curtis Museum, Mme. Nadeau Saumier has already made this “the



Monique Nadeau Saumier

summer of the lake” by inspiring no fewer than nine historical societies, heritage associations and other groups on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border to offer exhibitions exploring the lake’s history, legends and artistic influence.

For her talk at the GHS' annual meeting, she will wear one of her other hats, as a student and well-known teacher of Canadian art history. Having earned master's degrees from both l'Université de Montreal (in museology) and Concordia (in Canadian art history), she is currently enrolled in the Ph.D program in art history at the Université de Quebec à Montréal. Her thesis is on the Sherbrooke Library and Art Association, an important cultural centre in the Townships from 1886 to 1927.

From 1987 to 1995 she was executive director of the Eastern Townships Research Centre at Bishop's University and has taught courses on the history of Canadian art and architecture, decorative arts and museology at Bishop's since 1985.

"The majesty of the lake's landscape has attracted many artists of importance, starting

with the English topographical artist, William Bartlett," she says. "He was followed by Cornelius Krieghoff, Allan Edson, John Fraser and most of the members of the nascent Royal Canadian Academy of Arts."

Her talk will also touch on the development of a landscape painting tradition which carried well into the first half of the 20th century, as groups of students from the Art Association of Montreal, under the guidance of Maurice Cullen, participated in out-door sketching classes in and around Georgeville.

The GHS annual meeting will be held at the Murray Memorial Centre at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday July 7. Following the meeting, the society will open an exhibition of photographs entitled "Summerfolk: Discovering a Sylvan Solitude" at the society's Gallery on Carré Copp.

Everyone is cordially invited to attend.

Gone But Not Forgotten

THE STRANGE SAGA OF JAMES BAKER HOYT

Of all of the stories told of those who sought to make their fortunes on the shores of Memphremagog, none is stranger than the tale of James Baker Hoyt, the first proprietor of the celebrated Mountain House.

Hoyt was a brother-in-law of the *Mountain Maid's* master, George Washington Fogg, and in the summer of 1851 – when the new steamer began regularly scheduled service between Lake Village (later Newport) and the Outlet (later Magog) – the two decided that the time was ripe for a resort hotel on the lake.

At the base of Owl's Head, the *Stanstead Journal* reported, "is a charming little harbour, where a house is being built for the accommodation of travelers. The ascent of the Mountain is facilitated by an opened road. The view from the summit is said to surpass that from the top of Mount Washington – the city of Montreal being plainly visible with the aid of a glass, and a vast landscape of variable

beauty lies extended to the naked eye. Altogether, Memphremagog offers the finest inducements to summer excursions. The public are invited to give it a trial."

The new hotel started off with high ambition, but apparently few guests. The fly in the ointment was that was that – the Passumpsic Railroad having pushed no further north than St. Johnsbury, and rail service from Montreal a more distant prospect – the traveling public still had no convenient way of reaching the lake. Then, on a November night two years later, disaster struck.

"The Hotel known as the Mountain House was destroyed by fire the night of the 30th," the *Journal* reported. "The fire was discovered in the dead of night, and the inmates were too few in number to offer any successful resistance. We regret to add that Mr. Hoyt and his estimable lady lost most of their personal effects. The loss is peculiarly

unfortunate for Mr. Hoyt, whose all was embraced in the enterprise.”

According to a later account, Hoyt moved his family into the hotel’s bowling alley, which survived the fire – and, borrowing heavily, managed to rebuild. After running the second Mountain House for just one season, the unfortunate Hoyt was apparently swimming in debt. On Sept. 6, 1855, under the headline *LAMENTABLE OCCURANCE*, the Journal reported what appeared to be the sad end of his story:

“We regret to announce the sudden death of Mr. J.B. Hoit [sic], the well known landlord of the Mountain House. On Saturday last Mr. Hoit crossed the lake to some point in Stanstead, in a small boat, for the purpose of procuring supplies. After transacting his business, he started to return toward evening. His boat was seen after passing the northern point of Province Island, with sail set, heading in the direction of home, and he has not been seen since.

Baffling darkness

“The boat, with nothing in it but a sail, was found stranded on the Western shore, some distance south of the Mountain, and a tub or pail which he had in the boat was picked up near Harvey’s Landing. Saturday evening was dark and stormy, and the probability is that the boat was capsized by a flaw of wind, throwing Mr. Hoit into the water, and although a strong swimmer, the darkness baffled any efforts he may have made to escape, and he found there alone, in the darkness of a night storm, a watery grave! Up to the present moment, the body has not yet been found; and there can hardly be a shadow of a hope that he escaped to land with life.

“This intelligence will be a sad shock to many who have formed a pleasant acquaintance with Mr. H. in his capacity as a landlord of a favourite summer resort.”

According to the *Mountain Maid*’s purser George Merrill, Capt. Fogg used the steamer

The Georgeville Enterprise

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to drag the lake for Hoyt’s body without success. Yet for Hoyt’s creditors, including Miles E. Knowlton, of Knowlton’s Landing, the contractor who built the second Mountain House, Georgeville’s Uriah Jewett and others who had provided provisions for the hotel on the cuff, there was still another shock to come: Hoyt turned up alive, apparently no worse for wear, having scarppered to Minnesota.

Uriah Jewett recorded Hoyt’s malefaction in a long poem that included the lines:

Capt. Fogg and his men were all very kind,
They gappled the lake but no Hoyt could
they find.

More prosaically, *The Enterprise* can confirm Hoyt’s new address in Minnesota. In a deed of sale registered in Stanstead on Oct 20, 1858, Judge Charles Dewey Day, bought, for \$550, the first 50 acres of what would become his splendid Glenbrook estate south of the village from James Baker Hoyt, “now of St. Anthony in the territory of Minnesota.” Presumably George Washington Fogg had by then forgiven his errant bother-in-law. Fogg acted for Hoyt in the transaction and George Merrill signed the deed as a witness.