



## **Société d'histoire de Georgeville**

## **Georgeville Historical Society**

**Newsletter – Summer 2009**

### **DATES TO REMEMBER SUMMER 2009**

*Saturday July 4th  
Canada Day Parade*

*1 pm*

*Be there to cheer on the GHS float*

**\*\*\*\***

*Sunday July 12th  
18th Annual General Meeting and Talk  
Murray Hall*

*2:30 pm*

**\*\*\*\***

*Wednesday July 22nd  
Historical Walk around Fitch Bay  
Car pool from Murray Hall*

*10 am*

**\*\*\*\***

*Wednesday August 12<sup>th</sup>  
A tour and picnic at  
historical Birch Bay  
Car pool from Murray Hall*

*10 am*

**\*\*\*\***

We need to know how many people to expect at the walks, so there will be sign up sheets at the AGM or you may phone  
Steve at 819-562-8036  
John at 910-843-6880

### **A Talk and a Walk around Fitch Bay**

The talk after the AGM this July will be given by past-president Stephen Moore about our sister village of Fitch Bay and the Rider family which dominated the local economy of the region for decades.

It may come as a surprise to some, but for half a century or more, Fitch Bay was a vibrant community, one of the most important in the original territorial extent of the township and county of Stanstead. At one time as many as five mills operated within its hinterland, three within the village proper. It had one of the largest general stores in the region, a creamery, a bank office, a number of community halls and was served by no less than four separate religious denominations. It was also the hub of the local telephone system.

At the center of all this activity was the Rider family. They owned most of the industrial and commercial operations, controlled local politics and had significant influence on all aspects of village life. T.B. Rider, for example, was the local mayor for many years and served a term as MP during the 1890s. The rise and subsequent decline of Fitch Bay and the Riders is a fascinating story which Steve has researched thoroughly, so do plan to attend.

Steve will lead a walk around Fitch Bay on Wednesday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> including a tour of the old Chateau Rider, now magnificently renovated by its current owner: Mme. Therèse Dallaire.

## A Tour and Picnic at Birchbay

In August 1878 the Boston Unitarian minister, Samuel June Barrows and his wife, Isabel, opened a remarkable era in the history of Georgeville when they pitched their first tents at Bedroom Point on the Merriman farm just north of the village. In succeeding years, the Barrows family introduced a distinctive summer life-style to the lakeshore – along with colleagues and friends who built a colony of log cabin “camps” extending north to Oliver’s Corner.

On Wednesday, August 12, we hope to recapture something of this era with a picnic and tour of the Barrows’ camp at Birchbay, which includes not only Bedroom Point but the earliest of the surviving log cabins, an evocative period piece built in the summer of 1890. The rain date is August 19. We are grateful to Elizabeth Ensink-Hill, whose grandparents succeeded the Barrows as the owners of Birchbay, for her kind invitation. All members of the GHS are welcome and everyone should bring their own picnic lunch. So that we will know how many to prepare for, please call John Scott at 819-843-6880 to reserve a place. Because parking space is limited, we will meet at 10 a.m. at the Murray Memorial Center and carpool from there.

## St. George’s Church Bell

Not until 23 years after its construction did St. George’s church have a bell in its tower; the congregation was called to worship by the ringing of the bell in the schoolhouse next door. Perhaps the original tower was not designed to house a bell. In any event, it was soon found to be unstable and in 1884 a new tower was built on a more solid foundation, designed by the Montreal architect who had built the New Camperdown Hotel.

Then, in 1889, a summer visitor, a Mrs. Darling gave the church a bell which the Stanstead Journal described as “small (but) very good sounding”. Strangely, less than a year later, it disappeared! In 1891, Stanley Bagg, then the

owner of what became the Williams property on the lakeshore, donated another bell, the one we still have today. Even more mysteriously, two months after Mr. Bagg’s bell was installed, Mrs. Darling’s bell was discovered in the earth under the church!

Can we assume that when Mrs. Darling’s bell was installed, Mr. Bagg had already signed a contract with the well-known Meneely Foundry in New York State for the casting of a bell for St. George’s – a bell no longer needed? Might not that have prompted a sympathetic friend to arrange with some village youths to remove Mrs. Darling’s bell so that Mr. Bagg’s could in due course take its place? We shall never know.

John Boynton

*Where is Mrs. Darling’s bell today? No record can be located. Any information would be welcome.*  
Ed.

## The Georgeville Flood

When the water in Lake Memphremagog rose to an unseasonably high level last August, 2008, it brought back to three of the village’s older residents remarkably similar memories of the time when the streets of downtown Georgeville were completely inundated.

The year was 1927. Rain began during the night of Wednesday November 2<sup>nd</sup> and continued without let-up for 48 hours. By Saturday morning the total rainfall measured 10½ inches. In Fitch Bay the dams at both the Camber and Waite sawmills were washed out and the grist mill was destroyed. The Stanstead journal reported that “the water was so deep in sections of the village that boots 9sic) became necessary”.

The Journal’s Georgeville correspondent wrote “the water in the lake rose over seven feet. Wharves are all destroyed and some small ones were carried away. Several boathouses were wrecked, cellars flooded, and no chance to get on the roads south of us on account of the bridges being washed out”. James E. Davidson noted in his journal “water 24 inches over the Georgeville wharf”.

Irene McTavish clearly remembers her father arriving to take her home from "Cedar Cliff" where she had been left in Granny Heath's care when the rain started. He carried her through the flooded streets until they reached a point far enough up Channel hill for her to walk the rest of the way home.

Addie Atkins recalls riding to the village with her father in the family buggy. Left holding the reins in front of the Bullock store looking down towards Wigwam Point, she was amazed to see Douglas McGowan rowing a boat along the middle of the road.

John Boynton's recollection is almost identical. Just past his fifth birthday he too was in his father's buggy, the water halfway up the wheels, when he watched a boat being rowed up South Street from the wharf.

This is one small item in Georgeville's history that deserves to be remembered.

John Boynton

### **A year with Aunt Lucy, 1849-50**

There is nothing like a well-turned reminiscence to bring the past to life. Such a one came our way last week, in a query from the Cowley County Historical Society in Kansas, telling us about the career of a notable Kansan, Edwin Cassander Manning (1838-1915). The son of a Burlington, Vt., glass cutter, he was a 23-year-old newspaperman and postmaster in Marysville, Kansas, a trading post on the Oregon Trail, at the outbreak of the Civil War. After serving two years with the Second Kansas Infantry, he became a militia colonel, returned to newspapering, was elected a state senator and founded the prairie town of Winfield.

Yet earlier there was a year that, Edwin Manning wrote in a privately printed memoir in 1911, remained undimmed in his memory as one of the most rewarding of his lifetime. In the spring of 1849, his parents sent him by stage coach from Burlington to spend twelve months on the farm of Isaac Ives, just north of Georgeville. Isaac's wife Lucy Patch was the older sister of his mother Mary. The household included his grandmother

Polly Patch, aged 80 and recently widowed by the death of her farmer husband at Derby, Vt.

"With a knitting needle stuck in corn cob," he recalled, Grandmother Hatch "kept the family in wool stockings, and smoked a pipe. I was eleven years old and helped on the farm until winter came with five feet of snow, when I attended school in the little red school house one-half mile distant. That school and the long hill on which we hand-sledged with the girls on moon-lit nights, rank in interest in my life with the events of the Civil War."

The girls undoubtedly would have included Isaac and Lucy's daughters Ellen and Elizabeth, who were a shade younger than Edwin. The family lived in the fine brick house, built as early as 1814 by Isaac's father Capt. Joseph Ives (today Patti Macauley's) near the top the hill that descends to the Ives cemetery. The one-room Ives school house, now gone, was built on the cemetery's northern boundary in 1831.

Young Edwin Manning recalled "going through" English grammar, geography and arithmetic in the school house that winter, but spelling was his favourite. "We had spelling school every Saturday afternoon. My nearest rival, Edwin Mitchell, about my age and a chum, and I were usually put at one end of the room standing apart and facing each other, taking turns in selecting the scholars to be ranged in a line by our side, and then the 'spelling match' began, to see which side could 'spell the other down.'"

Edwin's chum was the 12-year-old son of Isaac Ives' neighbour, the Rev. Edward Mitchell, who arrived on the lakeshore in 1838 as a missionary from the Vermont Baptist State Convention. Mr. Mitchell established himself (on what was later the Brookhouse farm) as the lakeshore's longest serving resident clergyman until his death in 1872. He made do without a church building, frequently preaching in Georgeville's brick "meeting house" and its successor on the same site, the Rochester school house. "A calico dress for Sunday was a coveted luxury," Edwin Manning wrote of one of Mitchell's services, "and the preacher in English broadcloth was a marvellous person." Edwin recalled the excitement prompted by the

construction of the lake's first steamer, George Washington Fogg's *Mountain Maid*, at Georgeville during the winter of 1849-50. While it has been recorded elsewhere that Fogg raised \$4,000 from public subscriptions to launch the vessel, Edwin Manning's account is the first we have come across that includes a grass roots illustration of the fund-raising: "I remember that Uncle Ives gave a brindle cow and a red calf as his contribution."

"In those days," he wrote, "the rural population of that region wore home-made clothing, and my aunt's spinning wheel and loom were in constant use in daylight. The people raised their own wool, wove their own garments, tanned their own hides, and had a travelling shoemaker who carried his own bench and tools with him from family to family where he remained until they were 'shod all around.' Grain was cut with a hand sickle and bound by hand. Barley, oats, rye, hay, potatoes and other vegetables flourished. Apples and maple sugar were plentiful. People lived well and were contented."

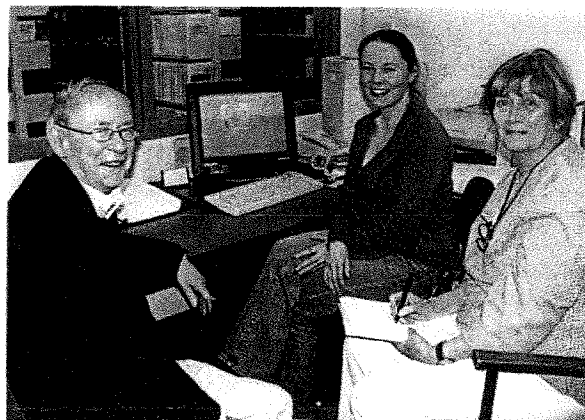
In the spring of 1850, Edwin Manning returned by stage to his family in Burlington. Our thanks to the Cowley County Historical Society for this glimpse of life on the Ives farm and the lakeshore.

John Scott

### **A visit to the Eastern Townships Research Centre**

We mentioned in a previous Newsletter that we wanted to expand the GHS archives to include more recent materials. In order to make our collections compatible with other archives and more useful for outside researchers, we purchased Archi-Log software for cataloguing our photos, documents, tapes etc. in a professional way. As you may have discovered, software is easy for 10-year-olds, daunting for those of more mature years! So Judy, John and Valerie visited the Eastern Townships Research Centre at Bishops University recently to have a private tutorial with archivist Jody Robinson. Her

expertise was invaluable and we are most grateful for her assistance. Now we can start cataloguing effectively.



*Valerie Pasztor and John Scott getting help using archiving software from Jody Robinson at ETRC.*

*Photo by Judy Bachelder.*

### ***The Eastern Townships of Quebec Connector – a new aid for Genealogists***

Two genealogists now living in Ontario, but with family roots in the Eastern townships, have started a twice-yearly Web newsletter. Its aim is to become an exchange where people can pose questions about missing ancestors or share information and resource materials with others interested in genealogy.

[Osgood Norton @gmail.com](mailto:OsgoodNorton@gmail.com)

### **Membership**

GHS currently has a membership of approximately 170 families. We are pleased to report an increase of 27 during the past year. July is the time to renew your membership to the Georgeville Historical Society. The fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 31. Renewal forms are included with this newsletter. Please take a moment to return it now or bring it with you to the annual meeting in July.

Donations are always appreciated and can be sent to Georgeville Historical Society, 4600 Georgeville Road, Georgeville, QC J0B 1T0.

The Society relies completely on your membership fees and donations to fund all the projects undertaken by the society, including these newsletters.