



Société d'histoire de Georgeville
Georgeville Historical Society



GHS NEWSLETTER / SPRING 2020

Celebrating Auberge/Maison McGowan

ITS LIFE AND TIMES

by Keith Wilcox

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First, a bit of history...

The history of the venerable Georgeville establishment, Auberge/Maison McGowan, can be traced back to 1886. Charles McGowan, son of William, and wife Martha, the first McGowans in Georgeville, rented John Taylor's cottage and started taking in boarders: the beginning of a one hundred thirty-four year history. In 1891, Charles bought the Taylor cottage.

Several well-known names from the early history of Georgeville have been associated with this property: Moses Copp, Abraham Channel, to name a few. The McGowan family name has had the longest continuous association; a period of eighty-eight years.

The vocation of the building however, has remained the same throughout that entire period, up to the present. It has always taken in guests: first boarders in the days before summer cottages, and now summertime hotel room occupants escaping urban life for a few days, or cottagers vacating their abode while their offspring enjoy a weekend retreat with friends.

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In its heyday, 1933 until the early 1970's, it was primarily known as a fishing lodge - one that played host to a variety of prominent people from both sides of the US/Canada border: businessmen, doctors, and famous hockey players such as Maurice Richard, and others from those teams and that era.

It was also a gathering place for equally well-known locals. In the early 1950's, in the old kitchen, people would congregate to watch hockey games in grainy black and white on the only television in the village.

You could also usually find a game of poker, canasta or 500. In short, it was a place where people felt at home, sharing company and conversation, a warm friendly place, a real center of the community.

After Heritage Georgeville Inc. took over in the early 1990's, the focus shifted to the terrasse. Boarding fishers and guiding them to the prime spots on the lake as Henry McGowan "the fisherman's fisherman" once did, was no longer the primary vocation.

Rooms are still available, but the main attraction is the exceptional view - one of the best in the country offered by the wonderful outdoor location overlooking the lake. It is a fine place to enjoy a meal and a drink, refreshed by the cool daytime summer breezes or, equally pleasant in the evening, after sunset, sheltered by tent-like curtains and warmed by heaters strategically

placed throughout. Once again, a gathering place, but this time for a wider crowd: locals, weekenders, and people from elsewhere, but nearby.

In recent years Quebec's Régie du Bâtiment has been threatening to close the McGowan. This 1894 structure needs major, costly renovations. Two members of the Board of Heritage Georgeville Inc. have proposed rebuilding the McGowan, retaining its current function, with rooms to rent and a



restaurant, both open year-round, and a terrasse in the summertime, and a couple of apartments to attract permanent residents.

These ambitious plans are not a done deal. Several derogations from Municipal regulations are required. The original plan was to have the new McGowan open for the summer of 2021, but given the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the normal delays in getting the necessary approvals, finding a contractor and actually getting the work done, who knows how long all that might take. But the backers seem serious and determined.

In the meantime, before the McGowan closes, let's celebrate its history **August 12, noon to 3 pm, Auberge McGowan: Honouring its history by sharing its stories.**

The Georgeville Historical Society is inviting all members to join us for lunch, on Wednesday, August 12th on the terrasse of Auberge McGowan, from noon to three in the afternoon. We have space set aside just for us.

There will be a set menu, with three choices, the same fixed price for each choice, with tip and drinks not included. The details regarding menu choices and the price have yet to be worked out.

We are also inviting those in attendance to bring with them memories and mementos of experiences they had at Auberge McGowan over the years. Any story is welcome: funny, sad, poignant, uplifting; anything that reflects a time in the history of this iconic

Georgeville institution.

Ideally, attendees should consider writing these down. We would like to fill a memory book that if the developers of the McGowan project agree, might be made available for future guests to peruse. It is important that no one forget what this place has meant to the history of our village.

(The description above is what we had originally planned. Unfortunately, the corona virus had other ideas. We are working on a modification of this plan. For more details see [page 7](#).)

Nous soulignons: L'Auberge/La Maison McGowan

SON HISTOIRE ET SES MOMENTS

Keith Wilcox

(Traduit par SuzAnne Tremblay)

Il était une fois...

L'histoire du vénérable établissement qu'est l'Auberge/La Maison McGowan débute en 1890. Charles McGowan, fils de William et de son épouse Martha, le premier McGowan à s'établir à Georgeville achète le chalet de John Taylor et commence à prendre des pensionnaires. C'est le début d'une histoire qui dure depuis cent trente ans.

Plusieurs noms réputés de la jeune histoire de Georgeville sont associés à cette propriété, incluant les Moses Copp et Abraham Chanel pour n'en nommer que quelques-uns. Le nom de famille McGowan en couvre la plus longue période, soit quatre-vingt-quatre années consécutives.

La vocation de cet établissement demeure toujours la même durant toute cette période et jusqu'à présent. Il y a toujours présence d'invités: des pensionnaires avant l'arrivée des chalets d'été et plus tard un petit hôtel estival pour gens en quête d'évasion des centres urbains pour quelques jours. À l'occasion, des résidents de chalets d'ici laissent également la place à leurs enfants pour des weekends avec des amis.

Dans ses années de gloire, soit de 1933 jusqu'au début des années 1970, l'établissement a la réputation d'une pourvoirie, abritant des gens proéminents en provenance des deux côtés de la frontière canadienne et américaine. Des gens d'affaires, des médecins, des joueurs de hockey de la trempe de Maurice Richard et autres joueurs de ces équipes de l'époque.

Il sert également de place de rencontre pour les gens bien connus du village. Au début des années 50, dans la vieille cuisine, on se rassemble pour regarder des parties de hockey sur écran neigeux, en noir et blanc, sur la seule télévision au village.

On peut également s'y attarder pour y jouer une partie de poker: Canasta ou 500. Bref, un endroit où les gens se sentent chez eux, en bonne compagnie pour y jaser, un endroit chaleureux et convivial, un endroit pivot de la communauté.

Arrive l'acquisition par Heritage Georgeville au début des années 1990, où la terrasse devient alors le focus de l'établissement. Les pensionnaires-pêcheurs qui venaient se faire guider vers les lieux prolifiques du lac par Henry McGowan (le pêcheur des pêcheurs) ne font plus partie de la vocation d'origine.

Des chambres sont encore disponibles, mais l'attraction principale est la vue exceptionnelle - l'une des meilleures au pays - de par sa position sur le lac. C'est un endroit très bien pour y prendre un repas et un verre, profiter d'une brise d'été rafraîchissante le jour ou en soirée, après le coucher de soleil. On s'y voit protégé par des toiles-rideaux et, au besoin, tenus au chaud par des appareils de chauffage stratégiquement disposés. Encore une fois, l'établissement demeure un endroit de rencontre, mais cette fois-ci pour un groupe élargi: des gens de la place, des weekends, des gens de localités tout près.

Plus récemment, la Régie du Bâtiment du Québec menace de fermer l'édifice McGowan. Cette structure de 1890 est en grand besoin de réparations majeures et dispendieuses. Deux des membres d'Heritage Georgeville proposent de rebâtir l'édifice McGowan, d'en conserver sa fonction courante en incluant des chambres à louer et un restaurant - ouverts à l'année. La terrasse serait maintenue durant l'été et deux appartements seraient prévus pour attirer des résidents permanents.

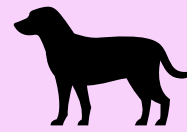
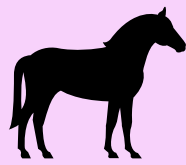
Ce plan très ambitieux ne s'effectue pas du jour au lendemain. Plusieurs dérogations municipales sont requises. Le plan original propose que le "nouveau McGowan" ouvre ses portes à l'été 2021, mais devant les incertitudes de la pandémie de COVID-19, les délais normaux d'approbations de tout genre, le choix d'un entrepreneur et la mise en marche des travaux comme tel - cette ouverture peut tarder. Les endosseurs de ce projet n'en sont pas moins sérieux et plus que déterminés.

Entretiens, et avant que le McGowan ferme ses portes, célébrons son histoire:

Ce qui nous amène au 12 août, 2020...

La Société d'histoire de Georgeville invite tous ses membres à se joindre pour le lunch le mercredi, 12 août, de 12h à 15h, sur la terrasse de l'Auberge McGowan. Un espace est réservé pour nous à cet effet.





"Fond remembrances of growing up in a village we all love, and of a few of the people who shared our times".

— Dick Hornby, Winter 1996

Almost a quarter of a century ago, long-time Georgeville resident Dick Hornby, sent the Georgeville Historical Society his memories of growing up in Georgeville. Dick and his recently deceased wife Georgina, once owned "The Village Store", located on the site of "The Studio". For some unknown reason his memories were never published. Thanks to the work of Judy Bachelder, our archivist, they were recently uncovered.

So, Dick, please accept my apologies. These should have appeared in our newsletter much sooner.

In this and subsequent issues we will be publishing excerpts from Dick's reminiscences. And we would like to invite others, no matter how old or young they are, to share stories about life from an earlier time in our fair village.

So, here is Chapter One of Dick Hornby's recollection of his life in Georgeville seventy to eighty years ago.

Early Days

Father joined the army in 1939 and shortly thereafter World War II became very real to our family. We had been living on the banks of the Saint Lawrence River, near Morrisburg, Ontario, but father's departure necessitated a move to my grandparents, Dan and Matty Ramage's home in Georgeville Quebec.

They lived in the large farmhouse on the J.B. Woodyatt Estate, called Hawthorden. (*This estate is the present-day location of the Desmarais property on chemin Georgeville.*) My very first recollection of Hawthorden was the unceremonious greeting I received from the farm dogs Fritz and Chum, who proceeded to remove the seat of my pants as soon as I set foot in the door. Grandfather Ramage soon came to my rescue, limiting the damage to my pants, and thankfully sparing other areas.

Mr. Woodyatt, who was known as "J. B.", was a large, portly man, most impressive in his shorts, long white socks, Oxford shoes, short sleeved shirt, arms folded, surveying his domain. He owned a lovely riding mare named Dolly. My uncle Matthew had the pleasant responsibility of exercising Dolly. He had a beautiful western saddle and was a sight to see when riding Dolly around the countryside.

J.B. trapped fur-bearing animals to supplement his income and taught some of the mysteries of trapping. He also owned a foxhound and when he went hunting foxes, he allowed me to trail along. You cannot believe the miles that dog would cover in a day! My short legs were taxed to the limit to keep up, but I loved every minute of it and would never pass up a chance to go!

Gordon McGowan owned a barn, long since torn down, located in close proximity to Cedar Cliff Hotel, Bachelder's Garage, and Grainger's Store. For whatever reason that barn was always a haven for skunks. One day, Richard Bachelder, Elwood Hand and I decided to try out our newly acquired trapping skills on the skunks. Imagine our dismay the following morning when we discovered three foul smelling skunks in our traps! Our households were not impressed. The skunky smells seemed to take forever to dissipate. Our ambition to become Hudson Bay Company suppliers was quickly put to rest.



Look for the next installment in our fall issue.

A pleasant surprise: Selections from the Stanstead Journal, 1903 - 1922 by Judy Rochester

PART ONE

In the Georgeville archives we have recently found, in John Boynton's meticulous handwriting, excerpts from the 1903 to 1961 editions of *The Stanstead Journal*. John appears to have gone through all the papers and copied out every item pertaining to Georgeville. Not so much births and deaths, though many of those are included but more happenings and current stories of the times.

He includes amusing anecdotes, such as the time the hearse being drawn in winter from Fitch Bay to Georgeville got stuck in the snow. The team had to be released and the hearse pulled by hand for two miles.

In 1909 the villagers had a pet deer, "Fanny", kept in what we now call the park. A year later there was much concern because their deer was ill.

One late night, 3:00 a.m., a little baby was found on the Sylvester's doorstep. It looks from John Boynton's added notes that the baby was adopted and brought up as Iva [or Ivy?] Sylvester, who married M. Hatch, and died in 2007.

All these notes have now been entered into our archive's computer. Any members of long-time local families who would like to examine their roots and presence in this community, simply must enter their name and the items related to that name will pop up. Examples include families Leney, Packard, Camber, Williams, Sheldon, and many, many others one might wish to research.

The same applies to the well known "houses" – Fernbank, Edgewood, Belmere, Glenbrooke, Grangehurst, Lake Hall, Tanglewood, Mossy Ledge - and many more.

There is much about who lived where in the village houses. To make it easier for us to identify the houses, John Boynton has added the person occupying or owning the house during his time, and in many cases, we have added the current names. Probably the most frequently mentioned house is that now owned by Currie Dixon – it was a parsonage, boarding house, summer rental, and changed ownership many times.

By 1913 many items start to appear about visitors: July 31, *"Cedar Cliffs, both house and cottage, are filled with summer guests. They are unable to accommodate many more. There is a great need of a good up-to-date hotel here. If somebody would only build one, they could soon fill it with guests."*

In 1914 the notes suddenly show separate listings from MAGOON POINT. It seems that a correspondent must have reported to the Journal from Magoon Point in addition to the one from Georgeville.

Only in his notes for August 13, 1914, does John Boynton include news from other towns – specifically their reports or reactions on the outbreak of WWI.

The years 1914 to 1918 show John Boynton's interest in wartime happenings. He has highlighted all the military notes for the World War years – specially the many items showing the numbers enlisted from Georgeville and the many fund-raising efforts of the community.

There are dozens of little anecdotes, historical, amusing, or both.

Our archives are currently closed, but when they reopen, anyone can drop by on a Saturday afternoon, between 1 and 4. The collection of these excerpts are all printed and ready for you to browse in a three-ring binder. They are also on the library computer, where it is easy to search a particular topic.

We owe a huge thanks to John Boynton for the hours of research and knowledge it took to assemble this wonderful collection.

Editor's Note: We owe also a huge debt of gratitude to Judy Rochester, the author of this piece, for the work she did transcribing all of John Boynton's written notes. It was a monumental task, one which gives us a wonderful research tool nicely cross referenced and accessible to all.

On another note, it is interesting that there were no references to lives lost to the Spanish flu, our last major pandemic before COVID-19, that took anywhere between ten and fifty million lives worldwide, more than died in World War I.

An urgent message concerning the Bigelow Garden

It is with great disappointment that I am writing to inform you that, as part of our response to COVID-19, our little garden has been closed to visitors for the foreseeable future. After discussion with Keith Wilcox, the president of The Georgeville Historical Society, it was agreed that we should take this action.

While it is early days, when the weather warms up, those volunteers who wish to work in the garden might be able to do so in groups of two.

Now that the Christmas tree has been removed there are daffodils poking up underneath which is cheery from a distance!

In the meantime, I hope that everyone is beginning to see a few bits of greenery in their gardens and are staying healthy.

— Jill Cobbett

GHS RECENT AND NOT SO RECENT HAPPENINGS

GHS Heritage Minutes · Anyone who has dined at Café Triticeus lately may have noticed several GHS Promo Cards. These are small plasticized cards placed on the tables at Janet's diner. Each contains a GHS Heritage Minute: a vignette, a snippet of Georgeville's history, written by Steve Moore and designed by SuzAnne Tremblay, our newest Board member. SuzAnne has a background in marketing. Her experience and talent have been a major benefit to our society. Next time you are at Janet's, take a look. Each story is fascinating. This summer, if it reopens, you should also see these Heritage Minutes at the Auberge McGowan as well.

And, if you want to get involved in the historical society, be sure to join. We are always looking for new, interested members. For more information, see the back of this newsletter.

Hill Cemetery Clean-Up · In the early days of our history it was common for families to bury their deceased members right on their property. Over time the original families moved away; there was no one to maintain the burial sites, and they deteriorated. Tombstones fell over or were hidden by vegetation accumulated over time. We have had a tradition in the GHS of volunteering to try to restore some of these sites.

The descendants of some of Georgeville's founding families are buried at the Hill Cemetery. It is an important location. Last summer a small dedicated group of Society members spent part of a day cleaning it up.

Bravo and thanks to Judy Bachelder, Maureen Cameron, John Atkin, Martin Bosch, Diane Partington, Christian Hurlow, and Nancy Sullivan for all their hard work.

GHS on Facebook · Yes, we now have a Facebook page. First Twitter and now Facebook. Who said you can't teach an old dog new tricks:

facebook.com/GeorgevilleHistoricalSociety

You can also find us on Twitter:

GeorgevilleHis1



Our headquarters at "The Loft" is currently closed until further notice

Normally on most Saturday's, between 1 and 4 pm, you can find Judy Bachelder at The Loft - the spacious upper floor of the carriage house located behind 4665 Georgeville Road. When we reopen, if you wish to drop off an artefact, do some research, or just chat, Judy, or someone from our Board, is usually there.

S · U · M · M · E · R · E · V · E · N · T · S

As I write this, I think it is fair to say that our summer program will have to be modified. Please check **"What's On"** for updated information. If you don't get this community newsletter, email Judy Bachelder at judy.bachelder@gmail.com to get on her contact list.

1.

THIS YEAR'S CANADA DAY PARADE WAS SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY JUNE 27 AT 1 PM.

The Community Association of Georgeville is looking at safe alternatives, but nothing has been decided as of this writing.

2.

THE GHS AGM CURRENTLY SCHEDULED FOR JULY 5TH AT 1 PM, AT THE MURRAY MEMORIAL HALL WILL NOT TAKE PLACE AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED.

Taking our inspiration from Canada's House of Commons, we are looking at ways of having a virtual AGM. Martin Bosch's talk on the Thomas Merton Center will take place in July 2021, we hope.

3.

THE GHS "GREAT HISTORICAL CHALLENGE, TAKE 2", WAS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR JULY 15TH, AT 10 AM. WE WERE GOING TO MEET IN THE PARKING LOT OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER.

Last year, when we ran this challenge, the weather was threatening and unpredictable. Due to this uncertainty, we had very few participants. We were planning to run it again, but we are currently studying alternate safe ways to organize this fun event.

Once we have finalized the details they will be posted on "What's On" as well as on our Facebook page, our web site and on Twitter.

Last year's winners can be seen in the photo to the right. If we find another way to run this, they will be disqualified from participating. So please remember their smiling faces.



From the left we have Christian Hurlow, Steven Moore, Judy Land, Maureen Cameron, Judy Bachelder, and Karen Smith. Bob Smith, who was part of the Challenge, took the photo. Thanks Bob.

4.

AUBERGE MCGOWAN: HONOURING ITS HISTORY BY SHARING ITS STORIES. THIS LUNCHEON WAS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 12TH, FROM NOON TO 3 PM, BUT IT HAS BEEN CANCELLED. EVEN IF RESTAURANTS WERE TO RE-OPEN, THEY WOULD IN ALL LIKELIHOOD ONLY BE AT HALF CAPACITY.

However, we would still like to encourage people to share their stories and memories, of Auberge McGowan, ideally in writing. We will also be soliciting these through interviews. A memory book is still a possibility. We are looking at various ways we can use these, perhaps in conjunction with a virtual tour. Stay tuned for more information.

Any memories can be emailed to Keith Wilcox at kwilco46@gmail.com, or sent to 1160 chemin de Magoon Point, Georgeville Quebec J0B 1T0.

*Nous soulignons: L'Auberge/La Maison McGowan
Cont. de la page 3....*

Le menu comportera trois (3) choix de plats, à un prix unique, excluant les consommations et le pourboire. Les détails et le prix de ce menu seront conclus prochainement.

Nous invitons les personnes présentes à partager à la fois souvenirs et histoires de leurs expériences vécues à l'Auberge McGowan au fil des ans. Toutes les histoires sont bienvenues: des drôles, des tristes, des éprouvantes, des remontantes - tout ce qui peut illustrer une période dans l'histoire de ce monument de Georgeville.

Idéalement, les personnes sont invitées à mettre ces histoires sur papier. Nous aimerions en faire un document-souvenir et l'offrir aux développeurs du projet McGowan pour être mis à la disposition de leurs clients éventuels. Il est important que personne n'oublie ce que cet endroit a signifié dans l'histoire de notre village.

*(La description ci-dessus correspond à ce que nous avons initialement prévu.
Malheureusement, la COVID-19 avait d'autres idées. Nous travaillons sur une modification de ce plan. Pour plus de détails, voir page 7.)*



REMINDER, MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

IF YOU HAVE NOT RENEWED YOUR GHS MEMBERSHIP FOR 2020-2021 PLEASE DO SO NOW. YOU MAY USE THE FORM BELOW. IF YOU HAVE MOVED AWAY AND DO NOT WISH TO REMAIN A MEMBER, PLEASE LET US KNOW.

SOMEDAY, WHEN LIFE RETURNS TO A NEW VERSION OF NORMAL, WE WILL MEET AGAIN, TO CHAT, LAUGH AND ENJOY HAPPY TIMES, REMEMBERING HOW WE LIVED THROUGH ALL OF THIS AND ONCE AGAIN CELEBRATING LIFE IN THIS WONDERFUL COMMUNITY.

THANKS SO MUCH.

Please send your cheque to/
SVP envoyez votre chèque à:

Georgeville Historical
Society/La Société d'histoire
de Georgeville
4600 Georgeville Road
Georgeville QC J0B1T0

GEORGEVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY/LA SOCIÉTÉ D'HISTOIRE DE GEORGEVILLE MEMBERSHIP FORM 2020

Name/Nom: _____

Address/Adresse: _____

Email/Courriel: _____

Renewal/Renouvellement:

New Member/Nouveau membre

Donation/Don:

Individual:Individuel \$15:

Family/Famille \$20: