



## Société d'Histoire de Georgeville Georgeville Historical Society



### A GREAT-GRANDSON TELLS THE STORY OF 'O CANADA'

On Sunday, July 9, the Georgeville Historical Society will convene its Annual General Meeting. This year's guest speaker is Jeff Packard, a seasonal resident of Cedarville. Currently residing in Calgary, Alberta, Packard will speak on the history of Canada's national anthem, *O Canada*, and his family's ties to it. How fitting that on this special year celebrating Canada's 150th anniversary, that we honour our national song, our national rallying call.

Packard is the great-grandson of the Hon. Robert Stanley Weir, a notable Canadian historical figure who wrote the English lyrics to *O Canada*. Robert Weir was a magistrate and lawyer, as well as an accomplished musician and published poet. Among his passions was a profound love for Lake Memphremagog and its environs. Indeed, he wrote the English lyrics for *O Canada* at his Cedarville summer residence, and there is little doubt that he drew significant inspiration for his poems, including *O Canada*, from this region.

#### FOR YOUR CALENDAR

- Saturday, July 8 – 1 to 4 p.m.  
Copp's Ferry Museum and  
GHS Archives open house
- Sunday, July 9 – 2 p.m.  
25<sup>th</sup> GHS AGM
- Wednesday, July 19 – 2 p.m.  
Croquet on the village green
- Wednesday, Aug. 9 – 10 a.m.  
Bridle Path walking tour

Packard will speak on the history of the anthem, including its French-Canadian origins which date back to 1880. He will also discuss its evolution over time and its eventual acceptance by English Canadians, enhanced it may be assumed, by the creativity of his great grandfather.

All Georgeville Historical Society members and the general public are invited to attend the gathering on July 9, at 2 p.m., to hear the full story behind our national anthem, and its ties to our region.

## CROQUET AND SUMMER GO TOGETHER



*A croquet party at Hugh Allen's Belmere estate attended by Queen Victoria's son, Prince Arthur, 1870*

The game can be mild or rowdy, competitive or casual, the players dressed up or down. It has become such a staple amongst North American lawn games that it is rare to find a household without a set of mallets, balls and hoops somewhere in the garage.

Nowadays, we think of croquet as an all ages, family-friendly game. But according to authors James Charlton and William Thompson (*Croquet: The Complete Guide to History, Strategy, Rules and Records*) croquet was once viewed as an excuse for “gambling, drinking and philandering” to such an extent that it was banned in Boston by one Reverend Skinner, while newspaper editorials at the time admonished both clergy and laity to suppress the “immoral practice of croquet”.

Captain Mayne Reid's book, *Croquet: A Treatise and Commentary*, adjured his young male readers to take heed and “warned [them] of the dangers of encountering women on the croquet court”.

Croquet Canada's website points out that “given the nature of Victorian courting codes, it is not surprising that young people - particularly women - relished the game which gave them the opportunity to socialize out of earshot of chaperones!” (“Please, Sir, have you seen a green ball? I think it went into those bushes...”)

London-based croquet game manufacturer John Jaques II claimed that Charles Dodgson (better known as Lewis Carroll) put a croquet game in *Alice in Wonderland* because of his friendship with the Jaques family. Carroll's illustrator, Sir

John Tenniel, was hired by the Jaques firm to create sketches for another product, “The Happy Family”.

Carroll’s niece Irene Dodgson later married John Jaques III. Croquet and Cupid triumph again!



*Alice using a flamingo for a mallet  
and a recalcitrant hedgehog for a ball*

The history of croquet is varied and contested with countries ranging from France (“paille-maille”) to England (“pesle-mesle” and “pall-mall”) to Ireland (“crookey”) claiming its origin. Nicky Smith’s book *Queen of Games: The History of Croquet* says that in England the game became quite popular in the 1860s and from there spread to the British Colonies. An 1810 publication by Joseph Strutt, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, describes “pale-maille [as] a game wherein a round boxwood ball is struck with a

mallet through a high arch of iron, which he that can do at the fewest blows, or at the number agreed upon, wins [...] [it] was a fashionable amusement in the reign of Charles the Second, and [from which] the walk in Saint James’s Park, now called the Mall, received its name [...].” A 1661 account by diarist Samuel Pepys relates, “I went into St. James Parke, where I saw the Duke of Yorke playing at Pesle Mesle - the first time that ever I saw that sport.”

Croquet made its way to Canada in the mid-to-late 1800s, and Croquet Canada’s website says that competitive croquet has grown from 50 to over 8,000 competitive players since the 1980s. Croquet’s popularity with the upper-classes in both England and North America was due in part to royal enthusiasts such as the Earl of Essex, whom according to Wikipedia, “held lavish croquet parties at his stately home in Watford, Hertfordshire, and the Earl even launched his own Cassiobury brand croquet set.” Later, in the 1920s and ‘30s, croquet ‘became a status favorite of literary and entertainment people’, according to Wikipedia’s history of croquet - East Coast and West Coast aficionados such as Dorothy Parker and Harpo Marx ‘developed a fierce and unsportsmanlike rivalry’. Picturing Harpo Marx from the movies, one can just imagine his croquet style!

Speaking of style, this writer finds the game of croquet’s style appealing in that it can be an Every Person sport - high or low-brow, with or without rules, varying number of balls or wickets, formal or informal. The genre of games from which croquet springs is known as ‘ground billiards’ and these games date back to who knows when; accounts of French peasants playing with wickets fashioned from branches,

and later, images of players aiming for robust rings of iron in *Alice* are easily found online.

If any readers have photos or stories about the Belmere bowling alley, this writer would love to see them. I have a fond memory from 1983 of bowling in that very alley; the round red window at the end, the undulating lane and the novelty of setting up the pins manually. It was a place locked in time.

Those of us at Georgeville Historical Society hope you find yourselves marking your calendars for the afternoon of Wednesday, July 19, for a fun-filled game of croquet with your fellow villagers and visitors. See you at the village croquet green!

- Gretchen Hatfield

## LAST OF THE FLEET



*The Anthemis moored at the Magog Wharf in 1952*

The Rev. R. Deane Moffat was leafing through the *Stanstead Journal* not long ago when he was brought up short by a photo reproduced in David Lepitre's popular genealogy column.

The photo showed the steamer *Anthemis* tied up to the federal wharf in Magog, listing sharply to starboard.

It was a calm day, with scarcely a ripple in the lake. Also barely discernable were what looked like three, or possibly four, teen-agers hanging about at the end of the wharf.

Could anyone, David Lepitre asked, explain the condition of the steamer, and identify the teen-agers? Deane Moffat could and did.

As Deane recalled, his older brother, Wally, then 14, was summoned to the office of Stephen Olney, the principal of Magog's Princess Elizabeth High School. Mr. Olney said that the Knowlton-based owner of the *Anthemis*, Bruce Irwin, was looking for an industrious young man to board the ship twice a day and check that its sump pump was

working. It was simple enough a task, paying \$7.50 a week, and fit nicely with Wally's delivery route for the Montreal *Gazette*.

Keeping the sump pump working had been achieved in many of the 44-year old steamer's earlier winters by drawing it up on the shore of Anthesis Bay just north of Georgeville. But alas, the last owner's commitment to keeping the old steamer afloat was uncertain, and it soon became clear that Wally Moffat faced a losing battle. Often accompanied by this younger brother, he had no difficulty climbing aboard and connecting and connecting a power

line from the shelter on the wharf. Some other souls were less generous; when Wally arrived to check the power line, he frequently found that it had deliberately been disconnected.

So it was that the summer of 1952 was the steamer's last – the last in an era of romantic vessels that began with the launching of the Georgeville-built Mountain Maid on June 7, 1850, and was followed for nearly a century by a fleet of steamers that were mainly owned, captained and crewed by Georgeville men (and women).

## **AN ABANDONED ROAD THROUGH THE WOODS**

On Wednesday, August 9, GHS President Steve Moore will lead a walking tour of an abandoned roadway through the woods on Magoon Point. Once an extension of the Magoon Point Road itself, it is now well on the way to being reclaimed by nature.

It is an excellent example of a roadway carved out of the forest in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by early settlers to the Georgeville area. Some of the roadways were likely once used to connect distant farms, a purpose since superseded by cars, trucks and changing patterns of land use.

The tour will begin where Camber Road turns east from Magoon Point Road. Beyond the junction of Camber Road, the Magoon Point Road continues south as it did over a century

ago, though considerably more restricted today. Farther along the road, two abandoned roads branch off, one to the west, one to the east. The latter will be the principal focus of the tour.

Past municipal councils deemed these various arteries redundant and withdrew funding for their maintenance. Today, these paths have become overgrown, morphing into woodland trails for the occasional hiker in summer and avid cross-country skiers in winter.

The GHS believes that we should document, map and video such local roadways before they are lost forever. If you are interested in helping with this, please speak to any of our directors.

## COPP'S FERRY MUSEUM: A WONDERFUL NEW VENTURE

At the April 22 meeting of the Georgeville Historical Society, director Jacques Valiquette had an exciting, special announcement to make. He had just set up a new non-profit organization, the Copp's Ferry Museum, and he was asking the Historical Society to partner with the new museum, and become its first institutional member.

The museum's mission is to give the Georgeville community the 'permanent means and tools to ensure the long-term preservation of its own heritage', with a focus on preserving and promoting 'the material and archival heritage of the Georgeville area'.

Jacques Valiquette has been a passionate and enthusiastic collector of local artifacts for decades, and one of his long-term aims is to encourage others to share their examples of Georgeville memorabilia as well, and help establish the Copp's Ferry Museum as a centre for the celebration of the history and heritage of our community.

Throughout the summer, the museum will be open Saturday afternoon from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. beginning July 8. Anyone interested in helping at the museum is welcome to drop by on July 8 and talk to one of the volunteers.

*-Keith Wilcox*

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