



Société d'histoire de Georgeville
Georgeville Historical Society

What's Inside:

In this issue of the GHS Newsletter, we feature articles on a variety of subjects relevant to our local history. The first highlights the heroic efforts of concerned members of the Fitch Bay community to save and renovate the St. Matthias Church. As church attendance declines it is important to protect, where possible, these cultural institutions for their place in our architectural heritage and for the cultural role they have played and continue to play today.

On the same theme, we have republished an article that first appeared in Magog's Reflet du Lac on the need to save cemeteries like the Oliver Cemetery to honour those who first settled in this hamlet, and as a reminder of what once existed in this community. It is an excellent companion piece to the article in our spring issue about GHS efforts to clean up this cemetery.

Finally, for something a little lighter, SuzAnne Tremblay has written a piece on Georgeville's version of the last spike that involves a gold-plated nail, Sir Hugh Allan, and the Lady of the Lake. Read on for more.

— Keith Wilcox, Editor

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RENOVATION : ST. MATTHIAS ANGLICAN CHURCH

FITCH BAY 2018-2021 By Janet Bagnall

Janet Bagnall is a resident of Fitch Bay. Before her retirement, she worked as a reporter, editorial writer, and columnist at the Montreal Gazette. She also worked on this project. We are pleased that she agreed to do this article for our newsletter.

Thank you, Janet.

For years, St. Matthias Anglican Church stood forlorn and neglected on the main street of Fitch Bay. A tree was actually growing on the roof of the entrance and a unique architectural feature, a series of flying buttresses, was almost past the point of salvation.

The building was nearly unrecognizable from the charming country church its parishioners built in 1888, a time when the village was bustling. Fitch Bay's attractions, according to *The History of Stanstead County* published in 1872, included "two churches, a school-house, two stores, a post office, a gristmill with three runs ..."

But by the mid-1900s, Fitch Bay began a decline that shows signs of being arrested only now, helped we think, by the restoration of St. Matthias.

With the church back on its feet, there's a livelier feel to the main street. As the renovation progressed, other structures in the village core were taken in hand and there are now several other 19th-century buildings under repair.

Three years ago, a group of residents met to talk about restoring the church. Today we can tell you what it took: an astonishing \$400,000 raised in private funds, the energy and enthusiasm of the organizing committee, Heritage Fitch Bay, the financial and physical support of a large group of residents and practical help from the Anglican Diocese of Quebec.

RESTORING AN HISTORIC BUILDING

Restoring a church in today's world is not an easy undertaking. Attendance is in free fall and the cost of upkeep keeps climbing.

A conservation group, National Trust for Canada, has estimated that 9,000 churches and other religious buildings

— one in three that currently exists in Canada — will be shuttered, sold or torn down over the next few years. It's happened already in Magog: St. Luke Anglican Church is now a micro-distillery.

As we started on our project, a few people asked: What's the point? The building's a wreck. Why restore the church? These were our reasons:

-  To save an historical landmark in an area that is fast losing its built heritage; St. Matthias is a testament to a once thriving Anglophone community
-  The church itself is an especially pretty example of a New England-style country church with its white clapboard walls; it not only adds to the village's historical core, without it, the main street would be diminished visually and emotionally
-  Maintaining the church would keep alive the feeling of connectedness between the generations that have made Fitch Bay their home. Families of some parishioners have lived in the area for more than 150 years
-  Renovated, the church is intended to serve as a community gathering point. Today, it's open to concerts, lectures, discussions, meetings, book clubs, tutoring for local students; religious services for all denominations, plus a café during the winter months. The Action Communautaire du Canton de Stanstead (ACCS), a volunteer group, is starting the work of organizing a program of events. In the spring, we will hope to start renovating Canon Gustin Hall. Our goal is to make it Fitch Bay's community center.

RAISING MONEY —————

Anyone who has participated in fund raising knows how hard it can be. If you've never done it before you have NO idea.

As recently as the 1990s, it was relatively easy to get the province or the federal government to provide money to restore religious buildings. Today most available funds are earmarked for the country's great cathedrals, its landmark buildings. This year in Quebec, Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal was allocated \$1.6 million for repairs to its bell tower spire - out of a provincial grant total of nearly \$4 million.

For our project, a small country church, it didn't help that in the 1960s the original entrance to the church was replaced by a box-like front. Architectural alterations to a heritage building reduce its heritage value making it less likely to get government funding. In Quebec, heritage buildings are classified A, B, C, D, and E. There is no funding after C. Because of its changed front, St. Matthias came in at D.

Our search for funding included various government departments at the federal, provincial and regional levels. Unfortunately, our project never quite aligned with existing governmental programs. At the time we were fund-raising, the municipality for its part was pursuing a different vision for Fitch Bay.

It is thanks to the citizens of Stanstead Township that St. Matthias Church has been restored. The \$400,000 raised was all from private sources, a truly remarkable achievement. We received donations ranging from \$20 to \$90,000 from individual donors throughout the Township. Donations also came in from a number of foundations including the Anglican Foundation of Canada. Heritage Fitch Bay members approached friends and family and fellow residents throughout the township for help. A small group set up a letter-writing campaign which proved very successful.

Volunteers stepped up to scrape and paint the exterior. Preliminary landscaping was also carried out in part by volunteers. Heritage Fitch Bay members spent hundreds of hours planning and organizing the project.

RESTORATION PRACTICALITIES —————

The Quebec Anglican Diocese, the owner of the property, proved helpful on practical matters. It required a standard three bids for every contract. Why this is standard practice became clear as an astonishingly wide range of bids came in. The Diocese provided us with insurance as well as accounting services. It gave our donors tax receipts. It has passed an ecclesiastical bylaw guaranteeing the community use of the property.

The COVID pandemic was an additional challenge in the renovation process. It took a long time to find a contractor who was available to do the work. Contractors throughout the area had been snapped up before we could start. And it's beyond helpful to have one or two people on the building committee who know about the nuts and bolts of building and renovating.

WHAT WE LEARNED —————

- ★ never give up
- ★ never get discouraged
- ★ don't take anything personally; a different vision is just that, someone else's idea of what the community needs
- ★ don't stop fundraising until the entire project is finished. So, shamelessly, in keeping with this last point, we'll just point out how donations can be made:
- ★ A cheque payable to Church Society - Heritage Fitch Bay, mailed to Heritage Fitch Bay, 360 Chemin Atkin, Canton de Stanstead J0B 1T0
- ★ Online at CanadaHelps.org. Put Heritage Fitch Bay in the search function. Tax receipts will be issued promptly.



BEFORE THE RENOVATION
(Photo by Jean Longpré)


*Thank you for all
your wonderful help.*



GARDEN GOSSIP SUMMER 2021



– Jill Cobbett

After the long COVID-19 winter of 2020/2021, spring finally arrived in Georgeville and to the Bigelow Pioneer Garden. The daffodils that we planted in the autumn were such a cheery sight through the gate in early May. Our volunteers met in the garden and started to work together, first in small groups but as COVID restrictions were relaxed we returned to our normal schedule.

The garden looked really splendid all summer thanks to the volunteers who met on Monday mornings. Through the dedication of Suzanne Marcil, the garden was watered regularly (often she visited the garden eight times a day to move the sprinklers) during the very hot and dry weeks. This is not sustainable and because of the drought, we are now looking into replacing the irrigation system which fell into disrepair many years ago and not replaced. A properly installed and programmed system should conserve water consumption and relieve the necessity to spend many hours hand-watering plants.

During the winter months, Judy Rochester volunteered to renew and prepare our plant labels. These name the plants in Latin, English and French. They are placed throughout the garden to help our visitors identify plants. We thank her for this great contribution. Sadly, some of our visitors remove these, which is very unpleasant and costly.

We have made a few improvements to the garden over the summer. The eight sections that point to the centre of the garden were trimmed back to provide easier movement within the garden and to bring it back to its original design. A few cedar logs were replaced on the perimeter and a large load of mulch was added to the paths.

In July, members of the children's Recreation Programme visited the garden under the guidance of Judy Macarthur and Jennifer Sudlow. They had a super time tasting different herbs and edible flower blossoms – nasturtiums, etc. They learned about the history of the early settlers of Georgeville and about the Abenaki. Each child was given a small bouquet of lavender as they left.

In early August, Sylvie Archambault invited us to visit the wonderful potager garden that she and her husband Robert Vincent have built in the village. We enjoyed seeing their raised vegetable beds, trial gardens and vast assortment of fruit

bushes. We were also invited to tour their Maple Sugar operation which is very impressive.

On August 11, we were shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden death of Jennifer Sudlow. Jennifer was a lovely friend and volunteer who was so devoted to the garden. She is missed by all. (Please see In Memoriam below.)

In early September, Gretchen Colby and her husband, Robbie, hosted our annual Summer Potluck Lunch on their deck overlooking the lake and Owl's Head Mountain. We had beautiful weather with delicious food and of course, loads of chatter.

We thank Jacques Valiquette for his generosity. As always, he supports our efforts and provides us with electricity and water. Best of all though, are his commitment to the garden and his visits every Monday morning!

Toward the end of September, the garden was decorated with an autumnal theme of pumpkins and corn stalks. In December, we will put up a Christmas tree, and then relax through the winter months until spring arrives when we return to be together again.

It was with great sadness that the Bigelow Gardeners learned of the sudden death of Jennifer Sudlow on August 11, 2021.

Jennifer was an active member of the Bigelow Garden for several years. She was an accomplished gardener who contributed extensively with her knowledge of plants and garden maintenance.

Jennifer was a model volunteer. She was always there with her hand up to pitch in and help. She would never miss a Monday morning without letting us know, and if she did, one would not be surprised to find her in the garden later in the week to follow through on her commitment. Jennifer rose to every occasion whether it was preparing vast amounts of rhubarb punch for our anniversary party or setting up our autumn decorations at the end of the summer season.

We miss seeing her arrive in the garden, always smiling and enthusiastic about whatever task had been set for the day. We send our deepest sympathy to her husband Michael and their three sons and their families. –Jill Cobbett



(Photo by Judy Bachelder)

IN MEMORIAM : JENNIFER SUDLOW

A HERITAGE WORTH PRESERVING

Maurice Langlois

OLIVER CORNER

Maurice Langlois is a former president of the Magog Historical Society. This article was originally published in Magog's Le Reflet du Lac. We are reprinting it here with permission from both the author and Le Reflet. It is a companion piece to that published in our Spring 2021 Newsletter on the clean-up of this heritage cemetery, organized by Tara Cope of the Georgeville Historical Society.

It is universally recognized that cemeteries are an important part of our collective heritage. As historical sites, they are first and foremost a testimony to the respect we have for those who have gone before us, because without their hard work we would not be here. In addition, they are an essential resource for historians, genealogists and others who are searching for their ancestors.

In the past, the Anglo-Protestant population has always shown a greater interest in these cemeteries than the Franco-Catholic population, especially for the smaller ones, including family cemeteries, on farms and those near churches. As the English-speaking population declines, it is incumbent upon us to increase our active participation in the preservation and maintenance of these precious links to our past.

In the former county of Stanstead, over one hundred of these cemeteries have been identified. Excluding the Catholic and Protestant cemeteries on Rue des Pins, there are three within the City of Magog, including the now defunct Union Churchyard Cemetery, located behind the Evangelical Church on Merry Street South. On Chemin de Georgeville there are two family cemeteries: the Oliver Corner Cemetery and the Ives Cemetery. The latter, initially dedicated to the Ives family, was later expanded and opened to other pioneer families. Well maintained by an association, it contains the remains of some 200 people and is still active.

The situation is more worrying for the Oliver Corner Cemetery, next to 2520 Chemin de Georgeville, a former stagecoach inn. This one is no longer active. It has been recently damaged and is in danger of disappearing. It is a family cemetery and one of the oldest in the area. It contains the remains of over 65 people. It is named after William Oliver, M.D., who arrived from Massachusetts with his family around 1804. The earliest gravestone is probably that of this doctor turned farmer who died in 1819. You will find buried here Olivers, Rexfords, Abbotts, Bachelders, Calls, Chamberlains, Hoveys, Remicks, Turners, and Wilcoxes. All these families are closely linked to the early settlement and development of the eastern shore of Lake Memphremagog. The last burial appears to have been in 1954. Over the years, this cemetery has been maintained by volunteers and/or neighbours concerned with its preservation, but it is currently abandoned.

Yet, this cemetery is a witness to a part of our history, a period when Chemin de Georgeville was the main road in the immediate area. The hamlet that developed at the crossroads of Chemin de Georgeville and Chemin de Gendron was called Oliver Corner. In the 19th century, and during the first half of the 20th century, it was a thriving center of economic activity. In addition to the stagecoach inn, there was a post office (1878-1914), a school (Oliver School), a library, a carriage maker, a cheese factory, and a sawmill on Oliver Brook, which flows into the bay of the same name. A small 'telephone exchange', known as The Oliver Corner Telephone Line, existed before it was taken over by Bell. The hamlet was important enough to have its social column in the local newspapers, including the Stanstead Journal.

In 2021, little remains of this place. It is therefore imperative to protect this cemetery.

Translation: DeepL and Keith Wilcox



The Legend of the Golden Nail



by
Suzanne
Tremblay

This legend is from an article written in 2000 by Jacques Boisvert, founding president of the Lake Memphremagog Historical Society in 1980 and of the International Society of Dracontology of Lake Memphremagog in 1986. Mr. Boisvert passed away in 2006.

In the early 1980s, he met Emma Packard from Newport, Vermont. At the time, she was writing in the local newspapers and hosting a phone-in show on the WIKE radio station in Newport. One day she told him about this legend:

When the Lady of the Lake was nearing completion, just before its launch in Magog in 1867, the owner of the steamboat, Sir Hugh Allan, travelled to Magog to drive in the last nail. According to tradition, when major work is completed this nail is made of gold.

Sir Hugh Allan hammered the nail into the corner of a table in the elegant dining room of the Lady of the Lake.

One day, a suspicious-looking passenger spent most of the trip sitting at this table. On the way back to Magog, Charles Shephard, the ship's officer, noticed that the golden nail was missing and immediately suspected the man sitting at that table during the first part of the trip.

Officer Shephard kept an eye out for this suspicious-looking man at each stop along the lake. At the Georgeville dock, the man prepares to disembark. In a flash, Shephard intercepts him and questions him. The suspicious passenger refuses to answer any questions.

The officer then asks for help to search him. At the same time, a passenger yells: "Mr. Shephard, the guy just threw something in the water." Nothing is found on the mysterious stranger and, attempts to find something at the bottom of the lake reveal nothing either.

A hundred years later, divers from the Memphre Diving Center installed a mud pump at the Georgeville dock to search the bottom of the lake. Guess what they found? Yes, a gold-plated nail. Intrigued by this discovery, the diver went to the Duvar jeweller in Magog to have it examined. The jeweller confirmed that it was indeed a 22-millimetre-long nail, weighing 0.035 grams and plated with 18-carat gold. A written attestation to this effect was produced in 1994.



(Photo by Suzanne Tremblay)

Today, you can find this nail, along with the attestation, in Georgeville, on one of the walls at the General Store.



"With more than 6,000 dives into the depths of Lake Memphremagog, Jacques Boisvert of Magog, Quebec, was a scuba diver, historian, ecologist, and monster hunter all wrapped into one. His diving adventures on the lake helped write, and sometimes rewrite, the history of the lake and its surrounding communities on both sides of the border. But Boisvert is probably best known for bringing the legendary, many say, the mythical, dinosaur-like creature of Lake Memphremagog – the Memphré – to life, or at least into the region's collective consciousness."



UPCOMING EVENTS

Next AGM

On March 19, 2022, at 10 AM, GHS hopes to hold our first hybrid Annual General Meeting. A hybrid meeting allows members to attend either virtually by Zoom, or in person. The in-person meeting shall take place at the Murray Memorial Center in Georgeville. Those who wish to join us virtually will be sent a Zoom link. At the appropriate time, a 'What's On' notification will be emailed with the procedures to follow if you wish to attend virtually.

Georgeville's 225th Birthday Party

The details as of this writing are sketchy, but a committee of interested local citizens has been meeting to plan a series of events in celebration of Georgeville's 225th anniversary. Yes, it has been 25 years since our last big party. Save Saturday, July 23. Stay tuned for more information in our next newsletter.

NEWSLETTER UPDATES

2021 History Challenge Winner

Judy Bachelder was the winner of this year's GHS History Challenge. Everyone who participated agreed it was a lot of fun. Plus, we learned so much as we visited various sites of interest. Families of ten or twelve children were common, death at an early age was not unusual. If a child died young, that child's name was often used again, which made tracing family histories challenging. Tombstone designs often reflected popular tastes of the day. An example of the latter was the mysterious etchings that seemed in vogue at the end of the nineteenth century. Many questions to answer, and as in all research, lots of new questions came to mind out of those answered. Much to think about when studying our history.

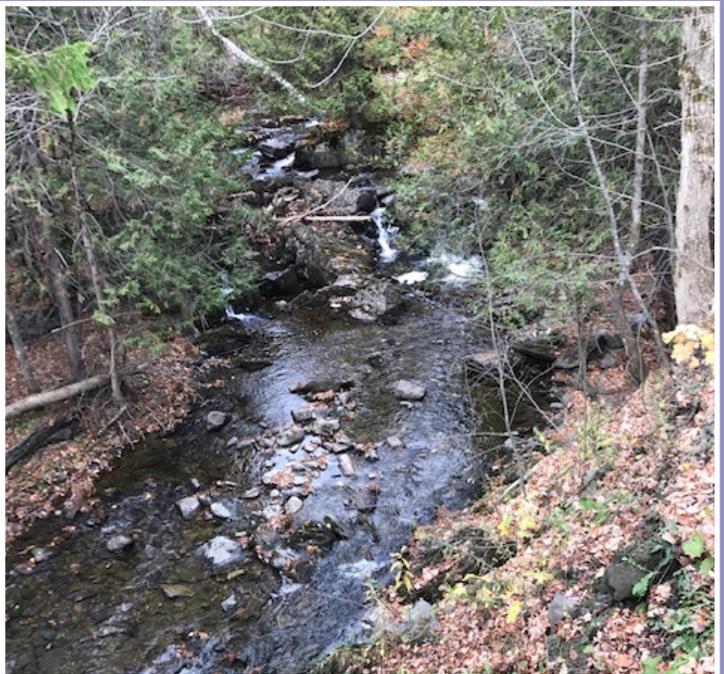
Judy Bachelder very kindly shared her winnings at Auberge McGowan with Stephen Moore, Judy Land, and Christian Hurlow:



Photographic Challenge

There was no correct answer to this challenge that originally ran in the Spring 2021 newsletter. We are running this again. The photo appears at right.

The scene depicted in the accompanying photo below is of a watercourse located in the municipality of Stanstead. The individual who can name the watercourse, most accurately describe the location from a geographic and historical perspective and identify the directional orientation will win a free one-year membership to the Georgeville Historical Society. Please submit your answer to either of the following email or postal addresses:
historicalgeorgeville@gmail.com or
judy.bachelder@gmail.com or
 GHS, 4600 chemin Georgeville
 Georgeville, QC J0B 1T0



(Photo by Stephen Moore)

Update on the video on the history of Auberge McGowan

The fall 2021 deadline for the completion of this video has been extended to April 30 2022. This was in response to an offer from the Memphremagog MRC which recognized that COVID might have impacted our shooting schedule.

GHS Board of Directors
2021-2022

Approved at our virtual AGM
March 20, 2021

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HOW BEST TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP &/OR DONATE TO THE GHS

MEMBERSHIPS:

\$15 a year for an individual or \$20 for a family membership. *Kindly provide your full name (or names if for a couple/family).*

- Interac e-transfer:
The payee's name is **Georgeville Historical Society**. The email address is gville.hist.soc20@gmail.com
- Write a cheque payable to the **Georgeville Historical Society** addressed to:
Judy Bachelder
4600 Chemin de Georgeville
Georgeville, Québec
JOB 1T0

DONATIONS:

Tax receipts are issued for donation amounts over \$20 and cannot be issued for membership fees.

- Interac e-transfer:
The payee's name is **Georgeville Historical Society**. The email address is gville.hist.soc20@gmail.com.
If you decide to use this option, kindly provide your full name and indicate if the donation includes a family or individual membership.
- Canada Helps: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/societe-dhistoire-de-georgevillegeorgeville-historical-soc/>
- Write a cheque payable to the **Georgeville Historical Society** addressed to:
Judy Bachelder
4600 Chemin de Georgeville
Georgeville, Québec
JOB 1T0

Kindly indicate if the cheque is meant to include a family or individual annual membership component as well as a donation, and if so, provide your full name (names if for a couple/family).

*Once again, we wish to remind everyone that GHS has The Loft thanks to Jacques Valiquette's generosity.
He provides this precious space at a nominal rent.*

Happy Holidays/The best of the Season/Merry Christmas. Stay safe/Be well.