

# THE GEORGEVILLE ENTERPRISE

Vol 4 No 1

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SUMMER 1995

Société d'histoire de Georgeville / Georgeville Historical Society

## MAKE IT A DATE

SHG/GHS ANNUAL MEETING AND EXHIBITION  
SATURDAY, JULY 8 2:30 PM

BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE'S QUILT AUCTION  
SATURDAY, JULY 15 1:30 PM

"THE HEART OF A VILLAGE" EXHIBITION  
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, AUG. 19&20

*For 1996*

## CALENDAR OFFERS EARLIEST PHOTOS OF VILLAGE SCENES

A 1996 Georgeville calendar that includes handsome enlargements of the first known photographs of the village, is now on sale at several locations and is available by mail.

Among early village scenes, the calendar includes two 1860 overviews of Georgeville by Montreal photographer William Notman and a view of the old Campedown Hotel decorated for a visit by the governor general, Sir Edmund Head, in 1861. It also contains photographs of Georgevillians of the 19th century.

The calendar, published by the Community Association's Bicentennial Committee with the help of the Georgeville Historical Society, is likely to become a collector's item and is ideal as a Christmas gift. The pictures are suitable for framing. It is available at the Georgeville General Store and Les Artisans McGowan for \$12, or by phoning Roz Smith at 843-1424. To order by mail, the price is \$15; please write to "Georgeville Calendar, c/o 4651 Chemin Georgeville, Georgeville, Québec J0B 1T0.

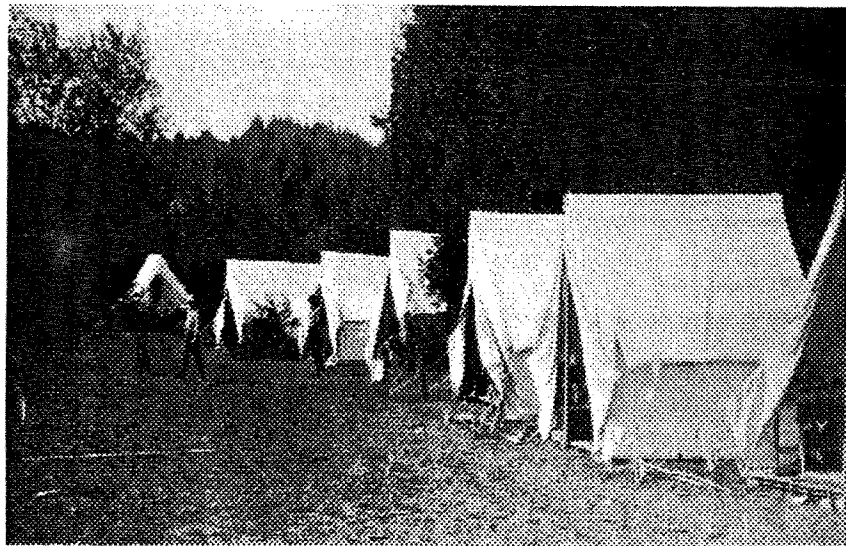
*Focus for July 8*

## PEACEFUL INVASION: A CENTURY OF CAMPS AND LOG CABINS

In August 1878 the Rev. Samuel June Barrows, of Boston, and a small group of campers set out from Newport on the 40 ft. motor launch "Gracie," towing a skiff. Dropped off with the skiff on Lord's Island ("in five minutes we had captured this British island and the American flag was flying from its headlands," Barrows wrote whimsically), the campers moved on to "a pleasant combination of grove, beach and brook" at Bedroom Point. There they pitched their army-style tents. The Barrows camp on what was then known as "the old Merriman farm" just north of Georgeville opened a new chapter in the story of the village and the lake.

In succeeding summers, the Barrows family introduced a distinctive style of camp life on the lakeshore. They also introduced a remarkable group of friends and colleagues to the lake—clergymen and college presidents, suffragists and social workers, teachers and journalists—whose families shared their life-long devotion to it.

The Barrows' camp, and the colony of camps it inspired on the lakeshore between Georgeville



*The Barrows' camp by the Cliff (1884)*

Photo courtesy Sylvia Drew



A 14 year old Theodore Clark Smith contemplates Nature from his tent (1884)

Photo courtesy Sylvia Drew

and Oliver's Corner, will provide the focus for the Société d'histoire de Georgeville/Georgeville Historical Society's fourth annual meeting at the Murray Memorial Centre at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 8.

Sylvia Drew, the guest speaker, will draw on her own reminiscences of camp life, as well as a memoir by her uncle, Theodore Clark Smith. A distinguished American historian, Smith first camped with the Barrows as a 14-year-old in 1884 and returned to the lake for 60 years.

Following the meeting, the society will open an exhibition, "Peaceful Invasion: A Century of Camps and Log Cabins, 1878-1978", at the former Village Store (sharing space with the antiques of Vie de Campagne. The exhibition will remain open on weekends through Labour Day.

Everyone in the community is cordially invited to attend the society's annual meeting and exhibition.

## FINAL "HEART OF A VILLAGE" AUG. 19 & 20

Ten years ago "The Heart of a Village" exhibition was only an idea. Two years later the first exhibition of photographs of five of Georgeville's heritage buildings, together with furniture and other artifacts associated with them, was held in Murray Memorial Centre, accompanied by Book I of *The Heart of a Village*, which told something of what had been

learned about the history of the buildings.

Successive exhibitions were staged in 1989, 1991, and 1993 and three more books were produced. This year the project has been completed and the final exhibition will be held in Murray Memorial Centre on August 19 from 9 am to 5 pm and on August 20 from 10 am to 1 pm. Fifteen buildings will be included, bringing the number of historic and not-yet-historic buildings that have been photographed and documented to fifty five. Book V of *The Heart of a Village* will be on sale at the exhibition.

## PIONEER GARDEN IMPRESSES VISITORS

On Sunday, June 11, the Conseil des monuments et sites de Québec wound up its annual meeting in Stanstead with a walking tour of Georgeville. Accompanied by SHG\GHS directors, the conseil's director, Marie Nolet, and some 35 delegates visited the Bigelow Pioneer Garden, examined the village's older houses and were welcomed to St. George's by the Rev. Hollis Plimpton and John Boynton for a few minutes during the middle of the Sunday morning service.

The Pioneer Garden, where the visitors were greeted by Katherine Mackenzie, was in immaculate condition. Architectural Historian Robert Lemire, who conducted the tour, said the CMSQ members were "delighted with Georgeville and impressed with the keen sense of purpose of the society's members."

Now in its third year, the garden is reaching its maturity. In May, a plant exchange at les Artisans McGowan, with the help of Nancy Amos, Denise Clermont, Maurey Devlen and Neils Jensen, earned \$214 for the development of the garden. On August 5, members of the Lennoxville Garden Club will pay the garden their second visit.

### SHG/GHS 1994-95 Board of Directors

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# THE MASTER ARTIST OF THE NORTHERN WOODS

By Peter Landry

In the summer of 1902, Theodore Clark Smith (see his picture on page 1) was a 31-year-old historian and a guest at the Barrows family camp at Cedar Lodge when he experienced "a sudden sharp interest" in answering an old question among naturalists: was it possible, by developing a system of musical notation, to detect an order in the songs of the thrushes that sang outside his tent?

"My tent was placed at the edge of a cedar and hemlock grove, mixed with occasional maples and birches which furnished nesting places for a great variety of birds," he reported in the February 1903 issue of *The Ohio Naturalist*.

"The most conspicuous singer was a hermit thrush whose song was heard every morning and evening and frequently during the day for over a month." Other thrushes could also be heard, though none was exceeded by the star performance of the "camp thrush": "I have heard him at extremely close range, on one occasion from less than ten feet and have also been able to distinguish his song, over the lake, from a distance of fully three-quarters of a mile."

On July 10 that summer Smith decided to take his interest in analysing the nature of bird songs on an overnight camping trip to the top of Owl's Head. As a companion, he took along 17-year-old Willie (Burnet) Barrows. "Supplied with lunch and blankets, I took the afternoon 'Lady' [the steamer *Lady of the Lake*] from Georgeville to the Mountain House," he recalled in his memoir. His diary reads:

Climbed 6:00-7:15. Mosquitos thick, splendid sunset. Heard chorus of hermits on every side of mountain, also olivebacks and woodthrushes to the south... Built bonfire, answered from Cedar Lodge and other places. Saw night come on. Lay down at 9:15. Wind fairly brisk and rising. Slept cold at first, later better. Walked at 3:20. Saw sunrise to



Twilight song of the Hermit Thrush

Drawing by John H. Dick

N.E. wonderfully fine over lake and country. Breakfast at 4:50. Heard thrushes splendidly and winter wren. Down mountain 7:35 - 8:25.

Young Willie Barrows (known to a later generation of villagers as "the Goat Man" because he shared his house on the Magog road with his goats) did not share Smith's enthusiasm for birds. "Willie lay looking into a deep crevice as I sat enraptured by the thrush chorus in the dawn, and finally observed, 'There's a big spider in there.'"

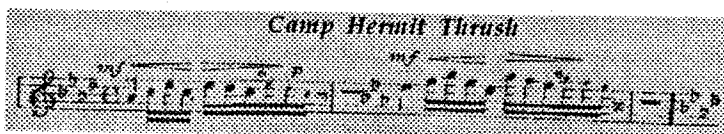
In 1904, Smith published the results of his voluminous notes on "Song-Forms of the Thrush" in the January issue of Boston's *Atlantic Monthly*. In this article, he examined in detailed musical notation a comparison of thrush songs (See example bottom left).

Hermit thrushes, he concluded, "sang with untiring persistence, sometimes for an hour or more at a stretch, and at all times of the day, but were generally much shyer than the wood thrushes, harder to approach and more restless, often changing from tree to tree while in song."

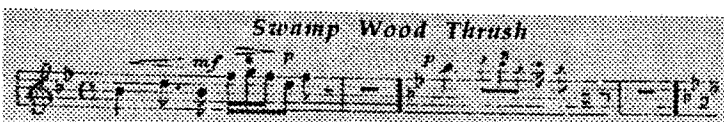
Smith went on to compare the vocal qualities of the two thrushes: "Were it a question of total sweetness alone, the hermit thrush would have to be ranked below his larger cousin. But in song-form, in execution and in general effect, the contrast was undeniably, it seemed to me, in favour of the hermit thrush.

"The wood thrush had a clear, liquid modulation, sudden and striking, and a brilliant arpeggio, but the hermit had a more elaborate figure, greater delicacy of utterance, and a manner of delivery no wood thrush equalled.

"When the two sang together, the wood thrush's phrases seemed beautiful, but frag-



Even to the untrained eye the notations of the first few bars of the songs of the Camp Hermit Thrush (above) and the Swamp Wood Thrush (below) appear remarkably different. The long opening note of the Hermit Thrush distinguishes it from other thrushes.



mentary, the hermit thrush's a finished performance... Even through the liquid notes of the wood thrush, the steady, swinging phrases of the hermit thrush pierced their way, now high and clear, now low and ringing, always individual, strong, delicate and aspiring. He was the master artist of the Northern woods."

Today, these native thrushes are still with us, along with the Veery, though apparently in fewer numbers than nearly a century ago (among many reasons for the decline are diminished forested areas, pesticides and the destruction of thrushes' nests by cowbirds). At our property on the Magoon Point road above MacPherson Bay, we used to hear wood thrushes singing until 1991. The next spring, when they failed to reappear, they were replaced by hermit thrushes.

The thrushes in our area may be down in numbers, but you still shouldn't have too much trouble hearing them sing in the season. They all differ, yet each has its own singular beauty.

Like Theodore Clark Smith, many would rank the secretive hermit thrush highest. But others might vote for the wood thrush and others still would choose the throaty veery. They all have a haunting quality, particularly when heard in the still of the evening as the light slowly fades.

Peter Landry is the compiler of Georgeville's annual Christmas Bird Count.

## SIXTY PLUS QUILTS TO BE AUCTIONED FOR BICENTENNIAL

The quilt auction scheduled for July 15 is quickly becoming an eagerly anticipated event. It promises to be both exciting and profitable for the community. All proceeds will be used for bicentennial activities during 1997 when Georgeville celebrates its founding by Moses Copp.

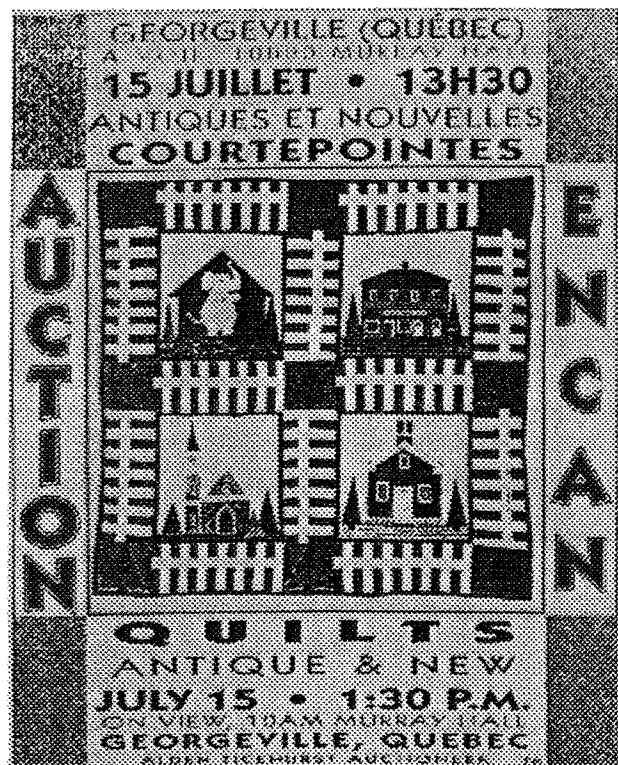
Thanks to the efforts of a great number of Georgeville's residents and friends, the auction's organizers have gathered over 60 quality quilts, both old and new, which will be auctioned on July 15, 1995 at the Murray Memorial Centre at 1:30 p.m.

The quilts range from wall hangings to bed quilts made by many people who are friends of Georgeville. A group of 22 people meet once a week to work on a community quilt. Apart from the quilts produced by this group, a great number of people have donated various pieces; some have come from as far away as Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

Many of the quilts are true heirlooms and collectors' items. One, which was recently donated to the auction, was made in Georgeville in the 1930s by Gertrude Ella Beach Copp, daughter of Nathan Allen Beach and wife of Charles Sewell Copp. She was born in Georgeville in 1865. Frances Hutchison, when she donated the quilt, said, "This is where Grandmother's quilt should be." The Georgeville quilt, depicted on the poster (left), shows four familiar Georgeville landmarks. It is sure to become an heirloom.

We are fortunate to have several accomplished artists living in the village. Katherine Mackenzie is an artist and author who produced a book of wild flower drawings several years ago. Priscilla Devlen has won prizes for her quilts at international quilting shows. She recently had one of her quilts on display in Germany as a result of being a winner in the American Quilters Society. These two women have combined their talents and have produced a set of twin bed quilts that will surely be show stoppers. These two quilts will be on display at Vie de Campagne in Georgeville over the July 1 weekend.

The quilts may be viewed at the Murry Memorial Centre on auction day starting at 10 am. A picnic style lunch, provided by Barbara Gibson, will be available at the Hall before the auction begins. The bidding will get under way at 1:30 when auctioneer Alden Ticehurst starts the proceedings.



Poster for the quilt auction depicts the "Georgeville Quilt," created by Molly Munster. Many Georgevillians would like this quilt to remain in the village.

## THE GOOD OLD DAYS (MOSTLY) ABOVE THE STORE

Max and Gwen Grainger—he with his fund of stories and explosive laughter, she with her quiet patience—operated the Village Store, and did much to keep Georgeville in good humour, for more than three decades. Now living in Victoria, BC, Gwen Grainger offers some affectionate memories of her family's Georgeville years in an interview with her son, Larry.

By Gwen Grainger

"Well, Gwen, how would you like to live in Georgeville on the shores of beautiful Lake Memphremagog?" What a shock that question caused in the summer of 1940. Max and I were thoroughly enjoying a house that Max had just finished building in Way's Mills. During construction we had lived in a tent near the building site. Our refrigerator was a hole dug into the side of a hill covered by a heavy wooden door. Of course, I agreed to move although it meant leaving behind my family, many friends and, most heart-wrenching of all, our new home.

Max had always liked the idea of being a storekeeper. When he was about 18 years old he bought a store in Way's Mills with \$1,000 he had inherited. He enjoyed, as always, meeting and serving people but he lacked store experience and found he couldn't make enough money to live on. So he sold out and went back to doing carpentry work, which at that time was mainly done in the summer time. But he never gave up on his dream.

### STOREKEEPER AND POSTMASTER

My first cousin, Edna Oliver, was married to Royal Bachelder. They had run the store in Georgeville for a number of years and eventually made enough money to retire. Max and I grew to love Georgeville during our occasional visits with Edna and Royal.

When the store was put up for sale, Max and Alfred Longpré bought it. Alfred, like Max, had always dreamed of running a grocery store. He and Max were the best of friends and he invited Max to join him as a partner. Of course, Max had to borrow almost all the money for his share, but the repayment terms were very reasonable. At first, I stayed behind in Way's Mills with our first-born son, Larry, but moved as soon as living arrangements were made.

Because Alfred and his wife, Alice, chose to live above the store, we Graingers had to find other accommodation. We first rented from Mrs. Howard



*Max and Gwen Grainger at their 50th wedding anniversary in 1986.*

*Photo courtesy Barbara Hutchins*

Percy who owned a house across the village green from the store. Being a summer resident, she kindly agreed to store her own furniture during the fall and winter to make room for our own furnishings. I arrived in October with Larry, two cats and a dog. We hadn't been there long before we heard rumours that the Percy place truly needed the insurance placed upon it because chimney fires were a common occurrence. In fact, the house burned down some years after we'd moved out.

In the spring of '41 Mrs. Percy returned and we moved again—this time above the Quinn store, a building that was included with the purchase of Bachelder's business. At that time it was located up at the "Triangle" where Magog Hill, Channell Hill, and Bullock Hill intersected. Because the ground floor was used to warehouse livestock feed and fertilizer, we always called it the "feed store." Max built an apartment upstairs. It was terribly hot during the summer and bats and mice were constant companions. Unpleasant smells crept in from the crude bathroom and the surrounding swampy soil. I spent as little time inside as possible.

### LONG DAYS AND LONGER WEEKS

The store hours were just terrible. The workday began at 7 in the morning and ended usually at 9 at night—sometimes even later. Max and Alfred took turns staffing the noon hour and Sundays.

The duties of postmaster lengthened the workday. Max was obliged to do weekly cash accounts, which took a lot of time. There were no adding machines or calculators back then. (Alfred, who was French, thought that Max, being English, stood



a better chance with the federal government of qualifying for the position. Besides, Alfred knew he wouldn't be staying in the business as long as Max. However, I doubt that even Max imagined back then that he would set an unbeatable record as Georgeville's longest-serving postmaster—33 years!

#### MOVING THE QUINN STORE

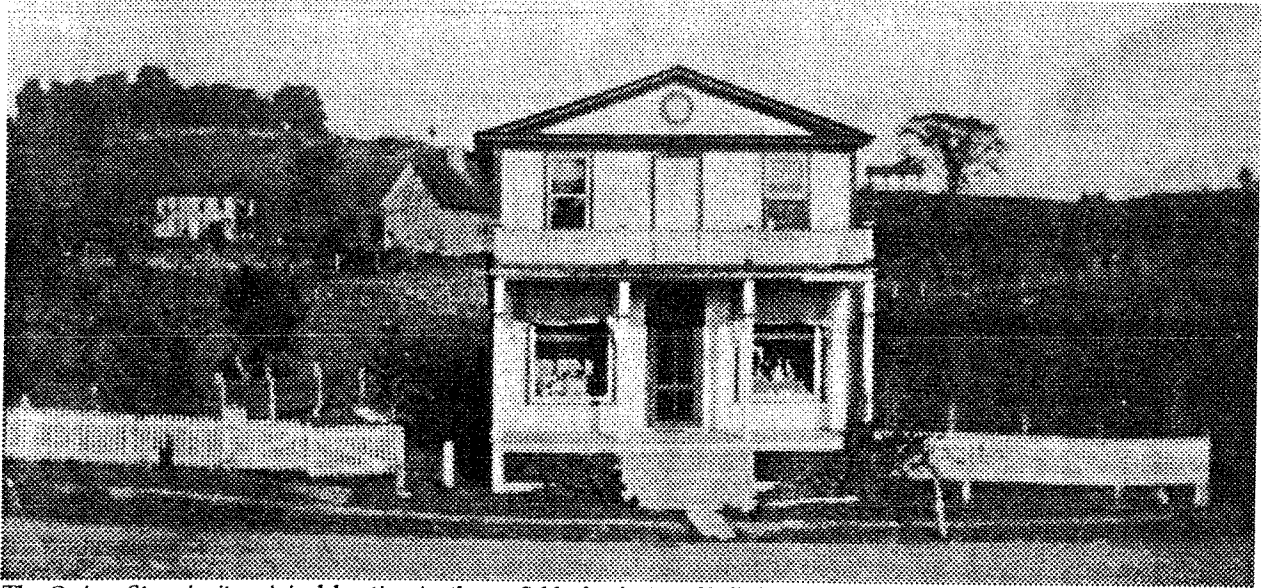
Serving farmers was a major chore—especially in the winter time—because the feed store and the general store were a hundred yards apart. First, you tended to the farmer's grocery and post office needs, then you ran up to the feed store, loaded several 100-pound sacks onto a wagon or sled, and then rushed back to the general store to serve other customers. After four years of running back and forth Max decided there was a smarter way: rather than going to the Quinn store, he would have the store come to him. And so the stage was set for one of the biggest engineering feats undertaken in Georgeville.

My father was much involved in the planning stages, having told Max (mistakenly as it turned out) that he knew a lot about moving buildings. On

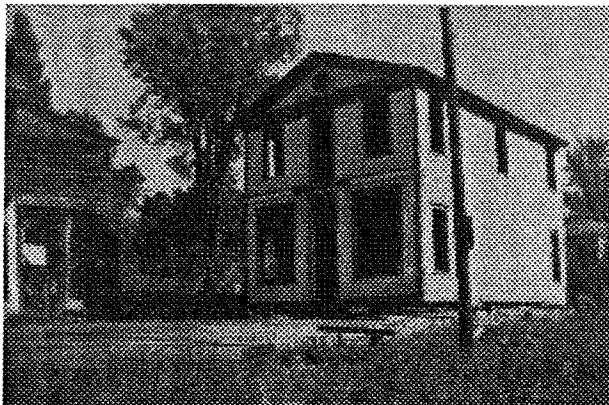
the big day Max was delighted to have Dad come over and help supervise—but he didn't stay long once the operation began. (Being pregnant with Doug, my second child, I thankfully spent the day in a much more relaxed setting—the family farm in Way's Mills.)

The building was much larger than any Dad had ever dealt with and the challenges were bigger and the language stronger than he was accustomed to. There was a lot of trouble—equipment broke, utility lines got in the way. The trouble continued even after the building was hauled down the street on rollers, backed into place beside the general store, and raised on blocks in preparation for a cement foundation. While Max was beneath the building making final adjustments, the bracing failed, and the building slid off its blocks. Altered by creak and crash of wood, he scrambled free but came within seconds of crushing his legs. But at the end of it all, Max had achieved what he wanted: never again did he have to run a hundred yards to serve feed.

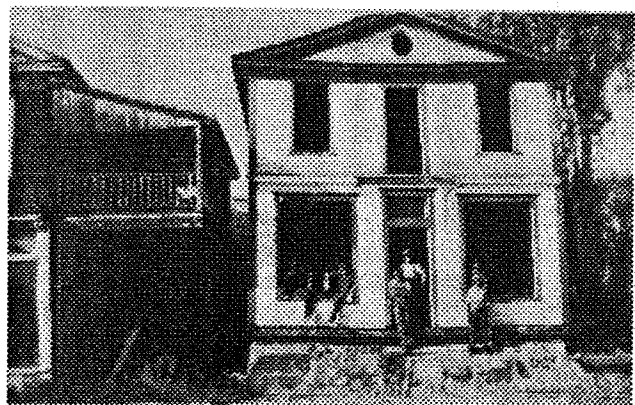
Many other improvements were made to the



*The Quinn Store in its original location in the outfield of today's softball diamond.*



*On the road to its new destination . . .*



*. . . and, to everyone's relief, finally set in place.*

operation over the years. The wooden foundation and floor in the store was replaced by concrete. The post office was moved from its dark location at the back to the light-filled bay window at the front. A walk-in meat cooler was installed. A variety of tables, counters and glass-topped cases were replaced by standard "supermarket" shelving and a checkout counter.

The range of goods was amazing: a general store in the '40s sold items that you would now find only by going to several "specialty" outlets—supermarkets, pharmacies, hardware stores, shoe stores, and clothing stores. Many foods were initially available in bulk only: dried raisins, dates, prunes, apricots and apples arrived in heavy wooden boxes; sugar and crackers came in large wooden barrels. All these items had to be individually bagged and weighed.

Kerosene for lamps was hand-pumped from a storage tank into individual customer containers. Bulk coffee was hand-ground on demand. In addition to bulk and canned goods, there were shoes and rubber boots, work clothing (hats, socks, pants, shirts, overalls, gloves), carpentry tools and paint, pots and pans, watches and jewelry, and stationery.

I had imagined that I would enjoy working in the store but in fact I found it tiring. A big problem was that Max carried prices in his head rather than marking them on the goods. That obliged me to ask Max the cost of items while the customer was waiting impatiently at the cash. I also missed the time spent with my growing family. These activities included swimming at Mill Bay and Heath Bay, picnics in a farmer's field and, of course, cruising Lake Memphremagog.

#### RIDING THE ANTHEMIS

During the summer Larry and I took many trips aboard *The Anthemis*, that lovely old steamship that made a daily round trip between Magog and Newport for some 40 years. John McEwen, a Georgeville resident, served as captain for many seasons and a friendlier man could never be found. He often invited us into the wheel house where he let Larry "steer" the boat.

On her southbound journey *The Anthemis* crossed the lake from Sergeant's Landing. She was such a beautiful sight and her arrival at the Georgeville wharf was a major event which attracted admirers as well as passengers. There was usually a contest among local boys to determine who would catch the

hawser and make the boat fast.

Larry was barely able to walk when we made our first trip. Sometimes the two decks were full of people; other times there were only a few passengers. Usually we packed a light lunch although there was a canteen on board. *The Anthemis* stopped only briefly in Newport before starting her return journey. If we were speedy, we could just make it up to the stores on Main Street for a few minutes of shopping before being summoned back by the steam whistle.

#### THE BIG ICE RINK

Winters also provided lots of opportunities for family outings—and occasionally unwelcome adventure. In the 1940s the weather was especially good for ice skating. Each February, it seemed, a thaw converted the drifts and mounds of snow to a thin layer of water spread upon the ice along the length and breadth of the lake. This was always

followed by a cold snap which, provided no snow fell, produced a magnificent and irresistible ice rink 32-miles long.

One Sunday, Max, Larry and I were boldly skating northward, several hundred feet out from the wharf and parallel to the shore. It was a mild, sunny day and the ice glistened with large patches of shallow black meltwater which

rippled in the occasional breeze. Larry skated ahead in a wide arc, turning first shoreward and then toward the centre of the lake. Stopping several hundred feet beyond, he waited impatiently for us to catch up. As we approached we realized with horror that the black water that separated us did not lie harmlessly on the thick ice as had all the other patches. From the size of the wavelets marching across its surface, we knew that we were staring at deep black water—open ice—a treacherous hole. Shouting frantically at Larry to stay motionless, Max followed Larry's route, took his hand, and together we went ashore, very much relieved but very much shaken.

Later that afternoon we viewed the scene from the lookout at Cedar Cliffs. The open water was about two acres in size. Why it formed we never understood. Nor have we understood why Larry chose his safe, circuitous route. I still shudder when I think of what would have happened had he skated straight ahead.

Coming to Georgeville marked a time of great change for a new mother who had bid goodbye to family, life-long friends, and the village of her birth.

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## 'A magnificent and irresistible ice rink 32 miles long'

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But I was welcomed by so many good-hearted people that my sense of isolation quickly passed. There were so many social events to work on and participate in that strangers quickly and easily became friends.

Community suppers and card parties were a popular way to raise money for worthy causes. In the days when the present community hall served as a school, most events were held in one of the big boarding houses — Cedar Cliffs, the Rainbow House, or the McGowan House. However, one event which remains especially dear to me was a 16-table card party held in our home. Sixty-four people crowded into the Grainger residence above the store. Such a large sitting was only possible due to a major addition to the house. (After so many improvements to the commercial side of the property, it seemed fitting that the residential side should finally benefit as well.)

There had always been an upper veranda at the back of the store. Below was the wood shed that stored logs for the stove that heated the store. Max closed in the veranda with sliding, all-season windows, moved the stairs to the outside of the building, and installed a Franklin stove. Suddenly, a dreary space had become the most popular room in the house, admired by adult and teenager alike and suitable for all kinds of activities — including card parties.

#### HOUSE ON THE HILL

There's a plus and minus to everything. Living above the store was certainly convenient. The children were at the centre of village life and I'm sure many men envied Max's brief "commute" to work: down the backstairs and through the door. However, it was equally convenient for customers who, arriving to find the store closed for lunch or dinner, climbed those same stairs to ask if Max would mind interrupting his meal long enough to sell them a loaf of bread or quart of milk. It's understandable that we would dream of increasing the separation between home and work. Over the years we kept an eye out for an appropriate house site beyond the village.

As newlyweds we had spent our first winter in a rented house on the Stanstead Fur Farm. No matter that the steam turned to ice on the open rafters when I washed clothes, that time and place — a pond, woodland trails, broad meadows, all kinds of wild animals and flowers — produced many of our happiest memories. Not surprisingly, we sought

to duplicate some of the Stanstead Fur Farm when we purchased a 10-acre parcel of the Dustin farm off McGowan Road. The new house was very much a product of Georgeville materials and energy. The open rafters and tie beams were logged on the property and milled by Byron Leney. The house was framed by Charlie Partington and his crew. The slate fire place was built by Buster Bernais. Much of the interior was completed by Max with help from Victor Robinson.

The house was sited so that Mount Elephantis was visible through the changing seasons from the kitchen window. We built a pond at the bottom of the hill. Trails guided hikers to treasures of ferns, lupins and ladies' slippers. On fall evenings we would watch flying squirrels soar from cedar tree to bird feeder. And, no, we didn't miss living above the store at all! Well, with one exception: the sound of Max's laugh rising up through the floor as he exchanged stories with customers coming down for the evening's mail.

When Max decided to sell the store in 1973, many people expressed concern that he would sorely miss the long line of customers who made regular visits as friends and audience. His stock response was borrowed from something he had read, possibly Mark Twain — he had grown tired of "serving any s.o.b. who wanted a five-cent stamp." Of course, there was a twinkle in his eye.

#### FORTY YEARS OF VILLAGE LIFE

In 1981 Max injured his Achilles tendon while walking the narrow, wooded trail between house and garden at dusk. The injury never fully healed and in his words, "It's time to move to a place where I can walk on sidewalks and see by street lamps." Within months we decided to move from Georgeville to Stanstead. And so ended 40 years as village residents.

My children tell me they could never imagine a better place to have grown up than Georgeville. They are right, of course. And so it turns out that when Max asked me so many years ago, "Well, Gwen, how would you like to live in Georgeville on the shores of beautiful Lake Memphremagog?" We couldn't have made a better decision.

*The Enterprise* welcomes your letters. Please send them to Editor, *The Georgeville Enterprise*, 4651 Chemin Georgeville, Georgeville, Québec J0B 1T0. E-mail address is PeterGMS@AOL.com.

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## 'Sixty-four people crowded into the residence above the store'

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