

THE GEORGEVILLE ENTERPRISE

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Société d'histoire de Georgeville / Georgeville Historical Society

A SOLDIER'S LETTERS FROM THE TRENCHES: LONGING FOR HOME AND PEACE BEFORE DARK

By John M. Scott

Charles Wilcox was 25 in 1914 when he left the family farm and enlisted as a private in the 4th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force -- one of more than a score of Georgeville volunteers who answered their country's call to arms in the First World War.

As for most farm families at the time, a son was hard to lose. Before joining up, Charles had worked closely with father, Willis Charles, in running the Wilcox farm on the Magog road and then gone off to study agriculture at McGill's Macdonald College. He also helped to look after a number of log cabin summer camps that sprouted along the lakeshore in the years before the war (see Sylvia Drew's reminiscence, page 4).

Charles was particularly fond of his younger sister, Mabel. She, with her husband, Harry Wilson, was busy running a camp for summer visitors her father had built at Mossy Ledge. Excerpts from Charles' letters to Mabel and her husband, which she carefully saved, provide a glimpse of one Georgeville soldier's story in "the war to end all wars."

With his younger brother, Morris, Charles had run an early steam-powered launch on the lake, ferrying summer visitors to and from Newport and Magog. Fascinated with the new technology of war, he gave Harry Wilson a first-hand description.

Moore Camp,
Shorncliffe, England
April 19, 1915

Dear Brother-in-law Harry,

Since I have travelled a lot since that morning you were kind enough to drive me to Smith's Mills [Tomifobia], perhaps you would be interested in hearing some of the things that most appealed to a green country lad.

Our ocean trip was enjoyed by me. As you know, the modern passenger boats are fitted out like houses with all conveniences imaginable.

The engine room is kept very clean and tidy. Dynamos furnish the light and electric fans keep the room cool -- some different from the boiler room. Our ship was about 400 ft. long, 10 decks high, had accommodation for about 1,800 people and averaged 15 miles an hour.

We see many different types of vessels here. The torpedo boat destroyers are long, slim, not high, are built of steel and go like the Devil. Some go 48 miles



Lieut. Charles
Wilcox in 1917

Photo courtesy Louise McKelvey

an hour. They destroy submarines, etc. and do so by running into them with such force to cut them in two. Submarine boats are seldom seen as they do not hang around to view the scenery.

Modern warfare is carried on in the air by the numerous aircrafts. The bi-plane travels fast (100 miles an hour often) and is used mostly for scouting. Then comes the proper airship. These are big beggars. I saw one yesterday 500 feet long -- oblong & pointed in shape.

Zepplins are used by the Germans in all the raids they have made in England. They are shaped exactly like a cucumber. Machine guns are interesting. They fire very rapidly and move around in a circle. Set them up on the edge of a corn piece and they would mow it right down.

We guarantee the importance of the rifle and bayonet & you know what these are as well as me. I am kept rather busy at present. I was promoted in Quebec and then again last week. Our section has been taken as battalion scouts and we have a lot to learn if we ever

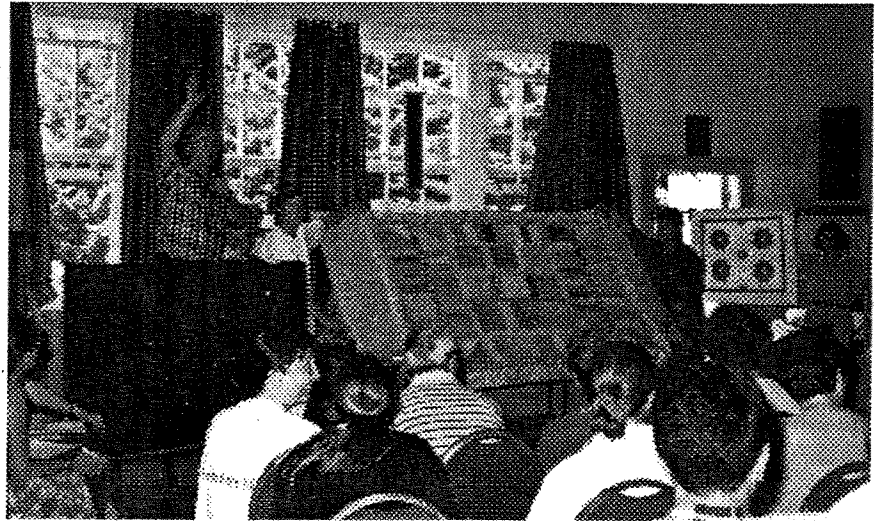
CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

QUILT AUCTION RAISES \$11,000 FOR BICENTENNIAL

Going once! Going twice! Sold! Auctioneer Alden Ticehurst pronounced those words 58 times at last July's quilt auction. By the time the bids were totalled, a shade over \$11,000 had been raised for Georgeville's bicentennial celebrations next year.

"We are extremely grateful to everyone who helped to make the auction a splendid success -- especially the quilters, who donated their work, everyone who contributed heirloom quilts and not least Alden Ticehurst, who also donated his services," said Maureen Cameron, who with Rosalyn Smith organized the auction for the Community Association's Bicentennial Committee.

Molly Munster's "Georgeville quilt", a wall hanging depicting village scenes, was bought by a large



Alden Ticehurst, auctioneer, in front of a large crowd in Murray Community Centre during the Bicentennial Committee's Quilt Auction last July

group of Georgevillians who wanted to be sure the quilt remained in the village. It now hangs in the Murray Memorial Centre.

HOMECOMING WEEKEND SET FOR JULY 12-14, 1997

The Community Association's Bicentennial Committee is filling the calendar for Georgeville's 1997 celebrations.

Bernard Drew, chairman of the group that is co-ordinating events for the village's 200th birthday, said the committee has set July 12-14 as the dates for the community's Homecoming Weekend.

While details are still in the planning stage, the weekend's festivities are expected to include a gala barbeque, live music, and games for the children.

The committee is also working on plans for a series of bicentennial events that will be spread through 1997. A few of the events that have been suggested include:

- ◆ A New Year's Eve party at the Murray Memorial Centre, December 31, 1996
- ◆ On the first Sunday of 1997, an ecumenical church service to launch the Bicentennial
- ◆ A February Winter Carnival including ice harvesting as it was done in times past
- ◆ An April "Spring Fling"
- ◆ An antique boat show in the summer
- ◆ Summer band concerts
- ◆ A special Remembrance Day observance on November 11

In addition the Georgeville Historical Society will present in the Murray Community Centre a major exhibition on the village and its people through 200 years.



UN OUVRAGE À CONSULTER POUR MIEUX CONNAÎTRE LES CANTONS DE L'EST

par Bruno d'Anglejan

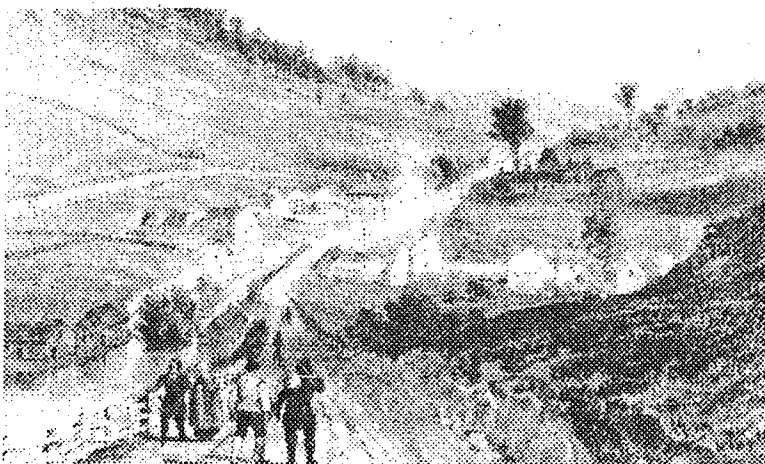
"Les Cantons de l'Est, Aspects géographiques, politiques, socio-économiques et culturels" par des professeurs de la Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de l'Université de Sherbrooke, du Collège de Sherbrooke et du Collège Champlain et leurs collaborateurs, sous la direction de Jean-Marie M. Dubois. Les Éditions de l'Université de Sherbrooke, 1989. 294 pages.

L'isolement relatif de notre vie quotidienne, encerclée à plusieurs degrés, est tel que pour bien saisir nos racines historiques, il est utile de franchir les limites du clan, du village, du canton, nous éloigner de nos paysages familiers, prendre nos distances et jeter un regard panoramique sur la région entière des Cantons de l'Est. Loin d'être une entité factice, créée par de pointilleux géographes, cette sous-province jouit d'une unité physique, sociologique, économique et même politique, dont la trame s'est tissée au cours de deux cent ans d'histoire, dans un cadre géologique vieux de nombreux

millénaires. Son nom pluriel est en contradiction avec cette évidente cohésion, mais l'appellation singulière d'Estrie, dans sa platitude et son inélégance, est trop restrictive, ne désignant, paraît-il, que Sherbrooke et sa région immédiate, Georgeville ci-inclus.

Pour en savoir plus sur les Cantons au sens large, vous pouvez consulter ou acquérir, si vous ne l'avez déjà, ce beau livre qui constitue une monographie assez complète sur cette région.

Vous y trouverez 27 études sérieuses, classées en quatre parties qui couvrent des sujets aussi variés que la géologie, la géographie, le milieu politique et socio-économique, et le milieu culturel des Cantons; le tout illustré de 54 tableaux et 108 figures et enrichi de nombreuses références.



Un des plusieurs illustrations du livre: *Moulin de Kilborn*, le nom original de Stanstead, aquarell sur papier par Joseph Bouchette

ences. Cet ouvrage académique est d'un format agréable et clairement rédigé.

Il vous aidera à trouver la réponse à de nombreuses questions que vous pourriez avoir, touchant, par exemple, les effets de la récente glaciation sur notre paysage, les populations autochtones, le climat, (pour mieux faire pousser vos salades et vos roses, aimeriez vous savoir à quels jours du mois d'octobre on peut attendre le retour de l'été indien? Quelle est la longueur moyenne de la période sans gelée à Georgeville, l'une des plus courtes dans le sud du Québec?) Il y a de bons chapitres sur l'histoire du peuplement et les origines des cantons, leur histoire politique depuis l'Acte Constitutionnel de 1791, leur évolution économique, le développement des arts, et même une évocation amusante des poètes de notre région.

Pour vous procurer une copie de cet ouvrage, la voie rapide est de vous adresser à la librairie de l'Université de Sherbrooke. Il vous en coûtera autour de \$28.00.

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WHEN INTELLECTUALS REDISCOVERED NATURE IT WAS WISE TO WATCH WHERE YOU SAT

Sylvia Drew captivated a large audience at the historical society's fourth annual meeting last July with a sketch of the Boston families, led by the Rev. Samuel June Barrows, who first camped on the lakeshore in 1879. By the turn of the century, these families had established a colony of tent and log-cabin "camps" extending along much of the shoreline between Georgeville and Oliver Corner.

One of those campers was Sylvia's uncle, Theodore Clark Smith, a distinguished American historian who wrote a memoir of his 60 years as a summer visitor. Drawing on her uncle's as well as her own reminiscences, Sylvia described the distinctive style of camp life the Barrows and their friends introduced to the lakeshore. Some excerpts:

Until the advent of the automobile in the 1920s, the trip from Boston was made by train. After a hot, dirty day in the railroad cars, the campers would spend the night at a railroad hotel in Newport, usually coming to Georgeville the next day on the Lady of the Lake. An alternative route was by local train to Tomifobia (then called Smith's Mills) and then, by horse and buggy courtesy of O'Leary's livery stable, over the hills to camp. This is what happened in Newport in August, 1884, when the Barrows were accompanied by the Holbrook family, who were members of Mr. Barrows church in Dorchester, and my uncle, who was then a boy of 14.

The site of the camp that summer was Anthemis Bay, which the Barrows called Camp by the Cliff. My uncle wrote:

We arrived at Smith's Mills, had a long drive of twelve miles over a hilly country to Georgeville where Mrs. Barrows bought a little meat to furnish us a dinner at camp. We rowed to camp, had dinner at twelve of smoky mutton chops, sour milk, and horribly sour half-baked bread from one of the farm houses and then went to work setting up tents.

All the campers slept in the tents of the army type, i.e. wall tents ranged side by side army fashion along the western side of the clearing or campus as it was called.

Cooking was done in a small tent, smoke-blackened and dingy, placed near a spring under large cedar trees. In it Mrs. Barrows and Mrs. Holbrook prepared meals over oil burners. Eating was carried on



Sylvia Drew addressing the SHG/GHS annual meeting

Photo: Art Friedman

at a table, fashioned of boards, set up in a sort of gap within the cedar grove that stood between the tents and the lake.

All the children had to swim. Bathing took place as a community affair, the whole crowd together, and was always called "the Baptist Sunday School." On Sunday this followed the simple religious services which Mr. Barrows conducted on an elevated part of the cedar grove to the north of the dining tent and the cabin. These services were made dignified and impressive by Mr. Barrows' devout and serious conduct of them.

In 1995 we must remember that we are dealing with the era when intellectuals re-discovered the great outdoors. The pattern of camp life set in these early days continued down well into the 1950s in one form or another at all the lakeshore camps that developed from the Camp by the Cliff. These camps were the result of the early pre-1900 Back-to-Nature movement, the work of people without a rural background, trying to simplify life, à la Thoreau. As a result, creature comforts were not considered to be important. "Roughing it" was a virtue.

At our camp, the Hemlocks, when I was growing up, we always slept in tents and ate on an outdoor porch. My family was so addicted to this way of life that on cold days we would be wrapped in blankets as we ate the rapidly congealing food,

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

SHG/GHS 5TH ANNUAL MEETING AND EXHIBITION
JULY 6, 1996

accompanied by a familiar litany about what "fun" this was and how "good" it was for you.

At Miss Alice Pearse's establishment, elderly ladies from Boston slept in tents and ate their meals under a big dining fly. The Barrows' later camp at Birchbay had only one closed room, relying on semi-open porches and outlying cabins for cooking, eating and sleeping. We have since become terribly effete, closing in our kitchens and insisting on sleeping under a roof.

The early camp furniture combined simplicity with discomfort to an amazing degree. Everyone slept on army cots covered with straw ticks -- bags of ticking filled with straw. The couches in our main

cabin were boards, covered with a straw tick.

It wasn't much better if you tried to sit down. Most of the chairs were hand made (by college professors and social workers) and were supremely hard and uncomfortable. The tables were either planks laid on saw horses or boards nailed on four legs with no bracing, so that they swayed in the breeze.

The camps also shared the same dish pattern. These were complete sets of grey agate ware, even to serving dishes and cups and saucers. The Pearse camp had a white, blue-bordered enamel ware, which the rest of us considered a bit pretentious.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

T.S. ELIOT ON "SWIMMING, ROWING, OTHER THINGS"

Thomas Stearns Eliot, who became a Nobel prize-winner in literature and one of the most influential literary figures of the 20th century, first visited the lakeshore camp of his uncle, the Rev. Christopher Rhodes Eliot when he was 16 years old in 1904.

The Eliot papers at Harvard University's Houghton Library include the following playful letter in verse to his sister, Charlotte. It is dated August 1904 from Oliver Corner, and describes, among other family activities, an expedition to climb Mount Orford.

*Hoping you are better,
At least enough to read my letter,
Which I have twisted into rhyme
To amuse you. I have taken time
To tell you of the happenings
Swimming, rowing, other things
With which I have the time been killing.
Wednesday morning, weather willing,
We after breakfast took a start,
Four of us, in a two horse cart
Together with a little luncheon,
Including things quite good to munch on,
To climb a mountain, quite a feat,
3,000 ft., and in the heat.
To make a lengthy story short,
We did not take the path we ought,
And though we exerted all our powers,
It took us all of three long hours
To reach the top, when, what a view,
Mount Washington, and Montreal too!
We took one hour down the road,
Then two hours more to our abode.
I suppose now I should desist,
For I am needed to assist
In making a raft.*



T.S. Eliot, at age 19, as a student at Harvard, three years after his first visit to Lake Memphremagog

Photo: Houghton Library

am afraid this letter will not please you but I hope you will excuse your brother

Tom

T.S. Eliot returned to Memphremagog for a second short visit in 1907. A journal recording family doings at the Eliot camp noted that he arrived at Georgeville on the *Lady of the Lake* on July 16 and stayed for a week -- on this occasion joining his young cousins, Martha, Abigail and Frederick, in climbing Owl's Head.

We were used to grey ware, but first time guests were often a bit staggered and looked around to see if they had the dog's dishes.

The result of this spartan disregard for creature comforts was that the campers' minds were free to think great thoughts. Throughout the years, the Barrows entertained leading spokesmen for social causes, penal reform and progressive education.

In the summer of 1890, the Nathan Beach farm, comprising all land north of Anthemis Bay to the line where Godfrey Passmore's house now stands, was bought by the Barrows, Holbrook and Pearse families. Each set up new camps on the shoreline - the Holbrooks took the southern-most part, which they called "The Hemlocks", the Barrows took the middle section, which they named Birchbay, and the Pearses the northern part (now known as Glen Harbour). Later the Barrows expanded their property to include Cedar Lodge and the Rev. Christopher Eliot, who succeeded Mr. Barrows as minister of the First Parish Church in Dorchester, established the Eliot camp near Oliver Corner.

After several years of renting the Holbrook property, my uncle was able to buy "The Hemlocks" in 1909, and he came to know the deus-ex-machina of all the early camps, Willis Wilcox. He characterized Mr. Wilcox as

a farmer, wiry, indistinguishable from a Vermont Yankee in language and manner of thinking, a shrewd, salty individual. From 1898 onward he built practically all the camp buildings (along the shore), showing skill,

imagination and good taste. His cabins were of all sizes, from the ample rooms at Cedar Lodge, to the small one-room individual cabins desired by the Eliots. Made of cedar logs, solidly roofed, they lasted indefinitely.

My uncle wrote of summer days of a kind that have always drawn people to the lake, and continued to draw him back for 60 years:

It is a great relief to get rid entirely of casual things: not merely of electric (street) cars, lamp posts, muckers and dust, but newspapers, fixed engagements -- people! When we rise we have a whole undivided DAY before us to use exactly as we see fit. If we wish to spend it "laying down," well and good. Reading? There are books. Rowing? There is the lake. Walking? All of Canada and Vermont lie before us. Writing? There are ink and paper. We can do anything we wish for as long as we wish and then we can stop whenever we feel like it and do something else.

After the Second World War my uncle gradually lost his eyesight which made camping and travel difficult. However, he and his sister made the effort to come to camp -- the last time in 1947. Once in camp, he wrote:

in spite of age, physical disabilities and decline of energy, we saturated ourselves in the beauty of the trees, the lakeshore, the lake itself and the ever-changing sky. Living the simplest of domestic lives, resting and reading, and for my part, finding an occupation in daily chores, we felt the days and nights slip by in peace, and welcomed even summer thunder-showers which roared across the lake to the camp, as familiar friends. Just to be there was enough.

THE PIONEER GARDEN: BEGINNING TO BELONG

By Katherine Mackenzie

The garden has completed its third year and the plants are beginning to look strong and healthy, as though they belong in their various places, and there is now time to think of improvements.

Last summer we had visits from several Montreal groups, one from Quebec and one from Lennoxville. They all seemed to enjoy themselves and inspected everything carefully.

For our plant exchange and sale in May, Denyse Clermont grew a great many plants under glass lights. We raised \$130 at the sale and feel that, with experience and better organization, we still can do better.

We did very well with sales of Elsie Sullivan's lavender and plan to expand sales of this product.

We placed large jars of white vinegar among the herbs in the pioneer garden last summer and as the various plants matured, the leaves were put into the

vinegar. The vinegar was strained and bottled, ready for this year when fresh herbs will be added before the vinegar is sold. We plan to have at least three sales this summer and in this way raise the \$600 to \$700 it takes to run the garden.

We hope to enlist the interest of the Community Association's recreation program in the garden this summer. The children could learn about the plants, perhaps do a little weeding, with the goal of creating a garden of their own the following year.

The date for this year's plant exchange and sale is Saturday, May 18. Further details will be announced closer to the date.

The Enterprise welcomes your letters. Please send them to *The Georgeville Enterprise*, 284 Ch. Channel, Georgeville, Que. JOB 1T0.

THE RAIN WAS MAINLY A PAIN

By William S. Murray

W.A. Murray, a familiar figure in Georgeville behind the wheel of his Model T, occupied the Murray estate immediately south of the village from 1915 until his death in 1956. On occasion, he would, hire Tom Quinn to do this or that around the place, such as harvesting ice or hay, or ploughing and planting—the kind of heavy-duty outdoor work that required no more intelligence than was required to keep one's self alive and reasonably healthy, or at least uninjured. Tom was just the man for this stuff—and thereby hang a number of tales.

Tom was the son of George Quinn, who emigrated from Ireland in the last century and worked at Hugh Allan's Belmere estate. Tom ran the stage coach between Georgeville and Magog in 1896 and later opened a livery stable in the village. His sister, Maggie, was a milliner and dressmaker who operated out of the Camperdown Hotel until it was destroyed in the great fire of 1898.

In 1910 Maggie bought "the Chamberlain block", located on what is now the north-west corner of the Murray Memorial Centre property. There she opened a grocery and dry goods shop which she operated until her death in 1936. Here she sold spools of thread for 12 cents apiece—or two for a quarter. It was said she never did figure out why people always bought spools one at a time. Her store still stands; it was moved to its present location next to the former Village Store in 1941.

Before Howard Bachelder opened his Shell service station in the village, Miss Quinn also sold gasoline out of a large drum equipped with a hand-cranked pump—one quart per turn. One fine day W.A. drove up to the store in his fine new Ford, and Tom came out to pump the gas. W.A. got out to remove the seat cushion over the tank, and Tom proceeded to turn the crank. He found out just how far a pint of gasoline will go when sprayed over a touring car and its owner.

But that story is not this story, which took place some twenty or twenty-five years earlier. One spring W.A. bought a new contraption—a manure spreader, which arrived disassembled. He hired Tom to scatter the winter's largesse across the fields, so Tom turned up and uncrated the spreader. He put the wheels and the pole on, and started in on assembling the

mechanical end. There were lots of gears and levers and belts and toothed drums, which he managed to get together so that everything turned and no parts were left over. He then hitched up the horses and loaded up with manure, and proceeded to the top of the hill, where W.A. was waiting to see how well this new gadget worked.

Tom threw the lever which engaged the spreader mechanism and set off at a smart pace down the hill. All seemed to go well, except that he had managed to get one of the gears in backwards. Instead of throwing manure out of the back of the wagon, the thing threw it forward, onto the back of Tom's head and down his neck. As delicacy of speech was hardly to be expected in the circumstances, Tom probably (and appropriately) hollered "Shit!" among other things. The horses took some offense at this unexpected yelling, and stepped up the pace. From Tom's point of view this improved things a bit, for the manure now flew over his head and came down on the horses. The horses, however, thought otherwise, and ran even faster. As a result, the manure hit them harder, and the harder it hit them, the faster they ran, and the faster they ran, the harder it hit them. So away they went, barrelling down the hill in a hail of manure, with Tom cursing and swearing as loud as he could shout.

W.A. collapsed in helpless laughter at the top of the hill. For fifty or more years afterwards, he said he had never seen anything quite so funny in his life, including the time his mother fell down the stairs carrying a loaded thunderjug.

Readers will remember Will Murray from his article on Dunkeld in *The Enterprise* vol. 2, W.A. Murray was Will's grandfather.



Tom Quinn at the old watering trough at the junction of the Channel Hill and the Magoon Point Roads

Photo courtesy Addie Alkin

A FUNERAL FLOTILLA ON THE LAKE

By John M. Scott

In abandoned country cemeteries, crumbling headstones sometimes hint at stories they cannot not tell. Such is the headstone for George A. Peasley in the overgrown Magoon family burial ground on Magoon Point. It simply records that he died on July 11 -- the year is no longer legible -- "ae 21."

A faded yellow newspaper clipping turned up by Elane Wilson, of Stanstead, fills out that sparse detail. It recounts the death of "a worthy young man, much respected and universally esteemed."

George Peasley was the son of Sarah Chadwick Peasley, a widow with three young children who married John Magoon in 1834. John Magoon was a farmer on the Point, a member of the large family for whom it was named, and himself a widower with six children when Sarah became his second wife.

Ten years later, George Peasley was just 21 when, on July 11, 1844, he drowned in a sawmill pond in Smith's Factory (later known as Smith's Mills and still later as Tomifobia). According to the *Sherbrooke Gazette* of July 30, he had been swimming with a friend in the pond. His family and friends organized an extraordinary tribute to the young man, setting out on Lake Memphremagog probably from Harvey Bay about two miles south of Magoon Point.

"The funeral obsequies were performed on Tuesday, the 16th; a procession was formed on the water, probably the first ever witnessed on [Memphremagog] Lake. It was preceded by a large boat bearing a mourning flag on its bow and its railing curtained with white, containing Mr. House and his Choir performing several select and appropriate pieces."

The *Gazette's* correspondent then let out all the stops: "While crossing the water, which gave a peculiar charm to the music, from its deep toned reverberations, the heavy swelling strains gradually subsided in distant undulating echoes 'soft as the fanning breeze on Flora's vernal wreath.'

"This was followed by a large sable-looking boat shrouded with black curtains containing the body ["sable" is an old usage for black, as a symbol of grief], the Superintendent and bearers, followed by some of

the mourning friends; next to these floated a large deck or platform erected on two canoes filled with friends and neighbors, then followed skiffs and canoes forming a line of handsome extent, all floating softly (slowly) and solemnly over the placid water to the opposite shore about two miles distance."

The procession landed at a wharf that served the Magoon family's lime kiln on the south shoreline of the Point. This was "near the residence of his widowed mother [John Magoon's homestead], where they were met by the mourning relatives and a numerous concourse of people -- seats were erected and the services performed in a grove at the water's edge, after which the body was interred in the burying ground on M'Goon's Point."

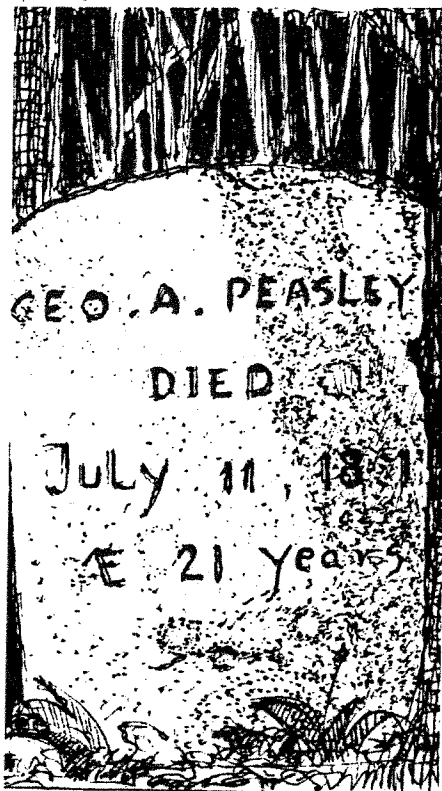
"Mr. House and his Choir" perhaps refers to Elder A.H. House, a Baptist preacher of the time, or possibly a member of the House family of Beebe. It is not known who the "superintendent" was -- perhaps the undertaker, or possibly the superintendent of the Smith's Factory sawmill.

John Magoon, who had died a year earlier at 49, was already buried in the small cemetery on the Point. His wife, George's mother, joined them there in 1861.

The 1996 Georgeville Calendar

ON SALE: A TRUE COLLECTOR'S ITEM

A few of the 1996 Georgeville Calendars are still available. The calendar has 12 rare photographs of Georgeville's past, dating as far back as 1860. The Community Association's Bicentennial Committee is offering the remaining calendars at a reduced price of \$6. The calendars are available at the Georgeville General Store or by mail for \$6 plus \$3 mailing costs from Georgeville Calendar, Mrs. Barbara Gibson, 820 Ch. Magoon Point, Georgeville, Québec J0B 1T0 or Georgeville Calendar, Rosalyn Smith, 8 Mosshill Place, Stony Brook, NY, 11790.



Drawing by Philip Mackenzie

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

wish to do any good and come back ourselves. I had no idea there was so much to learn about war.

Well Harry keep the home fires burning. For us boys are often yearning of our homes and loved ones far away. We will show them what the Canadians are made of when our chance comes which will not be long.

Sincerely Charles

With the enthusiasm of new arrival, he added a jaunty postscript: "We have very little spare time but are happy just the same for we are the boys that are going to march to Berlin and cook the Kaiser's goose for him."

One month later Charles was in the desolate landscape of the trenches in France. His view had shifted a little.

May 24, 1915

Dear Sister Mabel,

Your letter was very good. Most all the others say "I suppose you hear all the news" and so I hear nothing at all.

If I can find time I will help father lay the foundation for the barn. He will need a good one if the ground trembles there as it does here. I suppose by the time this reaches you all the camps will be open.

This is the 24th of May and so this a.m. about three o'clock we had one big celebration. I never thought anything could be so horrible. We are in the trenches now and have been for 3 days in the same place. If the chance ever comes I think I would like to have a wash once more. You see I pretend I am a woodchuck and have burrowed out a hole into which I can retreat.

We are not very far from the Germans. We get our sleep in short spells and it does not take long to eat. We will probably celebrate again about sundown & it may keep it up until light comes again. As for myself I would be satisfied to declare peace before it gets dark. The country just here is not very pretty, everything utterly destroyed. The trees have lost all their branches even & stand up as black stumps.

The easiest way to make the Germans run is to get them after us and so when I get started again I am going to run clear home.

Remember me to all the people.

Your loving brother, Charles Wilcox.

Charles' letters from France constantly remarked on the cold and hungered for news from home.

July 15, 1915

Dear Mabel,

The weather is cold windy & rainy. I got rained out of bivouac last night & gathered up my mattress, blankets, pillows, bed & crept over [to] a hen house. Time does not pass very quickly over here in sunny France where you need to wear your over-coat in the

middle of July.

So Wilfrid Brookhouse has joined the army has he? Just lately about 50 more Macdonald boys have joined and many of the professors. It looks as though the boys had just woke up to the fact that this is going to be a long war. The war will not be finished unless the ones that wanted to stay home hurry up. We boys out here will more than welcome them.

How are the camps going? Who is there? Why have I not heard from home this week? Does everybody be busy all the same time?

Your most devoted brother Charles.

He wrote home for a warm sweater and in August gratefully reported its arrival.

"Ye Dark Lantern Bivouac,"

August 24, 1915

Dear Mabel,

The bright coloured, well patched, not well done up jersey arrived at 7:04 p.m. this day.

Sincerely, Charles.

P.S. Has Wilfred Brookhouse offered his services for King and country or is it only rumour?

P.P.S. I am tired, sleepy, hungry and lonesome so will go to sleep just for fun.

Charles' friend and neighbour Wilfred Brookhouse joined the Canadian Mounted Rifles in February 1915, along with John Cochrane, Sr. In June 1916 the *Stanstead Journal* reported: "Mr. and Mrs. N. Brookhouse received word on Thursday that their son, Wilfrid was wounded in the back while fighting with the 5th CMR in France."

Sept. 23, 1915

Dear Sister Mabel,

We have just had a nice refreshing shower and so the mud is once more prominent. Think of me crouching here where the worms creep, waiting for somebody to sing me to sleep. A mouse just ran up my back but I don't care -- we allow them all sorts of privileges for they are the only pets that will stay up here with us.

Well, good-bye Mrs. Harry.

As ever Charles

In late 1915, Charles was wounded and invalided back to England.

Hill House Military Hospital,
Minster near Ramsgate, Kent

Jan. 27, 1916

Dear Mabel,

Sure I am coming home sometime but it will be after the war I guess. It will be a month at least before I go back to France -- can't use my arm any yet but the splints are off.

The boxes that were sent to me went to the boys

in my company in the trenches & I am glad because I cannot indulge in such luxuries they liked them very much.

We have not got Conscription in England yet but they are calling up the groups in the Derby scheme and that is nearly the same. They never will have Conscription in Canada, at least during our period of existence. Of course we must get wiser as a nation or perish; but, it all takes time.

Your loving brother Charles.

Granville Canadian Special Hospital,
Ramsgate, Kent.

March 20, 1916

Dear Mabel,

I just received your letter of Feb. 20. It took exactly a month to come to England -- might be worse you know. Another operation on one of my fingers this week and then no more!

I have an easy staff job and I am enjoying myself pretty well. Down in the town there is a pretty little cottage with vines all around. In this little palace there dwells a fair maiden -- you know the kind: has a dimple on her cheeks when she smiles, calls me Chawley, says "nao" and "not half." I don't mind spending a month or so here -- can't do as I like anyhow so might as well make the best of things.

Wish I were there to get some maple sugar. Can't say as I am anxious to go back to Canada until the war is over -- "n'a peu finis."

Your loving brother, Charles.

By early 1917 Charles was back in the trenches and thankful for more packages from Georgeville.

Jan. 4, 1917

Dear Sister Mabel,

It is nearly dark so I have a candle burning away stuck up on a small tin box in our corner of the barn. Have just had supper -- bread, jam & a bit of tea -- the same as we have every night when we get anything. I have also changed my socks and put on pair knit (or supposed to be) by Amy Richardson, Georgeville, & came in a Xmas parcel from the good people of Georgeville.

Had a note from Lee Rollins the other day -- he is in France now. Perhaps it would have been a more happy life to have stayed at home but if none of us came out here nobody in Canada would have had much of a Christmas. Best regards to Mabel Holland!

Charles

In April 1916 the *Journal's* Georgeville correspondent reported that "Messrs. John King, Roy Sheldon and Lee Rollins have enlisted in the 117th, making in all 26 from this small community who have volunteered for their country."

Lee Rollins, son of Clarence and Henrietta Rollins and brother of Hazel Robinson, was fatally stricken by illness in February 1917 and is buried in a military

cemetery near the village of Bruay in the Pas-de-Calais.

Jan. 30, 1917

Dear Mabel,

It is still cold -- the coldest for 22 years so they say. It is dandy bright moonlight night out & we ought to be hearing some sleigh bells but the sounds of the shells bursting make the valley and the hills fairly seem alive.

Your loving brother, Charles

On July 10, 1917, Charles wrote Mabel a touch tetchily that "the letter you didn't write didn't arrive." He enclosed a photo of himself: "The ribbon just over my left coat pocket is my medal & two stars on my shoulder for rank of lieut." He had won the Military Medal for bravery in the field and promotion from the ranks. Of the circumstances, he had nothing to say, asking instead: "Are the camps all open? I spect that Harry smokes his pipe, also visits John Holland's orchard after dark" (as running joke, he regularly accused Harry of helping himself to Holland apples).

Charles' war finally ended when he was wounded for a second time in the costly Canadian victory at Passchendaele late in 1917. While recovering in England, he met and married a young Englishwoman, Gertrude May Hill, and thought longingly of home.

Witley, Surrey

Feb. 12, 1919

My Dear Mabel,

I was very glad to get your nice letter and to know that you and Harry would have an open door for me and Gertrude. It was worth waiting four short (?) years of war to get such a jewel as "my partner." But fancy her fancying me!

I do so want to get home for sugaring. But we have to wait for the powers that be to send us and they seem to have taken a liking to me.

Sincerely, Charles

There was a homecoming, and with much to celebrate, for on Aug. 29, 1920, the *Journal* had happier news of the Wilcox family to report after the long years of war: "A baptism service was held at Mossy Ledge when Rev. R.W. Carr christened the little daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wilcox and the little son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Wilson."

Charles Wilcox returned to the farm, becoming a successful dairy farmer near Shelburne, Vt. and raising a family of four children. He died in St. Petersburg, Fla. in 1976 at the age of 87.

We are grateful to Mabel Wilson's grand-daughter, Louise McKelvey, for sharing Charles Wilcox's letters with us.