

# THE GEORGEVILLE ENTERPRISE

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## 'A GREAT CONVENIENCE TO THE VILLAGE' REAPPEARS ON THE SCHOOL HOUSE GROUNDS

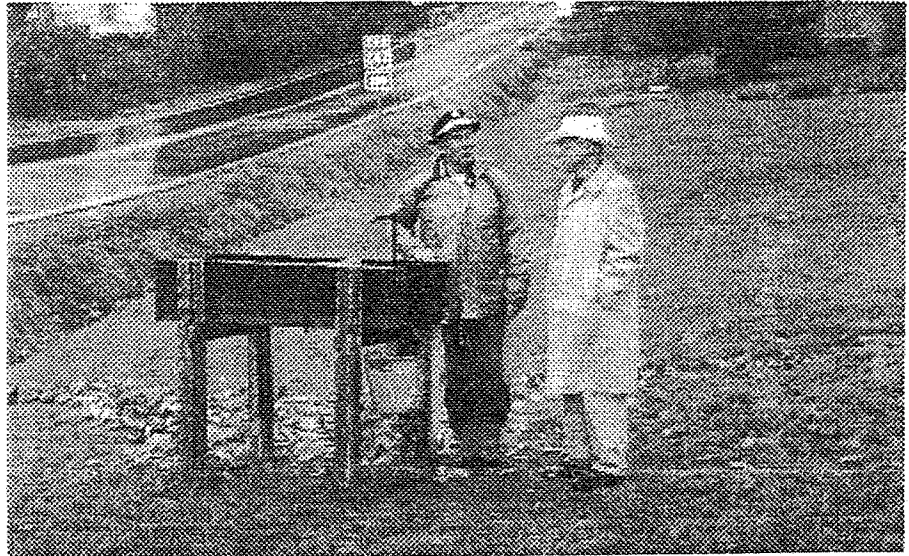
By Steven Moore

A hearty group of residents gathered last fall to inaugurate the newly reconstructed water trough at the junction of Magoon Point and Channel Roads. Despite an unrelenting rainshower, the small assembly of well-wishers was in good spirits as the new trough was unveiled.

The wooden structure is a close representation of an old village landmark from the era before the Second World War. Originally established a century ago, the water trough assumed various forms over the years, including that of an iron pot, but is best remembered as a trough made of rough lumber supported on four legs.

The inspiration to resurrect the trough originated with John Boynton, a director of the historical society. Skimming through old copies of the Stanstead Journal, John came across a story reporting the construction of the original trough. Dated November 16, 1899, the item described how, through the efforts of Rev. Luther Martin England, the village's Methodist minister, a spring on the schoolhouse grounds was tapped to feed a "water trough and covered place for drinking" which proved to be "a great convenience for the village."

When John told the story to Toby Rochester, who owns the school house, Toby promptly suggested that a new one be built. And so, with the 100th anniversary in mind, John and Toby set about recreating the trough early in the fall. Since no photographs of the original structure have survived, the two patterned their version on the trough as it was known to exist in the 1930s. Based on a photo



*Toby Rochester, John Boynton and the new 'old' water trough*

of about 1935, the reincarnation includes two compartments, one for thirsty humans and a lower one for Nellie & Co. To make it as authentic as possible, old, wide planks were used in the fabrication.

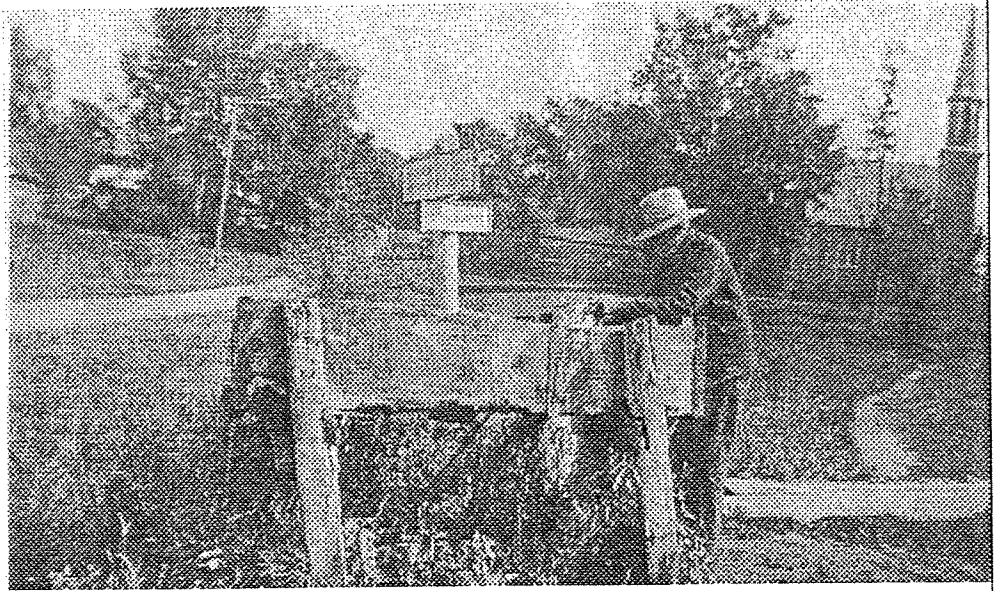
To supply the trough, Toby laid pipe from the spring on the lawn just below the school house, as in the 1890s. The water is fed to the trough by gravity, where it enters the

upper compartment. The overflow empties into the lower compartment before spilling off into the village stream.

The 1935 photo shows one-time resident Tom Quinn dipping a pail into the trough. Old Tom, who lived in the house now occupied by Ruth Partington, used the trough to water his cattle which grazed on what is now the grounds of the Murray Memorial Centre.

Tom was not the only one to take advantage of the facility. At a time when many still relied on horse-driven carriages and wagons, the trough was a welcome convenience for local folk and visitors alike. Horses were often seen refreshing themselves before the long trek up the surrounding hillsides. As motorized vehicles nudged Dobbin into retirement, the watering trough fell on hard times. It disappeared sometime during the 1940s.

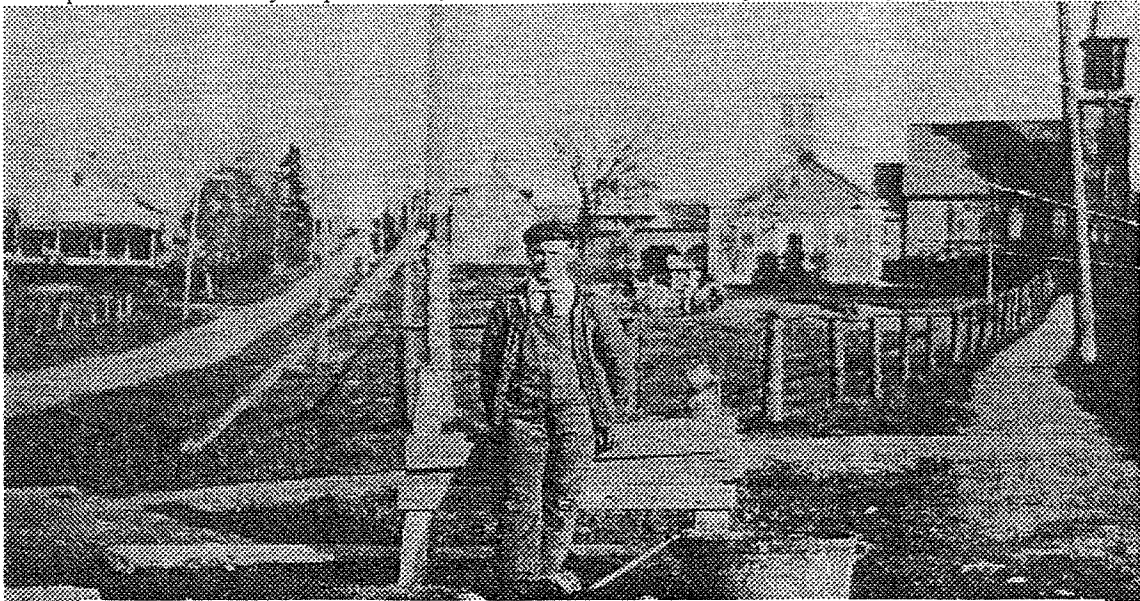
On October 23, the new trough was unveiled less than a month before the 100th anniversary of the original. Taking the first official dip was the society's president,



*Tom Quinn at the 1930s trough*

Stephen Moore. Citing some of the existing landmarks in the village and their importance to the community, Stephen expressed the hope that the new trough would become a focal point for villagers and their guests, as the original did, years ago. John Boynton assumed the role of Tom Quinn in a reenactment of the scene from the 1935 photograph.

The trough is stored away for the winter, but will return this spring, complete with landscaping and a small bridge for easy public access. The historical society, which is sponsoring the trough, will install a plaque later in the year identifying it for passers-by.



*Arlie Davidson and the turn-of-the-century iron pot*

## COMPARING SUMMER STORMS: 'LAD, THAT'S A WESTERN TORNADO, IF I'M ANY JUDGE'

When last July's windstorm cut cruel swaths through so many wooded lakeshore properties north and south of the village, it was natural to wonder: are there records of a summer storm like this in the past?

No, not exactly. But on a Friday afternoon of May 18, 1877, what William Bryant Bullock later remembered as "the hardest storm in the memory of the 'oldest citizen'" swept across the lake from Sargent's Bay, levelling trees and fences on his father's farm (now the Desmarais property) and tearing part of the roof off the Moses Copp house then owned by Chester Packard (now Peter Smith's).

W.B. Bullock was then a boy of nine, living on his grandfather William Bullock's 1801 homestead, known as Lakeside farm, with his father Increase, mother Mary Jane Bryant and 16-year-old sister, Clara.

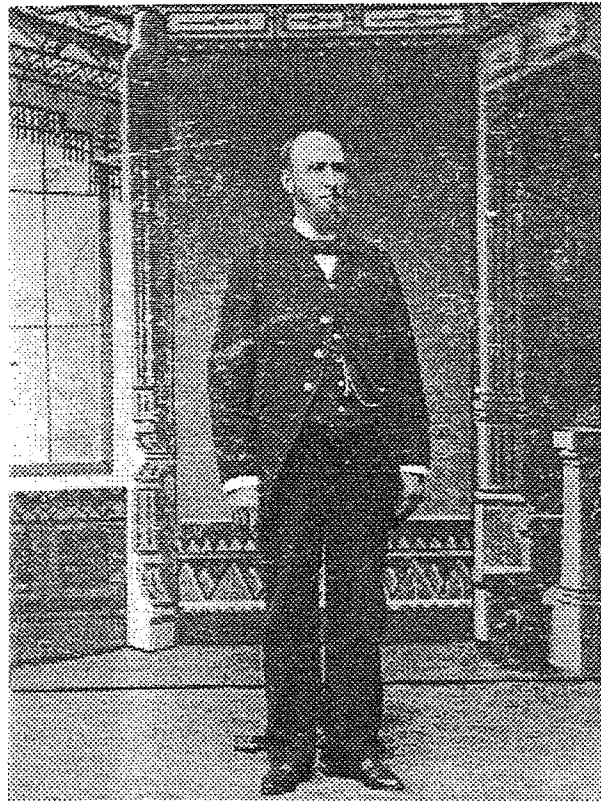
"Far off to the west," he wrote in *Beautiful Waters*, "seeming to hover over Bolton mountain, was a dark cloud-like formation which seemed to be moving faster than other clouds and appeared to be coming our way, changing to cone shape.

"Father began to get excited and said, 'Lad, that's a regular western tornado, if I'm any judge. and there's a mighty force wound up in that one... Run to the house and tell your mother and sister to come out at once.'"

The *Stanstead Journal* carried a contemporaneous account of the tornado, probably written by Increase Bullock himself, a regular contributor.

"The water spout seemed to form at first in Coolidge's bay [at Knowlton's Landing]. Parties who were near there had their attention called to a noise in the air, when they saw a spiral column of water whirling in the air to a great height. From there it took an easterly course directly over [Montreal Lawyer T.W.] Ritchie's cottage house" near Gibraltar Point.

The tornado then struck a cluster of cottages on the point, built as part of resort development, including a large hotel (which, in fact was never finished). "It levelled one house completely to the ground," the *Journal's* account reported, "and unroofed another where a family was living, tearing off the plastering in a room where a baby lay but doing it, I believe, no harm."



*Captain Charles C. Bullock*

At that point, "the terrible tornado speeded across the lake, bearing shingles, pieces of boards and fencing and other finishings, and dropped them as it passed over Lakeside farm and the village. Mr. [Chester] Packard in the village had a roof partly blown off, but not much damage besides occurred there; but there was lively work on the hills among the fences and trees. At least 100 rods of rail fence was levelled at Lakeside farm alone, down to the bottom rail. Apple trees were wrenched off and posts taken out of a wall and

carried away to a considerable distance... The rain fell here about fifteen minutes in perfect torrents. It was about 5 p.m. that the storm passed over here."

Five days later, Rev. Ernest Manley Taylor, the Brome county historian, after visiting the east side of the lake, noted that the storm carried "door cases across the lake [from the cottages on Gibraltar Point] and some shingles to Brown's Hill some miles away in Stanstead.

He added: "I saw the roof of a barn near the shore of Austin's Bay and which had been taken off bodily and carried away like a wind-blown umbrella. As I surveyed this from a row boat in which I was crossing the lake from Georgeville, I thought of the accounts I had read of the destruction of property by cyclones in the west from which we had always thought ourselves immune in these mountain defences."

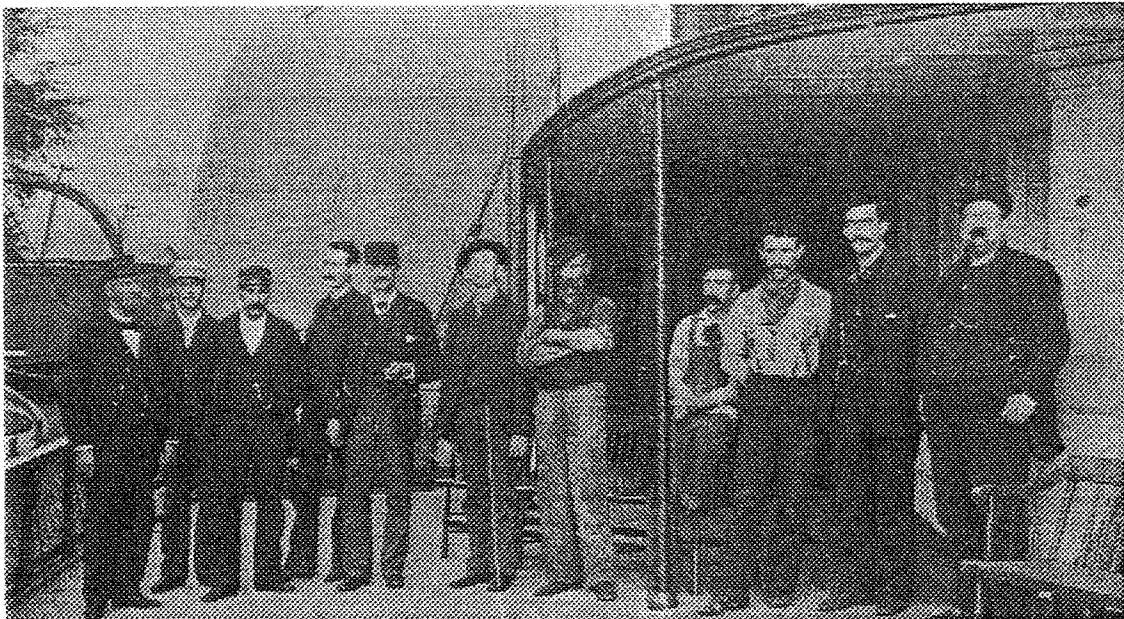
A decade later, on July 13, 1888, another son of Increase Bullock's, Capt. Charles Carroll Bullock, was involved in a furious storm as master of the Steamboat *Lady of the Lake*. The weekly *Magog News* reported that the storm suddenly blew up as the steamer was returning to Magog with 150 passengers who had spent the day attending a circus

in Newport.

"As the steamer was returning last night about 8:30 the terrific gale caught her and in spite of the strongest efforts by the captain and his crew, she was blown out of her course and grounded on what is known as the "East Shoals" not far from the Little Outlet. The fury of the wind, the blinding storm of rain and hail, the screaming and fainting women and the excitement of the passengers placed the scene beyond a parallel in the Memphremagog.

"Gradually the storm broke away and after the *Lady* had been stranded nearly an hour, she blew her distress whistles which were immediately answered by the *Mountain Maid* [which was then docked at the Magog wharf]. The *Maid's* skipper, Capt. Fred Futvoye, quickly had his boat underway and although it was a ticklish spot ran alongside the *Lady* and received her eager and frightened passengers."

When *Mountain Maid* returned to Magog, in the darkness and confusion on the wharf one of the passengers, a Magog alderman "barely escaped with his life by walking off the end of the pier." Fortunately, the flailing alderman was spotted in time by the mayor, who fished his colleague out of the lake.



Capt. Bullock (left) and the crew of the *Lady of the Lake* (1880s)

## The McGowan Story

# ALL IN THE FAMILY: A BRITISH OFFICER, THE BLACK PIRATE & MR. MEMPHREMAGOG

*Two centuries ago now, in the early 1840s, William McGowan arrived in Stanstead and landed a job with Her Majesty's Customs -- and the rest, as they say, amounts to a large slice of Georgeville's history. At the historical society's 8<sup>th</sup> annual meeting last summer, Wayne McTavish, a great-great-grandson of the first William, sketched the McGowan story through nearly 160 years. Excerpts from his talk:*

McGowan is a familiar name in Georgeville, evoked as it is by Maison McGowan and Chemin McGowan. But, you don't have to be an oldtimer to remember when William McGowan's descendants were making their presence felt throughout the village. There was my grandfather Douglas McGowan, who ran the Rainbow House (now the Auberge). There was the stooped figure of *his* uncle Fred McGowan, who delivered ice from the McGowan house on the front bumper of his car.

There was my great aunt Grace McGowan Heath, who welcomed generations of visitors to Sunday dinner at her boarding house, Cedar Cliffs. Some here will remember the menu, at least through the 1940s: chicken and biscuits, vegetables from the garden, and a great treat -- home churned ice cream made with fresh peaches, strawberries or maple syrup.

There was my uncle Henry McGowan, who bought the McGowan house from "Uncle Fred," and operated it for 27 years. And there was Uncle Gordon McGowan, every inch a gentleman. He occupied the old Moses Copp house, now Peter Smith's, and farmed the large property behind it into the 1950s. I used to help mow the rich hay there as a boy.

The McGowan men all seemed to be "uncle" to everyone.

Let me begin at the beginning, with William McGowan, of Dublin and County Cork. The reasons for his coming to the new world in the early 1840s are lost in a fine Irish mist. You will recall the potato famine that devastated Ireland in the late 1840s. William probably left because of hard times but before the worst of the famine took hold. Soon after his arrival, William took up a job with Her Majesty's Customs.

Here he courted and married a local girl. She was Mary McCabe, who was probably a daughter of a fellow Irishman and farmer, James McCabe, who fought in the Duke of Wellington's army at Waterloo. The McCabes at one point farmed the original George Fitch Copp farm (now Betty Jaques' property) on Merrill road.

Mary McCabe was 18 when she was married, and 23 years younger than William. She bore him twelve children over a span of 24 years and seems to have been as resolute a person as he. At one stage, according to family legend, she carried the mail by horseback between Stanstead and Georgeville, toting a handgun at her side. The single photo of Mary McCabe that survives shows her as a sturdy, unflinching lady, her dark hair parted in the middle and pulled into a bun, looking severely into the camera.

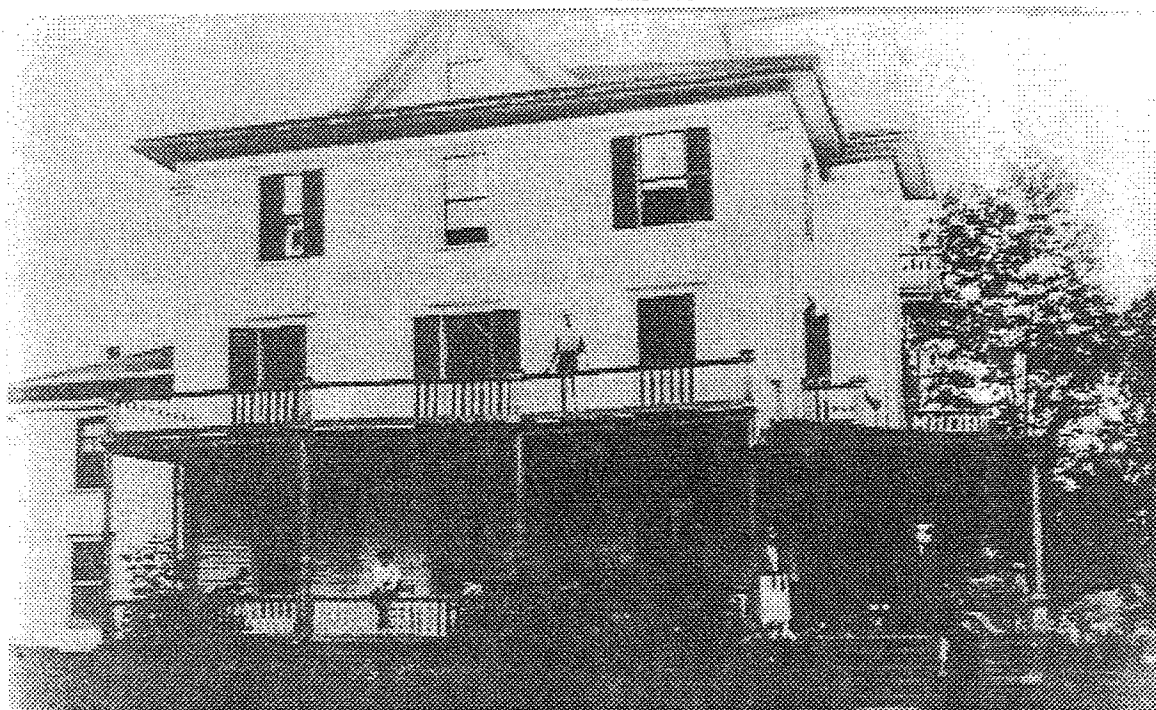
Like most Protestant Irish immigrants of the period, William was proudly British to the core. A story is told in William Bryant Bullock's *Beautiful Waters* of an episode involving custom's officer William McGowan during the American Civil War. As in Vermont, we can assume there was little

sympathy for the Confederate cause among Georgevillians, with their mostly New England roots.

William McGowan had a contrary view. He evidently sympathized with, and lent a hand to, a couple of "skedaddlers" – the Civil War version of draft dodgers – who had stowed away on the steamer *Mountain Maid*. When Union army officers who were searching for the skedaddlers intervened -- and tried to arrest my great-grandfather -- he flashed a sword he carried at them and declared: "You cannot arrest a British officer."

was the Collector of Customs in Stanstead from 1842 to 1853.

Mr. Thompson described Stanstead as a community where "the population is shrewd and lawless and ever willing to aid smugglers." So William McGowan discovered for himself. The first trace of him, in the customs' archives, is in 1845. In that year, he discovered, near Georgeville, a party of ten to twelve men throwing stones at a fence in order to free three steers he had seized across the lake. According to his report, he was then assaulted with stones himself, escaping only three hours later when two other men came to his rescue.



*Douglas McGowan's "Rainbow House"*

The custom's department seems to have taken the view that predominantly American settlers of the Townships were natural-born smugglers, if not worse. So they tended to hire retired British naval officers to keep the settlers in line. It thus may well have been William McGowan's status as a newly-arrived, uncontaminated immigrant from the "auld sod," that got him his job with the department. His boss, for example, was a man named James Thompson, a British naval veteran, who

One year later comes the story of his short-lived boat. To improve William's effectiveness on the lake, his superior approved the purchase of a rowboat for the sum of 3 pounds and 15 shillings. Only a few days later the boat disappeared from its landing place at Georgeville. In his report to the Commissioner, Thompson wrote that William McGowan "has every reason to believe that the people of the neighbourhood have sunk her in the lake."

As economic conditions in this area improved in the late 1840s, Capt. George Washington Fogg, who grew up in the village, conceived the inspired idea of building, down near the present wharf, the *Mountain Maid*, the first steam boat on the lake. When the *Mountain Maid* was launched in the summer of 1850, commercial opportunities in the village were raised to a whole new level – and so was the competition between the customs officers and the local people.

### Spectacular lineage

William McGowan often worked with a young preventive officer named Frederick John Parker, the son of a retired naval officer in Compton. Frederick Parker never made it to the high seas himself, but his Royal Navy lineage was nothing if not spectacular. His relatives included a flock of British admirals. They included Sir William Parker, who distinguished himself with Horatio Nelson in the battle of Cape St. Vincent, and old Sir Peter Parker, who as admiral of the fleet was the chief mourner at Nelson's funeral in 1805 after the famous victory at Trafalgar.

On the strength of his family connections, Frederick Parker was given the plum job of customs officer aboard the *Mountain Maid*. On the steamer's run between Georgeville and Newport, Parker found the female passengers a bit of a trial. He reported that passengers were more numerous on Saturdays, "particularly females whose satchels are evidently much heavier on their return, that they never let them out of their possession" The Commissioner of Customs advised him that an officer had the right to examine women's satchels, but "it is a right to be exercised with great delicacy and discretion."

In fairness to the ladies, it must be noted that William McGowan and his colleagues were not without interest in goods they seized – whether heads of cattle, a bottle of rum, a keg of kerosene, or such other everyday items in demand as tea and tobacco. Preventive

officers were paid only \$60 a year. More to the point, they were entitled to one third of the value of the goods they seized. Perhaps not surprisingly, the result was that they tended to keep a close an eye on each other.

No falling out within the ranks created more sparks than a running feud between Frederick Parker and John Carty Tuck, who was the son-in-law of innkeeper Abraham Channel. Not long after Parker became the first custom's officer appointed to the *Mountain Maid*, he was displaced by John Carty Tuck. However respected Tuck may have been in the village, he could not have been further from the model of British-born officers who were normally recruited for the service. Back in the *Patriote* rebellion of 1837-38, the American-born Tuck had been one of four Georgevillians arrested on suspicion of harbouring rebel sympathies and spent five months in the Sherbrooke jail.

When Parker lost the job on the *Mountain Maid* in favour of Tuck, his father, Lieut. W.F. Parker, RN, fired off a scathing letter to the Governor General. He complained that "[the] few Gentlemen who reside as British Subjects in these Townships ... are tried Men and Loyal. We will no longer submit to be trampled upon and insulted by ... traitors to their sovereign & adopted Country."

### Disgrace to the service

The letter failed to dislodge Tuck, but in 1856, a petition from the *Mountain Maid's* master, Capt. Fogg, did the trick. He wrote that Tuck had tried to get himself hired as purser, as well as acting as customs officer. Tuck was also, Fogg complained, "profane and abusive in language, filthy, intemperate, ungentlemanly and a disgrace to the public service." They certainly didn't mince words back in those days.

So it was that John Carty Tuck was fired from the *Mountain Maid* and William McGowan was appointed to replace him. And so it was, in view of his new job, that -- in the

same year of 1856 -- he bought the 200-acre farm on Channel road. Here, combining farming with his customs duties, he and Mary McCabe raised their family. The 1861 census reports William's was a modest farm. He had four milk cows, one horse, two pigs and ten sheep -- and Mary McCabe wove 50 yards of flannel. I recall her loom and spinning wheels, still stored in the attic when I was a boy. In other words, the farm was a subsistence farm.

William remained a customs officer until well into his 60s. He died on the farm in 1884, at the age of 79. Mary McCabe, who for a time led the choir in St. George's Church, remained on the farm until her death in 1905. She lies beside her husband in the Bullock cemetery.

The McGowan children married into local families -- Fred McGowan married a Dailey (her family name survives in Dailey Corner, where the Fitch Bay road branches off from Channel road). Walter McGowan married into the Copp family and William McGowan, Jr. into the Packard family -- so you can see that when it comes to older Georgeville families, it is easy to get lost in the family trees. The eldest son, William McGowan, Jr., taught school in the village in his early 20s. When he married Hattie Packard in 1875, he was the McGowan half of the McGowan & Bullock general store and telegraph office, which occupied the corner of Carre Copp opposite the parking lot.

After William Sr. died in 1884, William, Jr. succeeded him as a customs officer. On

### From the Mailbag

## THE CAMPERDOWN: 'THIS IS WHERE I WAS BORN'

I was very interested to read about the Camperdown Hotel in the recent issue of *The Enterprise*. That was where my grandmother, Katherine Grace Murray, was born in November 1860. Her mother, Isabella Maria Macduff, was the daughter of Thomas Macduff.

My brother, Peter Macduff Armour, has a house in Georgeville, so there is still a family connection, one hundred and thirty-nine years later.

Victor Robinson had a print of the Camperdown which had written on the back in my grandmother's hand-writing, "This is where I was born."

Margaret Sellers  
Winnipeg, Man.

I found the summer 1999 number of *The Enterprise* especially interesting because Thomas Macduff was my great-grandfather. I have a picture of him with his family in my living room. I had long wondered if it was the

Old or the New Camperdown hotel which he owned and your article gave me the answer.

My grandmother was Macduff's daughter, Isabella, who married John Murray. Their son, William Alexander, was my father. At Georgeville -- and ever since -- I was known as Nancy Murray, although you will notice that I sign my cheque "Agnes," which is my legal name and one which was passed from generation to generation in the Murray family. To distinguish them they were called "Nancy" or "Anne" (common Scottish nicknames for Agnes) in turn besides Agnes.

Thank you for helping me learn more of my forebears.

Nancy (Murray) Price  
Victoria, B.C.

*The Enterprise* is head and shoulders above most local historical news letters. It's a joy to read and contains fascinating material of interest to non-Georgevillers.

Duncan McDowell  
Ottawa



occasion patrolled the lake with one of John Carty Tuck's sons. William Jr. had better luck than his father when it came to row boats. As the *Journal* reported in July 1885, "A few nights ago customs officers McGowan and Tuck had suspicions that a boat with contraband goods would pass down the lake, and were on the alert. McGowan heard the boat approaching and gave chase, soon overhauling it, although the smuggler had two pairs of oars. McGowan's boat *The Black Pirate* is hard to beat... Smuggling don't pay these days."

Fortunately, new business opportunities were paying off, for after the Waterloo and Magog Railway finally reached Magog in 1877, Georgeville experienced a tourist boom. Visitors occupied just about every available bed in the village. William Jr. and Hattie were inspired to build a fine new boarding house. This was Cedar Cliffs, on the bluff above the Wigwam Point north of the wharf. When Cedar Cliffs was built in 1878, the *Journal* remarked that, with its mansard roof, it was "the most notable object to one coming into the village from any direction."

In July 1890, the *Stanstead Journal* counted 172 boarders in the village. William Jr. was putting up 22 guests at Cedar Cliffs. His uncle, Charles McGowan, had 23 at the

### ***The Georgeville Enterprise***

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newly expanded McGowan house. The other main boarding houses were Avon Doloff's boarding house at the top of Channel Hill, which would later become Douglas McGowan's Rainbow house, and Dr. William Keyes' three-storey house on Carre Copp.

### **First on the waterfront**

Charles McGowan, nine years younger than William, Jr., followed his brother into the innkeeping business. In the 1880s he leased (and later bought) the prize property on the lakefront facing the steamboat wharf. Here Charles Copp and George Merrick had built a one-and-a-half storey frame cottage not many years before. Curiously, this seems to have been the first residence built on this central piece of waterfront – early photos show that most of the early houses in the village were well set back from the lake, probably because of the winter winds. This was the beginning of Maison McGowan. In October 1884 Charles undertook renovations that gave the building essentially the appearance it has today. The *Stanstead Journal* reported: "Charles McGowan is enlarging his house, nearly doubling its capacity. It will be a spacious, three-storey structure with verandahs, and will accommodate a large number of boarders."

The summer boarders were evidently a thirsty crowd. In 1896, we read that "High Constable Moe and Inland Revenue Officer Morkill of Sherbrooke were here last week and made seizures of small quantities of the ardent at the Hotel Elephantis and also the boarding house of Charles McGowan." My great-grandfather Charles was not a big spender. Here, a few months later, was the disposition of the case: "C.H. McGowan last week pleaded guilty at Sherbrooke to the illegal sale of intoxicating liquor and took three months in jail instead of paying the fine and costs of \$150."

Some years after he launched the McGowan house, Charles McGowan's wife Martha died at the age of 34, leaving him with

four young children – my grandfather, Douglas, his brother Harold, and sisters Alexandra Victoria and Annie. His sister Mary Jane moved down to the McGowan house, to help look after the children as well as the summer boarders.

### **Famous no hitter**

Alexandra Victoria, known as Allie, brought a touch of glamour into the family. She taught at the Merrill road school house and in Fitch Bay, before marrying and moving to California, where her husband died in the flu epidemic of 1918. Anyone here with a memory for baseball lore will recall the name of her second husband. He was Barton “Dusty” Rhoads who pitched for eight years in the major leagues, most of them with the Cleveland Indians – including a celebrated end-of-season no hitter against the Boston Red Sox in 1908.

Back in Georgeville, Douglas extended the family’s inn-keeping by moving up Channel Hill and buying, in 1922, Avon Doloff’s boarding house, now the Auberge. Here he and his wife Lena were hosts to successive generations of summer visitors for the next 45 years. My mother Irene recalls her father meeting guests arriving at the wharf on the steamer *Anthemis*. He would put their baggage onto a home-made green wheelbarrow and they would all puff up the hill to the inn.

Meanwhile, down at the wharf, the McGowan house also came back to life. At the beginning of the First World War, Charles McGowan gave up inn-keeping, and lived on at the McGowan house until his death in 1930. Then, in 1933, his brother Fred, who was by then 67 years old and had been farming at the family homestead moved down into the village. Uncle Fred and his wife Addie Dailey – Uncle Fred and Aunt Addie to the whole village – received boarders at the old boarding house through the rest of the 30s and the Second World War.

With Uncle Fred’s death in 1945, my uncle Henry – known to fishermen from near and far as “Mr. Memphremagog” – became the third McGowan to take over the reins at the McGowan house. An expert hunter and fisherman, Henry and his wife Kay turned Charles McGowan’s inn into a fishermen’s lodge. Many of Henry’s clients were well-heeled American fishermen. Village kids were fascinated by the huge cars lined up in front of the McGowan house, with their exotic license plates from places like New Jersey and Connecticut.

### **Another half century**

And back at the old family farm? My parents, Lloyd and Irene, bought the farm from Uncle Fred in 1945, and carried it on for another half century. My sister Wendy and I helped to deliver milk from my father’s Jersey cattle, riding in his pick up – made by Ben Woodard from an old Chevvie 490 automobile.

Lloyd later branched out raising Angus beef cattle and then into road-work and the excavation business. He took up golf in his 50s, playing with his brother Neil, Charlie Partington, John Cochrane and Max Grainger on men’s night at Dufferin. Never inclined to do anything by half, he dreamed of building a golf course, no doubt partly so that he could play closer to home. So Inverugie was opened on pastureland and woods of the old Camperdown farm in 1977.

### **Closing the chapter**

When my parents sold the first William McGowan’s farm in 1995, this closed a chapter of 140 years. The first William may not have had the warmest of welcomes when he first came to Georgeville. But he made it possible for many of his descendants to make their careers welcoming others to the village and lake they loved. For that -- to him and to them -- we can be grateful.