

THE GEORGEVILLE ENTERPRISE

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Société d'histoire de Georgeville / Georgeville Historical Society

THE WHARF REOPENS WITH HAPPY CEREMONY AND HONOUR FOR AN ILLUSTRIOUS SON

GEORGE WASHINGTON FOGG
1819-1884

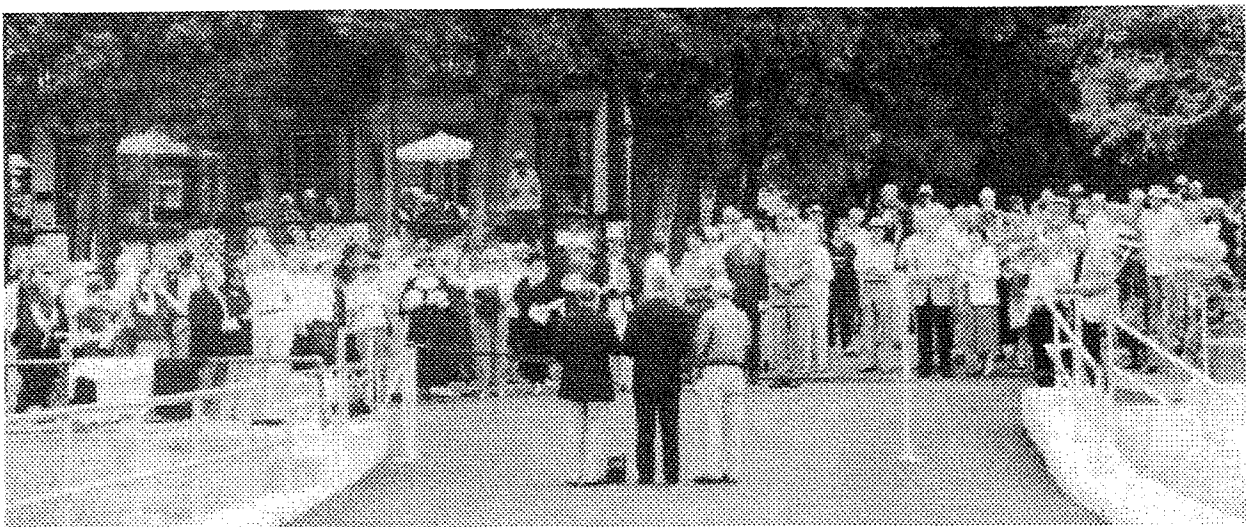
IN HONOUR OF CAPT. GEORGE WASHINGTON FOGG, OF GEORGEVILLE, WHO BUILT THE ORIGINAL WHARF ON THIS SITE FOR HIS PADDLE-WHEEL STEAMER, THE *MOUNTAIN MAID*, LAUNCHED IN THIS BAY ON JUNE 27, 1850, AS THE FIRST STEAMBOAT ON LAKE MEMPHREMAGOG. THIS PLAQUE WAS PLACED BY THE GEORGEVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, JUNE 14, 2002.

So reads the bronze plaque on the north corner buttress of Georgeville's wharf, unveiled by the society's president Stephen Moore as part of ceremonies marking completion of the year-long reconstruction of the wharf. The plaque includes the only known likeness of Capt. Fogg that survives, a

glimpse of the bluff, hearty figure who so personified Georgeville to early visitors of the lake that the *Stanstead Journal* once – mistakenly, if understandably – speculated that the village was named for him.

And so, fittingly, Capt. Fogg may be said to be back on the dock where he launched the era of steam transportation on the lake, and was himself to become the most storied figure of that era, as master of the *Mountain Maid* and then its larger sister, the *Lady of the Lake*.

As several hundred villagers and visitors gathered for the dedication ceremonies, the celebratory mood evoked that of the earlier June day -- "still, warm and cloudless" -- when, as the *Journal* reported, George W. Fogg's *Mountain Maid* "took to her 'native element like a duck,' or to speak more classically, she 'walked the water like a thing



M.P. David Price cuts the ribbon, flanked by Community Association President Paul Amos and Mayor Eddie McCaughey.

of life.' The bay was covered with craft of various description, filled with eager spectators, and the shore was lined with applauding witnesses."

Capt. Fogg emerges from contemporary accounts as an amiable figure who enjoyed nothing more than inviting visitors to the bridge of the *Mountain Maid* or the *Lady* so that he could yarn about his years on the lake. While still in his 20s, Capt. Fogg skippered a horse-powered ferry, carrying passengers, cargo and the mail between Georgeville and Knowlton's Landing as a link in the Montreal-Stanstead stage coach service.

He also ventured off that well-travelled run with his horse boat, conducting groups such as the ladies of the Georgeville Sewing Society on excursions and went to the south end of the lake in search of business. An observer in Newport recalled that, even then, Fogg had the bearing of an seasoned old salt: "I heard him, with his stentorian voice, giving his customary command, 'Trim the boat!', as if he had been in command of an ocean liner."

But if Fogg was expansive on the lore of the lake, he drew a veil over what brought him to Georgeville in 1831. In an earlier profile of Fogg in *The Enterprise* [see Vol. 9, No. 2, Summer 2000], we noted that he passed over an enquiry from a correspondent of the Boston Journal by remarking "Folks joke me by saying that 'Capt. Fogg's origin is very misty.'"

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

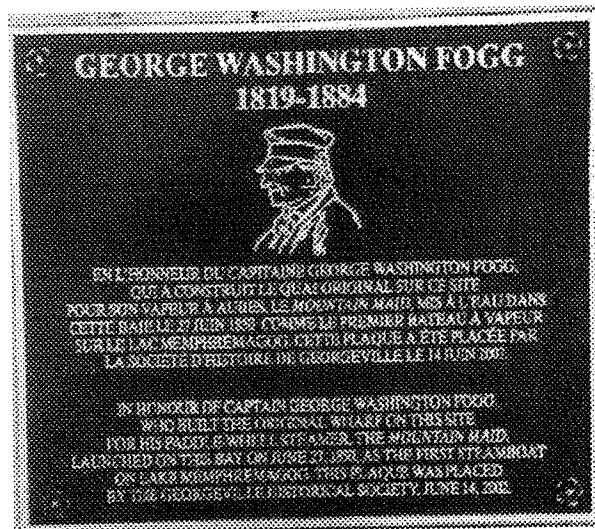
The GHS/SHG's 11th annual meeting
Saturday, July 6, at 2:30 p.m.
at the Murray Memorial Centre.

A joint meeting with the
Stanstead Historical Society.

Speaker: Kathleen H. Brown

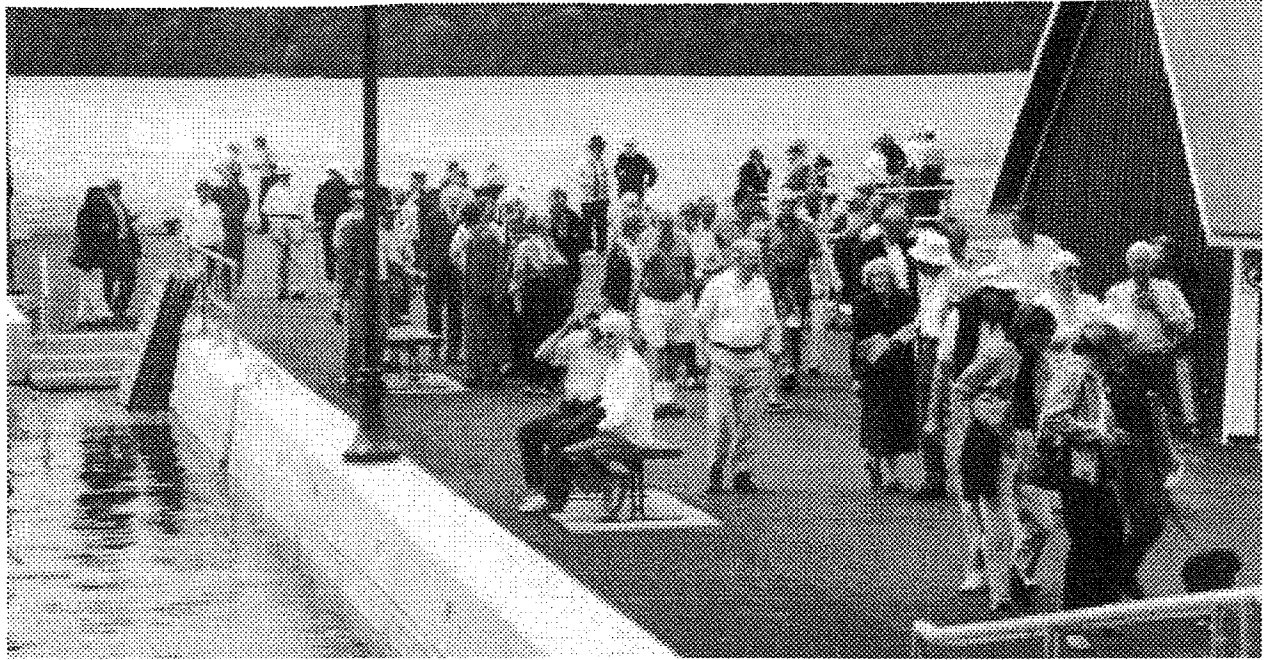
Exhibition opens at the Gallery
following the meeting
"150 Years of Schooling in Georgeville"

Thanks to Kathleen Brown's *Schooling in the Clearings*, we can now piece together a little more of Fogg's background. Born in 1819, he was the second of five children of Josiah Fogg and his wife Polly who settled on a homestead near Stanstead Plain. When tragedy struck in 1826 with the death of their mother at the age of 32, George and his three older siblings were pupils at the Church (Centre) School in Stanstead. Josiah Fogg kept his young family together until 1831 when, his own health failing (he died a year later), the children were farmed out to relatives and friends.



So it was that, in the winter school term of 1831, the 12-year-old George came to live in the family of Asa Lillie and his wife Hannah Thayer. The Lillies had recently moved from Stanstead Plain to Georgeville, where Asa presided over the village brickyard (where the Community Association pond is today), manufacturing the bricks for the new Georgeville School House. George Washington was enrolled in the new school that winter, along with the Lillies' daughter Sophronia.

George not only grew up in the Lillie household but soon after their graduation he and Sophronia were married. He was still only 30 when, anticipating the development of tourism and commerce that would follow the arrival of the railways at the lake, he raised



Enjoying the renewed wharf in all its splendour

funds to build the *Mountain Maid* on what is now the Maison McGowan property, and hired a shipwright from Lake Champlain to oversee the construction. Years later, the sometime village storekeeper Hazen Increase Bullock described the June day that the *Mountain Maid* was launched as “probably the greatest day that Georgeville ever saw.”

In 1851, the year the *Mountain Maid* went into regular service, Fogg joined James B. Hoyt (who married Sophronia Lillie’s younger sister, Rhoda Ann) in building the Mountain House as a summer hotel at the foot of Owl’s Head. However, both the new steamer and the new inn had to endure lean years as the Passumpsic Railroad seemed to take forever and a day to push its way up the Connecticut Valley.

The earliest article we have found in a popular American periodical promoting the grandeurs of the lake appeared in the Boston weekly, *Ballou’s Drawing Room Pictorial*, in July 1858. Under the title “A Trip to Lake Memphremagog by a Tourist in Search of the Picturesque,” *Ballou’s* correspondent explained that he had “grown weary of the fashionable summer resorts and craved

something new.” From Boston he travelled for eleven hours by train to the end of the line at Barton, Vt., and next day boarded a stage coach for the final 15 miles to the lake. “‘There’s Memphremagog,’ said the driver, and there indeed it was ... in the soft, hazy atmosphere it looked calm as some Eden stream on a paradise morning.”

The *Mountain Maid*, “commanded by that fine fellow, Captain Fogg,” dropped the writer off at the Mountain House. “There is no more delightful trip in the country – the shores of the lake are indented with lovely bays, and bold headlands stretch out grandly. No better place for the union of music and moonlight could possibly be imagined.”

In 1863, when the first Passumpsic train finally arrived in Newport, the lean years were finally over. As later travel writers found their way to the lake, they found in Capt. Fogg just the avuncular guide they were looking for. He remained at the helm of the *Mountain Maid* until 1868, and then for another 14 years was master of the iron-hulled *Lady of the Lake*. In the 1870s he and Sophronia moved from Georgeville to Newport, where he died on April 2, 1885.

The reconstruction of the old wharf has given Georgeville the opportunity to honour one of its most notable sons. Capt. Fogg would probably be even more pleased to know that, after 152 years, the historic wharf has been preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. This accomplishment is recorded in a plaque placed on the south corner buttress and unveiled by Mayor Eddie McCaughey:

THE MUNICIPALITY OF STANSTEAD TOWNSHIP ACQUIRED THIS WHARF FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN 2002. ITS RECONSTRUCTION WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA, THE MUNICIPALITY AND THE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OF GEORGEVILLE WITH SUPPORT FROM ITS MEMBERS INCLUDING, IN PARTICULAR, PAUL DESMARAIS JR. AND ROBERT GRATTON. THE PROJECT WAS MANAGED BY PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES CANADA.

A SECRETARY DESK BEGAN THE TRAIL TO A SPLENDID TALE

For Kathleen H. Brown, it was the contents of a secretary desk, handed down through four generations of her family, that started her on the trail. She is the great-great granddaughter of John Brown, who brought his young family from New Hampshire to a homestead between Tomifobia and Fitch Bay in 1806. His son, Chester Wright Brown, carried on the homestead and, like his father, was active in helping to create early schools in Stanstead Township.

A few years ago, Dr. Brown, who recently retired after a busy career as a professor of family economics at the University of Guelph, decided the time had come to take a serious look at the correspondence, diaries and account books stored in the desk – and the rest, as they say (with literal accuracy in this case), is history.

Inspired by the fragmentary family records, she decided to embark on an exhaustive examination of long-neglected primary records in the National Archives and other sources on Stanstead Township schools. The splendid result is *Schooling in the Clearings: Stanstead 1800-1850*, a perceptive and illuminating account of the beginnings of schooling in the township.



Kathleen Brown and the secretary desk

On Saturday, July 6, Kathleen Brown will share some of her findings as guest speaker at the Georgeville Historical Society's 11th annual meeting. We are pleased that the Stanstead Historical Society has accepted our invitation to make this a joint meeting, a first for the two societies.

Dr. Brown's engaging approach to her subject gains not only from her roots in the township but a distinguished teaching career. She grew up on the ancestral farm, went to school at Stanstead College and McGill's

Macdonald College, and then taught at high schools in Richmond, Danville and Pointe Claire. After a year of traveling and teaching in the United Kingdom, she went on to graduate school at Cornell and then to her professorship at Guelph, specializing in family economics. Her *Personal Finance for*

Canadians, widely used as a text in Canadian colleges and universities and updated in seven editions, has been in print for 21 years.

The GHS annual meeting will be held at the Murray Memorial Centre on July 6 at 2:30 p.m. Everyone is cordially invited to attend.

AT THE CENTER OF THE MOST INTERESTING YEAR IN THE TOWNSHIP'S EARLY HISTORY

Kathleen Brown's *Schooling in the Clearings*, published under the imprimatur of the Stanstead Historical Society, is not only informed by meticulous and painstaking research, but includes the names of more than 10,000 pupils in the township between 1809 and 1836, as well as of teachers and school trustees.

Drawing on her research for these early years, the Georgeville Historical Society, following its annual meeting on July 6, will open an exhibition at the society's Gallery on Carré Copp. The exhibition, open on weekends through the summer, will trace a century and a half of schooling in Georgeville, from the hamlet's first log school of about 1810 to the last graduates of the Georgeville Consolidated School in 1966.

An imposing sum

The exhibition will begin with a focus on Georgeville in the remarkable year of 1829, when three events occurred that would have a lasting influence on the life and growth of the village. In May of that year an astonishing number, for so small a community, of 100 children began classes in a new brick school house. Perhaps still more astonishing was that the cash-strapped villagers raised the imposing sum of £275, 5 shillings and 6 pence (the equivalent of \$110,000 in today's money) to built it.

The new school was built in anticipation of the Legislative Assembly's "Act for the Encouragement of Elementary Education," a first, if halting, step towards a secular, publicly-funded school system in Lower Canada. Under the same impetus, a crop of one-room school houses, known as "Assembly Schools," also sprouted in the outlying area.

Forty two Magoons

These were on Richard Copp's homestead on the East Road, on Merrill's Hill, at Blake's Mills (on what is now known as Taylor Brook) and Magoon's Point. The Magoon's Point school enrolled, over the

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Articles are published in English or French, in the language in of the writer. Your comments and submissions are welcome.

Desktop publishing for this issue of The Enterprise by Larry Bernais.

next two years, no fewer than 42 young Magoons.

The second important development of 1829 was the launching, by the storekeeper Joshua Copp, with several partners, of the celebrated Georgeville horse-powered ferry between the eastern and western shores of the lake. As was soon to be noted in a petition recorded in the *Journal of the Assembly of Lower Canada*, "by the public spirit and enterprise of several Individuals, a Horse-Boat Ferry has been established for the accommodation of the public, running from Georgeville to the North East corner of Potton."

Market road

The petition pointed out that five stage coaches were arriving weekly at Stanstead Plain from northern New England. Thanks to the new horse ferry, all that now stood in the way of a badly-needed market road to Montreal (much shorter than the alternative route via Waterloo, Granby and Chambly) was the still "virtually impassable" road through the Bolton Pass to Brome, Dunham and Farnham.

Then, in mid-November, both the new school house and horse-ferry were pressed into service for the third key event in

Georgeville's 1829 calendar: the first election of representatives from the newly-created Stanstead County to the Legislative Assembly. Over five days the village was more crowded than it had ever been before when 134 property-owning homesteaders from Bolton and Potton townships braved chill November winds to cross the lake and to vote at a polling station set up in the school house. Another 180 voters rode in from Hatley and Stanstead.

All of which placed Georgeville at the center of the most interesting and important year in the early history of Stanstead Township.

A LONG WALK TO LIGHT THE LAMP FOR GOOD OLD DAD

Almost everyone has a favourite story of the Georgeville wharf. Knetha Reeves, a sprightly lady of 86 who now lives in Beebe, remembers when she and her brother Elgin, walked a mile-and-a-half from the Lindsay farm to the village every evening during the summer, on an errand for their father, Herbert Hand. Their job was to light the beacon on the wharf.

This was in the 1920s before electricity arrived in the village, and mariners depended on the large kerosene lantern after dark. The lantern was filled with oil, its globe carefully cleaned and polished with newspaper, and hooked onto a rope and pulley. It was then pulled to the top of a pole where it swayed in the wind from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. Every morning the children repeated the walk, to take down the lantern and store it in the waiting room on the wharf, awaiting its next trip up the pole.

Knetha believes her father, who farmed the Lindsay property, received five dollars a month as the lantern keeper. The children worked for free.

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