

# THE GEORGEVILLE ENTERPRISE

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Société d'histoire de Georgeville / Georgeville Historical Society

## THE *GLOBE* MAY BE SOLD ON THE 'L' WORD BUT EARLIER BOSTONIANS KNEW BETTER

Why is it, when the summer tourist season arrives in Georgeville, the "L" word is bound to follow? *The Enterprise* invites its readers to keep an eye out for it. It seems to be gaining on us.

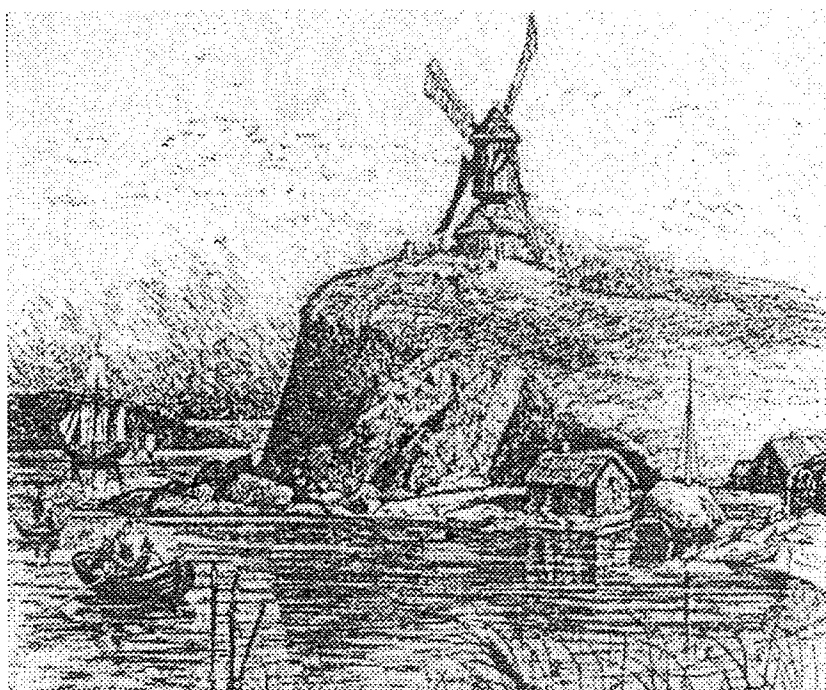
Our latest sighting is from the *Boston Globe*. Last fall the *Globe* dispatched a writer-photographer team to explore what it characterized as the "Loyalist country just north of Vermont and New Hampshire." Crossing the border at Derby Line-Rock Island, the visitors dropped into the Stanstead Historical Society's Colby Curtis Museum for afternoon tea ("What could be

more British?") and then "caught Route 247 winding north along the eastern shore of Lake Memphremagog."

And so on to Exhibit A, so to speak: "In less than a half-hour we were in Georgeville, one of Quebec's best preserved Loyalist villages. In this font of tranquillity, named in honor of George III, the white clapboard houses go back centuries. The children buy candy at an ancient general store, and the local inn, one of Canada's oldest, still attracts guests to the rockers on its broad Victorian porch."

To be sure, the *Globe* is not alone in jumping to the errant conclusion that the New England homesteaders who settled the shores of Lake Memphremagog were "refugees" (as its headline put it) fleeing the new Republic to the south. Closer to home, for example, the MRC Memphremagog recently published a strikingly handsome tourist brochure *On the Stage Coach Trail: discovering the Memphremagog MRC*. Even the MRC promotes the loyalist myth, asserting that "many" of the first settlers were Americans "attracted by a region where they could settle freely while remaining loyal to the British Crown."

For the *Boston Globe* to fall



*William Copp's cabin at the foot of Copp's Hill in Boston  
(from The Memorial History of Boston, 1630-1880, Vol*

for the myth is a thumping let down, given Georgeville's long and intimate ties with that city. After all, Copp's Hill Burying Ground, a popular stop on Boston's "Freedom Trail," is named for the shoemaker, William Copp, the great-great-grandfather of Georgeville's founder, Moses Copp. There lie buried many of Boston's most notable citizens, including Robert Newman, the man who hung the lanterns in the steeple of the "Old North" Church to warn the defenders of Lexington and Concord that the British were coming.

It was to Boston that Georgeville's first store-keeper, Moses Copp's son Joshua, sent for tobacco, tea and ginger. And it was a correspondent from the Boston weekly, *Ballou's Drawing Room Pictorial* who, as far as we have been able to determine, was the first travel writer to discover the charms of the lake. In 1858 he journeyed for eleven hours by train on the Passumpsic Railroad's newly-completed line to Barton, Vt., and next day boarded a stage coach for the final 15 miles to Newport and the lake.

Writing under the title "A Trip to Lake Memphremagog by a Tourist in Search of the Picturesque," Ballou's man rhapsodized: "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. 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."

His sentiments were seconded during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by a shoal of Boston journalists who wrote extensively and well about Georgeville and the lake. In fact, if a Boston editor hung "Gone Fishing" on his door in those days, the odds were that he had left for Georgeville.

The most prolific of Boston fishermen-journalists was Samuel June Barrows, who filled the columns of the weekly *Christian Register* (and later his book *The Shaybacks in Camp*) with tales of camping with family and friends just north of the village. Among the Bostonians he attracted to the lake were Alice Stone Blackwell, editor of the suffragist *Women's Journal*, and Francis Howe, who both wrote about the village in the *Boston Transcript*.

In *The Shaybacks* Barrows recorded that "perch seldom tempt the rod of the natives but when one of the editors of a prominent Boston daily and his wife go to Memphremagog for a two weeks' vacation, the perch always hear of their arrival. A thousand fish caught in two weeks with the assistance of another companion is a well verified achievement."

The perch-loving colleague he had in mind was William E. Bryant, Jr., for 20 years the night editor of the *Boston Journal*. He was an uncle of William Bryant Bullock, the Georgeville-born compiler of *Beautiful Waters*. This gave him an inside track for his own reportage on the lake (and possibly on the perch).

All of which is to suggest that, for earlier generations of Bostonians, Georgeville was a familiar dateline, and in its origins certainly never the outpost of Empire current fashion would have it. For the record, we dispatched the following letter to the *Globe*:

Re: Quebec's British accents (Sept. 29). Diane Foulds is quite right to be impressed by the

### For Your Calendar

The GHS/SHG's 12<sup>th</sup> annual meeting  
Sunday, July 13, at 2:30 p.m.  
at the Murray Memorial Centre  
Speaker: Louise Abbott  
on "The Austin Farm"

Following the annual meeting,  
a reception to celebrate the  
10<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Bigelow Garden

charms of Victorian afternoon tea at Stanstead's Curtis-Colby Museum. Still, the experience seems rather to have overwhelmed her. To characterize the Eastern Townships, just over the border from Vermont and New Hampshire, as 'Loyalist country', and Georgeville as 'one of Quebec's best preserved Loyalist villages,' is, not to put too fine a point of it, poppycock.

The eminent Canadian literary critic, Northrop Frye, a Townshipper himself, once described the English-speaking settlements of the Townships as 'a northern spur of New England.' The vast majority of homesteaders who settled this part of the world, in the late 1790s and early 1800s, were New Englanders drawn not by any lingering affection for George III, but more prosaically by the lure of cheap land. In doing this *they* were simply doing what their parents and grandparents had done before them, as the

frontier of settlement pushed north up the Connecticut valley.

Far from leaving what Diane Foulds sees as a 'Loyalist', 'British' or 'Old Country' imprint on the townships, the American settlers brought with them the cultural, social and political values of New England. In Georgeville, for example, had Foulds dropped in on an exhibition by the Georgeville Historical Society, she could usefully have learned about the fine New England "meeting house" the settlers built on the New England model, as a school and for non-conformist religious services, and of their predilection for naming their sons after George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.

Some Loyalists! Some refugees! The *Globe*, we regret to say, had no room for the correction. Nor, we imagine, have we heard the last of the "L" word.

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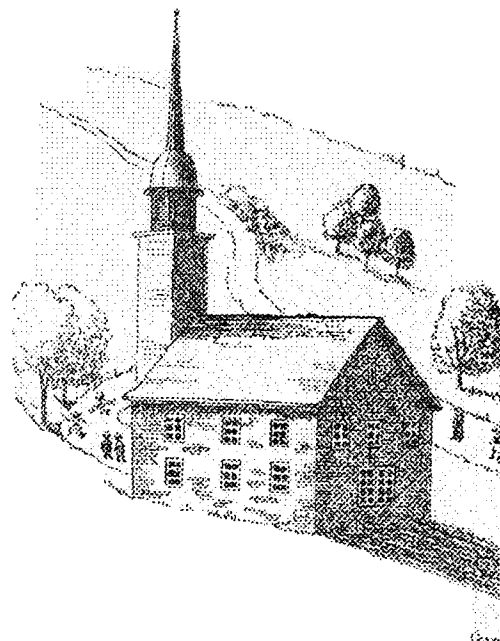
## A NEW ENGLAND MEETING HOUSE

There is no reason to doubt Hazen Increase Bullock's description of Georgeville's "Meeting House" as "the finest public building ever constructed" in the village. Built in 1829 at a cost of £ 275, 6 s. 3 d. (the equivalent of \$110,000 in today's money), the brick Meeting House was used, in the New England tradition, as both a school and a house of worship.

The Meeting House was built on almost the same site as its successor, the "old" Red School House of 1848, in the fork of the Magoon Point and Channel Hill roads. H.I. Bullock, a village storekeeper, remembered its "lofty belfry and graceful spire" from his boyhood. When the Meeting house was destroyed by fire in January 1847, the *Stanstead Journal* made a point of referring to its "beautiful steeple."

The English artist and illustrator William Henry Bartlett sketched the Meeting House in one of his drawings of the village in the summer of 1838 -- a depiction that is all the

more interesting for offering the only contemporary representation of the building that survives. Local artist Gael Eakin drew both on Bartlett and surviving descriptions of the building for the fine drawing below.



What's in a Name? (1)

## WASHINGTONS & BEN FRANKLINS GALORE

*Kathleen Brown's new book, Schooling in the Clearings: Stanstead 1800-1850 helped us to identify for last summer's GHS exhibition the names of the 182 pupils who were enrolled for school in Georgeville's brick Meeting House between May 1829 and September 1831, as well as the young scholars who attended the one-room outlying schools at Blake's Mill, on Magoon Point and Merrill's Hill, and on Richard Copp's farm on the East Road.*

*Names sometimes tell tales. We offer here two snapshots of earlier Georgeville that emerge from the lists of pupils.*

The homesteaders who settled Stanstead Township generally came furnished with Old Testament names, handed down in their families since their Puritan ancestors arrived in New England – Abraham and Moses, Elijah and Isaac, Ebenezer and Samuel. The names of their wives and daughters tended to come from the same biblical font – Ruth and Judith, Abigail and Hannah. Alternatively, in the unemancipated tradition into which they were born, they bore names like Thankful and Wealthy, or Comfort, Submit and Delight.

To be sure, through the first generations born in the township, the Levis, and Joshuas, Aarons and Calebs continued marching on. But as the names of the pupils in the early schools in the Georgeville area make clear, a new source of inspiration was also at hand -- the leaders of the new American republic. A notable example is George Washington Fogg, who grew up in the household of Asa Lillie and his wife Hannah Thayer, and went on to build the paddle-wheel steamer Mountain Maid as the first steamboat on Lake Memphremagog. A bronze plaque placed by the historical society on the newly-reconstructed Georgeville wharf honours his

contribution to the life of the village and the lake.

Capt. Fogg was not the only young Georgeville scholar named for the first president of the United States. George Washington Jewett, a son of David Jewett and Laura Rexford, was the younger brother of Benjamin Franklin Jewett, one of Fogg's classmates. The elder Jewett boy later transferred to the Blake's Mill School, where a classmate was George Washington Brown, Jr., a son of George Washington Brown, Sr. and Abigail Judd.

At the very least, these names belie the myth that the village was a loyalist settlement. Other examples may be found in *Schooling in the Clearings* and in *B.F. Hubbard's Forest and Clearings: the History of Stanstead County*. He was Benjamin Franklin Hubbard, by the way.

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## A CHANCE TO MEET SOME FINE PEOPLE

Join John Boynton for a leisurely stroll through Georgeville's historic cemeteries, and learn something about the interesting people whose names are carved on the slate, marble and granite headstones dating back to 1816 – village founder Moses Copp and his wife Anna, the centenarian innkeeper Abraham Channel, the wonderfully-named Caroline America Everett Beach Davidson and five generations of MacPhersons.

John will conduct a tour of the Georgeville Village Cemetery, also known as the Bullock Cemetery, on Chemin Georgeville on Monday evening, July 21, and of the MacPherson Cemetery on Chemin Magoon Point on Monday evening, August 4. The tours will begin at 7 p.m., with a rain date in each case for the following evening.

What's in a Name? (2)

## THE FRANCOPHONE PRESENCE IN GEORGEVILLE

Our list of pupils at the village's 1829 brick schoolhouse points up a little understood facet of 19<sup>th</sup> century Georgeville: the francophone presence in the community began much earlier, and was much larger, than has been recognized. Consider the Sabolle family. Francois Xavier Sabolle, a veteran of the Napoleonic wars, settled on Magoon Point as early as the 1820s and sent the three eldest of his eight children – Eliza, Francois and Joseph – to the Georgeville school.

The Sabolles were soon joined by Paschal Martel and his family (three of the Sabolle children grew up to marry Martels). By the time of the 1861 census, the families of Victor Lapointe, Thomas Bertrand, David Robichaud, and Prim Rioux were interspersed with the Cambers and Blakes, Hands and Magoons on the Magoon Point Road.

Altogether, there was a population of 51 French-speaking Roman Catholics on the stretch of the lakeshore between Georgeville and the Narrows. Another 36 francophones, including the engineer of the Mountain Maid, lived in the village proper; with the group on the Magoon Point road, they accounted for 17 per cent of the population.

Francois Xavier Sabolle died at 82 in 1869 and was buried with his wife at Sacre Coeur Cemetery in Stanstead. Yet his family's life in a predominantly Anglophone society inevitably has its impact. Later generations of Sabolles became Sabolls (or Saballs). Joseph Saball and Elizabeth Martel raised eleven children on the Magoon Point Road. When their daughter Sarah married John A. Camber in 1867, theirs was a Protestant marriage – the first wedding in the new St. George's Episcopal Church; a few years later her sister, Eliza, married Daniel Amos Camber.

By that stage, the Martels had become Martins, Rioux had been transformed into Eryou, and Charles Le Roi, who was one of Georgeville's best boat builders, took to calling himself Charlie King. Some of Prim Rioux's sons adopted Prim as the family name.

The census takers often mangled French names. On its way to Eryou, the surname Rioux appeared as "Arreau", Bertrand became "Bastraw," and Robichaud as "Robershaw," Robisho" or "Rubishou." According to a contemporary diarist, David Robichaud "was generally called Robinson by the farmers, or 'Rubbershoes' by others." Such was the painful process of acculturation.

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## THE PIONEER GARDEN. TEN YEARS ON AND GOING STRONG

"The garden should be – as nearly as possible – an early 19<sup>th</sup> century garden of the kind the first settlers grew, with herbs for cooking, plants for dyeing, some vegetables and some decorative plants. A garden of this sort was always close to the house and surrounded by a fence to keep out cats and dogs and other small animals.

"Our garden will honour the memory of the first citizens of Georgeville, by reminding us of the difficulties of living in isolation, rarely being able to visit a neighbour who lived further than walking distance, having to care for the family without the aid of doctors, hospitals or drug stores, having to feed and clothe the family, provide bedding, curtains and carpets, make soap, candles, candy and beer, and rely on the produce of a little garden such as we hope to create."

So Katherine Mackenzie wrote in *The Enterprise* (Vol. 1, No 2, Fall 1992), describing the historical society's plans to create a pioneer garden on the site of Levi Bigelow's Stage Coach Inn – a venture that, under her direction for the past decade, has given pleasure to countless visitors to the village. Following our annual meeting on Sunday, July 13, the GHS/SHG invites

everyone to a reception at the Bigelow Garden, to celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. Katherine Mackenzie is now living in Knowlton and, as visitors will note, has left the garden in excellent condition. It is now in the care of a keen group of volunteers organized by historical society directors Valerie Pasztor and Russel Williams.

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*At the GHS Annual meeting*

## ABBOTT TO RECALL THE AUSTIN FARM

The guest speaker for this year's annual meeting of the Georgeville Historical Society on Sunday afternoon, July 13, will be Louise Abbott, whose graceful writing on Townships themes frequently appears in the *Stanstead Journal* and the *Montreal Gazette*.

Louise has chosen as her subject the farm Nicholas Austin established on Gibraltar Point in the 1790s, a subject to which she brings an unusual perspective. "I knew," she recalls, "the stony beach and hilly terrain of the land which Austin had cleared with an intimacy and fondness born of ten years spent on this farm when my family owned it in the 1950s and 60s."

Born in Montreal, Louise graduated from Westmount High School and McGill in honours English. She edited the *McGill News* before embarking on a career as a freelance writer, photographer and filmmaker that has won her high honours.

She is the author of three books -- *The Coast Way: A Portrait of the English on the Lower North Shore of the St. Lawrence*; *The French Shore: Newfoundland's Port-au-Prince Peninsula*; and *A Country So Wild and Grand: A Travel Guide to the Lower North Shore of Quebec*.

Her latest film is *Alexander Walbridge: The Visionary of Mystic*. She recently received grants from the Belanger-Gardner

Foundation at Bishop's and the Townshippers Research and Cultural Foundation for a video documentary on the history of rail fencing and stone walls in the Townships. In 2002 she won awards from the Periodical Writers Association and the Canadian Journalism Foundation. Louise lives in Tomifobia with her husband, Niels Jensen.

Everyone is welcome to attend the GHS annual meeting on Sunday, July 13, at 2:30 p.m.

### *The Georgeville Enterprise*

*The Enterprise* is an occasional publication of the Société d'histoire de Georgeville / Georgeville Historical Society and distributed to its members. Individual membership is \$10 per year and family membership \$15. The membership year runs from June 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup>. Communications may be addressed to the Secretary, 184 Chemin Channel, Georgeville, QC, J0B 1T0.

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

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