



Société d'histoire de Georgeville

Georgeville Historical Society

Newsletter - Winter 2011

Summer Activities in 2010

The Canada Day Parade

We have all seen the band stand near the children's playground in the centre of Georgeville, but has it ever occurred to you that band concerts might have been an integral part of village life and that there was an active Georgeville Brass Band? Few details exist but newspaper references indicate that a band played regularly in the 1890s and early 1900s.

The GHS float this year bore a spirited re-enactment of such a band concert. We were unable to borrow any real brass instruments or a big drum, but Valerie, with help from Google, concocted 2-D replicas from Foamcore, and six Georgevillians toot-tooted with gusto to the tunes of Sousa, played by a hidden boom-box.



A spirited re-enactment of a Georgeville Brass Band concert

Annual General Meeting and Talk

The AGM was well attended even with competition from the Soccer World Cup. The current slate of directors was re-appointed.

In the last Newsletter, we hinted at an 1820s scandal involving a Scottish congregational minister which was instrumental in bringing many immigrant families from Scotland to Stanstead Township. This year, John Scott presented a beautifully crafted talk on the early lives of those settlers, luring us on throughout the talk with hints as to the nature of this shocking impropriety. He told us that Josiah Gibb was "without doubt a liberally minded preacher, theologically ahead of his time".

Finally, John quoted from a little-known source (a biography of Rev. John Murker) that Gibb had undertaken "the bold experiment of putting a female member into the high and responsible office of church treasurer. The root of the bitterness can be traced to this gallant but indiscreet appointment." Gibb died long before the Suffrage movement promoted women's abilities.

Historical Walks

The July outing revisited Birch Bay so that we might admire once more the large log house built by Isobel Barrows, grand-daughter of Josiah Gibb. It is full of memorabilia of the Barrows and other families who camped there, first under canvas and later in log cabins. The small harmonium standing near the door was frequently carried down to the point to lead the singing for Sunday services.

In August a cavalcade of cars drove up Magoon Point Road to the junction with Camber Road. Then, armed with a section of the 1864 Gray Map and John Boynton's excellent tour guide, we progressed in stages northward as far as Leslie Road, stopping frequently to tramp around old house sites and other features of historical interest.

The Beach-Evans Barn Lives Again

After the auction of the contents of Frances Evans house and farm buildings and the sale of the whole property, people were resigned to the idea that farming might cease there and that the old eighteen seventies, high-drive barn might be torn down. The whole structure was unsafe and past renovation. Then, at the beginning of summer 2010 a construction crew moved in, but not with a wrecking ball, the barn was carefully dismantled and any wood that could be salvaged was stacked under the trees beside the house. Word got out that the barn was to be re-built.

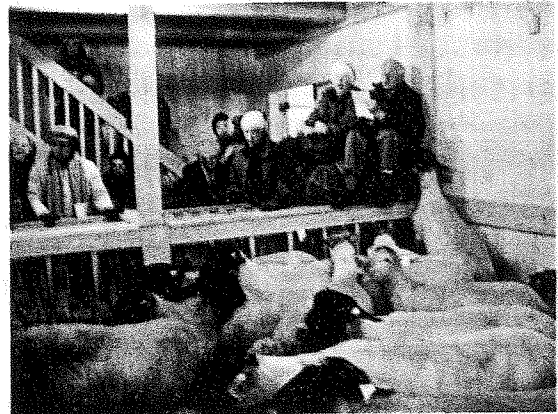
And what a fine project it was: an almost identical replica of the Evans barn. Wherever possible the old beams were cleaned up and used again, and elements of new wood were built using original construction techniques. Beautiful mortices and wooden pegs abounded. Modern insulation and services were hidden within typical barn walls. M. Coallier, the new owner, is demonstrating sensitive stewardship of his new property.



The new cupola atop the rebuilt Evans barn, a replica of the original one

In December 2010, a fine Georgeville tradition was revived: the barn carol service. About 100 people crowded into the lower floor, along with the sheep, hens, horses and a donkey. The Reverends Stuart Martin and Dean Moffat officiated at a simple barn blessing and communion service, and everyone enjoyed singing all the favorite carols with Sarah Hoblyn on the keyboard. Most of the animals were awed by the sheer volume of the music, and only the ram and the cheeky donkey gave voice now and again.

Afterwards we were all invited to climb the stairs to the hay mow for refreshments. A big "Thank you" to the Coallier family for their warm hospitality.



Sheep and humans enjoy each others company at the barn service

A Mystery Solved

When, in 1948, Colin MacPherson brought order into the long neglected burial ground on the Magoon Point Road, which had for many years been operated by his family, he installed the sign, still in place, which reads "MACPHERSON CEMETERY, EST. 1798." In a short essay on the history of the cemetery which he included in a booklet containing the by-laws, rules and regulations, Mr. MacPherson wrote "it is believed that the cemetery location... was chosen at the time of the first survey in the years 1797-98." That I have always doubted, there being no such requirement in the instructions issued by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Lower Canada to Samuel Holland, the surveyor-general of lands prior to the survey of each township.

I have long wondered about the reason for that apparent mistake, and now I think I may have found it. Reading a novel set in New Hampshire at the time of the French-Indian wars, I learn that proprietors of land grants in that province were required to set aside three lots for the building of the town hall, a church and a school plus two additional lots for a cemetery. The author gives the impression of being well versed in New Hampshire's history, so I believe he was reporting correctly.

The book was published in 1939; did Mr. MacPherson read it, and during the passage of years confuse this account with what he knew of the procedures followed in the Townships?

How, then, did the MacPherson Cemetery come to be? In the early days of settlement it was

customary for the first death in a family to be followed by burial on the family lot; sometimes neighbours were allowed to bury their dead nearby, and while most such burial grounds remained small others grew along with the population of the district.

The earliest burial known to have taken place on this site was that of David Webster in 1822, as recorded on a lead tablet unearthed in 1948. He owned the property at the time, so that may have been when the cemetery had its beginning. It, along with the land surrounding it, was bought in 1843 by Alexander Macpherson, hence the name.

John Boynton

Camperdown Hotel Artifacts?

There are five quite ornately carved posts supporting a fence on the west side of our property at 10 Chemin McGowan. Some years ago, I was told – though for the life of me, I can't recall by whom – that these pillars were "rescued" following the 1898 fire that destroyed the Camperdown Hotel.

I have examined photos and other renderings of the Camperdown and also the Elephantis Hotel, which went up in flames at the same time, in various Eastern Townships histories. A fine photo of the new Camperdown, taken sometime between 1891 and 1898, does not show any major supporting posts except for a porch on the north end of the building. However, a photo of the old Camperdown, taken in 1861 prior to a visit by the Governor General, does show pillars supporting the front of the hotel. These photos, including a picture of the Elephantis with apparently plain posts supporting a wrap-around porch, appear in *"Copp's Legacy: A Family History."* A rendering of the Camperdown "house and residence of W.E. Tucker, Esq.", which appeared in the *"Belden Illustrated Atlas of the Dominion of Canada, 1881"*, does show supporting pillars on the front of the building. In none of these illustrations is there sufficient detail to provide convincing evidence.

Can anyone shed any light on the provenance of our posts?

David Cox

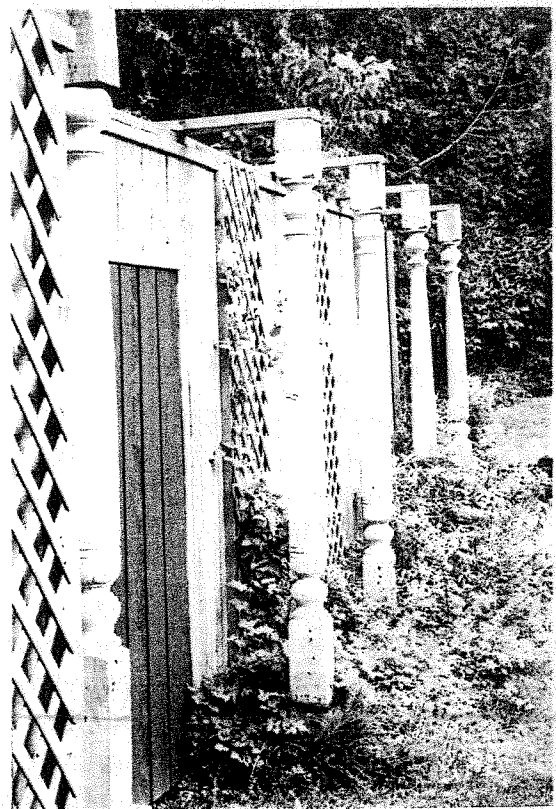
FSHQ & QAHN

There are two umbrella organisations which link and provide support to historical societies and museums in Quebec: the older Fédération des sociétés d'histoire de Québec (FSHQ) was founded in 1965

and operates largely in french, and the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2010 and seeks to advance knowledge of the history of Quebec's English-speaking communities. Both receive funding from the federal and provincial governments, hold annual conferences and workshops, publish interesting journals and maintain web sites. Membership is open both to organisations and individuals; the two groups are thriving and cooperate amicably.

Steve Moore represented GHS at the Eastern Townships chapter of FSHQ and I attended the QAHN annual Conference held at the Cheribourg Hotel.

Valerie Pasztor



The interesting pillars in David Cox's garden

The Stanstead Stone Circle

Early this Fall, our sister society Georgeville Nature Ski (GNS) organized an outing to Beebe to see the year-old Standstead Stone Circle. Since many of the participants were also members of GHS, we felt that the event deserved a write-up in this newsletter.

The circle, sited on a large open pasture on the banks of the Tomifobia River, looks quite small from the parking area, but as you walk closer you begin to appreciate the immense size of the granite stones. They are all different shapes and sizes, some

freshly quarried, other darker and weathered after decades of exposure to the elements, all weighing thousands of pounds. They are set deeply in the earth to give stability for years to come. While we realize that modern machinery brought them from the nearby quarry and lifted them upright, one by one into their precise places, no teams of slaves and oxen here as with the henges of the ancients, yet there is a feeling of awe and wonderment as one enters that special place within the circle of stones.

Looking down on the circle from the vantage point of the raised bank at the field's perimeter, the pattern of stones and shadows was enhanced by plantings of buckwheat forming rich golden brown stripes radiating out from the centre.

The inspiration for creating this new 'heritage' structure came from Kim Pengelly, a local resident, and her determination in recruiting the granite community and energizing Stanstead's benefactors is to be applauded. Go to the web site: www.stansteadstonecircle.org for beautiful photos of the circle in summer and winter plus directions for getting there. It is well worth a visit.

Valerie Pasztor

Report from the Bigelow Garden

2010 was a good year for gardeners and the garden thrived during a long summer of moderate temperatures and adequate rainfall. The efficient work of our team of volunteers was much appreciated by a steady stream of visitors.

In the spring I mentioned to the GHS directors that the signboard hanging at the entrance to the garden was in dire need of renewal and they authorized me to purchase a new one. So I took it down, but then, I must admit, did nothing about finding a suitable sign painter for many weeks. I was horrified to learn about the rumor circulating in the village that the Bigelow Garden might soon be

closed, but fortunately a chance meeting with Dr. Valiquette across the garden gate allowed me to enquire if the rumor was true, and he reassured me emphatically that he would be happy to continue to host the garden. Obviously we had to get a signboard in place again.

Close examination of the plywood board prompted me to fill the rotten holes with plastic wood and I saw that enough of Almut Thuyin's pretty, but faded, design remained to enable me to paint a new sign in all its original glowing colours.

If anyone would like to join our team of volunteer gardeners, please contact me:

valerie.pasztor@mcgill.ca

Action on obtaining a PIIA

As we explained in our last Newsletter, the acronym PIIA stands for Plan d'implantation et d'intégration architecturale, a set of guidelines, tailored for each municipality, intended to complement the existing building by-laws. Stanstead still has not formulated its own PIIA.

A Special Meeting of the GHS Board of Directors was held in November 2010 to discuss a report presented by our Ad Hoc Committee on Planning concerning the pressing need for drafting and adopting an appropriate set of guidelines. Subsequently, a letter was mailed to Mayor Eric Evans and all the municipal counsellors on behalf of GHS expressing our hope that the Council would take action in the near future to get a PIIA implemented and to put in place a strong, knowledgeable Consultative Committee on Urbanism. A copy of the report was attached.

Our thanks go to Alison D'Anglejan, Aileen Desbarats, Nicole Forbes, Francine Markwell and Peter Smith for their valuable work in preparing the report.

Georgeville Historical Society / Société d'histoire de Georgeville

Renouvellement – Membership Renewal
2010-2011

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