

Société d'histoire de Georgeville

Georgeville Historical Society

Newsletter - Winter 2012

Review of Summer 2011 Activities

Canada Day Parade

John Boynton produced a 1950s photo of the Georgeville hockey team called the Camperdowners (after an old wooden hotel long vanished) He was able to contact five players still living in the area, with more adipose tissue and less hair but keen to come and join the parade. Old skates and sticks were found, a net was constructed from a mesh hammock, colourful bunting and noisy supporters enlivened the mood and we were off. The poster-sized enlargement of that old photo on the side of the float brought back memories of the glory days of hockey in Georgeville. The judges agreed and we won prizes: cash to defer costs for next year, a handsome rosette and a huge Canadian flag.



Then and Now

Bernard Drew, Bob Evans, Dick Hornby, Wayne McTavish, Jim Thayer

AGM and Annual Talk

The business meeting of GHS in July returned the slate of officers for another year and congratulated

our membership secretary and the treasurer for a healthy bank balance. Remember we have changed to the calendar year for membership purposes, so please fill out and return the Renewal Form included.

Louise Abbott, benefitting from John Scott's help and her own researches, gave an interesting talk about the achievements of Nathan Beach and his influence on so many of the old houses around Georgeville.

GHS has instigated an award called the Nathan Beach Award for the conservation of our built heritage. We now have a handsome plaque which can be seen in the trophy window at the Hall.

Historical Boating Tour of Lake Memphremagog

July 20th was a lovely sunny, warm day and the slight breeze on the water as we put-putted under the covered bridge of Fitch Bay and out onto the open lake was most welcome. We had rented three comfortable pontoon boats and whenever we passed some landmark of historical interest, we rafted together and listened to Steve Moore's commentary. Thanks go to Robbie Colby for inviting us to disembark on his property to eat our picnic. Everyone had a good time and we will probably repeat the excursion another summer.

Our first 'Dig'

On July 20th 2011, six of us met at the 'cellar hole' of the Peaslee house, located on Jean-Paul Clermont's property to the east of chemin de l'Éléphant. Two hours later we had removed vegetation inside the foundation walls and lowered the soil level by about a foot around the perimeter, so that the walls stand out more clearly from the surrounding terrain.

These walls are all that remain of the log cabin that we believe was built by Philip Peaslee as early as 1801.

The location of several more pioneer buildings are known, including the homes of Captain Fogg, builder and skipper of the "Mountain Maid", also of William Bullock, one of Georgeville's earliest settlers. We plan to do more 'digs' to help conserve these historical sites.

John Boynton



Before and After

John Boynton, Ian Wallace, Paul Bannerman, Martin Bosch and Nancy Sullivan admire the results of their hard work.

Steve Moore took the photo.

The August Historical Cavalcade

After meeting at Murray Hall on Aug. 10th to arrange the car pool, members drove along Magoon Point Road to the MacPherson property to learn about the historical sites along the proximal section of that old road. Since the hand-out was not available on that day, the full story is included on page 4 of this Newsletter.

Who and What is Heritage Georgeville

When Heritage Georgeville was awarded the society's first Nathan Beach Award at the July annual meeting, people have asked 'Who and what is Heritage Georgeville?' Perhaps the following will help.

For decades the McGowan family ran a fishing lodge in what we now know as Maison McGowan. It provided simple accomodation, good food, skilled guides and handsome mahogany outboards for generations of fishermen. When the McGowan family was no longer able to cope with the demands of running the lodge, it was sold to a couple who carried on as before for a few years. When this couple retired the property was sold again and the new owner changed its character. It became a sort of 'bar-terrasse' and a gas tank was installed on the dock; clientele and noise level changed as well.

Learning that this owner was about to resell, a group of Georgeville citizens got together to consider the future of this very central building in village history, life and space. It was decided that an effort should be made to aquire the property and develop it as an asset to the appearance and life of the village. The necessary funds were raised through the selling of shares to about forty local people who felt strongly about the worth of the project. The shares were in a new, formally incorporated entity 'Heritage Georgeville Inc.', complete with a Board of Directors, Mission Statement and high hopes for the future.

For more than twenty years a number of very committed Heritage Georgeville shareholders have volountarily overseen the steady renovation and upgrading of the building and its grounds, they have raised extra capital for this work and they have overseen the restaurant and marina franchises. What we see today is a fary cry from the property acquired in 1985. At the August 2011 annual meeting it was quietly celebrated that the building and accomodation were now in very good shape. Other challenges remain.

Current directors of Heritage Georgeville are as follows: Paul Bannerman; Kip Cobbett; Robert Colby; Raymond Decarie; Brian Drummond; John Godber; Andy Howick; Jean-Pierre Lefebvre; Juliana Lynch-Staunton; Derek Price; Toby Rochester; Tony Straessle.

Aileen Desbarats

Georgeville Activities with a Long History

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count

This Dec. 27th 2011, about 25 people answered the call emailed by John Hoblyn to join the 112th Audubon Christmas Bird Count. They set off by car along their designated routes to become 'citizen

scientists' for the day and help census the birds of North and Central America.

The Georgeville Count Circle has a diameter of 24km centred on Amy's Corners and includes a good variety of bird habitats including garden feeders, farmyards, hedgerows, open fields, woodlands and lake shores. The weather was fine, not too much wind (which birds hate) and sightings were good. Later that evening we gathered at the Hoblyns' home for a convivial wine and cheese when the days's data were handed in to our naturalist compiler Angela Losito. She was able to help novices identify their 'little brown birds' and 'cute woodpeckers' from notes made and judge whether or not the same flock of wild turkeys had been sighted by more than one group. 33 species were spotted and we eagerly await Angela's tallies of birds counted (expressed as birds of each species per observer-hour.)

Our area has been participating annually since 1977 when Peter Landry set up the Georgeville Bird Count, and it is now one of 41 Count Circles in Quebec. There are more than 2000 localities sampled across North and Central America, all sending data in to the Audubon organization. It is the biggest, oldest bird census in the world and is much valued by ornithologists and those interested in animal populations and biodiversity.

These bird counts were initiated in 1900 by Frank Chapman, an officer of the recently formed Audubon Society and started off with 27 observers. Now there are more than 53 thousand observers each Christmas. It is a good feeling to be part of such a historical activity. More information can be found at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc

Jean-Jacques Audubon (1786 – 1851) was born in Haiti, raised in France and emigrated to the U.S. to avoid conscription during the Napoleonic wars. He became a trader but life was very harsh on the frontier. Through all his wanderings he developed a passion for observing and drawing birds. At age 41 he sailed for England where he became immensely popular as a lecturer and artist and his paintings were much appreciated. Here he could get his work published and his great book *Birds of North America* appeared around 1829. An original, hand coloured copy recently fetched \$11.5 million at a Sotheby's auction.

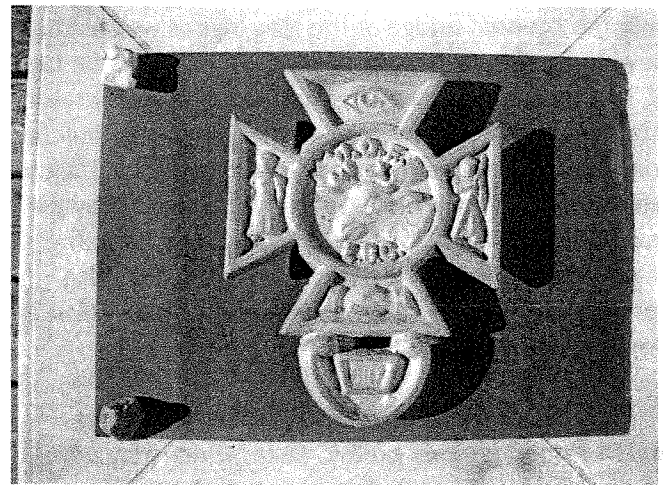
Quilting in Georgeville

Quilting evolved in the early colonial days as a way to anchor layers of lightweight insulating fill between sheets of home-woven plain fabric. The lines

of stitching trapped pockets of air making the bedcoverings warmer and lighter. Fine cotton fabric was favored as it was both durable and washable. The stitching patterns became more and more elaborate and accomplished quilters were welcome guests in any home.

By 1840, machine-made fabric became widely available and women, freed from the time consuming chores of spinning and weaving, could use their creative talents in beautifying their quilts. Piecing together scraps of coloured cloth into regular patterns of repetitive blocks made striking quilts especially when enhanced by swirling lines of quilting stitching. Sample blocks were exchanged and passed on from mother to daughter. Later printed patterns of block designs were available in magazines. See www.womenfolk.com

Lately there has been a resurgence of interest in handmade quilts. Judy Bacheldeet thinks quilting bees came to the Georgeville community around 1982; meeting regularly in the winter months in Joan Murray's home. At first, quilting was done in the traditional way using a quilting frame, but a variety of techniques have been used in the 30-year continuous span of quilting afternoons. The beautiful quilts are raffled each year with the proceeds going to charity.



The Foresters Plaque

This iron plaque (probably dating back to the 1880s) was found in 1937 during some repairs to Frances Evans farmhouse and lay forgotten in a cupboard until John Boynton rescued it and brought it to the attention of the Georgeville Historical Society. The letters IOF stand for Independent Order of Foresters which was, and still is, an insurance company and fraternal benefit society providing assistance and support to its members in times of hardship. For

example it has a flourishing student scholarship program and supports childrens hospitals and other community projects.

There is a number at the bottom which probably denoted the Georgeville branch of the Foresters; we know that Nathan Beach was a staunch member of the local board, or Court. Probably this plaque was displayed outside the house or barn where it served an important function. At some period the Foresters were the local fire brigade and would send out horse-drawn pumper wagons in cases of fire, but if the farmer was not a member and displaying his Forester Plaque, the wagon drove by without stopping.

On the occasion of the 2011 Christmas Barn Service, Georgeville Historical Society was very happy to return the plaque to its rightful place in the restored Beechwood barn and house and into the safekeeping of the Coallier family. The plaque is home again.

The Final Stretch

John Boynton conducted a tour of the remaining part of Magoon's Point road on August 10th 2011. It started at the MacPherson property where the current owner, Alison d'Anglejan graciously showed the group through the house. It was built for Alexander McPherson ca.1867. His son Charles A.K.MacPherson built the covered bridge at the Narrows as well as the New Camperdown Hotel. Across the road was the farm of Nathan Beach, mill owner, farmer, quarry operator, land speculator and Georgeville's most notable building contractor. The large mansion "Beechwood" he built for himself burned down in 1918 and was replaced by the smaller house in which Frances Evans lived for many years. The old barn has been restored and is still a handsome landmark. (See the Winter 2011 GHS Newsletter.)

The next stop was at Taylor Brook and the house of John Perkins, built in 1824, which may have housed the Blake's Mills School in the 1830s. The Blakes established gristmills and sawmills there before 1818; they were later owned by William Taylor, who gave his name to the brook.

Driving up Austin Hill, on the left was the extensive property known as "Woodlands". It was first settled by David Jewett, bought by William Wood in 1863 and then by Robert Lindsay whose descendents still own parts of the property.

Across the road on the right is a Robert Shore Milnes lot, bought in 1823 by Abram Blake, the original settler. It was subsequently owned by Daniel Austin, from 1850 to 1877 and later by George Silvester from 1931 to 1980. Their farm house and barn stood on a smaller plot of land across the road on the site now owned by Valerie Pasztor. Fire has destroyed most of the original house but old fieldstone walls in the cellar show part of the original footprint.

After the crest of the hill where the road begins its descent into the village down Bullock Hill, the small house built in 1892 by carpenter Hugh Clark may be seen on the right. It was for many years the home of Victor Robinson and his large family. Later, Lucille Delorme lived there and her family still owns it.

The property north of the Lindsay's originally designated Lot 2d in Range 1, was bought by William Bullock in 1823 and remained in his family until 1861 when most of it was purchased by John Murray. He designed, and Nathan Beach built, the mansion he named "Dunkeld" in 1862. Upon John Murray's death in 1905 the estate was divided among his three children: William, Agnes and Katherine. Later, William acquired Agnes' share and lived in "Dunkeld" with his family until the property was sold approximately 20 years ago to the Southerlands.

The tour ended here. Information about the houses within the village of Georgeville may be found in the booklets of the series "Heart of the Village"

John Boynton

This GHS Newsletter is prepared by Valerie Pasztor. Historical stories about our region are always welcome. Send to valerie.pasztor@mcgill.ca