

Société d'histoire de Georgeville

Georgeville Historical Society

Newsletter - Summer 2013

DATES TO REMEMBER SUMMER 2013

*Saturday June 29
Canada Day Parade*

*1 pm

*Sunday July 7
21st AGM & Talk
Murray Memorial Hall at 2 pm*

*Wednesday July 24
(July 25 in case of rain)
Walkabout and picnic
featuring
The GHS Challenge
Meet at Murray Memorial Hall 10 am*

*Wednesday August 14
(August 15 in case of rain)
The churches of Georgeville
& Fitch Bay
Car pool from St. George's car park*

*10 am

*Fogg House cellar hole
work party
Meet at St. George's car park
Date T.B.A. at AGM*

Exploring the world of the great estates

The GHS has long wished to invite a guest speaker to explore the world of the first Montrealers who built summer retreats in the late 1850s and early '60s on the lakeshore south of the village.

Such Montrealers as the eminent jurist Charles Dewey Day, who in 1858 began to create the 308-acres estate he named Glenbrook; the banker Alexander Molson, who a few years later assembled his neighbouring property, Fern Hill; the insurance magnate William Murray, who installed his son John on the working farm that eventually became Dunkeld; and the wine merchant Henry Chapman who in 1864 built Belmere Hall. Just two years later, the Chapmans sold it to Hugh Allan, who was on his way to becoming the richest man in Canada.

For our annual meeting on Sunday, July 7, we are delighted to announce our wish is fulfilled. Our guest speaker will be Jody Robinson, a newly-minted MA in history from the University of Sherbrooke, who brings authority and verve to the subject. A native townshipper, Jody has combined her graduate studies with her job as archivist of the Eastern Townships Resource Centre since 2006. She will base her talk on her recently completed thesis, "The loveliest lake in the New Dominion: Montreal villégiateurs on Lake Memphremagog, 1860-1914."

The Nathan Beach Award

Two years ago, the Society established an award to 'show appreciation for people or groups who have been responsible for conservation of our built heritage.' The plaque listing the award winners may be viewed in the Trophy Window of the Hall. The award winner this year will be announced and the plaque presented prior to the AGM.

The AGM

A brief - yes, a very short, business meeting will follow the talk.

Which are the village's oldest buildings?

The GHS will offer a definitive account

Last June the *Montreal Gazette* published a splendid photo of the Joshua Copp house (long the residence of the late Joan Murray, now owned by Jacques Valiquette). The caption and accompanying headline described it as "the oldest house in Georgeville", built in 1815. Wrong, alas, on both counts.

One of the glories of Georgeville is the number and quality of its early 19th century buildings. To help keep the record straight, and give our oldest buildings the respect they deserve, the GHS will present a definitive account of when they were built and the circumstances that attended their building. This we will do at a walkabout and picnic on Wednesday, July 24.

Meanwhile, to whet your appetite, we are announcing a contest, open to everyone, entitled "*The GHS Challenge: Can You Name Georgeville's Oldest Buildings?*" The grand first prize: dinner for two at Maison McGowan, courtesy of Maison McGowan.

An entry form is included with this newsletter and additional copies are available at the Library and Studio Georgeville. The rules are simple. On one side of the form, we list all of the village's surviving 19th century buildings, in alphabetical order of the names of their owners or residents.

Turn the page over, and you will see a list of ten dates, beginning with the year 1814. You are invited to match buildings from the first list with the dates in the second and thus list the village's ten oldest buildings in the order of the year they were built.

You will gain extra marks if, in the case of houses, you are able to include the name of the person or family for whom a house was built. For this you may find it helpful to consult the volumes of *The Heart of a Village*, available at the Library or Studio Georgeville. But be forewarned: names and dates drawn from it may not in every case be dependable; similarly, names and dates that appear on some of the buildings may not be accurate. Some inspired guesswork will be necessary.

When you have filled in your entry, please post it in the box available for that purpose at the Library or Studio Georgeville or mail it to John Boynton, 59, Chemin Magoon Point, Georgeville, JOB 1T0.

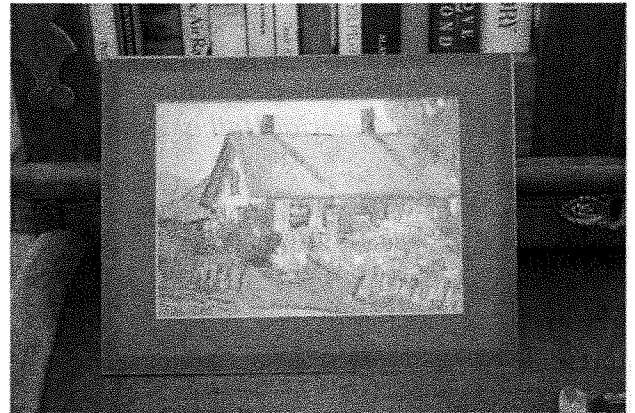
The deadline for entries is Wednesday, July 17. Prize winners will be announced at our walkabout on July 24. We suggest you bring a picnic lunch.

Tidying up after a house long gone

While the *GHS Challenge* is focused on 19th century buildings in Georgeville that have survived the ravages of time, we are also interested in tracing the story of houses that are no longer with us.

Along roadsides outside the village, you can occasionally come across a fair-sized hole in the ground, strewn with a rubble of stones – the cellar hole of an early homesteader's cabin. Some are exactly where you would expect to find them, since they appear as dwellings, with the homesteaders' names attached, on the Gray Map of 1863.

Many will be surprised to learn there is just such a hole in the ground in the heart of the village, hidden by a thick growth of shrubs across the road from St. George's Church. It is the site of a one and a half-storey house built in the early 1830s. Its most notable owner was George Washington Fogg (1820 – 1885), the builder and captain of the *Mountain Maid*, and later captain of the *Lady of the Lake*. The house was demolished in 1949 by John Leney, and replaced by a new house further back from the road. It, too, was later demolished.



Old photograph of a painting of the the Fogg house

This summer, with the approval of the owners of the property, the GHS proposes to tidy the site of the Fogg house by removing extraneous growth, and identify it with a suitable marker. If you would like to help with this project, we will have a sign-up sheet available at the GHS annual meeting on Sunday, July 7.

Georgeville honours John Boynton

John Boynton's 90th birthday was celebrated in style by the Community Association on 21 October 2012. People gathered in Murray Memorial Hall to toast John's health and wish him well as he blew out birthday candles (one for each decade) on the traditional cake. Then we walked over to Copp's Square near the War Memorial where a young tree had been set in place ready for the symbolic planting



John vigorously blows out his birthday candles



John's Sugar Maple will provide shade on Copp's Square for many summers to come.

A short biography

Born in Georgeville, John is the great-grandson of Abraham Boynton, who settled on the Boynton farm south of Georgeville in 1839. Another great-grandfather, Deacon John Christie, arrived in Stanstead with a group of pioneer Scots emigrants in 1830, and settled on the lakeshore at Magoon's Point.

The Boyntons and Christies were strong non-conformist church people; as a result, John grew up, and still lives, in one of Georgeville's oldest houses, next door to the 1891 Methodist Church, whose site was donated by his forebears. He himself may accurately be described as the mainstay both of that church (now the United Church) and St. George's Episcopal Church where he serves as a lay reader.

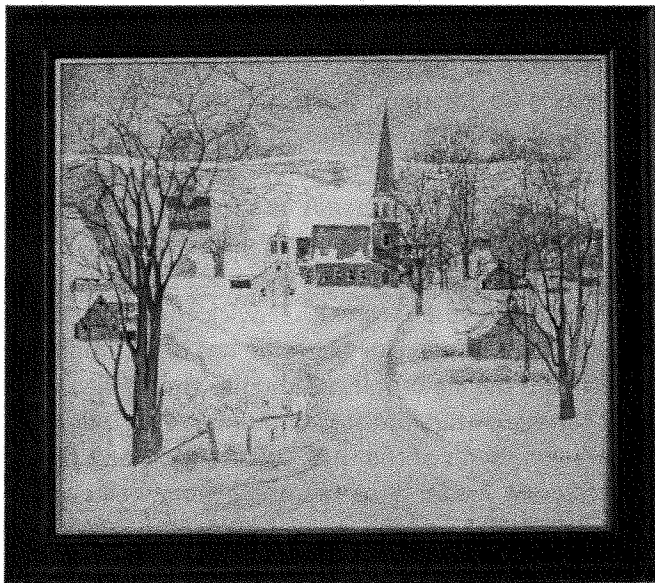
John served overseas as a radar officer with the RCAF during WWII and, after graduating from the University of New Brunswick, went on to a forestry career in Quebec and New Brunswick. In 1979 he returned to Georgeville, where he has been intimately involved in the life of the community ever since: as a long-time secretary of the Community Association, a founding director of the GHS, secretary of cemetery associations, leader of nature and history walks also cemetery tours, and the inspiration behind floats in the Canada Day parade. His house is a regular port of call for innumerable visitors in search of information about their ancestors in the region.

Given his family background, it is understandable that John's meticulous research into Georgeville's micro history began with trawling through notarial deeds and old issues of the *Stanstead Journal* to put together the story of his family and the village churches. Of course, one thing always leads to another in historical research. In John's case those countless hours spent at the Registry Office and in archives led to the publication, between 1987 and 1995, of five volumes of a series titled *Heart of a Village*, detailing the history of many of Georgeville's old houses, mostly written by him.

In May 2012, the Municipality of Stanstead Township selected John as Volunteer of the Year and honored him with a reception at the Mairie.

Elementary, my dear Watson

Many will have noticed the intriguing painting - actually a photographic reproduction of an oil painting printed on canvas-textured paper - of the school house and St. George's Church now hanging in the main hall of the Murray Memorial Hall. It is a gift from Paul Bannerman. Although the painting is unsigned, it is by Sydney Steele, a gifted artist and mother of the late Joan Murray. Mrs. Steele copied the scene from a photograph.



Sydney Steele's winter scene of the village

Looking at the painting, viewers may wonder: what is the date of the scene it portrays? Most of us would be stumped for an answer. John Boynton, on the other hand, studied the painting for a few moments and announced: "The winter of 1892 - 93."

How could he tell? By the presence in the painting of one detail and the absence of another. The detail that is there (to the left) is a glimpse of J.E. Davidson's boat building shop. It was completed, according to the *Stanstead Journal*, in November 1892. What is missing is a chimney at the rear of St. George's, for the wood furnace that, according to church records, was installed a few months later. Therefore the photo that Mrs. Steele copied must have been taken in the interim. Elementary, my dear Watson.

A tour of the churches in Georgeville and Fitch Bay

We will meet at St. George's Church car park 10 am Wednesday morning, August 14, to arrange a car pool and then we will drive in a cavalcade from one church to the next. At each location there will be a short talk about the history and architecture of the building.

The Bigelow Garden, at 20 Brimming with New Energy

The historical society's Bigelow Pioneer Garden will celebrate its 20th anniversary this summer as an important visual and cultural asset to the community. The time has come for extensive renovation of the garden and the group of volunteers who have so diligently cared for it are bringing a renewed sense of purpose and energy to the task.

In July a team led by GHS director Martin Bosch will replace the fence posts and stabilize the fence and arbours. Toby Rochester has already repaired and restained the three garden benches. With Jacques Valiquette's cooperation and approval, the weedy trees and underbrush around the outside of the garden will soon be removed.

Suzanne Marcil is the volunteer in charge of the planting team, whose goal is to maintain the design laid down by Katherine Mackenzie of an authentic early 19th century homestead garden. In this the team is greatly assisted by a record of the plants chosen by Katherine, meticulously maintained by Valerie Pasztor. "This is a tremendous amount of work," Suzanne says. "While a fair number of the plants are no longer in the garden, we have a wonderful basis with which to work to replenish the beds."

Each of the volunteers has chosen to work on one of the garden's four thematic beds - culinary plants, medicinal herbs, plants for household use, and biblical plants. If you would like to join the group of volunteers, please contact Aileen Desbarats

(aileen.desbarats@axion.ca).

Contributions for plants and materials would be most welcome. A plant and second-hand garden book sale to raise funds for the garden is planned for the village's Canada Day celebrations on June 29. Please do drop by.

Review of GHS activities in the summer of 2012

The GHS Canada Day float

Last year, 2012, was the two hundredth anniversary of the War of 1812 and our float depicted one of the musters of Capt. Moses Copp's Militia Company at Copp's Ferry (as Georgeville was then known). These gatherings were usually convivial occasions with more consumption of drink and refreshments than serious preparations for repelling invaders.



The jolly lads of the Moses Copp's Militia Company enjoying a convivial muster.

The Annual GHS Talk

Professor Desmond Morton, Canada's foremost military historian was invited to present the Annual GHS Talk in Murray Memorial Hall last summer and he held us all spellbound.

He emphasized that the Southern Eastern Townships region along the border was sparsely populated and isolated geographically from Montreal and the rest of Lower Canada. The British Treasury was loath to spend much on maintaining a regular army in this indefensible region. Consequently the responsibility for defence was assigned to local militia officers who had to recruit local volunteers from farmers often with divided loyalties. Many were recent incomers from the American colonies who came north to take up free

land. They were supposed to muster once per year, sometimes no-one showed up!

There was more interest in smuggling cattle rounded up in the borderland forests. One foray south across the border brought back 100 head of cattle, providing much needed meat for the struggling communities.

Historical Tour of the East Road July 2012

There are several noteworthy and surprisingly large farm houses along East Road, and the road itself was always important as a good route for getting produce to and from the farms. John Scott, Doreen (Keet) Moffat, Mary Hatfield and Bernard Drew gave commentaries.

GHS Village Tour August 2012

John Boynton was a knowledgeable guide taking us around the village, stopping at his favorite houses. It was a very hot day, but we were all keen to learn more about these lovely homes.

Both tours were well attended.

Stories and photos for future *Newsletters* are always welcome.

valerie.pasztor@mcgill.ca

This newsletter is prepared by Valerie Pasztor assisted by John Scott and Christian Hurlow. Photographs by Judy Bachelder