



Société d'histoire de Georgeville

Georgeville Historical Society

Newsletter - spring 2016

DATES TO REMEMBER, SUMMER, 2016

Saturday, July 2

Annual Canada Day Parade, starting at 1 pm. The Georgeville Historical Society plans to sponsor a float.

Sunday, July 10 at 2 pm

Annual General Meeting of the Georgeville Historical Society at the Community Hall. This year is the 150th anniversary of St. George's Anglican Church. As guest speaker, Dr. Valerie Pasztor, a Past President and Director of the GHS, will provide a research-based presentation on the history of the church.

Tuesday, July 19, 2 to 5 pm

Historical Artefact Fair. People are invited to bring historical items of interest to the Community Hall, where they will be displayed, and tell a story about the significance of the piece. The most important criterion is that the artefact being presented must have some connection to local history. Examples of interesting

objects could be books, flags, furniture, art, household items, clothing, leisure and sports articles.

Wednesday, August 10

Guided Tour of the Bridal Path

Stephen Moore, a director of the GHS, will lead a tour and provide a descriptive commentary of the Magoon Point Bridal Path. Historically, bridal paths were shortcuts where people would journey through more rugged terrain to get to a desired destination. Nowadays, these paths are often more attractive places for a leisurely walk. Contact Stephen Moore at (819) 562-8036.

Throughout the Summer

Don't forget to take visiting friends and family to the beautiful Bigelow Pioneer Garden any time this summer.

GHS Research Projects

Stephen Moore is currently researching the **historical ownership of properties north of Georgeville**. This research may reveal historic information that otherwise might be lost. The hope is to hear stories of interest about the people who settled this area and made a significant impact on its development.

Disappearing Roads. Members of the Georgeville Historical Society are videotaping, photographing and documenting some of the country roads that are now disappearing. Some of these roads were once occupied by settlers' homes and barns. Some were a rugged attempt to get produce to market and some were surveyed roads in areas that were simply unsuitable for successful settlement.

GHS OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Executive

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| President | Deane Moffat |
| Vice-president | Judy Bachelder |
| Secretary | Christian Hurlow |
| Treasurer | Diane Partington |

Directors

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Past-president | Valerie Pasztor |
| Members Emeritus | Adelaide Atkin |
| | John Boynton |
| Martin Bosch | Maureen Cameron |
| David Cox | Aileen Desbarats |
| Heather Kovacs | Joyce McTavish |
| Stephen Moore | John Scott |
| Lorne Waid Jr. | |

THE CREATION OF THE BIGELOW PIONEER GARDEN

[The following article was written by the late Katherine Mackenzie and Maurice Devlen in 1997].

The Bigelow Pioneer Garden was named for Levi Bigelow, an early settler who owned a hotel in the village for passengers waiting to cross Lake Memphremagog on the stage coach route between Boston and Montreal. The garden represents, as nearly as possible, a garden of the early days, that is, in the early eighteen hundreds when the pioneers started to arrive and the village started to grow, and although rich in blacksmith shops and stables, lacked such conveniences as medical supplies, food shops, clothing outlets and so forth.

The garden was started in 1993 by the newly-formed Georgeville Historical Society, to be well established by the time of the Bicentennial in 1997. The site for the garden was very kindly donated by Joan Murray, part of her lawn facing the village square. The garden is surrounded by a wooden fence, not for decoration, but as it would have been in the old days, to protect it from small animals coming out of the woods and also the family cow.

The garden was opened in July of 1993; Arlene Probyn cut the ribbon. She is a descendant of the Rexford family, which first settled north of the village in 1794. The family was also the last to inhabit the Bigelow inn before it was torn down.



The Bigelow Pioneer Garden as it appears today.

Life in those early days was, of course, very different from today. For instance, bread was often made from rising hops and then thickened with potatoes. Flour was hard to get and expensive. Soap was made by running off lye from a barrel of ashes and then adding fat from bacon, pork or any available source, and the whole mixture was then placed in a barrel in the sun and the liquids allowed to evaporate. Candles were a problem because few settlers killed enough beef, sheep or hogs to collect the tallow. Boiled water and salt saved green vegetables for winter use. Introduced to maple syrup, the pioneers quickly adopted it as their main sweetener.

The average diet was salt pork, potatoes and bread for breakfast, salt pork and potatoes for dinner, pork and potatoes for supper. Children were usually given a porridge made of Indian cornmeal. All clothes had to be made at home, including shoes, which were really moccasins. The clothes were made from flax, grown in most gardens. There was a complicated procedure for turning flax into linen. The procedure included “breaking,” “combing,” “swingling,” “towing,” and finally, the distaff, a “buzzing linen-wheel” that made music in the old kitchens. Producing two double skeins a day was excellent and very hard work. Shirts, sheets and dresses were all made from the cloth.

When the early settlers came over the seas from many different countries, the women were said, in many cases, to bring their favourite plants, in seed form, in their pockets. Some of these were for beauty, some for health, some for diet and so on. Thinking of this when we started the garden, we went around to the oldest families and asked for seeds from any original or even old plants. We were given cuttings from an old and treasured white rose, hops from an 1800 farm house, long gone, but the hops grew on and now flourish in the garden. We were given primroses from the Rainbow House in Georgeville, recently the Auberge, tiger-lillies, peonies, Japanese anemones from the old Colby garden, all brought out from England, wild sweet peas found in an abandoned field and a one-hundred-year-old foxglove and Glomerata brought from England.

The idea for the garden was to get as many people as possible involved. Many were most generous. The land where the garden was to be established is low land and very wet; it is really below the level of the lake. Wayne McTavish, owner of a back hoe and plough, removed the grass, dug down and levelled, laid down a layer of crushed stone, then covered that with material to keep the topsoil from sifting through. We then seeded the topsoil with winter rye, went home and waited for Spring. In the meantime, Albert Elliot donated enough boards to make a fence right around the garden and we stored them in Richie Camber's barn for the winter.



A watercolour rendering of the Union Hotel which occupied the site of what is now the Bigelow Pioneer Garden. The owner was Levi Bigelow.

In the following May, the Hornby family, five of them, first of all planted 33 posts, 7 feet high, delivered by Jacques Valiquette, and then put on the boards. The fence was finished on Sunday morning and, at noon, many people gathered to cheer the family on, and then all joined together to enjoy a glass of wine, cheese and sandwiches. The garden was launched and on its way.

Soon, a group of willing painters turned up and stained the boards and helped lay out the garden paths. Plants started to arrive; the Straesses brought masses of day lillies for outside the fence. The Lynch-Stauntons gave rose bushes. Niels Jensen took us to the old Roy farm in Tomifobia where there grew a stand of yellow iris, now in the swamp outside the garden, kindly donated by the Roy family. We dug up hops from the Caleb White farm house, built in 1801, below the Elliot's house on the Beebe Road. Holland Gardening installed an underground watering system and Hood Gambrel ploughed in the winter rye. Cecil Jeffery made the arch leading into the garden and Sandy Mclean donated a rose to

climb over it. Doug Paterson made a trellis for the hops and it shelters the lists of plants and their uses, in French, English and Latin, carefully made by Marie Josee Laurin and Nicole Ferguson.

We decided to have a garden tour in Georgeville to raise money to buy all the plants we wanted to fill the garden. Stuart Robertson kindly announced the tour in his column in the *Montreal Gazette* for Wednesday, July 7, 1994. Stuart gave a lively garden talk to start the tour off and a box lunch was provided by Barbara Gibson and her crew of helpers. The village was swarming with visitors, 110 of them eating their lunch in the park, by the lake, or wherever they chose. Franny Williams drove a shuttle to the garden, some directed traffic in the village and some manned the Bigelow Garden. At \$20 a head, we were definitely in the money.

Now we were ready to plant the garden. Around the fence is a bed that grows old favourites, as far as possible those the settlers brought with them. The centre of the garden has four sections, divided by paths. There are household plants, culinary plants, Bible plants and medicinal plants.

THE BEGINNING OF THE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OF GEORGEVILLE

The story on the following page first appeared in the Summer, 1996, issue of *The Georgeville Enterprise*, the forerunner of the current *Georgeville Historical Society Newsletter*.

As the article points out, its roots go back to 1905 when 26 people, villagers and summer residents, formally established “the association for a park or square in the village of Georgeville,” and took over ownership of two lots that comprise the village green. Today's Community Association is the direct descendant of this 1905 association



A current view of the Georgeville village green.

THE 26 FOUNDERS OF THE VILLAGE PARK

The 26 villagers and summer residents who came together to found "the association for a park or square in the village of Georgeville" are listed in the deeds for the property. As Georgeville prepares for its bicentennial, their names form a special honour roll in the history of the community. The group of 26:

- Rev. Samuel June Barrows, Boston clergyman, editor and social reformer who established "Birchbay" camp in 1889 and "Cedar Lodge" in 1899.
- Nathan A. Beach, the village's busiest contractor before the turn of the century who built Georgeville's Elephants Hotel and the Haskell Opera House in Stanstead.
- Alfred Wales ("Bertie") Bullock, a great-grandson of the pioneer settler William Bullock. He opened "Bullock's Department Store" in his father's boat-building shop and (in 1897) was editor of the original *Georgeville Enterprise*.
- Prof. Charles W. Colby, McGill historian and grandson of Stanstead's pioneer doctor, Moses French Colby, who bought lakeshore property at Winlock Bay in 1898.
- James Everett Davidson, house builder, municipal councillor and, among other activities, president of the Georgeville Progressive Crokinole Club.
- C. Handyside, a regular summer guest at "Cedar Cliffs".
- Oliver Hutchins, the village butcher who also carried the mail from Smith's Mills (Tomifobia) to Georgeville.
- Douglas V. Lindsay, a long-time member of the community whose father, Robert A. Lindsay, the chief accountant of Bank of Montreal, acquired "Woodlands" in 1873.
- William McGowan, Jr., like his father before him, a Georgeville-based customs officer for 20 years and owner of the boarding house "Cedar Cliffs".
- Henry J. Mudge, a Montreal insurance executive who occupied the "Wigwam" cottage near the Georgeville wharf formerly owned by his father-in-law Thomas McDuff, the late owner of the old Camperdown hotel.
- John B. Pearse, retired general manager of the South Boston Iron Company who built a summer home at what is now Glen Harbour.
- E. Goff Penny, a Montreal customs broker and M.P. for St. Lawrence (1890-1900) who built the steamer *Anthemis* in 1910.
- William Henry Rediker, a village butcher, blacksmith and carriage maker who also spent 23 years as a customs officer, many aboard the *Anthemis*.
- Harold M. Redpath, of the Redpath sugar family, a lakeshore resident whose Stanley Steamer automobile terrorized horses on the Magog road.
- Edythe Maude Routledge, a daughter of Sir Hugh Allan who spent most of her life on the family estate, "Belmere."
- E.S. Sanford, a summer resident from South Orange, N.J., who, like Harold Redpath, arrived in the village in an early Stanley Steamer.
- Ernest W. Sheldon, a caretaker of the Owl's Head Hotel (formerly the Mountain House) who came to Georgeville as farmer for E. Goff Penny and later owned and operated "Ellabank" (now the Auberge).
- Nora Sheriff, a daughter of the Camperdown's Thomas McDuff who married an Alabama lumber merchant and built "Bonhard" (now the Lambert house) in 1909.
- Rev. F.G. Vial, the pastor of St. George's Church from 1901 to 1906.
- Miles L. Williams, a Montreal engineer who in the 1930s helped to acquire the old red school house as Georgeville's first Community Hall.

There were six others in the group – C.H. Bogue, Renfrew Canford, C.E. Davis, Ernest Mark, E.C. Perkins and L.F. Welch – whom we cannot identify. The *Enterprise* would appreciate hearing from any readers who can.

CANTON DE STANSTEAD'S HERITAGE TRAIL/UN CIRCUIT PATRIMONIAL

The official launch of the Heritage Trail will take place Sunday, July 3, at 2pm at the municipal parking lot off Carré Copp in Georgeville. You are invited to join Mayor Francine Caron Markwell in the celebration of this new attraction.

The following note was received from the Canton:

Welcome to Stanstead Township, a community steeped in history. We invite you to follow our trail, open year-round, stopping at five stations along the way, as you picture the past and enjoy the spectacular panoramic views across the countryside. Start either in Fitch Bay at the Town Hall, 778 Sheldon Road, or at Carré Copp in Georgeville and follow the trail. A map is available at either of the two main starting points or on the municipal website, <www.cantonstanstead.ca>.

Soyez les bienvenus au Canton de Stanstead, une communauté riche en histoire, à laquelle nous sommes fiers d'appartenir. Nous vous invitons à suivre notre parcours patrimonial de cinq arrêts, à remonter dans le temps et à profiter des paysages panoramiques exceptionnels sur la campagne environnante.

Commencer au Carré Copp à Georgeville ou à la mairie au 778 chemin Sheldon pour faire le circuit de 21 kilomètres, à

parcourir en voiture ou en vélo. Le circuit est ouvert à l'année longue. La carte marie, au des différents arrêts est disponible à la marie, ou Carré Copp ou sur le site internet de la municipalité, <www.cantonstanstead.ca>.

FORGOT TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

You can join the Georgeville Historical Society or renew your membership -- \$10 for an individual, \$15 for a family – by sending your cheque, made out to the Georgeville Historical Society, to Judy Bachelder at 4600 Chemin Georgeville, Canton de Stanstead, QC. J0B 1T0.

Stories and photos for future newsletters are always welcome.

Contact: davidcox@axion.ca.

This Newsletter was prepared by David R. Cox. Photographs by Judy Bachelder, Suzanne Marcil and Jacques Valiquette.