



December 2002 Newsletter

MERRY CHRISTMAS & A HAPPY NEW YEAR

The December meeting of the Lost Villages Historical Society will be held on Monday, December 9, 2002, at the Forbes Memorial Reading Room, at 7:30 p.m. As has been the custom at our December meetings, refreshments will be served. The social committee will convene this event, and the executive hopes that you will mark your calendar and plan to attend. As well, don't forget to bring your flashlight, as lighting at the east end of the park is minimal. Note, though, that the Christmas lights have brightened the park considerably.

PROGRAM: The program for the December meeting will be the usual "Show and Tell". This has always been a popular activity, and many interesting and unusual artifacts are displayed. We hope that you will bring along a "treasure", or something which you cherish. The stories connected to the artifacts are always fascinating. We hope that you will make our "Show and Tell" evening a success.

CAROLS AT THE ADVENT

Due to the overwhelming response to our third annual Christmas Advent Service at the Sandtown Advent Christian Church, "Laudamus", the performing name for the Brown family singers, will return for a repeat performance on Sunday, December 8, 2002, at 7:00 p.m. In words and music, they will present "Carols at the Advent". A reception will follow in the Forbes Memorial Reading Room. Seating tickets may be obtained by calling The Picket Fence Craft and Gift Shoppe, 534-3888, or "Crafter'z Market", 534-8445. We appreciate the kindness and generosity of Bill, Rosemary, Felicity and Emily Brown in returning to the Lost Villages Museum, for a repeat performance.

The Sandtown Advent Christian Church has been decorated for the occasion, and such old favourite carols as "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel", "O Little Town of

Bethlehem", "O Holy Night", "Joy to the World" and "Silent Night", are included in the program.

We thank Cornwall's "Standard-Freeholder for the splendid coverage of this event, both before and after. Our hats are off to Kathleen Hay and Rachel Labreque, for their interest and help with this event. Both reporters have a very soft spot in their hearts for the work and volunteerism of the members of our historical society. The next time you meet one of these fine ladies, feel free to thank them for their work, on our behalf. Also, Alf Lafave, Editor, is one of our biggest supporters. Thanks Alf, Kathleen and Rachel!

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the year 2002 draws to a close, it is time to wish all members and "friends" a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. With this being our 25th Anniversary Year for the historical society, and the 10th Anniversary of the museum site, I wish to thank all those who made 2002 an outstanding year in society and museum work. We have established our presence in the community, and left a permanent mark. There is much work ahead, however, by working together, we shall continue to showcase our volunteerism in the community. Thanks a million for all your fine work and efforts. Have a wonderful holiday season. Your attendance at our meetings is appreciated.

BITS AND PIECES

Tim Gault was the "Chief" cook, at the annual "Bike-a-thon", held on October 17, 2002. In the November newsletter of the society, his name was inadvertently missed, and we apologize for this oversight. In fact, Tim's participation in all the barbecues held at the museum site in 2002 is appreciated. As a new member, he has certainly contributed to the success of the Lost Villages Historical Society. Thanks Tim!

Alex McGillivray, Alan Rafuse, and Donnie Alguire, scurrying to beat Old Man Winter, repaired and installed the storm windows on the Forbes Memorial Reading Room. When we acquired the building, two storm windows were missing, and replacements had to be found. Although the replacements are not exactly like the originals, they will certainly do for the winter of 2002-03. However, we must continue the search for storm windows which match the originals. Any help would

be appreciated. Following summer visits and picnics at the Lost Villages Museum, the following organizations made financial contributions to the society. We are appreciative of the generosity extended by St. John's Presbyterian Church, Cornwall and the St. Lawrence Branch of the United Empire Loyalist Association.

Thank you to David Hill, Jane Craig, Harold Snetsinger, George Hickey, Alan Rafuse, Joan McEwan, and Rosemary Rutley, for sharing stories of the "life and times" of the Lost Villages with members of the production team from Preface Theatre, Toronto. A "special" thank you to Rosemary for making the arrangements, and providing the refreshments to the team members. The following members and "friends" of the Lost Villages Historical Society represented their "Lost Villages" well in Jim Brownell's Encore Seniors' class at St. Lawrence College, on November 22, 2002. Larry Welch, George and Nancy Hickey, Harold Snetsinger, and Eric Rice told some fascinating tales about their villages to a captivated audience. It's time to get their stories into print!

On Thursday, November 14, 2002, Jim Brownell received the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, at a presentation held at the Best Western Parkway Inn, Cornwall. He was one of twenty citizens from the Federal Riding of Stormont, Dundas and Charlottenburg to receive the medal. Jim wishes to thank the Township of South Stormont, and the Lost Villages Historical Society for the nomination.

A CHRISTMAS STORY FROM MOULINETTE PUBLIC SCHOOL

The following story was provided to our historical society by David Hill. It was written by Harwood Nesbitt, son of Margaret (Mullin) Nesbitt and the late Ellery Nesbitt, and former resident of Moulinette.

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS STORY

I sat in the fourth row from the window side of Mrs. Ellis's grade 4 class, five desks back from the blackboard. I remember clearly my desk location. From the desk, I couldn't walk up to Mrs. Ellis's desk. I had to walk past the side of her desk on the way to the blackboard. The walk past Mrs. Ellis's desk could be a very long one, if homework was not done the night before.

Mrs. Ellis was a silver gray haired teacher's teacher, called by only a very few by her first name, Annie. Most people who lived in Moulinette, a small Seaway Valley town in eastern Ontario, called Mrs. Ellis, Mrs. Ellis.

Now it was Christmas in Mrs. Ellis's grade 4 class. Christmas was a marvellous time of wonderment and excitement for all. The classroom windows were decorated with fantastic creations from our grade 4 class. A huge tree was in the corner, decorated with a lifetime of memories from previous grade 4 classes.

This, however, was not the highlight of our class. This was not what we all had worked for. This was not what all our class waited for with excited expectation. In Mrs. Ellis's class, the highlight of the Christmas season was when she read our Christmas cards at the end of our last day before we all went on holidays. Our parents also knew this was an annual event, for they too had been in Mrs. Ellis's grade 4 class.

I don't mean Christmas cards bought at a mall card shop or corner store. I mean our grade 4 cards. I would collect the Christmas cards of years past, arrange myself at the kitchen table, and carefully scrape off all the sparkly stuff from cards sent to us from people I never knew. I would put all the different colours carefully in large soup spoons, and gently place the sparkly stuff on my well placed glue. The glue bottles in those days had a funny rubber thing on top that never worked. This year, my Christmas card was a Christmas tree. I mean a big Christmas tree, with big sparkly balls, lots of big sparkly balls. Boy was it a big tree, and did it ever have big sparkly balls. **IT WAS MY BIGGEST AND BEST CARD EVER!**

All our grade 4 cards were stacked neatly on Mrs. Ellis's desk. I bet they were two feet high. I could see my card about half way down in the pile. I knew it was my card. I could see the corner of it, sticking out of the envelope. I had a little trouble folding it over my big card. The glue didn't stick as well in those days, as it does now.

All the presents were opened in class, cake and home baked treats were gone, games played and it was time for the cards. I was so proud of that card. Did I tell you it was a big one? I wanted to be a big boy that day. I wanted Mrs. Ellis to know I was a big boy, and I was going to show Mrs. Ellis just how big I was. I signed my card, Merry Xmas Mrs. Ellis, Master H. Nesbitt.

Slowly Mrs. Ellis went through our cards. Each time Mrs. Ellis opened them carefully with her gentle hands, each time looking over her glasses with a smile, each time with a comment that only the card maker could understand and each time with a shy returned smile. Then my card, you know the big one with a Christmas tree, with big sparkly balls. Yes, I got the look, the smile. I was so proud. Then suddenly, Mrs. Ellis didn't put my card on the growing pile of other cards. She gently, with a smile, set it beside all the others. Was mine the best? Was

I special? I don't even remember the comments of all the remaining cards. I was so excited.

All the cards were read, looks were given, comments made. There were no more cards left in the pile. Mrs. Ellis's hand slowly moved towards my card, set apart from all the others. She was looking at me, straight in the eye. Then, with that gentle understanding voice that I will never forget. "Harwood, would you please come up to my desk?" I stood there looking up into eyes that just may have a small tear. How big Master H. Nesbitt felt. Mrs. Ellis was holding my card up in front of the whole class. She had selected mine above all the others. All the hours at the kitchen table, scraping and gluing had paid off. Mine was the biggest, mine was the best. These firm gentle words Mrs. Ellis said to me, a long time ago, have remained with me to this day. "This is a wonderful card Harwood." Then she leaned over whispering oh so quietly that I could only hear. "Harwood, Christmas is spelled CHRISTMAS, and we all should try to keep Christ in Christmas.

Master H. Nesbitt has received hundreds of cards over the years, and many have been signed Merry Xmas. I have often wondered if they would have had a grade 4 teacher like Mrs. Ellis. Would they have tried harder to keep Christ in Christmas. I have always tried, Mrs. Ellis. Have a wonderful holiday!!!

A HISTORY OF MOULINETTE, by William H. Ellis

With Harwood Nesbitt's recollections of Christmas in Mrs. Annie Ellis's class at Moulinette Public School, we provide a historical account of Moulinette, written by Annie's husband, William H. (Billy) Ellis. This historical account was given to Katie Mullin, many years ago, and we provide it for your enjoyment. Researchers to the Lost Village's website will find the details quite useful. This "first- erson" narrative gives an excellent account of Mr. Ellis's life in the "Lost Village" of Moulinette, for he was born in 1885, and died on November 26, 1970. His dad, William H. Ellis, was born in 1847, and died in 1922.

HISTORY OF MOULINETTE

Among the many villages affected by the recent flooding in this district, due to the building of the Hydro Electric Power Project, was my home town, Moulinette. I can recall the flooding of a part of the St. Lawrence River, may I say a portion of the river, which was created into a lake, (Bergin Lake), so called and named after the member of Stormont County, in the person of the late Dr. Darby Bergin. This lake was approximately three miles in length and about one-half mile in width, and

was created by two dams, one at the head of Sheik's Island, sometimes called Sheik Island, and the second dam at the eastern end of the island.

This (Sheik's Island) was reached, only at that time, by a road from the Village of Moulinette through a culvert under the old Cornwall Canal and then by a roadway consisting of two bridges and the ordinary road connecting these bridges and then to the main shore of Sheik's Island. The two bridges, of which I speak, crossed over a flume, that is, a passage through which the water was carried to the water wheels which supplied the power for each of the mills of that day.

On the north side of the river, we had two mills, a saw mill and a grist mill (flour mill). This last mill was operated by my father, the late William H. Ellis of happy memory, and was owned by the late John G. Snetsinger. The other mill was run by the late John Snetsinger, a distant relative of the former man. This was a saw mill, and, during the year, was quite a busy mill, cutting up logs into all kinds of building materials, also into cedar shingles which were very much in use in that day.

I can recall, as a small boy, going over to this mill to meet my dad in the summer of 1894-95, and coming home with him when his day's work was over. During these two years, a farmer of Sheik's Island, Mr. Samuel Moss, got the idea of cultivating the bottom of the river, and, during these years, he had as nice a field of buckwheat as you would ever see. I can still see, through memory, the grain waving in the summer breezes.

This "Bergin Lake" was created to speed up the boats passing through the Cornwall Canal, and also to give

a deeper channel, and, thus, save the great amount of dredging to deepen the channel, as the old Cornwall Canal of that day was only nine or ten feet draft. On the north side of this part of the river, and on the island side, were the woolen and carding mills, owned and operated by the late Croydon Woods (Corrie). His home was situated near the Island road. These were all wiped out by the flooding of this lake (Bergin Lake), in that day, and a roadway was built by the government to the lower end of the island and across the eastern dam to a Swing Bridge over the Cornwall Canal to the Village of Mille Roches.

The flour mill and saw mill were later built in Moulinette. The flour mill was operated by MacPhee and Meader, and the saw mill was owned and operated by the late Alexander McGillis. His brother, Martin McGillis, took over and operated the flour mill for a period of years. At the west end of Sheik's Island we came to

the famous Long Sault Rapids, and, during the summer months, Passenger Steamers from Toronto and points along the river used to run the rapids almost daily, and nearly always had a great many passengers aboard. These steamers carried on down the river to Montreal, passing through Lachine, Cascades and Cedar Rapids, and, from Montreal, they changed to larger steamers to make the cruise down the river to Quebec City and down to the Saguenay River, and up this river to Cape Eternity. This was one of the most popular summer cruises of this era. This was in the days previous to the coming of the automobile. This convenience, of course, proved to be much more popular than the passenger vessels.

The Long Sault Rapids, of which I speak, was a great spot for fishermen and the men of the district often would spend much time at this spot. Night fishing was very popular, and was done mostly with the aid of torches (coal oil). Their catch consisted of Mulletts, Suckers, Pickerel, and the famous "Sturgeon", a fish that was very popular among fishermen and demanded a fairly good price. The fish would swim against the current, along the shore, and, with a spear or gaff, would land their catch on the shore. The farmer at the head of Sheik's Island, a William Sheets by name, was very proficient at this sport, with the result he was nicknamed "Sturgeon Bill".

The village of Moulinette of this day had two hotels, two general stores and a post office, two wharves on the water front, two churches and a cheese factory.

The wharves were where the steamers used to stop and take on their supply of wood, as this was their only fuel for their steam boilers. This was in the day before coal was used for the process of steam making. I can remember quite well the west wharf, where, as a young boy, I would like to go down and watch the boats taking on this wood, which would take about one to two hours, depending on the amount they would take.

A building on the wharf was used for storage of freight and merchandise, and part of it used for housing the caretaker, who would remain there always, as the boats would come in at all hours of the day. The caretaker of that day was "Many Vanalstine", and I can recall from memory his name being mentioned to my dad. A number of men were employed during the summer months, replacing these piles of wood after the boats would take on their quota of wood.

I might mention some of the men of that day, the late Mr. James McAvoy, Senior; Daniel Gallinger and Sons; "Scoot Brook"; Alexander Foley, Senior; George Anderson, and brother, James Anderson; and the Forsythe brothers. Near the

eastern section of the village, another wharf was built. This also was used for loading and unloading the boats of any freight and also to reload any wood and ties which were shipped to different points along the waterway, for building homes and railways. As we had no railroad station of that era, we had to rely on mail being brought in by carrier horse and buggy. This mail came in from the north, starting at Moose Creek, and passing through Avonmore, Northfield, Harrison's Corners, and in to Moulinette Post Office. A man, Stephen Flannigan, covered the mail route and a mail man from Moulinette, Mr. Forsythe (Chummy) brought the mail twice daily to Mille Roches Station. This carried on until the year 1906 or thereabouts, when a small station house was erected in Moulinette, and the people of this village owe a great "thank you" to the late John G. Snetsinger, who was instrumental in bringing this about.

We had two hotels in Moulinette in that day, one at the eastern end of the village, and another at the western part of the village, the Lion Hotel in the east, and "Pea Green" at the western end. This place was named after the colour of its "painting". It was quite a large building and had a very large ball, a "ballroom" it was called in that day, and was well patronized at the Easter and New Year's Balls. It also served for concerts and medicine shows, which were very popular with the people of this era.

Near the western part of the village, we had the Anglican Church. This building was built about the year 1834, by the Adam Dixson family, who were of United Empire Loyalist stock, and was built at this time to perpetuate the memory of the Dixson family. It was moved to Upper Canada Village, and now occupies a very prominent place with the other buildings moved there from the different places flooded out by the present Lake St. Lawrence, -the C.A. Robertson home from Maple Grove, the Moss home from Dickinson's Landing, Cook's Tavern from Aultsville, and many others from the flooded area. In all, the villages of Maple Grove, Old Mille Roches, Mille Roches, Moulinette, Dickinson's Landing, Wales, Farran's Point, Aultsville, and parts of Morrisburg and Iroquois were flooded out at the time. A clipping from our local paper, the Cornwall Standard-Freeholder, remarked it was one of the greatest mass evacuations of all times. This clipping, I am sorry to say, was mislaid during the course of our moving.

The village of Maple Grove had the Locks of Cornwall Canal, a hotel, and also a Carriage and Blacksmith Shop. This was operated by the late C.A. Robertson, and was very prosperous in these times. The old Village of Mille Roches boasted a furniture shop, owned and operated by the Brooks family. The village of Mille Roches had a Paper Mill from the early part of this century, and the G.F. Harvey

Co., Manufacturing Chemists. This place of business operated for quite a number of years, and seemed quite prosperous during that time. The St. Lawrence Power House was built at the southern end of the lower dam at the beginning of the present century, and, as a young boy, I was employed there in the capacity of driving a horse and cart for which I was paid the sum of fifty cents a day -10 hours. This power house supplied the power for the Cornwall Canal locks, bridges and the lighting along the canal bank, and also the Paper Mills and surrounding country. It also met the same fate by the flooding.

During the year 1860, the Prince of Wales visited Canada, during which time he laid the corner stone of our present Parliament Building in Ottawa, and also for the opening the Victoria Bridge in Montreal, across the St. Lawrence River to St. Lambert, Quebec. The Prince came up to Wales by rail, and drove out to the village of Dickinson's Landing and boarded one of the liners (passenger boats) and cruised down river to Montreal. This was a red letter day for the people of that day. The Prince later became King Edward VII, on the death of his mother (Queen Victoria), at the beginning of this century. The surrounding country was cleared of all trees and bush land in the flooded area, and I might say that an elm tree in the village of Moulinette, which was cut down during this time, was one of the oldest trees of the present era. An account of this tree in the Cornwall Standard-Freeholder of December 19, 1957, stated this tree to be 10 feet in diameter and nearly 100 feet high. According to an unofficial ring count, the tree was estimated to be more than 500 years old, and was a sapling when Columbus discovered America. This tree was badly damaged in the very severe sleet storm during the winter of 1942-43, and many of the branches were broken off by the ice from that storm. The story is told that the late Samuel Champlain, on one of his voyages on the St. Lawrence River, rested under this tree, and had his daily lunch underneath it.