



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE GATINEAU
BOX 143, OLD CHELSEA, QUE., JOX 2N0

1986

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

**NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, FEB. 24
AT 8.00 IN THE CHELSEA SCHOOL**

It will be our honour to welcome the Honourable John Bosley, Speaker of the House of Commons, and Mrs. Bosley. Mr. Bosley will speak about the history of the institution of the Speaker in our parliamentary system. Among his many other distinctions, Mr. Bosley is a resident of the Gatineau (or hopes to be again soon). His residence, The Farm, is of keen interest to members at the moment. We hope for a large attendance to meet this distinguished guest.

Last Meeting

It had been quite a day. Storm warnings had driven the pusillanimous Québec Public service to huddle all day in their homes, and many a voluntary society made the mistake of listening to Environment Canada's prediction of 25 cm. of snow which never came. But not the Society. Despite the threat of meteorological mayhem and many an unploughed driveway, we had 40 members for our longest and liveliest discussion on record. Much of this Newsletter will be devoted to the issues raised.

We met in the informal surroundings of the historic building which more than a century ago had been Dean's hotel, early meeting place of the local Council and most recently BJ's Restaurant. Members suggested we keep it as an option for future meetings. (One suggested we buy it as a museum and meeting place!)

The new membership fee structure, the new executive, the financial statement the re-appointment of the auditor and the Annual Review of 1985 were all unanimously approved. The president had to apologize with some embarrassment for a weakness in our system which resulted in typographical errors,

and an omission in the financial statement which is attached to this newsletter in its corrected form. Encouraging comments on the Review strengthened our resolve to continue this annual publication.

The President and Tony German summarized an important meeting with the NCC in which the many concerns of the Society were frankly stated in an extensive brief, and sympathetically received.

The Society had received national publicity when the Cemetery was the subject of an interview on CBC *Morningside*, and again on *The Best of Morningside* on January 14. (A tape was played during an intermission.) It had evoked warm letters from strangers as far away as Vancouver Island, and prompted a warm offer of co-operation from the Royal Canadian Regiment. Extensive correspondence included an invitation to the Minister of Veterans Affairs (a) to raise the present \$25 annual contribution to the Thompson grave and (b) to participate in a rededication ceremony this summer; an article for the RCR newsletter *Pro Patria* appealing for support; an application to the Québec Government to declare it an historic site, and subsidiary letters to back up the application.

An offer from the NCC to make available the Maclaren House at Wakefield for two years to house our projected museum led to a meeting with the NCC the week before, and a good discussion at the Annual Meeting. The proposal was to start simply, since much work is needed in organization: Saturdays and Sundays in July and August. The big question was whether members would respond to a request to man the estimated 48 shifts needed. A show of hands indicated that half those present would offer to take three shifts each. Some members also volunteered to sit on the newly-formed museum committee under the chairmanship of Ray Daly. In short, there was

real enthusiasm for the project which the Executive would be discussing further at its next meeting within a week.

No strong views were expressed on the days for the monthly meetings. There is no disposition to move from Mondays, but some members had asked that it be shifted from the fourth to the third Monday of the month. It would seem that we have outgrown the Community Centre for most meetings. The school, basement of the United Church and former restaurant are likely sites. With our shifting venue, we plan a prominent Historical Society sign outside for future gatherings. Watch for it.

Arthur Davison announced the winner of the 1986 Arthur Davison Prize for outstanding contributions to *Up the Gatineau!* He spoke warmly of the years of work devoted to the publication by Lid Ryan who, alas, was prevented by an unploughed driveway from hearing her praises sung. The certificate and cheque are being delivered by hand.

A song! Carol Martin astonished the assembly with her proposal for a contest to write a song about the Society which would be performed by the Castanchole Choir, taped, and offered to members. They liked the idea, and the hunt is on. As with Gilbert and Sullivan, authorship is not confined to one person with both musical and poetic talents. So please-- this is an imaginative proposal and the results could be the source of great pleasure-- and pride when it reaches the Top 10,000. Closing date is May 1, so that the winning entry can be produced at our May gala meeting. You may send music and words, or tape with accompanying written words, in a plain brown envelope to the Secretary.

The NCC and West Hull are both interested in action to preserve the Chelsea Cemetery (not to be confused with ours with the Thompson grave). Our position had been that we were sympathetic, but not taking any initiative pending suggestions from the financing parties. Some members pointed out that this cemetery was still in active use, and it might be prudent to restrict our responsibilities to historic cemeteries no longer permitting burials; we did not wish to be involved in authority for current interments. We will nevertheless follow developments and offer moral support without administrative responsibility.

Williamsburg of Canada? Following the lecture by Heritage Canada Governor Charles

Lynch, Judy Crawley had suggested we consider a Main Street program to revitalize the historic aspects of Old Chelsea. Strong support was expressed for action to recognize its history and charm, and regret was expressed that we had lost both the Town Hall and Hudson House in recent years. It was noted that much work would be needed to canvass public opinion and to make a proposal to the Heritage Canada Foundation, though valuable research was available on the village. One member, expressing warmth for Old Chelsea, nevertheless wondered if efforts would not better be focussed on Wakefield which had an extraordinary setting, many interesting old buildings (and later eyesores) and a business base to support community rehabilitation. He thought a small committee should look into the broader perspective of Gatineau villages and make recommendations to the Society for initiatives it might take. Judy Crawley (conveniently stormbound) was unanimously asked if she would pursue this important idea with the help of fellow-members who indicated interest. Those willing to explore this fascinating subject are asked to get in touch with Judy Crawley (827-0496) or the Treasurer (827-3045).

There were pictures of past Society activities, including all the photos from our own archives-- which are not extensive. It is not too late to remedy this lack. One member has already offered to print her slides for the archives. Won't you dig through your files and help? The Society will be glad to pay printing costs.

And, despite the full agenda, members insisted on staying for the traditional Show and Tell which yielded a gripping and amusing published moral tale, a pre-electric vacuum cleaner, a pre-dial phone, antique shuttles and bottles with a history.

And, with all this, diligent volunteers with ball-point pens managed to write "\$8" on 2,100 membership pamphlets. What an evening!

Membership

Yes, it is now \$8 per household. You can gather from our current activities that our treasurer and her associates are being hard-pressed. Please make life easier for them by renewing now. When you do so, it would help us-- even if you are a member of long-standing-- to complete the membership form indicating

interests. Please note especially which members in your household are active members. It will cost you no more, but it will give us a better idea of our true following than the list of households alone. Membership sent by post to Box 143, Old Chelsea, J0X 2N0 will be received with particular gratitude to avoid a jam-up at the next meeting.

We are grateful to *The News Low Down to Hull and Back* for their support, and particularly for including those 2100 membership folders in the newspaper without any profit to themselves. That will be valuable to the degree that members help follow up, asking their friends if they received the application and filled it out. If you would like more membership brochures, they are only a phone call away. (Rae Moore: 827-1995.) The Executive is organizing an ambitious "special names" list of non-members to whom personal letters of invitation will be sent. If you can think of anyone who is not a member- and should be- **please phone Rae Moore now** with the name and address. We'll do the rest, if you prefer not to make the approach yourself. This can be a real help to the Society and to the person concerned. Please think about it.

WITH DEEP REGRET.....

we record the death of Louise de Panet, long a member earning the gratitude and affection of the Society. We shall miss her very much, perhaps especially at Auction time where she will leave an unfillable gap. We express our sympathy to her family of Society supporters.

SUMER IS ICUMEN IN

We plan to apply for a federal grant to enable us to employ two summer students again. If approved-- and we never know until mid-May-- it will be interesting work of professional value to the employees: mostly helping organize and run the museum but also historical research, oral history, work on the cemetery, among other things. To comply with

the terms of the program, the students must be registered at an educational institution and be returning to one in the fall. Since our Museum must serve English-language and French-language visitors, bilingualism is important. It would be very helpful to have a car, for whose running expenses the Society will pay.

If you know of anyone interested, please ask him or her to write to the secretary with a resumé and a brief explanation of why the candidate wishes to work for the Historical Society. The sooner the better!

THAT PICTURE....

One item for which there was no time at the Annual Meeting was the explanation of the photo in the last Newsletter. We took it the last day we saw Prime Minister King, on August 20, 1946. It was an unremarkable snapshot of the graves of Pat I and Pat !!, except that it became an historical rarity. Over the years, the graves disappeared without trace. When the NCC undertook its restoration at Moorside last year, their researchers could find no photo or other clue to the whereabouts of this symbol of the somewhat bizarre aspect of the Mr. King's character. Happily we were able to solve the puzzle with this picture from our personal files. The lesson is: never underestimate the potential historical importance of photos--- and share them with the Society's archives.

REMEMBER THIS PICTURE!

(see back page)

This is, or was, The Farm at Kingsmere, currently the home of the Commons Speaker. Until this winter it remained largely as when Mr. King left it to the people of Canada, a monument to him and his era. Then Public Works Canadamoved in with sledge hammers, wreckingbars and a purse brimming with \$400,000 of taxpayers' money. What are they doing to our history? The Society's efforts to find out have been rebuffed.

