



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE GATINEAU

BOX 485, OLD CHELSEA, QUE., J0X 2N0

1986

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

NEXT GATHERING: THE ANNUAL AUCTION, SATURDAY AUGUST 16 AT 8.30 A.M. AT THE WEST HULL COMMUNITY CENTRE, OLD CHELSEA.

THE ANNUAL AUCTION

The excitement of all this year's new activities (see below!) must not let us forget the importance of the Auction, as a great social occasion and entertainment, and as the vital source of funds to keep all our other projects going. David Castleman and his committee (Marc Boyer, Eileen Castleman, Angela Carroll, Ray Daly, Carol Martin, Rae Moore, Dave Morisset, Adèle Robinette-Street, Adrian Wilson) have not forgotten. We ask all members to consider ways to help the Auction, and through it, help us keep the Society in high gear.

1. Please note the date, and try very hard to come.
2. Please tell friends and neighbours about the auction at every possible opportunity. Point out that whether they want to buy or not, this is a wonderful Gatineau institution they should not miss. City dwellers should be encouraged to come to see what a colourful country auction is like. Collectors of collectibles should not miss it. Thrifty souls looking for crazy bargains in household goods, games for the children, books and heaven knows what, have a field day at the flea market.
3. Can you put up posters in your neighbourhood? We have a supply of 8 1/2x11 posters suitable for bulletin boards in stores, offices and so on. Please phone Dave Castleman (827-1610) to get your supply.
4. Would you join our band of happy volunteers who run the auction? We need help the day before, and during the auction from 8.00 a.m. till lunch. There is a job for every taste, and no longer is one of them erecting the outhouse. Helen Starnes (827-0696) will welcome your call.
5. Have you anything to contribute to either the antiques and collectibles, or to the flea market? You can either receive half the proceeds or get an income tax receipt for the entire proceeds. The kinds of things we need are listed in the last newsletter. It is about everything. If you would like to discuss possible contributions, phone Dave Castleman.
6. Can you think of friends who might contribute articles? One does not have to be a member to

contribute antiques and collectibles. Any non-member wanting to sell through the flea market can easily join the Society. Please approach the potential contributors, or let us have their names.

7. Please note the list of special contributors which will be circulated. There are all sort of exciting things from renowned artists, public figures, commercial establishments. Help us, especially with commercial establishments, by expressing your appreciation to them for their help.

How many of those seven steps can you take? It is all a contribution to saving our history.

The list of special donations is not complete as we go to press. We have again approached artists whose works in the past have brought great respect and spirited bidding. Jean Pigott is giving us, autographed, the first admission ticket every issued for Gatineau Park, and it will get you free parking through 1987. Or how about watching The Great as the guest of generous Barry Moore, faithful Member of the Society and Member of Parliament (not necessarily in order of importance), at lunch or dinner in the Parliamentary Restaurant? We might even be offering a plot in an historic cemetery-- who knows what will come? Or maybe you have a bright idea we could still pursue?

Please help us make the Auction a great and enjoyable success with participation of more of us than ever before.

LAST MEETINGS: The Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery

"Memorable occasion" is an overused phrase, but we have the right to use it this time. The Capital Region's unaccustomed monsoon season, which produced rain in Old Testament proportions, miraculously gave way to sunshine 12 minutes before the rededication started on Saturday afternoon, May 24 at 2.30. That was divine consideration, not just of participants, but of Queen Victoria's personally crocheted Scarf of Honour which was a star attraction. An estimated 200 people gathered for the colourful 55-minute ceremony which began with the inspection of the splendidly uniformed honour guard from the Petawawa Battle School. After a welcome from the Society, NCC

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29 July 86*

Chairman Jean Pigott-- descendant of pioneers buried there-- gave a warm address. Then we moved to the Thompson gravesite where General Norman presented the Society with the magnificent benches given by the Royal Canadian Regiment. Following prayers, Barry Moore laid a wreath from the Government of Canada. Then the haunting sounds of the piper's lament echoed across the graveyard and to the Gatineau hills around. With greetings from Councillor MacLeod of West Hull, everyone then toured the Cemetery where stories of the old families were told by Ladies in Victorian costume and by one Gentleman in conspicuous black stovepipe hat (Pat Evans). The sound of the pipes brought the assembly back to the entrance for the regimental salute and marchoff of the guards.

Among those present were representatives of many families whose ancestors lay in the cemetery. And there were strangers. A gentleman from Staten Island chanced to be in Ottawa briefly when he saw the story of our cemetery in the *Citizen*, and decided this was what he most wanted to see in the National Capital. An active member of an historical society at home, he not only made very warm remarks about the work of our Society, but presented us with a generous cheque. Others who could not come but read the article also sent welcome donations.

If you missed it, we are sorry, but all may not be lost. We arranged to videotape the ceremony, with the hope of presenting an edited version at our Annual Meeting.

We cannot leave this day without a remark about the Cemetery Committee. Our committees have terrible powers and constantly veto the shy President-- as when they removed their own names from the program. But they can't get away with it in the *Newsletter*. Pamela MacDougall is chairman and the members are John and Marion Hazen, Alice Hudson, Colonel Munro and Adèle Robinette-Street. If you were there-- and maybe even if you were not-- you might have just a slight idea of the time-consuming planning, liaison, wheedling, running, phoning, raking, persuading, and general organizing that went on for weeks to make this a clockwork production of great sensitivity. And let us not forget others who also helped, notably Lillian Walton whose keen sense of history led not only to the story of the Thomson grave in *Up the Gatineau!* but to the preservation of invaluable records of the ceremony a generation ago-- all of which she generously lent the committee.

The Final Meeting of the Season

Again heaven was on our side, producing a glorious summer evening as over a hundred members gathered at The Grange for our usual climactic gathering. In the Great Hall, Tom Kines sang wonderful Valley songs, including an evocative ballad

of the log runs which members could see out the windows on the Gatineau River below. An interesting policy discussion ended in a unanimous vote to protest the closing of the grounds of Rideau Hall. (See below.) Then there were coloured slides telling the story of the saving of The Grange and the other five pioneer log buildings at the Phillips Place. Finally, the winner of the Song Contest was announced. Alex Sinclair was there to sing his new ballad of the Gatineau, with the participation of all present. After that, members drifted to the lawns for the customary wine and cheese and conversation.

THE MUSEUM

It finally happened! After years of patient hoping, and months of painstaking work, the first Historical Museum of the Gatineau was officially opened on a fine Saturday afternoon, July 5, in the vintage MacLaren House in Wakefield. Nearly 200 people were there.

Ray Daly, who is a workaholic when it comes to affairs of the Society, put it together with the help of David Castleman, Pat Evans, Katherine Fletcher, Paul Fydenchuk, Norma Geggie, Beth MacFie, Pat and Frank Potvin and Adèle Robinette-Street. And Dr. Stuart Geggie. With all the Committee's work, the Museum itself could never have achieved its quality had not Stuart agreed to accept the Post of Honourary Curator. We had the benefit not only of the Geggies' knowledge of history and Stuart's energy and organizing capacity, but a Special Task Force whose sole purpose was evidently to examine small museums in New Zealand and Australia. (Norma and Stewart Geggie were the members.) We have also been indebted to the NCC, notably to Jean Pigott for her endless personal enthusiasm and backing, to June Creelman and to Julie Dompierre for their patient hard work in many details.

The opening had the Society's colourful trademarks. It began with the mayors of LaPêche and Low riding from the Grist mill by horse and buggy, provided by the NCC. (You never know where deregulation of transportation will lead.) After greetings from the Society, Mayor Hervé Leblanc, assisted by Mayor Michael Francis cut the ceremonial ribbon-- not with any cliché pair of scissors, but with the Society's massive broadaxe. After all the guests had admired the imaginatively displayed collection-- depicted as three rooms of a pioneer house-- the marvellous Ottawa Celidh Band raised up a storm of music and dance. Tea with the best home-made muffins and jam in Christendom was served on the lawns.

This time our dalliance with modern technology failed: the videotape broke down as the president was about to be interviewed.

And now the Museum is open, every Saturday, Sunday and holiday from 9.30 till 4.30 until Labour Day. Admission is free to everyone wearing the new Society lapel button, and to members of their families. The buttons may be bought at the Museum for one dollar. (Over 100 were sold the first day.) Also available are memberships, all our publications, and copies of the June issue of *Ottawa Magazine* which featured a story on Wakefield.

Beth MacFie (who designed the button and all our new posters) is also looking after the manning schedule. We need two volunteers to be there about four hours every open day until the end of the summer. Please phone Ray Daly (459-2038) about the shifts you would like to take.

Equally important, we hope that by September every member of the Society within reach of the National capital will have visited the Museum to share our pride in this new venture.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Two new leaflets have joined our growing list of publications: one on the Cemetery, produced in time for the rededication and one on the Museum, for its opening. To avoid waste and extra postage, we are not sending them with copies of this Newsletter, for many members already have them. With the financial help of the NCC, they are appearing in both official languages.

As a token of our appreciation for the continued support of members from afar, who cannot get to meetings, we are sending the leaflets only to addresses outside the National Capital Region. Other members may pick them up at the Auction or at meetings, or at NCC outlets; or they may phone the Secretary to receive free copies. For the artwork on the Cemetery pamphlet we are indebted once more to the skills and generosity of Beth Macfie.

And the same may be said for the new posters: simple, imaginative, cheap. Separate designs are to be used for the Museum, Auction and general meetings. Watch for them-- or ask for copies if you can help publicize our activities.

Up the Gatineau! has received a not-unexpected rave review from Wakefield's leading newspaper. We are, by the way, indebted to *The News Low Down to Hull and Back* for its superbly improved coverage of our activities. If you don't subscribe to it, you may miss something. Acecolumnist/reporter/photographer Ernie Mahoney is responsible not only for much of this ink but for other personal help, such as membership advice. Our thanks to the editor and all his people.

Then there are the new buttons, mentioned above. They are of a simple bilingual design with the Society's axe logo. The Executive decided on them as a somewhat ingenious solution to a couple of problems. Of course they raise money for our work (roughly 65 cents each); the whole cost was recovered in sales the first weekend. They help make others aware of us, and they are also a pass to the Museum. There were strong feelings that, in conformity with general local museum practice, there should be some contribution from visitors to our extensive and somewhat expensive work, but we hesitated to set a fee for entry to what we expected would be a very modest beginning. (It is much less modest than we expected.) So the multi-purpose button was the compromise. They will be on sale to members at all meetings for \$1, and we hope you will buy them enthusiastically to keep and give away. To get them by post, please send us one dollar for each button and a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

We appreciate the co-operation of *Ottawa Magazine* in making available to us surplus copies of the June issue, containing the cover story about Wakefield by one of our members. They are sold for the regular retail price of \$1.50, with all profits going to the Society. The superb colour pictures make it an issue which we hope you will want for your interest and your archives. Since the number is limited, you may want to reserve your copy by a phone call to the Secretary (827-1995).

SUMMER STUDENTS

Would you believe five (5)?? Adrian Wilson and Marc Boyer, who won the competition to be our two summer students, have been focussing their attention on the organization of the Museum. The services of Angela Carroll who joined the LaPêche staff for summer work related to the train, were generously lent to us pending 1201's long late arrival.

And very important, we have an excellent arrangement with Outaouais Alliance which has two summer students to do oral history in the Gatineau. We participated in the planning of the project, the selection of the students and their professional guidance and supervision, and we are contributing to the non-salary expenses of the project. After years of hoping, the oral history project is at last off the ground, and we can expect our first taped and written reports by the end of the summer. Our thanks go to Margaret Buchinski of the Alliance, to students Jamie Creskey and Tom Hanson and to all the senior residents of the Gatineau who are contributing their time to the recording of their yesterdays.

MEMBERS

Our record of new memberships is gratifying evidence of the success of our various forms of outreach and to the growing reputation of the Society. Our weakest area is prompt renewals. Would you believe that, after six months of pleasant reminders, cajoling, pleading and almost religious exhortations, some members have severely berated executive members because they are no longer receiving our *Newsletter* and other publications! It is too bad that we have to ask volunteers to spend so much of their time in reminders to faithful members instead of on more productive pursuits in the cause of history. But we'll do anything to keep the Society together.

Those who find that the years roll too quickly by may wish to get multiple-year memberships which we are, for the first time, accepting at the usual \$8 rate. For members joining at The Auction and after, we are offering a convenient special: \$12 for a membership valid until December 31, 1987. This will save the bother of renewal so soon after joining. That gives the member free copies of *Up the Gatineau!* for both 1986 and our 25th anniversary year in 1987. Have you thought of such memberships as gifts to people you really respect?

We welcome as new members Claire and Jim Argo, Hope Brown, Mr. and Mrs. D.E. Burgin, Colette Canavan, Eric Dale, Dr. W.F.A. Davies, Brigadier General Michael S. Dunn, Francis J. Farrell, Low Mayor Michael Francis, Richard Bruce Freeborn, Joan and Randolph Gherson, Mrs. Ainslie Gnaedinger, Mrs. Jacqueline A. Hanna, Mary Ann Hogan, Robert Hyndman, Elaine and Laurent Isabelle, Mr. and Mrs. A.M. Johnston, Mr. and Mrs. James W. Knight, Nicholas Patterson, Kenneth and Gerda Ramsay, Clement J. St. Pierre, David W. Scott, Mrs. Violet Simpson, Michael Sproule, Rev. and Mrs. Wm. Simons, and Robert G. Toller. May we add that Bill Simons is the Rector of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene which was so helpful to us in the arrangements for the cemetery rededication, and that Clement St. Pierre is our cemetery neighbour who has given us many kindnesses, including parking for the ceremony on his lawn, and the constant watering of our cedars? Michael Francis, conservationist and collector of log buildings, is the first Gatineau mayor to join us.

RIDEAU HALL GROUNDS

Members saw in the precipitate, almost total barring of the Rideau Hall grounds a major principle respecting the conflict between public access to our history and use of its amenities by officials. They were unconvinced by official explanations that a terrorist threat to Her Excellency would be met by such a

measure, or that we should do it because there were selected foreign examples of such closures. An official letter from the Secretary, discussed at length by the Executive, was published in *The Citizen* on July 3. Among the other points it made was that even the Kremlin was now opened to visitors while the Canadian Government was closing down our history.

In the weeks between the sending of that letter and its printing, the Government wisely introduced tours which enable anyone-- not just pre-packaged tourists-- to see the historic grounds. We therefore asked the paper to withdraw our now outdated letter for reconsideration, but it was too late, for this is one newspaper which believes in aging some of its news before publishing it. We would prefer to think that Canada could enjoy at least the degree of freedom for its historic-minded citizens that the USSR affords, but this is a helpful step in recovering from an unwise, ill-considered and badly explained decision.

CONGRATULATIONS TO....

valued member Kathleen Mennie-de Varennes of Ste. Foy whose publication "*Au Coeur de la Gatineau*" has received the Louis Taché Award from the Institut de la Recherche sur l'Outaouais and the Percy-Foy Award from the Société généalogique canadienne-française of Montreal. Pierre-Louis Lapointe personally brought the first award to Mme Mennie-de Varennes whose health did not permit her journey to Hull.

WITH GREAT REGRET.....

we record the death Ernest P. Ryan of Nepean, a long-time supporter whom we shall much miss.

PROGRAM

Please mark your calendars for the meetings of the new season. You may remember the decision at the Annual Meeting to meet on the third Monday evening each month, beginning September 15, rather than the fourth. This was to help some members with conflicting engagements. Consequently we plan to put the *Newsletter* in your hands a week earlier.

POST MORTEM?

(Loose translation: "Is Canada Post dead?") Behind the new address at the top of this issue is another sad postal story. Apparently the closing of the Old Chelsea Post Office had long been planned, and the resignation of the postmaster some time ago made the time opportune. This was a secret well kept from us by the Federal Government which announced the closing with six days' notice. No warning of its possibility, of course, so that we would not have uselessly and expensively printed our established address some 4,000 times during the previous month. We shall be paying an annual fee of \$25.44 to collect our mail at the main Chelsea Post Office. Could we plead from our government, not more p.r. but a little consideration and common sense?