



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF THE GATINEAU

December 1988 NEWSLETTER

Purpose of the Society

"... to promote matters of historical or heritage significance in the general area of the Gatineau Valley."

REMEMBRANCE DAY CEREMONY

Once again, members of the Society and local residents paid their respects at a commemorative service at the Pioneer Cemetery in Chelsea - since the 1960's the property of the Society. The event was attended by the Mayor of West Hull, Mrs. Judy Grant, the President and representatives of Branch 214 of the Royal Canadian Legion, and a strong detachment of the Battle School of the Royal Canadian Regiment, Petawawa.

Wreaths were laid at the grave of Private Richard Thompson on behalf of the Government of Canada, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Royal Canadian Regiment, and the Municipality of West Hull. Last Post and Reveille were played faultlessly by Mr. Alan Ridgeway, Musical Director of Philemon Wright High School. An exceptionally well produced and complete Program of Service was provided by David Lewis.

Following the Service, the Royal Canadian Legion, Wakefield, kindly opened its doors and played host to members of the Regiment and others who were able to attend.

- C.L.

NOVEMBER MEETING HEARS KATHARINE FLETCHER

On November 28, seventy interested members of the Society and friends were treated to

an interesting presentation by Katharine Fletcher, author of "Historical Walks: The Gatineau Park Story."

Her presentation, entitled "Trails of History", featured historical and contemporary projected images of a number of sites in the area. These included Dunn's Hotel in Old Chelsea, the Carbide Wilson Mill, McCloskey Road, the McLaren House in Wakefield, and the Forsyth Mine.

Several members of the audience were able to supplement Mrs. Fletcher's presentation - a stimulating and educational evening!

- J.A.

JANUARY 1989 MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Society will take place on January 16, 1989, at 7:30 p.m. at the West Hull Community Centre. Speaker to be determined. Mark the date down and plan to attend.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Society is due to take place on Heritage Day, February 20, 1989. A suitable location is still being sought (details in the January newsletter).

It is on this occasion that the new slate of officers for the Executive will be submitted. A Nominations Committee has been formed for this purpose.

At the time of writing the Executive is faced with the resignation, effective December 31, of both the Secretary and the Secretary-Treasurer. Without these two vital people the Society cannot operate. Please let us know if you have any suggestions.

- C.L.

THE MCNALLY HOUSE

A number of members of the Society have expressed concern about highway developments in Wakefield as they affect the historic McNally House. Situated opposite the new bridge on the west side of the Gatineau River, it appears to be directly in the path of the new Wakefield by-pass scheduled for construction in the next couple of years.

The frame house dates from the mid-1800's and is an excellent example of the architecture of that period. It is still occupied by the McNally family and there are good grounds for believing that it was once owned by William Fairbairn, the builder of the Wakefield Grist Mill. There is some hope that the house may be moved to a safer location. The Executive is following this situation with interest and will keep members informed.

- C.L.

THE DIGESTOR TOWER

"I am deeply worried about the fate of the former Eddy Digestor Tower, now a lonely sentinel on the grounds of Douglas Cardinal's new Museum of Civilization. This masonry tower is not only a significant piece of industrial archaeology in its own right (the largest digestor for the world's largest mill upon completion and birthplace of much contemporary pulp and paper technology).

"Its form also provides the perfect aesthetic middle term intervening between the horizontal

banded tyndall stone of Cardinal's Museum and the vertical limestone Peace Tower looming across the River.

"Millions are being spent inside the Museum to fashion artful simulation of Canadian buildings and industries, yet three levels of government cannot raise a half million dollars to physically stabilize the Digestor Tower, a structure which fairly breathes rugged authenticity.

"Current aesthetic and political realities are such in this capital Post Modern age that simulation is everywhere preferred to reality. Thus, the E.B. Eddy Digestor tops my list of the best of Ottawa buildings."

Those are the words of Carleton University architectural historian Trevor Boddy, writing in the November 26 Citizen. The preservation of this important historic symbol has now become a major cause of Heritage Ottawa, as well as our Historical Society. On behalf of the Executive and the membership, Co-President Charles Landon has written a strong letter to NCC Chairman Jean Piggott, who has not given her public support to this conservation project.

More will follow in future newsletters. Meanwhile, members are urged to use every opportunity to persuade friends and officials of the importance of this significant symbol of past industrial greatness in the Outaouais.

- R.A.J.P.

THE OTHER COVERED BRIDGE

Are you aware that, despite the sad loss by fire, a few years ago, of the Gendron Bridge at Wakefield, we still have a covered bridge in the lower Gatineau? This one, much shorter than the Gendron Bridge, is situated in the Meech Creek Valley (or Baldwin's Valley), where it spans Meech Creek.



This survivor may be reached by car by turning west off Highway 105 at Pine Road. Follow this road, called locally Cross Road, because so many members of the Cross family have resided on both sides of it. You can drive to the bridge, but it is better to park the car on the top of either hill at the ends of the bridge and walk down to it. This is a safety measure!

Examine the bridge's construction carefully to see how it was put together. Note especially the joints to see if they differ from modern methods. Spare time for photography.

Upon returning to your car continue in the direction you were previously driving and soon you will rejoin Highway 105. Should you meet one of the locals ask about the old farm cemetery on top of a hill hidden by a lilac grove. Here is the grave of Charlotte Wright (1830-1906), who married three husbands, Hugh McMullin, William Baldwin, and Robert Earle, family names of early settlers in the area.

Valley inhabitants used to walk to Hull via Old Chelsea, over the Notch to the Mountain Road. By turning left one would eventually

arrive at Hull. On the other hand, if one turned right from the Notch onto the Mountain Road and by turning onto the present Vanier Road through the community of Simmons one could arrive at Aylmer by proceeding along Britannia Road (the present Aylmer Road).

One last "do you know" - that Meech Creek Valley was to have been turned into a zoo, an election promise still waited for?

- P.M.O.E.

IN SEARCH OF ROOTS

Interested in tracing family roots in Ireland? Ray McGrath, an adult educator and folklorist, will be conducting a tour of Ireland, April 24 - May 6, 1989. The program is being arranged in association with Heritage College of Hull, Québec, a publicly funded community college serving western Québec. It will consist of six days of workshops conducted by staff from the National Library of Ireland and the National University of Ireland, followed by six days to do as you wish.

For information contact the Continuing Education Division at Heritage College (819/778-2270) or Ray McGrath (819/422-3258).

'UP THE GATINEAU' - BINDERS

Rae Moore, our Secretary, reminds us all that a good supply of useful protective hard cover binders is available in the office - price \$10.00, plus \$2.25 postage.

Back issues may also be obtained at a cost of \$2.00 plus postage (\$1.00 for one to four copies, \$2.00 for more than four copies).

Telephone (819) 827-4432 or write to the Society at the address on the first page of this newsletter.

The Historical Society of the Gatineau Newsletter is published monthly. Editor is Jay Atherton (827-1703). Comments and/or contributions are welcomed and encouraged.

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Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good ... 1989!