



# NEWSLETTER

APRIL 1990

Box 485, Chelsea, Québec J0X 1N0. Telephone (819) 827-4432

## Purpose of the Society:

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

## OUR NEXT MEETING:

MONDAY, APRIL 23

8:00 p.m.

West Hull Community Centre  
Old Chelsea

"Origins of the American  
Community in Ottawa-Hull"

with

Peter Gillis

Trained as an historian, Peter Gillis has worked at the National Archives of Canada. He is now a senior analyst in information policy with the Treasury Board of Canada.

In his talk, Peter will be analyzing the factors leading to the growth of sawmilling in the area in the mid-nineteenth century. He will be placing special emphasis on the role of the Harris and Bronson Company, from its location in the area in 1851 up to 1870.

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The meeting will be preceded by a social half hour beginning at 7:30.

Bring a friend!

## FIRST ANNUAL PHILEMON WRIGHT DEBATE A GREAT SUCCESS

Heritage Day 1990 was celebrated by the first annual Philemon Wright Debate held on Monday, February 19, under the joint sponsorship of Heritage College and our Society's Search for History Committee. It was a great success and will, we hope, become an annual event to culminate in the year 2000 - 200 years after Philemon Wright arrived as the National Capital Region's first white settler.

Over 100 people gathered at Heritage College to hear historians Grete Hale, Peter Gillis, Michael Newton, and Pierre-Louis Lapointe explore all sides of the proposition that Philemon Wright, in his dealings with the early settlers of Hull, had been a benevolent autocrat.

Under the watchful eye of articulate and somewhat mischievous moderator, Society President Doug Rowland, the four debaters went at the topic in several different ways. First, they spoke within the framework of a formal debate, in which each had seven minutes to make the case for either the affirmative or the negative. The debaters approached this portion of the proceedings with their own unique flavour and sense of style. Consensus seemed to

indicate that Mrs. Hale had the most amusing stories, Mr. Lapointe the most effective rebuttals, and that Mr. Gillis in his criticism of Philemon Wright was the most definite. All agreed that Mr. Newton brought new meaning to the notion of fence-sitting. ("Was Philemon Wright a benevolent autocrat? Benevolent, yes. Autocrat, no.")

Following the formal debate, the four speakers continued in a less constrained fashion, as the moderator led them in a brief panel discussion. The floor was then opened for questions and comments, and the audience was quick to join the fray, with the result that lively exchanges continued throughout the evening.

At one point, the meeting was disrupted by the unexpected arrival of Philemon Wright himself. Looking very much like Bruce Lister in a frock coat and with salt and pepper hair, old Philemon spoke with all the assurance of one who had actually been there, and showed little patience with the evening's speakers. His words to the assembled gathering were illuminating, not to mention his Yankee accent and 19th century turn of phrase.

The evening was successful for a number of reasons. certainly the large turnout was encouraging, and the refreshments, both liquid and other were much appreciated, especially the large cake decorated with the Society logo (thanks to Glennis Cohen and Bruce Lister for these). Also, the event ran smoothly due to the friendly assistance provided by several of the Society's members. Special appreciation should be extended to the descendants of Philemon Wright

who participated actively in the discussion. However, there can be no getting away from the fact that fundamentally the event was successful because of the outstanding contribution made by each of the debaters and the moderator. Each was knowledgeable, entertaining, convincing, witty, and frankly just plain interesting. All who were there came away with new insights into Philemon Wright and the period in which he lived.

The Search for History Committee is already considering plans for next year's event. This would be a good time for anyone with comments and/or suggestions to make these known to committee members.

As a final word, both of us would like to say that we had a lot of fun coordinating the First Annual Philemon Wright Debate, principally because of the support and encouragement that came to us from so many quarters. To all of you who lent a hand and to everyone who came out to this event, we say thanks.

- Martha Phemister  
- William A. Young

## **NCC SUPPORTS CONSERVATION OF OLD CHELSEA BURIAL GROUND**

On February 16 West Hull Mayor Judy Grant and NCC Chairman Jean Pigott participated in an important ceremony at the Protestant Burial Ground in Old Chelsea. Mrs. Pigott presented a cheque for \$2,500 to Mayor Grant, as the first instalment on a promised contribution of \$10,000, intended for the conservation of the historic cemetery. Meanwhile, the Cultural Property

Committee (on which sit several Historical Society members) is awaiting council decisions on many aspects of the physical work, which the committee wants to start this spring. The Committee will be looking for volunteers for a number of tasks involved in cleaning up the cemetery.

Any member interested in helping, please call the Historical Society answering machine (827-4432) and leave your name and phone number.

### **MILLS AND MILLSTONES THROUGH THE AGES (MARCH MEETING)**

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small...."

These wonderfully familiar words, though having nothing directly to do with our March meeting, seem to evoke a spirit of mystery and timelessness. The members who attended the lecture on March 19 experienced some of the same feelings in listening to Arthur Dunn's exposition on the history of mills and milling.

The interesting lecture was complemented by a series of coloured slides of historic mills of all sizes - from those several thousand years old that were held in one's hands, to massive stone wheels of fairly recent vintage. Arthur even had a four thousand year old mill on hand to add to the authenticity of his remarks. The relevance of the presentation was apparent at the end of the lecture, when Mr. Dunn put the Wakefield Mill in its impressive historical context.

- Jay Atherton

## **MEET YOUR EXECUTIVE**

### **(3) Molly Wait (2nd Vice President)**

A computer programmer with Statistics Canada, Molly Wait has lived in the Gatineau area for 12 years. Her family has resided here for almost a century - her grandfather came to the area around 1900, and her father farmed at Otter Lake.

Molly lives in a 130 to 150 year old house in Wakefield and devotes her spare time to community work in the village (at the hospital, etc.) and, of course, with the Historical Society of the Gatineau.

- Jay Atherton

### **BETH MACFIE NAMED TO ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Historical Society First Vice President Beth Macfie has been appointed to a new provincial advisory committee formed to improve anglophone representation in the Quebec public service. The announcement was made recently by the President of the Treasury Board, Daniel Johnson.

Beth joins six other professionals from across the province. In addition to her full time job as head of continuing education at Heritage College, she is a director of Outaouais Alliance, an organization dedicated to preserving and promoting English-language rights in western Quebec.

- Jay Atherton

## **1990 AUCTION SALE - Reminder**

Members are reminded that we will be looking for good quality items for our annual auction sale this coming summer. In addition, we have arranged to store your items safely until then, if you want to clear them out soon. Just call the Society's office (827-4432) and leave a message.

Don't forget the date and location: Saturday, August 18, at the West Hull Community Centre.

## **PRESCOTT HISTORIC BUS TOUR - SPACES STILL AVAILABLE**

As we go to press, there are still spaces available for the historical tour by bus of the Prescott area on Saturday, May 26. The tour, arranged with the Grenville County Historical Society, will include visits to several heritage sites and a short bus/walking tour of historic Prescott.

Cost of the entire tour, including bus fare, admission fees, morning coffee, and lunch, will be \$20 per Society member, \$25 for non-members.

If interested, call Carol Martin at 827-1633.

## **HISTORICAL MAP OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF WEST HULL**

### Preamble

The team of Mr. and Mrs. Edmund and Lyd Ryan has for long been interested in the history of West Hull (soon, perhaps, to change its name to the Municipality of Chelsea). Ed came from a line of Ryans that had as its Canadian progenitor, James, who arrived in

this country from County Tipperary, Ireland, with his wife and six children, in 1852, settling on a farm in what was to become Ryanville, east of Lake Ste. Marie.

Ed's father, William, in due course acquired a farm on the Notch Road, now the Dunderosa Golf Course. This property was Ed Ryan's birthplace. Fortunately for posterity, Ed persuaded his father to record on tape the happenings and the ways of life of himself and his contemporaries of an earlier generation.

Lyd (who was a founding member of the Historical Society of the Gatineau) over the years, managed to fill three alphabetically arranged notebooks with comments and anecdotes of her father-in-law, to which she added gems from the written and spoken bits and pieces of local history that she garnered.

A further bonus for later historians was that for several years Ed Ryan was Secretary-Treasurer of the Municipality and custodian of its records from the very first meeting of the Council held in the O'Neil House in the newer Chelsea in 1875. The second and subsequent meetings were held at Ed Dean's Hotel in Old, or Upper, Chelsea, until such time when the new municipal hall, on a lot adjacent to Dean's, was ready for use.

In December of 1958 the then Municipal Council produced a Zoning Map of its territory, which included at the time a large segment of land on the east side of the Gatineau River. Ed had the inspiration to use one of the blank maps to superimpose the various lots as revealed by the 1875 evaluation roll. In this endeavour he was aided by his wife, Lyd. In several

instances they were able to insert the dates some of the settlers acquired their farms. These dates ranged from 1819 to 1940, most of these being south of the Mountain Road. Timothy Moffat, the first Mayor, had his property at the southwest corner of the Mountain Road where it meets the present Vanier Road. Several years ago the Historical Society placed a bronze plaque, dedicated to the Pink and Moffat settlers, at this corner.

### Conclusion

In preparation for writing the story of the two Chelseas, the Old and the newer one to the east, I had sought the help of the Ryans. Graciously Lyd entrusted me with her precious notebooks. I also listened to the tape which William Ryan and his son, Edmund, had put together. As an afterthought Ed remembered the map that he and Lyd had prepared so many years ago, which by now was in storage in the attic of their present home, once that of the Sheffield family.

Returning with the map, Ed gently and carefully spread the yellowing sheet on the table. The lettering by ball point pen was starting to fade. As the Ryans were shortly to leave for a visit to the U.K., I suggested, as some recompense for their kindness, that I spend the time they would be away to re-letter the map in India ink, which resists fading. This I was permitted to do.

The opportunity could not be resisted of showing the finished product to Bob Phillips, then the Society President, who conceived the idea of making the map available on a wider scale, with of course the acquiescence of the map's authors. This permission was obtained upon the Ryans' return and a number of

black and white maps were reproduced.

Later, a team of volunteers "doctored" a select number of the black and white versions by treating them with cold tea, which tanned the glaring white sheets. By this method they were artificially aged. The "doctors" also hand-painted the waterways with blue and outlined the roads in red.

The fancy coloured maps, which sold for \$10 each, and the black and white versions (\$20 a piece) sold out some time ago. In response to frequent requests, the Society has arranged for a further stock of unadorned maps. They are available for a price of \$10 at our monthly meetings, or from the Society office in the West Hull Community Centre.

- Patrick M.O. Evans

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## CONDOLENCES

The Society extends its sincerest sympathy to Bob Phillips on the death of his wife, Mary Anne, on March 19 after a lengthy illness.

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## INVITE A FRIEND

Enjoy being a member of the Historical Society? Why not spread the joy among your good friends and acquaintances? Invite a friend to accompany you to the monthly meeting on May 23, to learn more about the history of lumbering in the Ottawa Valley. Better yet, invite your friend to become a member of the Historical Society. Membership fees are \$15 for one year, \$25 for two years.

Call Marilyn Lister (827-4244).