

Wolfville Historical Society

Newsletter

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<http://wolfvillehs.ednet.ns.ca>

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From Our President

The two most obvious signs of progress this summer at Randall House are external: the restoration of the front and back of the building in preparation for final painting next year, and the changes which a revitalized garden committee have begun. As we move towards the end of our museum season and towards our fall programs, the details of which follow in this newsletter, our thanks go to Curator Heather Davidson and Assistant Curator Anna Chisling, to our program committee, and to those who have been involved in working in Randall House both outside and in.

One clear lack has been made manifest in the dearth of social events. The board has been seeking for nearly two years someone to co-ordinate a social committee. Though there are many who volunteer to act as crew, neither appeal nor press gang have been able to produce a captain.

You will note that we have, as we have done for the past two years, planned our September meeting to take the form of a fund-raising dinner. We thank those of you who contributed the price of our ill-fated Heritage Dinner to the Society, and hope that you will all be out on September 23rd to further support our Society in an evening of dining, socializing and Joe Howe. Surely September in the Valley is safe from any Juan – wet/windy or white!

H. John Whidden

Dyke Land Capers

by Graham Patriquin (Acadia '27)

As we entered the teen age, most of us East Enders, as we loved to call ourselves, developed an academic interest in girls by way of the Acadia Ladies' Seminary. We regarded the girls whom we met every day at school much the same as our sisters; but the segregated Sems we viewed from the other side of a mandatory deterrent barrier: they were denied all truck and traffic with boys. This magnified their appeal, and we took an almost unhealthy interest in their casual breach of the rules as they sneaked away from their Main Street bounds and met the more daring boys from Acadia Collegiate Academy in the secrecy of spruce bushes.

We town boys begrudged our contemporaries of A.C.A. (Cads) their fraternal closeness to the girls of A.L.S. (Sems) and wore our noses raw prying into their infrequent encounters, all illegal, secluded and of pitifully short duration. The Sems were allowed to promenade in groups on Main Street's sidewalks twice a week. The eastern limit of this sanctioned walk was the Town Line, a few yards beyond Dyke Lane, a tree-lined secondary road leading to the Wickwire Dyke and skirting James Woodman's brook, orchard and horse pasture. The pasture was bounded by a thickly-forested bank and an escarpment falling abruptly to the dykeland level. It afforded a relatively safe, woody rendezvous to the Sems and their swains close to, but effectively removed from, the in-bounds sidewalk of Main Street. We watched this lane and the bank as often as the weather was full of promise, and worked on strategies of approach so that we could get close to the amateurs and share in the hanky-panky vicariously, green with envy and shivering with fear of apprehension. The Cads had no mercy on snooping kids from the town.

Harry Snow was probably a minor delinquent in his home town. He was a hero in Academy and Seminary circles, with ready wit and a tall, athletic frame. He was a chronic girl-chaser and the Sems fell for him like ripe apples. We envied, feared and hated him.

One lovely afternoon, Harry and two companions

trailed three comely Sems out toward Dyke Lane. Unobserved, Harold Gould, Rufus Burgess and I followed at a distance, recruited a mildly sportive Bob Chambers at The Lindens and, maintaining carefully adjusted clearance, stalked the six would-be lovers all the way to Woodman's Bank. Confident in the safety of their evergreen bower, the students were having a noisy, carefree ball. Giggles, shrieks of girlish glee and the raucous guffaws of the Cads made us bold. We climbed from the moat-like depth of Woodman's Brook to the grassy plateau next to the Bank almost recklessly, then tip-toed across the pasture toward the trees in order to upgrade our eavesdropping. Indistinguishable sounds of boy and girl voices . . . Then, as we drew nearer, the words themselves destroyed our customary wariness and we reacted, according to what we heard, with rancour or amusement. The latter overcame Bob's caution and one girl's fulsome "Oh, Harry; you devil!" was too much. He snorted audibly and instantly betrayed our presence.

Harry Snow, breathing fire, burst from the spruces followed by two Cads. Three of us started to flee the oncoming wrath; well we knew Snow's speed and willingness to play rough. I threw a terrified glance back at our pursuers. What I saw stopped me in my tracks, unbelieving: Bob Chambers was bombing the attackers with horse buns. From the scattering of dried manure balls, he threw as fast as he could pick them up from the ground. He scored no direct hit, but the grotesque, absurd counter-attack confounded all Snow's angry intent.

"My God", he shouted. He stood there, wide-eyed and choking with exploding merriment. Then, as Bob advanced, throwing at each step, the Cads took refuge in the trees with the girls. Bob threw the last available bun into the evergreens, shrugged with good-humoured resignation and trotted off towards his companions. That was all; we retreated and left the interrupted lovers to themselves.

Sixty years later, Bob intimated that his bizarre reaction to the crisis foretold his life's work as a cartoonist.

Randall House Museum

Although attendance at the Randall House Museum this summer is down from 2003, we are attracting a high proportion of local people. General attendance was down in June. In July our numbers were down because we did not have our ice cream social. August has been excellent: last year we had 104 visitors, while by August 17 this year we have had 121 visitors. In spite of our special displays on dykes and orchards from Acadian times to the present, we attracted few Acadian visitors.

Our final display for the year celebrates 80 year of Wolf Cubs in particular and Boy Scouts in general. This will attract school children, former members of the organizations and interested residents. This display begins August 27th and continues to September 15th.

— Heather Davidson, Curator

You may have noticed that Randall House is whiter than it was. That is because the whole house has been cleaned, scraped and primed for painting, and the windows have been refurbished. The paint job has been divided into three phases. Phase 1 was the preparation of the east and west sides of the house, Phase 2 was the preparation of the front and back sides, and Phase 3 will be the painting of the whole house. Phase 1 was done last year, Phase 2 this year, and Phase 3 will be next year – in a colour which has yet to be decided. Curtis Thomson & Sons are the painters.

— Henry Bradford, Chair, Property Committee

The garden committee at Randall House has been expanded and invigorated this year. We now have six keen and experienced gardeners, four of whom previously worked at the beautiful garden of the Atlantic Theatre Festival, and plans are underway for some changes. The Planter garden theme adopted three years ago will be evolved to an early Victorian garden theme, giving more scope for colour, scent and interest while retaining most of the Planter elements like the herbs and the vegetable garden. All new plantings will be low maintenance and appropriate to the period, such as old fashioned shrub roses. The ailing cedar trees will be removed (as was approved by the general meeting last year) to give more space for outdoor events, and we would like to have a Victorian bench or two where visitors can sit to enjoy the beauty. A long range plan for the property has been prepared and we are looking forward to the results. If you would like to discuss any of the plans please drop by the Randall House any Tuesday between 10 and 12 in the morning.

— Heather Watts for the Garden Committee

Closing Tea

Wednesday, 15 September, 2004, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

OUR WISH LIST AGAIN!

Would you like to help the gardeners improve and expand the Randall House garden with the cost of a rose bush, some stone for the new path, or a bench? All donations for the garden expansion gratefully received. Your name, or that of a person you wish to remember could be attached to the planting if desired.

Autumn Events, 2004

Thursday, 23 September, 2004, 6:30 for 7:00 p.m.

Annual Dinner at the Old Orchard Inn

Michael Bawtry will talk about "The Life of Joseph Howe",
the great 19th Century statesman and outstanding son of Nova Scotia

Tickets are available from Derek/Heather Watts (542-0307) or John Whidden (542-5061)

Wednesday, 20 October, 2004, at 2:00 p.m., Wolfville Town Hall

Sonia Wood and Chris Mansky, of the Blue Beach Fossil Museum,
will show and tell about the unique "Fossils of Blue Beach"

Wednesday, 17 November, 2004, at 2:00 p.m., Wolfville Town Hall

Larry Keddy, well-known historic photograph restorer,
will talk about "Dating Old Photographs"

December, 2004, (date & location TBA)

Wolfville Historical Society Christmas Party

Report from Gordon and Edith Haliburton

From May 13th to 15th we represented the Wolfville Historical Society at the Annual Spring Conference of the Federation of Nova Scotian Heritage, held at the Inverary Inn at Baddeck, Cape Breton. Spring was still coming to Cape Breton, but the rooms we met in were warm and welcoming. The theme this year was "Our Storied Past". During these two days we met interesting people and were enriched by hearing significant stories about people and places in Nova Scotia. For the most part two sessions were held at the same time, so we split up to enjoy different experiences. We learned that the Government of Nova Scotia values the Heritage field as very significant economically because of its importance to the tourist industry.

The "story-telling" sessions gave us a perspective on the lives of a Mi'kmaq teacher, an African Nova Scotian musician, a Gaelic-speaking Cape Bretoner and others – some at second-hand. Professor James Morrison, talked about the importance of collecting stories from elders and Dale Jarvis, from St. John's, told about the "Magic of Story Telling", which he employs when leading "Ghost Walks" through the old streets of his city. We were persuaded that story-telling has an important role in preserving and passing on heritage.

These presentations and others were varied by excursions to the "Highland Village Museum" and to Cheticamp. All in all these annual meetings are a great experience for the participants. If other members of the Society would be interested in attending the next one to be held at Annapolis Royal next Spring, do let our officers know.