

Wolfville Historical Society

Newsletter

Volume 06.1

259 Main Street, Wolfville, NS, B4P 1C6

February 2006

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

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President's Message

Once again we have survived the Annual General Meeting, and one result is evident in the column to the left: a larger board. One of the first decisions taken by this board, you will be glad to read, is that in future annual meeting reports will be printed and not read aloud, thus shortening the business meeting.

We head into 2006 with a number of projects under way. Our clothing collection is being assessed and catalogued by expert Bonnie Elliott, and preliminary findings show that we have not just a bunch of old rags but a significant and important array of historical garments. We await anxiously the final report, and must be prepared now to manage this part of our collection properly.

Volunteers are busily cataloguing and transcribing the six hundred plus letters in the Dottie Stewart fonds (a lovely word I have just acquired). We expect more volunteers to deal similarly with W. H. Chase fonds which contain photographs and letters of the family of Nova Scotia's "Apple King". These two fonds will inaugurate a new arrangement with the Acadia University Archives of joint custody of papers and photographs important in the history of the Town and region. Other volunteers have started to organize the Randall House library so that it will fit more exactly with the aims of the museum and Society. And still more volunteers have attended cataloguing and accessioning workshops so that they can start using the long promised Passage museum management computer program as soon as it comes. And, of course, the Garden Committee has come to life with a roar in the past year and promises even more excitement this summer.

This summer we face our triennial evaluation by the Nova Scotia Museum upon which our level of provincial funding depends. I am confident that the tremendous effort our volunteer members have been – and are – putting into Randall House and its collection, our alliances with the Town, the University and other heritage groups, and into the many other aspects of the Society and its operations, will be reflected very favourably in the evaluation report.

Thank you all for your participation and support.

H. John Whidden

Annual Heritage Dinner

Thursday, 16 March 2006, 6:15 for 7:00 p.m

Festival Theatre Lobby, Main Street, Wolfville

Speaker: Rev. David Curry

Rector of Christ Church, Windsor and

Chaplain and Senior School English & Philosophy Teacher at Kings Edgehill

Some Literary Figures from Windsor's Past

Tickets available from John Whidden at 542-5061

or Derek/Heather Watts at 542-0307 (or other Directors)

Tickets: \$25.00. Menu: Choice between Baked Salmon and Stuffed Chicken Breast

Arrive early to view our exhibit in the lobby. It will include a display of several of the most outstanding costumes and accessories in our collection; the Civic Memorial Book; a selection of the Dottie Stewart letters; a display of some of the W.H. Chase documents and photo collection; a display of the "Town Portrait" collection of photos and the new Board Manual.

The Dottie Stewart Letters

A group of about 12 was formed to transcribe a cache of old letters found in a Grand Pré attic. They are having a wonderful time, but can use more help. Computer skills are not needed, but proof readers with good eyes to decipher old handwriting and read through what has already been done would be welcome. An exhibit and a walking tour for June are planned to display this interesting find. To offer help, phone Heather Watts at 542-0307.

Victorian Christmas at Randall House

Randall House was a bright spot in Wolfville's Christmas. Many thanks to Dorothy Cavanagh and Pat Stewart, who arranged it all, the Town of Wolfville, who supported it, Henry, John and Derek, who did the lights and outside decorations and, not least, to all the members who brought and served refreshments. A special word of thanks to Junyan Zhang from China, who came as a guest but who stayed for two nights working very hard in the kitchen to learn more about our culture.

Civic Memorial Book — New Names Added in 2005

Cecil & Cora Hansford
Theodore Seth Harding
Ronald Stewart Longley

Robbins Leonard Elliott
Shirley Burnham Elliott
William Henry Chase

Dr. Frank H. Eaton
Charles H. Wright
Laura Haliburton Moore

The Memorial Fund, initiated by Robbins Elliott in 1993, is now valued at \$32,386.00.

It generated investment income of \$2,721.00 in 2005 for Society projects.

Randall House Museum Report



Randall House Museum opened its doors to visitors in 2005 on June 18, and closed in mid-September. We no longer have the services of Heather Davidson, our Curator of fourteen years, so we employed two Acadia students, Anna Chisling and Andre French, as Manager and Assistant Manager respectively. They welcomed visitors and performed other duties related to the operation of the museum, the display of its collection, and preparation for the season opening. This new arrangement required considerable work by committee volunteers, the highlights of which are described below.

Social and exhibits. The season began June 18 with an afternoon tea and quilt display. A very successful ice cream social was held out-of-doors on July 31. Another outdoor social was held on August 27 for children and their parents, called "A Teddy Bears' Picnic". All were invited to bring their Teddy bears. Inside was an exhibit of Teddy bears from the museum's collection. Other exhibits in Randall House during the summer included a collection of christening robes, a Wolfville school display, and exhibits of photographs related to Wolfville architecture and Wolfville as a port. The social year ended with a celebration of a Victorian Christmas on the evenings of December 6 to 11, with musical entertainment, carol singing, and tasty food. The organizing efforts of Pat Stewart, who works for the Town of Wolfville were greatly appreciated. The usual candle light window decorations plus an outdoor tree donated by the Lions Club added to the Christmas atmosphere.

Property. If you have seen Randall House this year, you will have noticed that its colour has been changed from all white to dark yellow ochre with white trim. This colour scheme was chosen after research into nineteenth century colours, and certainly makes the museum stand out. Another major project was the installation of a powerful fan in an attic window that cools the attic and helps to ventilate the whole house. The project was supervised by Derek Watts.

Gardens. The gardens volunteers spent many hours planning, pruning, planting, and palleting bricks. The town constructed a new front path and side path leading to Victoria Avenue, and a temporary layer of fine gravel was laid down. A top layer of bricks is planned for 2006.

Collections. The committee undertook the annual task of preparing the museum for opening and closing, training our new Manager and Assistant Manager, planning to archive our photo collection, and continuing the ongoing work of cataloguing our artifact collection. The much anticipated "Passages" program, which is designed for computer cataloguing of museum collections, did not arrive this year, but we look forward to receiving it and the computer that accompanies it in 2006. There were four new acquisitions to the museum collection, including the Dottie Stewart collection of over six hundred letters. A wealth of expert advice on conserving our collection was given by Kellie McIvor during a three-day visit sponsored by the Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage.

If you would like to take part in any of this type of volunteer activity, either as a member or non-member of the Wolfville Historical Society, please contact WHS President, John Whidden, Heather Watts (Chair of the Management Committee in 2006), or any of the people listed below.

This report for 2005 was written on behalf of the Randall House Museum volunteer committees:

Management Committee – Chair, Henry Bradford (2005), Heather Watts (2006)

Collections Subcommittee – Chair, Heather Watts

Exhibits Subcommittee – Chair, Myra Tuton

Garden Subcommittee – Chair, Heather Watts (2005), Sue Bissix (2006)

Social Subcommittee – Chair, Dorothy Cavanaugh (2005), (2006 volunteer needed)

Winter/Spring Events, 2006

WEDNESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2006, AT 2:00 P.M.

"State of the Town" Address

His Worship Mayor Robert A. Stead

WEDNESDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2006, AT 2:00 P.M.

Wolfville Fire Hall

Wendy Elliott "Preserving Our Built Heritage"

THURSDAY, 16 MARCH 2006, AT 6:15 P.M.

Annual Heritage Dinner

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WEDNESDAY, 19 APRIL, 2006 AT 3:00 P.M.

Wolfville Fire Hall

Heather Watts

"Polar Bears and Ptarmagins: Andrew Downs's Zoological Gardens"

17 MAY, 2006: TIME AND LOCATION TBA

Pat Townsend, Wendy Robicheau, *et al.*

"Turn Out and Cheer: Sports in Wolfville 1870-1950"

JUNE, 2006: DATE, TIME AND LOCATION TBA

Conducted by Beth Keech

"A Walking Tour of Historic Grand Pré and Hortonville"

Special Evening Lecture: 2 March, 2006 at 7:30 p.m.

Co-sponsored by the Acadia Department of History and the Wolfville Historical Society

Dr. Jamie Whidden: "The British in Egypt – 1863-1956"

Beveridge Arts Centre, Room TBA

HOUSE GLIMPING

Sheila Stevenson and Steven Archibald, authors of the award-winning book, *Heritage Houses of Nova Scotia*, are giving a seminar titled "House Glimpsing" sponsored by Acadia Lifelong Learning. It takes place on Thursday, April 20, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. (location to be announced). Although their programmes are not usually open to the public, ALL has said that Historical Society members would be particularly welcome to attend this one.