

Wolfville Historical Society

Summer, 2015

NEWSLETTER

Volume 15 Issue 1



Randall House Museum

259 Main Street

Wolfville, Nova Scotia

wolfvillehs.ednet.ne.ca

Hours: 10:00am -4:00pm

Tuesday - Sunday

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President's Letter

Spring being the time when we look for signs of renewal, I'm happy to report there are many at Randall House, besides the daffodils springing up in cheerful profusion.

Those who have already visited will have seen some familiar faces. Krystal Tanner, who was Museum Interpreter last year, returns as Acting Curator, and Devon Thomson has been appointed Collections Assistant. We are also delighted to welcome Mercedes Peters as Museum Interpreter.

The year 2015 marks an important anniversary for Wolfville. The first Atlantic Theatre Festival performance took place on 16th June 1995. Not only was this a major cultural event for

the town: it marked a coming-of-age for theatre in the province. So it's appropriate that this year the Museum houses an exhibit about the creation of the ATF, "Birth of a Festival," guest-curated by Katherine Ryan. It will be opened by Scott Brison MP at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, 12th June.

Another anniversary, that of Magna Carta, has caught the attention of many people on both sides of the Atlantic who are concerned with the problems of western democracies, particularly the rights of subjects vis à vis the state. To mark this occasion, we are hosting a special event at 7:00 p.m. on June 18th at the Wolfville Farmers' Market. There will be an illustrated talk by Professor Jennifer MacDonald, followed by discussion.

Our happy association with the Apple Blossom Festival continues. Krystal has prepared a related exhibit; and on the afternoon of May 31st, Randall House was honoured with a visit by Queen Annapolis and the Princesses.

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President's letter cont'd

And before we leave the subject of renewal: a sincere thank-you to the many WHS members who have already renewed their memberships for the current year, thereby supporting the many activities of the Society. For the benefit of those who may have overlooked this essential springtime ritual, a Membership Form is included with this Newsletter.

Anthony Harding

Krystal's Comments

The Museum has lots of programs planned this season, including the opening of our new temporary exhibit *Birth of a Festival* on June 12th. We will also have a special lecture by Dr. Jennifer MacDonald entitled *Magna Carta 800: Our Rights and England's History* on June 18th. We have decided to continue our Afternoon Teas this season, beginning on June 20th, and each Saturday until the end of the season. We also have a BBQ planned at Willow Park as we celebrate Canada Day, and for the first time we will hold a First Nation's Program for National Aboriginal Day on June 21st. Other programming events include a wine tasting, ice cream social, potluck supper, game night, family fun day, and a film showing. For the dates and times of these events please check the museum's website, visit us on Facebook, or contact us at the museum.

Winter at Randall House

I'd love to be able to tell you that it was I who undertook the Herculean task of creating our own version of the Northwest Passage, but the credit must go to Findlay O'Brien -- not so much Hercules as Finn MacCool -- who was recruited by board-member Michael Bawtree. My role here is merely to provide human scale. (ed.)



WHS Painting on Loan

The painting above, *Mi'kmaq Camp on NW Arm*, c.1865, attributed to Elizabeth S. Ladds, is currently on loan from our museum to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia as part of its *Arm's Length: The Northwest Arm and the Artist*, which runs until September 27th. As the curators observe, "The ...exhibition is a fascinating study in the many ways a single area has captured the imagination of artists over two and a half centuries."





Digging up the Past in our Garden: A Note from the Archeologist

The aim of our archaeological research was to uncover the Acadian landscape hidden in Wolfville. We know from historic maps, text and more recent surveys that Wolfville was once populated by numerous Acadian homes prior to the deportation of 1755. Due to the amount of development Wolfville has experienced over the years the Randall House Museum property was selected as a starting point because I deemed it as a place that might provide the best opportunity to uncover this Acadian landscape still relatively intact.

While we did not find anything that can be connected to the Acadian period we were still able to uncover many artifacts which can be dated to the time Randall House was built (early to mid 19th century) and throughout the century. Artifacts included buttons, ceramics, wine bottles and a coin dated to 1882. We also recovered several small nails that may be tied to the house once being occupied by a cobbler.

I was a little surprised at the amount of sub-surface disturbance we encountered. Modern artifacts were found throughout the excavation unit mixing with the much older ones. Nearing the end of the excavations we uncovered an old drainage pipe that leads to Willow Park. Perhaps this pipe once drained into the old harbour prior to it becoming a park.

All the artifacts belong to the province of Nova Scotia. Once I have finished processing and cataloguing them they will be turned over to the curator at the Museum of Natural History in Halifax. Once processed there they can be applied to be borrowed in order to be studied further or displayed.

Our next project will be to excavate in Willow Park. We know through historic records that Willow Park was once a thriving harbour and would have been used by the Acadian prior to their deportation. It would be interesting to see if we can find the original shoreline and determine if there are any remnants of the old harbour.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Wolfville Historical Society and board of governors for allowing the Acadia University Archaeology Fields school the opportunity to use the Randall House Museum property as a site with which to conduct our archaeological field research.

Aaron Taylor

Acadia University

2015 Special Exhibit: 'BIRTH OF A FESTIVAL'

Twenty years ago this June, the Atlantic Theatre Festival opened its doors for the first time, attracting attention and visitors from all over North America and beyond. The ribbon to the newly converted Festival Theatre was first cut by Christopher Plummer, who was from the beginning an active patron.

The Festival's conversion of the old 'ice palace' into a magnificent 500-seat theatre was financed by the Infrastructure Program of the federal and provincial governments, and the Town of Wolfville and Acadia University gave their full financial and in-kind support to the project. Actors and production people from the four Atlantic provinces came together to form a majority of the company, which was led by Kentville-born star Peter Donat. Over two hundred volunteers from the community came forward to provide all sorts of services for the new venture. Over 80% of ATF's first audiences came from the Annapolis Valley. In short, this unique enterprise brought everyone together, and was a genuine community effort. And its productions were of international caliber.



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To honour and commemorate those stirring times, the Wolfville Historical Society has mounted a Special Exhibit, titled BIRTH OF A FESTIVAL. The Exhibit, guest-curated by Wolfville theatre designer Katherine Ryan, will trace the Festival from its visionary beginnings in 1993 to its Grand Opening in June 1995. Photos, programs, paintings, costumes and documents will tell the story, with audio clips from Peter Gzofsky's interviews with Plummer, Michael Langham and Michael Bawtree.

The Exhibit will be opened by the Hon. Scott Brison and 2.30 pm on Friday, June 12, at Randall House Museum, and will remain open throughout the summer, within the opening hours of the Museum.



"Do come for tea at Randall House!"

Afternoon Tea will be served every Saturday from 2:00 to 5:00 pm starting on June 20th

\$5.00 per person