



# WHS

Wolfville  
Historical  
Society  
*founded 1941*

[wolfvillehs.ednet.ns.ca](http://wolfvillehs.ednet.ns.ca)

## NEWSLETTER

**Volume 13 Issue 3**

**SEPTEMBER 2013**

On the last page of our June newsletter we listed all the events which the Wolfville Historical Society was to be holding during the summer. Now, in mid-September, those happenings have all happened, and we give some account of them in this end-of-season news, which is timed to coincide with our members' meeting on September 18th.

On our masthead, above, you will see a recent picture of Randall house featuring our new sign (see below). We like to think it had some effect in increasing our visitor numbers in 2013.

Welcome to our Fall newsletter, and please feel free to send ideas for future issues -- always understanding that we are constricted by space from including everything!

*Michael Bawtree, Editor*

### ***NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT***

With summer coming too quickly to an end, we can look back on a successful season. Just a few months ago, the Board was deeply concerned about an apparent decline in the number of paid-up members. With a sustained effort by the present Board and the valued assistance of many past Board members, we have returned membership numbers to a level above those of the last two years. The Board is grateful to all those members who have renewed their membership for 2013, and to those who have joined the Society for the first time this year.

There was also good news about the grants applied for in the spring. The largest, for which we are especially grateful, is from the Town of Wolfville, and constitutes the major contribution towards the salary of the Manager-Curator, Alexandra Hernould. Grants from the Canada Works program and the Nova Scotia summer student employment program enabled us to employ two student assistants, Samuel Gillis Hogan (museum interpreter)

and Nicholas Kaizer (digitization). A further grant, from the Nova Scotia Strategic Development Initiative, supports both the stipend of Danielle Megaffin, research assistant for the Great War project, and a portion of Alexandra's salary.

Nicholas continues to work for the Society as a volunteer, monitoring the Facebook account which plays an increasingly important role in attracting visitors. Another volunteer, Devon Thompson, has rebuilt the Randall House website, and given Alexandra some training in website management so that she can also edit and add items as needed.

The program of events has gone well; the number of visitors has substantially increased over the 2012 figures. Alexandra has been a welcoming presence and has steered the museum through a busy and challenging season. In August, a particularly good month, visitorship totalled 264, including 25 under the age of 17. Friday afternoon teas became a notably successful part of this summer's social activities despite a few problems in the early stages. Receipts from the Canada Day barbecue (for which we partnered with the Wolfville Scout Troop) were rather disappointing, poor weather being largely to blame; but we sold out all our hot-dogs and sausages! Incidentally, we owe a debt of thanks to Carl Oldham of SaveEasy, Al's Deli, Sobey's and Pete's for their generous supply of our many catering needs.

Those who attended our wine and cheese event (co-hosted with Gaspereau Winery, 1st August and led by the Winery's vivacious Colleen O'Reilly) found it enjoyably informative about the products of three local wineries: Gaspereau, Domaine de Grand Pré, and Luckett. And our Dottie Stewart Social was perhaps the most colourful event of all (see article below).

Debbie Macdonald has very generously donated a quilt to be raffled as a fundraiser for Randall House. The draw will be held on 18th September.

Some challenges still remain. The east side of Randall House is in need of some careful restoration, and we have begun a program of repairing and repainting our storm windows over the next year. As next year is the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War, we are developing ideas for some events and exhibits, and plan to coordinate publicity efforts with the Town of Wolfville and with other museums, galleries, and local businesses.

*Anthony Harding*

## ***OUR NEW SIGN***

One of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee which met in the Fall of 2012 was to erect a larger sign outside Randall House, to identify the museum more clearly for passers-by. In May of this year the Board passed a resolution to allot funds for the sign, and it was in place by the second week of July. The sign was designed by Steven Slipp and built and installed by Tim MacQuarrie of Canning. The lettering was prepared and put in place by AutoTrim Design of Centreville. We thank them all for their good work.

We also wish to thank Gregg Morrison, Director of Planning for the Town of Wolfville, for organising the removal of the unsightly elm-tree stump at the north-west corner of the Randall House property, cleaning up the site, re-filling the hole left by the removal, and seeding it. With the grass now grown in and the sign set up in place of the stump, you wouldn't know things had ever looked different.

## THE DOTTIE STEWART SOCIAL

Anyone passing by Randall House on the afternoon of Saturday, the 17th of August, had to rub their eyes to make sure they were not imagining things. Why? Because on the lawns all round the house they would be able to see Victorian ladies and gentlemen strolling and strutting: the ladies in dashing greens and browns and reds, with bustles, splendid picture hats and parasols; men in Victorian frock-coats, and top-hats or straw boaters. There was even a Victorian urchin running about in suspenders, breeches and cloth cap, like something out of 'Oliver'.

The Social was held to celebrate the Dottie Stewart exhibition which has been running all summer, and the Trenholm family, who are descended from Dottie and did so much to put the exhibition together, was also responsible for creating much of the costume finery on display at the Social. There were cucumber sandwiches and cakes and cookies on hand, served out by our summer staff members Sam and Nick. And Sam gave a tour of the garden, pointing out some of its special features -- including the herb garden with its medicinal plants.

Among our honoured guests were several members of the Trenholm family, as well as our M.L.A. and Minister of Education the Hon. Ramona Jennex, and Bev Bliss -- who last winter created "Discovering Voices", a series of short films on the Dottie Stewart letters. The series is now available online for schools throughout the Province.

There was no charge for the event, but donations were contributed generously. As so often this summer, the weather co-operated with a warm and sunny afternoon, and everyone agreed it was a fine occasion and well worth repeating.



## THE TREATY OF UTRECHT

One of our historically-minded members has pointed out to us that this year is the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Utrecht. It all seems long ago and far away. But in fact the Treaty, which was signed by Britain and France and brought an end to the protracted War of Spanish Succession, included articles about the two North America. And among those which meant most of Nova Scotia This of course left the Acadian our part of the world, now living to swear allegiance to the Crown in 1755. Their place was soon from New England, many of whose descendants are still among us today.



countries' ongoing fight for control of articles was one by which 'Acadie' -- -- was ceded by France to Britain. *habitants*, the great dyke-builders in under the British flag; and their refusal eventually led to their harsh expulsion to be taken by colonists and planters

So a document signed in a far-off city in the Netherlands three hundred years ago in fact changed the social make-up of our Valley for ever. *Entendu?*



## ***THE WATSON KIRKCONNELL PRIZE***

Every year, the Historical Society awards the Watson Kirkconnell Prize to the outstanding history student at Horton High School. The Prize was set up by the Society in memory of the one-time President of Acadia after whom it is named, and is an award of \$300 towards the purchase of history books.

Our President Anthony Harding and Curator Alexandra Hernould were both on hand at the graduation ceremony at Horton on June 27th, to award the prize. This year we accompanied the prize with a certificate, and also with a folder containing a record of the life and many achievements of Watson Kirkconnell. The 2013 prizewinner was Hannah Hutchinson, who will be going on to Acadia University this Fall. We also gave her honorary membership in the Wolfville Historical Society, and look forward to having her among us in the future. Congratulations, Hannah!

WOLFVILLE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

**THE WATSON  
KIRKCONNELL  
HISTORY PRIZE  
FOR 2013**

IS AWARDED TO

**HANNAH HUTCHINSON**

## ***STATUE UNVEILING***

On September 21st, a statue of T.T. Vernon Smith will be unveiled at Waterfront Park, Wolfville. Vernon Smith was the engineer who supervised the building of the Windsor and Annapolis Railway, connecting the Annapolis Valley to Windsor, and so to Halifax. The railway was opened with great celebrations in August 1869, but less than two months later the Grand Pré and Wolfville section of the line was washed away in the great Saxby Gale of that year. (The Gale was so called because it had been predicted almost a year earlier by Lt. Saxby of the Royal Navy, an amateur astronomer.)

Vernon Smith struggled heroically to rebuild the line, but all through that Fall, with the dykes broken on the Minas Basin and continuing violent weather, it was repeatedly washed away, and the Railway Company narrowly avoided financial ruin.

The statue has been donated to the town by Allen Eaves, great-grandson of Vernon Smith. It has been created by well-known sculptor Ruth Abernethy, whose uncle was the last station master of Wolfville Station before its closure in 1988. The statue will be unveiled by the former Mayor of Wolfville, Robert Stead.

Our Historical Society has a connection with Mr. Smith through his great-grand-daughter Elizabeth Browne, who has been an active Board member for many years. We are all invited and indeed encouraged to attend the unveiling, which takes place at 2.30 pm.



*The Windsor and Annapolis Railway*

## ***LANDSCAPE OF GRAND PRÉ: THE NEW VIEW PARK***

There's a new spot to see a commanding view of Grand Pré. This summer Parks Canada held an official opening of the Landscape of Grand Pré View Park atop the Old Post Road, with West Nova MP Greg Kerr cutting the official ribbon.

The Landscape of Grand Pré Society was incorporated in May of this year. Claude Degrace of the Société Nationale de l'Acadie, who is a former park superintendent, and Naomi Blanchard of Grand Pré are co-chairs of the society. Its goal is to implement the site's management plan.

DeGrace said the opening of the view park makes it possible to appreciate fully the beauty and rich history of the landscape. The Landscape of Grand Pré was inscribed on the World Heritage List last June. It is Canada's 16th World Heritage Site and Nova Scotia's third.



## ***ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH IN WOLFVILLE UP FOR SALE***

Since late spring St. Andrew's has been sporting a large and unattractive 'For Sale' sign. The fine stone-built church is in fact one of six United church buildings in the Valley which have been put on the market: others include Lower Canard, Greenwich and Kentville -- the Canning church has already been sold. The Church's plan is to build one central United church to take their place.

St. Andrew's was completed in 1914, so was about to celebrate its centenary; though its stone cladding and traditional design makes it look much older -- like something from an old English country village. The Historical Society is naturally concerned that an appropriate use be found for the building, and has been making inquiries, with a view to participating in any community effort to save the church and re-define its function. The Board will be discussing the matter at its October meeting.

## ***REMEMBERING OUR MEMBERS***

In the last few weeks the Society has lost several faithful members. The Revd. **William M. Bishop**, who died on 2nd September, was interested in being involved with us from his arrival in Wolfville in 1987. He had a rich experience as a scholar, educator and archivist to draw upon, and served for years as a member of our Board. In that capacity he gave advice to the Executive when appropriate, and it was much appreciated.

**Gwynneth Wallace** also joined our ranks when she and her husband Bob settled into their retirement home in Wolfville. Particularly interested in encouraging the appreciation of the Arts,

she contributed much to the community. Members will remember how she and Bob presented part of their collection of Nativity Scenes at Randall House a few Christmases ago.

Finally we were sorry that the life of renowned artist **Alex Colville** came to an end, though he was full of years and honours. He and his late wife Rhoda were members of the Society for many years.

The Society remembers with thanks the participation of these friends in our activities.

*Gordon Haliburton*

### ***WHS Member Honoured***

Our President writes: 'It is a great pleasure to be able to announce that Heather M. Watts has been selected by the Awards Committee of the Association of Nova Scotia Museums to receive the 2013 "Award for Excellence in Museum Practices – Individual Contribution." Her name had been put forward by the Society.

The award (part of a new program recently launched by ANSM) will be bestowed each year on a person who has "exhibited exemplary commitment and contribution to a museum in the province."

Heather will receive the award at a ceremony in Government House on 19th September.'



***Heather Watts***

### ***Fall Program of Talks***

**September 18th, 2 pm at the Town Council Chambers**

**Speaker: Robin Bates**

A co-author of 'In the Province of History,' Robin will speak about fiction from the first half of the 20th century and its effect on tourism. A Wolfville native completing his doctorate, Robin believes that looking back at fiction is a worthwhile exercise for historians, especially when racial attitudes are considered.

**October 16th, 2 pm** (speaker and location to be confirmed)

**November 20th, 2 pm** (location to be confirmed)

**Speaker: Dr. Thomas Peace**

Dr. Peace is the Harrison McCain Visiting Professor at Acadia University. His academic interests include Canadian history, Maritime history, indigenous history, environmental history and social history.

***PLEASE NOTE: There will be a short members' meeting before each talk.  
At the September 18th meeting, members will be asked to ratify the 2013 budget.***