

Wolfville Historical Society

Summer 2018

Newsletter

Volume 18 Issue 2



Co-operation from the Town in installing the model of Wolfville in 1893

President's Message

This edition of the newsletter sets out to highlight the variety of projects and activities that members of the Society are currently involved with. It's a given that Randall House has been a hive of activity since its opening in June (see Krystal's article on page 4), but there are also other initiatives under way that are still under the radar. A theme that emerges in these pages, however, is that of co-operation with various other local organizations and groups, as the Society endeavours not only to run a successful community museum but also to play a useful role in the cultural life both of Wolfville and its surrounding communities.

Martin Hallett

Oaks from Acorns - Alfred Lake

Wendy Elliott

Some members of the Wolfville Historical Society are aiming to create an information panel to complement the one currently on post office property. The existing panel tells the story of Wolfville's WWII heroine Mona Parsons, whose memorial sculpture, The Joy is Almost Too Much to Bear, stands in front of an oak tree with a special story. It goes back to King Charles II of England, who hid for a time in a huge oak tree while fleeing Cromwell's army after the Battle of Worcester (1651). When King Charles regained his crown, an oak was planted at Windsor Castle to commemorate his escape and the role the tree played in it. As Wolfville native Gordon Hansford tells the tale, local resident Alfred Lake, who served in the 85th Battalion during WWI, heard the story and happened to pick up an acorn that he later found in his pack on his return to Nova Scotia. As the gardener and caretaker at the post office for many years, he planted it on the grounds. The resulting oak tree is now nearly 100 years old.

By way of postscript, we also plan to revive the story of how the Wolfville War Memorial came to be created – a project that will include some sprucing up of the cenotaph itself.

Beautiful Garden At Wolfville, N.S.
Cared For By Public Works Employee



Caretaker Lake

The "Public Garden"

A "Public Garden" has been developed at the back of the Wolfville, N.S., Post Office Building comprising about 30,000 square feet which is devoted to lawns, flowers, shrubs and trees. Thousands of persons visit the ground annually to admire the multitude of blooms. Alfred J. Lake, the Caretaker at the Post Office Building, is responsible for the array of beauty in the garden. He has been with the Department of Public Works for 24 years and is planning to retire this year when he reaches his 65th birthday. Prior to 1952 the area was cared for under the jurisdiction of the Wolfville Garden Club. In 1953 the Department of Public Works authorized a seasonal part-time cleaner and helper to assist in looking after the grounds, and since then the project has been cared for by the DPW.

The Old Made New Again

John Whidden, WHS Historian

We who respect and admire the old buildings in Wolfville get a sinking feeling in the stomach when we hear of another one being renovated. Too often, this means getting rid of old windows, putting up vinyl siding, removing ornamental features and committing other atrocities on the cheap, cheap, cheap. But some owners do appreciate what they have and are willing to do what it takes to restore their properties.

Looking across the street from Randall House is the big mid-19th century house owned by the Bromley family for many years. It had become somewhat run down, but Mr. and Mrs. Riley, the present owners, went straight at it and removed the overgrown shrubbery, painted and repaired the woodwork to restore it to its former glory.

At the corner of Main and Harbourside, TAN coffee occupies one of the oldest buildings in the downtown, originally sited across from Randall House and moved to its present location in the early 1860s. When MacKay Real Estate bought it some ten years ago, it needed work. Seeing the old clapboard under the 1960s siding, John MacKay decided to remove it all and put up new wooden clapboard. In addition, he put in front windows which duplicate those seen in the 1953 winter photograph of the Acadia Stores, which then occupied the building, with Gordon Conrad at the reins of a team of horses and sledge pulled up beside the big snow drift in front. The building now looks much as it did for most of its 160+ year-old life.

Thirty Gaspereau Avenue, at the corner of Acadia Street, was purchased recently by Moira and Philip Milward. Anyone driving by over the past year has seen the careful

recladding of the house with new clapboard and the rebuilding of the verandah in the original style. The decorative features of this otherwise plain house have been faithfully copied: brackets on the verandah posts and supporting the moulded entablatures over the windows in particular. The house is a pleasure to look at, as is the new garage/workshop behind, built in a sympathetic style.



Finally, “The Stalls” on Acadia Street, just east of Highland Avenue, are being restored. John Mackay has again gone back to the original, replacing the side windows on the turrets, removed some decades ago, so that each turret has three windows. The windows around the Mansard roof of the second storey now have again the decorative pediments of the original design, and the inappropriate metal verandah posts and have been replaced by wooden pillars. This is a building unique in Wolfville which can once more stand proudly with contemporary houses in the area.

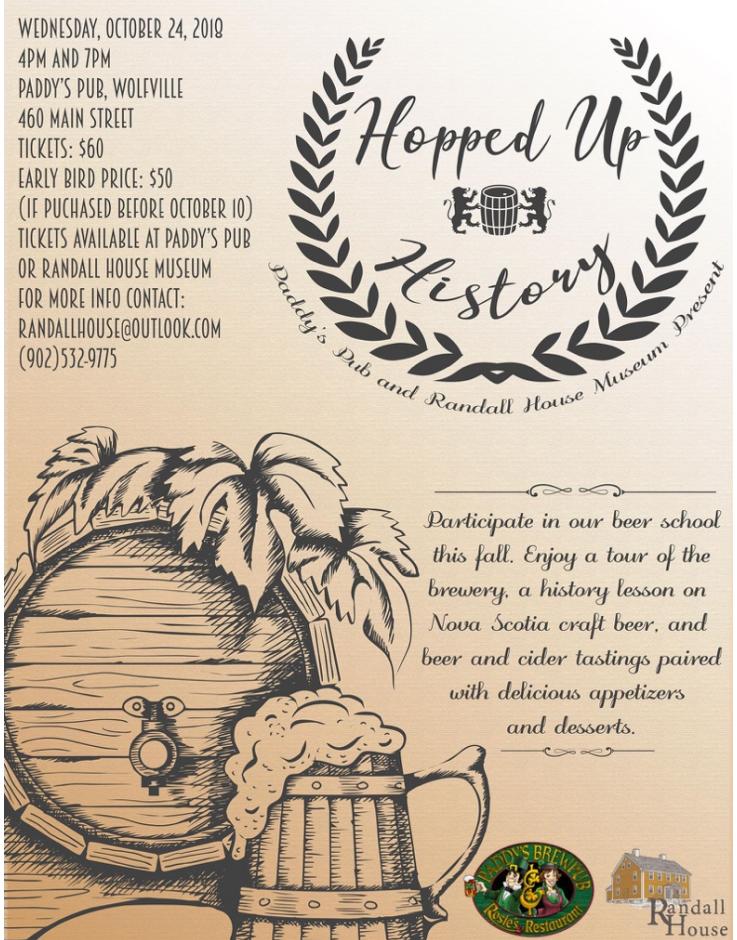
Let us be grateful for the owners who respect the heritage in their possession.

Summer at the Randall House

What a season it has been at Randall House Museum. If I were to use one word to sum it up, it would be CHANGES. The most interesting changes being hiring a new student, installing two brand-new exhibits, and moving a large portion of the textile collection into a new storage area. I think the best way to describe the season is to do a re-cap of some of the highlights, the first being an introduction of our two students, Lauryn Wadden and Breanna Stewart.

Lauryn is a familiar face around Randall House, as she was hired last year as the Heritage Interpreter/Guide. She recently graduated from the Bachelor of Music program at Acadia University; she will be returning there to begin the Bachelor of Education Program this fall. Her dedication, passion, talent, and familiarity with the museum made her an easy choice for re-hire as this year's Collections Management Assistant, made possible through funding by the Student Summer Skills Incentive. Our second hire was Breanna Stewart. Another graduate of the Bachelor of Music program at Acadia University, Breanna will be returning to complete an Honors thesis in Musicology this fall. Her versatility, story-telling skill, and community drive have made her a welcome addition to the Randall House Team.

A partnership between Randall House and the Acadia University Art Gallery led to a successful start to our workshop season: bookbinding. Ruth Legge, a well-known conservator and bookbinder, led participants through the steps of how to create their very own bound book. Our thanks go to Dr. Laurie Dalton, Director/Curator of the Acadia University Art Gallery, for arranging the workshop space and to Ruth for taking on the task of teaching us. Following that, we welcomed the return of Lynn Denney, who introduced participants to the basics of rug hooking. We have also established a new partnership with Paddy's Pub here in Wolfville to host "Hopped Up History". This event, taking place on October 24th at 4PM and 7PM, will include a condensed version of beer school, a tour of the brewery, some beer and food pairings, and a history lesson on craft beer.





Another highlight of the year was the installation of two brand new exhibits. The first exhibit to open this season was created in conjunction with the Wolfville 125 celebrations. This exhibit examines the shifting streetscape of Wolfville through a comparison of archival and contemporary photographs of select locations around the town. The exhibit was also distinguished by a model of Wolfville as it was in 1893, constructed by David Burton in 1993 for the Town's centennial celebrations. Thanks to Wolfville 125 funding, the model was restored and has come to the museum as part of its permanent collection. Our second exhibit celebrates Wolfville's very own Mona Parsons, who was this year's 2018 Heritage Day honoree. A collection of objects and photographs help to tell Mona's story from her beginnings in Middleton to her life here in Wolfville, following the Second World War. Upcoming exhibits will include a look into the industries of Gaspereau and a mini-exhibit on a group of local peace activists.

The Randall House Team would like to thank all those who were involved in making the season so "highlightable". With just over 3 months left - that's right, we are open into December - we are looking forward to what is coming next.

Krystal Tanner - Curator

WHS Map Hortonville Project

Some time ago, Ed Symonds, from COGS (Centre of Geographic Sciences) in Lawrencetown, gave a talk to a WHS Members' Meeting about a mapping project that had been done in conjunction with a community group in Annapolis Royal. They used software to produce theme maps of the town, such as historic houses, old wharves, and black loyalist settlements. The community group did research and collected materials, photos, text and documents, which were related to various points on the map. A student from COGS was assigned to the group to assist with the technology. The maps they produced are stored on the internet and are accessible to everyone. This seemed to us an excellent way to collect, record, and retrieve local historical information, so the WHS decided to sponsor its own town map project.

We chose to do the first project in Hortonville because Charlie Curry, a member of our Board, was born and raised in Hortonville, the 5th generation of his family there, has long been interested in local history and has a fine collection of old photos, documents, and transcripts of interviews. In addition, Hortonville has a dramatic history. Charlie is currently putting together a group of residents who are interested in working on the project or have interesting materials to offer.

The software provides a selection of 12 different background maps, topography, aerial photos, etc. Our initial plan is to develop a number of layers of maps of the area; for instance, we might start with a geographical map, then a map of the Acadian settlements, followed by one of the Planters' plots, and one of the current town. The maps that are produced will depend on the design of the project by the community group and the materials they are able to collect. Ed has volunteered to help as needed.

If you would like to participate in this project or if you have old photos or documents you could lend, please call Charlie on 902 542 0900. If you would like more information, please call Caroline Power on 902 697 2007.

