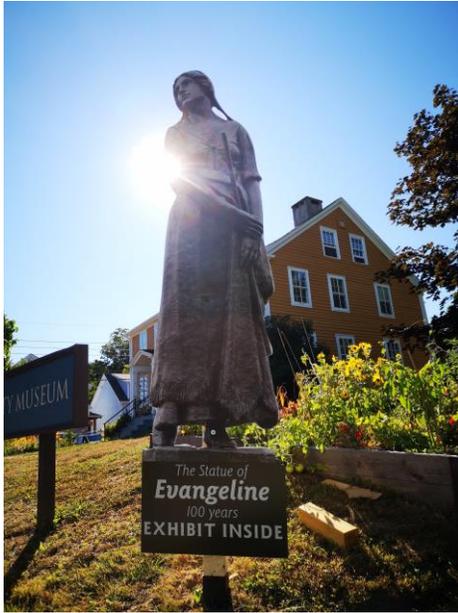


# Wolfville Historical Society

Summer 2020

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At first glance, you might think that we're a bit behind the times in describing this newsletter as our summer edition, since we're now well into September – and from a chronological point of view, you'd be quite right. Our intent, however, is to celebrate the simple fact that we were able to open the museum's doors at all, given the obstacles that a certain pandemic threw into our path, and to share with you some of the ways in which we've tried to make a mark on Wolfville's cultural scene.

But that's just the start of it. Once we knew what the safety protocols were, we set to work to design our exhibits accordingly, and discovered that Randall House is a very adaptable place – at least downstairs – when it comes to

one-way traffic! Another tactic was to develop a pair of Wolfville Walks, ably led by student assistants Emma Bullerwell and Evan Jennex (from whom you will hear more later in this newsletter).

We were sad to say goodbye to two distinguished members of the Society earlier in the summer. Heather and Derek Watts offered inestimable support and expertise over many years, which for a volunteer

organization like ours is key to survival. We shall miss them.

Please note that we'll be closing our doors for the season on September 21st at 4pm. so please drop by for a visit if you haven't already done so. We're proud of what we've achieved this year, and we'd very much like to share it with you!

Martin Hallett

President

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## “Lights, Camera – Ghosts?”

### *Randall House’s Ghostly Tales and Paranormal Attraction*

There’s no question that many people think that historic buildings are filled to the brim with ghosts and other spooky things that are waiting to jump out at them from every dark corner. It’s very common to be asked by visitors whether the museum has any ghost stories or, in some instances, who still “lives” at the museum. Luckily, we have had enough unexplainable incidents over the years that we can often delight (or scare) people with our stories. In some cases, the timing of these stories couldn’t be more perfect. I’m thinking back a few years ago, to the time when I was telling stories of our dear “resident ghost,” Annie, and the power in the museum went out, leaving us all in darkness. Talk about dramatic effect, huh?!

Randall House has always had an eerie reputation. Graham Patriquin recalls that back when Eardley and Annie Randall lived in the house, it had “a spooky reputation among the young fry [of the community]”, due to the dilapidated state of the property. Now that we’ve dabbled in the world of paranormal investigating, we still have a reputation for being spooky. A TripAdvisor review reads: “Hubby and I enjoyed our tour through the Randall House ... I did not see a ghost or feel a presence, yet I was aware at all times of experiencing one ...” or the review from another visitor who swears Sister Annie was playing tricks: “[t]he history of the house is fascinating and then there is the ghost of Annie. Apparently on days when the museum is closed, grounds crew have seen Annie's face looking out the window, as she never left the house but would get after the children stealing apples from her property which was overlooked by her bedroom. After visiting there, my cell phone would ring just once then stop. This happened probably at least 3 times a day during our 18 day trip. We laughed that Annie was doing it. It has not happened since we left Nova Scotia!”

Armed with a digital folder full of voice and video clips from our friends at Caretakers Paranormal, as well as all of the stories that I’ve collected and experienced over the years, I was more than happy to welcome a production crew from the television show *Sight Seers*. They brought with them a medium and an oracalst who were tasked with contacting any spirits in the house. The crew spent a week at the museum filming an episode that I’m told will air sometime in May. While I can’t give away any spoilers, it was quite an emotional experience and one that answered many questions that have been lingering over the years.



*Written by Krystal Tanner, Curator of the Randall House Museum*

## “Recognizing the Precursors to Black Lives Matter”

### *Looking into the NSAACP and the BUF*

In terms of vital, historical education, it is of the utmost importance that two things be historically recognized by Nova-Scotians. Firstly, the historical prejudices and injustices that have led to the current situation, and secondly, that the recognition and fight against these issues are not new to Nova Scotia.

While many Nova-Scotians have been rightfully educated on the story of Viola Desmond, Nova-Scotians need to be taught that this situation was not isolated, and was not fought single-handedly. In 1945, supported by the Cornwallis Street Baptist Church (now the New Horizons Baptist Church) and its minister, William Pearly Oliver, the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People was formed. The goals of the association were pure and just; to support and improve the economic and social conditions of African Nova-Scotians, while actively protesting and fighting racial biases, and “Jim Crowism” laws.

The NSAACP would be heavily influential in helping African-Nova Scotian communities. They successfully lobbied for the Supreme Court to look at the Viola Desmond case, they improved the adult education program for African-Nova Scotians, and lobbied for African Canadian women to be accepted into nursing schools.

In 1970, BUF (the Black United Front) was created as a separate entity from the NSAACP. BUF was created as an institution of support for African-Nova Scotian communities, and as an institution to support and promote black culture in Nova Scotia. As described by William Pearly Oliver,

“Black people now for the first time in the history of the Nova Scotia Negro have collectively realized that their frustration emerges from the subtleties of racism and discrimination by the whites. They realize that they cannot fight the intangible thing called “discrimination” without some power to control it. It is hoped that the Black United Front would be the tool that would assist in the developing of sufficient power to overcome the monotony of anxiety, frustration, poverty and depression caused by overt and insidious discrimination.”<sup>1</sup>

Current Nova-Scotians need to understand that our current issues with discrimination

Have been long-lasting and fought by previous Nova-Scotians as well. The racial issues that are the focus of the Black Lives Matter protesters existed long before the current movements, and the blocks from which this movement is built were put in place by William Pearly Oliver and the other activists of the NSAACP and BUF. The fact that this fight continues to this day should not be viewed as a negative, but should be recognized as the refusal to succumb to societal

discrimination. It is with the current action, and the historical foundation laid beneath it that we will make meaningful change through the Black Lives Matter movement.



*Written by Evan Jennex, 2020 Summer Student*

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, Colin. *Born with a Call: A Biography of Dr. William Pearly Oliver, C.M.* (Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia: Dartmouth). (1986). 124.

## “Organ Donors”

### *Advertisements and mechanics of organs from the Randall House Museum Collection*



Some organs maintain the administration of business. Other organs pump blood throughout the body. But my favourite organs? My favourite organs provide beautiful music to all kinds of gatherings. From church to funk, organs have been an essential part of music making since 300 BCE.

In the collection at Randall House, we only have one organ. It is a pedal organ – a type of popular reed organ from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The player would operate two pedals with their feet while they were playing on the keyboard. Generally, the pedals would pump air through the reeds of the instrument, causing the reeds to vibrate and produce a rich tone. However, this organ comes from a sub-type of pedal organs called the Melodeon. The Melodeon’s pedals actually sucked air into the reeds, as opposed to blowing them out. Kind of like playing the clarinet in reverse – except the clarinet won’t make a pretty noise if you play it like that. This allowed for more dynamic contrast. Pedal organs were rarely used in churches due to

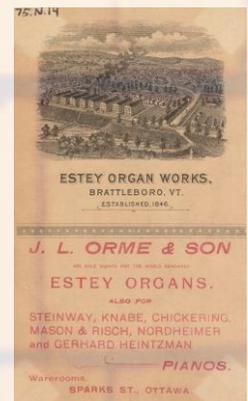
the popularity of the pipe organ. The pipe organ’s iconic, dynamic, full sound and distinguished overtones continue to make it the churches’ instrument of choice. The tone of the pedal organ pales in comparison, making it a substitute in small churches – that is, until it was replaced by the piano. The organ in our collection was made between 1853 and 1874 by the S.D. and H.W. Smith Company. It was once owned by Charles Randall and the Gilliat family. One can just imagine these New England Planter families around the pump organ, singing Christmastime hymns and enjoying family time in the Victorian era.

The ad you see here (top left, side one and bottom right, side two) is also from our collection. Dating back to around 1895, this card advertises a popular reed organ from the Estey Organ Works. The picture is of a very rare reed organ known as the Phonorium. This organ looks similar to a modern organ, with its pedals and double keyboard. It is not a pedal organ; it is operated with a crank near the top of the keyboard. You turn the crank for a minute or so, then you play as usual! As far as we know, there are no fully functional Phonoriums in the world today. It is possible that the only playable Phonorium left is in the Estey Organ Museum in Vermont.

Established in 1846, Estey Organ Works in Brattleboro, Vermont had an “organ empire” that nearly circled the globe. By 1900, they had sold 300,000 to six continents. Their first products were Melodeons – the same sub-type of organ that is in our collection. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century turned to pipe organs and the popularity of reed organs decreased. In the 1950s, the acoustic organ industry was dying out and the company turned to electronic organs. By 1960, Estey Organ Works had gone through many changes to become Estey Electronics, Inc. These changes included moving to California.

Did any Wolfville resident have the organ pictured in this ad? We can’t be sure, but we can assume that, due to the popularity of Estey Organs, they may have been a household name!

No matter what type of organ you’re talking about – business, body, or music – they are all important. Are they equally important? Well, that’s for you to decide.



*Written by Emma J Bullerwell, 2020 Summer Student*

## “The Battle of Grand-Pré”

*A tale of violence in between French and British in pre-expulsion Acadie*

The area surrounding Wolfville and Grand-Pré today represents a peaceful and scenic escape for many who wish to relax, sign up for wine tours, hike, visit historical sites and generally enjoy themselves. When the area was Acadian, it shared that same sense of tranquility and beauty, but was also the site of periodic colonial conflict between the British and the French.



One such violent episode occurred in 1747, when a French force fighting alongside Mi'kmaw allies and Acadian guides surprised an Anglo-American force stationed in the village of Grand-Pré by attacking through a snowstorm in the early morning of February 11<sup>th</sup>.

Soldiers from New England, led by Colonel Arthur Noble, had made their way from Annapolis Royal to Grand-Pré to assert control over a greater portion of Nova Scotia. The French forces, under the command of

Nicolas Antoine II Coulon de Villiers, sought to undermine that endeavor by mounting a long-range attack against the British forces.

Locals had warned the troops that the French commander was planning some kind of attack, but they did not credit the information, since they assumed it would be far too impractical for the French to march for so long through such poor conditions.

Having learned the details of where the enemy was garrisoned from guests at a wedding reception in Gaspereau, the French force and their allies divided into strike-groups, each designated to assault a different building housing enemy soldiers. They began their coordinated advance at 3am, taking the British garrisons totally by surprise and achieving most of their objectives within a few hours. Despite this, the British were able to defend a fortified position in a stone house outfitted with artillery, and the fighting spilled into broad daylight.

During one of the many skirmishes, a British officer was captured, but his captors did not have their surgeon available to patch up the wounds that the officer sustained. A deal was struck whereby the British sent out their surgeon in exchange for a hostage. This led to a temporary ceasefire that lasted until the following morning.

In the end, the French were successful in defeating the Anglo-American force, even taking several prisoners. The British commander, Colonel Noble, was killed during the engagement.

The long-term effect of the victory on the strategic level was insignificant, though, with the British eventually taking control of the province along with the rest of Canada.

It is likely that the events of this battle and the fact that Acadians served as guides and informants to the French contributed to the lack of trust and eventual expulsion of the Acadian people by the British.

*Written by Alex Dupuis, 2020 Summer Student*

**Signing off on a successful season!**

