

Wolfville Historical Society

November 2019

Volume 19 Issue 3

Armistice Day in Wolfville Celebrating Peace and Victory

Chris Gertridge



Note the separation of the sexes, even in celebration!

When WWI ended, the town of Wolfville took to the streets to celebrate.

It was early on a Monday morning on the 11th day of November in 1918 when the telegrams started to arrive. They gave official notice that the Germans had signed the Armistice, surrendering unconditional to the Allies and bringing an end to the Great War.

At 5:30 a.m., the student body at Acadia University was awakened by the college bell announcing the signing of Armistice and the end of the war. Classes were suspended for the day, and by 6:00 a.m., nearly every student had congregated in the college chapel. There, President Dr. George B. Cutten led one of the most impressive, although short, thanksgiving services at Acadia. At 9:00 a.m., the students met in Assembly Hall, where they joined in patriotic song and after were addressed by several professors, each one speaking on behalf of one of the Allied Nations.

Meanwhile in the town of Wolfville, the college bell prompted residents to pour on to Main Street, some in various stages of undress. Their singing and dancing with bells, whistles, and horns notified any citizens still sleeping that the anticipated news had arrived: the war was over. Once relative calm had been restored, the day was proclaimed a holiday and all places of business closed so that every person could celebrate and give thanks. At noon, the students and the townspeople met in the churches where services were held to mark the momentous occasion.

At 2:30 in the afternoon, a parade was held on Main Street, which included almost every citizen in town as well as the whole student body of Acadia University. It was said that the line of jubilant people, young and old, stretched over a mile. As the town's citizens and students made their way down the street with flags, horns, bells, and whistles, many had tears in their eyes and clutched handkerchiefs. After four years, three months and fourteen days of war, this was a glorious day for everyone. Celebrations continued into the evening with a large bonfire on campus followed by fireworks and sky rockets, all prepared by students.

The day of celebration was considered a success in every way and was executed without damage to property or person. Some eleven days later, however, the *Acadian* reported that Mr. David Thompson was still looking for his flag, which was removed from his veranda on the evening of the Armistice. He asked "that it be returned at once and further trouble will be avoided." Hopefully it was!



Both photographs on this page taken by Edson Graham

Our Newest Acquisition...

Martin Hallett

We are pleased to announce a major acquisition for Randall House, the centrepiece of our new Basement Gallery. We have eagerly awaited its arrival for some time, since the first attempt at delivery had to be aborted for security reasons: since there were several suspicious-looking individuals dressed as construction-workers pretending to build a house on the other side of Victoria Avenue, the driver decided that he could not put his precious cargo at risk and drove on.

One can only marvel at the craftsmen of ancient times, that they should have had both the skill and the prescience to design a sarcophagus disguised as a fibreglass tank. What better way to confuse a would-be basement robber in order to protect and preserve such a costly oil as *Essence d'Irving*? Our insurers advised us some time ago that such a treasure should not be stored in a fragile single-bottomed metal tank (no vessel from ancient times was made of stainless steel, after all), so the die was cast, so to speak.

Viewing of this extraordinary artifact will be by appointment only, and will begin as soon as we've raised the funds for a body-scanner to be installed at the top of the basement steps.



THE WOLFVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
invites you to our

Annual Holiday Party

At the Randall House Museum, 259 Main Street, Wolfville
Monday, November 25, 7-9pm
Featuring music by Daniel James McFadyen
Light refreshments will be served

Please contact the Randall House Museum with any questions
email: randallhouse@outlook.com ~ phone our curator: 902-680-0385

Krystal's Komments

Krystal Tanner

Here we find ourselves at the end of another lively and successful season at Randall House Museum. I find myself reflecting on all of the positive moments that were had this season and it puts a huge smile on my face. I am very proud of what the museum and the Society has managed to accomplish this past year, from our annual events on Canada Day and Mud Creek Days to the Randall House Regatta, a wine and cheese social, and a sold-out rug-hooking workshop.

One of the stand-out moments for me was the Society's participation in the Museum Evaluation Program [MEP] that is implemented every four years by the Association of Nova Scotia Museums. This was my first time being involved in every aspect of preparation for the evaluation, and while it was at times overwhelming and stressful, it was, in truth, a great learning opportunity. The ANSM released our final grade in early September, and I am proud to report that our score increased from 75.4% in 2016 to 83.5%.



This is the highest mark that the museum has ever received in the evaluation program, which first began in 1995. A new element of the MEP is Accreditation, which essentially recognizes those museums that have excelled in the evaluation process. Since Randall House meets all of the eligibility requirements for becoming accredited, I am now in the midst of completing the application. If we are approved, we will receive a branding package that indicates our museum has met high standards of practice in the field that we will be able to display onsite.

Krystal's Komments continued...

One of the cool things about working in a museum is the variety of unique opportunities that a person gets to be involved in. This year the museum was asked to contribute to a project known as "Watercolour World". The project aims to create an online database that contains hundreds of thousands of pre-1900 watercolour paintings from all over the world. You can see the paintings that we submitted from the museum's permanent collection on their website: <https://www.watercolourworld.org/>.



Watercolour: Annie L. Pratt – 1894 – Randall House Museum Collection

Another exciting prospect is that Randall House Museum and the Acadia University Art Gallery are collaborating on an exhibit entitled *Omnium Gatherum*, which looks at how visual culture and material culture intersect, between the 'art' object and the 'museum' object. The exhibit, which will open in January, will present portraits from Acadia's permanent collection that are juxtaposed and contextualized with objects that come from our permanent collection here at the museum.

Lastly, I will just take a moment to send a special thank you to all of those people who have continued to offer their support for the museum. In May of 2020 we will officially open for our 70th season and it wouldn't be possible without you and all those that came before. Let's see where this museum journey takes us next!

University Hall: Wolfville's Defining Landmark

John Whidden

It took several years for Acadia to recover from the blow delivered when the second College Hall burned to the ground in 1920, twenty-five years after the first College Hall was similarly destroyed. Then the Board of Governors turned to Leslie R. Fairn, a Wolfville architect whose domestic and institutional designs were by that time bringing local and province-wide acclaim, to design a replacement. Fairn did not disappoint.

Like its two predecessors, University Hall was to have ample classroom and administration space, but unlike them, it was to provide an auditorium seating some 1,200 people, enough to accommodate Acadia students and employees and most of the population of the town as well. In retrospect, this seems a greatly daring decision founded on unbridled optimism. The design process produced several proposals, but Fairn and the Governors finally settled on what we see today. It can be described as a Palladian based building in the Classical style, with Baroque elements in the tower and corner cupolas.

In essence, a Palladian design has a centre block, with symmetrical wings ending in corner pavilions. Province House in Halifax is perhaps the finest example in Nova Scotia. The central blocks sometimes, as in U Hall, had pillared porticos, and the rooflines of the wings were sometimes lower than that of the central block and pavilions. Institutional buildings tended to have a single roof line height in the interests of providing useful interior space.

If we look at the south façade of U Hall we can pick out the elements. The first two storeys are strictly Classical in proportions and symmetry; hold up a piece of paper to hide everything above and you will see this. But above is the wide, plain band of the attic giving the height to accommodate the soaring pillars and pediment of the porch. On the public façade of Buckingham Palace, the attic does the same thing, but extends only over the central block. The full attic of U Hall also fulfills two important interior requirements: the western 60% provides the height for the auditorium and allows the balcony to extend upwards, and the eastern 40% provides space for two large classrooms, now cut up into smaller spaces.

A further inspection of the façade reveals two end faux pavilions, here marked only by a slightly protruding façades enclosed by shallow square pilasters, and pediments over the lower windows. Above each pavilion, the roof rises in a low, barely perceptible pediment which also serves to give a bit of a visual lift to the ends of the long roofline. Above three pavilions (the north façade being nearly a mirror image of the south) are cupolas, while the south-west corner has a disguised chimney for the long-gone furnaces. From the centre of the roof rises a tall, square tower with a railed gallery at the top surmounted by a coppered dome and finial, and with a decorative urn at each corner. The finial might seem a bit superfluous, but it adds just a wee touch of élan and gives a lift which the rounded dome alone does not.

From the north, the view is not quite a mirror image; the proportions of the façade are slightly different as the ground falls away a bit to reveal part of the basement and thus gives increased height to the building. The ground then falls away further so that from the street the building dominates the front lawn in that iconic view which attracts the eye of every passer-by. In contrast, from the south the façade of U Hall is a continuation of the façade of Seminary House and therefore is the major, but not overwhelming, part of the central campus perimeter.

Acadia has some other very fine buildings, but only the orangery, or Garden Room, of the Irving Centre can match U Hall for architectural grandeur.

Peoples of the Valley:

A Joint Project

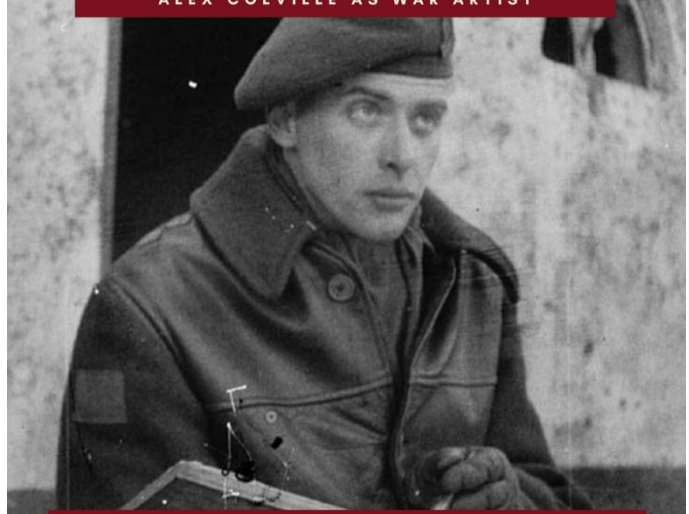
Back in the Spring, the Society was contacted by Tony Berger from the Lifelong Learning program at Acadia with the idea of mounting a course that explored the social history of the different “founding peoples” and their successors who have over the years made the Valley their home. We were enthused by the suggestion and during the following months were able to find speakers that we think are eminently qualified to tell this fascinating story, beginning with the Mi'kmaw and progressing through the Acadians, the Planters, the African-Canadians, the Dutch and concluding with the Newcomers – specifically, the Syrian refugees.

The course runs each Thursday from March 5th to April 9th, 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. For more information, please call 902-585-1434.

PRESENTED BY THE WOLFFVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

"THE SWEETEST SPRING"

ALEX COLVILLE AS WAR ARTIST



SCREENING OF THE FILM: "THE SWEETEST SPRING - DIARY OF A WAR ARTIST"

Sunday, 24 November 2019 at 2pm
At the Wolfville Legion, 310 Main Street



Randall House celebrates the marriage of board members Jasmine and Chris