

Gatineau Valley Historical Society
2018 Annual General Meeting

President's Report

Good evening everyone, my name is Marc Cockburn, the President of the Gatineau Valley Historical Society, and it's my pleasure to welcome you to our 2018 Annual General Meeting

The main purpose of our AGM tonight is to highlight the Society's accomplishments over the last few years, so we have devoted the meeting to presenting some of our collections and products, which will follow our AGM

As well, I invite everyone to check our website for a record of the last year's activities in the Newsletter, or to see the documents relating to the AGM that we recently posted. We will also publish reports in our next Newsletter.

First of all, I want to thank all of the volunteers that help make the Society succeed, including our hard working and devoted Board of Directors: Suzanne Gibeault (Secretary), Shirley Brown (Treasurer and Newsletter editor), Louise Schwartz (Publications), Erik Rask (Internet), Linda Bardell (Archives).

As well, I am sad to announce that two of our current Board members Vice-president Bob McClelland, and André Renaud (Cemeteries), are stepping down this year. Both have been invaluable to the Society in bringing our activities to fruition, and for the sage advice they brought to the Board table.

We once again put on a number of interesting and well attended series of 8 program events last year, on a broad range of topic topics.

Later on we will let you know what we have already have planned for this spring. And we are already looking at our fall program. We already have some great ideas, and in fact we may have to make some difficult choices about what to include.

Over the last few years, we have found that a lot of our efforts "assisting the wider community to make know the history and heritage of the Gatineau valley.

As part of Canada's 150 celebration, the GVHS partnered with the Low Down to publish a bi-weekly series of one page spreads drawing from our image collection and publications

The series was coordinated by Louise Schwartz, with help from contributors Bob McClelland , Don Kealey, Lise St. Jean, Ben Bulmer, Linda Bardell and myself. Also Erik Rask who took the printed version and converted to a very nice webpage.

We were very pleased to assist the Fairbairn House Heritage Centre which the production of their Notable Woman of the Gatineaus exhibition.

This exhibition celebrates the lives of ten remarkable women of the Gatineau Valley and ran at the Fairbairn House from June to October, then went on tour at the Chelsea Municipal Library and is now currently on display at the Cantley Library. Congratulations to the Fairbairn House!

We continue to work with Chelsea Trails to add new interpretation panels on the Chelsea Winter trails. Last year we added some more signs at the south end of the trail, documenting Chelsea's rail history. Thanks to Louise Schwartz for putting this project together, and we anticipate will grow as the rail line becomes a permanent all-season community trail.

In the fall of 2017, in recognition of Canada 150, we presented Mayor Caryl Green with a framed reproduction of the watercolour "Old Chelsea, Quebec" by Francis Fitz Roy Dixon.

This iconic scene of Old Chelsea was painted in 1898 by artist Dixon, who had a summer home in Cascades. The reproduction rights for this painting were generously given to the Society by Jon and Lyne Dellandrea of Toronto.

Our Facebook page continues to grow with over 600 page likes. It's been interesting to see how our reach has extended outside the Gatineaus, as people across the country and in the United States are discovering our resources and activities. Many thanks to Shirley, Louise and Suzanne for maintaining the page.

We continued discussions with the Municipality of Chelsea, Chelsea Commerce, and Chelsea Trails to contribute create a trail system which will incorporate the

Old Chelsea Protestant Burial Ground, and eventually link to a system of trails surrounding Old Chelsea and beyond.

We are also happy to learn that Greg McGuire will be the Municipality's representative on consultation committee that looks after the cemetery, replacing Beth McVie. Also, as Andre Renaud is stepping down from the Society's Board, we have John Udvarhelyi replacing him.

I am also happy to announce that the Municipality will be installing a 'contemplation bench' in honour of Carol Martin at the cemetery this spring.

The GVHS wishes to advise its members that the Society's board has taken the decision to transfer the ownership of the Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery and Cenotaph to the Municipality of Chelsea. The transfer request was approved by Chelsea Council in October 2017, conditional on the completion of some capital and maintenance projects by the GVHS. The official transfer is expected to take place later in 2018.

The GVHS first acquired the cemetery in 1966 from its former private landowner. Early records refer to the site as "Church's' Cemetery," as it was the burying ground of the Church family.

It was formally named the Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery in 1989 when it was designated a historic site. Richard Rowland Thompson, Boer War hero and the only Canadian recipient of the Queen's Scarf, is buried here beside his wife, Bertha Alexander. As well, a cenotaph commemorates Chelsea's war dead from World Wars I and II.

Since assuming ownership, the GVHS has promoted recognition of the cemetery and maintained its grounds for safe public access. As well, the GVHS organizes an annual Remembrance Day service at this site.

In 2016, the GVHS received a generous \$25,000 legacy from the late Past President Carol Martin for improvements to the cemetery. A plan is now in place for the disbursement of these funds, including the installation of a classical-design fence, the removal several unsafe and diseased trees, and the completion of some overdue maintenance to improve drainage, level the ground, and repair the

two stone pillars at the entrance. This work will exhaust the legacy and meet the condition required by the municipality before it accepts ownership.

From the date of official transfer going forward, the municipality will take over the insurance and maintenance of the Pioneer Cemetery and Cenotaph. These elements had been of concern to the board, and significant factors in the decision to propose the transfer of ownership. The GVHS will continue to work with the municipality to organize the annual Remembrance Day ceremony at the cenotaph, as well as acting in an advisory capacity, similar to the role the Society carries out with the other municipal cemetery, the Protestant Burial Ground in Old Chelsea.

Of course we are always willing and ready to welcome new volunteers, so please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to volunteer in any way.