

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE GATINEAU LA SOCIÉTÉ HISTORIQUE DE LA GATINEAU

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Newsletter

No. 98-6: December 1998 - January 1999

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." - George Santayana

Coming Events

Monday, January 18

SKI-ING UP THE GATINEAU! with Allan Richens

With the help of some mementoes, Allan will reminisce on a typical day of ski-ing at the **Ottawa Ski Club** (Camp Fortune) during the winter of **1946-47**. The content of this "fireside chat" will be of interest to your children and grandchildren - so please bring them along.

Chelsea Community Centre, Old Chelsea
Refreshments - 7:30
Meeting at - 8:00

Monday, February 15

Heritage Day: **Annual General Meeting**, presentation of awards, election of officers, and a guest speaker. Watch for details in the next newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Please check the mailing label on the envelope in which you received this issue of the Newsletter. If it indicates a renewal date of either "98/12/31" or "1998/12," your membership will be expiring very shortly.

A name on our list involves costs to the Society: stationery, printing, and postage being the major ones. Please help us out by renewing your membership now. An individual or family membership for one year costs \$15 and two years, \$25. Please send a cheque to the address given above on our masthead.

Thanks!

Christmas Gift Ideas

The Society has just issued a tribute to Patrick M.O. Evans, Archivist Emeritus and one of the founding members of the Historical Society. *Echoes from the Past: Articles on the History of the Gatineau from the Pages of the Low Down to Hull and Back News* contains over 100 pages of reprinted *News* articles. Also featured are an autobiographical essay and two quality photographic portraits of Pat Evans taken by local photographer Adrienne Herron.

The book is 8½ by 11 inches in size, in cerlox binding. Cost per copy: \$12.00. It is available in a few local outlets and directly from the Society by calling Duncan or Gudula Marshall at 827-2077.

Duncan and Gudula also have available for purchase a few copies of the official *History of the Outaouais* at a special reduced price of \$40 (rather than the normal \$50).

Big Island (Blue Sea Lake) History

Society member Bruce Ballantyne has been a cottager in the upper Gatineau Valley (Blue Sea Lake) all his life. His family has been vacationing there since 1912. Bruce has just published a small book on the history of one of the island cottage communities (Big Island) at Blue Sea. It is a community of 20 families, many of which have been summer residents there for decades.

The 48-page book tells the story of the early settlement of the island, how people got there, what they did for recreation, and how they provided for the needs of island cottage life (supplies, shelter, transportation, etc.). The book contains thirty photos (some dating back to the start in an 8½" by 11" format, along with several maps and tables. It gives a good idea of what cottage life was like in the first half of this century in the upper Gatineau. Copies can be ordered from Bruce at \$14.50 each, postage included. His address is 77 Shetland Way, Kanata, ON K2M 1S7.

Heritage Issues

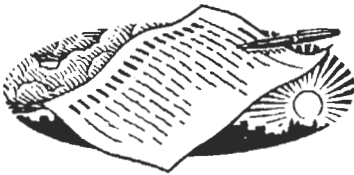
AYLMER'S McCORD HOUSE

One of Aylmer's oldest historic houses is the Judge McCord House at 10 Broad Street, at the heart of Aylmer's heritage core overlooking the park, with a large garden at the corner of rue Principale. Following [the death of the previous owner, Dr. Evans,] the property must now be sold. Heritage properties are not always quick to sell; but those in strategic locations are often bought by speculators who see value in the land. Then, frequently the houses are left empty until vandalism and fire bring about their untimely end....

Because the McCord House is at risk, because of its architectural interest, and because of its prime heritage location, preliminary approaches have been made to establish the viability of **Aylmer Heritage Association** (or a special alliance of groups) acquiring this property for the benefit of Aylmer. The Association is not in need of office space--we are to be located in the *John Egan House*--but we believe that there are a number of imaginative uses for the *McCord House* which would benefit the community. All of them would need a long-term commitment on the part of the Association.

[A special meeting was to be held on November 26 to discuss options for this building.]

(From the Aylmer Heritage Association *Newsletter*, November 1998.)



HULL INDUSTRIAL LANDMARK THREATENED

During the past two months, a number of current and former community leaders in the nation's capital have been attempting to start a movement to rehabilitate the famous Chaudière Falls on the Ottawa River between the cities of Ottawa and Hull. E.B. Eddy Forest products Limited, which controls the picturesque falls, has not only resisted the scheme, but added fuel to the fire by applying to the City of Hull for permission to demolish a landmark 1870 stone paper mill in the vicinity. A coalition of heritage organizations, led by the *Société d'histoire de l'Outaouais*, met and spearheaded a rapid campaign to save the now-vacant building which, interestingly, is situated directly across the street from the

offices of the federal Department of Canadian Heritage [on the south side of Taché Boulevard, at the corner of Eddy Street, directly across from "Les Terrasses de la Chaudière"]. For the time being, the oldest mill in the Eddy complex is secure, as the City of Hull denied the company's request to demolish the property.

(From *Heritage*, the magazine of the Heritage Canada Foundation, Fall 1998 issue.)

DOMINION OBSERVATORY

Throughout history people have been fascinated by observatories. The excitement of outer space, advanced technology, and the rarity of these structures all contribute to the appeal.

One of these intriguing buildings is the former Dominion Observatory located on the grounds of the Central experimental Farm in Ottawa--the capital's most recent National Historic Site, and Canada's best known inner-city farm. The Dominion Observatory was constructed in 1902-04 and formally opened in 1905. For many years it had a high profile as the national observatory; however, urban growth and the resulting interference of city lights eventually compromised its work and in 1974 all astronomical instruments were removed.

Subsequently, the building and eight associated structures provided accommodation for the Geological Survey of Canada. With the recent departure of the Geological Survey, the Heritage Canada Foundation now occupies part of the former Dominion Observatory. In addition to office space that is distinguished for its architectural and historical pedigree, the relocation into the building highlights the Foundation's efforts to promote the retention and adaptive reuse of Canada's heritage resources. Heritage Canada is showing, once again, that even heritage resources which were conceived for very specific (and hence sometimes later outmoded) uses can continue to be utilized in imaginative, historically sensitive and productive ways.

(From the Fall 1998 issue of *Heritage*, the magazine of the Heritage Canada Foundation.)

AND IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE *NEWSLETTER*, updates on the current status of three heritage buildings in our own area: the **Wakefield Mill**, the **Fairbairn-McNally House** in Wakefield, and the **Old Town Hall** in Chelsea.

SOCIETY RECEIVES HYNDMAN PAINTING

The Historical Society has received as a gift a painting by local artist **Robert Hyndman** of the Gatineau River at Kirk's Ferry. The donor, G. Harry A. Green of Ottawa, spent summers at nearby Larrimac and decided that the historical value of this painting would be particularly recognized and appreciated by others in this area. Dating from the 1950s, the painting shows part of a barn and a grazing horse on what was then part of Charlie Reid's farm complex on the Kirk's Ferry Road, which included a stable, hay barn, and granary. We are most grateful to Harry for his donation and support of the Historical Society.



WEATHER OCCURENCES SOUGHT

David Phillips, Senior Climatologist with the Atmospheric Environment Service, Environment Canada, is looking for documented accounts of significant weather occurrences (cyclones, blizzards, storms, drought, flooding, cold and warm spells, etc.) in our community.

The ice storm aside (he already knows about that), if you can help Mr. Phillips, contact him at Environment Canada, 4905 Dufferin Street, Downsview, ON M3H 5T4 (fax: 416-739-4380).

Editor/compiler of the *Newsletter* is **Jay Atherton**, who welcomes contributions from members (phone/fax: (819) 827-1703; electronic mail: james.atherton@sympatico.ca). The mailing list is maintained by the Society Secretary, **Eileen Castleman**, while **Rae Moore**, **Marjorie Evis**, and **Charis Palmer** take care of mailing and distribution.

13 November 1998

The West-Quebec Post

Gatineau Hills history goes on the Web

Post Staff

Opening Up Historical Legacies of the Gatineau Hills is a multimedia WEB project conceived by Wakefield's *Resort to Work*, to put the cultural heritage of the Gatineau Hills on the Internet.

To date, this region remains known largely for its natural beauty and recreational escapes, despite being steeped in a long and proud history. For example, two of Canada's most honoured citizens are buried here, Lester B. Pearson in the Maclaren Cemetery and Richard Rowland Thompson, holder of the military's rare award the Queen's Scarf, in the Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery. With The Historical Society as curator and custodian, the project will document these stories and other.

"The Historical Society is delighted to be a partner in this project, especially when the main purpose of the Society is to promote matters of historical or heritage significance in the Gatineau Valley," explained Ernie Mahoney, Society president.



Staff needed / CLD involved

The project has received a \$21,000 grant from Industry Canada's Digital Imaging Program to hire three employees, preferably from this area. The five month effort will provide training in Web site development and multimedia software, skills that will be useful for local businesses and groups as they merge onto the Information Highway. The MRC's CLD will help *Resort to Work* provide career development and business advisory services.

Potential storyboard modules – suggested by the Historical Society – could feature logging on the Gatineau, a virtual museum for artifacts formerly at the Maclaren Mill, or the history of the railroad. Other links could include Maruska and Marshall's *Then and Now Aerial Photography Exhibit* comparing the Gatineau River from 1926 and 1997 using aerial photos.

Post readers can contribute to this project—housing the new employees, for example. Call *Resort to Work* at 459-1600 or The Historical Society at 827-4432 (EM).

SMALL CEREMONIES

by Bob Phillips

Editor's Note: On October 26 the Executive Committee of the Historical Society decided to stop sponsoring the annual carol-singing event held at The Grange, home of former president and long-time supporter of the Society, R.A.J. (Bob) Phillips.

The Executive arrived at this decision reluctantly, but because of a consensus that—as its Minutes state—"attendance by Society members has waned considerably in the last few years, chiefly because of the weather, and the hill which intimidates our older members."

Our President, Ernie Mahoney, conveyed this decision to Bob Phillips, who obviously does not agree. He presents some interesting points for consideration by the Society. His open letter to Society members is printed in that spirit at his request.

Eight years ago, a member of Heritage Aylmer asked if I would let fellow historians sing Christmas carols in The Grange. She wanted to extend the invitation also to members of the Historical Society of the Gatineau, as a convivial way to make links between us.

The splendid idea soon built upon its own history. Hard-working members of both societies consulted, and baked, and brought guarantees of festive cheer. Old Dan the dog and I felled a thirty-foot pine and, with unwary volunteers, transformed it into a Christmas tree. People arrived with varied instruments and enthusiastic voices. The valley's most respected musicologists, Carol and Bob Martin, set a high example, while the flute duets of Luskville's Elspeth Butterworth and her son were annually anticipated. The background was the friendly flames in the fireplace of the Great Hall, whose timbers were fashioned the year Queen Victoria was born. There we savoured ancient tradition, made new friends, and began another Christmas season.

The Historical Society has decided that there will be no Christmas carols in The Grange this year. For us the season will not quite be the same. We shall find a tree, as always, but it will be a smaller tree for the simpler rituals of our family. Young Dan the dog and I do not have voices competent to sing alone.

The purpose of this self-indulgent reminiscence is to tell fellow Society members that we are still alive, and that the doors of The Grange are always welcoming to

them. If ever the Society should resume the occasion, we shall be happy.

Perhaps more. Although in the past year or two our friends from Aylmer were apparently not invited, the numbers of our own members at the evening continued to grow. I wanted to suggest that we not only re-extend the hand of friendship out Aylmer-way, but also invite a few other societies—such as Buckingham, maybe Ottawa, perhaps Hull—to send a couple of representatives; from such forged links important chains might grow. Sharing the historic Christmas tradition seems a happy way to thaw the permafrost that too often exists between groups with the same objectives.

Historical and conservation societies cannot afford to be islands. We never know when we shall have a crisis or an opportunity better handled with the support of friends. And, as one of the oldest, best established historical societies in the National Capital Region, we have a responsibility to others in their time of need. The tragic demolition of Hull's historic Hammond House was a shocking example of the folly of a small, inexperienced society trying to fight alone. Our help, so warmly given, might have been of far more value if personal links had alerted us to Hull's danger far earlier.

Would the Historical Society of the Gatineau consider ways to improve the links with its neighbouring friends? The method need not be structures or conferences: just seizing opportunities to meet. If the executive decides that one means could be gatherings in the Great Hall of The Grange, Dan and I will be at the door to welcome you.

