

Heritage Renfrew

Renfrew Ontario

September, 1988.

***** "NEWSLETTER" *****

Dear Members,

Your Executive hopes that you've had a good summer, even though at times the heat was oppressive.

We've accomplished a considerable amount on your behalf, including the following-----

1. The moving of the old Hurd's Lake church from its position on an island in Hurd's Lake to the property of Rev. Max Putnam, where it will be in use again as a worship centre at a non-denominational retreat the Putnams are building, (More about the history of this building in a later newsletter.)

2. The construction of a foundation and cairn at the northern end of the Swinging Bridge, to commemorate the original industrialists who developed the north side of the Bonnechere, including such people as the McDougalls, the O'Briens, etc. Notice will be posted in the local newspaper regarding the dedication of this cairn. The cairn is built using some of the stones from Bonnington House which were saved at the time of demolition.

3. A letter was sent (with copies to relevant M.P.'s and M.P.P.'s) to Dr. Wallot, Director of the National Archives, regarding the possibility of being granted space in the old Mitel building for the housing of our Archival collection, which as you may be aware, is now split between two buildings on a temporary basis.

4. A bus trip to the National Gallery in Ottawa has been arranged. It will leave from the Renfrew Bus Terminal on Sept. 29, and travel to Ottawa via the River Road. Watch your local paper for further details.

***** "SMITHS CREEK" *****

Smith's Creek gets its name from John (Tanner) Smith, the first reeve of Renfrew, its leading industrialist and merchant, its largest taxpayer and the first man to start any work of importance in the area. It was he who purchased water rights at Hurd's Lake to permit the conservation of water there.

The Creek was not always the quiet little trickle that meanders through our sylvan countryside. Nor were the large willows that we see in Renfrew always there. Agnes Lockwood has an original Handford photograph taken in 1904 from across the street from the present Presbyterian Church and it shows a Horton Street devoid of its stately trees on the east side and a vast expanse of water. An examination of landform alongside the creek suggests that in the past it was indeed a mightier waterway. It is not hard to imagine old timers canoeing, skating and learning to swim in it, or indeed an occasional logging activity on it. Larry Ritza fondly remembers his three-phase initiation to local aquatic pursuits. First there was wading in the pool near Horton Street Bridge. One progressed from there to more athletic endeavours further downstream on what Larry called Pataskey's Creek before graduating to the Bonnechere.

The first bridge to allow traffic to cross safely dates to 1851. Money for the project was raised by a special two-year tax on licensed taverns. Miss Lil Handford remembers the bridge as a favourite summer gathering place for soldiers during World War I.

John Mills and James Carmichael had built a lumber mill on Hurd's Creek as it was then called, by 1833. Sampson Coumbes had a sawmill and brewery near where the Mercury building is now. By 1847 Smith had built a tannery and bought out Coumbes. Since John was a Charter Member of the Temperance Society he eventually converted the brewery into a grist and oatmeal mill.

In November 1903 the Mercury reported that W.A. Smith had erected a concrete dam and the electricity generated (350 h.p. from a head of 44 feet) ran the grist mill, sawmill and planing mill. The Tanner Smith mill was later used as a concentrator of molybdenum.

The red brick building adjacent the Smith ruins on the north side of the falls just behind the mill stone memorial in Stewart Park is not Tanner Smith's. It is a transformer plant built by M.J. O'Brien to convert electricity from Calabogie for use at Renfrew Woollen Mills, Renfrew Machinery, the fuse factory, Energite Explosives Ltd and the O'Brien Munitions.

Tanner Smith, who helped Xavier Plaunt drive the last spike when the first railway came to Renfrew sold the right of way over his land (adjacent Smith's Creek) to Renfrew's third

3

railway which was J.R. Booth's Ottawa, Arnprior, Parry Sound (later the C.N.R.).

A.A. Wright who served on the Renfrew Board of Education for 50 years and first suggested that a history of the town be written probably tapped the Creek for power to build his generating station to power a few arc lights on the main street in 1895 when Renfrew was incorporated as a town and visited by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The system was criticized and A.A. took the lights down shortly after.

Readers are invited to visit Stewart Park and the falls that rush over the ruins and commune with the spirits of Renfrew pioneers. You'll find yourself in a world apart.

.....Dave Lorente

***** MAP OF 1850 *****

When this map was made by Major Baron de Rottenberg, Assistant Quarter-Master General there was a road from Gould's Landing on the Ottawa River to Renfrew, a road up into Admaston and a road to Burnstown and beyond into the County of Lanark. But the little settlement in the Township of Horton at the 2nd Chute of the Bonnechere already had a post office.

John Lorn McDougall had a store, the first in the settlement, somewhere near what is now the Woodworks. He also had a hotel somewhere near what is now Imbleau's Foundry. Near the corner of Prince and Raglan Robert McIntyre had a store, the stone wall of which is built into the wall of the Chown building. Over on Plaunt street was the stone house of George Bonnington, the first stone house in the settlement. Along the Creek, in back of what is now the Mercury Office, John Smith had a tannery, a saw mill and a grist mill.

But the little settlement was growing and in 1858 was to separate from Horton and become incorporated as the Village of Renfrew.

.....Harry Hinchley

NO ONE SHOULD BELIEVE IT IS HIS PRIVILEGE TO DESECRATE, DISFIGURE OR DESTROY A HERITAGE OR HISTORIC BUILDING JUST BECAUSE HE HAS PAID FOR IT. IT DOES NOT REALLY BELONG TO HIM. HERMAND SAID: "people who have heritage buildings in their possession are merely trustees for future generations. Their ownership is temporary. They have the duty of preserving their building for posterity." THE NUMBER OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS IS LIMITED - AND CAN ONLY GET SMALLER EACH YEAR.

.....Joseph Wechsberg

The following may be a trip through the land of nostalgia for some of you. (We hope so)

It was kept out in the kitchen and 'twas long and deep and wide
And the poker hung above it and the shovel stood beside,
And the big black cookstove,grinnin' through its grate from ear to ear,
Seemed to look as if it loved it,like a brother, pretty near.
Flowered oilcloth,tacked around it,kept its cracks and knotholes hid
And a pair of leather hinges fastened down its heavy lid,
And it hadn't any bottom--or,at least,it seemed that way
When you hurried in to fill it so's to get outside to play.

When the noons was hot and lazy and the leaves hung dry and still,
And the locust in the pear tree started up his planin' mill,
And the drumbeat of the breakers was a soothin' temptin' roll
And you knew the gang was waitin' by the brimmin' swimmin' hole
Louder than the locust's buzzin',louder than the breaker's roar,
You could hear that woodbox holler "Come and fill me up once more!"
And the old clock ticked and chuckled as you let each armful drop,
Like it said,"Another minute and you're nowhere near the top."

On the chilly winter mornin's when the bed was snug and warm,
And the icy winders tinkled neath the fingers of the storm,
And you breath rose off the pillow in a smoky cloud of steam,
Then that woodbox,grim and empty,came a-poundin' through your dream.
Came and pounded at your conscience-screamed,in aggravating glee,
"Would you like to sleep this mornin,you get up and tend to me!"
Lord, how plain it is this minute,shed and barn and drifted snow,
And the slabs of oak a-waitin,piled and ready in a row.

Never was a fishin frolic,never was a game of ball
But that mean,provoking woodbox had to come and spoil it all.
You could study at your lessons and 'twas full,and full to stay,
But just start an Injun story and 'twas empty right away.
Seemed as if a spite was in it and although I can forget
All the other chores that plagued me,I can hate that woodbox yet.
And when I look back at boyhood,skin off the cares of men
Still it comes to spoil the picture,screamin'"FILL ME UP AGAIN!".

.....Joseph C. Lincoln

WATCH FOR NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING!



.....
(President)

P.S.--***The Eady-Nofke Architectural book is in the hands of the
printer!!!** WATCH FOR IT!!