

January, 1979

HERITAGE RENFREW

Affiliated Member of Ontario Historical Society

Notice of Meeting

The Annual Meeting of Heritage Renfrew will be held in Renfrew Public Library Program Centre on Thursday Eve January 25, 1979 at 8.00 p.m.

Agenda:

- Presentation and Consideration of President's Report
- Reports of Committees

Auditor's Report

General Business

Nomination and Election of Eleven (11) Directors

Eleven Directors, as provided in the Constution are to be nominatec and elected at the Annual Meeting. From their own number this elected Board shall elect their own Officers.

Any member of Heritage Renfrew may nominate any member of members for the Board at any time prior to ballotting at the Annual Meeting.

Notice of Motion: The Board of Directors shall move or cause to be moved that Section 6 of Article III of the By-laws shall be amended by adding the words "after having been approved by the Board of Directors so that the sentence shall read " Monies shall be paid out by nu,nered cheque signed by Treasurer and the President after having been approved by Board of Directors."

"Tales My Grandpa Told Me" - stories of the pioneers.

Some members will be relating bits and pieces of family stories that have been passed down from earlier generations. Not family histories or biographies but just little incidents that happened long ago.

Archival Displays; Some materials from our new archives will be shown.

As usual, light refreshments will follow meeting.

Harry Hinchley
President

Dorothy Skinner
Recording Secretary

- Officers:
- Harry Hinchley President
 - Marjorie Lindsay Vice-Pres
 - Dorothy Skinner Rec'd'g Sec
 - Helen Clark Corresp Sec
 - Dave Hiller Treasurer

- Directors:
- Mayor Audrey Gree Honorary
 - Leslie J Anderson
 - George Johnston
 - Dorcas Kirk
 - Stanley Sloan
 - Jessie Stewart
 - Barbara Symington
 - Dr Richard Trainor

- Auditor:
- Mrs Margaret McHugh
- Newsletter Editor:
- Harry Hinchley

INTERVIEW WITH MAYOR GREEN

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Soon after Audrey Green was installed as Mayor of Renfrew she was interviewed by Heritage Renfrew. While a member of Council she had always been interested in Heritage and when the first Board of Directors of Heritage Renfrew was set up she was a member. When he municipal duties as Reeve interfered with her active participation in Board work she consented to act as Honorary Director a position which she still holds.

Mayor Green is very much interested in the preservation and development of our Down Town Core. "I think" she said "that Heritage Renfrew should work closely with LACAC and perhaps we might even have our whole Main Street designated under the Heritage Act. Such a step has been taken in other places across Ontario. We might even get Timbertown involved. I hope the local merchants association may see fit to work in this direction. There is a strong movement all over our province to emphasise the values of our older town streets not only for their Heritage value but also as a modern business promotion."

Mayor Green expressed the hope that Heritage Renfrew will again take the lead in the promotion of Heritage Day in February. Heritage Renfrew has the reputation of running one of the best Heritage Day observances in all Canada. I feel sure that there will be another good program this year. She assured there would be the same support from Council as had been provided in other years.

"I also hope" she went on, "that Heritage Renfrew can again be active in the promotion of Canada Week next summer. The Town Canada Week Committee has always received the best of assistance from Heritage Renfrew and I hope that it will be the same this year."

"Your Heritage Newsletter" she said "has always been a credit to your organization. Don't cut it down. These letters have always been a good means of communication between the Executive and the members and have kept them up on what was going on."

"Heritage Renfrew has done a good job in setting up Renfrew Archives. There has long been a need for such a place for the preservation of old records and because of this lack many valuable papers have been lost. Much has already been accomplished and I am sure more will be done in 1979."

"Your Architectural Committee has done good work and from my experience on Council and with LACAC I know that it has been of great value. Last summer the town through the Students' Incentive 1978 obtained the services of Miss Halina Jeletsky to assist in this work. Council will be trying to have this repeated this year as this young lady did some valuable research in connection with many of our Raglan Street Buildings. Much of her work was published in the LACAC Book of the Peterbor Conference."

"I wish all all members of the Executive of Heritage Renfrew a successful year in 1979. On behalf of Council I offer encouragement and support. You are doing a good job for the town in many ways and I am looking forward to seeing you keep up the good work in 1979."

THE DOWNTOWN CORE

The downtown is the show place of the town. It is the first thing an executive looking for an industrial site looks at to see if the town is worth investigating.

The downtown is important to the growth of the town. Let's hope town council and merchants can keep it growing.

The Renfrew Mercury

"TALES MY GRANDPA TOLD ME"

At our Annual Meeting we hope to have a few brief talks on tales that have been handed down in the families. They could be old stores, and accounts of events of former days which deal with happenings in the lives of early settlers and pioneers. Many of our members have heard how their ancestors came up into the wilds of the Ottawa Valley when Renfrew was young - or perhaps did not even exist. We have heard a few and we would like to hear more.

ARCHIVES

Along somewhat similar lines we are hoping to get some accounts of early days or settlements for preservation in our Archives. Some of present generation still know them but if they are not recorded they are in danger of being lost.

What we would like might include names of families, possibly with a family tree, where they came from, and when, where first location was made, conditions in early days, early schools and churches, medical facilities and social organizations. Of particular interest might be anecdotes of notable neighborhood events.

The whole concept is new to us and we have no definite guide lines or rules to follow. About all we can really be sure of is that we have storage space and we can preserve what may be donated.

For a start we have an account from member of an old family who tells of how his grandfather came from Ireland and settled in Horton long before there was a Renfrew. To thresh his wheat he used a flail. After removing the straw he tossed the remainder in the wind so that the chaff would blow away and the grain fall.

To get flour he took this wheat, loaded it on a jumper and set out through the bush to Portage. He took an axe along so that if a runner broke on his jumper he could cut a tree and fix it there and then.

3 Before he had a horse to pull the jumper he took a bag of wheat on his back and carried it through the bush to mill near the Fourth Chute above Douglas.

Some other anecdotes have been promised and, now that we have an Archives where they may be preserved we hope to make a collection.

What we are looking for is more factual than a story in flower language so let try the plan and see what comes up.

THE MAIN STREET POSTER

"By the time you read this your LACAC. Business Improvement Area, Historical Society and Chamber of Commerce will have received copies of the poster, Ontario's Main Street Heritage produced by the Ministry of Culture and Recreation. It is intended to aid in raising the awareness of the public to the value of our urban cores and not to be hoarded in the homes of already committed conservationists. To that end, please help see that that it is broadly distributed and widely seen. To settle any questions you may have about where the buildings are, from left to right, they are in 1) Dundas 2) St. Marys 3) Brockville 4) Sault Ste Marie 5) Toronto 6) Prescott and & and 8) Guelph. from LACAC News

LACAC has received a supply of these posters and soon they will be being distributed. As of date a couple may be seen in the Town Offices but before long more will be displayed around town.

They are large, printed in colors and most attractive.

Watch for them.

Ice Slides Do you remember the ice slides that used to appear on the sidewalks of Renfrew in days gone by? If you do, you are dated because we have not seen one for years. There was a smooth spot on the sidewalk and every kid (and sometimes his father) took a run and a slide and skidded along.

BOOK REVIEWS

The LUMBERJACKS by Donald MacKay
McGraw Hill Ryerson Limited 319
pages \$19.95

In preparation for this book the author has done extensive research both on the actual ground and in the Archives. He visited the Ottawa Valley and other lumbering districts of Canada and obtained first hand information from men from men who had the facts.

The book will be of great interest to readers in Renfrew since so much of it deals with work that was carried on almost at our own back door. The Bonnechere, Madawaska, Petawawa, Coulonge, Black and Dumoine, were the great rives of the Valley down which the timber and logs were driven.

The Opeongo Road through Renfrew was one of the great routes of travel to the lumber camps and it was over this road that the armies of men with their endless earavans of teams drawing supplies travelled to the "shanties". The operations of these camps is what much of the book is about.

The book is well illustrated and has many photographs taken in the camps. Many are by courtesy of Mrs Jean Cunningham, Arnprior and are from the Charles McLachlan Collection. They show many views of McLachlan Bros camps up the Madawaska and elsewhere. The book has a very complete index and each chapter has an extensive list of notes. Many references are given for further reading.

The LUMBERJACKS is very highly recommended especially to young people who wish to learn about life in our area in bygone days.

GHOST TOWNS OF ONTARIO by
Ron Brown. Stage Coach Publishing
Co. P O Box 3399 Langley B.C.,
V3A 4R9 200 pages

Ghost Towns of Ontario is about villages that used to flourish in Ontario but have now lost their importance. Some such from our area that are described include Fergus Lea, Brudenell, and Black Donald Mines. Further away but still in the Valley are Wilbur, Craigmont, Mohn's Corners and Kingdon Mine.

Another place of interest because it was the terminus of the Ottawa, Arnprior and Parry Sound Railway, now the C N, which J R Booth built through Renfrew and the other Valley places, is Depot Harbour.

This town was built on Depot Harbour which is Canada's largest fresh water harbour. It was both a railway terminus with station, roundhouse and sidings and a lake port with a huge grain elevator, where the lake boats unloaded cargoes of western wheat. In the 1920's the town had a population of 1600. Today it is abandoned.

"Although its buildings have gone Depot Harbour's relics are perhaps the most extensive of any among Ontario's ghost towns. The railway roundhouse kurks...like a Roman ruin. Concrete sidewalks lie buckled and heaved and beside them rusting fire hydrants. Huge maples line the streets snow shading rows of foundations, while the winds from Georgian Bay are the only intruders in the once bustling port town."

The book abounds in good photographs including some excellent pictures of Black Donald Mines and Fergus Lea. Of particular interest is a full page illustration of a scraper gone with a wheeled scraper at work on the construction of what is now the Cn running through Renfrew.

For any one interested in the story of the Valley this book is a good buy.

MEMBERSHIP FOR 1978

The application for of enclosed Heritage Canada brochure may be used for both organizations or for Heritage Renfrew only.

If you wish to belong to both Heritage Canada and Heritage Renfrew please return with \$5.00.

If you wish to belong to Heritage Renfrew only, just send \$2.00.

You may remit to Mrs. D W. Stewart
167 Hincks St. E

or to
Mrs Evelyn Desilets
259 Raglan St.

or
to same person as
in 1977.

RENFREW ARCHIVES

Much was accomplished during the past summer to establish Renfrew Archives. Mrs. Judy, Beattie, an experienced archivist took charge of a number of volunteers, members of Heritage Renfrew and guided them carefully with the result that there are now nine collections to begin our Archives. Judy spent over 100 hours on the collections herself and the volunteers gave over 200 hours to the Archives as well. Judy's salary was met by Heritage Renfrew and the University Women's Club of Renfrew.

The first few days in mid-July were directed to the inventory of the Town of Renfrew documents stored in the loft of the Fire Hall and in the basement of the Town Hall. Judy prepared a report for Mr Bob Howes, Town Clerk who presented it to Council in mid-August. Many hours were spent in Bonnington House (United Church Stone House) preparing the collections. Two major collections are the J & S McEachen papers from Douglas donated by Mrs. Judy Beattie and the Barnet Family Papers donated by the executors of the late T F Barnet estate.

Renfrew Archives will be established in the building recently acquired by the Renfrew Public Library as soon as possible. An inventory will be available on request and papers may be examined by researchers, students and con-

cerned parties on the premises.

Appreciation and thank you must be expressed to the many volunteers who assisted in this project; to the Renfrew Public Library for their encouragement; to the University Women's Club to Trinity-St Andrews United Church, and, of course to our able and patient archivist. Volunteers included Helen Clark, Jean Elliott, Harry Hinchley, George Johnston, Marion Johnston, Dorcas Kirk, Russell Kirk, Mary Lester, Marge Lindsay, Donald Ready, Dorothy Skinner, & Harold Skinner

- Marge Lindsay, Chairperson
Archives Committee.

FROM MRS ETHEL SULLIVAN:

Mrs Sullivan has responded to our request for a contribution and has written the following for our Newsletter. (Mrs. Sullivan was born and brought up near Portage and we hope to see her old home on our bus trip. It is a fine old brick house dating back over 100 years and perhaps she may tell us some of its story.)

The Emerson Reid Estate at Portage du Fort will be among the buildings seen by members of Heritage Renfrew on October 15th. It is a three storey stone building and is now called the Chateau Pontiac.

On a recent visit to Foss's Bakeshop on Plaunt Street where renovations were going on, Inez Foss showed me a copy of the Ottawa Journal printed in April, 1916. Faded and a bit tattered this paper contained some items of great interest as this was during World War One.

A French Canadian Battalion brought great honor to Canada in France in an outstanding assault against the Germans.

Sterling silver signet rings were selling at Birks in Ottawa for \$1.50 gold rings for \$5.00 and \$6.00.

Jos. G Smith of U S A, Head of the Mormon Church had returned from Hawaii where he planned to build a Temple.

Easy Knitting Home Auto-knitters promised their owners a return of \$2 to \$3 a day profit if they bought their own knitter.

THE EARLY SCHOOLS

A community in which the pioneers were largely Scotchmen could be counted on to look out for the means of education almost as quickly as for the means of grace. In the pioneer homes the two gettings went together: for the children of the Airth family learned to read by studying the Testament at night and reading aloud, verse about. They had a paper now and again from the old country; but postage was expensive and the papers were few. Maver's spelling book was the only volume approaching a text-book. It was about 1835 that the settlers were strong enough in numbers and in courage to attempt to found a school. A "Section" was organized with Dr. John McNab, Sgt. Airth and Thos Costello as trustees. They chose Duncan Ferguson as the first teacher. He was then a young man of 18 or 19, and had come from Drummond, with the tide of emigration from that district of Lanark. He received a salary of £40 a year from the people; and this was supplemented by a grant from the Government. He boarded with the Gibbons and Mayhew families. The school house was of sided elm logs, and was built on the side of what is now the Barr farm, near where it joins the Martin farm. The scholars numbered 25 or 30. Mr. Ferguson was considered a good teacher by the people, and also received favorable report from Rev. Dr. Mann, who was examiner of the schools of the district at that period.

Mr. Ferguson taught for about 2 years and then gave place in June, 1837 to John McIntyre who as previously noted had walked the 40 miles a day looking for a better land than that of Renfrew, and could not find it. He taught for several years in this old elm school. At the same time Mr. Ferguson was also teaching. The village had been growing and he thought he could do better in the centre of population. So he erected a little building near what is now the North end of the Dominion House, and taught in this for some years; charging each scholar a fee.

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But when John McIntyre relinquished his post to take up clerking in the store of Robt. McIntyre, Mr Ferguson gave up his private school and went back to teach in the old log building on the Barr farm. Not only did he teach in the day time, but he also founded a night school for the benefit of the farmer lads and lassies who were needed at home in the daytime to assist in the arduous labors of the pioneer farms. But the early singing school put an end to the night school, probably some time in 1848. There not enough young people to keep both night school and singing school going. So the matter was out to a vote: and the majority favored the music class led by Archibald Thomson.

Population continued to increase, and the village children found it inconvenient to walk 2 miles to school on the Barr farm. For a time the 2-storey building which had been built by J. L. McDougall as a pork warehouse, near the hotel on the Beauchamp property (then kept by Lawrence O'Reilly) was utilized for school purposes; and the teacher was one McDougall, not a relative of John Lorn, but a Scotchman from Beckwith, and particularly noted for his proclivities as a horseman. He taught for a year or so, in or about 1849 as far as can be ascertained, and was followed by Robert Rule Wilson, a somewhat notable and well educated character. Not only was there a new teacher at this period, but a new school as well. Mr. X. Plaunt donated the land, and what was known as the Grammar School was erected. It stands in 1901 in rear of the residence of Mr. M. Stafford on Plaunt street. It was, as the picture shows, a log building; and Messrs Henry and David Airth were two of the cornermen.

These then were the schools and teachers of Renfrew up to 1850, a dividing point in our Story.