

Heritage Renfrew

Renfrew Ontario

pg 1

NEW

October, 1988.

Dear members,

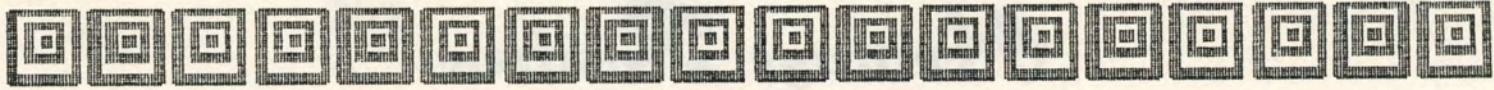
* To begin, let me remind everyone of the dedication of the plaque commemorating the pioneer industrialists who were instrumental in developing the banks of the Bonnechere. * This ceremony will take place in O'Brien Park at the north end of the swinging bridge on Tuesday, November 8, 1988, at 2:00 p.m.

The plaque will be unveiled and dedicated by Mr. Harry Mayhew, who is a direct descendant of the first white child born in Renfrew, (Mr. Joseph Mayhew), and of the owner of the axe factory, which was one of the industries concerned.

Secondly, Mr. Hank Legree has been closely involved with the placing of a memorial cairn to honour the Pioneers of the Opeongo Road, and has been successful in convincing several township councils in the area that contributions to the cost would be worthwhile. More news about this venture in a later newsletter.

Marj. Lindsay's booklet on the Architectural Heritage and the architects of Renfrew has been completed, sent to the publishers and printers and will be available soon. Watch the local papers and T.V. and radio for further news.

If you didn't see and hear Dr. Max Buxton's account of his trip across the North Pole at the last presentation, another chance is given! Please see the advertisement in this letter.



HERITAGE RENFREW

presents

Dr. MAX BUXTON



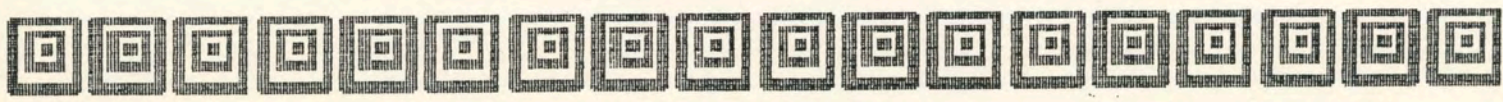
with slides and talk about his
recent
Canadian-Russian Polar Trek
Expedition

Renfrew Quality Inn

Wednesday, Nov. 16, 1988

7:30 p.m.

(Donations gratefully accepted)



THE BYER'S CHURCH

Heritage Renfrew has been involved in the moving and restoration of the old Byers' Church to a location near its original site. The building will serve as the spiritual and physical centre for an inter-denominational Retreat area on Pucker Street near the Hurd's Lake turn-off.

Carole Bennett and Don McCuaig's Story of Admaston tells us that Mrs. Frank Byers collected data on the church in 1943. The history that follows is from the information in their book.

In the 1880's the area was "backward"-all bush and no roads. Paths connected the few German farms in the area and Rev. Carl Allum, Methodist Minister from Portage-du-Fort, came once a month to conduct religious services at Carl Byers'. The old people had brought their hymn books over with them so services were conducted half in German and half in English. Renfrew's Methodist minister, Rev. H. Krupp, and then Mr. H. Stevenson later took charge of the "Byers' Appointment" and sent laymen to preach each week.

When the Byers farm changed hands in 1893 the meetings moved to Frank Byers Senior's home, and Mrs. Byers and her sister, Miss Agnes Frood, started a Sunday School. In July of 1897 Rev. Tom Bailey came to Calabogie and later that fall conducted two weeks of special meetings to such crowds that they decided to build a church near the Hurd's Lake school, across the road from where Haley and Betty Flower now live.

Everyone pitched in, and on Thursday, 17 March, 1898, the logs were put in place. William Frood and Rudy Byers were in charge. By late April Mr. Walsh finished the plastering and on the 30th the site was cleaned up and Frank Byers brought the chairs out from Renfrew. On a sunny Friday, 6 May, 1898, the church was opened. Rev. Hugh Cairns of Arnprior and Rev. John Webster of Renfrew were the chief speakers. The first prayer meeting was held that night and a week later there was a Communion service.

Over the years the original shingles were replaced by a metal roof. The interior was redecorated and trees were planted on the lawn. Frank Byers was the first Treasurer of the church and he was succeeded by his wife. Local families and cottagers attended

the little church. The list includes the following names: Inglis, Warren, Pultz, Byers, McIntyre, Mooney, Hoffman, Hisko, Stevenson, Froot, Stewart, Piassetzki and Delarge.

Old timers remember the floor that was scrubbed white, the bake sales, and the women's groups: the Willing Workers who later became the Ladies' Aid and then the Women's Association. They recall to the acquisition of an organ, largely through the efforts of Mr. N.S. Throop and his Bible Class. The Stewart family saw to it that the organ was stored away when the church was sold. It will be returned to the church when it is completed.

Roads, the motor car and 'progress' spelled the doom of the wee church and others of its ilk. It was sold, taken apart and re-erected on the shores of Hurd's Lake as a cottage over twenty years ago.

In July 1985, a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Rev. Max Putnam and his wife Peggy (nee Byers) acquired the Byers property adjacent the old school house. They moved into their new home, refurbished the place and began to see the potential - in their own back yard - for a Christian Retreat place for all denominations.

Several congregations had used the place, and in July, 1987, the daughter of the man who had purchased the church twenty years before knocked on the Putnam's door and said: "I've read about the work you are doing here and I believe I should offer the little church back to you."

It took a year to complete arrangements with the owners of the cottage-church at Hurd's Lake. At this point Heritage Renfrew became involved because they were interested in seeing a piece of local history brought back to the community where it once stood and restored as closely as possible to its original condition. The Society has provided counsel and assisted with the cost of moving and restoring the church on its present site.

Max and Peggy Putnam arranged for volunteers to mark and dismantle the log shell of the cottage and float the individual units behind motor boats to a dock area, whence they were taken to the Putnam place and rebuilt on a 20½' x 27' foundation made of local stones.

The church now sits atop a rocky knoll, clearly visible from the road. It overlooks an amphitheatre-shaped depression in the landscape that will eventually be the site of the main sheltered meeting place. The roof has been shingled. The four windows look out on flowers, trees, stone and rail fences and the rolling pre-Cambrian hills - truly an ideal spot for private devotion and meditation.

The task is ongoing and far from complete. The porch has yet to be added. It will be made a bit larger - and so, more functional - than the original entranceway. The flooring, wainscoting, lighting, heating and furnishings have yet to be undertaken.

Bruce Vail and his sons have done the stone work and log construction of the chapel. John Zwiers, a member of the Board of Christian Retreat, has restored and renovated the cottage where the church once stood. Many people have assisted on a volunteer basis and with donations to make the dream a reality. All gifts are recorded in a memorial book.

The idea of a place of 'retreat' (the word comes from the Latin words "to withdraw from") is not new. Christ Himself got away from the hustle and bustle of the times to pray in the desert or on the hillside garden that was Gethsemane.

The Christian Retreat has already been used by many local congregations as a place to come together in a ministry of encouragement teaching and healing. Weekly meetings of worship and teaching will be organized. Counselling and help will be available by appointment to anyone in need. The Byers church will play a new role as a non-denominational prayer chapel. It will always be open as will the grounds which can be used for nature study and such winter activities as skiing and snowshoeing. Future development includes a fellowship hall which will enlarge the scope of activities to include meals, a book room, craft workshops, etc.

The Only involvement of Heritage Renfrew has been, and will be, the restoration of an historical building, as closely as possible, to its original site and condition. Eventually a plaque will be erected at the roadside to identify the building and commemorate its historical significance.

P.S. A matter of note: Karl(Carl) Byers - the original immigrant to Canada, spelled his name BAYER. Over the years the "A" was dropped, probably because the shorter version was easier to pronounce. So the old church was really the Bayer's of Byer's church. The family name now has a final "S", perhaps because of its long association with its role as a possessive in the name of the church.

.....Dave Lorente, Sr.

The Front Seat

When I was but a little lad I always liked to ride,
 No matter what the rig we had, right by the driver's side.
 The front seat was the honour place in bob-sleigh, coach or hack,
 And I maneuvered to avoid the cushions in the back.
 We children used to scramble then to share the driver's seat,
 And long the pout I wore when I was not allowed that treat.
 Though times have changed and I am old I still confess I race
 With other grown-ups now and then to get my favourite place.

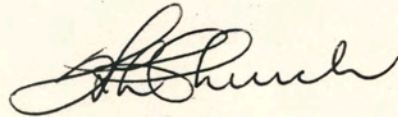
The auto with its cushions fine and big and easy springs
 Has altered in our daily lives innumerable things,
 But hearts of men are still the same as what they used to be,
 When surreys were the stylish rigs, or so they seemed to me,
 For every grown-up girl today and every grown-up boy
 Still hungers for the seat in front and scrambles for its joy,
 And riding by the driver's side still holds the charm it did
 In those glad, youthful days gone by when I was just a kid.

I hurry, as I used to do, to claim that favourite place,
 And when a tonneau seat is mine I wear a solemn face.
 I try to hide the pout I feel, and do my best to smile,
 But envy of the man in front gnaws at me all the while.
 I want to be where I can see the road that lies ahead,
 To watch the trees goes flying by and see the country spread
 Before me as we spin along, for there I miss the fear
 That seems to grip the soul of me while riding in the rear.

And I am not alone in this. To-day I drive a car
And three glad youngsters madly strive to share the "seat with Pa."
And older folks that ride with us, I very plainly see,
Maneuver in their artful ways to sit in front with me;
Though all the cushions in the world were piled up in the rear,
The child in all of us still longs to watch the engineer.
And happier hearts we seem to own when we're allowed to ride,
No matter what the car may be, close by the driver's side.

from "Just Folks" by Edgar A. Guest

Until the next newsletter...

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "H.L. Church". The signature is written in dark ink and is centered on the page.

H.L. Church, president, Heritage Renfrew