

# Opeongo Lines

Heritage Renfrew newsletter

April 1992

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**A Special Message  
to  
all Home Children,  
their descendants and friends,  
and  
members of Heritage Renfrew**

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Barnardo Boys.  
Alexander & David McKean, 11 December 1899.  
Alex, left, is six and David is four.



Last year's reunion of Home Children, their descendants and friends was so successful that a repeat performance was requested. It will be held at Trinity United church, Renfrew, on Sunday, 26 April, 1992, starting at 1.15 p.m.

There is no admission fee; all are welcome. The gathering is sponsored by Heritage Renfrew and will be chaired by Dave Lorente, the son of a Home Child and Chairman of Heritage Renfrew's Home Child Committee. Persons who wish to arrive early may attend 11.00 a.m. church services at either Trinity United or the Roman Catholic church next door. A luncheon will be served in the United Church basement at noon; cost is \$5.00 per person and we ask that you reserve a place by sending the form on the next page to Heritage Renfrew's secretary, Dorothy Skinner at 547 Fortington St, Renfrew, Ontario, K7V 1E5.

The afternoon will consist of brief sessions on the history of the Child Migrant Movement; Problems Encountered by researchers into Individual Cases and The Significance of the Westminster List which Heritage Renfrew has received from overseas. These sessions will be interspersed with informal coffee-breaks to allow you to meet others with whom you share a bond or concern.

We hope that some children of Home Children and Home Children themselves will share some experiences at the closing session. We shall have TV programmes on Home Children running all afternoon in a separate viewing area. Dave Lorente will be available most of the time to meet you, discuss your concerns and arrange for a follow-up. There should be something for everyone who has an interest in Home Children.

We shall be sending letters to editors of many newspapers throughout Ontario and Quebec; still we urge you to contact Home Children personally to advise them of the reunion. We also ask that you send or bring us the names of those unable to attend so that they might receive a report on what transpires.

Home Children have only recently come to the attention of the British public who are shocked that so many thousands of their children - 'Lost Children of the Empire' they have been called - were exported to ease social problems back home and to populate the Commonwealth with loyal subjects of the Crown. Many came to the Ottawa Valley on both sides of the the river through St George's clearing house in Ottawa and through the large network set up by Rye, Macpherson, Barnardo, Quarrier and others.

Most came as farm labourers or 'mother's helpers' and while the majority were teenagers some of those 'labourers' were under 10 years of age. Few complained about the injustice of the system that separated the children from family, friends and country and denied them some very basic rights. Fewer still listened to those who, like Renfrew's Charlotte Whitton, did raise a voice in protest. Only in the last decade or so, when hitherto secret information was made available have books and TV productions revealed the injustices of the system.

There is a need for Home Children and their descendants to meet. That is made clear by the fact that since last year's reunion, Heritage Renfrew has received over 260 requests for assistance and has sent out free research kits and advice to all who inquired.

Our objectives are many:

- to bring together Home Children, their families, descendants, people with whom they once lived and other friends;
- to inform all about child migration in its historical context and in the process ...
- to reveal that important but forgotten, overlooked or suppressed story in our history;
- to inform all where information about the movement can be found;
- to advise interested parties where information about specific cases might be found;
- to offer free assistance and advice to those who wish to trace a specific child's case history;
- to create a milieu in which the stigma some might attach to Home Children can be erased;
- to create a milieu in which a justifiable pride could be instilled in the accomplishments of Home Children, if only in merely surviving such a system and becoming contributing members of our society;
- to enkindle old and new friendships in a unique gathering of people who share a very special bond;
- to rejoice.

For more information, contact:

Dave Lorente,  
Chairman, Home Children Committee,  
107, Erindale Avenue,  
Renfrew, Ontario,  
K7V 4G3.  
Tel: (613) 432 - 2486

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Yes, I plan to attend the April 26 Reunion for Home Children, their families and friends, and wish to reserve \_\_\_ places at the luncheon in the United church at 12 noon. Enclosed is \$\_\_\_ payment in full for the luncheon. ( \_\_\_ places x \$5 each.)

Please check if required:

I desire information on B & B, motels, hotels:

I desire information on other places to dine:

Send to Mrs Dorothy Skinner, Secretary, Heritage Renfrew  
547, Fortington Street, Renfrew, Ont. K7V 1E5.

## Father Joseph Gravelle, and *Our Chisholm Story* by Les Anderson

One of the best things a former Governor-General and his wife did for Canada was to stimulate a pride in our pioneer ancestry. Yes, our Centennial in 1967 did the same thing, but Lord and Lady Tweedsmuir of the 1930s started the ball rolling. They suggested that local communities should record their histories for posterity. The Women's Institute, Canada-wide, took up the challenge.

The W.I. in my home township of Chisholm, 150 miles north and west of Renfrew and inland from Mattawa, was among the first to produce such a history. Begun in 1943 and published in 1960, *Our Chisholm Story* contains accounts given orally by many of the original settlers who had poured into this newly surveyed township immediately on the heels of J. R. Booth's loggers from 1885 to 1900. Among them were the Andersons and the Owens families. One of our *Heritage Renfrew* members, Mrs Agnes (Owens) Ruddy, also her brother, the late Monsignor Stephen Owens, are descendants of the latter family.

I suppose Chisholm could claim to be a part of the Ottawa Valley - certainly because so many families moved up from Lanark looking for better land - also younger sons of families around Micksburg hungry for acres of their own. But in a geographical sense, only the eastern half of the township drains into the Ottawa River whereas the western part drains towards Lake Nipissing and westward on to Georgian Bay. The eastern part was settled mainly by French-Canadian river drivers and loggers and for some reason which I haven't been able to find out has always gone by the name 'Chiswick' which certainly isn't very French! Within a year or two, missionary priests set up the parish of St Louis de France, an outpost of the mother church at Bonfield. In 1920 a young priest, Father Joseph Gravelle arrived - and was to remain there at his own request for 31 years.

At this point you might consult the account of Gravelle's father, Arthur Gravelle, written on pages 171-2 in *The Story of Renfrew*. Owner of the Ottawa House on Raglan Street and publisher (for a short time) of *The Renfrew Journal*, it was he who

began the work in genealogy covering the Renfrew area, passing his files and his enthusiasm on to his son Joseph.

Joseph studied medicine at first but he dropped it, either from lack of money to pursue it or because he had developed a preference for theology. "He was a gentle man," according to the writer of his obituary and no doubt preferred the peace and quiet of Chiswick where he could pursue his favourite hobby, the tracing of the names of the families in his parish back to their roots in Quebec, and some even to France and the first 'filles du Roi' brought out to New France by Intendant Talon in 1666.

Father Gravelle never pressed his parishioners for money even though the poorly constructed church needed it; he knew all too well their poverty, but he enriched them in spirit. He could advise them on legal matters and his knowledge of medicine enabled him to help the sick. I like to think of him as a 'throw-back' to the priests on the seigneuries who were 'all things to all people' in those early Quebec communities.

Later on, the history committee of the Chisholm W.I. over in the western part of the township asked Father Gravelle to contribute his knowledge of the origins of French and English settlements. He obliged with a detailed account of the early Indian inhabitants, and the location of the first logging camps with names of jobbers on contract to the lumber baron J.R. Booth. This was used as a lead article for *Our Chisholm Story*, a good backdrop for the personal accounts of the resident families and the development of municipal government. Mrs Ruddy's father, Mr Patrick Owens, had been elected first Reeve of Chisholm in 1920; my grandfather Edward Topps was first secretary.

Father Gravelle accepted transfers to Otter Lake and Fort Coulonge after 1951. His ambition had not included rising in the hierarchy of the Church. I should add here, however, that he was one of the priests who encourage Mrs Ruddy's young brother Stephen to study for the priesthood. This man was willing to take on much greater responsibilities than Gravelle, one of these

being the building of the new St Francis Xavier church during his incumbency in Renfrew in the 1970s.

Father Gravelle made frequent visits back to Chisholm where he would stay with his old friends, the Peter Chayer family. Down here, we of *Heritage Renfrew* prevailed on him to come over from Fort Coulonge, where he had retired, to speak at a general meeting. We expected him to talk about his memories as a boy with his parents at the Ottawa House, but no, his thoughts and remarks were about his life in the parish of Chiswick, 'the heavenly country'!

His obituary printed in *The Mercury* in September, 1973, includes this: "His genealogical records containing more than a million names handwritten on hundreds of slips of paper were turned over to the national Archives."

Meanwhile, the book *Our Chisholm Story* had won second prize at the Canadian national Exhibition in a contest for Tweedsmuir local histories - unique for its first hand accounts of pioneers, and the scholarly work of Father Gravelle.

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### *Heritage Renfrew Officers 1992.*

#### **Past Presidents/Advisory Members**

Marjorie Lindsay  
Dorothy Skinner  
Les Anderson  
Les Church  
Dave Lorente

#### **Honorary Directors**

Jessie Stewart  
Mary Lester  
Donald Campbell  
Hank Legris

#### **Executive Committee**

Past President - Dave Lorente

President - Doris Humphries

Vice-President - John Steele

Secretary - Dorothy Skinner

Treasurer - Helen Clark

#### **Board of Directors**

Doris Humphries

Helen Clark

Judy Anderson

Grace Simmons - Vaughan Simmons

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Con Hunt

John Steele

Jim Ferguson

Bob Trobridge - Irene Trobridge

The Registrar General of Ontario has turned over to the Archives of Ontario its birth records for 1869-1896, marriage records for 1869-1911 and death records for 1869-1921. These records are being microfilmed, a process expected to take up to 2 years. During that period the Archives will accept a maximum of 4 requests from Ontario residents, without any charge, provided that each request includes a full name, date and place of event - the search will be limited to one year. Requests must be submitted on the 'Vital Statistics Search Application Form' which may be obtained from the Archives. Searches for documents needed for legal purposes are not limited to Ontario residents and may cover a period of four years on either side of the year specified but requests must be accompanied by a letter from a solicitor or agent stating clearly the mandatory requirement along with a letter from the client authorizing the solicitor or agent to act on his or her behalf.

Residents of Ontario & Quebec may contact the Archives by calling toll free 1-800-668-9933. The address: Archives of Ontario, 77, Grenville Street, Toronto, Ont. M7A 2R9.

Submitted by Norman K. Crowder.

1899 - HARRY HINCHLEY - 1992

The Founding Father of *Heritage Renfrew* died on February 25, 1992, in his 93rd year. A memorial service for Harry Hinchley was held in Parkview Methodist church on February 29. Every pew was occupied as friends gathered to honour a much respected and admired citizen of Renfrew.

Christened "Henry Robert," he was born near Seaforth in Huron County. Harry worked in the creamery business in several towns before coming to Renfrew in 1932 to work at the United Farmers Co-operative Creamery. He was manager there from 1935 until 1953.

He went into the propane gas business and managed B. F. Propane until he retired in 1968.

He was associated with *The Renfrew Mercury* for 25 years and wrote *From the Old Files* for 14 years until his retirement in 1990. He was the first resident in Quail Creek Retirement Home in Renfrew's North Ward.

Harry took a keen interest in the history of Renfrew and area. He and others with similar interests organized a tour up the Opeongo Line in the fall of 1974. Organizational meetings were held and the Constitution of *Heritage Renfrew* was adopted in January, 1975. Harry was our first president and held that position until 1978. He continued on the Board of Directors until his death.

Harry was enthusiastic about specific worthy buildings being designated 'Heritage.' He worked to have historical sites marked with cairns and plaques to make their history known to and appreciated by the public.

When *Heritage Renfrew* undertook the task of compiling the multi-authored *Story of Renfrew, Volume Two*, published in 1984, a significant amount of the writing was done by Harry Hinchley. He supported the work of many authors in their compilation of articles or books on historical topics. He was very happy last fall to know that a stone cairn with a bronze plaque had been erected to mark the start of the Opeongo Road at the Ottawa River.

Harry Hinchley was predeceased by his wife, the former Mary MacCallum. He is survived by Jim and Kathleen Hinchley and their sons Robert and Michael of Kanata.

Doris Humphries.

## Bulletin Board

Two microfilm readers have been added to our collection. We now have a total of three.

John Steele has donated microfilm copies of the 19th century censuses for Renfrew County.

A television commercial featuring Roy Bonisteel in his old homestead shows a stove made in Renfrew in the background. How many of you noticed?

Family histories on the ENRIGHTS, the LEPACKS and the KLUKES have been added to our genealogy collection.

Connie Seeley and Mike Turcotte, adult trainees, are working for us at RCI at present.

The Cal Green photo collection is in many boxes and comprises thousands of negatives as well as four catalogues listing all these negatives in chronological sequence.

Connie has compiled an alphabetical sequence for each catalogue. She has also combined the four catalogues into one. A search for a photo that previously might have taken many hours can now be done in seconds.

The Township of Horton Minute Book, volume one, is being typed by Mike Turcotte. When he is finished deciphering the handwriting and converting each page to print, which is easier to read, researchers will have two copies to work from in our Archives. Mike is also facilitating research by putting all names of persons in capitals and matching the typed pages with handwritten ones. When this task is finished we hope eventually to get permission to do the early books of Renfrew and the adjoining townships.

Donations of Books of Knowledge, a series on Scottish history and some British Memorabilia have been donated by HELEN SCOTT; ISABEL RICHMOND of RCI; SISTER NORAH OVERS of Pembroke.

The Archives of Ontario is now targetting 15 April 1992 for putting LARCH (the new interlibrary loan service) into effect. Public libraries will be provided with a catalogue of films available for loan and patrons will be able to order three reels at a time for a 4 week loan period.

Coming events, to be held at the Library Programme Centre, open to all:

May 27, 1992, 7.30 pm

Guest speaker:

NORMAN CROWDER  
of Nepean.

Topic:

*Loyalists and Other Early Settlers.*

Norman grew up in Renfrew. He received the first gold medallion presented by the Renfrew Public School Board to the top student graduating from Grade 8. He became a teacher and principal. Since retirement he is in demand at places far and wide, speaking on topics of historical interest. He leads study sessions in Canada and the USA for Elderhostel programmes. He is a renowned genealogist.

June 18, 1992, 7.30 pm

in co-operation with the  
Upper Ottawa Valley  
Genealogical Group.

Guest Speaker, RUTH MILLS.

Topic:

*Dating Photographs by Fashion.*

Ruth is Costume Curator with  
Parks Canada.

She asks us to bring in photographs,  
with or without dates,  
for fashion examination.

Compilation of our book,  
*Founding Families*

*of Admaston, Horton & Renfrew Village*  
is well under way.

It features families who were in the area at the  
time of, and prior to, the 1851 census.

Editor Carol McCuaig is proceeding with further  
volumes, *Founding Families of Grattan & Wilberforce*  
and *Founding Families of Bagot, Blythfield & Brougham.*

You are invited to submit family data if your family was  
among the early settlers of those townships.

### Lumber Baron Festival July 22-25

Old photos of people and places on or near the Opeongo Road are needed for a book being prepared by three of our directors.

The photos will be returned to you almost immediately, after they have been copied for possible use in the publication.

Contact :

Hank Legris at 432-2177  
Vaughan Simmons at 432-2736  
or Dave Lorente at 432-2486.  
The trio would also appreciate hearing from you if you would like to be interviewed, or have any mementos, letters, documents, yarns etc that you would like to share.

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Carol McCuaig has a similar request in connection with a history of St Patrick's Parish, Mount St Patrick which in 1993 will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its founding.

### Lumber Baron Festival July 22-25