

# Opeongo Lines

## Heritage Renfrew Newsletter

## September 1994

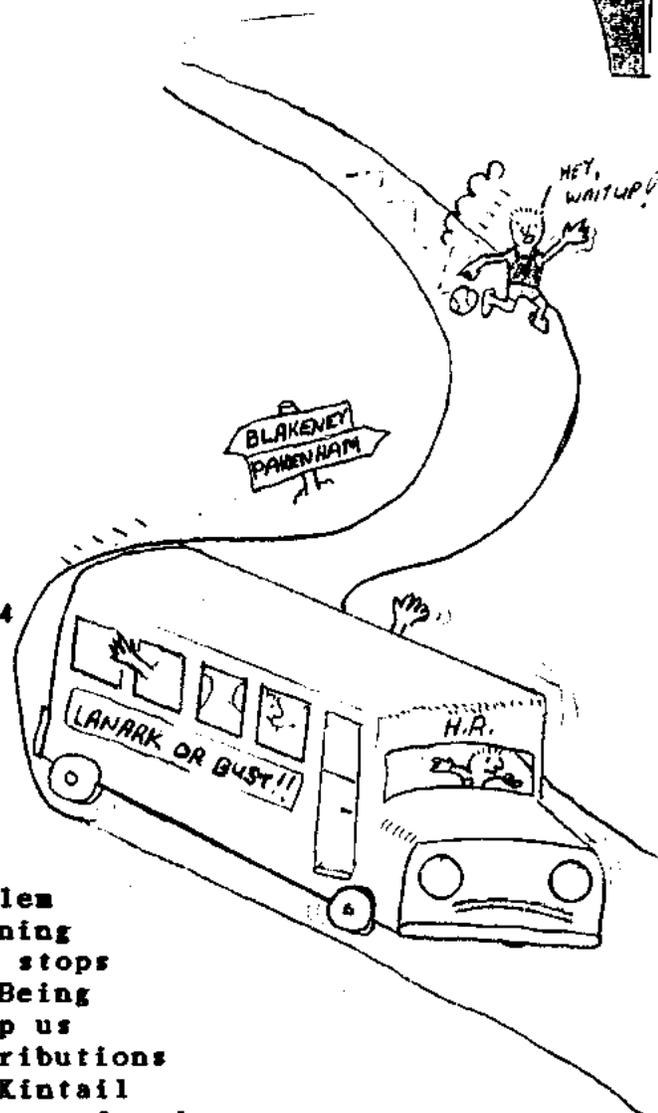
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*To our treasured Heritage  
Renfrew Members:*

Greetings from the Heritage Renfrew Archives, our base of operation for many worthwhile community efforts. As I feel obliged to say in every newsletter, your board of directors have once again proven themselves a force to be reckoned with, and deserve a lot of credit for their work. In this edition we will touch on those many events since the last newsletter, and also apprise you of some upcoming stuff!

Along with other snippets of info, you will find information on our upcoming bus tour, Sat. Oct. 1, 1994 to Lanark County (read on....) the enormously successful Home Children Reunion, and also a look back at Lumber Baron '94.

We all know that Con Hunt, of our beloved board of directors, is an infamous globetrotter. This time, however, he shows shades of the Harlem Globetrotters in his excellent planning of the Lanark County Bus Trip, with stops at the Naismith farm near Almonte. Being a well-rounded fellow, Con will help us become enlightened about local contributions to medicine and art at the Mill of Kintail Museum, closeby. Read on, as detail are found on the following page. So remember to sign up soon, and support Heritage Renfrew, a significant contributor to the culture of your area !!



John Steele  
President, Heritage Renfrew



**Heritage Renfrew's Fall Foliage Tour**  
**Saturday October 1st '94 - Lanark County**

.....

By Con "the globetrotter" Hunt

Our fall trip this year is designed to tour the very scenic and interesting countryside of Lanark County and to pay tribute to two of it's earlier citizens, James Naismith and Dr. R. Tait McKenzie. James Naismith, the founder of basketball, was born on the farm near Almonte where the Naismith Foundation is now endeavouring to establish and operate the Naismith International Basketball Centre. R. Tait McKenzie was born in Almonte and is recognized for his contributions to medicine, physical education and sculpture. We will visit his summer home and studio-workshop housed in a renovated gristmill.

**Just the Facts, Ma'am**

To: Lanark Co.-Naismith farm, Mill of Kintail, Victoria School Museum  
 Date: Sat. Oct. 1 '94  
 Bus leaves a.m.  
 Cost: \$20, lunch not included

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Lunch will be at the Leatherworks (*formerly the Tannery*) in Carleton Place for those who wish to purchase lunch. Alternatively, it is suggested that you bring a picnic lunch, weather permitting. *As it is necessary to make restaurant reservations, please advise, at time of booking, if you wish to lunch at the Leatherworks.*

After lunch a short walk brings us to the Victoria School Museum, where the social history of Carleton Place and Beckwith Township is featured. As well, there will be a special historical display entitled "In sickness and in Health". The old school building is now owned and operated by the Carleton Place & Beckwith Historical Society, and the grounds are maintained by the Carleton Place Horticultural Society.

From here we travel cross country for a visit to Lanark Village before returning to Renfrew via Calabogie (along that beautiful stretch of pavement we affectionately call "the Darling Road")

If you intend on touring with us, please book ASAP (!) at Aikenhead's Pharmacy. We need your name, phone number, and preference regarding lunch arrangements. Cost is \$20, lunch not included. Friends of Heritage Renfrew members are most welcome!

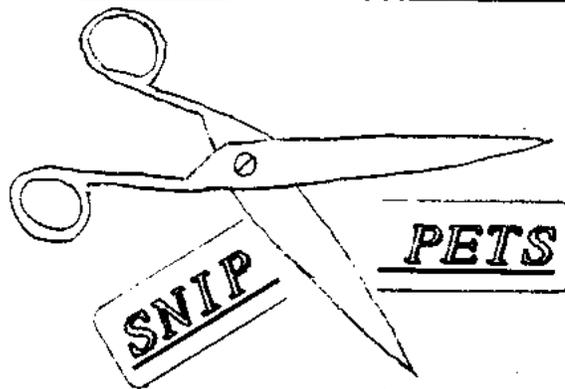
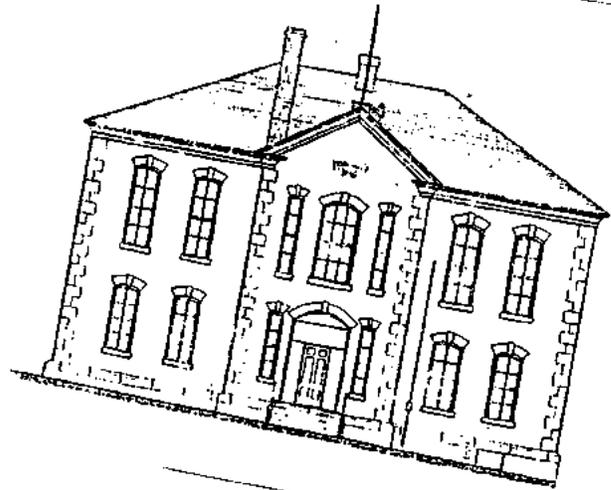
Con

A MEMORIAL TO  
DR. JAMES NAISMITH  
(1861-1939)

FOUNDER OF BASKETBALL  
On the Farm Where He was Born

## Mill of Kintail

Situated along the Indian River, the Mill of Kintail Conservation Area is known for its remarkable beauty and historical significance. The site features the Mill of Kintail Museum which explores the life of Robert Tait McKenzie, world-renowned sculptor, physician and physical educator.



**FLASH!!!!!!**

....Watch for G.B. Shaw's book on the OPEONGO TRAIL to be 'launched' next month out of the Burnstown General Store Publishing Company. (There's something wrong with that metaphor, but no matter; you got the idea, I'm sure.)

....Soon we shall have a surprise on our shelves at the RENFREW ARCHIVES. On 7 September HR directors gave the go-ahead to purchase microfilms of all RENFREW ADVANCE papers from 1946 to the time the ADVANCE bought out the MERCURY and the two became the MERCURY-ADVANCE. This fills an important gap in our microfilms and provides access to the many stories of local myth, legend and history that Don McCuaig and Father Josie Gravelle delighted in.

**SNIP**

**PETS**

- CONT'D

....Special thanks to Tim Gordon for his donation of two books of genealogical importance. Helen Clark opened the saga of the SNEDDEN FAMILY and found an account of her FORGIE ancestors. The book on the GOMME family drops some local names too.

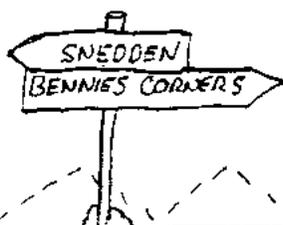
....Kudos to MARGE LINDSAY who has orchestrated all historical research and led the STROLLING PLAYERS during every LUMBER BARON FESTIVAL to date. MARGE has announced that she will be assuming a diminishing role in the future so that she can spend more time with family - and especially grandchildren - during the summer holidays. In months to come she will be training her successor...or successors. That's no mean feat in itself - learning to walk in her seven league boots. (feat..boots..walking...no pun intended..)

....CHARLIE BRISCOE took a week off from IGA to spend a few days in DACRE two weeks ago. While there he visited BROUGHAM CASTLE. By now, you probably are guessing that he returned with his children to ENGLAND, to PENRITH and the DACRE area whence his ancestors, the BRISCOE brothers, hailed back in the early 1800's. He did not have time to visit ADMASTON which is several miles directly south near SHREWSBURY or the 'other DACRE' in Yorkshire. "DACRE", by the way, is Welsh Celtic for "little tear" - a reference to the not-so-mighty stream that trickles through the hamlet. "GOOD WILL" CHARLIE delivered a parcel of DACRE ONTARIO history and a picture of the DACRE BRAG LOAD print to four people in England who have corresponded with Hank Legris and Dave Lorente on the origin of the name.

....Not to be outdone, CON HUNT went traipsing through RENFREW in BONNIE AULD SCOTIA about the same time. He even enveigled some of the local Scot curlers to visit RENFREW ONTARIO in November and try their skills on our country lanes - curling, that is. Canny lad, eh!

.... Directors Dave, Marge, John and others have escorted many researchers through the Archives - One compliment from a researcher rated us favourably with the Mormon Library ! If you have a family history prepared, why not leave us with a copy.. we'd love you for it!

.... The LUMBER BARON next year will be JOHN MCDUGALL (JR.)  
You Heard It Here First !!



## HOME CHILDREN NEWS.....

At the 4th Annual Reunion of Home Children and their descendants on Sunday, 11 Sept., a replica of the **FIRST PLAQUE IN ONTARIO TO COMMEMORATE HOME CHILDREN** in any way was unveiled in the presence of a capacity crowd at Holy Rosary Church. The church complex in Ottawa was, from 1895 to 1934, the only Home Child Distribution Home in Canada for Roman Catholic Home Children. An Open House was also held to celebrate the event and visitors came from Edmonton in the west, Virginia to the south, the province of Quebec and even England to the east. The oldest 'home children' present were 96, 97 and 98 years of age.

**PRIME MINISTER CHRETIEN** sent special gold embossed letters to each Home Child present or to the families of their descendants. Extra copies will be sent to those too ill or unable to attend the Reunion. The letters were solicited by **LEN HOPKINS**, our MP, who continues his strong support for making the Home Children story known. Thanks **LEN**...and special thanks to **SHIRLEY MALLOY**, his good right hand in the Ottawa Office.

Only one letter per home child is available, to the Home Child herself/himself or to one descendant. If you want a copy of the **PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER**, contact **KAY & DAVE LORENTE** at 107 ERINDALE AVE, RENFREW, K7V 4G3. Send details of your connection with a specific Home Child and include a self-addressed-letter-size-big brown envelope with TWO 43 cent stamps on it.

We are proud to say that **THE (\$700) BRONZE PLAQUE** will be paid for by donations received by Heritage Renfrew for Home Children projects. The **ONTARIO HERITAGE FOUNDATION** gave its official blessing to the project and has generously offered to subsidize the cost with a special grant. We thank the Town Council and staff and the Public Library staff and board for their cooperation on this historic venture.

**THE PLAQUE WILL BE ERECTED IN RENFREW AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE TOWN LIBRARY IN MID OCTOBER.** We hope that the local Home Children who are still with us and the descendants of the more than two dozen who settled in town will be present to participate in the unveiling. **ANOTHER FIRST FOR RENFREW!** Watch the media for further announcements.

The work done by **HERITAGE RENFREW'S HOME CHILDREN COMMITTEE** has received national - and even international - attention. Over 600 requests for free assistance have been received in the last three years. Dave Lorente has written articles on the subject for periodicals in Canada, the UK and the USA. Kay and Dave have been asked to speak to provincial genealogical associations on the topic in Ontario and in Alberta next year. They will also conduct an Elderhostel on the subject next winter near Orillia; it's no accident that Heritage Renfrew member and local wit **NORM CROWDER** (now of Ottawa) is on the same program elucidating on Canadian humour.

**OUR HOME CHILDREN RESEARCHER'S KIT** is always undergoing change. It is

now 10 pages long and is being modified again to include the Prime Minister's message.

**FOR THOSE RESEARCHING HOME CHILDREN**, the Lorentes have a new source of information available abroad for Home Children researchers. If you haven't heard of the **POOR LAW GUARDIAN RECORDS (WORKHOUSE RECORDS)** get in touch with Kay and Dave.

By the way, when contacting the **LORENTE's** re **HOME CHILDREN** a number 10 self-addressed envelope with a 69 cent stamp is greatly appreciated.

When Dave Lorente was interviewed on TV in Edmonton last year more calls were received than for any other broadcast. Some were glad the Home Child story was finally being told. Others could not, would not, believe that such things could happen in Canada or (God help us!) in England. Some people can't accept the fact that so many Home Children were badly abused. They will find it harder to believe that several school boards in Ontario actually passed regulations to prevent Home Children from even setting foot on school property. Still harder to believe - but it is documented in books like **EUGENICS: THE MASTER RACE IN CANADA** - is the fact that when influential Canadians had a law passed in the late 1920's to prevent the importing of children under 14 years of age, it was not because the children were being abused, but because the do-gooders wanted to keep Canadian blood-lines "pure". You see, Home Children were associated with certain races, occupations and classes of society who were thought to pass on hereditary physical, moral and psychological defects and abnormalities. Today, people who think that way are called 'racists' and there are laws to deal with them.

**THE HOME CHILDREN COMMITTEE** has compiled a collection of 27 ships that brought Home Children to Canada. Photocopies are available free of charge (send # 10 SASE) from the Lorentes.

Mrs CM BRADFORD, Director of the famous **BARNARDOS AFTER CARE** in England, was a special guest at the 4th Home Children Reunion. She and her husband Steve will be guests, along with the Lorentes, at the **BARNARDO HOME CHILD REUNION** in Belleville on September 18. **BARNARDOS** sent 30,000 Home Children to Canada...1 of every 3. **MRS BRADFORD**, at Heritage Renfrew's request, effected a remarkable change in the length of time it took to get an answer to overseas requests. She chopped 12 months off that 'normal' time frame.

**HERITAGE RENFREW'S HOME CHILD COMMITTEE** was asked to intercede in the case of a Home Child who was sent to the Cobden area years ago. He was mistreated so badly that he returned to England and found the 'family' he never had by joining the army. He was wounded at Dunkirk and recalls thinking, as he lay bleeding on the beach, that he had no one to write to...no one to tell. He married, took out a Life Insurance policy with **SUN LIFE (ENGLAND)** and used the birthdate he had used all his life - the one told to him by the people who ran the "Home" in England. It was the wrong date, and now **SUN LIFE (ENGLAND)** has advised it will NOT pay his wife

remembered as a talented artist. Her oil and watercolours and famous painted crocks and jars reflect her love of the scenic Ottawa Valley.

The former Katie Cornett first began painting at age 12 when her mother gave her some watercolours. She first became serious about her art when she was at Normal School and along with three others had a display at the Canadian National Exhibition which took first prize. One of her early painting chums was Winona Stewart. The conservatory of the Stewart home on Hincks Street was a favourite place for the two friends to work.

Following her marriage to Ernest (Ernie) Millar in 1917, Katie turned her talents to business. The Millars opened a bakery and then switched to the lucrative Pepsi Cola soft drink business that flourished and expanded over the years.

In 1951 Katie entered the political ring and led the polls in her first bid as councillor. Elected deputy-reeve in 1956, she became the first woman from Renfrew to serve on Renfrew County Council. She served two terms as deputy-reeve and retired from politics after serving out her term as councillor in the 1968 election.

Among the paintings shown last summer, organized by Grace (Katie's niece) and Vaughan Simmons, was a favourite of Katie's, a portrait of herself done by Josephine Prentice, well known artist. It was first shown at "Katie Millar in Retrospect" organized by Dorothy Cooke and Jo Prentice for Canada Week festivities in 1978.

Despite her hectic schedule, Katie regularly set aside time for painting. She participated in many art classes and arts and crafts shows. Although she had given lessons she never missed a chance to enter a class when it was given in Renfrew or the area. She felt there was always something to learn about the colour or composition that could be passed on. (Renfrew Mercury files)

#### Robert Leslie Wright (1870-1942) - Landscape Painter

"Robbie" Wright was a lifelong resident of Brockville, Ontario. His parents were Robert Wright and Mary Ann Row. The family owned the Wright Department Store and later the Wrightway Laundry in Brockville. He married Agnes Cecilia MacKenzie in 1892. Robbie Wright was a cousin of Winona Near Stewart, (Mrs David Watson Stewart) of Renfrew.

Dan Stewart, grandson of Mr and Mrs Stewart, a collector of Robbie Wright's paintings along with his cousin, Donald W McCuaig, organized 10 landscapes for last summer's display. These included four of the Renfrew area, McDougall Mill and Woolen Mill, two of the Hydro Dam and the Bonnechere River and a winterscape of the early Stewart cottage at Hurd's Lake.

Robbie Wright has been described as a self-taught artist. Landscape oil painting was his serious hobby, particularly after his retirement from the Robert Wright Co. His

paintings were done in the Brockville area and also in Renfrew on his visits to his cousin Winona. Robbie's work was exhibited at various times with:

Ontario Society of Artists - 1898

Montreal Artists Association - 1918, 1919, 1934, 1936

Royal Canadian Academy - 1929, 1933

Some of his paintings are in the Study Collection at Queen's University, Kingston, a bequest of his brother, Wallace Wright.

**We hope you have enjoyed this Newsletter.. If you have comments or ideas for HERITAGE RENFREW, or would be interested in becoming more involved, please feel free to drop us a line at:**

**The Renfrew Archives P.O Box 1009 Renfrew, K7V 4H4**

**Much thanks to directors DAVE, MARGE, and CON for their help with the newsletter, to DOT and HELEN the envelope stuffers.**



*John the Editor*

if anything happens to him because he does not have a 'valid birth certificate'. We have contacted the British High Commissioner to ask him to explain to SUN LIFE that giving false birthdates was almost a normal procedure to prevent Home Children from tracing their parents. He (after consulting Head Office) advised that he can't intercede in a 'private' matter. We also contacted the President of SUN LIFE (CANADA) and he has contacted the parties in England to try to settle the matter. We'll let you know what happens.

Finally, and brace yourself for this one, WE WANT TO CONGRATULATE CANADA POST AND THE LOCAL STAFF. People across Canada have read recent reports in newspapers or heard Dave interviewed on TV and since no address was given in the report they have mailed their requests for help with incomplete addresses and no postal code. At least three such letters got through within the last two weeks. One letter was simply addressed to Renfrew PO with the note "address not known but PLEASE deliver....from a Home Girl." That envelope is a "keeper".

## IN A VICTORIAN SETTING - LBF '93

Marge Lindsay

Display of paintings of two well known local artists and of a third with local connections enhanced Heritage Renfrew's Open House held during Lumber Baron Festival '93. The artists were Noreen Martinson, Katie Millar and Robbie Wright.

Mary and Jim Deslaurier graciously opened their home on Raglan St. S., formerly home of Mr and Mrs James Allan, PLS, and Mr and Mrs Thomas F Barnet Sr, for our pleasure and enjoyment. Renfrew Pony Club members fed and groomed their horses in the barn as they did during the early days of the Club in the 1960's when Tom Barnet Jr welcomed the Pony Clubbers to learn Stable management and care of their horses and tack. Renfrew Lionettes served cold lemonade and cookies from the marquee nearby. Mr Pat Kennelly, perched proudly atop his well appointed wagon drawn by a handsome team of horses, took guests for rides. Garry Briscoe's gleaming antique car, a 1917 Brisco, was available for a tour of nearby streets. Guests played at croquet on the lawn.

Mr and Mrs Allan, (Emma and Don Campbell) welcomed guests to tour the home built in the 1870's and added to in the early 1900's, to enjoy the many attractive rooms, (Mary's decorating skills, Jim's furniture designs) and to savour the display of art throughout the home.

### Noreen Martinson - Floral Watercolours

Noreen, the former Noreen Kelly, is a Renfrew native who returned to town a few years ago. Prior to receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts cum laude from Concordia University in 1979, Noreen was a part-time student at Montreal Museum School of Art, 1960-1965, where she achieved top-standing in Basic Design and Textile Design from Claude Tousignant. Arthur Lismer, Group of Seven painter and founder of the school, was no longer teaching but cruised the studios regularly. All art supplies had to be purchased from him in his office, says Noreen, so everyone got to know him fairly well.

Montreal Museum of Art presented Noreen a certificate for 5 years (1967-1972) of training and guiding in the Museum. This includes summer walking tours with emphasis on history and architecture.

Noreen has shown her art in local shows and has sold a number of her paintings.

### Katie Millar (1894-1990)

Often referred to as the first lady of Renfrew, Mrs Millar served the town well for many years in business, politics and as a community leader and volunteer. A woman of many accomplishments, everything she set her mind to was a success. She certainly is