

# NEWSLETTER

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's mid winter and you might think Keillor House would be in hibernation, but you would be wrong, as witness the following.

### *Special Events*

As predicted in the last issue, the Victorian Christmas Dinner was once again a great success. Both evenings were sold out, the food was as delicious as ever and everyone enjoyed the musical ministrations of the barber shop quartet, a feature of this event since its beginning. Our special thanks to crooners Gerald Cormier, Lloyd Folkins, Boyd Clory and Sandy Forgeron, as well as to soloist Leonette Nelson and organist Wendell Anderson. Like the Haunted House Tour, the Victorian

Christmas Dinner is the work of many willing hands. In this issue we make special mention of them in the section 'Saluting Our Volunteers'.

The Victorian Dinner was no sooner over than we hosted two bus tours, organized of course by Alice. This time, Jeanette Glew's delicious seafood chowder competed with Alice's squash soup for the culinary attention of our satisfied guests.

The last event of our season is the New Year's Levee, which takes place immediately after the polar dip on Palmer's Pond. This year it was graced by the attendance of Senator Carolyn Steward-Olson and

Tantramar MLA Mike Olscamp, as well as more than a hundred other eager celebrants. As always, the frozen 'polar bears' greatly appreciated Ritchie's spicy chili and Alice's hearty chicken soup, as did the 'chickens' who didn't take the plunge. The chickens in Alice's soup had no comment. Of course the punch and desserts were not neglected, either. The New Year's Levee is an annual event jointly sponsored by the Westmorland Historical Society and the Village of Dorchester, and is another example of the important role we play in this community.

### *Properties*

We mentioned in the last

issue that plans for expanding the facilities of Keillor House and repairing the back wall were on hold, but there has been an encouraging development since then. ACOA (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) has asked us to submit our proposal for a Concept Design Study as soon as possible—which will have been done by the time you read this, thanks to the diligent efforts of Cole Morison. Clearly, we have garnered a lot of support in the right places. Of course, this is only the first stage. The initial funding, if we get it, would be for a full architectural study—a major undertaking in itself. When that is completed, we will be in an excellent position to apply for funding for the

## KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM —SPECIAL EVENTS

**Candlelight & Spaghetti Supper** April 21. 4:30-7:00 pm. \$14.00 & Family Rate

Celebrate spring with candlelight and spaghetti, music, salad and desserts. Takeout or home delivery in Dorchester available. Call 379-6620.

**Mother's Day Tea & Putting on the Glitz** May 5. 1:00 -2:00 pm and 3:00 – 4:00 pm. \$8.00  
Enjoy tea, sandwiches and cakes. Shop for "Glitz - New to You" jewellery.  
Tickets: Darlene 379-2439 or Alice 379-6620.

**Museums Across the Marsh** June 2-3, 10:00-3:00 \$4.00 (Family \$10.00)  
Keillor House, St. James, Monro House, Campbell Carriage Factory, Fort Beausejour, Boultenhouse, Cumberland Co. Museum, NS Highlanders Museum

Call 536-2541 or 379-6633.

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main project. It will be the work of years, but if it succeeds, and it just may, it will give Keillor House a whole new lease on life.

Plans are also underfoot for the Payzant & Card Building. The leaking roof has been repaired and a more permanent fix is coming in the spring. We are also looking for ways to build another apartment in the building in order to increase our revenue. Once again, we hope to draw on help from our friends at the Westmorland Institute who continue to be a wonderful resource for us.

*Graydon Milton Library and Genealogy Centre*

We are very grateful to Theresa Simpson for volunteering to undertake genealogical research upon request. She started doing this last summer and has already helped a number of people to trace their Dorchester roots—she averages about two requests a month. Essentially, she supplies information from our genealogical library that they cannot get online or from the materials they already have. Recently, for example, she was able to email a scanned copy of an ancestral will to a satisfied customer. To engage her services, please call her at 379-6790 or email her at [teearle9@yahoo.ca](mailto:teearle9@yahoo.ca)

*Outreach*

It is important as well as pleasant to be working in common with our sister museums and other organizations dedicated to tourism in the region. On June 2nd and 3d we will again be part of the 'Museums Across the Marsh' initiative. On those days you can purchase an individual pass for \$4 or a family pass for \$10 and visit any or all of the participating museums: Keillor House and St. James Textile Museum in *Dorchester*, Boultenhouse Heritage Centre and Campbell Carriage Factory in *Sackville*, Monro Heritage Museum in *Port Elgin*, Fort Beauséjour/Fort Cumberland in *Aulac*, and Cumberland County Museum in *Amherst*. There will be special activities at each, and those who manage to take in all the museums will have a chance to win a prize. Once again let me exhort you to make a special point of visiting our local museums at every opportunity—and not just the ones mentioned here. Monument LeFebvre in *Memramcook*, Lutz Mountain Meeting House and Thomas Williams House in *Moncton*, Steeves House in *Hillsborough*, and the Albert County Museum at *Hopewell Cape* are all nearby and all well worth multiple visits.

Remember, it is hard to expect governments to support museums if we don't support them ourselves- and regular visitation is one of the best ways to do this.

Another way we have been keeping in touch with other organizations is by inviting some of their representatives to address our Annual General Meeting. Last year Darrell Butler of King's Landing gave a fascinating presentation on the furniture making traditions of south eastern New Brunswick and explained what they can tell us about the social history of the region. Darrell has now agreed to do two follow up events. On Tuesday June 5<sup>th</sup> he will accompany museum staff and Board members on a tour of Keillor House and St. James Textile Museum, examining, photographing and commenting on the artifacts. On Monday June 25<sup>th</sup> he will give a public presentation on the significance of our collections for the material history of New Brunswick. Participants will be invited to bring items they think may be of historical interest, and Darrell will be glad to comment on them.

*Bernie's Garden*

Speaking of outreach, in this issue we offer a long overdue article in appreciation of Bernie Melanson, a popular science and math teacher at École Mathieu-Martin who for the last fifteen years or more has lovingly tended the period garden around Keillor House. We are also planning a special event with him this summer. The details have yet to be worked out, but it will revolve around a tour of the house and garden with a local garden club, or clubs, and a lunch featuring bread baked in the Keillor House bake oven and Bernie's own delicious *soupe d'été*.

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Finally, I note that Inge Hansen is home over a long Christmas break from her studies at the Fashion Institute of Technology at State University of New York where she has been accumulating some wonderful hands-on experiences working in museums, including the Guggenheim. While here, she is continuing her excellent work on our costume collection. Many thanks and best wishes, Inge!

*Greg Partridge*



## BERNIE'S GARDEN

Visitors to Keillor House often stop to admire the lovely period flower garden running along the front wall and around the Dairy Room. They may even be charmed to learn that most of the plants would have been familiar to the Keillors. But do they know how this beautiful addition to our museum came to be?



*Bernie at Work*

It is all started about fifteen years ago and is the result of the generosity, dedication and knowledge of Bernie Melanson, a teacher at Mathieu-Martin High School who has developed a special relationship to Keillor House. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that it all started with Bernie's grandmother, Edith LeBlanc. Born in College Bridge in 1884, Edith worked at Keillor House for a short time as a maid when she was about fifteen. This would date her service either to the last year of Mary Keillor's life (d. 1899) or the first year or so that Sheriff McQueen and his wife, Edessa Chapman McQueen, lived in the house. After leaving Keillor House she worked at Rocklyn Manor until her marriage to Bernie's grandfather. Bernie remembers going with her on long Sunday afternoon drives during which she would fondly point

out the two stone houses in Dorchester where she had worked as a girl—and apparently stored up some happy memories. It was here that she learned to make lemon meringue pie—something quite foreign and exotic to an Acadian, and it became one of her favourites.

After their marriage, Bernie's grandparents settled in Moncton where Mr. Melanson worked for the railroad. Both of them loved gardening, as did his grandparents on his mother's side. They had a farm and raised a family of seventeen kids, yet somehow still found time to create and tend a beautiful flower garden—a 'grande allée' extending some 500 feet from the front of their house to the road, full of blooms and lined with apple trees on both side. Bernie still vividly remembers toddling though it at about age three or four, carefully examining every flower, curious as to its exact formation and delighted with its colour and scent. He comes by his 'green thumb' honestly. Not only his four grandparents, but also his parents were (and in the latter case still are) passionate gardeners. Needless to say, Bernie also has his own extensive garden at his comfortable home in Dieppe.

Bernie's passion for flowers, particularly roses, was further stirred by trips to Europe. Among the many famous gardens he visited there, two in particular stand out in his mind: the Roseraie de L'Haÿ near Paris, the first ever dedicated exclusively to roses, featuring more than 3000 varieties, and the Parc de Malmaison where Napoleon's wife, Empress Joséphine, had a famous rose garden from which some original specimens still remain. Both places made a deep impression on him.

One fine day during the early 1990s when some relatives were visiting from Ontario, Bernie's European experiences intersected with his grandmother's Dorchester memories in a way most fortunate for us. While on a drive through the Memramcook Valley to show them where the grandparents had grown up he decided to visit Keillor House, something he had never done before, and an idea was born. Of course everyone loved the house, but Bernie couldn't help being somewhat disappointed in the few flowers and shrubs that languished there at the time. An historic house, he thought, should have an authentic garden to set it off, and what better place to help make that happen than Keillor House where his beloved



## BERNIE'S GARDEN

grandmother had worked? Some time afterwards he asked at the museum whether they needed any help with the garden, and left his name. Not long after that he got a call from Alice, who then as now was ever on the prowl for fresh recruits. She invited him to lunch at the Bell Inn (he still remembers the seafood chowder and biscuits)—and the rest, as they say, is history.

When he started the project, the front wall of Keillor House was in such a dangerous state of disrepair that no one was allowed near it, and so it was the area around the Dairy Room and kitchen that received his first attentions. Once the steel supports were up, he began the front garden—and had it nicely established when it had to be dug up again for the rebuilding of the wall in 2005-06. The new plantings flourished for a while, but as they grew higher the Dorchester winds became a problem and so this fall, ever the perfectionist, Bernie took out quite a number of them. This spring the garden will reappear in its third incarnation, planted with shorter and stouter varieties better able to withstand the buffeting of the breezes.

To make his period garden as authentic as possible, Bernie consulted lists of historic plants compiled by King's Landing and Fortress Louisbourg. Not all of the ones available today are exactly the same as they were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but by experimenting with various possibilities he is able to achieve a good approximation of what an upper class ornamental garden would have looked like when the two generations of Keillors were living in the house. In fact, until recently there was one specimen that had actually survived from that time, a red peony said to have been planted by Mary Keillor, wife of Thomas Keillor who had inherited the property from his father, John—the one who built Keillor House. It had to be transplanted when the steel beams went up to support the collapsing wall. It survived this ordeal but unfortunately not the next one when the wall was rebuilt. It is not completely impossible that someone took a cutting from it in years gone by, and if so, it would be wonderful to bring it back home. If anyone knows of such a cutting, please let us know!

I asked Bernie if he had any favourites among the plants at Keillor House and he replied with a fascinating story about the Apothecary Rose, which, appropriately enough, is entangled in legend and history with both an English and a French aspect. It is a very early variety

going back at least to ancient Persia where its original white coloration was said to have been changed to dark red by the blood of an overly amorous nightingale who clasped it too tightly to its breast. From the mysterious East it was brought into medieval Europe by returning Crusaders who knew it as the Rose of Damascus. According to the French version, which is more prosaic but probably more historically accurate, the Crusader was Count Thibault IV of Champagne, an otherwise thoroughly disagreeable character, who brought it to the city of Provins near Paris where it was cultivated commercially for its medicinal qualities and hence became known as the Apothecary Rose, or Rose of Provins. Well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was still used in various concoctions to cure indigestion, sore throats, skin rashes, eye maladies- and even hangovers (here it was mixed with wine, which no doubt increased its effectiveness). Women found that the petals would rejuvenate the skin and restore youth. If nothing else, it smells good, and so was also grown for perfume and dried for potpourri.

The English version is more romantic (imagine that- the English being more romantic than the French!) but also rather darker. According to it, the rose made its way by a circuitous route to the court of King Henry II (who also happened to be Duke of Normandy and lord over many other territories in France, so maybe the French win on the romanticism score after all) where it somehow arrived in its original white coloration. A good king but a bad husband, Henry had a mistress named Rosamond whom he affectionately called his 'Rosa mundi' - his 'Rose of the World' - thereby showing off his Latin. The queen was not amused (although she had not exactly been a model wife, either) and so she concocted a deadly potion disguised with the scented oil of the Apothecary Rose and presented it to dear Rosamond, perhaps as a beauty aid. It must have worked, as Rosamund never got any older after using it. After her sudden death, a new rose sprouted outside the castle with both red and white stripes- as the *Rosa mundi* does to this day.

The Apothecary Rose has another English connection, although this story is a bit more convoluted. During the dynastic struggles and outright civil wars of the fifteenth century popularly known as the 'Wars of the Roses', the Yorkist kings (so called because they were descended from the first Duke of York) took as their heraldic badge a white rose, while their opponents, the Lancastrians, (descended



## BERNIE'S GARDEN

from the first Duke of Lancaster) adopted a red one—the Apothecary. The wars ended with the victory of Henry Tudor, claimant to the Lancastrian heritage, over the villainous Richard III who had usurped the throne from his underage nephew—and, according to vicious rumour, did him in as well, along with his little brother—just for good measure. Henry first consolidated his claim by pledging to marry their sister, Elizabeth of York, thus uniting the two dynasties and bringing much desired peace to the realm. After the Battle of Bosworth (1485) in which Richard was killed, Henry, now King Henry VII, was as good as his word. To symbolize the union of the two houses of Lancaster and York, he came up with a great PR stunt by superimposing a white rose of York on a larger red rose of Lancaster to create the Tudor Rose, the plant badge of England to this day.

The Westmorland Historical Society owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to Bernie for this beautiful enhancement of Keillor House—and also to the students of Mathieu-Martin who regularly help him to maintain it. We also must thank *district scolaire 01* for allowing Bernie to use the greenhouse at Mathieu-Martin in order to start the seedlings for the annuals each year. Without it, the cost—which Bernie bears himself, and says that he is happy to do so, would be prohibitive. For example, he plants more than a thousand marigolds alone. So, to Bernie and all the good people at Mathieu-Martin who help him each year in this worthy project we offer a most heartfelt *merci beaucoup!*

Gene Goodrich

### *Preserving Dorchester's History and Our Stories*

The mandate of Keillor House and the Graydon Milton Library & Genealogy Centre is to preserve and document Dorchester's rich history and make it accessible through publications, exhibits and newsletters. The museum is asking you for any materials you have that will expand our collection of information on Dorchester and on families from our area.

Every year, families from all over North America send us inquiries and come to Keillor House to trace their roots. Last year a researcher was even looking for evidence that Houdini once performed at a local hall in Dorchester!

We would welcome your donation of letters, diaries, books, pictures, stories or memorabilia—anything that might aid someone in researching the history of the area or their family roots.

If you wish to keep the originals, we will copy and return them at no cost to you to ensure their preservation for future generations.

Please help us by 'digging out' your memorabilia or artifacts from the past and sharing them with us.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact us.

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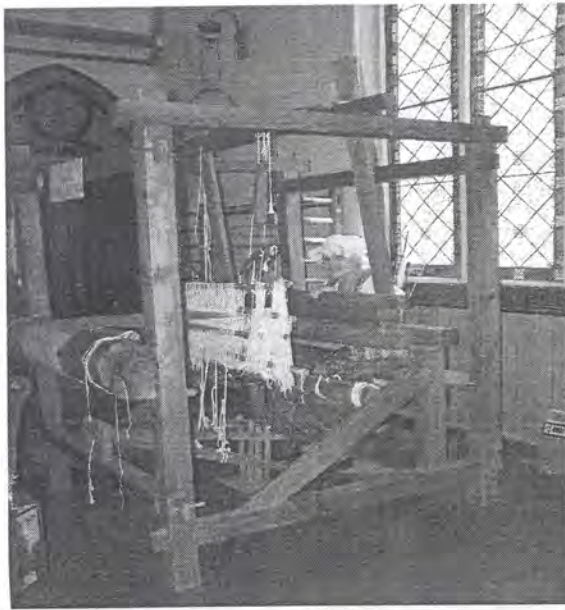
#### *Art McReady passes away...*

Another of Dorchester's links with the past was broken with the death of Art McReady on January 15th at the age of 102. Besides his many years of service with Canadian Car in Amherst and Enamel & Heating in Sackville, Art led a long and interesting life as a farmer and fisherman at Johnson's Mills on Dorchester Cape. Ed Bowes did a piece on him in the May 2009 issue of the *Newsletter*.



## DOMESTIC TEXTILE PRODUCTION IN EARLY NEW BRUNSWICK

*The following is a modified version of a lecture Gene Goodrich delivered last April to a 'Seniors' Course', one of a series on 'Historic Dorchester.' It is based in large part on the PhD thesis of Dr. Judith Rygiel, who conducted a very interesting session for the 'Needle and Thread for the Bed' mini-course given in the summer of 2010.*



*Loom from ca. 1800 St. James Textile Museum*

The St. James Textile Museum is devoted to the domestic arts primarily of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Besides a representative sampling of carpenter and blacksmith tools, we are fortunate in having an excellent collection of the various devices used in the production of home made woolen and linen fabrics, including a loom dating from about 1800. Known as the Beachkirk Collection, it was given to the Westmorland Historical Society in 1985 by Pamela Black, a scion of one of this area's most prominent families. Most of the items come from southeastern New Brunswick and constitute one of the most important collections of its kind in the Maritimes.

These are artifacts from a world very different from our own, and one that was not without its attractions, in spite of the hardships it sometimes inflicted. One major difference between those days and these is the degree to which people were self-sufficient. If most of us living today were deprived of our supermarkets and shopping malls, stocked with items from every corner of the globe, we would soon starve or freeze in the dark.

Not so the farming, fishing and lumbering families of early New Brunswick. It would be an exaggeration to say that they were completely self-sufficient. Given the province's easy access to the sea and its well developed commerce, people had no difficulty obtaining imported manufactured goods, as well as a few luxuries such as chocolate. Even many staple items like molasses and rum came from abroad. But, to a much larger degree than today, they produced most of their own basic food, clothing and shelter.

It is the clothing, or more precisely, the textiles, that is the focus here. Most everyone knows that rural families of earlier generations raised their own meat and vegetables, made their own bread (as well as the jams and jellies to go on it), grew their own apples etc. What is less well known is that, besides making their own clothes, many of them also spun the wool and flax and wove the cloth. Besides making enough cloth for their own use, those with special weaving skills could do custom work for others and even sell or barter their surplus production to local merchants, thus earning extra income for their families.

In New Brunswick, these practices continued much longer than in the United States and Ontario. Here the tradition of homespun cloth-making flourished from the time of the first European settlement down to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century—and lingered on in isolated pockets as late as the 1930s. One reason for this was that cotton and woolen mills came late to the province and there were never very many of them, so they couldn't meet all the demand. Another reason was that hand woven woolen cloth, as well as hand-knitted woolen socks and mittens, were much tougher and warmer than the factory variety—and therefore much preferred by men who worked outdoors, especially in winter, which was a lot longer and colder than it is today. It was common, rather than exceptional, for snow to arrive in early November and linger on till May, while January and February temperatures often dipped into the minus thirties. New Brunswick had many outdoor workers relative to its total population because the economy largely depended on farming, fishing, ship building, and lumbering, all of which required a copious supply of warm clothes. A dozen pair of socks and several pairs of mittens was standard issue for a lumberjack working in a winter camp. Starting in the mid 1850s, the building of the railroads became another source of demand. Even after factory-made cloth became widely available during the latter half of the century, many people used it only to make their 'Sunday-go-to-meeting' finery while continuing to use homespun for their work ware.



## DOMESTIC TEXTILE PRODUCTION IN EARLY NEW BRUNSWICK

At times, wearing homespun became a point of pride, even among the elite. The Planter and Loyalist settlers from colonial America brought with them a Yankee tradition of frugality and self-sufficiency, and the farmers among them often regarded store bought cloth as a sign of bad management, too easily leading to that worst of economic sins—debt. During the 1840s and early 1850s New Brunswick suffered a deep depression, thought by some to be caused by too many imports and not enough exports. For a while, it became a sign of patriotism to wear homespun in order to avoid extravagance and help the local economy. Some members of the legislature even made it a point to wear homespun suits, preferably made of wool from their own sheep.

The amount of home weaving actually increased until well after 1850. Of course, this partly reflected the growth in population, but it was also actively encouraged by the agricultural societies—often dominated by the social elite who were trying to encourage better farming methods and, in good Victorian fashion, to inculcate virtue into the population. Fairs were organized and prizes given, not only for the best livestock and garden produce, but also for homespun textiles of various kinds—in order, in the words of one promoter, “to excite and reward the industry of the country’s female population.”

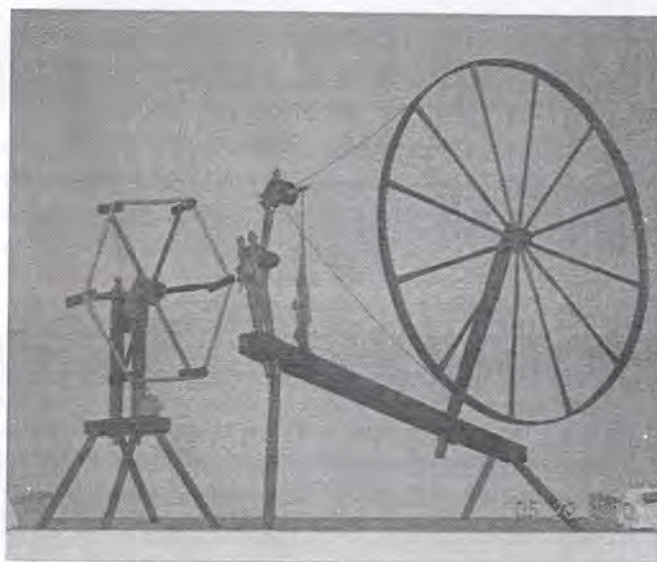
This reminds us that much of this work was done by women and girls.

It was not always thus. Women had always been spinners, particularly girls and single women, so much so, in fact, that the word ‘spinster’, which originally just meant someone who spins, took on the meaning of an unmarried woman. But in Europe weaving on a big upright loom was men’s work. The marvelous brocades and tapestries that can still be admired in the museums of Europe were the work of professional male weavers, highly trained in a long apprenticeship. In spite of discouragement by the British government, which wanted the colonies to import most of their textiles from the mother country, a weaving trade dominated by professional male

weavers also developed in colonial America. After the expulsion of the Acadians, and particularly after the American Revolution, a number of them made their way to the Maritimes, where they were joined not long afterwards by others from Scotland and Ireland. There were no textile mills in their new homeland, but some found work as custom weavers, often going from house to house and boarding with their customers while they wove their store of linen or yarn into cloth. Some of the better qualified ones set up dedicated weaving shops from where they did fancy work, such as elaborate coverlets and shawls, for affluent patrons.

Professional or semi-professional male weavers continued to practice their trade, although in diminishing numbers, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But most weavers were women who worked mainly in their own homes and produced mainly for their own families, although some also did custom work for others, or sold cloth to the local stores along with their eggs and butter. This was a departure from earlier times, and particularly from European practice. The reason was that, during the first few decades after arriving in an undeveloped land, much of it heavily forested, the priorities for men and boys were chopping down trees and building houses, barns and, in many places, boats—to say nothing of the regular farm work which everyone took for granted as a matter of survival. As a result, weavers who turned to farming, as many of them did, tended to pass their weaving skills on to their daughters rather than to their sons. Within a couple of generations, the idea took hold that domestic weaving was a female occupation—and a bit of a sissy thing for boys to do.

Of course, weaving is only one of the many steps in cloth-making. First, the wool or flax has to be spun into thread and



*Spinning Wheel and Winder in St. James Textile Museum*



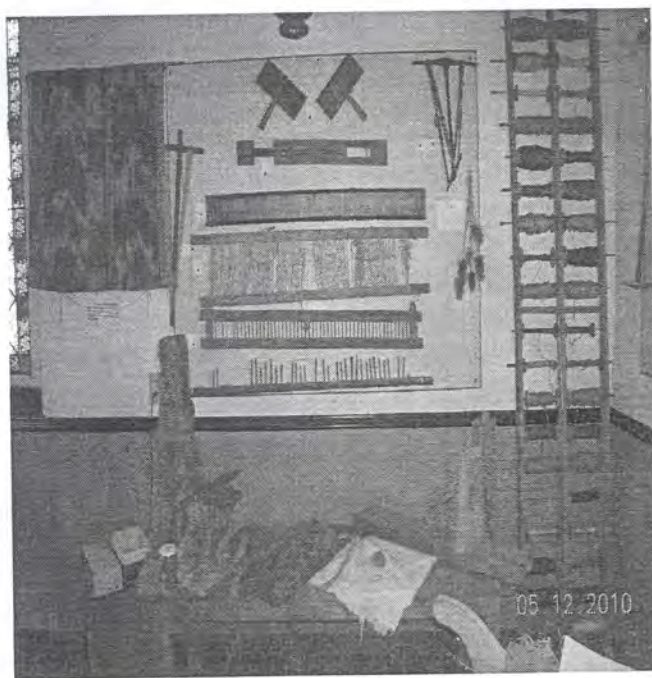
## DOMESTIC TEXTILE PRODUCTION IN EARLY NEW BRUNSWICK



Bettie at Work

done by women. However, they often relieved some of the drudgery by working together with friends and neighbours in what the Loyalist settlers called 'frolics'—a combination of a work bee and a social gathering with ulterior motives. Writing in 1828, a British visitor to New Brunswick described them this way:

*"The term 'frolic' is peculiar, I believe, to America in the different senses in which it is used. If a good wife has a quantity of wool or flax to spin, she invites as many of her neighbours as the house can well accommodate; some bring their spinning wheels, others their cards; they remain all day at work and, after drinking an abundance of tea, either go home or remain to dance for some part of the night: this is called a spinning frolic. They are on these occasions as well as at other frolics, joined by the young men of the settlement, and in this way many of their love matches are made up."*



Carding Tools St. James Textile Museum

before that, in the case of wool, the sheep have to be shorn and the fleece thoroughly washed, combed and carded. After being woven, the cloth was normally fulled, essentially by soaking it in a foul solution and pounding the daylight out of it with a club, or in some cases even with the naked feet. This was in order to thicken it and make it shed water.

Flax was even more work. It had to be pulled from the ground by hand, dried in the sun or over a fire, turned and spread several times, then have the seeds combed out of it. After that was done, it had to be wetted down in order to soften it, dried again, then broken on a flax break and finally 'scutched', 'swingled' and pounded to remove the last bit of crud—and all this before spinning, let alone weaving, could even begin.

Although some of these processes, especially wool carding and flax breaking, were very hard work, a lot of it, too, was

Men also organized frolics, but their ulterior motive was a little different. For example, when a farmer needed some woods cut down, he bought a few gallons of rum and had a 'chopping frolic'.

In the case of wool working, at least, a better way of relieving the drudgery was to take it to a carding and fulling mill run by a water wheel. These were fairly common in New Brunswick from an early date, usually built by Loyalists who had known them in their homeland. Almost every town in Colonial America had one by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Amos Botsford, a leading Loyalist from Connecticut, built one at Westcock in 1812. It could also saw timber and grind grain. A number of years before that—I don't know exactly when, but soon after 1800, Gideon Palmer, another prominent Loyalist, built a carding and fulling mill on what is still called Palmer's Pond in Dorchester. Palmer's Pond later became the site of a ship yard.

A carding mill gets the wool ready for spinning by means of a revolving drum studded with fine wires that align the fibres. It could card in an hour what a pair of human hands could do



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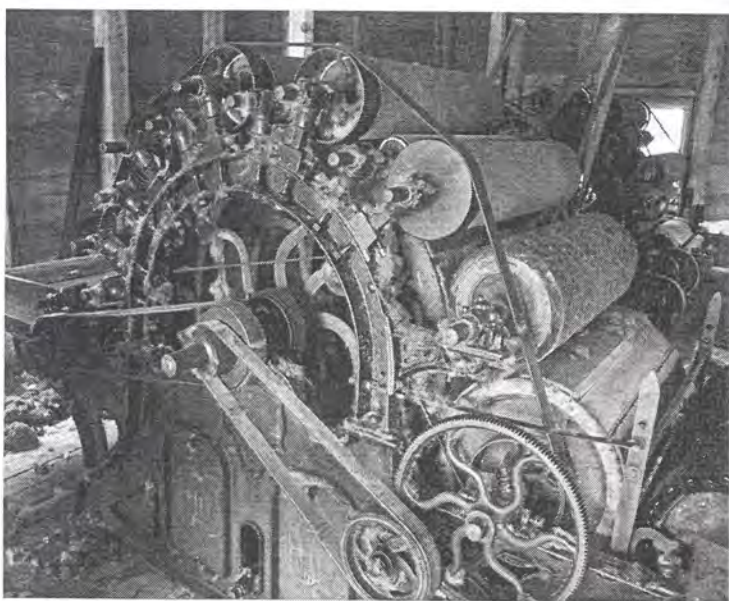
in a week, so if there was one within traveling distance, any serious spinner or weaver would take his or her raw wool to it, usually paying for the service with a percentage of the wool. Lumber and grist mills operated the same way. Incidentally, the Wile Carding Mill, built in 1860 and operating until 1968, is still standing in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia. It is now a museum and well worth a visit. All the machinery still works and the costumed staff is very knowledgeable, friendly and eager to demonstrate their skills.

It was the carding and fulling mills that made it possible for home weavers to produce significant quantities of woolen homespun, both for home consumption and the market. The 1851 census reports that more than 5400 New Brunswick households had a loom, which represents about 40% of the total. Of course, virtually every one had a spinning wheel. Linen was another story. The first Anglophone settlers certainly spun some flax, but it was mainly for making the warp threads for weaving wool. But when machine-spun cotton warp thread came to be imported, beginning in the 1840s, flax spinning waned among Anglophones and most linen in New Brunswick came to be produced by Acadians, who, of course, also spun and wove woolen textiles. Among the Acadians, both spinning and weaving, as well as much of the preliminary preparation, was done by the women. There seems to have been few, if any, professional male weavers. One of the British military officers involved in the Deportation observed that Acadian women were very industrious and particularly adept at carding, spinning and weaving of wool, flax and hemp. Another British observer noted in 1828 that "the industry of their wives and daughters is wonderful; they are at work during the spring and harvest on their farms; they cook and wash, make their husbands' as well as their own clothes; they spin, knit and weave, and are scarcely idle during their lives."

Acadian textile production was mainly for home use, and Acadian families depended even more upon it than did Anglophones, as they were generally poorer, and in any case not much interested in new fangled ideas. Besides being generally unable to afford store bought cloth, there was another reason for their continuing to make their own textiles and garments: Acadians clung fiercely to their religious, linguistic and cultural identity, and no small part of this was their



*Mechanical Hand Carder St. James Textile Museum*



*Carding Mill Interior*

distinctive dress which set them apart right down to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were particularly noted for their love of bright colours, especially reds and blues. Although it was homespun and relatively simple in pattern, their workmanship—or more accurately their 'workwomanship', was very good, and in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was apparently a ready market for Acadian linen, most of it, Judith Rygiel informs us, produced in the Memramcook Valley. During early summer, when the fairy flax was in flower, practically every Acadian farm must have graced the lush green valley with large splashes of beautiful bright blue.

Not all the textiles produced in the home were for strictly practical purposes. This was more or less the case during the earlier period of the province's history, but after about 1850 a new ideal of womanhood and women's role in the family began to emerge. It first took root among the middle classes and then trickled



## DOMESTIC TEXTILE PRODUCTION IN EARLY NEW BRUNSWICK

down the social ladder through the influence of farm journals, mainly American, sections of which were reprinted in some New Brunswick newspapers. Although primarily dedicated to encouraging better agricultural methods, they always included a section on practical tips, as well as moral advice for the ladies. Instead of just being a workhorse, the ideal farmer's wife was now supposed to develop her artistic talents and create an aesthetically pleasing, as well as a comfortable, home for her family. Of course, she still had to cook and sew, wash and clean, look after the children, the chickens, the garden—all the things ordinary women did in those days, and many continued to spin and weave, even if some considered it a drudgery inappropriate for the new style woman. But there was also an increasing emphasis on decorative work such as coverlets, doilies, cushions, fancy needlework and embroidery of all kinds—things that gave aesthetic pleasure as well as the satisfaction of being a good homemaker.

Whether it was for decorative or practical purposes, home textile production was a very important part of the rural New Brunswick economy right into the early twentieth century. It was also an integral part of family life, and one of the many ways in which women played their part in creating a world whose remnants are now a valued part of our own heritage.



### OUR SPECIAL EVENTS RELATED TO TEXTILES

#### INNER JOURNEYS EXPERIENCE - "NEEDLE & THREAD FOR THE BED"

WEDNESDAYS DURING THE SEASON. 10:30 AM TO 2:30 PM  
FEE \$48.00

Surrounded by antique quilts, learn about the 19<sup>th</sup> century skills needed to make bedding. Try the age-old practices of carding, spinning and 'throwing' the weaving shuttle. Take your own quilt block home...and enjoy lunch served by the open hearth.

*Reservations Required.*

(506) 379-6633 [www.keillorhousemuseum.com](http://www.keillorhousemuseum.com).

#### KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM QUILT SALE

Browse the museum and shop throughout the year! Enjoy the exhibit of new quilts for sale nestled into our museum—on consignment from local quilters for the summer season.

(506) 379-6633 [www.keillorhousemuseum.com](http://www.keillorhousemuseum.com).

CANADA DAY, July 1st - "Handiwork Bee"- Dorchester  
10:00 PM To 3:00 PM

Textile artists! Bring your latest project to the Community Hall, 4955 Main Street Dorchester. Enjoy the morning socializing and the afternoon tapping your toes to traditional Maritime music. Activities include: rug hooking, felting, knitting, quilting, spinning and weaving. Bring your projects for display. Visitors welcome!

Judy Morison (506) 379-6682

HERITAGE FAIR July 21— KEILLOR HOUSE AND ST. JAMES  
TEXTILE MUSEUMS 11:00 AM To 3:00 PM

Weaving demonstrations. Try traditional methods of carding and spinning—start with wool and leave with yarn. Shop for special products from artisans gathered for the Sandpiper Festival.

(506) 379-6633 [www.keillorhousemuseum.com](http://www.keillorhousemuseum.com).



## NOTES FROM MARLENE'S SCRAPBOOK

*In the course of her researches into the history of the Hickman family, Marlene Hickman has collected many interesting items pertaining to Dorchester and the surrounding area. Several of these have appeared in previous issues of the Newsletter, and we intend to bring you more from time to time. Thanks for sharing them with us, Marlene. The following items illustrate some aspects of travel and leisure during the latter half of the 19th century. Notice the friendly co-operation between the religious denominations in the last one.*

August 22, 1878 – Chignecto Post

A Grand Excursion to Halifax takes place on Tuesday next 27<sup>th</sup> inst. The train leaves Hopewell at 4 AM, passes Sackville at 8:30 reaches Halifax at 2 PM and returning leaves Halifax at 7:30. The return fare from Sackville is \$2.10. So cheap an excursion is seldom offered to the people and those desirous of enjoying a pleasant day and seeing the sights over the ICR and viewing this ancient capital of Nova Scotia will not soon have a cheaper or more favorable opportunity of doing so. Every arrangement has been made to prevent over crowding and to promote the pleasure of the occasion.

March 19, 1898 – The Spectator

The Ferry Boat is now plying between Cole's Point and Albert Co. Passengers can be driven from the railway station to the Ferry by the Hotel Livery or from the ferry to the Windsor [Hotel] by the ferryman's team as the case may be.

April 5, 1877 – Chignecto Post

A Bonnet Hop took place at Robb's Hall, Dorchester on Tuesday night. Nearly two hundred hoppers were present and hopping was kept up with great spirit until daylight began to hop in through the window panes. [A Bonnet Hop is defined in the Newfoundland Dictionary of English as "spree or social at the community hall." Presumably, it has the same meaning here.]

August 15, 1878 – Chignecto Post

The Bazaar at Dorchester on Tuesday last held by the ladies of Trinity Church netted \$275.00.

The Pic Nic at Dorchester on the 28<sup>th</sup> promises to be one of the most agreeable events of the year. A band will discourse sweet music during the afternoon and evening. A platform for terpsichorean performers [*dancers*] will be erected. The programme of the afternoon's performances include Scotch games, foot and hurdles races. Medals are being struck for the winners. Prizes will be offered in Ladies Archery. The Dramatic Club plays at Robb's Hall in the evening: "Faint Heart Never Won a Fair Lady" and "Limerick Boy". Return tickets on the trains are expected.

The committee having the affair in hand intend making it in every way a most agreeable and enjoyable affair. The proceeds are in aid of the new Catholic Church in Dorchester and while a committee of Catholic gentlemen are managing the affair, the people of other denominations are cordially invited to participate.

The most liberal arrangements are being made in providing refreshments – all the delicacies and fruits of the season will be spread. A very large attendance is confidently anticipated.





Donations, Memberships and  
Newsletter Submissions to:  
4974 Main Street, Dorchester, NB  
E4L 2Z1

Keillor House Museum  
Tel.: (506)379-6633  
Fax: (506)379-3418  
E-mail: keillorhouse@nb.aibn.com  
www.keillorhousemuseum.com

#### Museum Hours 2012

June 9 to Sept. 15  
Tuesday to Saturday  
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday  
12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m.

## PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

The Westmorland Historical Society is a non-profit charitable organization founded in 1965 with the mandate to collect, preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage of Westmorland County, NB. For four decades the WHS has worked with local partners to apply this mandate in a unique *entrepreneurial way* by encouraging *self-financing historic sites* attracting visitors from across North America. The historic Sir Pierre Landry House, the Bell Inn, and the Payzant & Card Building, contain apartments or businesses that help off-set the costs of preserving these historic buildings.

The Society's stellar museums—the Keillor House Museum (1813) housing the Graydon Milton Library and Genealogical Centre—and the St. James Textile Museum, contain remarkable collections attracting genealogists, researchers and visitors from across North America.

How to become a WHS Member?

Contact Judy Morison, our Membership Secretary, at 4974 Main Street, Dorchester, NB, E4L 2Z1. Tel: (506) 379-6682.

#### Annual Fees 2012

(Includes Newsletter)

Individual: \$10.00  
Family: \$15.00  
Sustaining: \$25.00

#### Board of Directors

President	Greg Partridge
Past President	Gene Goodrich
Vice-President	Cole Morison
Secretary	Kathy Bowser
Treasurer	Bob Bowser
Mary Balser	Cheryl Feindel
Norma Boudreau	Shirley Oliver
Eddie Bowes	Theresa Simpson
Genie Coates	Susan Spence
Margaret Eaton	Nancy Vogan

## SALUTING OUR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

*We always like to thank our many volunteers for their unstinting devotion to the WHS and its work in the community. In this Issue, we pay special tribute to those who made the Victorian Christmas Dinners such an outstanding success.*

#### Servers & Cleaners:

Under Alice's capable leadership, an enthusiastic group was assembled to undertake these tasks for the Victorian Dinners.

Deana Crossman, Anne Hendrikson, Dakato MacLean, Wendy Hunter, Warren Folkins, Donna Folkins, Kathy Bowser, Bob Bowser, Cole Morison, Judy Morison, Susan Spence, Gene Goodrich, Tanya Folkins, Heather Fillmore, Theresa Simpson, Roland McIssac, Mary Balser, George Balser,

Joanne Corey, Linda VanZullen, Donna Keiver, Ritchie Folkins & Alice Folkins.

#### Set-up:

Alice Folkins and boys, Mike, Stephen and Chuck. This included everything from bringing the Christmas ornaments down from the attic to setting up the tables and folding the napkins.

We want to thank the Westmorland Institution for allowing these volunteers to help us with the set-ups.

#### Decorations:

Joanne Corey and Maurice Gautreau performed their usual magic.

For a number of years they have provided spectacular backdrops for our Christmas events. In three days of hard work this year, they once again transformed Keillor House into a festive

scene of light and colour.

*Again we offer special thanks to Alice Folkins for all the contributions she makes to this organization. They are literally too numerous to list here, but we see them at every turn.*

*What would we do without her?*

*The Executive*