

WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring is here and I am glad to report that it brings mainly good news on all fronts...

Special Events

Although the Candlelight and Spaghetti Supper attracted fewer folks than expected, the Mother's Day Tea and Glitz more than made up for it with another sell-out for both sittings. Congratulations to the O.I.D.E. and all our WHS volunteers for another class act! Next we look forward to celebrating Canada Day with live music and refreshments. Also, please consider attending the public lecture (June 25th) by Darrell Butler of King's Landing on the significance of our museum collections for the material history of New Brunswick. More details inside this issue.

Judy Morison has put our 2012 Special Events on the websites of the 'Cultural Coast' and 'South-East Zone'—and will update them throughout the year. Now, visitors to the Kent-Tantramar region will have up-to-date information on what's

going on at Keillor House at the click of a mouse.

Properties

Following water damage to one apartment and parts of the hall in the Payzant & Card building, the Executive Committee recommended re-roofing the front section. Quotes have been received and a contractor selected. All costs will be met from our capital reserve fund.

For nearly a year now, Alice has been working two days a week with two volunteers from Westmorland Institution on a number of projects including: replacing parts of the steeple of the St. James Textile Museum and repairing, painting and fixing the plumbing in several of our buildings. Most recently, the boys added a much-needed second toilet—with wheelchair access—in the kitchen area of Keillor House. The plastering and finishing is being done by

volunteer Rolly MacIsaac. Thank you Rolly—it really looks great!

In her ongoing trolling for volunteers Alice landed another 'big one' in Scott Harris, a recent graduate of Algonquin College, where he studied the restoration of stone buildings with traditional techniques using lime and mortar. Scott generously offered to re-point and reset the stonework of the back and sides of Keillor House for the cost of the materials, and is already at work on the project. This is a tremendous contribution to the preservation of the building, and we are extremely grateful for it.

We are still hopeful of funding from Heritage Canada to expand our facilities—as reported in previous issues of the Newsletter. We are in the process of applying to Cultural Spaces to fund a feasibility and concept study and to Legacy Fund/ACOA for capi-

KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM —SPECIAL EVENTS

Official Opening Ceremony

June 9, 1:30 Free guided tours with costumed staff

Celebrate Canada Day

July 1, 1:00-3:00 *free*

Toe tapping Maritime Music Complimentary Refreshments Kids' Games, Face Painting

Canada Day Handiwork Bee

July 1, 10:00-3:00 *free*

Textile Artists & Visitors Welcome. Bring a project—*Knitting, Hooking*. Visit & Exchange Ideas

Sandpiper Festival Breakfast

July 28, 7:30-10:30 \$6.00;
Family Rates

Pancakes, Sausages, Baked Beans, Tea & Coffee

Heritage Fair

July 28, 11:00-3:00 *free*

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tal funding. We have also applied to Heritage Canada for funding to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Keillor House in 2013. After a thorough review of the insurance policies on our buildings, the Executive Committee voted to expand certain kinds of coverage to provide more protection at an affordable price.

The Museums

Inga Hansen and Meighen Beaudin have been appointed Museum Manager and Assistant Manager, respectively, for this season. Both have worked for us before and have an outstanding record of dedicated service. Thanks to both of you for taking on this responsibility. We know you will do a great job!

Alice

Most members of WHS will probably be somewhat taken aback to learn (or be reminded) that, in accordance with one of our bylaws, Alice is not actually on the Board this year. The Executive Committee took advantage of this loophole to persuade her to accept some compensation for working three days a week for the rest of this season. Of course she will continue to volunteer on the 'other seven' as well! We can't stop her. She is a force of Nature—and the one that continually sustains the rest of us.

Greg Partridge

Learning About Our Collections with Darrell Butler

This June, the Board, museum staff and general public will have a great opportunity to learn more about our museum collections and their importance from a leading expert. Darrell Butler, Manager of Heritage Resources, Material Historian and Chief Curator at Kings Landing will lead a two-part workshop on the "Significance of the Keillor House and St. James Textile Museum Collections for the Material History of New Brunswick."

On June 5th Darrell will tour both museums with the WHS Board and museum staff, examining, photographing and discussing our most important holdings. This should add considerably to the information we have on our artifacts, which in turn will help us to improve our displays and enhance our tours. Carefully prepared photographs of the most significant items will be submitted for display on Heritage Canada's Virtual Museum website.

On June 25th, starting at 2:00 pm, Darrell will give an illustrated public lecture on his findings, placing our most important artifacts within the larger framework of New Brunswick's material history. After a delicious afternoon tea featuring homemade strawberry shortcake, the day will conclude with Darrell's informal commentary on any items brought by participants.

Please register in advance for the June 25th event. It will take place in the historic kitchen of Keillor House, where maximum seating is 22. Please bring any items you think may be of historical interest.

Fee: \$12.00: includes museum admission, strawberry shortcake and tea.

Contact: Judy Morison 506-379-6682

THE HOTELS OF DORCHESTER

*The following is an edited version of an unsigned article that appeared in **The Chignecto Post** April 9, 1896. Familiarity with his other works has convinced me that its author was the owner-editor of the **Post**, W. C. Milner, known to many readers for his **History of Sackville** and **The Early History of Dorchester**. His information on the shiretown's earlier hotels seems to be based on his historical research—to which I have made a number of relatively minor corrections based on my own research. The section on the 'Windsor' appears to be based on a personal inspection just before the grand opening on either April 9th or 16th, 1896. A later article (not by Milner) in the **Moncton Daily Times** of May 24th, 1956, kindly supplied by Marlene Hickman, informs us that additional grandiose furnishings such as an all glass front with enclosed patio were planned but never completed because the builders ran out of funds. The 'fourth flat' (floor) that Milner speaks of was never completed either. Built in a brief period of renewed optimism for Dorchester's future, the 'Windsor' became a sad symbol of its long decline into obscurity. Milner was apparently told that it cost \$14,500, but the later article claims that the total tab would have been \$23,000, except that funds ran out at \$18,000. Business was never enough to justify such an investment, and in 1901, only seven years after its glorious debut, it was sold to W. Frank Tait for \$10,000. In 1926 Frank sold it to his son, William, for \$5000. From 1946 to 1957 it had seven owners before Irving bought it and sold it for salvage in order to build a service station. That, too, is now gone, but it is not as sadly missed as is this splendid piece of Dorchester's architectural past.*

W.E. Goodrich

The shiretown has long been famous in Provincial history for its hotels. They were never very pretentious or luxurious or noted for a Sybaritic cuisine, (meaning 'luxurious' or 'voluptuous'. Sybaris was a town in southern Italy famous in Roman times for its luxury) but their associations were multifarious. Nearly a century of judges and juries, of barristers and court suitors have found quarters within their walls, while generations of businessmen, politicians and electioneering agents flocked there—of whom time preserves today only a memory.

The tinkling of glasses and the shouts of laughter for a well told story were not unfamiliar sounds within the parlors of the old Dorchester Hotel; much that went on there has contributed to the progress and history of the country and much served only to point a moral and adorn a tale.

The old Dorchester Hotel building, which was demolished to make way for Hotel Windsor, was erected in the present century, by Harry Cornwall, who was born at Dorchester Island. The place at that period was a competition for trade with Fort Cumberland and for over a century when wooden shipbuilding was profitable was a very busy and prosperous place. At the time Cornwall built, some of the families moved from there to the corner, (Dorchester Corner, the site of the present village. Earlier the main settlement was on Dorchester Island) while the opening of the highways rendered the corner more accessible to the cultivated and populous districts of Memramcook, Moncton, Sackville, etc. The leading families were the Sayers, Wilsons, Weldons, Keillors, Chapmans, Smiths, Miles &c.

Coates Kinnear was the next Boniface; he came from Fort Cumberland and took charge about 1820. ('Boniface' was in Milner's time a well known term for a jolly innkeeper, derived from a character in a once popular play, *The Beaux Stratagem* (1707), by George Farquhar.)

John Hickman, the ancestor of the numerous and prosperous family of that name, succeeded about 1825. He was an Irishman and had belonged to the Irish Constabulary. He was a clever and popular servant of the public. Many anecdotes are told of him and his sayings. The next in charge was his son, William Hickman, Justice of the Peace, who went into business in 1850 and in 1856 sold out to Harry Wilbur now of Westcock who in 1862 or



The 'Dorchester' when it was known as 'Wilbur's'. Before 1890

THE HOTELS OF DORCHESTER

63. He himself sold out to Willard Wilbur to whom until a few years ago it belonged.

There have been other hotels in Dorchester. The stone building nearly opposite the hotel now occupied by Wm. Hickman as a dwelling house (*the Bell Inn*) was built by Coates Kinnear for a hotel shortly after he parted with the other building. (*A study of the surviving deeds suggest that the 'Bell Inn' was built about 1815 by a James Hamilton, and that the first innkeeper was James Carter. Coates Kinnear was indeed an innkeeper there in the early 1820s, but he only leased the building.*) Coates Kinnear was succeeded by George Kinnear and he in turn by Ambrose Hicks who sold the building to William Hickman, the present occupant when the latter went out of the hotel business. (Actually, Hicks sold it to Albert J. Smith, who then sold it to Hickman.)

The Weldon House (*Weldon Hotel, now the Payzant & Card Building*) was built by William Weldon about 25 years ago and remained open up to 3 or 4 years since. (*This is also mistaken. The 'Weldon' was built about 1835 or 36 by Andrew Weldon. It was the stage-coach stop for the Harvey Eastern Royal Mail Stage, which commenced operations in 1838.*)

A feature of the old Dorchester Hotel was the annual ball held in January up to about 1890. The hotel and legal business in Dorchester have sadly fallen off. In the early fifties it would average a dozen guests a day, or more, but the moneyed as well as industrial and political interests that in the past centered there have to a great extent departed and with it the Hotel business.

HOTEL WINDSOR

In the month of June last, a joint stock company, which was composed of the leading professional and businessmen of the town, was formed, for the purpose of building a new hotel here. The site selected was the spot where the old hotel then stood. Early in July the old buildings were torn down and the foundations of a handsome new structure laid. Messers. McKay & McDonald, of Amherst, were the successful tenderers for the erection of the new house. The hotel, which is built in the Queen Anne style of architecture, measures 90x46 feet outside, and is five stories high, with a balcony running the entire front and half way around the northern end, and also a balcony on the second flat. On the northern end of the first floor is situated the spacious and well-lighted dining room, which measures 43 x 23 feet, with large plate glass windows in the northern end, as well as in front, together with octagon tower and block windows. Passing from the dining room, the office is reached, which is 32 x 36, and fitted

up with open brick fireplace, large plate glass windows and arches, and heavily corniced. On the front of the eastern end is found the writing room, which is the largest and most conveniently situated one in the province, having an open fireplace as well as a hot air register. On the opposite side of the writing room are situated the Gentlemen's parlor and Proprietor's private office, two large and well arranged rooms for the respective purposes.

On the first floor will also be found the Lavatory, which is fitted with the most modern plumbing fixtures. The bathroom is near the Lavatory. On the front northern corner of the second floor will be found the Ladies parlor, 18 x 45, the main entrance to which is made by way of the Ladies private entrance and winding staircase. The balance of the second floor and the third floor is divided off into large, well lighted and well ventilated bed rooms, and suites of rooms, varying in sizes, fitted up with mantles and grates and electric bells. The fourth flat has not yet been finished, but will be the coming season. There are thirty-five furnished bedrooms, which with the additional fifteen rooms on the upper flat, will make fifty in all. In the basement will be found three sample rooms, 25x17, 16x24, and 28x16 respectively, which are large, airy and well appointed for the purpose, beside root cellar, store room, two furnace rooms and Gentleman's Lavatory, which is finished in marble and silver. An elevator runs from the basement to the fourth flat.

The first flat is finished in cherry and reflects great credit on Mr. A. M. Gaudet of this place, who had the contract for painting. Two Cumberland improved wood furnaces with patent silvered radiators, manufactured by Messers. Knight and Black, Amherst, have been placed in the basement by Mr. S. Pattison, our local stove dealer, and thus far have given entire satisfaction. The slate mantles throughout were supplied by Messers. Emmerson & Fisher, Saint John, the large wooden mantles and mirrors being furnished by Messers. Webster Bros. & Parks, Montreal. Mr. Andrew Hunter of Saint John put in the electric bells, which are of the most improved pattern. The ell to the main house is a building 23x43 feet, three stories high, the first of which is used for a laundry, fitted with tubs, hot and cold water, a store room and trunk room. The second story is occupied as a kitchen, carvers' room, pantry, china pantry and ordinary pantry. There has been placed in the kitchen an 8 foot double oven steel range, manufactured by Messers. Geo. R. Prowse & Sons, Montreal, with all modern conveniences. The third flat is used as the servants' apartments. The barns are directly back

THE HOTELS OF DORCHESTER

of the hotel, and measure 90x45, and are well fitted up for the convenience of the public. Ice and cold storage houses are also in the course of construction. The water for the house is supplied from a large reservoir thirty feet above the height of the building, and conveyed thereto through a three-inch pipe. On the fifth flat there is a large reserve tank holding 1500 gallons of water. The house is now lighted by oil, but electric lights will be put in the coming season. The plans of the building were by Mr. R.C. John Dunn, Architect, of Saint John, and are a great credit to that gentleman.

The buildings themselves cost in the vicinity of \$ 14,500. The Company deserves the highest praise for their enterprise in building such a magnificent house, and what the town has long required, and the company trust will be fully appreciated by the travelling public.

The following were the officers elected at the annual meeting of the stockholders: Mr. Cochrane, President, W.D. Wilbur, Vice-President, J.H. Hickman, Secretary-Treasurer, and the following board of directors: William Cochrane, W.D. Wilbur, J.H. Hickman, Geo.H. Fairweather, A.W. Chapman, H.J. McGrath and A.J. Chapman.

Bathing houses for the accommodation of the guests of the Hotel Windsor are to be erected at Cole's Point, a distance of one and a half miles from the Hotel, where there are extensive sandy beaches and beautiful surf bathing, and to which place, guests will be conveyed by the hotel coach twice a day, free of charge, during the bathing season.

The hotel promoters are particularly fortunate in being able to obtain, as manager, a man so well calculated to cater to the wishes of the travelling public, and from the record made by Mrs. Gallagher at the Commercial, in Moncton, the Hotel Windsor has, and will continue to have, one of the best tables in the Province.

The hotel has been receiving guests for some ten days past, but the formal opening takes place this Thursday evening with a grand ball, for which over one thousand invitations have been issued, and without doubt it will be the grandest event of the season. (In 1896 Thursday fell on April 9, the date of the issue of the Chignecto Post, and also on the 16th. It could have been either of these evenings.)



The Bell' ca. 1930



The 'Windsor' ca. 1952. To the left, Bishop's Hardware, formerly Hickman's

MEMORIES OF A DIFFERENT KIND

Dorchester Penitentiary as an Historical Site?

Editor's Note: The following amusing article touching on one of Dorchester's less esteemed 'historic sites' was kindly submitted by Eldon Hay of Sackville, a long-time member of the Westmorland Historical Society and Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Mount Allison University. Although written in something of a light-hearted vein, it offers some interesting insight into the censorious moral culture of the Victorian era.

In July 2010 a dozen members of the Clarke family, residents of Florida and California, came to the Chignecto region searching for memories of ancestors who had once lived in this region. "Do you know of any historic sites with Clarke connections that we could visit?" they asked me. Perhaps somewhat to their surprise, I said that Dorchester Penitentiary was one possibility.

This answer cries out for some explanation. The odyssey began some months previously with a telephone call to me from Sarah Clarke Stuart, a teacher of composition, literature and culture at Florida State College in Jacksonville. Research into her Clarke family history had led to a meeting and partial reconciliation with distant California relatives with whom contact had been largely lost—there'd been a painful breach in a previous generation when a member of the staunchly Presbyterian family married a Roman Catholic. During her visit to California she was shown an old Clarke family Bible that—as family Bibles often do—contained a wealth of genealogical information. Encouraged, she used the marvelous powers of the internet to 'Google' names and places she found in it, among them 'Rev. Alexander Clarke', 'Amherst', 'Chignecto' and 'Covenanters'. This quickly led to a hit on a book I had written some years before entitled *The Chignecto Covenanters: A Regional History of Reformed Presbyterianism in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, 1827-1905*. Sarah bought a copy and was delighted to discover material on Rev. Alexander Clarke and his wife, Catharine McMillan Clarke of Amherst. After confirming their connection with the Clarks of Florida and California, she proceeded to do research on me. Having discovered that I am a graduate of Queen's University, she contacted their Alumni Office—which emailed me, so that I could email her. Following an interchange of questions and responses, she asked if I would meet with her and a group of Clarks from both American branches of the family who were eager for a visit to the Chignecto in order to discover their roots and complete their reconciliation. Of course I said 'yes', but before returning to the visit, let me fill you in on some of the relevant details of the Clarke family history that my research

had turned up.

The first members of the Clarke family to reach these shores were Rev. Alexander Clarke, his wife, Catherine McMillan Clarke, and their two young daughters, one of them born on the way. A native of Belfast, Ireland, Rev. Clarke was studying for the ministry in the Reformed Presbyterian—also known as the Covenanter Church—when, in 1827, a letter arrived from a Covenanter group in Saint John asking for a missionary. Feeling the call, he responded, but after encountering certain difficulties in New Brunswick's burgeoning port city he moved with his family to Amherst in 1828. Here he quickly reached his stride as a missionary, founding a number of Covenanter congregations in Cumberland and Westmorland Counties—Amherst, Goose River/Linden, Nappan and River Hebert in the former; Shemogue/Murray Corner, Chapmans Corner, Jolicure, Port Elgin and Sackville in the latter. Before his death in 1874 the good man's tireless labours had given birth to some fifteen Covenanter congregations. Curiously, Dorchester was not among them, although his successor founded one in nearby Rockland in 1878.

Also fruitful in other ways, the Clarks raised a family of eight girls and two boys, most of whom married and stayed in the region. One exception was Mary, widow of Amherst's Henry Dunlap. She moved to Michigan to join her adult sons who were employed in the automobile industry. The oldest of the Amherst Clarke sons, McMillan, was a well-known elocutionist and music teacher. Although twice married, he had no children. The youngest member of the family, William James, born in 1845, is the 'hero' of our story. The Clarks who visited Chignecto in 2010 are his direct descendants.

Educated in Amherst, in 1870 William James married Jane Elizabeth Trueman, a descendant of the early Yorkshire settlers. The following year saw the arrival of their son, William Alexander, the only child of that generation to bear the family name. The couple apparently farmed for a while until William James felt called to the Covenanter ministry. Shortly before his father's death, he and his family went to Philadelphia where he entered a Covenanter seminary. After his ordination in 1877 he began his ministry in Lisbon, New York.

Here all went well until he was charged with immoral conduct—which he denied. The case dragged on for some years in presbytery (the church court). Finally, in 1881, Rev. William James was deposed from the ministry. He evidently returned to Chignecto forthwith, as the Cumberland County census for that

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year, 1881, lists a William James and a Jane Elizabeth Clarke, both 35 years of age, together with their son, William Alexander, aged nine. For the next decade we know nothing of their whereabouts. Then, in 1891, he again appears in the Cumberland County census, this time as "William Clarke, 45, married, Lodger, Reform[ed] Presb[byterian], Elocutionist," but his wife and son are conspicuous by their absence. In the meantime, the Covenanter Church had sadly declined in the Chignecto area after the death of his father in 1874; it was to disappear altogether in 1905 when the last remaining Reformed Presbyterians joined the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

Although evidently negligent of his spiritual calling, Rev. Clarke had not otherwise been idle, as witness this notice of him under a different name in the January 7th 1892 issue of the *Moncton Daily Transcript*:

On December the third ... there drove from Sackville to the Dorchester Hotel, a man somewhere about fifty years of age, intelligent looking, and evidently one who had not labored much outdoors. He was accompanied by a woman about ten or twelve years his junior, but by no means so prepossessing in appearance ... The couple were no more loving than many a couple are who drive to the county town on a similar mission ... The couple were accompanied by Mr. Johnson Patterson of Upper Sackville. The two had not long registered when the men found their way to the office of the popular issuer of marriage licenses, Mr. W.S. Tingley. He with a keen eye to business promptly issued a license in favor of one Geo. J. LeClair, of Boston, Mass., and Mary Cullen, Spinster, of Upper Sackville. The groom gave his age as 46 years; and the somewhat buxom bride as a lady of only 36 summers. Mr. S.W. Tingley was asked if he could name a convenient clergyman and he took the recipient of the license to the Methodist Parsonage and introduced him to the Rev. Mr. Baker. The latter accompanied his caller to the parlor of the Dorchester Hotel where the ceremony was solemnized. Mr. Patterson was a witness; and another ... was called up and signed the paper ...

The ceremony over, the principals drove away, before noon, in the direction of Sackville.

Later in the same month of December, Jane Elizabeth Clarke called at the office of Magistrate Cahill, of Sackville, and "laid an information against W.J. Clarke on the ground of bigamy. She said she had within the past fortnight arrived from the United States, and learned the fact of her husband's second marriage."

A newspaper headline summed up the consequences:

"Elocutionist Clarke Arrested for Bigamy, And Lodged in Dorchester County Jail." Two days later, another headline updated the situation: "Clarke Committed. His First Wife Appears on the Witness Stand. She Tells the Story of Her Wedding and Separation."

According to the evidence of Jane Elizabeth, when Clarke was dismissed from the ministry for misconduct they separated and she remained in Brooklyn, New York. The same account indicated that William James Clarke had drifted in and out of sight for a number of years; that he later returned to the Sackville area and had been teaching elocution and music wherever he could get classes.

The court proceedings were fully reported in the Sackville, Saint John and Amherst newspapers. Although Mrs. Clarke was treated with respect, the tone of the reportage was generally sensational and salacious; the attitude towards ex-Rev. Clarke and Mary Cullen was patronizing, harsh and contemptuous. The headlines, many of them front-page banners, reflected the general tone of moral panic: "Bigamy Case at Sackville: A Teacher of Music and Elocution in Trouble," "He Had Two Wives: An Ex-Minister to be Tried for Bigamy," "That Bigamy Case—Clarke Pleads Guilty And Is Remanded For Sentence." The final outcome of the trial was that "Clarke The Bigamist: Is Sentenced to Three Years in Penitentiary." Mary Cullen quickly disappeared from view.

Returning to Brooklyn, Jane Elizabeth Clarke vigorously pursued and won a divorce, granted in 1893.

After serving his three-year sentence, Clarke was released from Dorchester Penitentiary on July 12th 1894. No doubt finding it difficult to remain in the Chignecto region, he spent the last decade of his life in Port Huron, Michigan, where his older sister, Mary Clarke Dunlap, was living with some of her adult children. There he pursued his avocation as a musician and even became "a popular instructor in music at the north end."

Ten years later, in March 1904, "after an illness of but one day, William Clarke, aged 58 years, better known as Prof. Clarke, passed away early at his home, 1111 Pearl Street. Mr. Clark was taken suddenly ill and failed to survive the [appendicitis] attack." (*Port Huron Daily Herald*, 22 March 1904). Unsurprisingly, given the temper of the times, his death went unnoticed in the Amherst newspapers; by contrast, they reported fully on that of Mary Clarke Dunlap, who died and was buried in Port

MEMORIES OF A DIFFERENT KIND

Huron in 1916.

Buried in Lakeside Cemetery, Port Huron, William James Clarke's tombstone inscription reads:

CLARKE
in memory of
William James
son of
Rev. Alexander Clarke D.D.
and Catherine McMillan
born at Amherst Nova Scotia
Oct. 24. 1845
Died at Port Huron, Mich.
Mar. 20, 1904—Aged 59 years

When Clarke's American descendants visited the Chignecto area in 2010 they found a number of places connected with the patriarch, Rev. Alexander Clarke, but the only known 'shrine' to his son was Dorchester Penitentiary. I accompanied them on their 'pilgrimage' to Dorchester only to find that entry was barred unless visitors were related to a living 'saint' within—an ancestral inhabitant was not enough to win an exception. As compensation, we stopped in the village and paid an attentive visit to the Keillor House Museum—particularly its penitentiary display. While viewing the interesting, if somewhat macabre, artifacts, I suggested that we might at least drive up to the main door of the penitentiary where the family could pay its respects to Rev. Clarke's memory and, as it were, touch a part of its own history. To preserve it for posterity, some pictures were taken on the way up the driveway—unfortunately, in the near vicinity of two security vehicles. We were promptly waved down. To the question: what was the reason for our visit? I volunteered that it was to show our American visitors where their esteemed ancestor had lived for three years. The security officers listened politely but were not impressed. After unceremoniously deleting the pictures from the visitors' camera, they summarily sent us back down the driveway.

It appears that Dorchester Penitentiary still has some way to go before it can be considered a museum or historic site.

Eldon Hay

WHY DORCHESTER BECAME THE SHIRETOWN AND SACKVILLE DID NOT

Most readers know that being the shiretown of Westmorland County was central to Dorchester's history. As host to the court house, jail and land registry office, it was the centre of the county's legal and political life as well as home to some of the most prominent lawyers and politicians in the whole province, many of whom built handsome houses that became an important part of Dorchester's architectural heritage. Names to conjure with include Edward Barron Chandler, Sir Albert J. Smith, Daniel Hannington, H.R. Emmerson (two of them actually, father and son)—and the list goes on.

But how many know why—or even when—Dorchester became the shiretown? It was not the first county seat, nor was it inevitable that it would be the choice when an opportunity arose to become the second one. The original shiretown of Westmorland County was the "town" of Westmorland, a loosely settled area around Fort Cumberland (earlier and afterwards known as Fort Beauséjour). It was designated in 1786 at the first sitting of the New Brunswick legislature when the new province was divided into counties following its partition from Nova Scotia in 1784. Apparently the reason was simply that, as the 'Town' of Cumberland, it had been the county seat of Cumberland County since its inception. The decision to retain it as the shiretown of the new county of Westmorland was politically convenient and perhaps also reasonable enough at the time since most of the population lived in the eastern townships (also called parishes)—large subdivisions of the county surrounding the 'towns' but not administratively distinct from them—of Westmorland and Sackville. However, it also prepared the ground for future discontent, as 'towns' together with their surrounding townships/parishes—in other words settlement areas—were also established at Dorchester, Moncton, Salisbury, Hillsborough and Hopewell. Until 1845, Westmorland County included all of what in that year became Albert County. Thus, it was a very large area, in effect made even larger by primitive roads and difficult traveling conditions, and this caused great inconvenience to the inhabitants of the western parishes who had to travel all the way to Westmorland to conduct their legal business.

There was an amazing amount of this. Not only were petty crimes and misdemeanours dealt with in the county courts—which a considerable number of the more important freeholders also had to attend as jurors; so too were most of the civil suits—people suing one another over debts, trespass, breach of contract etc. Lawyers were still relatively cheap and men

WHY DORCHESTER BECAME THE SHIRETOWN

could bring suits on their own. As a consequence, at least to judge from the court records of the time, everyone and his dog was suing everyone else and *his* dog. To make matters worse, for years, the judges of the Supreme Court in Fredericton refused to travel on circuit, so that many cases that would have ordinarily been heard by them were relegated to the county courts.

As long as the populations of the central and western townships/parishes remained relatively small, government could ignore the complaints of those who had to suffer the long and arduous journey to Westmorland in order to attend court or register a deed or will. Too, considerable money was spent building and repairing the courthouse and jail, and there was naturally a good deal of vested interest in keeping it there. But as the other communities grew larger and more important, so did their discontent with a situation that seemed patently unfair. Thus, when an opportunity presented itself to do something about it, they were not slow to seize it.

The magic event occurred in 1801 when the courthouse and jail at Westmorland burned to the ground. There seems to be no record of how it happened—perhaps it was wishful thinking. In any case, the ashes were barely cold when a flurry of petitions to the provincial legislature arose, asking that the shiretown or county seat (the two terms are interchangeable) be moved to some other place. In a remarkable show of unselfish common sense, they all agreed that Dorchester was the right choice. Not only was it the most centrally located ‘town’ in the county; it was also conveniently situated on the main road between Saint John and Nova Scotia. Planned during the first sitting of the legislature in 1786, the road had finally become something more than a bridle path, and it would now make Dorchester relatively easy of access to all. There was also another consideration. John Keillor, one of Dorchester’s more prosperous and prominent citizens, who also happened to live close to the road (in a log house by Robb’s Creek; the stone house was not built until 1812) had made known his willingness to donate land for a new courthouse and jail, thus sparing the other inhabitants considerable expense.

The petitions from Moncton and Salisbury were identical to that of Dorchester, suggesting that someone had been doing a little politicking.

The Petition of the Inhabitants of the Townships of Moncton and Salisbury humbly sheweth that the County had the misfortune (we can almost see the wink here) to have their Court House burned, and it being nec-

essary that another should be erected, do pray, if the Legislature in their wisdom think it necessary, [that] it should be built in some other part of the County, that they will fix it in the Township of Dorchester on the public highway leading from Westmorland to St. John about three hundred yards before it comes to Mr. John Keillor’s House in Dorchester, which your petitioners humbly think the most central situation for the County at large...

The good people of Hillsborough and Hopewell made the same point about the appropriateness Keillor’s offer, asking that the court house *be built on the East side of the Memramcook river near the main road by Mr. John Keillor which is nearly the centre of the county and in such a situation as the inhabitants in general may attend...* They also thought it good to stress the inconvenience of Westmorland whose location *has been and is still a just cause of complaint of the Inhabitants aforesaid, to attend court or other Publick business by reason of the rivers in Summer and deep snows in Winter, added to this the distance of Seventy Miles Travel...*

There were, however, some dissenting voices. The loudest came from Sackville, which had conceived a better candidate for a new shiretown—itsself. Its petitioners had a whole different take on the issue of centrality. They freely admitted that *the late Court House and Gaol, being built for the County at large before the division of the Province, upon that event was not in a central situation*, but their argument for rebuilding in Sackville was more prescient than persuasive: they anticipated the creation of a new county out of the western portion of Westmorland—something that must have been talked about at the time, but in the event did not happen until 1845—that would make Sackville the central location: *Your memorialists conceive the Town of Sackville the most proper situation and best adapted to accommodate the great body of the County—Westmorland being on one side of the County and Dorchester on the other side, when Hopewell shall be made into a distinct County and Sackville between the two.* Therefore they “humbly prayed” that the government would be pleased to erect a new courthouse and jail on the ‘town platt’, an area around St. Ann’s Anglican church in Westcock originally intended as the town square of Sackville.

Nay, there was more. To show their public spirit and selfless devotion to the common good (and no doubt also to counter John Keillor’s pledge), they offered to “*relieve the rest of the county from part of the taxes by voluntary contribution, in case that Sackville shall be deemed the proper place for building the Court House and Gaol, and for that purpose engage to pay the sums affixed to their names respectively.*” And their money was not far from their mouths. Each of the fifty-nine individuals who signed the petition pledged an amount ranging from five pounds—about two months wages for a working man—to five shillings, or about

WHY DORCHESTER BECAME THE SHIRETOWN

two days' pay for the same, for a total of £35.9s.

The Sackville petition was supported, perhaps understandably enough, by the growing community at Cape Tormentine, which would soon (1805) become part of the new parish of Botsford. We might think that the inhabitants of Westmorland Township/parish would have done likewise, once they had reconciled themselves to the fact that the shiretown was going to be moved. After all, in spite of being in a separate township, they had in all other respects been part of the same community since the resettlement of the Chignecto by British subjects following the removal or marginalization of the Acadians, and Sackville was almost as convenient for most of them as the 'town' of Westmorland. But they did not. In fact, their petition was identical to that of Dorchester, Moncton and Salisbury, so the politicking must have been more than just 'a little'. Were they motivated by a genuine conviction that Dorchester would better serve the needs of the whole county, or was there some rivalry with Sackville that made it unpalatable for them to see it replace Westmorland as the shiretown? In the absence of further evidence—or at least any that I know of—it is easier to ask this question than to answer it with assurance.

Trailing two petitions to five, the odds were against Sackville, but there was someone who might have been able to even them up if circumstance had been a little different—its most prominent resident, Squire Amos Botsford. Since 1786 he had been the chief figure of the county court as well as Registrar of Deeds and Wills. He was also a member of the provincial legislature and, most importantly, its Speaker. If anyone in Westmorland County should have had influence in high places it was he, and he was probably motivated to use it. Having Sackville as the shiretown would certainly have been advantageous to him. One of the leading Loyalists, Botsford had originally settled on Dorchester Island, but around 1790 he sold out and moved to Westcock where he developed a large agricultural estate, complete with a 'manor house' considered in its day to be one of the finest homes in the province. As Speaker, he could not with propriety sign the petition, but the fact that the first name on it—with a 'high end' pledge of £5—was that of his son-in-law, Stephen Millidge, High Sheriff of the county and one of Sackville's most prosperous merchants, is no doubt a solid indication of his own prefer-

ence. Of course it would never get into the record, but it is difficult to believe that he didn't quietly lobby for Sackville in the 'Celestial City.'

Unfortunately for the Sackville cause, Botsford's influence in government was not at its peak. He was in bad odour with many of his colleagues because he advocated moving the province's capital, along with the Supreme Court, to Saint John, and just about this time he was becoming more vociferous about it. Whatever his efforts on behalf of Sackville may have been, they were in vain. All the petitions were solemnly read out in the House and, after due deliberation, Dorchester won the day. An act passed on February 21st, 1801 declared it henceforth to be the shiretown and ordered the construction of a new court house and jail near the home of John Keillor.

And Keillor was as good as his word. By a deed dated December 22nd 1802, he gave four acres of land "in consideration of the good will I have for the County of Westmorland and the desire I feel to promote the interests and advancement thereof." A two-story wooden structure was built containing both courthouse and jail, and John's younger brother, Robert, became its first jailer. Robert also kept a small inn and tavern on the first floor where lawyers and other folks on judicial business could stay overnight, get meals and enjoy other 'refreshments'. There was no lack of the latter. Lawyers had a reputation for being a particularly thirsty lot in those days, and there was plenty of other clientele as well. The business of the courts and Dorchester's central location soon attracted lawyers and politicians to settle there, the most famous example being Edward Barron Chandler (1822). Economic spin-offs followed and within a few years Dorchester Parish had more inhabitants than Westmorland or Sackville. Within a few decades shipyards and sea borne commerce made their appearance, bringing prosperity as well as dockworkers and sailors looking for evening entertainment. Between them and the lawyers, Dorchester acquired quite a reputation—still loudly upheld by local heroes doing doughnuts in the town square, once known as 'the devil's half acre'.

Like life, history often proceeds in unexpected ways, and Dorchester's is no exception. Because of a serendipitous fire and the temporary eclipse of a politician it became the shiretown of Westmorland County, which in turn led to a lively social and cultural life and the nurturing of all those famous men. Of course, Sackville has been jealous ever since.

Gene Goodrich

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 Dorchester's busy economic life during its heyday.

November 18, 1859 – The Borderer

“Princess Royal – The Steamer Princess Royal will leave St. John every Tuesday evening for Dorchester, Hillsboro and Moncton the first high water on Wednesday after 6 o'clock AM, not calling at Hillsboro and Dorchester on her way down for the purpose of gaining time to make her trip to Sackville. Will leave St. John every Friday evening for Dorchester, Hillsboro and Moncton and touching at Dorchester and Hillsboro on her way up and at Dorchester on her way down; leaving Moncton the first high water after 6 AM, when practicable. The above steamer runs in connection with the American Boats and Steamers

“Westmorland” for PE Island and “Arabian” for Quebec and intermediate parts. Passengers going and returning from Sackville, Moncton, Hillsboro and Dorchester, to St. John, will only be charged 12s6d each way, good for one week. When more than three members of a family take passage at one time, a discount will be made from the usual rate. – *Thomas Baird, Chairman of the Committee – Hugh Gallagher, Agent for Sackville.*

November 13, 1897 – The Spectator

“

Petition for a Pier – One of the topics of the day in which the people of Dorchester are becoming interested is the building of a pier at Cole's Point. A petition to the Dominion Government is being circulated in Westmorland and Albert Counties for the construction of the pier. The object in view is to build a pier far enough out on the flats to permit crossing by ferry at high or low tide. The cost of the proposed pier is estimated in the vicinity of \$10,000. The construction of the pier would be a strong inducement to Ferryman Cole to put in a small steam ferry capable of carrying horses and wagons, which would no doubt divert more of the travel to and from Albert in this direction.”

August 19, 1880 – Chignecto Post

“From Centerville, Dorchester – This is becoming a stirring place. Messrs. Anderson and Palmer have sawn in their mills and shipped some fifteen or twenty schooner loads of deals this season to St. John, and are still sawing more. – Messrs. Bishop and Son's Carriage Factory has turned out a large amount of work this summer mostly Phaeton and Dexter Carriages. They are well fitted up with steam power and first class machinery, and are prepared to do all kinds of house work in connection with carriage work. – Mr. Geo M Black is running quite a business but mostly in the line of spinning wheels and Prickly Comfry. – Mr. Wm H Black has done quite an amount of carriage jobbing this season, and is now preparing sleighs for the winter. – Messrs. William H Couillard & Co are driving away at their new building located near the Dorchester bridge; they expect to have it in operation as soon as the engine and machinery arrive from Ontario. – C. Taylor & Co's boot and shoe factory has turned out a large amount of work this summer, all first class work; as Mr. Taylor over-sees the whole himself, you may rely on getting a good pair of boots. – The Belliveau Coal Company are expecting to find coal soon. Stock going up.



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

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

Museum Hours

June 9 to Sept. 15 2012
Tuesday to Saturday
10:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Sunday
12:00 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 Secretary, at 4974 Main Street, Dorchester, NB, E4L 2Z1. Tel: (506) 379-6682.

Annual Fees 2009

(Includes Newsletter)

Individual: \$7.00
Family: \$10.00
Sustaining: \$25.00
Life: \$100.00

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SALUTING OUR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS

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 Mother's Day Tea and 'Putting on the Glitz' another outstanding success, whether as servers, sandwich makers or donors:

Susan Spence, Alice Folkins, Dienna Crossman, Jean Cole, Barbara Bowes, Pat Jones, Anne Hendrickson, Darlene Dobson, Diane Nicholson, Judy Morison, Helen Cole, Gene Goodrich, Beryl Kingston, Ginette Glew, Genie Coates, Mary Ann Crossman, Shirley Buck, Debbie MacDonald, Nancy Vogan

We would also like to offer special thanks to three other volunteers in this issue:

Roland MacIsaac worked every evening for a week to crack fill and skim-coat the two new restrooms in Keillor House. In addition, he regularly volunteers to help at all of our events.

Besides being a model volunteer in other ways, Teresa Simpson, answers all genealogical requests and regularly checks our e-mail for forwarding to the appropriate person.

Ron LeBlanc also deserves special mention for all his work in scraping and painting the upper part of the back ell and 'mouse-proofing' Keillor House by filling in the many cracks in the stone foundation. This

was a difficult and time consuming job—but Alice says it's the first year we have not had a 'rodent' problem.

Everyone appreciates your efforts, Ron, except the mice.

We couldn't do it without you, folks.

Thanks again!

The Executive