

WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Over the past year, the ‘200th Anniversary Committee’— Inga Hansen, Alice Folkins, Judy Morison, Cheryl Feindel, Genie Coates and Mary Balsler—have done an outstanding job developing an impressive roster of events to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of Keillor House. (See enclosed ‘Keillor House Museum: Celebrating 200 Years’ for a list of events).

Celebrating 200 Years, 1813-2013

Of the many ‘celebratory’ events, members might particularly note the Honouring of Sylvia Yeoman (June 15th) at the Keillor House after the Shiretown Parade. (Sylvia will be in attendance.) Margaret Eaton and her Committee have produced a magnificent wall plaque describing Mark and Sylvia’s contributions to New Brunswick heritage and to the Keillor House. This plaque will hang in the Dorchester Public Library next to the plaque honouring our first recipient— Douglas How.

Cheryl Feindel’s wonderful ‘Tea and Talk’ Series includes three more ‘talks’ on June 16, July 28 and August 25th. If you have not yet been able to attend, tickets are available at the door. (Call 379-6633 for time and place.)

After Cheryl’s ‘talk’ on June 16th (2:00 pm) we have a very special event. The Capital School of Performing Arts will present two plays (3:30 pm) at Dorchester Community Hall (St. Eds)—*Heroes, Lies and Shiny Brass Buttons*, and *Love at War and Israel Robichaud parle de la guerre*. These short plays explore the many different attitudes of Acadians (some of whom were draftees) to the War of 1812. The *Cheour Neil Michaud* will sing traditional Acadian songs and military marches, linking the plays together. (For details see Margaret Eaton’s article ‘Acadian History Takes To Stage’ in the *Times & Transcript*, June 6, 2013.)

Inga Hansen, our capable and enthusiastic Manager, has returned from NY and is hard at work on the Heritage Fair (July 27th) and our three key celebratory events—The ‘100 Year Retrospective of Fashion in South East New Brunswick, 1860 to 1960 (June 30th to September 15th at Keillor House), ‘200 Years—Reflected in Fashion (September 22, 6:00 pm, Vogue Theatre, Sackville) and ‘Behind the Scenes of a Costume Exhibit: Workshop’ (October 3, 1-4 pm) Registration at 379-6633.

We have secured a significant federal grant to help us celebrate and everyone is very excited to be able to offer these outstanding retrospectives. (If Inga contacts you to help us with these projects, we hope you will be able to say ‘Yes’.)

Book Launch

Eldon Hay’s *Maggie’s Memories*, edited

KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM —SPECIAL EVENTS

**Canada Day.** Celebration of Canada Day and the 200th Anniversary of Keillor House . From 1:00-3:00. July 1. Fiddle music; Free cake & ice cream.

**Sandpiper Festival Breakfast.** Pancakes, Sausages & Baked Beans. July 27, from 7:30-10:30. \$6.00 & family rates.

**Book Launch of Maggie’s Memories,** a collection of charming stories from an idyllic childhood in Little She-mogue. Aug. 18, 2:00 at Munroe Heritage Centre, Port Elgin.

**Harvest Supper.** Hip of Beef and old-fashioned deserts by the crackling hearth. Oct. 5, from 4:30-6:30. \$14.00 & family rates.

**Haunted House Tour.** For ghosts and goblins of all ages. Special bookings for groups. Oct. 18 and 19, and also 25 and 26, from 7:00-9:00.

**Victorian Christmas Dinner.** Elegant four-course dinner with wine and live music, served in the glow of candlelight and the warmth of our famous hearth. Nov. 30 and Dec. 7, from 6:30-10:00. \$60.00. Book early!

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## NOTEWORTHY EVENTS

### SYLVIA YEOMAN HONOURED BY WHS

As mentioned in the President's Report, Charter Member Sylvia Yeoman was honoured at a reception during the opening of Keillor House on June 15. Margaret Eaton wrote a most fitting tribute for the plaque that will hang on the 'Wall of Fame' in the Dorchester Public Library to commemorate her many contributions to the preservation of our heritage. These are her words in part:

"Sylvia Yeoman was invested with the Order of Canada by Governor General Hon. Edward Schreyer on April 11, 1984. Her citation states: *Sylvia Yeoman deserves her reputation as 'amiable steam roller' in her efforts to preserve the New Brunswick heritage. After a period as a teacher and fashion designer she vigorously campaigned to restore historic buildings in Dorchester and helped to develop museums, libraries and historical societies.*"

Sylvia and Mark Yeoman, Q.C. moved to Dorchester in 1959 after purchasing Rocklyn (1831) as a home for their family. Built by Father of Confederation Edward Barron Chandler, the house was declared a National Historic Site in 1976. On November 6, 1960, the Yeomans became Charter Members of the Westmorland Historical Society. Sylvia served as vice president and led the Museum Committee (Dorchester Historic Properties), while Mark provided *pro bono* legal services and later served as president. As a result of their passionate efforts, five historic buildings have been preserved, beginning with the 1967 Centennial Project to restore Keillor House (1813). The other buildings house a textile museum, restaurant, public library and residential apartments.

Sylvia is a Member of the Order of Canada, an elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a recipient of the Association of Museums of New Brunswick Merit Award, the Freedom of the Village of Dorchester and the Queen's Gold and Diamond Jubilee Awards. Mark died in 1989 but Sylvia remained active with the WHS until 1997, when she moved to Nova Scotia and joined the Board of Directors of the Historical Society of Annapolis Royal."



### BETTY ADAMS AN OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER OF NB

After many years of dedicated service as the 'hands on' guide at the St. James Textile Museum where she has demonstrated the weaver's art to generations of visitors, Betty was very appropriately given an Outstanding Volunteer Award by the province of New Brunswick this year. Shown here at the presentation ceremony at the Bell Inn are (left) Mayor J. J. Bear, Premier David Alward, Betty Adams, Sandpiper Committee Chair Jeannie Lowerson and Tantramar MLA Mike Olscamp. Congratulations, Betty, and many thanks from all of us. WHS owes you a tremendous debt of gratitude.



#### *In Memoriam*

Gladys Lillian Bowser 1921-2013

The Westmorland Historical Society regretfully notes the recent passing of this Charter Member and recalls with gratitude the many contributions that she and her husband, Reg, made to it, both as volunteers and as donors. We offer our sincere condolences to Bob, Kathy and family.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

by Gene Goodrich, has been published by WHS with a book launch scheduled for August 18th (2:00 pm) at Monroe Heritage Centre. Eldon, thanks for allowing us to publish this delightful collection of letters which gives such rare insight into the private lives of people living in 19th century rural New Brunswick (*See Margaret's Review, page 7*)

### *Staff Update*

Denyse Milliken who has worked and volunteered at St. James Textile Museum for many years has agreed to take on extended hours and responsibilities and will now be at the museum five days a week for the season. Dee has done an exceptional job, working with Betty—setting up looms, conducting tours and giving demonstrations (e.g. upcoming with Betty at the Highland Games). Betty and Dee do make a great team!

As you can see, we have an exciting season ahead...please 'put us on your calendar' and help us celebrate!

*Cole Morison*

## THE WORK CONTINUES:

### TEA AND TALK

Cheryl Feindel is giving a series of interesting talks over the summer on the fashions of bygone days. On April 28 she presented "Hats Off To You," a survey of millinery trends over the centuries. "Let Me Hold Your Hand: Gloves & More" is slated for June 16. This will be followed by "Apron Strings", July 28 and "Shoes: A Walk though Time", August 25. All the talks are accompanied by tea and delicious sweets. See our Calendar of Events for particulars. In the picture Cheryl is seen with her brother, Wayne, the "official photographer," at the "Hats Off To You" presentation.



### ON THE TRAIL OF HISTORY



At this year's AGM guest speaker Tim Humes of 'Canoe Kayak NB' detailed (via fascinating maps and photos) his organization's efforts to rediscover and restore six ancient native portage trails linking key New Brunswick waterways, making it once more possible to canoe and portage around the inner circle of the province. Tim expects the entire circuit to be open to the public by the summer of 2014. It will likely take four or five weeks to complete the entire circuit, with portages of three or more kilometers.

If you would like more information on the project, Tim can be contacted at (506) 622-5050.

Tim and Judy Morison

## DORCHESTER MEMORIES: ERNIE PARTRIDGE PART I

As I listened to Ernie Partridge at last year's Annual General Meeting telling of his days on the dikes, it struck me that he would be a great choice for another of our 'Dorchester Memories.' He agreed to an interview and I spent several delightful evenings in his home recording reminiscences of his life in this remarkable village—and also enjoying the treats laid on by his “girlfriend of sixty years,” as he affectionately calls his wife, Janet. It is an inspiring story of courage and determination in the face of adversity, of character building under the tutelage of some interesting Dorchester types and, above all, of love and devotion to family and community. His vivid memories of the experiences that shaped his life are an excellent follow-on to those of Charlie McEwan and Garfield Spence, the first two to be featured in this column. From them, we learn something of what made Dorchester tick from the mid 1930s to the mid 1960s, and gave it the special character that is still evident today.

Life did not start out easy for Ernie, and even less so for his parents. Both of them came to Canada in the early 1920s as indentured servants, his mother from Scotland, his father from England. Indentured servitude was the only way people with no means could pay their passage to a land of new opportunity, but it meant two years of menial labour for room and board under conditions that depended largely on the character of their employers—which spanned the usual human spectrum from noble to rotten. Ernie's mother worked as a domestic in the household of Laurie Black and was treated kindly. His dad, a veteran of the Great War who had been badly wounded at Vimy Ridge, was employed by a chicken farmer in Middle Sackville. He was of a less pleasant disposition. After the eggs had been gathered, he would often amuse himself by placing one of them on his 'servant's' head and squash it—an act of deliberate humiliation. A lady who came over on the same boat as Ernie's mother was indentured to a prominent farmer of Taylor Village. One day, the patriarch took her out to the barn to show her the routine of milking the cows. The one she was practising on had a nasty burr in the tassel of her tail and when she swatted the novice milkmaid with it, as cows love to do, it took her eye out. Three days passed before

she was taken to a doctor. Stories like these always reminded Ernie of his humble origins, but, far from being ashamed, he proudly rose above them.

Although indentured servitude soon ended for Ernie's parents, economic hardship did not. Married in Sackville in 1926, in 1929 they moved when Ernie was only three weeks old to Dorchester where Ernie Sr. got a job as guard at the penitentiary. Unfortunately, it didn't last. His elbow had been shattered at Vimy Ridge and when it was discovered that he couldn't turn both locks of a cell door at the same time, he was fired. Destitute, he opened up a small canteen and hotdog stand just across the street from the present day Quick Mart. Called 'the Vimy Canteen', it became a feature of Dorchester life during the 1930s and again for a while after the Second World War when Mr. Partridge returned for the second time from service to King and Country. On Fridays when all the farmers of the surrounding area came into town by carriage or sleigh for the weekly shopping they invariably stopped at the Vimy Canteen to enjoy his famous gumbo, which he prepared especially for that day. However, in spite of its popularity, the family barely scratched a living from the canteen and Ernie and his three siblings grew up in extreme poverty. One of the few bright spots of these lean years came when his mother was able to take him on a trip to her home in Scotland where his grandfather made a life-altering impression on him, the first in a series of older mentors to do so. While out on a walk they met a staggering drunk. Ernie's grandfather took him by the shoulders and, looking him straight in the eye, said, “Laddie, I hope I never see you that way.” Ernie, who was only six at the time, said, “Gramp, *no one* will ever see me that way.” And no one ever has. In his 84<sup>th</sup> year alcohol has yet to pass his lips. Thus, through a grandfather's loving admonition he escaped the trap that caught all too many who lived through war and depression.

After the return from Scotland the family was given permission to live in an old hall owned by the Palmers that served as a movie theatre. The projection room was Ernie's bedroom, which he shared with his brother. In winter it was so cold that he often woke up with ice on the pillow. But such hardships only strengthened his resolve to overcome them. By age thirteen he had his first jobs and they, too, became lessons in life, not least because they introduced him to new mentors. One of them was Bill Tate, owner of the Windsor Hotel. Ernie said that he “learned more from him than you could read in any book.” He worked for Mr. Tate after school and on weekends, milking

## DORCHESTER MEMORIES: ERNIE PARTRIDGE (CONT)

cows and doing other farm chores necessary to supply the hotel. I was reminded again (Garfield Spence also told us this) that it was almost completely self-sufficient. Its owners raised all the meat, milk, eggs and vegetables used in the restaurant; the only foodstuffs they bought were sugar, flour and salt. The hotel's barn also boarded the community bull, owned by the Agricultural Society. Every second weekend Ernie was responsible for arranging his 'professional visits' with the local cows, for which their owners paid a fee of \$2.00. He also raised the calves of the hotel's milk cows. These experiences fostered in him a life-long love of animals, especially cattle—he still keeps a small herd near his house on Cape Road—as well as an acceptance of the more painful realities of animal husbandry. One animal that made a particular impression on him was a small and weakly calf—a 'runt' in farmer talk—that he was trying to nurse into health. As often befalls animal lovers in such circumstances, he had grown especially fond of it. One day, Mr. Tate, who had not paid much attention to it before, noticed it was not doing so well, even though Ernie had brought it a long way. After disappearing for a few minutes into the tool shed, Bill handed him a ball-peen hammer and instructed him to kill and skin the calf. Ernie never forgot that. The hide was worth more than his precious calf, and that was (and still is) the reality of farming.

Bill also taught him lessons in honesty and fair dealing. He always kept three or four sows and would advertise the piglets in Bishop's Hardware, where people came from the countryside to trade goods. When Ernie was still new to the job he was told to show a litter to a prospective customer. Thinking to please his esteemed employer by helping his bottom line, he moved the best piglets to another pen before the man arrived. Bill soon noticed this and told him in no uncertain terms to put them back, as customers were entitled to the pick of the litter. He also did custom threshing and often had oats for sale. The first time Ernie levelled the bushel pail with a yardstick, Bill made him put two handfuls back "just for good measure." Ernie never forgot these moral lessons, either. "Every time I deal with someone, I see that man," he said. He resolved henceforth always to take that extra step, or as he put it, "when I went to work, if that fellow was paying me fifty cents, I earned fifty-five."

Thus, even during his tender years, Ernie was already earn-

ing his way in the world, and not just by working for Bill Tate. About the same time, he also became janitor at Trinity Anglican Church. He did all the cleaning, pumped the organ, rang the bell and fed the fire with cordwood so heavy that he had to rig up a rope lift to get it into the furnace. He also hauled it in every fall. For this he was paid 25c. a day except for funerals; they were free, and so he got nothing for them. His most vivid memory of his janitorial career was the day the war ended. He rang the bell for three and a half hours and was glad to do so, as it meant that his dad was coming home. Ernie Senior had again offered himself to his country but was rejected for active service because of his disability. So he joined the merchant marine and saw action anyway. Torpedoed going into London, he was in the water for thirteen hours before being rescued. After this, he was given a safer job as doorman and elevator operator at Canada House in London, a gathering centre for Canadian servicemen and women. Doug How, Dorchester's famous war correspondent and afterward journalist and author, later told our Ernie how surprised and delighted he was when the first person to greet him at Canada House was someone from his hometown. Another Dorchester lad who had the same experience was Billy Manship, but his story is sadder. The very next day he was shipped off to France and killed in action.

Not content with two jobs, Ernie also mowed the lawn and put in the cordwood for Mrs. Francis Hickman, whose brother was away in the Air Force. One day while he was washing some windows for her (as a little 'added extra') he spotted a beautiful shotgun behind a door and immediately fell in love with it. He asked if she would be willing to sell it, and for how much. A few weeks later, after consulting with her brother, she presented it to him as payment for mowing the lawn that day. Of course it was worth far more than that, but the family wanted to reward Ernie for all his faithful service. "Well sir," he said to me, "that lawn mower *flew* over the lawn that day...and when I went down the road with that shotgun over my shoulder I was the proudest kid in this village." And well he ought to have been. He had gone that extra mile and then some, and had been justly rewarded. Incidentally, the gun was a very special one. It had once belonged to another Hickman, Charlie, the eccentric heir of a considerable fortune. He went to Belgium one time with a load of lumber on a three-masted schooner and while there he had it made to order as he watched. Ernie still has it in his vast collection of tools and artifacts.

Another Hickman who came into Ernie's life in a positive way

## DORCHESTER MEMORIES: ERNIE PARTRIDGE (CONT)

was Bill, a cousin of Charlie. At the time, he was running the family's lumber business, but he also liked to work with his hands. He had a workshop near the big barn that will be featured in a future article in the *Newsletter*. Here he spent many of his leisure hours building a wooden boat entirely by hand. Ernie loved to watch, and by doing so he learned "more about patience than you can ever imagine." He always remained grateful that this "prince of a man," as he called him, would take the time to sit down by the big stove and talk to a "little gaffer"—even talk politics with him. Like Bill Tate, Mr. Hickman was "a big paragraph in my life," Ernie said, and "he never led me astray."

Another positive influence in Ernie's young life was the Dorchester school. By the time the kids had finished grade two, he declared, they had developed a love for one another and for their teachers that was "unreal." He cited the case of his two daughters who have been living in central Canada for decades. Yet, if anyone asks them where they are from, they always say, "Dorchester." Both they and their families would be back in a heartbeat if the economic opportunities were here. An even more dramatic example was the school reunion organized by Doug How and Alice Folkins in 1985 that brought no less than 482 alumni back together. Ernie remembers one of them in particular, Florence Grant, who was living in the States and suffering from cancer. Her doctor gave her permission to come only on condition that she travel no more than four hours a day, after which she was to stop at a motel and rest. Her husband told Ernie that when it looked like they might not get here in time, she made him drive seventeen hours in a single stretch to make sure they did.

A major reason so many Dorchester people loved their school was the quality of the teachers. "You learned a lot," Ernie said, "and they were interested in you." He experienced that personal touch for himself on one traumatic occasion. During his eighth grade he was working so much at the Windsor and Trinity that he neglected his studies to the point of failing the entrance exams to high school. He was so devastated that the date he got the news—June 26 1944—is seared into his memory to this day. Fortunately, a sympathetic principal, Mr. Reinsbor-

ough, reached out to him. He permitted Ernie to enter Grade 9 on a one-month trial basis to see what he could do. Grateful, and determined not to miss his second chance, Ernie studied extra hard, and at the end of the year he was leading the class. Readers with a long memory may recall a similar example of a teacher's care and concern—and the positive response it brought—that Charlie McEwan experienced as a Dorchester schoolboy of an even earlier generation (*Newsletter* of October 2008).

As he had promised his Scottish grandfather when just a little boy, Ernie graduated from high school and would have loved to become a veterinarian, a result of his job at the Windsor Hotel—he always wondered what a vet could have done for that calf. But money was too scarce and so he went working in the woods. I couldn't help marvelling that even though this was way back in 1948 he still remembers not only the places he logged—Upper Dorchester, Woodhurst, Taylor Village etc.—he even knows still who owned every plot. After a short time on the job, Johnny Frazer, a friend of his and brother of the girl who lost her eye to the cow's tail, asked him if he would like to help him repair some dikes. Ernie did, and took to the work so well that the following spring the Maritime Marshland Reclamation Association called and asked if he would accept a job as its superintendent of dikes and aboiteaus. For the next twelve years he was responsible for inspecting and maintaining all the dikes and aboiteaus between Aulac and Moncton, which meant he had to walk them on a weekly basis in the wintertime. One of his tasks was keeping the groundhogs at bay. Attracted by the easy digging in stone-free mud, they loved to make their burrows in the dikes. Unfortunately, this would cause a breach within two tides if it was allowed, so they had to be evicted immediately upon discovery, and the holes filled with fresh marsh mud. Although it is painful to relate, measures also had to be taken to ensure that they did not return.

It was hard work, especially if the crews were building an aboiteau—and Ernie built no less than twenty-one of them during his time with MMRA. Then they had to work day and night, following the rhythm of the tides until it was done. After being sharpened with an axe, all the pickets were driven in by hand by three men using heavy mauls, more or less in the manner of laying a railway track. As Ernie said, you didn't need to go to the gym for exercise when you were doing that job. Nonetheless, he enjoyed every minute of it. He was out in the fresh air

## DORCHESTER MEMORIES: ERNIE PARTRIDGE (CONT)

every day in a beautiful setting, and the work was interesting. He developed a real fascination for how the dikes and aboteaus were built and operated, a fascination he has shared in a number of other public presentations besides the talk he gave at our AGM last year. Best of all for him was working with the crews he supervised. They were all local men and boys, they enjoyed what they were doing, and they were superb and utterly dependable workers. Ernie said he knew that, even if he were to go away for a week, they would continue working just as hard as if he was there. Often, several members of the same family hired on and many of them came back year after year. All of them seem to have been good friends. Ernie never heard any complaining, bickering or backbiting among them, and morale was always high, whatever the weather. He attributed this to their being able to see what they had accomplished after a day's work, but I think it also had a lot to do with Ernie's leading by example. He would never ask a man to do something he wouldn't do himself, and that just about says it all.

Ernie's early experiences in holding down demanding jobs and learning valuable lessons in life from kindly mentors developed in him a strong moral code and sense of responsibility that also shaped his family. When he proposed to his "girlfriend of sixty years," he made a promise to her that he would never do anything to make his family ashamed, and that his children would never go hungry, as he had. And he kept it even though it meant taking on a job that was far less pleasant than working on the aboteaus. But we will leave that story for the next issue.

*Gene Goodrich*

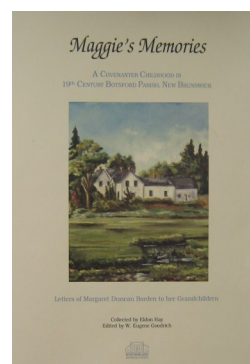
### BOOK REVIEWS: TWO NEW WHS PUBLICATIONS

**Maggie's Memories: A Covenanter Childhood in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Botsford Parish, New Brunswick. Letters of Margaret Duncan Borden to her Grandchildren. Compiled by Eldon Hay; Edited by W. Eugene Goodrich.** Published by the Westmorland Historical Society 2013. Reviewed by Margaret Patricia Eaton from an advance copy.

As historians well know, important discoveries are often the result of pure serendipity – Christopher Columbus' finding of America while looking for India and Alexander Fleming's chance observation of penicillin mould at work in a half-forgotten petri dish spring to mind. Eldon Hay's accidental discovery of some old letters in an abandoned house while doing research for a book on Reformed Presbyterianism may not be quite as earth-shattering, but it does shed light on daily life in Botsford Parish in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in a most engaging way. Full of poetic insight, the captivating letters of Margaret Duncan Borden give belated voice to a sensitive writer. Indeed, under different circumstances, she might well have become New Brunswick's answer to Lucy Maud Montgomery. Certainly, there are parallels in their charming portrayals of 19<sup>th</sup> century rural childhood, in the deft interweaving of literary and Biblical allusions into their stories and in their strict but sincere Presbyterian piety.

'Maggie', as she was usually called, was born in 1864 in Little Shemogue into a deeply religious family of Covenanters, a small splinter group also known as 'Reformed Presbyterians' that Dr. Hay was researching. In 1888 when she was 24, she married Reverend George Borden, the widower of Maggie's older sister, Mary Isabel. The couple soon afterwards moved to the 'Boston States' and then west to Michigan, Nebraska and Oklahoma. Before she died there in 1935, she wrote a series of letters to her grandchildren, telling them stories of her youth. Fortunately, she made carbon copies of the originals and sent them to relatives still living in the family home on Murray Road. When the current owners, Doreen Lane and her son Geoffrey, unlocked the doors of the then abandoned house to Eldon in 1990 to search for material relating to the Covenanters, he found what he calls "a totally unexpected treasure."

The many delightful passages in the letters make it difficult to choose a particular one to illustrate the quality of Maggie's writing, but this description of her home is certainly a worthy candidate: "There are two hills with a brook running between. On the eastern



hill Father had built the home, widening the brook like a little lake, with water-lilies at the water's edge, behind a row of willows to trail their loving arms over the beautiful scene. On the north end ran the highway, lined with silver birches in their shining white. Southward was the orchard, radiant in Spring with bloom, and in Autumn, glowing with fragrant apples. Behind it all, as a mighty bulwark of defence, stretched 'the forest primeval'."

Genealogists will be intrigued to read the familiar family names of the Duncan's neighbours. For example, in one story Maggie sets out on a five-mile journey to collect for the British and Foreign Bible Society and calls on Amos, Allen, Hastings and Scott families (where she was given lunch as well as a donation). After a long afternoon she arrived at the Boyce family home where she was invited to spend the night. "When I reached the door, I smelled something oh so good! And I knew it was Irish stew – a favourite dish of mine. When the men came in, hungry from digging potatoes, a large tureen of this stew was put on the table, but because I was a visitor I could not have any but must be fed something better (?) So I was fed cake, preserves and other dainties, but even yet I feel cheated when I think of that stew!" Other stories refer to Oulton, Hunter, Murphy, Silliker, Anderson and Taylor families.

As we would expect from childhood memories, there are stories of family, school and church; of starched white petticoats and pantalets, and the first pair of bought shoes with red tops left out in the rain; of an overnight journey to Sackville; of six unexpected visitors arriving from Port Elgin and the impromptu three-course meal fourteen-year old Maggie conjured up "all from our own farm and prepared by our own hands." Her stories enliven local history in a way dusty texts never can, for they allow us to share the experiences and observations of people who once lived and walked where we live and walk today.

Linking the stories like pearls on a string are the words of wisdom Maggie bequeathed to her grandchildren—and they are as timely today as when she wrote them. "Things perish and pass away, but deeds and memory remain." "Being kind is the best religion in this world." These are indeed words to live by. *Maggie's Memories* (\$18.00) is available at the Keillor House Gift Shop and at local bookstores.

Margaret Patricia Eaton

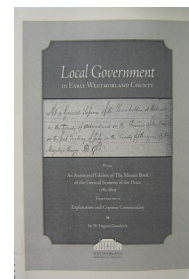
### ANOTHER WHS PUBLICATION (also available at the Gift Shop and local bookstores)

**Local Government in Early Westmorland County: Being an Annotated Edition of the Minute Book of the General Sessions of the Peace 1785-1809, Together with Copious Commentary.** By **W. Eugene Goodrich**. Published by the Westmorland Historical Society 2013. Described by the author.

The title may not make you eager to see the movie, but if I explain what it's about, some of you may be interested enough to buy a copy in spite of the outrageous price (\$28.00). Perhaps I can best do this by telling you how I came to write it without actually intending to.

As some will know, I have been researching the Keillors of Dorchester for several years now, and am well into a book that I hope to finish sometime next year. One of the important things about John Keillor (1761-1839), besides the fact that he built Keillor House, is that he was one of the justices of the peace for Westmorland County. Having taught medieval and Tudor history at Mt. Allison for decades, I knew that justices of the peace were important men in their local community back in England, but I had only a vague idea of what their function was in early New Brunswick. When I discovered that almost nothing had ever been written on this, I began looking for old records that could enlighten me and thus help me to better understand John's prominence in Dorchester society. The most interesting document I turned up was a photocopy of the minute book of the General Sessions of the Peace for Westmorland County, beginning with the very first one in July 1785 and ending abruptly in the middle of the June Sessions of 1809. I stumbled across it more or less by accident in the university archives where it had been mislabelled 'The Hillsborough Town Book'.

What were the General Sessions of the Peace, and what did the minute book tell me about John Keillor? To answer, I must briefly explain what justices of the peace did. The provincial government appointed some ten to twenty of them from among the most prominent men in each county and tasked them with enforcing a whole host of laws governing petty crimes and misdemeanours, administering welfare (such as it was), regulating taverns and retail stores, overseeing tax assessment and collection—and too much else to catalogue here. To put it briefly, in the days before elected municipal government, they ran the county under the





supervision of the province. However, they didn't do it alone. They were authorized to appoint a roughly similar number of 'town and parish officers' to carry out specific administrative tasks in each of the parishes into which the county was divided. [In Westmorland County there were ten parishes in John Keillor's time: Westmorland, Sackville, Dorchester, Moncton, Salisbury, Hillsborough, Hopewell, Botsford (after 1805), Shediac (1827) and Coverdale (1828).] The 'town and parish officers' included: supervisors and surveyors of highways; tax assessors; overseers of the poor (essentially 'welfare officers'); a town clerk; constables; fence viewers; pound keepers and hog reeves; surveyors and inspectors of butter, leather, hay and other commodities intended for retail; and a number of others as well.

Justices of the peace operated in several ways, depending on the matter before them. For the most part they acted individually as single magistrates—that was an alternate term for them—summoning miscreants to their petty courts (held in their own house, or sometimes in a tavern), issuing warrants for the arrest of suspected criminals, deciding petty cases of debt or property damage, authenticating documents etc. For somewhat more serious matters, for example if someone surreptitiously freed his impounded cows to avoid the fine for loose livestock, two magistrates were required to settle the case. But the most important matters within their jurisdiction could only be dealt with at a *General Sessions of the Peace*.

These were twice-yearly meetings, limited by law to five days, of all the justices of the county. (Well, *theoretically* all of them—in fact there was considerable absenteeism.) In Westmorland County, the General Sessions were originally held at Westmorland Point in a courthouse on 'Green Hill' near Mount Whatley. When an accidental but not universally regretted fire destroyed the courthouse and jail in 1801, the shiretown (and hence the General Sessions) moved to Dorchester. In the June 2012 edition of the *Newsletter* I explained how Dorchester's central location in the county and John Keillor's opportunistic gift of four acres on which to build the new facilities swayed the government's decision, despite the valiant efforts of Sackville Parish to pluck the plum for the Jewel on the Tantramar.

Presided over by the High Sheriff of the county, the General Sessions was a duly constituted court of law authorized to try criminal offences of an intermediate nature, such as assault and battery. (Misdemeanours such as violating the Lord's Day Act were dealt with in the magistrate's court, while serious crimes such as murder were the prerogative of the Supreme Court.) But, more than that, it was also an administrative board—the precursor of the county council—authorized to pass bylaws on a variety of matters, levy and collect taxes for

local public works, regulate commerce, license taverns and retail stores and, in general, to run the county within the framework of provincial legislation. Last, but certainly not least, it was the occasion when the justices of the peace appointed the town and parish officers each year. (Unlike the justices, the parish officers were appointed for one year, but they could be, and often were, renewed.)

From the minute book I learned a number of important facts about John Keillor unknown to previous researchers. For example, he was not appointed a justice of the peace until he was in his mid forties, but then he rose rapidly to become one of the more important ones, clearly a reward for faithful service. All this and much more will be detailed in my book on the Keillors. Here the story is about how the minute book turned into a separate study almost in a fit of absent-mindedness—and why you should buy a copy anyway. Although it was handwritten and in places difficult (sometimes impossible) to read due to fading and/or questionable penmanship, I doggedly slogged my way through the entire document looking for tidbits on my man. In doing so I also found many other items that should be of interest to local historians and genealogists. For example, the minute book records a number of cases of assault and battery, breaches of the peace, petty larceny, and even 'bastardy' (defined as the fathering of illegitimate children liable to become a parish charge.) The details are sketchier than a gossip might wish, but at least we learn the names of the defendants as well as the jurors who judged them, because all trials were by jury. In fact there were two kinds of jury. The 'petit' (or 'petty') jury of twelve that delivered the verdict was drawn from a list of male inhabitants of the county between twenty-five and fifty who owned property worth at least £10 (a very modest amount). But before a case could be tried it had to be vetted by a 'grand' jury of sixteen to twenty-three. The grand jury also acted as an advisory committee to the justices of the peace, submitting recommendations for public works such as aboiteaus or new roads, the tax rate to be levied for poor relief, and other such like matters. The property qualification for grand jurors was £100, meaning that only relatively well to do men could serve. Since the names of all jurors summoned were duly recorded whether they appeared or not, the minute book is a veritable 'who's who' of the county as well as a fairly comprehensive list of the lesser fry. Also recorded were the names of all the parish officers and the positions to which they were appointed for the year. The General Sessions licensed all taverns and retail stores in the county, renewed them every year and duly listed the names of all the recipients, as well as the fees they paid and the

bonds they had to post to ensure compliance with the liquor laws. It also appointed the ferry operators and wrote regulations governing their fees and schedules. It regulated the local weir fisheries with a view to settling the many disputes over them. It passed bylaws on when and where livestock could run at large and determined the penalties for violations. After the passing of the Parish Schools Act in 1802 it appointed the teachers and supervised the schools...

Enough said. The justices were clearly a busy bunch and by now the value of the minute book for local history should be obvious. In any case, it interested me enough to undertake a transcription of it, even though it was a distraction from my main research on the Keillors. After piddling away at it during odd moments over the course of several months, I managed to transcribe about 98% of the text, enough to make a useful edition. Then I realized—with some dismay—that the transcription was only the beginning of the project I had gotten myself into. The minute book is not easy to interpret without some prior knowledge of court procedures and the legal terms that often obscure them to the layman. It gives no idea of how juries were selected, or what the qualifications of the jurors were, nor does it explain the different functions of the two kinds of juries, grand and petit. It tells us the names of the sheriffs and justices of the peace but not what they did when not attending General Sessions, which was most of the time. The same goes for the parish officers. Unless they happened also to be justices (which some of them were) or had some specific business such as submitting a financial statement or attending the jury as a constable, they did not attend Sessions. Yet their appointment was among the most important business conducted there. They were as essential to the functioning of local government as the sheriff and justices. Without some information on what they actually did, readers would be studying the minute book in a vacuum.

In short, it needed an introduction. Not being a specialist in Maritime or Canadian history, I naively assumed that the necessary information would be easy to come by. Instead, it turned out that very little has been written on local government in New Brunswick and this obliged me to undertake another full-scale research project just to gather it. For ex-

ample, for specifics on the duties of the justices and, especially the parish officers, I had to search through all the legislation of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia during the years covered by the minute book. In the course of my diggings in various other sources, I also turned up considerable information—rather more than I had expected—on quite a number of the justices. This led to the thought that a series of brief biographical sketches (some of them turned out to be not so brief) explaining why each of the justices was appointed and how he performed in office would be a valuable adjunct to the minute book, as well as interesting in its own right. Next it occurred to me that readers would want some explanation of what a parish was and how it functioned in relation to the county. Then, of course, there was the confusing use of the terms ‘town’, ‘township’ and ‘parish’. That, too, would need some explanation...

Not to put too fine a point on it, the ‘Introduction’ got completely out of hand, eventually becoming longer than the minute book itself. So, it became “Part I” with its own title. When the collective biography of the justices proved similarly unruly, it became ‘Part II’, leaving the poor minute book to be relegated to ‘Part III’ (but annotated with 259 footnotes in compensation).

Actually, this turned out to be a good thing in terms of selling the book to any but a narrow readership. Although there are many interesting entries in it, much of the minute book itself is repetitious and not very exciting, although it should prove very useful to researchers, particularly as one of the appendices is a complete list of all the names, including the variant spellings (Treitz, Trites; Steifs, Steeves etc.) that appear in it. To make it even more so, I include a CD of the entire work in both pdf and Word 2000 format, so it is completely searchable. It is this, as well as its length (322 pages), that necessitates the higher price.

While the minute book may not be the stuff of romance, my “Explanation and Copious Commentary” are written for the general reader. Part I offers a detailed description of the county offices of High Sheriff, High Constable, Coroner and Justice of the Peace as well as all the parish offices that appear in the minute book. The biographical sketches in Part II are written as stories, not just a collection of facts. Some of the names will be familiar, others not. Among the familiar ones are Sackville’s Amos Botsford, Charles Dixon and Christopher Harper. Dorchester is represented by John Wheldon and, of course, John Keillor.

I am confident that anyone with an interest in local/and/or family history will find something worthwhile here. If you have ever wanted to know whether your ancestor was a pound keeper or a hog reeve, this is the place to find out. Who knows? He may even have been a justice of the peace. That alone should make it worth the price.

*Gene Goodrich*

## NOTES FROM MARLENE'S SCRAPBOOK

*In the course of her researches into her family history, Marlene Hickman has collected many interesting items from old newspapers pertaining to Dorchester and the surrounding area. A number of them 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. Since the 'Dorchester Ferry Tale' in the last issue elicited considerable interest, I thought readers might enjoy the items Marlene collected on the ferry that ran from Cole's Point to Hopewell.*

### **July 22, 1880 – Chignecto Post**

“The Impressions of a Stranger.....If you go to Albert County by the way of Dorchester, you should be acquainted with the time of the tide, so as to be on hand at high water. You can go at low water but it is not so convenient either to the ferry man or yourself, unless you start from Dorchester island where the shores are not so decidedly muddy as below, and that you have to land at a less convenient place on the other shore in order to keep tolerably clean. I went by way of the Cape, and reached there at high water, but owing to unforeseen events, the tide had ebbed some distance before our boat was ready to leave. The craft was high and dry, the flats between it and the water glistened in the early morning sun, and as the river would not go to the boat, it was evident that the boat must go the river. Bare feet and legs were the correct thing for the occasion, and in this uniform, ferryman Cole and his passengers propelled the craft over the flats until the current was reached and the boat launched into the waters of the “red sea” of the Petitcodiac. The distance between the ordinary landing places is called three miles, but a stiff north-west breeze and a strong ebb tide combined to give us the worth of our money by carrying us a mile or so further down river, where we landed on the edge of a wide and suspicious looking expanse of mud flats. The walking was very muddy. The roads of Sackville and Moncton are muddy enough sometimes, but they are Appian Warp in comparison with these flats. The green fields looked temptingly down, but a bee line to them was out of the question at this place, for between them and the water the mud was a delusion and a snare, in which it was possible for the pedestrian to sink to a depth seriously detrimental to his dignity and comfort. The more devious course did not take one deeper than the knees. The tramp took a little longer, but we didn't begrudge the time; and we at least reached terra firma at a place where a fresh water stream enabled us to dispose of our adhesive real estate and assume a more conventional appearance.”

### **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.”

### **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 or station by the ferryman's team as the case may be.”



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## 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. (506) 379-6682. [morc@rogers.com](mailto:morc@rogers.com)

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## SALUTING OUR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

It's always a pleasure to recognize our many volunteers for their diverse contributions to the success of WHS events and projects and its work in the community. They are all superb, but in this issue I want to pay special tribute to three of them who have won enthusiastic accolades from that Volunteer of All Volunteers, Alice Folkins—high praise indeed.

**Betty Adams'** winning of the province's Outstanding Volunteer Award has already been noted, but I would like to add a few words from the nominating letter Alice wrote on her behalf. "Betty is a hands-on teacher, a treasure many do not notice because she goes quietly about being a true volunteer, not seeking recognition for the work she does, just making sure the job is done...She deserves recognition for spending up

wards of 30 hours a week throughout June, July, August and September each and every year for the last thirty-five plus years. Without her, WHS would not have been able to keep open our unique textile museum."

The other two about whom Alice "cannot say enough" are **Deanna Crossman and Annie Hendrickson**. Like Betty, they, too, often "work behind the scenes." "They come to all our activities and participate by cooking, making sandwiches and sweets. They help in the kitchen, wash dishes and do just about everything a person could want in good volunteers. They come early and are among the last to leave. They help set up, and take down, put away, carry and lug upstairs and down. I do not know what I would do without them, especially this year with all our 200-year celebration activities."

Well said, Alice! And of course I know that by praising some special people you are by no means unmindful of the merits of others. Any doubt of that is dispelled in your closing lines: "They are the Best of the Best, as are all my volunteers. Thank you to all."

As the saying goes, 'it takes one to know one', and you, Alice, know the qualities of an outstanding volunteer about as well as anyone ever has. Our thanks also to you.

*Cole Morison*