

WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 49 ISSUE # 1 FEBRUARY 2014 ISBN320813

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's always a pleasure to report on the exciting projects and activities of WHS. They are possible only because of the dedicated work of our wonderful volunteers and enthusiastic staff.

Bell Inn Restaurant

After more than thirty years of service David and Wayne have sold their business and retired to enjoy the good life. We are working closely with the new owners, who are also leasing the building, including the back ell and the apartment on the second floor. Andrew Harrison and Sara Craig are young, enthusiastic and experienced chefs who have been working in the hospitality industry in Victoria. Having visited the Bell many times, they are familiar with its cuisine and the expectations of its patrons. They intend to keep up its traditions while adding to the menu and extending the season into December. They will open in April. To own their own restaurant is their dream, and we think the Bell Inn is

just the place for them to realize it. *Congratulations and a hearty welcome to the new owners.*

For the definitive, and intriguing, history of the Bell Inn, see Gene's wonderful article in this issue.

Catalogue for 'Small Town, Big Fashion'

This companion to the highly successful exhibit *Small Town, Big Fashion* curated by Inga Hansen—and now at the New Brunswick Museum—includes striking photographs by Thaddeus Holownia and Karen Stenaford of each of the dressed manikins from the original Exhibit. The accompanying text identifies the owner and provides a short history of each garment in the exhibition. Designed by Andrew Steeves, this beautiful little publication will soon be available for purchase. The launch will take place at the New Brunswick Museum later

this Spring. *Congratulations to Inga and her team...well done.*

Website News

The Website Committee has been working on redesigning the website to complement our information on Facebook and Twitter. 'Striking the right balance' means finding the right 'role' for each—a difficult task. Thanks to George and Mary Balser, Margaret Eaton, Teresa Simpson, Genie Coates, Judy Morison, Nancy Vogan and Gene Goodrich for their hard work. Thanks also to Teresa Simpson for handling our Twitter account and for answering the many inquiries about our genealogical resources. This often involves extensive research, and dealing with these requests can be challenging—requiring tact and many hours of follow up with clients.

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KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM —SPECIAL EVENTS

Annual General Meeting. Sunday April 13.

Time, Place and Speaker to be announced. Delicious dinner guaranteed. \$18.00

Mother's Day Tea. Saturday, May 10. *This year, the 'Glitz' will be in the tea and tempting treats. Coffee also served in case Mom doesn't drink tea. \$10.00.*

Museums Across the Marsh. Sunday, June 1 and Monday, June 2.

Participating museums: Cumberland County Museum, Amherst; Munro Heritage Centre, Port Elgin; Boultenhouse Heritage Centre and Campbell Carriage Factory, Sackville; Keillor House and St. James Textile Museums, Dorchester. Visit all six during this period for only \$4.00 per person or \$10 for a family.

Keillor House Opening. Saturday, June 14.

Right after the Shiretown Parade.

Celebration of Canada Day. Date was announced in 1867. Time: 1:00-3:00.

Free cake, ice cream and fiddle music.

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SMALL TOWN, BIG ACCOMPLISHMENT: INGA'S 'HOME RUN'



Inga on Bayboy at the Heritage Fair

Many readers will know about the outstanding exhibition that Inga Hansen organized and curated at Keillor House this last season—quite a few of you attended the ‘standing room only’ grand opening on June 30 that was a triumph in its own right. But did you know it was so successful that the New Brunswick Museum in Saint John simply *had* to have it come there, where it has been since October? *Small Town, Big Fashion: Fashion from Southeastern New Brunswick from 1860s – 1960s* documents a century of change in ladies fashion through a series of tasteful and imaginative displays of relevant items from our own vast Keillor House Textile Collection. Particularly charming is the

way Inga connects each garment to a woman who once lived in Southeastern New Brunswick, if not in every case in Westmorland County itself. For example, the attractive bustled afternoon dress of ca. 1870 that was also included among the pictures accompanying Margaret Eaton’s informative article on Inga, reprinted in the last issue of the *Newsletter*, once belonged to Mary Ann (Snowball) Black (1834-1911), a daughter of Rev. John Snowball, the Methodist minister at Mount Allison and wife of Joseph L. Black of Middle Sackville.



Mary Ann Black's afternoon dress



Barbara Houghton's graduation dress

Another lovely example is the 1932 bias-cut day dress, typical of the time, worn by Barbara Houghton Stiles (1914-2000s) at her graduation from Dorchester High School. We learn that dresses were often cut on the bias to “achieve a gentle drape from the shoulder and lay softly along the body” to render a “sleek and feminine line.” We also learn that during the Depression Barbara’s family moved from Moncton to Dorchester where she married Ralph Stiles and with him raised their five children on their farm at Dorchester Cape. These are but two of the twenty pieces showcased in the exhibition that together illuminate an important aspect of our social history and serve as a model of what museums can and should be about.

As a follow up project, Inga has prepared a descriptive catalogue of the exhibition, complete with highest quality colour photographs of each item by Thaddeus Holownia and Karen Stentaford. A book launch will take place at the New Brunswick Museum sometime this Spring. Keep your eyes peeled for a notice of it.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Volunteer Appreciation Night

January 12th was Volunteer Appreciation Night at Keillor House, celebrating our many dedicated volunteers. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to relax, meet new people and devour a fabulous 'potluck'. At a special presentation, Deanna Crossman and Annie Hendricks were recognized with well-deserved Lifetime Memberships and Certificates of Appreciation. *Thank you, ladies, for your continuing support.*

Cole Morison

DORCHESTER MEMORIES: ERNIE PARTRIDGE PART III

In the last two issues we learned about Ernie's work on the dikes and aboiteaus, his experiences both bad and good at the penitentiary and, especially, about the role models who shaped his character. An equally important part of Ernie's story is his love of Dorchester. He said at both the beginning and end of the interviews that he is going to die here, that he has no urge to move any place else. His reason is the same one Garfield Spence gave: the quality of its people and the vivid memories they left with him, some of them funny, some of them sad, all of them fond. In this, the last instalment, I will share a few of them with you.

If you have read the 'Dorchester Memories' of Garfield Spence in the June 2011 issue of this *Newsletter*, you may remember the tale of the horse that got stuck on the second floor of Herb Palmer's warehouse after climbing a spiral staircase to get at the oats that were stored there and being unable to go back down. (It became the central incident in Doug How's novel *Blow up the Trumpet in the New Moon*.) Garfield believed it really happened but he knew others who thought it was just a story. Ernie can confirm that it really happened, as he was an eyewitness. In fact, it happened in the same building—also used as a movie hall—that he had lived in, and he actually helped to get the horse back down. Just as in Doug's novel, there was considerable discussion on how to go about it. One of the opinions most eagerly solicited was that of Turner Reid, the local blacksmith who had a reputation for being able to fix just about anything. Turner was also a man of direct action and few words. His solution? "To hell with the horse. Shoot it and haul it down." More tender sentiments prevailed, however, and the problem was solved by taking out a window and putting a door in its place. A ramp was then constructed of timber and the horse blindfolded and slid down to safety—

and a somewhat more boring diet. Ernie was able to correct one error in the tradition. The horse was up there only a few days, not the whole summer as previously reported.

Speaking of *Turner Reid*, he was one of the Dorchester characters Ernie remembers with fondness, as did Garfield. He was a handyman *extraordinaire*, and if you had a problem you could call him any time of the day or night and he would come and bail you out. Besides being a blacksmith, he also did plumbing. Ernie also has a vivid memory of the big leather bag Turner carried over his shoulder with everything he needed in it. It was so heavy and he carried it around so much that he developed a permanent stoop. As a blacksmith, plumber and bachelor, he wasn't much on dressing up, but for a while he made an exception on Saturday nights when he would frequent the "Hole in the Wall," a little restaurant in the downstairs of the Bell Inn, where the kitchen is today. It was run by a lady named Hazel, whose husband had left her. Turner tried to court her, but she had had enough of men and so ignored him. The young fellows watching, Ernie among them, thought it comical at the time, and no doubt it was. With maturity came reflection and compassion for his loneliness. Turner never married.

Another story with a touch of humour, this time one that Turner himself appreciated once he had cooled down a bit, is about duck hunting. Turner loved hunting ducks, probably the only recreation he ever had, and was the proud possessor of a beautiful set of decoys carved by Peter Thomas, one of the Indians who lived in the village. One fine fall day he carried them down to a local creek, dug a blind, put cattails around it and carefully placed the decoys where they would be most likely to entice in tomorrow's dinner.

The next morning he was back before daybreak, but it was too late. Another hunter had got there before him and shot the decoys full of holes, a compliment, no doubt, to Peter's woodcarving skills. Turner had some choice words for the 'mighty Nimrod' but afterwards he began to see the humour in the situation. He loved to tell the story, and even put one of the shot-riddled decoys on a shelf in his blacksmith shop as a conversation piece to get him started on it.

Another unforgettable character was *Marcel Belliveau*. He was severely wounded in the First World War and only escaped death because of a bible he kept in his jacket pocket. A bullet went through the bible and was deflected just enough to miss his heart. Though spared the ultimate price of patriotism, he sustained enough damage that even when Ernie knew him in the 1940s he could literally lift his arm and breath through his back. His wife had to treat the wound every day and he couldn't go into a barn or anyplace where there was dust for fear of breathing it in through the hole. Yet, he was the most cheerful fellow you could ever hope to meet. Ernie and some of the other kids sometimes did chores for him around the barn where he kept a little mare called Mud. Marcel would reward them with nut bars that he bought at the Vimy Canteen (run by Ernie's dad). He liked to play with the kids and when his lung whistled, as it often did when he bent over, he would laugh uproariously. He also loved to fish for bass and would often hitch up Mud and take a bunch of the local boys down to Dorchester Cape to try their luck. Ernie remembers that he never had to switch Mud or shake her reins, as she was totally obedient to his chirps and whistles. He always had uncanny luck as a fisherman, consistently catching fish where others couldn't, even though using exactly the same bait. Ernie never figured out what he did differently. They always came back with fish and what Marcel didn't need at home he sold to Dr. Teed, the physician for both town and penitentiary, who always had an appetite for bass. Ernie always wondered at Marcel's outlook on life and even at this distance in time often thinks of what he must have suffered. "When you think of the burdens on both of them, yet you never saw him ugly," is how he put it. He had a son and two daughters. Ferdinand was in the army during World War II but was discharged because of bad eyesight. Evangeline ('Vangie') was an army nurse. Ernie often wondered what Marcel must have felt when he saw his children joining up—some combination of pride and anxiety, I would imagine. Ernie says he would love to have that bible as a remembrance of Marcel. He asked his youngest daughter, Judy, about it, but she didn't know it even existed. But Ernie knows. He saw it

dozens of times, for Marcel always carried it in his shirt pocket.

Jude LeBlanc was in charge of the farming operations at the Windsor Hotel and also drove the horse-drawn wagon or sleigh that picked up and delivered passengers from and to the 'Maritime' every evening at 8:45. From a very poor family, Jude had no education whatsoever and even had trouble figuring out how to meet the train on time, as he couldn't read a watch very well. Yet, if you gave him money he knew exactly how much was in his hand. At the time Ernie was working at the Windsor with him, he and his wife, Margaret, were living in a back apartment of the same house the Partridges were in. (It is now the home of Wayne Feindel.) Ernie remembers Margaret as "a prince of a lady." Although very heavy, she was as agile as a two year old and a wonderful cook. She was very 'French' (more accurately, Acadian) and when you first talked to her she was reluctant to speak English as she thought you might laugh at her mistakes. But Ernie taught himself not to laugh. "She had two languages," he said, "while I only had one. She was smarter than me." Jude was a lot like Marcel in always being jovial. Nothing ever seemed to bother him—or almost nothing. Down at the back of the hotel was a boiler for cooking culled potatoes, turnips and vegetable peelings to feed the cattle. Mr. Tate always maintained that they were five times better for the purpose cooked than raw. The boiler was on a tripod over a wood fire, and while Jude was adding fuel, sparks would sometimes fly into his chest hairs, as he always wore his shirt with the top three buttons undone. Then he would angrily swat his chest and say something in French—to spare tender English ears, no doubt. The only other occasion Ernie remembers him showing a temper was when Bliss Lowerison, a co-worker on the hotel farm and a very large man, challenged his authority over the horses. Bliss and Ernie, who was just a kid at the time, were supposed to go work in the woods on this day. When they hitched up old Jerry to the wagon they discovered that he was lame, and Bliss wanted to take another horse. But Jude said, no, there was no need for that. Jerry was not lame, he was just pretending; it was a trick he had learned to get out of work. When Bliss insisted, saying, "You don't run this place," Jude, who was only a small man, faced him toe-to-toe and replied, "I run this place. When it comes to the horses I run this place." Ernie still remembers that as he was talking "the spit was just flying." And he got his way. Bliss and Ernie had to take Jerry and, sure enough, just as Jude had said, the old rascal was only faking. As soon as he got on the road and figured it wouldn't do him any good to keep up the charade any longer, his lameness disappeared. Bliss could only mutter, "That Frenchman. That Frenchman." But it was not without a touch of admiration, and even affection for a man so devoted to his job. When the hotel was torn down Jude was heartbroken. He went into a deep depression and his last years were hard ones for both him and

Margaret.

During the war an elderly widow by the name of *Mary Poirier* ran a restaurant, now no longer standing, on Woodlawn Avenue a few houses up from the corner. She was so crippled that she had to walk all hunched over. Yet, she ran the restaurant all by herself. Did all the cooking, waited on the tables, did all the dishes, the cleaning—everything. Ernie remembers her as a dear old lady and he treasures an image “as clear as if it was yesterday” of her interesting technique for defrosting windows. Her place had great big 6’x6’ windows on either side of the door—you could always see who was in there when you walked by—and as there were no thermal panes in those days, and very few people bothered with storm windows, they would ice up on cold winter days. She had a pot bellied stove that burned coal and, of course, the inevitable small flat steel coal shovel that went with it. She would heat the shovel in the fire and pass it lightly over the windows, just shy of the glass. Apparently, it was quite effective, though Ernie doesn’t quite understand why the glass didn’t crack. During her last years Jude and Margaret moved in to take care of her (she lived upstairs in the restaurant) and when she died she left the building to them.

You may have noticed, as I did, that four of the five ‘characters’ so far mentioned were Acadians. That brought up the question of ‘English-French’ relations in Dorchester, which Judy Morison and I also asked of Garfield Spence, and I got the same answer from Ernie. They were excellent because “we never thought of them as Acadians. They were part of us.” And the same went for the Indians, now more generally called ‘natives’ or ‘first nations’. We have all heard the old cliché about “some of them” (whoever “them” might be) being “among my best friends,” but in Ernie’s case it was true, at least when he was a lad. We encountered *Peter Thomas* above. He was a licensed guide who had inherited all the hunting skills and inexhaustible wood lore of his people, and when he was in his seventies he befriended Ernie, who was in his early teens and keenly interested in hunting and trapping. Ernie says he was “my very best friend” at that time. He taught Ernie how to snare rabbits and Ernie set up a winter trap line along the “two mile stretch” which he serviced with a double runner sleigh. As Peter was getting somewhat feeble, Ernie would bring him a weekly rabbit and even clean it for him. Peter lived in a log cabin near Palmer’s Pond. It had a veranda and at the front of it was mounted a moose head from whose antlers hung a magnificent bow and quiver of arrows that Peter had made when he was about Ernie’s age. Ernie always admired them whenever he stopped in. One day after Ernie had just finished cleaning a rabbit for him, Peter said, “I notice that you have been watching that bow and arrow.” He

reached up and handed it to Ernie saying, “That’s paying you for them rabbits.” Just as when he received the shotgun from Mrs. Hickman, he was “one proud boy when he got that bow.” He had it for years afterward until it was unfortunately stolen.

Like all the Dorchester characters, Peter had a sense of humour. He loved to tell his clients, who always admired his ability to track moose, how he once tracked one “real close.” It was on a very foggy morning when there was just a little snow on the ground. He told his party to watch him carefully and he would tell them when the moose was near. Crouching down and pointing to a track, he said, “He’s not far.” A little further on he picked up a bit of moose droppings and said, “We’re getting closer.” Further yet he picked up some more droppings and said, “Even closer.” Finally he felt something fall on his neck. “Real close, now!” Readers may be skeptical, but Ernie swears this really happened. Peter told him so, himself.

These and many other memories—poignant, whimsical, funny, sad—are what bonded Ernie to Dorchester. It was, and to some extent I think still is, a rooted community where people know and trust one another and often engage in acts of spontaneous generosity. Ernie experienced this on a number of occasions. When he was first married, for example, and awaiting a child, he needed a water pump, but he didn’t have the money to pay for it. When Allan Bishop, the owner of Bishop’s Hardware, learned of the situation he said, “You need a water pump? You have a new wife and a baby coming? She can’t be pumping water by hand. Go in the back and get the one you want. Pay me when you have the money.” Jude LeBlanc, who at the time was driving a truck for Mr. Bishop, delivered it and Turner Reid hooked it up. When Ernie asked him how much he owed him, Turner replied, “Did I say anything about paying? You don’t have to pay me. When you have that baby, just tell me how much you appreciate having the running water.” “And that’s what they thought of you in those days,” Ernie said fondly.

No wonder Ernie says of Dorchester, “I am going to die here. This town was good to me. This town kept me from starving to death. I have been all over the Maritimes and you will not find any other place with so many people with a love for one another.” That’s why he is writing a book: so his children and grandchildren will know what he and his parents went through, and why it was all worth it.

Gene Goodrich

A HISTORY OF THE BELL INN

Editor's Note, with Apologies: *Originally, I had intended this space for a very interesting article on prominent businessman and several-time mayor of Moncton, Cavour Chapman, submitted by Althea Douglas, his descendent and occasional contributor to this Newsletter. However, the recent news about the Bell Inn Restaurant has persuaded me that this would be a particularly appropriate issue for the following article, which was otherwise to appear in these pages at a later date. My apologies to Althea for making her wait for yet another issue, and to readers for monopolizing so much of this one.*

Like Keillor House, 'The Bell' is one of the oldest stone buildings still standing in New Brunswick. It was most likely built sometime between 1811 and 1821, but there was once a Dorchester legend that it is much older than that, predating the British conquest of Acadia. According to the legend, fur-hungry freebooters from the New England colonies built the core of the building, perhaps as early as the 1690s, to serve as a small fort from which to carry on their illicit trade with the Miq'mac and Acadians. However, there are several reasons for thinking the legend was just that. We know about it only because of a letter written in 1943 by C. G. M. Chapman, a Dorchester magistrate and antiquarian, to Dr. J. Clarence Webster, one of New Brunswick's finest local historians. Among many other things, Webster was the man responsible for restoring Fort Beauséjour and getting it established as a national park. He also had family connections in Dorchester and was very interested in its early history. Although Chapman believed the story to be basically true, he also admitted that "how much is fact and how much is fancy of course I do not know as we have found it impossible to verify or prove false very much of it..."

His caution was well founded. There is no documentary evidence whatsoever for a structure of this date, and considerable evidence that it was, in fact, built later. Indeed, even if there had been a building on this site during the French period, we have it on the authority of Abijah Willard, who took part in the capture of Fort Beauséjour, that all the houses in this area were destroyed in 1755. During the restoration of the building in the 1970s archaeologists looked in vain for signs of an earlier construction. The staff of the Historical Resources Administration in Fredericton then undertook an exhaustive search of the deeds of sale preserved in the Westmorland County Land Registry Office to trace the ownership history of the land on which the 'Bell' sits. What follows here is based on what they found, together with my own researches, which were greatly aided by materials collected by Ed Bowes.

The land was part of a grant received by Thomas Keillor in 1786 and then sold to his brother, John, in 1787. When Dorchester began to attract settlers after the county court was moved here in 1801-02, John sold off several smaller parcels of it. The one we are interested in went to a Thomas Carter by a deed of sale dated November 20, 1811. Carter, a cousin to John Keillor, was a farmer who was important enough to hold a number of parish offices in Dorchester, to where he moved from Sackville in 1795. There is no mention of a building on it, but Keillor reserved twenty-five square rods (272.25 square feet) for a cobbler's stall. Apparently, he planned to rent it out to a local cobbler, but there is no evidence as to who he was, or if a cobbler's stall was ever built. Certainly, the cobbler was not Keillor himself. By a deed that was never recorded, Carter sold his lot to a James Hamilton, identified in a census of 1820 as a stonemason. Hamilton somehow also acquired the small parcel meant for a cobbler's stall—again there is no record of the transaction—and by a deed dated January 29, 1821 he sold both of them to James Carter, one of Thomas' nine sons. This time, the deed specifically mentions "twenty-five square poles or rods *together with a good and sufficient stone house thereupon.*" This is the first mention of a building in the record, and it seems to indicate that it was erected sometime between 1811 and 1821—let's split the difference and say about 1815 or so—by the stonemason James Hamilton, who, for all we know, may also have been a cobbler.

James Carter bought the land and building in 1821 for £400, a considerable increase over the £100 for which John Keillor had sold it in 1811—another piece of evidence that there was no building on it before. Two years later, he sold it to his brother-in-law, Shepherd Frost, for £370, a loss of £30. In the deed by which Carter bought the property from Hamilton he is identified as a 'gentleman'. In the deed transferring it to Frost he is identified as an innkeeper. From this we can conclude that the 'Bell' first served as an inn in 1821, or soon thereafter, and that it was not very profitable. This is also suggested by the fact that Frost didn't stay in the house for very long. Instead, he mortgaged it to Edward Barron Chandler for £150 and moved to the Miramichi. (Besides being a lawyer, Chandler held a lot of mortgages, another explanation of why he was able to build Rocklyn after only ten years of law practice.) In 1832, Frost finally paid off the mortgage and sold the house to Dr. William Wilson, a Dorchester phy-

sician and property speculator, for £205. Apparently, it had lost more than half its value since Frost bought it. About the same time, Wilson also bought the lot adjacent to the stone house from E.B. Chandler for only £20. Chandler had paid £42 for it at a sheriff's sale, so here is at least one instance where he didn't make money on a property.

Dr. Wilson owned the property throughout most of the 1830s, but he didn't live here any more than did Frost. Instead, it appears that after Frost left for the Miramichi he leased it to Coates Kinnear, and that Kinnear not only lived in it but also operated it as an inn—or perhaps more accurately as a 'roadhouse'. Coates Kinnear's successor, George Kinnear, who was identified as a plasterer (I don't know if he was his son), leased it from Wilson until 1839 when he was able to buy it for £160 from a local carpenter named Brooks—who had previously bought both the house and the adjacent lot from Wilson for £300. It seems that Dr. Wilson was a bit of a real estate shark. George Kinnear was eventually able to acquire the surrounding lot as well, and by 1847 he had built up enough of an inn keeping business—and perhaps made enough improvements—that he was able to sell the works to a couple of farmers named Ambrose Hicks and David Stiles for £490. We know that George Kinnear kept an inn here because he was identified in the deed of sale as an innkeeper, whereas he had previously been called a plasterer. After three years in partnership, in 1850 Hicks bought out Stiles for £200 and in the following year, for £450—in other words for a bit of a loss—he sold everything to Albert J. Smith, the up-and-coming Dorchester lawyer who was just about to win his first seat in the legislature and take on E.B. Chandler and the so-called 'Family Compact' of old Loyalists who were allegedly running the province in their own interest. Later, of course, Smith was noted for briefly becoming premier and delaying New Brunswick's entry into Confederation by about one year.

Although Hicks and Stiles were both identified as yeomen (i.e. farmers) in the deed by which Stiles sold out to Hicks, it seems most likely that the house was nonetheless still being run as an inn until Hicks sold it to Albert J. Smith. I assume this to be so because in the deed transferring it to Smith, Hicks is clearly identified as an innkeeper. I will speculate on what Smith did with it in a moment, but first let's talk about the name of the place. Today, everyone knows it as the 'Bell Inn', but it turns out that it was not called the Bell Inn all the time it actually was an inn. Indeed, it may never have been called the Bell *Inn* until it was restored in the 1970s. The only written evidence we have for the name comes from Magistrate C.G.M. Chapman, and his only source was his grandmother. In his letter to Dr. Webster, Chapman wrote, referring to a time when "a man by the name of Kinnear ... ran an inn there," that "my grandmother has told

me that she remembers that it was known as 'The Bell House' and that there was a large flat bell suspended over the door and that it used to creak and rattle all night when the wind blew." In an article published in the March 28th 1950 issue of the Sackville *Tribune-Post* Chapman repeated the story with minor, but perhaps significant, differences in detail. "Years ago a very old lady told me that she well remembered the Bell *Inn* and that a very large wooden bell was suspended over the entrance and that on a stormy night the slumbers of all the near neighbours were greatly disturbed as it swayed back and forth and creaked and groaned on its hangers."

Oral tradition is not generally the most reliable source of detailed information, but this one is probably more sound than most, because Cy Chapman's grandmother would have been the right age to have seen the sign herself. According to genealogist Edith Gillcash, Cy was born in 1860—he was 90 when the article in the *Tribune* was published—so there is no reason to think his granny didn't know what she was talking about, and every reason to believe that the word 'Bell' was in the name of the establishment. But there is an interesting discrepancy between the 'Bell House' that Chapman remembered in 1943 and the 'Bell *Inn*' he recalled in the *Tribune* article of 1950. Both terms were used in the 19th century, often interchangeably, but there was a certain implication when an inn was referred to as a 'house', although not the one you may be expecting. 'House' was short for 'house of entertainment', an American term that was also commonly used in early New Brunswick to designate an inn or roadhouse of modest pretensions. The original distinction between an inn and a 'house of entertainment' was that a house of entertainment didn't have a licence to sell hard liquor. However, that soon became a distinction without a difference, as the liquor was simply offered for free—and the price of the meal adjusted accordingly. Essentially, a house of entertainment, or roadhouse, was a private home that offered hospitality to travellers as circumstances permitted, much like a bed and breakfast.

That 'The Bell House' or 'The Bell Inn' was a modest establishment at best during the years before it was sold to Albert J. Smith is suggested not only by the low and often decreasing selling prices—£300-£400 was no more than would have been paid for any substantial house—but also by the fact that there were two much larger and classier inns in Dorchester during this period that would have drawn off most of the well-heeled clientele. The first was the 'Dorchester Hotel'—the term 'hotel' was just then becoming common for the larger establishments—built

about the same time as the 'Bell' by a Harry Cornwall and acquired in 1825 by John Hickman, an Irish veteran of the Napoleonic Wars who started his new life in Dorchester as a cobbler. By the 1830s it was known as 'Hickman's Inn' and from 1836 until at least 1845 it was the Dorchester stop and overnight stay for one of the stagecoach lines that ran between Saint John and Amherst. Then, shortly before 1838, Andrew Weldon built the 'Weldon Hotel' just across the street from the 'Bell'. (It was later converted to a store and still stands as the 'Payzant-Card' building.) Cy Chapman had information that "at the time of its erection, over a hundred years ago, this was considered to be the last word in hotel construction and one of the finest in the Maritimes." From 1838 to sometime in the early 1850s it was the stagecoach stop for the rival line that put the first one out of business.

With this kind of competition, the 'Bell' could only have been the first choice for those on a budget—or at best an overflow for the two larger hotels—unless it was gussied up to attract a premium clientele. But in that case it wouldn't have been owned by speculators or leased out to plasterers and farmers. So, my conclusion is that, whether it was called 'The Bell House' or the 'Bell Inn', during the period before 1851, it was an 'entry level' hostelry, and probably none too profitable for its owners.

What Albert J. Smith did with it is a bit of a puzzle. He had not yet built 'Woodlands', his well-known mansion of a later period, and he was just getting started in his legal and political career, so he may have lived here. But I am pretty sure he was never an innkeeper, and there is no record I know of to suggest the house was occupied by anyone else during his ownership. One indication that he may have lived here and made some small improvements to the house is the fact that in 1858, seven years after he bought it from Hicks for £450 he sold it to William Hickman for £525, for a profit of £75. Of course, it was not unknown for property holders (including lawyers) to profit from a sale even if they had made no improvements, but in this case it was less likely, as Hickman was one of Smith's most enthusiastic political supporters and a sharp businessman in his own right. Years later, when he had become one of Dorchester's biggest ship builders, during election campaigns he would send his workers out to heckle candidates who opposed Smith. It is hard to believe that Smith would have failed to give such a good friend value for money.

Whatever the case during the Smith years, the 'Bell' was definitely an inn for perhaps a dozen years under Hickman's ownership. However, it was no longer called 'The Bell', but rather 'Hickman's Hotel'. This is a little confusing because William Hickman had inherited 'Hickman's Inn', also sometimes called 'Hickman's Hotel', from his father, John Hickman, in 1850. But in 1856, a full two years before he bought the 'Bell', he sold it to Harry Wilbur. After that it was known both as 'Wilbur's Hotel' and the 'Dorchester Hotel'

until 1895 when it was torn down to make way for the much grander 'Windsor', which unfortunately fell victim to the wrecker's bar in 1956.

We know that Hickman called his new establishment 'Hickman's Hotel' from a description of a stagecoach trip that newspaper owner and local historian W. C. Milner took from Amherst to Moncton in 1860. Milner tells us that the driver changed horses at Hickman's Hotel in Dorchester, and he could not have meant the hotel across the road, as that had been sold to Wilbur four years before. This is the first mention of the 'Bell' as a stagecoach stop, although stagecoaches had been coming to Dorchester since 1835. Thus, at the risk of marring a good story, I have to inform you that, according to the only evidence we have, the 'Bell' was indeed once a stagecoach stop just as fond local lore would have it. But it was not one for very long, and when it was, it was not called 'The Bell Inn'.

This raises the question of why William Hickman sold the bigger hotel only to buy the 'Bell' two years later. There is no documentary evidence on this, but we know that he was an ambitious, entrepreneurial man – as I said, he later went on to become one of Dorchester's leading ship builders—so perhaps he wanted to raise some capital, which he would have done if, as is most likely, he sold the hotel for more than he paid for the inn. This would have given him the money to buy into the stagecoach line, which he seems to have done shortly before 1858. Quite possibly, he didn't want the bother of running the bigger establishment at the same time as his stagecoach business, especially since, as we will see, the 'Bell' was more than adequate for this.

It may have been the stagecoach business that prompted Hickman to make renovations and additions to the building. To judge from its architecture, the side ell, which once served as a kitchen, dates from this period. This would be confirmed if a story that a local lad told the staff of the Historical Resources Administration is true, that a coin dating from the late 1850s was found in the foundation during the restoration of the building. A number of outbuildings were added, including a stable (if there was not one there before) and over the years the property grew into quite an elaborate complex. A less appealing touch, at least to preservationist tastes, was the cement coating he laid over the stonework of the original part of the house. It was only removed during the restoration.

Exactly how long William Hickman operated the building as Hickman's Hotel is unknown, but it is unlikely to have been much past the early 1870s. What is certain is that it was no longer a stagecoach stop after 1872, the year the *Intercolonial Railroad* was completed, and possibly not after December 1868, when the first train puffed its way into Dorchester. So it was a stagecoach stop for only about ten to twelve years, but, as a consolation prize, it was the only one in town during this period. By 1858, the coming of the railroad was obvious to everyone (it had been a-building since the early 1850s and was already just about to reach Sussex from Saint John), so the longer stagecoach lines on the route between Saint John and Halifax were breaking down into shorter ones in anticipation of their coming demise.

Hickman's was the last stagecoach line to come through Dorchester, and it ran only between Amherst and Moncton, although of course there were connections with other lines at those two places. His coaches carried passengers and mail three times a week between Amherst and Moncton. They passed through Dorchester in the middle of the night on the way up to Moncton, and in the middle of the day on the way back to Amherst. Milner tells us that when the passenger load was light, a small two-horse coach was used. When it was heavier, as it was every fortnight when the English steamer arrived in Halifax, bringing travellers and immigrants into the country, a large four-horse coach, suspended on huge leather springs, rolled and tossed its way over the rough and rutted "Westmorland Great Road," as the highway was called in those days. Another witness tells us that when the big four-horse coach dashed down the hill to the Hickman stables, it was the "event of the day," and always attracted a crowd. Here, the horses were changed, the mails were picked up and delivered, the passengers were refreshed (perhaps with a brief 'wetting of the whistle' in the bar room), and meals and accommodations were offered to those staying on in Dorchester. Unless Mr. Hickman had removed it, on windy nights the guests were still serenaded by the creaking and groaning of the bell that had given the inn its name.

When the stagecoach era ended in Dorchester, Hickman turned the inn into a private residence and headquarters for his far-flung shipping and trading enterprises. It was probably this period, between the early 1870s and Hickman's death in 1903, that the 'Bell', thenceforth known simply as 'Hickman House', reached the height of such magnificence as it ever had. This was not so much owing to its architectural splendours, which remained rather modest, as to its fine furnishings and refined social life. It is said to have been filled with high quality mahogany furniture, silver and plate—the fruit, no doubt, of Hickman's commercial contacts in Boston, New York and other centres of sophistication—while the grounds, although small, were filled with an impressive array of flowers and shrubs. All in all, the house was a worthy setting for the frequent gatherings of Dorchester's social

elite, even if it was pretty small in comparison to E.B. Chandler's *Rocklyn*.

That Hickman House was never considered a pretentious mansion, is reflected in its valuation at the time of William Hickman's death: \$2,500 or £625 in pre-Confederation reckoning. This was only £100 more than he had paid for it in 1858, about a 20% increase in forty-five years. Of course, Dorchester's decline following the end of the ship building boom must have affected property values, but the valuation still suggests that the renovations and additions were not really that grandiose. True to its modest beginnings Hickman House reflected quiet good taste, rather than vulgar ostentation. And this was not because Hickman was too poor to afford a bigger house. He is said to have left an estate worth \$250,000, more than five times that of Thomas Keillor, John's lawyer son and the inheritor of Keillor House.

William's only son and heir, Charles, inherited the house from his mother, but he was not the businessman his father was—nor was Dorchester the same thriving community—and over the next decades it became more and more obvious that it had seen better days. By the 1920s, Hickmans no longer lived in it, but rented it out to tenants. (Charlie's wife owned it until 1948.) Two of the tenants were Fred C. Bowes, chief keeper of the Maritime Penitentiary, and his sister, Grace. They were the grandfather and great aunt of Ed Bowes, who supplied me with much of this information. Ed's father, Russell Bowes, grew up in the house before moving over to 'The Keillor' in the early 1940s.

Russell had a bit of a tragic tale to tell about the house, or at least tragic to anyone interested in Dorchester's history. There is a safe built into the foundation where the restaurant kitchen is today, and it was once filled with records from William Hickman's shipbuilding and import-export business. One day, sometime in the late 1920s or early 30s, Charlie Hickman told Russell to clean out the safe and burn all the old junk. Being just a young lad, Russell was in no position to argue. He did as he was told, and regretted it the rest of his life.

Besides the Bowes family—Fred lived here until his death in 1946—there were other tenants in the east ell during the 30s and 40s. One of them was the Shepody chapter of the I.O.D.E. During the mid 1930s Russell Bowes had a small confectionary shop. In 1948 Charlie Hickman's widow sold the house to Margery Cumming and Albert Filmore for \$1—in other words she gave it to them. I don't know what the relationship was between

the new owners and Mrs. Hickman, but they must have been friends or relatives, as it is impossible to believe that the property was completely valueless at the time, although a description in the *Moncton Times* that appears to have been written in the mid 1940s does say that the “outbuildings are today gray from lack of paint, slanting and falling for lack of repairs.” Miss Cumming had a beauty shop nearby and also ran a small restaurant in the ‘Bell’. Garfield Spence, who had a general store across the street to the north, said in an interview that he gave to me and Judy Morison shortly before he died that there was also a small bar in it during the late 40s and early 50s. As you learned in the ‘Dorchester Memories’ of Ernie Partridge, it was also the site of Hazel’s “Hole in the Wall.”

By the mid 1960s the building had fallen into disrepair, although there were still tenants in it, including at one point, I believe, a dentist. Fortunately, the Westmorland Historical Society was up and running by this time and, after accomplishing wonderful things with the Keillor House, it began to look wistfully at the ‘Bell’. At the Society’s urging, the New Brunswick government came on side and, perhaps impressed by the work on Keillor House—and maybe even a little ashamed at having let the Rocklyn covered bridge fall down the year before—in 1976 it bought the property from Marjory Cumming’s estate. With the help of a Canada Works Grant, restoration proceeded apace under the general direction of the Historical Resources Administration in Fredericton and an official grand opening was held on June 28, 1980.

There was considerable discussion over how the building should be used. Suggestions included a folklore research centre, an archive for historical records and a display space for handicraft skills. In the event, however, Sylvia Yeoman and her daughter, Katie, opened a small but very successful tearoom in the south annex. In 1985 or thereabouts the tea room was expanded into the rest of the house and taken over by David McAllister and Wayne Jones who turned it into one of “the” places to eat in Canada. (I think it is still listed in *Where to Eat in Canada*.) In an act of perhaps dubious generosity, about 1986 the New Brunswick government sold the building to the Westmorland Historical Society for the back taxes on it and we have been maintaining it ever since, sometimes with great difficulty. But that’s another story.

Gene Goodrich

NOTES FROM MARLENE'S SCRAPBOOK: WHAT ELSE IS NEW DEPARTMENT

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. In light of all the current handwringing about the deplorable state of the New Brunswick economy—all the young folk leaving for the 'greener' pastures of the Alberta tar sands etc.—we thought it might be salubrious to recall that this tune has been played before in our history. Following the end of the American Civil War in 1865, the Reciprocity Treaty that had established free trade between the British North American colonies and the United States, and brought considerable economic benefits to the Maritimes, was repealed under the influence of protectionist elements in the U.S. The effects were immediate. Employment dried up and young men left in droves seeking a better life in 'the Boston States'. It need hardly be added that the world did not end for New Brunswick. In the following decades new markets opened up to usher in the 'Golden Age of Sail' and perhaps the longest period of prosperity in her history.

September 1, 1865 – The Borderer

In our last issue we referred to the well-known fact that numbers of our young men had been, and still were, leaving their native home, seeking employment in the United States, and earnestly expressed a wish that the prosecution of the railway between Truro and Moncton might be the means of, not only preventing any further exodus from these provinces of those, the bone and sinew of our country, but might also attract many homewards. This week we have seen and conversed with several just returned, or on their way to their home, and the accounts they give of their recent experience of life in the United States confirm us in the justice of the opinions we then expressed. They say it is next to impossible for mechanics or workmen in any of the different departments of labour going there now from these provinces to obtain employment, owing to the fact that thousands and thousands of discharged soldiers and young men from the navy are now seeking employment and the preference is given to them by employers. The consequence is that the labour market is overstocked (with the exception of cotton factories), new comers cannot find employment so easily as they once did, and are therefore compelled to saunter about the streets idly, or engage in some employment less pleasant and far more inremunerative than that at which they are wont to employ themselves. Speculators are also steadily engaged in the endeavour to keep down or equalize the price of labour by means of the introduction of immigrants from Europe, large numbers of which latter arrive in every passenger ship that reaches America. These things alone should be sufficient to deter the young men of New Brunswick from leaving their own country – a country literally overflowing with milk and honey, where a good living and abundant provision can always be obtained by any able and willing to work..."

Of course there were naysayers, then as now.

September 15, 1865 – The Borderer: A long article appeared discussing the financial state of New Brunswick

Now in the darkest hour of New Brunswick history – the blackest and darkest commercially, financially and politically, that ever this country witnessed...

How to make an ordinary living is puzzling thousands at the present hour, but something however will depend on the meaning of the [word] 'living'. If it be a living where a man for thirteen or fourteen hours of labour receives sixty, seventy or eighty cents a day, and is compelled to take that amount in goods at fabulous or famine prices, and feed, clothe and school some six or eight children on the pitiful payment, then that living can be had here, and few need to go to the States for it.



Donations, Memberships and Newsletter
Submissions to:
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Fax: (506)379-3418
E-mail: keillorhouse@nb.aibn.com
www.keillorhousemuseum.com

Museum Hours

June 14 to Sept. 13 2014

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 Membership Secretary, at 4974 Main Street, Dorchester, NB, E4L 2Z1. (506) 379-6682. morc@rogers.com

Annual Fees

(Includes *Newsletter*)

Individual: \$10.00

Family: \$15.00

Sustaining: \$25.00

Life: \$150.00

Research Associates

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SALUTING OUR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

We can never thank our volunteers enough for all the good work they do to keep our operations running smoothly. Nor is there ever enough room to mention them all individually in any one issue. So, once again, let me turn the spotlight on a few of them, with the understanding that they stand for many more.

There was a good start in this direction at the Volunteer's Potluck Supper on January 12 when *Diana Crossman* and *Annie Hendrikson* were presented with honorary life memberships in recognition of their "dedication in supporting the Westmorland Historical Society, our activities for Keillor House Museum and preserving our rich New Brunswick heritage." The particulars of their contribution were outlined in the June 2013 issue of this *Newsletter*. Suffice it to say here that they are, along with Alice,

the key players in preparing the food for all our events, and also a very large presence among the cleanup crews. In a nutshell, they always "come early and stay late."

The Haunted House Tour has become our biggest fundraiser and, together with the Victorian Christmas Dinner, our most popular and successful event. It has become widely known as one of the best of its kind anywhere. For the last two years this has been in large measure due to the outstanding efforts of *Teddy and Marilyn Wheaton* and *Mike Shea*, who have assumed the direction of the project. They all have full time jobs, but for weeks on end they dedicate their evenings and weekends to transforming 'The Keillor' into a house of horrors, to the delight of young and old alike. Throughout the rest of the year they look for new ideas on how to terrorize victims, whether innocent or guilty. Of course, many other volunteers help to implement their dastardly

plans, but they are not always available to assist in building the torture chambers (oops, we mean 'sets') and—just as big a job—in taking them down again once the horror has passed.

It is worth remembering just how much we rely on the success of our special events to keep our museums going, preserve our heritage, provide summer employment for students and help the local economy. It is not only the Westmorland Historical Society that has cause to be grateful to our dedicated volunteers.

The Executive