

# WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's always a pleasure to report on WHS activities because our volunteer committees, Museum Manager and staff work so hard to accomplish so much, season after season.

On July 1<sup>st</sup> Dr. Ruth Stanley will unfurl a maple leaf flag signed by her late husband, Dr. George Stanley, who designed the original. It promises to be a memorable day with live music by Frantically Atlantic. (Dorchester Veterans' Centre, 4955 Main St. Dorchester. 1-3 pm.) Check your calendar as well for the Sandpiper Festival Breakfast and Heritage Fair (July 25<sup>th</sup>)

A Special Exhibit 'During War—Life's Precious Memories' curated by Inga Hansen will be mounted at Keillor House this season to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII. (See page 2 for details)

### *A Welcome to Our New Staff for the 2015 Season*

Ashley Beaudin, our enthusiastic 'new' Museum Manager for 2015 (last year she was our accessions cataloguer, co-supervisor of the Visitor Information Centre and supervisor of the Gift Shop) is hard at work—with Alice of course—putting the museum in order for the opening, planning events, hiring staff, getting them trained and fully oriented to the Keillor House 'culture'. Our capable Manager of last year, Meghan Beaudin, is completing her Ph.D thesis and cannot commit the time the job requires, although—it must be Alice's influence—she is able to help us part time! Meghan did a wonderful job as Manager and we wish her all the best. I think Alice would agree that her management and administrative skills are simply outstanding.

Our new seasonal guides this year are certainly well qualified. Eric Maquignaz (American School of Dubai) is bilingual and studying computer science at Mt. Allison. He has lived in the USA, France, South Korea and the UAE, and worked as a Tourist Information Councillor in Tofino, BC. Aidan Ingalls (International Baccalaureate, Saint John High School) has just completed his Foundation Year at the University of King's College, Halifax (Donald R. Sobey Scholarship). Aidan was a tour guide at the Jewish Historical Museum in Saint John last summer and has been an alumni leader for the New Brunswick Heritage Fair. Hannah Grant (Private Tutor) has just completed her first year at Mt Allison in Biology and has volunteered at The Barn (riding stable), Keillor House, Dorchester Memorial Library and Ronald MacDonald House.

*continued p.3*

## KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM —SPECIAL EVENTS

**Keillor House Opening Saturday June 13. 1:30-5:00**

**Celebration of Canada Day. At Veterans' Centre.** Dr. Ruth Stanley will unfurl the maple leaf flag designed by Dr. George Stanley  
*Free*

**Sandpiper Festival Breakfast—Keillor House July 25. 7:30-10:30. Pancakes, Sau-sages & Baked Beans. \$7.00 (children under 6 free)**

**Heritage Fair—Keillor House July 25. 12:00 to 4:00. A display of traditional artisan skills.**

**Harvest Supper Saturday—Keillor House September 12. 4:30-6:30**

*Hip of beef and old-fashioned desserts. \$14.00*

**Haunted House Tour—Keillor House. October 16-17 and 23-24. Adults \$10.00, Students \$8.00. Special Bookings for Groups: 379-6620.**

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

SPECIAL EXHIBIT: LOVE IN WAR TIME	2
THE EARLY HISTORY OF WHS PART I	3
ANOTHER TIDBIT FROM THE KEILLOR PROJECT: THE DATING OF KEILLOR HOUSE	8
GREATER DORCHESTER MOVING FORWARD	12
OUR WHS VOLUNTEERS	12

## SPECIAL EXHIBIT

## PRECIOUS MEMORIES: LOVE IN WAR TIME

This season a special Exhibit at Keillor House entitled 'During War—Life's Precious Memories' has been mounted to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII. Inga Hansen (See 'Small Town, Big Fashion' *Newsletter*, September 2013) curated the exhibit which celebrates the touching stories of two Sackville couples and their WWII era weddings.



David and Jean MacAuley



George and Ruth Stanley

*The Exhibit will be open to the public Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup> when we officially open the Museum for the season. 1:30 – 5:00 pm.*

One of the couples, David and Jean MacAuley, met while they were serving overseas. They married at the end of the war, and faced many obstacles on the road to their wedding. George and Ruth Stanley's wedding story is presented alongside the MacAuleys—they, too, faced uncertainty and challenge. Visitors will undoubtedly be struck by the contrast between these weddings, dominated by the realities of war and the post-war period, and today's elaborate celebrations. It was a time when food was scarce, life was uncertain—yet the future offered hope for a better world to come.

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

Nabil Malik, another of last year's guides as well as an outstanding volunteer, will also be back on board. Nabeel will be attending Mount Allison this fall.

### *St. James Textile Museum*

Dee Millikan will again conduct tours, demonstrate various textile arts and teach a new group of students at the Museum. She also manages our Face Book account for St. James, and her experience and enthusiasm is appreciated across the province. Last fall, she conducted a textile workshop on carding, spinning and weaving for King's Landing as well as for Queens County Heritage, which is setting up the new Loom Crofter's Museum in Gagetown. On June 9<sup>th</sup> she conducted a similar tour and workshop for the Sussex Tea Room Hookers. (If you haven't visited St. James recently, there are some wonderful textiles for sale—all created by Dee and our staff.)

There is no doubt about it. We have an enthusiastic and capable staff as well as an exciting calendar of events. Keillor House is well prepared for another successful year. Be sure to put us on your calendar!

*Cole Morison*

## THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY PART I

*I have had it in mind for some time to do a piece on the early history of WHS, and recently a couple of things came together to make it happen. As described in the September 2014 issue of the Newsletter, Judy Morison, Shirley Oliver and Alice (of course Alice!) undertook, with the help of a volunteer from the Westmorland Institution, to organize and file all the paper work that's been accumulating since the Society began in 1960. Among the many items brought to light are the minutes of its meetings from the first one in June 1960 to 1993. More than half a century later they make fascinating reading, recalling as they do the cast of dedicated characters who founded the Society as well as the ideals and aims that inspired them. Together with the complete set of WHS Newsletters collected by its former editors, Wayne and Edith Gillcash, they offer a surprisingly full account of the Society's earlier activities and very considerable accomplishments. The other peg that fell into place was Katie Yeoman's excellent article on the origins of the Bell Inn Restaurant, which also appeared in the September 2014 issue. It made*

*me realize that she would be just the right person for this job. Her parents were very active founding members of the Society and, fortunately, she can still draw on her mother's memories for information as well as some of her own that stretch back to the early 1970s. She is also a former student of mine, so I have first-hand knowledge of her research and writing skills. (I like to think I had something to do with developing them.) It all seemed like a perfect match, so I imagine my delight when Katie agreed to write a series of articles on how, why and by whom the WHS was founded and to trace its evolution from a county-wide historical society focused on research, presentation and the collection of historical records into a Dorchester-oriented heritage trust focused primarily on museum management and the preservation of historic buildings. It's a very interesting and enlightening story, one that I think is most timely at this point when we are in the process of divesting ourselves of at least some of our properties and need to consider our future direction. Sometimes it's easier to see where we want to go when we know where we have been. In this issue Katie takes the story down to the end of 1961. All quotations are from the minutes.*

*Gene Goodrich*

## THE EARLY HISTORY OF WHS

### **June 8, 1960: The home of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Machum, Moncton**

The Westmorland Historical Society originated through an initiative of the New Brunswick Historical Society during the late 1950s to encourage the formation of county historical societies that would collect old records and artifacts, preserve historic buildings and establish county museums and archives. By 1960 seven of them were up and running and enthusiasm was growing for an eighth—in Westmorland County. Among the enthused was Lloyd A. Machum, a Moncton high school teacher who later joined the Department of Education at Mount Allison and was also a member of the New Brunswick Historical Society. After attending its annual meeting, where he conferred with representatives of the county societies already formed, he came home determined to get things going here as well. On June 8 he and his wife hosted a meeting of nine interested citizens at his home. Besides himself and Mrs. Machum they included: Mrs. Howard Trueman of Sackville, Borden Steeves of Coverdale, and Dr. A.S. Robinson, George Little, Alex. Pincombe, R.W. Hewson and Mrs. A.R. Ayling, all of Moncton. Upon hearing his report, the meeting decided then and there to organize as the 'Westmorland County Historical Society'. A temporary planning committee was appointed with Lloyd as Chair and in September the Society's first executive meeting was held to organize a general meeting in October, to be addressed by Dr. George MacBeath, Curator of the New Brunswick Museum. In musing on the objectives of the proposed society Mr. Machum stated that plans for a museum might be in the offing. Historic houses as well as papers and artifacts should be preserved, he said, and the new society would prove invaluable in that respect. Prophetic words indeed!

### **October 3, 1960: Moncton High School Library**

About fifty people attended. Dr. MacBeath outlined the reasons for a new interest in local history, which was now beginning to be recognized as an important component of provincial and regional history, and emphasized the key role local historical societies could play in preserving and exploring it. Besides making many suggestions for activities and programmes, he declared that every county society should eventually have a museum. He also noted that 1961 would be the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary

of the founding of Sackville, and urged that some notice be taken of it by suitable commemorations in Sackville. Following his talk, the motion was made to form a Westmorland County Historical Society and carried unanimously. It was agreed that a Committee on Organization would be appointed to draft a constitution and bylaws. A Planning Committee and a Nominating Committee were set up as well. It was decided that the next meeting, to be held in November, would be Charter Night. The constitution and bylaws would be approved, officers elected, and those joining the Society at that meeting would be charter members.

### **November 7, 1960: The Monctonian Room of the Brunswick Hotel, Moncton. The Charter Meeting.**

The constitution proposed by the Committee on Organization was amended in places and duly adopted. It provided for a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer and nine Directors. As a note of particular interest, a suggestion from the floor that three of the Directors be Francophones met with general approval. Getting off to a good start as a historical society, the rest of the evening was given over to an address by Lloyd Pollock of Petitcodiac who talked about the "many fine exhibits of by-gone days, including books, shoes, farm implements, etc." that he had brought to the meeting. Seventy-six people attended and thus became the charter members. They were in alphabetical order (by last name): Dr. F. Douglas *Ackman*, Mr. Laurance F. *Allison*, Mrs. Russell *Anderson*, Mrs. A.R. *Ayling*, Mr. M.M. *Baig*, Mr. & Mrs. Allen *Balser*, Miss Pamela *Black*, Mr. W.T. *Blacklock*, Dr. C.H. *Blakeny*, Mr. J. Rodolphe *Bourque*, Miss Helen *Cameron*, Prof. I. *Campbell*, Mrs. Paul *Chapman*, Mr. A.L. *Colpitts*, Miss Alice *Condon*, Mrs. C.E. *Cook*, Mr. & Mrs. A.M. *Cooke*, Miss Stella *Crandall*, Miss Louise *Dixon*, Mr. & Mrs. C.G. *Douglas*, Mr. Albert *Dyer*, Mr. D.S. *Fisher*, Dr. W.T.R. *Flemington*, Miss Elizabeth *Friel*, Mr. J.M. *Gibson*, Mr. F.H. *Gillespie*, Miss Amelia *Goodwin*, Mr. Vincent *Goodwin*, Mrs. Avarð *Gorbell*, Mr. Ken *Hardy*, Miss Nancy *Harquail*, Mr. R.W. *Hewson*, Mr. J.H. *King*, Mrs. E.L. *Lawson*, Mr. Emery *LeBlanc*, Mr. G.E. *Little*, Prof. Allan *MacBeth*, Mr. W.A.N. *MacDonald*, Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd A. *Machum*, Miss Margaret *Machum*, Miss Marie *Machum*, Miss Marlyn *Machum*, Mrs. C.G. *MacWilliam*, Mrs. Dana *Maxwell*, Miss Katherine

*McManus, Dr. L.B. MacNaughton, Mr. T.H. O'Brien, Mrs. Lloyd Parsons, Mr. C.A. Pincombe, Mrs. J.W. Pincombe, Mr. Lloyd Pollock, Mrs. W.H. Prescott, Prof. G. Rawlyk, Dr. A.S. Robinson, Mr. & Mrs. F.R. Sayer, Miss Eva Siddal, Mrs. Muriel Sikorski, Dr. D.M. Steeves, Mr. Harold Steeves, Mrs. J. Frank Steeves, Miss Muriel Steeves, Miss Ruth Steeves, Mr. & Mrs. Howard Trueman, Mrs. Patricia Webster, Dr. Wm. Webster, Miss Marion White, Mr. Richard Wilbur, Mr. H.M. Wood, Mr. & Mrs. Mark Yeoman.*

### **November 21, 1960: Moncton High School Library**

The Charter Meeting was quickly followed by the first regular meeting, which elected the first slate of officers as follows: President: Lloyd Machum, Vice Presidents: A.S. Robinson & E.J. LeBlanc, Secretary: Mrs. A. Ayling, Treasurer: Elizabeth Friel. The Directors were: G. Rawlyk, Mrs. W.H. Prescott, Mrs. Howard Trueman, Mrs. Edgar Cook, C.H. Blakney, L. Pollock. Three Acadians were to be elected at a later meeting. A letter from Dr. MacBeath was read encouraging the Society to support any plans for commemorating the "establishment of an English settlement in Sackville." The matter was referred to the newly elected officers.

Tweaking the details continued through subsequent meetings. In December the Board met at Mount Allison to plan meetings for the following year, each of which was to feature a speaker. It also proposed dropping the word 'County' from the name of the Society to avoid any suggestion that it was interested only in the history of the county as such, and not in "all the areas and communities within the county." The proposal was adopted at a subsequent regular meeting. Dreams of a future home for the Society were already evident at this Board meeting, and the first prospective candidate was the Free Meeting House in Moncton. Built in 1821 mainly through the efforts of New York Loyalist Ichabod Lewis, Pennsylvania German settler Solomon Trites and Baptist missionary Joseph Crandall, it served as a place of worship for all denominations until they were able to build their own churches. Long since dilapidated by the 1960s, it was nevertheless a historic building worth preserving and it seemed like an excellent place for WHS to hold its meetings, store its yet to be collected archives and display its yet to be gath-

ered artifacts. It would be the county's museum! To this end Dr. Blakney was delegated to approach the trustees to see if they would consider becoming Directors of WHS and thus merge the two organizations into one with a view to restoring the building. More on this story later. Prof. Rawlyk reported on the proposed bicentennial celebrations in Sackville. Father Clement Cormier and Senator Savoie were suggested as possible Acadian Directors.

### **January 30, 1961: St. Joseph's University, Moncton**

The first meeting of what would turn out to be a very productive year focussed on the collection and storing of archives. When it was reported that the trustees of the Free Meeting House were opposed to the idea of becoming Board members of WHS, the possibility was raised of procuring archival space in the new Moncton public library, and members of the Archives Committee were delegated to attend a forthcoming City Library meeting with that end in view. President Machum stressed that WHS was a county organization and pointed out that the Town of Sackville had good archives too. He hoped that more archive centres could be set up in other places as well, such as Baie Verte and Port Elgin. The speaker for the evening was Board member Professor George Rawlyk of the Mount Allison History Department, and his topic was Archives. He warned of the danger of a new society attempting too much too soon. His advice was to have clearly defined, limited goals. He recommended that the Society look for old newspapers, especially from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century during elections, letters, journals, diaries, and minutes of organizational meetings, especially of churches. Almost nothing had been done in the field of New Brunswick social history, he told the meeting, and he thought the Society could make a major contribution here. He urged members to send in papers immediately so as to force the Society to find a permanent place for records, preferably in Moncton. He also drew attention to the valuable French archives at Memramcook. (*Editor's note: Dr. Rawlyk's paper is in the WHS archives at Mount Allison*)

### **March 20, 1961: Brunswick Hotel, Moncton**

The meeting discussed the letter of thanks from the Women's Auxiliary of the Central United Church for the Society's contribution to a recent exhibit of historical items at the Church hall in conjunction with a tea. It was viewed by over 500 people and parts of it were shown on CKCW-TV. Items included "household articles of the past century, handicrafts of great grandmother's day, lacemaking, embroidered work, hand made quilts and examples of local pottery." Among the many WHS members who contributed were Mark and Sylvia Yeoman, Lloyd Machum and Shirley Dobson. The meeting also discussed the Society's next project, of helping publicize Canadian Library Week by putting up

a window display at Eaton's. With the business part over, Mr. R.W. Hewson, Q.C. and Honorary Curator of Fort Beauséjour Museum, gave the Society's first historical paper. Entitled "Some facts and places not generally known in and around the Chignecto Isthmus and Westmorland County," it was on the early history of Westmorland County, which, he said, was "the most historical county in New Brunswick." (*Editor's note: this paper is in the WHS archives at Mount Allison.*) He "traced the early beginnings of the first Chignecto canal and also outlined the development of the French and English forts built from 1750 on to protect the entrance the Chignecto Bay. Throughout his remarks, Mr. Hewson stressed that the public could easily trace out and examine the actual remains of these historical items, something he had done many times." He then turned to an account, "largely based on his own investigations, of early homes and other buildings in the Dorchester area, emphasizing those which were still in existence and for the most part occupied." During the question period Mr. Hewson also "revealed many fascinating aspects of Moncton's early history, including such things as the street railway system, street naming and annual visitations by gypsies."

#### **April 24, 1961: St. Joseph's University, Moncton**

An invitation was received from Mark and Sylvia Yeoman to have a meeting and social gathering at Rocklyn sometime in June. The President "thought this would make an excellent outing." He also reminded the members of Mr. Hewson's suggestion that a pilgrimage be made in June to the old sites in the Dorchester and Sackville areas mentioned in his paper. Preliminary plans were made. After the business meeting, Dr. A.S. Robinson, Principal of Edith Cavell High School and a charter member of WHS, who had been very active in the initial efforts to organize the Society, re-read a paper that he had delivered in 1925 before the United Teachers' Institute of Albert and Westmorland Counties. Entitled "The Bend; a historical sketch of the early days of Moncton," it was based on "the knowledge of the community known at that time" and on information he had gathered from well-known Moncton residents, including Mr. Hewson. (*Editor's note: this paper is in the WHS archives at Mount Allison.*) "After outlining...the arrival of the first settlers from New England

(*Editor's note: the first settlers of Moncton were from Pennsylvania, not New England*) and their efforts ...to establish a community [he] explained the origin of the older streets, including Steadman, Main and Lewis, and of the commercial beginnings; the first lawyer, lumberman, storekeeper, hotel and bank. The shipbuilding era was treated as well as the start of the railway. Dr. Robinson said that much of latter information came from the *Diary of Judge Chandler*, now the property of R.W. Hewson. (*Editor's note: This was probably James Chandler, a cousin of the Father of Confederation and the County Judge of Westmorland 1868-1870.*) It was Judge Chandler who decided that Moncton rather than Shediac should be the rail centre for the area. (*Editor's note: I think Dr. Robinson was confusing him with E.B.*) Other parts of the paper dealt with Moncton's first newspapers, elections, fire department and churches. The members learned that Moncton's first teacher, William Paton, was paid a salary of 16 to 18 shillings a quarter."

#### **May 15, 1961: St. Joseph's University, Moncton. The first Annual General Meeting**

Outgoing President Lloyd Machum said he considered it quite an honour to have been the Society's first President. He hoped it would become a permanent organization and that all its minutes, records and archives would be preserved in a suitable place. A field trip to the Isthmus of Chignecto was announced for June 17, going from Moncton by one route and returning by another so that Fort Beauséjour could be included. Cars were volunteered and Mr. Hewson offered to act as guide. The Membership Committee, (Alex. Pincombe, Chair) reported 76 charter members, 88 individual members, 8 sustaining members, 1 institutional member, and 3 student members. The Museum Committee discussed several sites as possible museums: The Free Meeting House, the Transportation Museum suggested by the Board of Trade and "rebuilding the Old Acadian Chapel destroyed in 1758." Mrs. C.E. Cook of Dorchester "thought the old Keillor House might be available for purchase at a reasonable price. An old brick house, it was in good condition and very historical." This was the first mention of Keillor House as a possible county museum. The Treasurer's Report noted that expenses for the year amounted to \$68.55. They included \$24.27 for postage, stencils, advertising etc. There was a balance on hand of \$70.14. A new slate of officers was elected: President: Frank Sayre; 1<sup>st</sup> V.P. Kathleen McManus; 2<sup>nd</sup> V.P. A.S. Robertson; Sect'y: Mrs. J. Neal; Treas.: Elizabeth Friel. The guest speaker was again Dr. George MacBeath of the New Brunswick Museum. After conveying greetings from the President and other members of the New Brunswick Historical Society, he spoke about "the remarkable degree of activity and trail blazing by the

various county societies in the province, indeed all across Canada, preserving the past as a source of identity to future peoples.”

After this, no more regular meetings were held until the fall. The Executive met on May 29 and again on September 11 to prepare and secure speakers for these and subsequent ones. Three volunteers were quickly found, of whom more anon. The President further pursued the matter of archival space in the new Moncton city library and was told this would not be agreeable to the city. Another suggestion was to look into the possibility of restoring historic buildings with the help of the federal government. The Free Meeting House was mentioned as a possibility. Later the President learned that it was going to be taken over by the city.

#### **September 23, 1961: Dorchester and Vicinity**

The meeting took the form of a field trip that included the ‘Old Indian Cemetery’ at Beaumont, followed by a regular meeting at the historic home of Mark and Sylvia Yeoman. President Sayer reported that on the request of the Minister of Education he had compiled and forwarded a list of historic sites in Westmorland County. A letter from the Historical Society Research Commission was read requesting representation from WHS at its annual general meeting in Newcastle. President Sayer was delegated to attend and several other members expressed the hope that they might be able to do so as well. Dr. A.S. Robinson “spoke with much enthusiasm upon the restoration of Fort Monckton (Gaspereau) both on account of its historic value as well as its importance as a tourist attraction.” A motion was passed (and a committee struck) “to approach the New Brunswick Tourist Bureau concerning this matter.” “A delightful tea was served by our hostess, after which our host showed us through their home...It was built about 1831 by E.B. Chandler, barrister, and later owned by Mariner Teed, and commonly called “The Chandler House” or “The Teed House.” Among the many objects that fascinated the gathering were the “huge window shutters, the flagstone floor in the hall, the secret cupboard at the back of the bookcase, and the bells, still in place, which were part of the bell-pull system formerly used.”

#### **October 21, 1961: Port Elgin Regional Memorial School**

The possibility of acquiring the Free Meeting House as a county museum and meeting place for WHS was again discussed, and the willingness of the Moncton City Council to take over its trusteeship was seen as a positive step in that direction. President Sayer reported on the annual meeting of the New Brunswick Historical Society in Newcastle. He also reported having contacted the Department of Tourism and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada regarding the restoration of Fort Monckton (today known almost exclusively as Fort Gaspereau), stating the Society’s willingness to assist if necessary. Mrs. W.H. Prescott, a Board member, brought up the historic importance of the picnic site at Baie Verte and felt it deserved a marker. At one time, she said, three to four hundred Indians had their encampment here. Later the French settled and Abbé Le Loutre built a warehouse. Later still, the first house in this area after the Treaty of Paris was built. (*Editor’s note: The Treaty of Paris, 1763, finally ended the century and a half long struggle between Britain and France over North America.*) The meeting ended with Dr. A.S. Robinson’s “very fine paper on Fort Moncton.” (*Editor’s note: this paper is in the WHS archives at Mount Allison.*) Following the paper, Dr. Robinson led a field trip to the Fort. A visit was then made to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Silliker, who had in their possession the original land grant on which their property stood, dated March 5, 1795. Much comment was made of the huge seal of George III. The Dominion Government had bought the site of the Fort from Mr. Silliker in 1929 and made it into a park.

#### **November 25, 1961: Mount Allison University, Sackville.**

Thirty-seven people attended. The President reported that he was still waiting for a reply to his letter about acquiring the Free Meeting House. One obstacle was that, since it was built for religious purposes only, the City Council would have to have that changed by an act of Parliament, and that would cost \$500. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board was to be urged again to make Fort Monckton into a tourist attraction by restoring it to its former state. The President reminded the meeting that Sackville would be celebrating its two hundredth anniversary this year. The first Town Meeting was held on July 20, 1762. New Englanders landed in Sackville in 1761. A letter was read from Mrs. Eva T. Davis, who was interested in selling her Dorchester home known as ‘Stone Haven Lodge’ (*Editor’s note: Today we call it ‘Keillor House.’*) She believed it to be “the oldest house in good repair in this district and would be an ideal location for historical value.” The Secretary was instructed to write Mrs. Davis to inform her of our financial state and inquire about the price, adding that WHS was “just in our infancy and without funds.” (Earlier in the meeting the Treasurer had reported \$50 in the bank.) The business meeting was followed by Miss Louise Dixon’s paper on “The Early History

of Sackville.” ((*Editor’s note: this paper is in the WHS archives at Mount Allison.*) She told the meeting that her interest in the town’s history came from her uncle, F.A.Dixon and that her home in Sackville was part of the first land grant there.

And so ended the first smashingly successful year of WHS history. Four historical papers were read, all by members of the Society, in addition to several “pep talks” about what its aims and ambitions should be. There were also three field trips, two of which tied in with the papers, and much useful discussion about acquiring a museum and meeting place for the Society. The Free Meeting House was an alluring prospect but it was already becoming apparent that there would be many obstacles on the road to acquiring it. A faint new star was beginning to appear on the horizon, and though it was distant, the day would come when the Society would reach for it. But that’s a story for another time.

Katie Yeoman

## THE DATING OF THE KEILLOR HOUSE: WHAT DO WE KNOW AND WHEN DID WE KNOW IT? ANOTHER TIDBIT FROM THE KEILLOR PROJECT

This question is not as silly as you may think. It’s true, the official placard on the outside wall of the ‘dairy room’, placed there by Historic Sites, says it was built in 1813. But when the Westmorland Historical Society was founded in 1960, in fact until 1966, the year before Keillor House was opened as a museum, its exact date was not known to members of the Society, although some of Dorchester’s older citizens seem to have had an inkling of it. Back in those halcyon days, papers on the history, artifacts and heritage buildings of Westmorland County were presented at almost every meeting. The first one, delivered in 1961—several years before WHS thought of acquiring Keillor House—was by founding member R. W. Hewson Q.C, a prominent Moncton lawyer with deep roots in the Chignecto and a keen interest in old buildings. Among other interesting houses in Dorchester he mentioned “a very fine stone house built by John Keillor between 1790 and 1800.” Eva Davis, the then owner, offered the house for sale in early 1962 but in all the discussion leading up to its purchase there was, as far as the detailed minutes of the Society can show, no further mention of the age of the building. In fact, during the meeting in January

1965 at which the decision to buy it was finally made, one of the questions regarding funding was how its restoration could be justified as a Centennial Project in order to be eligible for a grant. According to the minutes, “it was felt that this condition could be met. The Keillor House is in the 1795-1800 period.”

Only after the house was purchased were systematic efforts made, mainly by founding member and first President Lloyd Machum, to find out more by querying Dorchester people who might know something about it. In response to an article on the Keillor family he published in the *Sackville Tribune*, Mona Dobson, a Keillor descendant with considerable knowledge of her family history and soon to be an active member of the Society, wrote to him in November 1966, informing him among other things that when F.B. Chapman bought it in 1928 it “was the first time the house was out of the hands of the Keillors from the time it was built in 1813 to 1828.” No doubt Mona or someone like her was also the source of David Fensom’s knowledge of this date. Fensom was a Mount Allison biology professor with a keen interest in local architecture (many of you



will know of his pen and ink drawings of the house) and in October 1966 he led a tour of “houses of historical or artistic importance in the Sackville area.” They included “Keillor House, 1813.” The date was solidified in April 1967 when Machum delivered a paper to a meeting of the Society on the history of Keillor House and the Keillor family. Here he added another bit of information that had hitherto gone unnoticed in the Society—and has since failed to take root in the same way as the date. The title of his paper was “The Keillor” (notice that Fensom referred to ‘Keillor House’) and he left no doubt as to where it came from. “This house was affectionately referred to by neighbours as “The Keillor” and some of the older people today refer to it quite naturally by this name.”

That both the name and date derived from a local tradition that Machum had only recently tapped into, is made extremely likely by a more concrete piece of evidence that neither he nor anyone in the village except perhaps some who were connected with the penitentiary could have known about. It is an old photograph of the house dated September 17, 1922 and I will let it speak for itself. Some of you will have already seen it.



As you can see, the photo is in the Penitentiary Museum Archives in Kingston, but a copy of it, or perhaps the original, was part of the Dorchester penitentiary exhibit collected by Byron Duffy, one of the custodial staff there. Mr. Duffy was an early member of the Society and served as project manager of the restoration work on the house. After spending some years in the old provincial

jail, the exhibit was moved to the “carriage house” at the back of the museum, but several years ago this picture was brought into the house and placed in the glassed-in cupboard in the “butler’s pantry.” (Ed Bowes brought it to my attention and provided the picture you see here.) It is possible that the photo was another source of the name and date of the house, as Mr. Duffy was certainly active in the Society by 1966, but what it mainly proves is that both the name and date were known locally in 1922, whereas this information was apparently not common knowledge in the early 1960s, at least outside of Dorchester. (The other name on the photo is explained by the fact that at this time the house was owned by County Sheriff Joseph McQueen, of whom more anon.)

So we now have an oral tradition going back at least to 1922, but what was it based on? Was there some feature of the house that once told its exact date but was no longer extant by 1960? Before I answer, let me assure you that during the restoration nothing was discovered that dated the house to a precise year, or revealed its name. The Society was fortunate to be able to engage the services of Peter John Stokes, an award-winning pioneer in architectural conservation (among many other achievements he was the restoration architect of Upper Canada Village). In a report to the Society dated March 7, 1967 he described the house’s architectural merits and heritage value in considerable detail and made many valuable recommendations that were followed as closely as possible. Had there been anything to establish an exact date, he would certainly have noted it. But on this subject he said only that “the Keillor House is a very fine example of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century design and from the surviving original detail the date of 1812-13 is quite credible.” Clearly, this is what he had been told, not what he discovered for himself.

This is the dramatic moment to return to my question. The answer was revealed to me by Ed Bowes, a long time member of the Society who has done a lot of research in local history and donated much valuable material to our archives. During the 1940s the Bowes family lived in Keillor House, and both Ed and his two siblings still have a very clear memory of a window in the exterior door of the stone ell or lean-to on the west side of the building now called the ‘dairy room’. On it was engraved “The Keillor” 1813’. (Actually, Ed’s brother and sister think the date was 1812, while Ed thinks it could have been either 1812 or 1813, but in view of the photo I think we can attribute the 1812 memory to ‘time lapse’.) If the window was there in the 1940s, it was certainly there in 1922, and so now we know how whoever took the picture knew the name and date of the

## THE DATING OF KEILLOR HOUSE

house. You have probably already guessed in general terms why these words weren't on the window in the 1960s but I will tell the story anyway. It can all be put down to the follies of boyhood. Sometime in the summer of 1947 or 1948 (none of the siblings can remember which) Ed's older brother, Barry, "a mischievous rascal with his big smile and platinum blond hair" threw a rock at something and missed his target. The window was replaced by a very upset father, but the etching was not, and so the information passed into a local oral tradition that was fast fading by the time the Society got involved with the house.

Do we now have certain proof that Keillor House was built in 1813, and that it was always called "The Keillor?" Well, not quite, as there are still some complications. As can be seen almost immediately from looking at the building, the 'dairy room' was not part of the original structure. Exactly when it was added is impossible to say, but if, as appears to be the case, it was at roughly the same time as the ell on the opposite side, and if, as I think probable, that ell once served as a post office, then it could not have been before 1825, the year a post office was established in Dorchester. In any case John Keillor certainly didn't have these words etched on the glass immediately upon completing the house.

However, this is only a minor complication compared to the next one. There is another early photograph of the house in the museum (hanging in the hallway just outside the kitchen), this time from about 1890:



As you can plainly see, *there was no door on this side of the ell in 1890* In fact, even today you can still see where it originally was—on the north side facing the "carriage house."



So, far from dating from John Keillor's time, the window was installed and etched sometime between 1890 and 1922 and almost certainly after 1900 when Sheriff Joseph McQueen (or rather his wife) bought the house and a few acres around it from the estate of Thomas Keillor's widow. McQueen remodeled the 'dairy room' for use as his office (which explains the "tinned" ceiling and large mantelpiece), and no doubt put the new door in to make a more appropriate entrance. "The Keillor" 1813' was probably etched into the glass in order to lend an authentic touch, and follow the fashion of giving a name to upscale houses.

We are now left with the question of how McQueen could have known the date and name of the house. Since there is no more direct evidence to provide a definite answer, we can only weigh probabilities based on the few clues we have. I frankly think that the name is phony and was invented at the time the new door was installed. It's true that some of the local elite of John Keillor's time named their houses, as witness Amos Botsford's 'Westcock House' and Edward Barron Chandler's 'Rocklyn'. But quite apart from the question of whether John considered himself in their class (and I don't think he did) the designation "The Keillor" is implausible on the face of it. I know of no other house name that combines the definite article with the family name in this way. Certainly, there is none in a list of over one hundred American houses posted on Wikipedia. One need only imagine people talking about "The Botsford," "The Chandler," "The Wheldon" etc. to see how unlikely it is that John really

## THE DATING OF KEILLOR HOUSE

named his house “The Keillor,” although it’s just possible that he wanted it to be known as Keillor House. (I have run across a contemporary reference to “Botsford House.”)

While there is room for considerable skepticism regarding the name, the date may rest on a more solid oral tradition. I can’t prove it, of course, but I think it was probably supplied by Sheriff McQueen’s wife—along with the (re?) invented name of the house. As a daughter of William Keillor Chapman who married his cousin, Elizabeth Reid, Edessa Chapman McQueen was a great granddaughter of John and Elizabeth Weldon Keillor on both sides of her family and, having grown up in the gentility of ‘Brookside’ (the elegant home that stood on ground now occupied by St. Edward’s Church) where ancestry counted, she would have been keenly aware of that. No doubt it was a big factor in the purchase of the house, which she, rather than her husband, made. Thus, it is quite plausible that the date it was built, or one very close to it, was engrained into her from an early age by her parents and grandparents. But how accurate was their knowledge?

Now for the truth. There is another and more certain way to date old buildings besides oral tradition or architectural features, provided certain conditions are met. Called dendrochronology, it is based on the analysis of growth rings in trees, and if sufficient data are available it can reliably date the felling of a tree to the exact year. The first thing necessary is wood of the right kind, and this Keillor House has in the form of hackmatack sills and spruce beams. The second, and just as crucial, is a dendrochronology laboratory with a wide database of wood samples from the area where the beams etc. were cut. This became available in the late 1990s when Dr. Colin Laroque established one at Mount Allison University and, as luck would have it, an analysis was done on Keillor House in July 2002 by Dr. Laroque’s associate, André Robichaud. Apparently, it was on the initiative of Bernard LeBlanc, Conservator of the Musée acadien at the Université de Moncton and Adele Hempel, formerly Preservationist at the Owens Art Gallery but at the time Executive Director of Tantramar Heritage Trust. (The two of them were heavily involved in the restoration of the Treitz House in Moncton on which the dendrochronology lab was doing, or had done, a similar analysis.) The results were as follows:

Seven cores were taken from the major beams in the attic, all of them spruce wood, but for technical reasons that need not detain us here, only four were dateable. In the words of André’s

communiqué to me, “two were dated at 1814 (posts) and two in 1815 (post and floor beam). This means the attic wood was cut in those years and most probably incorporated in the house in 1815 or 1816.” He then added, “It is not impossible that other parts (lower levels?) of the house are of another (earlier?) age.”

The way to find out would have been to run a test on the sills, which one of the students actually did somewhat later. Unfortunately, the core samples were very damp and the terminal rings—the ones that tell when the tree was cut—were damaged, so they couldn’t be dated exactly. Since then, both Laroque and Robichaud have moved to other universities and the dendrochronology lab has stopped doing tests on old buildings, owing to increasing demands that were interfering with the researchers’ main work.

Once again we are frustrated in our quest for certainty. The dendrochronological analysis makes it possible, perhaps even likely, that the construction of Keillor House began in 1813, but it doesn’t prove it. What it does prove is that it was not finished until late 1815 at the very earliest, and most probably not until 1816. Nonetheless, although the oral tradition is not completely accurate, it is comforting to know that it’s not that far off, either.

*Gene Goodrich*



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E-mail: keillorhouse@nb.aibn.com  
www.keillorhousemuseum.com

#### Museum Hours

June 13 to Sept. 12 2015

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](mailto:morc@rogers.com)

#### Annual Fees

(Includes Newsletter)

Individual: \$15.00

Family: \$20.00

Student: \$5.00

Life: \$150.00

#### Research Associates

Judith Rygiel, W. E. Goodrich

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## GREATER DORCHESTER MOVING FORWARD

The Greater Dorchester Moving Forward Committee's mandate to enhance development, tourism and heritage in the region has been fully embraced by the Society.

It was agreed that WHS can contribute particularly with respect to historical signage, visitor information, marketing strategy, grant application expertise, and perhaps design ideas and grant submissions for development of the Irving property in the square.

A number of exciting opportunities exist to develop *new* facilities to attract birders, hikers (new trails and parks) and history buffs (new historical plaques, directional signage and 'history walks'.)

WHS has committed to place historical plaques on all of our historic properties in order to facilitate the development of (self-guided) 'history walks' through the village and local region.

There is a proposal to expand local parking and a new 'market' is already up and running (Thursdays). The 'Save Our School' Committee is also hard at work to implement daycare and after-school programs. Lady Smith Manor is preparing promotional tour packages and intends to partner with local eateries.

On June 10<sup>th</sup> a 'branding' exercise took place with the goal of finding a unique 'brand' for the village.

**For more information contact: Wendy Keats at [wendy.keats@cecnb.ca](mailto:wendy.keats@cecnb.ca)**

## SALUTING OUR VOLUNTEERS

A special thank you to Susan Spence for organizing silent auctions for our Mother's Day Tea and our AGM, Gail Baker for making the canopies for two new rope beds donated by Mrs. Charles Armour, and Andy Partridge for again tilling the garden at Keillor House.

Thanks also to Crystal Grant for volunteering to work with Alice on various grant applications.

*Cole Morison*