

# WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### *Bell Inn Update*

As many of you are aware, the Bell Inn Restaurant has had to close (as of August 15<sup>th</sup>). Sara and Andrew have decided to pursue other ventures, so we are looking for new proprietors to take over for the 2016 season. Several parties have expressed an interest, and a Board Committee will interview prospective owners beginning this fall. Of course, the Committee will be especially sensitive to the need to maintain the high reputation of the Bell Inn for quality and friendliness, and will seek new owners who share this vision. We are talking with Andrew and Sara about acquiring the artifacts, pictures and other items which were a part of the Bell Inn for so many years.

We have undertaken extensive renovations to the building over the past two years (See Newsletter, February 2015) to make it economically viable and to reduce heating costs for tenants, so we

believe that the building no longer presents a significant economic challenge for tenants wishing to establish a profitable business.

To cover expenses for the winter—it seems unlikely any new owners could open this fall—the third dining room (closest to the square) has been temporarily set up as an apartment, which it was at one time. If new owners wish to use it as a dining room, it can be converted back in a day or two. Happily, this apartment has already been rented and we are seeking tenants for the other two apartments, which are now highly desirable because of the extensive refurbishing that has taken place. Again, I want to acknowledge the work done by Bob and Kathy Bowser—and Alice, each of whom worked over many months to bring about this very successful refurbishing.

*Thank you again!*

### *Fall Fund-Raising and Events*

It's that time of year again. Our Haunted House Tours (October 16-17, 23-24<sup>th</sup>) promise to be better than ever. Marilyn and Ted Wheaton, Mike Shea and both their families and friends are already hard at work on the 'Dungeon of Doom'. Alice's volunteers from the Westmorland Institution have brought down the Halloween decorations and the 'transformation' has begun. This is our most successful fundraising event, so please mention it to your friends, and especially, to their children and grandchildren! Tickets at the door: Adults \$10.00, Students \$8.00 Reservations for The Victorian Christmas Dinners (November 28, December 5<sup>th</sup>) should be booked *now* because many visitors reserve their tickets a year ahead—and you don't want to be disappointed. Contact Alice

## KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM —SPECIAL EVENTS

### **Haunted House Tour**

Oct. 16-17; Oct 23-24

7:00-9:00 PM

\$10.00 Adult

\$8.00 Student

*For Ghosts and Goblins of All Ages*

### **Victorian Christmas Dinner**

Nov. 28 ; Dec. 5

6:30-10:00 PM

Tickets \$65

*Elegant Four-Course Victorian Dinner with Live Entertainment*

**Book Early**

**379-6620**

### ***Carolling at Keillor House***

Dec. 13, 2:00-4:00 PM

**Food Bank Donations in lieu of admission. *Christmas Music, Hot Cider & Christmas Cookies***

### ***Dorchester New Year's Levee***

**Jan 1, 1:00-3:00 PM following the Polar Dip**

*free*

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## MUSEUM MANAGER'S REPORT

As the 2015 season draws to a close, I can definitely say that this year has been one of precious memories at the Keillor House Museum. Thanks to the wonderful work of our activities coordinator, Alice Folkins, we were able to hire many brilliant students. Nabeel Malik, Aidan Ingalls, Rodrigo Martinez-Farina and Meghan Beaudin were our tour guides, Eric Maquignaz doubled as accessions cataloguer and tour guide, and I was the manager. We cannot forget our library worker Hannah Grant who is still working part-time in our library and part-time at the Dorchester Library. If I had to describe this season's staff in one word, it would definitely be "energetic". Every day was a new adventure and I believe this greatly contributed to the success we saw this year. When calculating attendance I saw a small drop in tourists this year but activities were more popular than ever! In total we saw almost 1000 people come through our museum doors.

This being said, our special exhibit is what really made this season stand out from the previous ones. *Precious Memories*, curated by Inga Hansen, was an exhibit demonstrating a side of World War II that most do not get to see. Along with ration books, photographs and even a CBC world map, the exhibit shared the love stories of two amazing couples that fell in love despite the hardships of the war. On display were the uniforms that Captain David MacAuley, and nurse Jean (McBain) MacAuley wore on their wedding day in January 1946. A little known fact about Ms. MacAuley is that she has a Dutch citizenship. Being unable to get married in Germany after the war due to the lack of a functioning government, the young couple had to cross into Holland and at least one of them had to be a citizen in order to wed. Thankfully, the mayor in a small village granted her an honorary citizenship that she holds to this day. Beside these stood the uniform of Dr. George Stanley and the beautiful satin wedding dress of his wife, Dr. Ruth Stanley. Many people revelled in the beauty of the 1950's gown, which Ms. Stanley is proud to say she purchased on her lunch break for only \$35.00 at Ogilvy's. We saw a good deal of Ruth this summer. She not only came to many of our events but she also came for tea in our Dinning Room! Alice Folkins sat down with Ruth, her friend Patrica George, Jean MacAuley and Jean's niece to have a lovely afternoon tea with lively discussion.

Other highlights of the year include our Canada Day celebrations and our recent Harvest supper. Although all our activities were a success, Canada Day stands out because of how different it was from our usual festivities. Held in the Veteran's Centre, it featured a large Canadian flag signed by the designer, Dr. George Stanley, in honour of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Canadian flags decorated almost every inch of the centre while the band, *Frantically Atlantic*, brought everyone to their feet. 'Entertaining' doesn't even begin to describe this band. If you were with us then you know what I mean. Their ability to involve everyone in their performance is outstanding. From the young to the young at heart, everyone was singing along, dancing or even playing with them on stage! Add that to our usual cake, ice cream and children's games and you have a truly great time. As for our Harvest supper, we didn't do anything differently from previous years, but the turnout was exceptional. We had roughly 115 people! That is a lot of mouths to feed in two hours, but our tireless volunteers were able to get the job done. I heard great things about the food, especially the deserts.

I'd like to end this by thanking everyone for such a wonderful season. This was my first year as Museum Manager and I must say I loved it. I have grown very attached to the Keillor House and Dorchester itself and am looking forward to having an even better season next year! The staff and I bid you farewell until June 2016 when we open our doors once again.

Ashley Beaudin

for reservations: 379-6620.

Our 'Hip of Beef' Harvest Supper was a great success with over 100 guests attending. I want to thank our many volunteers, and especially Deana Crossman and Annie Hendrickson who worked so hard 'behind the scenes'.

#### *Youth Employment Fund Internship*

This season, and continuing into the fall, Hannah Grant is working at Keillor House *and* the Dorchester Memorial Library as an intern. This program has enabled her to become familiar with the operations of both associations and to acquire a variety of valuable skills. Krista Johansen, Library Manager, in a recent Report gives us a sense of what she will be doing in the fall:

"Hannah is about to begin an online course in using *WordPress* for website development, in preparation for the creation of a blog presenting photos, articles, and other material of interest for the twinning project we have underway with the Dorchester Library in Dorchester, England. In the coming months she will learn to scan documents (art sent by children in England) and prepare it in the photo processing program *Gimp* to be uploaded to the blog. She will also have training in book-mending techniques and will increase her familiarity with *Adaptive Workstation* and print disability issues. By shadowing the library manager, she will also be learning about taking minutes at meetings, preparing statistical reports, budgets etc., and developing new library programmes."

I want to thank Alice for working with Krista in preparing the grant application that made Hannah's internship possible. *Great work, Alice!* In closing, I want to thank the Website Committee for first-rate work in developing an outstanding website for the Society. In an upcoming Newsletter we expect to provide a full report on this Committee's activities. I also want to thank Dee Milliken, our Supervisor at St. James Textile Museum, for another highly successful season (*see Dee's article p. 4*); Ashley Beaudin, our capable Museum Manager, for providing leadership and creating an outstanding work environment for our Guides (*see Ashley's article, p.5*); and Gene Goodrich, for his original research on so many subjects of interest to the heritage community. *Congratulations to all of you...well done.*

*Cole Morison*

## ST. JAMES TEXTILE MUSEUM REPORT

Our season started off early this year, when Alice, Judy and I went for a visit to Queens County Heritage in Gagetown to shop their Loomcrofters Museum yarn sale. We set out on a rainy morning to find ourselves at the former Queens County Courthouse in a huge room surrounded by yarns of every description! These yarns were left over from the former Loomcrofters Weavers studio and shop.

Loomcrofters, founded by Patricia Jenkins in 1945, designed and wove the tartans not only for the province of New Brunswick, but also for the city of Fredericton, the Royal Canadian Air Force and many other tartans known the world over. Two years ago, Queens County Heritage decided to take on the project of restoring and preserving textile examples and patterns that were left in the studio upon its close.

After a very pleasant visit, we enjoyed a wonderful lunch and headed back to St. James with our bounty. At about 70% off retail prices, this was a sale we could not afford to miss and it will keep the students and me weaving for several years. We picked up lots of cottons especially for our very popular tea towels.

We opened the second week of June, but were off to a slow start this summer, due to the weather, I would say. After such a seemingly endless winter, it seemed like spring would never come. I decided to load up two of our looms with warps for tea towels, one in twill and one in waffle weave. When my thirteen-year old daughter, Freya, finished school for the summer, she came down a few afternoons a week and volunteered with me, weaving on the twill while I worked on the waffle weave towels. This work enabled us to have plenty of new towels on hand for our visitors.

This summer we met people from all over North America, as far away as Kansas and Minnesota. A few families from Europe, came to visit one day, among them a couple from France. The husband was a weaver in the 1970s, selling mainly scarves, and we had a nice long visit talking about how very fascinating a process weaving is, and how the only limits to it are in our imaginations.

Towards the end of the summer, we had a visit from a textile executive from a fabric company in New York City. She was very impressed to see people actually still able and willing to weave by hand. She had visited weaving factories and seen the automation at work, but had never been able to see the process up close. She thoroughly enjoyed her visit.

An interesting remark I heard over and over this summer came from people from right here in New Brunswick who had discovered our museums, and even Dorchester itself, by accident. They would tell me they had been on their way home on the Trans Canada Highway, decided to take “the scenic route” down Route 106, and made the happiest of discoveries when coming upon our village. They said they had no idea we even existed. They were so happy to have found us and spent a very unexpected and pleasant afternoon in Dorchester. It makes me very happy to be a part of that.

On a personal note, ten years ago I had no idea what volunteering a few afternoons a week at St. James would lead me to. With a lifetime of various textile skills and historical textile knowledge, it seemed a perfect fit for me to do that. Betty Adams was a wonderful, skillful and knowledgeable teacher. She taught me to spin, and to weave on the floor looms. This year was my first summer without Betty, and I thought about her every day. I will forever be grateful to her.

Denyse Milliken

## THE ACQUISITION AND RESTORATION OF KEILLOR HOUSE: OUR FIRST ‘MEGAPROJECT’

*Editor’s Note: The following is the second in what I hope will become a series of articles on the history of the Westmorland Historical Society. It is based on the surviving minutes of the Society, the early Newsletters and materials in the WHS archives at Mt. Allison.*

In the last issue we learned about the founding of the Westmorland Historical Society and the astonishing range and frequency of its activities during 1961, its first banner year. The main emphasis was on papers delivered at the regular meetings, field trips of interest for the county’s history, efforts to preserve historic buildings such as the Free Meeting House in Moncton and initiatives to develop historic sites such as Fort Monckton (originally Fort Gaspereau) as tourist attractions. But, right from the beginning, one of its objectives was to acquire a museum. At the very first meeting, held Octo-

ber 3, 1960—before the Society was formally founded—Dr. George MacBeath, Curator of the New Brunswick Museum and the main inspiration for the founding of county historical societies in New Brunswick, declared that every county society should eventually have a museum.

The Society was quick to respond. At the first Annual General Meeting, held on May 15, 1961, a Museum Committee reported on several possible sites: the Free Meeting House, the transportation museum advocated by the Moncton Board of Trade (to be made out of the old C.N.R. roundhouse) and even “rebuilding the Old Acadian Chapel destroyed in 1758.” (It’s not clear from the minutes which destroyed chapel was meant—there were a number of them.) One of the Directors, Mrs. C.E. Cook of Dorchester, made a suggestion from the floor. She “thought the old Keillor House might be available for purchase at a reasonable price. An old brick (*sic*) house, it was in

good condition and very historical.” This was the first mention of Keillor House as a possibility, and it came very early. But it was by no means an inevitable choice, nor was it certain that the Society would ever have the means to make such an acquisition. Its first choice seems to have been the Free Meeting House, which Moncton members (the majority at that time) like President Lloyd Machum for some time envisioned as a repository for archives and artifacts as well as the Society’s eventual headquarters. The most powerful thing Keillor House had going for it at this time was its owner’s eagerness to sell.

The owner was Eva Davis, who had bought it from the Bowes family in 1953 (she renamed it ‘Stone Haven Lodge’). By 1961 she was getting on in years and no longer able to maintain it properly. After hearing that the Society might be in the market for a historic property, she wrote a letter that was read at the November meeting, offering to sell. Perhaps out of curiosity as much as anything else, the Secretary was instructed to ask about the price, but also to explain that WHS was “just in our infancy and without funds.” (It had just \$50 in the bank.) Mrs. Davis responded with another letter, dated February 3<sup>rd</sup> and read at the March 1962 regular meeting, stating the amount she wanted: \$6500. It was not answered until after the AGM in May when, after considerable humming and hawing, both the Directors and the general meeting had to admit that, “this building could not be afforded at this time by the Society.”

Attention then returned to the Free Meeting House. The new President (Frank Sayer, who succeeded Lloyd Machum) had been in contact with Fredericton regarding the possibility of having it deeded to WHS, but the trustees balked at this idea. It was then decided to present the matter to the Moncton City Council and to ask the Provincial Sites Advisory Board to designate it as a historic site. The Society also asked City Council for space in a recently decommissioned fire station on St. George Street that it might use as a temporary museum. Earlier, a request had also gone to the new Moncton Public Library for filing space for our archives. (This was granted in early 1963, although it only amounted to one filing cabinet. When this proved unsatisfactory, the archives were eventually moved to Mount Allison University Library in 1975 where they still repose.) However, by the end of 1962 it was becoming apparent that neither the Free Meeting House nor the fire station idea was going to work out any time soon. WHS was informed that all available space in the fire station was occupied (this may have had something to do with the

statement in the request that “the Society is not prepared to put out any great financial assistance at the present time”) and repeated letters to City Council recommending immediate action to restore the Free Meeting House went unanswered.

Then in 1963 a new factor came into play that became key to the acquisition and restoration of Keillor House. In January of that year, the Centennial Commission was formed to dispense unprecedented largesse in preparation for the celebration of Canada’s one-hundredth birthday. Its Commissioner was John Fisher (1912-1981), a very popular CBC roving reporter who, from 1943 to 1955, travelled the length and breadth of the land proclaiming its wonders in a thrice-weekly programme called ‘John Fisher Reports.’ Because of it, he was known as ‘Mr. Canada’. In 1963, besides being Chief Centennial Commissioner, he was Director of the Canadian Tourist Association, a special assistant to Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, and altogether a good man for a young historical society to know. Best of all, he was born in Sackville. By August a letter had been written to him, asking for suggestions as to what the WHS might do to commemorate the Centennial in 1967.

Another important but unheralded link in this chain of events was Professor Charles F. Humphries, Chair of the Archives Committee and a Vice President of the Society. Before joining the Mount Allison History Department he had been a member of the research team that guided the development of Upper Canada Village and was personally acquainted with its much-acclaimed chief restoration architect, Peter John Stokes. At the April meeting he addressed the Society on the great accomplishments at Upper Canada Village and in October attended the conference of New Brunswick historical societies where Stokes was one of the main attractions. In his report, Professor Humphries mentioned that Mr. Stokes had recently visited two historic houses in the area, the Siddal House near Fort Beauséjour (which was built by John Keillor’s father—unfortunately it burned down in 1976), and the Chapman House at Point de Bute.

Later we will note the connection between John Fisher, Peter John Stokes and the restoration of Keillor House as a Centennial Project. That was still in the future. Until almost the end of 1964 the focus was again on the Free Meeting House, as things had finally begun to move on that front. In February the provincial government repealed the trusteeship and granted it to the City of Moncton, and soon afterwards its Centennial Committee recommended that it work with WHS in restoring the building to its original condition, and that this

be considered a Centennial Project. The Society seemed committed to this until late in the year when the subject of a county museum—for which the Free Meeting House was unsuited—rather suddenly came to the fore again after having lain dormant for some time. (After acquiring the Free Meeting House the city decided to restore it itself, and so dropped it as a Centennial Project. Only years later, was the job finally finished.) The reason for the renewed interest in a county museum was a policy change at the Fort Beauséjour Museum. As Dr. William L. Webster explained to a Directors meeting in November, the museum had hitherto served both as a national museum commemorating an event of national significance and as a local museum. However, under new staff unaware of the policy committed to, items of purely local interest were no longer to be displayed. Moreover, any new articles donated locally would henceforth become the property of the Crown and allowed to be taken anywhere in Canada for display. Thus, there was a greater need than ever for a county museum.

Dr. Webster (1903-1975) was listened to with great respect. The youngest son of Dr. J. Clarence Webster, the acclaimed Shediac-born physician-turned-historian who was responsible for the establishment of the Fort Beauséjour Museum (as well as a great deal of excellent historical research and writing on the early history of this region), Dr. William was a brilliant physicist who had worked under Ernest Rutherford and Sir James Chadwick and was awarded both the Order of the British Empire and the American Freedom Medal for his wartime work, which included serving as Secretary for the Manhattan Project. After his father's death in 1950, he returned to Shediac and became a trustee of the Webster Museum Foundation at the New Brunswick Museum (working closely with Dr. MacBeath) and also continued his father's interest in the Fort Beauséjour Museum. Keenly interested in the history of Westmorland County, he was a charter member of WHS and a close associate of Moncton lawyer R.W. Hewson Q.C. (1895-1963), noted local historian and honorary Curator of Fort Beauséjour Museum (following J. Clarence Webster). As you may remember from the last issue of the Newsletter, Hewson gave the Society's first historical paper.

Dr. Webster's prompting led to the first serious discussion of acquiring a permanent dedicated museum. Three candidates were mentioned at the November Directors meeting: Cranewood in Sackville and Rocklyn and Stone Haven (Keillor House) in Dorchester. The first two were quickly eliminated because of the price, although the Society continued to support efforts to have Cranewood declared a national historic site with a view to preserving it in the condition it was in when occupied by the Wood family. Sometime in

1964 the idea had come up of turning Keillor House into a combined county museum and local library, and at its December meeting the Board of Directors discussed in some detail how this might be done. It was apparently at this point that it occurred to them that it could be an ideal Centennial Project. An ad hoc committee consisting of President Alex Pincombe, Lloyd Machum and Miss Louise Dixon was appointed to look into the matter.

*Decision Day, January 20, 1965.*

A note of urgency was sounded by a communication from the Provincial Centennial Committee informing the Society that the deadline for applying for a Centennial grant was 12:05 PM January 20, 1965, a mere month away. The committee appears to have gotten its act together very quickly and efficiently, organizing an emergency general meeting on January 16 in the Dorchester High School to come to a decision on what was now being called the Keillor House Project. Dr. Webster set the stage by addressing the meeting with the same points he had made to the Board in November of the previous year. President Pincombe followed through by outlining what the ad hoc committee had found out regarding how the project might be financed and gotten off the ground: Experts might be sent from Ottawa to help set up the museum; Mark Yeoman would act as the Society's solicitor *pro bono*; the county might contribute some funds; the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce (there was still one in 1965) had a fund that might be used for the library; Mrs. Davis might be persuaded to come down in her price...etc. There was much community support, and not just from Dorchester. The Foundation Company of Canada, Moncton branch, had offered to send its head survey engineer to Dorchester to do a complete estimate of the cost of restoration for free. Herbert Beal, President of the Sackville Board of Trade, who was present at the meeting, assured the Society of Sackville's support for the project and hoped that the two communities could be linked as areas of historic interest. Questions from the floor regarding the Society's financial contribution were met with assurances that we could borrow the money to buy the building and repay through membership fees, admission fees to the museum and a fundraising campaign. At this time WHS had 225 members and the possibility of 1000 was envisaged. (This was never reached, but at one point—1971—we had 380.) Last, but not least, we might get a federal grant of up to \$8000 from the Centennial Commission for the restoration of historical sites. In the end this turned out to be the biggest source of funds for the project. In spite of lingering doubts about the Society's ability to finance such an undertaking, the meeting was persuaded to

go ahead with it and a motion was passed unanimously empowering the Board to act as it saw fit.

By February 1965 things were well underway. The Centennial Commission approved the project and the initial estimate of the cost of purchasing the building and making the necessary repairs came in at about \$15,000. (It turned out to be nearly double that.) President Allan MacBeth contacted John Fisher, who responded enthusiastically by sending Bob Hume, Assistant Director of the Centre of Science and Technology in Toronto and a specialist in museum design, down to Dorchester to supervise the beginnings of the project. Work started about March even though Mrs. Davis didn't get her money until the end of the year. She had apparently been going to New York for the winter, leaving the house unheated, so the Royal Bank in Dorchester lent the Society some wood to get the fires going and bring the building slowly up to temperature. A Mr. McGraw tended the fires while his wife cleaned house. A man was hired to fix a leak in the roof that had damaged a ceiling on the first floor...etc. Then came the realization of just what the Society had gotten itself into. The formal agreement with the county, making the museum and the Dorchester Regional Library a Centennial Project, was signed on March 29. The Centennial Commission had granted the maximum of \$8000 and, by the terms of the agreement, the Society had until July 1 to raise the other \$7000.

This set off a flurry of fundraising activity. Of course there were appeals to the generosity of the membership, but two members in particular made noteworthy contributions. Professor David Fensom of the Mount Allison Biology Department was keenly interested in the historic buildings of the area and was also a talented pen and ink artist. He made a number of sketches of Keillor House that were printed up as 'Hasty Notes' (we still have some on hand) and marketed around the county, with all proceeds donated to the Society. (One might say that his contribution was doubly 'noteworthy'.) Lloyd Machum wrote a very comprehensive *History of Moncton* that later won an award from the American Association for State and Local History and he, too, put its proceeds to the same good use. By 1968 the Hasty Notes, and particularly the *History of Moncton*, would bring in close to \$6000, second only to the Centennial grants from the federal and provincial governments. Unfortunately, the response to appeals for donations and canvassing efforts from the membership was rather disappointing, amounting to only \$4,476 by early 1968. This was a constant theme of the early Newsletters, which began in April 1965 under the editorship of—Lloyd Machum. In order to meet the July 1 deadline for raising \$7000, the Society incorporated (Mark Yeoman did the legal work gratis) and made arrangements to borrow \$6000

from CIBC—this was apparently the final price—to complete the purchase of the house, which it did at the end of December. In the meantime, Bob Hume had addressed the Annual General Meeting in May, outlining the questions that must be answered before serious alterations and renovations of the building should get underway: What time in the history of the house do we want to emphasize? What kinds of artifacts do we want to display? Do we want to create a living museum with costumed employees acting as guides, or simply house a collection of curiosities to be admired...etc?

1966 was the year the restoration work started in earnest. For some reason not apparent from the minutes, the idea of a combined museum and library was dropped and the decision was made to restore and refurnish the house more or less as it would have been in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and to display only artifacts that fit this theme. It soon became evident that much more would be involved than making a few repairs and fixing a few leaks, as all the accretions and alterations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would have to go. One of the biggest undertakings would be the recovery and restoration of the kitchen. For years, it had been used as a shed and garage. The wonderful old fireplace was bricked in, a door cut into the east wall to accommodate a car—in short it was a mess. The smaller annex that now serves as the kitchen was in such bad shape that it had to be torn down and rebuilt. Care had to be taken to maintain the original structures and materials as far as possible, and this was much more expensive than simply ripping out and redoing.

Fundraising worries—and activities—mounted with the costs, but fortunately there was a generous response from governments that can only make us nostalgic for the exuberant mood of the centennial celebrations when heritage was, for all too brief a term, riding high in public estimation. The Centennial Grants were actually *increased* to \$10,500. On the other hand that put additional pressure on the Society to do its share, and its fundraising goal was raised to \$10,000 (which it never reached). Nevertheless, the work went on, as one member said, "on faith." The Museum Committee under the extremely able chairmanship of Sylvia Yeoman assumed general guidance of the project and was empowered to let out the contracts. (Yes, she was called 'chairman'—this was still in the Dark Ages when the masculine included the feminine, grammatically speaking.) William Crandall of Moncton agreed to act as General Supervisor and Byron Duffy of Dorchester as Interior Supervisor of the work on the building (both as volunteers, needless to say). The contractor whose crew did the actual work was Leandre Dupuis of Memramcook. He had built many buildings in the area, including eleven schools but he always said that Keillor House

was the job that gave him the most pleasure of any in his career. Mr. Dupuis was a jovial man with a great sense of humour in spite of the fact that he did his work from a wheelchair, having lost the use of his legs as the result of a terrible accident. The other members of the Museum Committee were Mr. & Mrs. Frank Dobson (Dorchester), Mr. & Mrs. Jack Bain (Dorchester), Mr. Kenneth Dobson (Dorchester), Mrs. H.G. Palmer (Moncton), Mr. Edward Jeffrey (Moncton), Mrs. David Robertson (Riverview), Prof. D.S. Fensom (Sackville), Mrs. Lloyd Machum (Sackville) and the President *ex officio*.

In her report to the AGM on June 6 Chairman Sylvia said that it had been decided to do the exterior of the house during the summer and autumn, with the aim of completing the masonry repairs and getting the chimneys and roofs in order before winter. Something might be done with the interior during the winter, but it was impossible to have the whole house ready by June 1, 1967, the target date for opening. The plan was now to have an appreciable portion done, with work to continue after the closing in September. She was glad to be able to say that we had "acquired a set of old hand-made tools, some from the house-building trade, some from the ship-building and blacksmith trades" (they are still on display; the foot organ was also acquired about this time) and asked members to let the Museum Committee know of "articles suitable for furnishing a family home between 1812 and 1900." "To gain interest and support," she announced an open house at Keillor House on Saturday June 11 (no doubt its first public event) when coffee and doughnuts would be served and a silver collection taken. Almost as an afterthought, she mentioned that she had recently attended a workshop in Halifax put on by the newly formed (and now defunct) Atlantic Museums Association to "train those of us who suddenly find themselves with a museum and don't know what to do!" Sylvia would attend a number of such workshops over the next few years and was our first Museum Manager.

The 1966 AGM undoubtedly got another morale booster when John Fisher, Mr. Canada himself, addressed the group. He was very enthusiastic about the Keillor House Project, and a noted speaker and raconteur to boot. Unfortunately, the minutes break off in May 1966, before the AGM, and do not resume until October 1967. (The Secretary, Mr. Keith Chappell, was transferred to Halifax and apparently it was difficult to find a replacement.) Strangely, nothing was said about the talk in the Newsletter, except that it was given, so we can't know exactly what he said. But we can be sure it was inspirational.

Things went ahead more or less as planned. The October

1966 issue of the Newsletter reported that work on the stone exterior began on September 26 and that tenders would soon be called for covering the wooden ell (the historic kitchen) before winter. It also reminded members that the work must be paid for. "The plain fact of the matter is," the editor scolded, "the time for raising our share can no longer be delayed."

#### *The Stokes Report*

Another important step on the road to restoration was the Stokes Report. In March 1967 Peter John Stokes, probably Canada's premier restoration architect, came down from Toronto and spent a few days examining Keillor House. He confirmed that the original construction date of ca. 1812-1813, which the Society had settled on by this time, was architecturally credible, but also noted renovations that he thought had been made around 1840. (On the basis of my research on the Keillors, I think they were more likely made after 1851 when Thomas Keillor, the son who inherited the house, married Mary Jane Moore. But that's a story for another time and place.) They include the archway in the parlour, as well as the mantelpieces there and in the dining room, and the clear architectural evidence that the kitchen had been enlarged around the same time. By carefully observing details such as stud markings and closed-in doorways, he was able to reconstruct something resembling the original floor plan and to identify the separate architectural elements from the two periods of construction and renovation. However, he felt that a complete restoration of the original house was unfeasible and in any case inappropriate if the idea was to illustrate something of the history of the Keillor family. Instead, he suggested a combined approach that would restore certain essential features of the original (in particular the walnut rail and balustrade leading up to the attic, the front door, and, above all, the fireplace and bake oven in the kitchen) but place the main emphasis on the house as it might have appeared around mid century. This was the plan that was followed.

Work continued at a feverish pace throughout the spring of 1967, members were solicited for items that might be placed in the museum, and all went about as well as could be hoped for. Lloyd Muir, Curator in the Department of Canadian History, New Brunswick Museum, was guest speaker at the AGM in May. His theme was the value, usefulness and importance of local history, a timely topic. Lloyd Machum, the Society's first President, was again elected, a fitting tribute to the man who had done so much for the cause (although he gave Sylvia much of the credit for getting the museum going). Lloyd served two more terms before being relieved in 1969-70 by Harold Steeves.

The Westmorland Centennial Museum (please note the name,



as it was not destined for long life) opened its doors to the public on Thursday June 1. The following Saturday, June 3, a fundraising tea planned for 500 and organized, you may be sure, by Sylvia, was held in two sittings at the Dorchester Regional High School Auditorium. Along with the tea and the usual yummy bits, it featured performances by the Westmorland Singers and a specially prepared skit of "The Keillor Family of 1813." However, the official opening was not until July 13 (to fit the schedule of the Provincial Centennial Commission for attendance of officials, military band, guard of honour and a flypast). The ribbon was cut by Margaret Rideout, our MP, and the Hon. Wendell Meldrum, Minister of Education.

The public response to the museum was most gratifying. Some 2500 visitors made the pilgrimage the first season and this number mounted almost every year until 1974 when it peaked at over 4,000 before falling off to the mid 3000 range and lower in and after 1976. (For those who may be discouraged by this fall in numbers: In 1965 Uniacke House in Nova Scotia had 37,993 visitors; now it averages about 3-5,000. Loyalist House in Saint John had 6000 visitors in 1965. This year there were about 2500.) The first museum attendant was Bob Hickman Junior, who still lives in Dorchester. He was followed in 1968 and 1969 by David McAllister, who, together with Wayne Jones, would later make his mark as the successor of Sylvia and Katie Yeoman at the Bell Inn Restaurant.

As planned, restoration work was halted during the first visiting season, but resumed in September and, in spite of ongoing fundraising worries, was pretty well finished by the spring of 1968, including an apartment over the kitchen for a custodian. (The first custodian was Mrs. L. Marriot who was much praised for working beyond the call of duty by pinch-hitting as a museum guide when not enough volunteers could be found.) As an added bonus, the Penitentiary gave us an old building that was once used for some purpose (I don't know which) in the Methodist Burying Ground (now called the Pioneer Cemetery) and later maintained by the pen as a storage building. The Society first used it as a "repository for non-household articles, farm tools and implements commonly found in sheds, barns etc." (Newsletter November 1967) Today we call it the 'Coach House' and, while it still houses the original articles, fittingly enough, it has since become the home of the Penitentiary Collection that owes its existence to Byron Duffy's foresight.

In the February 1968 issue of the Newsletter, President Machum remarked, "Financing has been close all the way

during restoration but somehow we have always managed. The various levels of government have kept their pledges and we expect our final Centennial grant very soon. We have not done quite as well ourselves." The 1968 Museum Financial Report tells at a glance what he was talking about:

REVENUE	
Municipality of Westmorland.....	\$5,500
Donations .....	4,476
Centennial grants .....	14,000
Provincial grant 1967.....	1,000
Sales and admissions .....	936
WHS sales (Hasty Notes, <i>History of Moncton</i> )..	6,000.....\$31, 912
EXPENDITURES	
Original purchase plus interest.....	\$6,161
Restoration costs paid and payable.....	28,056
Light and fuel.....	1,065
Insurance.....	357
Advertising .....	181
Telephone.....	63
Wages of attendant.....	675 .....
	\$36,558
	<b>Deficit \$4, 646</b>

\$4,646 may not seem like much of a deficit nowadays, but it was quite a bit back then, and it worried the Directors for some time. Happily, however, it all worked out in the end, although it took a while. Because of large museum attendances and successful fundraising events like the teas put on at Rocklyn, courtesy of the Yeomans, the November 1972 issue of the Newsletter was able to report, "At no time in our history have we enjoyed the enviable position we are in financially. One bank loan has been paid off and the second diminished to the point that in the New Year we will be debt free. A new bored well at Keillor House delayed the elimination of our second loan." Keillor House was finally ours—at least in a psychological sense. By the terms of the government grants, after it was purchased from Mrs. Davis it was deeded to the county and leased back to the Society for 99 years. When counties went by the wayside it was taken over by the province. It was not until 2004 as part of the negotiations for restoring the front wall that it was finally deeded over to the Society in fee simple. One of the conditions of the Centennial grants was that it would be named the Westmorland Centennial Museum, and so it was—officially. But within a few years, that name went the way of the county and the dodo bird and by the mid 1970s it was regularly advertised as the

Keillor House Museum, its (unofficial) name today. So much for gratitude.

In spite of the relatively lacklustre response to the financial campaigns, the acquisition and restoration of Keillor House was a tremendous achievement that owed much to the heroic efforts of the Society's most active members (there were more of them than mentioned here), and we in turn owe them a lasting debt of gratitude. It's also worth mentioning that, throughout all these restoration activities, papers on local history were regularly delivered at general meetings held several times a year, and a number of field trips were also undertaken. However, they became less frequent thereafter and the two phenomena were probably not unrelated. The Society had now taken on responsibilities undreamed of during its early days, ones that would shift its focus and, over time, fundamentally alter its nature. But that, too, is a story for another time.

Gene Goodrich

## REPORT ON THE KEILLOR PROJECT: IT'S ALMOST DONE, FOLKS!

At long last I have finished the first draft of my monumental study of the Keillor family. There is still considerable editing to be done, and getting it ready for the printer will also take a fair amount of time, as it's nearly 400 pages long and will be gone over very thoroughly by a skilful copy editor who has an eagle eye for detail. But it's now in the bag and should be ready for your delectation by early spring. You will probably be surprised at its length and no doubt be asking: is there really that much material on the Keillors? Well, yes and no. The Keillors themselves left nothing in the way of diaries, personal letters or other direct testimony apart from a couple of business letters and a few lines of awkward love poetry written by John—otherwise nothing that tells us anything directly about their character or their thoughts and feelings. A few anecdotes have filtered down through oral family tradition but they are very brief, and in any case they have long since been gathered by Lloyd Machum, WHS's first President—the first and last person before me to undertake serious research on the Keillors. This Machum did in conjunction with the restoration of Keillor House. The sources of the anecdotes were some unnamed Keillor descendants and a lady whose aunt, Matilda Saulnier, had worked for the last Mrs. Keillor and had herself as a young girl spent her summer vacations in the house. They are all told, and very quickly, in

Machum's eight-page pamphlet *The Dorchester Keillors* written for the museum and sold in the gift shop.

However, just because there is not much direct evidence to go on doesn't mean there is nothing more to be said about the Keillors. A surprising amount can be learned about them—and indeed about many other early settlers—from the indirect and unwitting testimony of land grants, petitions, deeds of purchase and sale, wills, estate inventories, account books, business letters, court records, miscellaneous family papers (unfortunately, not the Keillors', as they left none), tombstones, genealogical records and other silent witnesses, including Keillor House itself. The bad news about this kind of evidence is that it requires a great deal of space-consuming analysis to make it yield its story, which can be tedious to read if not written up very carefully. (Even then it is bound to have its tranquilizing moments.) The good news is that in this case it introduced all sorts of other people besides the Keillors and all sorts of other topics that I would never have discussed, had I relied on 'direct' evidence alone. I shared an example with you in the February 2015 issue of the *Newsletter* where I analyzed John Keillor's account with Amos Fowler during the years 1789-99 in terms of what it can tell us about his economic circumstances and standard of living—and in general about the kinds of goods that were available during Dorchester's early days. I promise you, there are many more

like this, ranging from how and where the Keillors established their farms, to Anglo-Acadian relations in the Memramcook Valley, to the structure of local government and the authority of local officials like John Keillor. (The section on John includes a summary of the essential points I made in *Local Government in Early Westmorland County*, as I know not everyone has a copy.) The book offers information on a good deal more than just the Keillors. It should also appeal to anyone interested in the early history of this area, and especially Dorchester.

The other thing about this kind of evidence—or any evidence, I suppose—is that it has to be found. Materials for writing history don't often show up unannounced on the historian's doorstep. They have to be sought out, and sometimes they can be hiding in the most unlikely places. Of course there are certain methods in historical research, but even when they are followed rigorously it is surprising how often things still turn up by chance. The fact is, behind every historical work there is another story, that of the discovery of the evidence. Historians seldom tell it, but I think we should, at least occasionally, because readers can otherwise too easily get an impression of inevitability and finality that is unjustified. New evidence, or the same evidence interpreted by a different historian, could lead—and has often led—to different conclusions, and the reader as well the historian (not always to be taken for granted in the latter case) should be aware of this. Another reason for telling it is that it is sometimes interesting. I shared an example with you in the September 2014 issue of the *Newsletter* where I related how a stupid blunder in ordering a microfilm led to the discovery of a hitherto unsuspected record of an account that John Keillor had with his nephew, Harmon Trueman, one that offered precious new information on both of them. There are a number of such 'Historian's Tales' in the book, and they, too, contribute to its length.

Because I found much more material than I had expected to, and decided to explore it more fully than perhaps strictly necessary since it contains a lot of interesting and hitherto unpublished information, I didn't quite accomplish what I set out to do. My original intention was to give an exhaustive account based on all the surviving evidence of both generations of Keillors who lived in Keillor House, namely John and Elizabeth (née Weldon) and their youngest son, Thomas and his wife, Mary Jane (née Moore). I think I did that for John and Elizabeth but there is still more that could be done on Thomas and Mary Jane, although I got much of the way towards that goal. It took more space than I had anticipated for the accounts (in a couple of cases quite long ones) of John and Elizabeth's other children (there were seven of them) and I also decided that two of John's brothers, Robert and Thomas, needed to be in the picture. (His other siblings make only brief appearances, but there is also a fair bit on his parents, especially his mother.) As a result, the bulk of the book focuses—if that's the right word—mainly on John and the rest of his immediate family, while Thomas is treated in an extended Epilogue and Robert and Thomas each gets an Appendix to himself. To warn of the rambling nature of the narrative and the frequent intrusion of my own adventures in seeking out the sources, I have tentatively entitled it *In Search of John Keillor: An Historian's Odyssey*. I had originally settled on *The Keillors of Keillor House, Dorchester*. A more accurate title would probably be *A Lot of Stuff on the Keillors and Much Else Besides*, but it might not be good for sales. I will keep you posted on the publication date and will probably tell you more about the book at that time.

Gene Goodrich



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 13 to Sept. 12 2015  
 Tuesday to Saturday  
 10:00 to 5:00 p.m.  
 Sunday

## PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

The Westmorland Historical Society is a non-profit charitable organization founded in 1960 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

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Judith Rygiel, W. E. Goodrich

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## SALUTING OUR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS



In this issue we express our special thanks to Gail Baker for sewing all the drapes for the two canopy beds at Keillor House and then making the window curtains to match. As usual, we have Alice to thank for the recruitment coup. She met Gail at a friend's house where a group of kindly ladies have been meeting every week to sew up hundreds of dresses for little girls in Africa so that they can go to school. All these ladies are keen quilters and sewers, so Alice had little trouble in persuading them to help her clean out the sewing room at the Landry House. While they were working at it, Alice's gears got to going and the next thing Gail knew she had volunteered to do the drapes. Alice then invited her to a 'photo op'—"just for our records," she said—and slyly slipped her the rest of the

fabric, upon which she willingly volunteered to make the curtains for the bedroom windows as well. Alice told me that Gail is a "one of a kind lady," and I am sure she is. But we are also blessed with many more "one of a kind" volunteers who make our two museums the shining gems they are. Thank you, Gail, from Alice and all of us.

*Your Editor*