

# WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 52 ISSUE # 1 FEBRUARY, 2017 ISBN320813

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been an outstanding year with an ambitious calendar of events and two critical Board initiatives undertaken this fall (*See Strategic Planning Workshop, Staff News, below*)

### *Fund Raising and Upcoming Events*

This year's four Haunted House Nights (Oct. 14-15, 21-22) raised over \$8,294 for the museum. Over the summer Mike Shea worked for many weeks designing and then building a new dramatic 'dungeon experience' for our visitors, with help from Marilyn and Ted Wheaton—and their families and friends. Other volunteers—up to 35 each night, 'manned' the museum. Many thanks to Bernie Melanson and his student volunteers. Our Victorian Dinners (Nov. 26, Dec. 3) were sold out, and thanks again to Bernie, his volunteers and many others. Both nights were successful—with over \$2,800 raised for museum activities. We hosted the New Year's

Levee Jan 1st for the village and a Volunteer 'Pizza' Party (Jan. 15) to thank all of you again.

On Heritage Day (Feb. 18), Dee Miliken, Supervisor of St. James Textile Museum, will give a demonstration on our behalf at Tantramar Heritage Trust's Heritage Day Breakfast—Judy Morison, our Secretary, will also be there representing the New Brunswick Mat Registry.

The special exhibit *Homey Elegance, Aspiring Gentility: The Furniture Makers of Westmorland County*, so successful in 2016, will be held over for the 2017 season.

*Summary of Other Donations for 2016 (Not Adjusted for 2016 Year End)*

To Museum Activities  
\$4,007

To Graydon Milton Portfolio  
\$1,285

To Expenses  
\$3,500  
Total  
\$8,792

### *Strategic Planning Workshop*

On November 12, the Board participated in a Strategic Planning Workshop under the direction of Wayne Burley, former Director of Heritage Branch, to review our Mission, Strengths, Opportunities and Priorities, and set out Goals for the next three years. In this Results-Focused exercise, we selected five major Goals and are developing appropriate Tasks with assigned time lines and milestones.

The Board is enthusiastic about this new Strategic Plan (replacing our 2004 Strategic Plan) and to working with our new Museum Manager.

*I want to thank the Board for their partici-*

## KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM — SPECIAL EVENTS

### **Mother's Day Tea- Keillor House Museum**

May 13, 2:00-4:00

*Tea, sandwiches and cakes served in the elegant setting of the Keillor House. Silent Auction. Call for tickets.*

506 379-6695, Susan Spence

### **Keillor House & St. James Museum Openings**

June 10, 2:30 (after the Shiretown Festival Parade)

*Celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of Keillor House.*

*Refreshments*

*Free guided tours for the day with costumed staff*

### **Canada Day-Dorchester Veterans' Centre**

July 1, 1:00-3:00

*Special music and entertainment, children's games, cake and ice cream.*

*Keillor House and St. James Museums tours available 10:00 to 12:00 and 3:00 to 5:00.*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

ANOTHER HONOUR FOR ALICE	2
THE WELDON HEARSE AT KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM	4
CAPTAIN EDMUND O'NEAL, AUNT 'EM' AND THE KAISER'S WATCH	9
AN 'UPDATE' ON THE DATE OF KEILLOR HOUSE	11
OUR VOLUNTEERS	12

## ANOTHER HONOUR FOR ALICE



On November 17 our Alice received the 2016 Siegfried Janzen Award from the Dorchester Penitentiary Minimum Sector for her life changing impact on inmates who volunteer for its work release programme. For many years she has been supervising—and working right alongside—“her boys” in a myriad of projects for WHS, ranging from painting and repairing our historic buildings to helping out with our special events to mowing our lawns and doing general maintenance to...(The list is too long to even attempt here. For some idea of the staggering extent of her and their contributions to WHS, see the articles on Alice in the last two issues of the Newsletter.)

But Alice is far more than a supervisor. Her kindly ways, her non-judgmental, open and affectionate attitude towards her charges—above all, the example of genuine humanity she sets—often have a powerful therapeutic effect on them. They don't feel like ‘inmates’ when they are working with Alice, but like valued members of a team doing important work for the community. And

the result is—growth. Well is she worthy of the words on the certificate that goes with the commemorative crystal clock: “Presented by the Dorchester Penitentiary Minimum Sector to an individual who has contributed to improving the quality of life of all citizens through his or her dedication to the personal growth of our inmates.”

The award ceremony was held in the Westmorland Institution chapel with some sixty people in attendance, including many inmates who had worked with Alice, two of whom spoke movingly of what she had done for them. Frank Landry, the manager of the programme, described the life changing effect of her kindness on these men's lives. Also present were Warden Jennifer Fillmore, President Cole Morison of WHS, Village Counsellor Wayne Feindel and Alice's family and friends. Siegfried Janzen's daughter, Wilma, presented the award after which Alice spoke of the many rewards she had experienced working with these men. The inmates put on a sumptuous buffet and provided first-rate musical entertainment throughout the evening.

Pictured with Alice are Frank Landry, Community Engagement/Volunteer Coordinator (left) and Gerry Morrissey, representative of the Inmate Committee Dorchester Penitentiary Minimum Sector.

pation in the workshop and for volunteering their time to move ahead with implementation. I think we have a great team...and can expect good things to happen.

#### *Staff News*

As you know (*Newsletter September 2016*) Ashley Beaudin, our manager for the last two years, steps down this year, ending the 'Beaudin era'. WHS owes a great deal to Meghan and Ashley—thank you again for your consistent dedication and hard work on behalf of Keillor House. (Of course, Ashley & Meghan although officially 'retired', are still involved—Alice informed me they are now 'volunteers'.)

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For next season we have been fortunate to be able to hire an outstanding professional, Donald Alward, the former Manager-Curator of the Albert County Museum, to be our new Manager. (We must have done something right!)

Donald comes to us with a wealth of experience and knowledge. He has been the Manager-Curator of the Albert County Museum for the past eleven years. Although he graduated from Saint Mary's University with a Science degree and has worked in payroll and accounting for 6 years, his passion for heritage is truly his calling. Considered by his peers to be one of the leading museum professionals in New Brunswick, Donald helped renew the Albert County Museum and bring history to life. He has received two Awards of Distinction from the Association Museums New Brunswick in recognition of his work at the Albert County Museum.

Donald lives in Hillsborough with his partner, Heather, has two teenage children, Jonathan and Ada, and sings with the Greater Moncton Chorale. He has been a volunteer firefighter for the past 20 years and is the Fire Prevention Officer for the Hillsborough Fire Department. He also currently holds several positions on various boards including: Chair of Caledonia Regional High School Parent School Support Committee; Vice-President of the Greater Moncton Chorale; Treasurer of the Association Heritage New Brunswick; and Board member of the Southeastern Branch – New Brunswick Genealogical Society.

Donald's experience and knowledge will help the Society in many ways—especially, with the development and implementation of more effective museum policies and procedures—an area we have neglected. His accounting skills and management experience, should be invaluable as we work to implement our new Strategic Plan (3 Years).

Welcome Donald...we all look forward to working with you...and hope you will enjoy working with us.

*Cole Morison*

### SIEGFRIED JANZEN (1920-2005)

Siegfried Janzen was a Ukrainian-born Mennonite who emigrated with his family to Saskatchewan and later Ontario, where he farmed. After the war he served with the Mennonite Central Committee in Holland caring for, processing and helping to resettle Mennonite and other refugees fleeing Stalinist persecution. After returning to Canada he settled with his wife and four daughters in the Annapolis Valley where he became a skilled bricklayer and fireplace maker. In retirement he served for ten years (1985-1995) as pastor of the Petitcodiac Mennonite Church in Petitcodiac, N.B. and while there became involved in chaplaincy service at the Maritime Penitentiary in Dorchester. In 2004 his contribution in that capacity was recognized with Correction Canada's presentation of the prestigious Taylor Award for outstanding volunteer work in chaplaincy and restorative justice. The Inmate Committee established the Siegfried Janzen Award in honour of his memory.

## THE WELDON HEARSE AT KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM

***Editor's Note:** Among the more curious items on display in the Coach House of the Keillor House Museum is an old horse-drawn hearse, and visitors as well as museum staff have often wondered how it got there—and what it has to do with Dorchester history. An opportunity to find out presented itself when Jamie Heap, a Mount Allison graduate, offered to do an article on it for WHS. It had come to his attention through research he had done on some artifacts in the Campbell Carriage Factory Museum. To get things started, I examined our cataloguing information and quickly discovered that the only thing known about the hearse was that Eugene Weldon donated it soon after the opening of Keillor House in 1967. The Museum's first guide, Bob Hickman (who, incidentally just recently joined our Board) confirmed that, beyond the simple fact that Eugene was the donor, there was no story to tell about it during his time at Keillor House. However, Marlene Hickman, former Board member and the source of the series of 'Notes from Marlene's Scrapbook' that appeared from time to time in past issues of the Newsletter, pointed out that Weldon's daughters, Peggy and Jackie, are again living in Dorchester, and might know something about it. It then occurred to me that another good person to ask would be Ernie Partridge, whose remarkable ability to recall decades-old experience in vivid detail so enlivened the series of 'Dorchester Memories' that also appeared (and will appear again) in the Newsletter. So, I got out the 'company's' trusty old digital voice recorder and Jamie and I interviewed Ernie as we shivered beside the hearse on a cold clear October morning. This was followed by another interview with the Weldon sisters in Jackie's charming home on Woodhurst Road, where the 'welcoming committee' of friendly little doggies performed its social duties with great enthusiasm. Here are the results, written up by Jamie and slightly massaged by your faithful editor.*

From their arrival in 1780 as the first post-Acadian family to settle in what is now the village of Dorchester (on land later occupied by the penitentiary) down until their name disappeared from the shiretown with the passing of Eugene in 1999, the Weldons have had a variety of occupations ranging from the ordinary to the otherworldly. They have been farmers, magistrates, legislators, judges, hotelkeepers (the Payzant & Card Building began life as the Weldon Hotel and there were Weldon Hotels in Moncton and Shediac), businessmen, butchers (or at least one of them was), and undertakers. The first of the undertakers was Peggy and Jackie's great-grandfather, Edgar, who built the house in which the business was carried on in 1856. Although much altered, it

is still standing and still in the Weldon family (4745 Route 106, Middleton.)



Their grandfather, also named Edgar, apprenticed with his father before taking over the business sometime fairly early in the last century. Their father, (Edgar) Eugene, most likely did not apprentice as an undertaker, but it's entirely possible, given his love of horses, that he drove the hearse during the last years the business was still going, as he would have been in his late teens and early twenties—by no means too young an age to be working in those days. It's for sure that he inherited the sombre conveyance along with the house because, as his daughters remembered, "the hearse was always there in a garage or shed somewhere. We used to play in it all the time. We loved to sit up on top of the hearse and pretend we were driving horses. But inside was creepy and didn't smell very good."

They also remembered some details from stories their father had told them. "When he was a little boy, there was this man who had drowned in the river. He went missing for a few weeks. When they found the body, they brought it back to their house." Bodies were prepared for burial in a kind of dugout at the back of the basement, entered from the outside through a hatch. Besides the embalming room, "they had one room (parlour) that was just used for displaying the bodies

and that became our living room." Such memories were no doubt further impressed on the girls' young minds when they discovered empty but still odoriferous bottles of embalming fluids while playing in the attic. About the hearse, they remembered that their dad told them it had originally been built for shorter caskets than we see today. He then added a story that Jack MacKenzie of the Sackville Harness Shop, the last of the long straw hand-stuffed horse collar experts, asked to be taken to the cemetery in the Weldon hearse (after his death, of course). However, Jack was a very big man and when he died in 1980 "they had to use the wagon because he wouldn't fit in the hearse."

Ernie knew something about the cramped conditions inside the original and added the detail that Edgar Weldon had done something about it (but apparently not enough to accommodate Jack.) "A unique thing about this hearse is that they started to make the caskets longer, so they had to add this piece in here. I know that for a fact because Eugene Weldon told me about how he and his dad had to do that."

He also knew a lot about the hearse's structure and was able to point out some other interesting features besides the lengthening insert. For one thing, it was made as light as possible. "The less weight they would have to haul around, the better," he said. "There was nothing that was really, really heavy about it. It was likely made out of yellow birch." And it was made for all seasons. One of its neatest wonders was a pair of retractable runners (no longer on it) that could be let down in such a way as to lift the rear wheels off the ground for winter travel. (Since most of the weight was on the rear, the front wheels cut through the snow just fine, so there was no need for runners there.) Thus, they didn't have to take off the wheels and put on the runners when the snow started to fly—or *vice versa* after a sudden thaw. The Weldons could very well have added this feature themselves, as the hearse appears to have been originally designed to run on wheels only. Eugene's father was a carriage maker as well as an undertaker, and Eugene was a very good blacksmith. According to Ernie, they also added the vent hole to release the fumes. "The formaldehyde would just knock you out," he said.



There is no indication on it (by way of a placard, for example) of where and when the hearse was built, but from its general appearance it likely dates from the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and could in fact be the first and last one the Weldons ever owned. It's also entirely possible that it was built locally. There were a number of carriage factories in the area and the first one that comes to mind is the Campbell Carriage Factory in Sackville. However, there is no mention of any Weldon having bought a hearse in the extensive surviving records of that business now carefully curated by the Tantramar Heritage Trust. But this leaves open the possibility that it was built in Dorchester. It's not well known today, but at least five Dorchester carriage makers are listed in censuses and business directories for the years 1851-1881, several of them highly skilled furniture makers as well. Those of you who visited the special exhibit in Keillor House on the furniture makers of Westmorland County—or better yet have seen the artifact (as opposed to the picture of it in the exhibit) at the Fort Beauséjour/Cumberland Museum—may recall Charles Dixon of Dorchester/Middleton and the truly spectacular cradle he made for Queen Victoria's newborn son, Edward (afterwards King). So there can be no question that the necessary skills for building the Weldon hearse were locally abundant, and would have made it totally unnecessary to import it from 'away'. Paul Bogaard, whose work with the Campbell Carriage Factory Museum has made him a real expert on horse-drawn vehicles, had a look at the Weldon hearse and he completely agrees that making it was "well within the capabilities of the local carriage makers," although they would have bought the springs factory-made.

Ernie also recalled seeing the hearse in a funeral parade when he was just a schoolboy. "It had to be 1940 or 1941 and they were going up the hill here. We lived just across from the Rec. Centre at that time. I remember coming home from school at three o'clock in the afternoon and hearing the sounds of the horses on the ground. And then this hearse went by me with a casket in it. I don't know where they were heading, but it used to be that it would go to Fairfield Cemetery or Woodhurst, depending on who in the village had died. Most of them originally came from there, so they wanted to be buried back in the place where they came from, so they'd take them clear to Woodhurst in this hearse. She was a just a-sparkling with a pair of black Percherons." That's the last time Ernie remembers seeing the hearse in use, but he figures that it probably remained in service until after the war, when motorized versions became the fashion. Fortunately, it then became a cherished family heirloom until Eugene decided that its proper last resting place would be the Keillor House Museum.

In the course of these interviews we also learned a bit about Eugene, a well-known and popular Dorchester figure in his time. Here are a few excerpts.

"He only made it to grade eight, but he was really smart when it came to making something," Jackie said. "He had a real mathematical mind. He was really smart when it came to designing something, or figuring out how something was working. He also welded and ran the (Irving owned) garage downtown until the late 1960s."

"He was in the trucking business before that," Ernie added. Jackie and Peggy also remembered that "he had a tow truck and he had this huge monstrous snow blower." "And at that time the snow was deep. We had a few really deep winters and they (Eugene and his business partner Bill McEwen) took it way down to Cape Tormentine and they'd be gone a week, staying at farmhouses and blowing out the roads. They also went up north." Eugene also had one of the first snowmobiles in the village, thus becoming a trendsetter. Another of his enterprises was building fancy show wagons in the family blacksmith shop—for, as noted above, blacksmithing was one of his many skills. (Paul informed us that he bought wheels

from the Campbell Carriage Factory.) Ernie said that he could make almost anything after seeing it just once.



*Eugene accepting one of his many trophies*

Peggy told us that her father also used his tow truck for a somewhat unconventional purpose—transporting a portable wrestling ring. "He was very good friends with (wrestler) Ivan Cormier (better known as 'The Beast') back then, and Randy Kay and all these brothers that were all wrestlers would take the ring around, help them put it up wherever they went and take it down. They did that for several years. They went to Fredericton, Halifax and Moncton and all these little places in between. We had wrestlers at our house all the time, such as 'The Stomper,' the little wrestlers and other guys that used to wrestle. He knew them all."

Like his good friend, Dick McCleod, Eugene had something else in common with 'The Beast' besides wrestling: a love of horses, and particularly black Percherons. They both had a number of these magnificent animals and the three of them used to travel around to horse exhibitions together. (Incidentally, if you love horses, blacksmith shops, lumber camps and the "good old days," get a copy of Dick's *Tales of the Horse*, available from Tantramar Heritage Trust. It's a great read.) 'The Beast' was beloved for offering sleigh rides in the winter and wagon rides in the summer, while Eugene regularly hitched one of his show teams to our Keillor House Landau for parades and other ceremonial occasions. Perhaps the most memorable of the latter was in 1984 when he conveyed Lt. Governor George Stan-

ley and Mrs. Stanley to a tea at the Dorchester high school to celebrate New Brunswick's bicentennial. Happily, Ernie's wife, Janet, was able to find a picture of them among her attic treasures.



One of Eugene's other loves was for dogs—clearly inherited by his daughters. It was interesting to learn that for a number of years he and they looked after the guard dogs up at the 'pen'. It must have been quite a change for Jackie when she went from German Shepherds to the sweet-tempered little Bichon Frisés that she has today. On the other hand, maybe the change wasn't so great after all. Peggy told us that most of the guard dogs were nothing like the vicious 'Nazis' guard dogs are supposed to be—in fact they were almost too friendly for the job (good thing the inmates didn't know that). Maybe the family's loving care sweetened them up a bit.

Two final tidbits to evoke the memory of the man who gave us the Weldon hearse: For a number of years he was Fire Chief in Dorchester (just before Garfield Spence), and an excellent one, Ernie remembers. His daughters recalled that he was involved in bringing the floating concrete dock from Saint John to Dorchester Cape to serve the Chemical Park that was supposed to bring industry and prosperity back to Dorchester. (This would have been around 1963.) Of course that didn't happen, but it was no fault of Eugene's. However, it's a story for another time.

*Jamie Heap and Gene Goodrich*

## CAPTAIN EDMUND O'NEAL, AUNT 'EM', AND THE KAISER'S WATCH

Fans of Helen Petchey, whose many books on Dorchester history are sold in the Keillor House Gift Shop, may recall the charming story in *Signal Sea Changes* of Emma Chapman O'Neal who defied her family to marry a onetime worker in the Chapman shipyard, a splendid young man who went on to become captain of his own vessels and eventually Marine Superintendent of a Glasgow shipping company. One particularly memorable event in their life together occurred in 1889 when Captain O'Neal took part in the rescue of the crew and passengers of a German steamship grounded and wrecked in the Red Sea and was presented with an inscribed gold watch by a grateful Kaiser Wilhelm II. Helen mentions that the watch was "later in the possession of a family namesake of the Captain." My memory of this incident was jogged during a telephone conversation with Don Chapman of Mission B.C. who got in touch with me after reading my book on the Keillors, which has a fair bit of miscellaneous information on some of the Chapmans. Of course we got to talking about Chapman history—Don has compiled a remarkable genealogical record of the Chapman and other families in the Chignecto <http://www.chignecto.org/>—and he just happened to mention that *he* now has the watch. As your ever-eager editor always on the lookout for Newsletter material, I naturally jumped on the opportunity to ask him if he would send me some pictures of it for inclusion in this issue. He readily agreed, even adding some information on Captain O'Neal's death. So now I have a story for you to go along with the pictures of what truly is a beautiful watch. The story is based mainly on Helen's work but I also found several accounts of the vessels and of the incident itself in various English and German newspapers now conveniently online, and they fill in some details Helen probably didn't know about. Unfortunately, they also take some of the limelight away from Captain O'Neal, but it's still an interesting tale.

### *A Rockland Romance*

The son of Scottish immigrants who had settled near Dover, Edmund Harris O'Neal found his way at an early age to Robert Andrew Chapman's shipyard at Rockland where he worked as a labourer. Somehow, although she was far above him in station, he wooed and won the heart of the owner's sister, Emma, who, as a proper young lady, had recently

(1868) graduated from the Mount Allison Wesleyan Academy, Female Branch. Their romance was much to the consternation of her brother and father, Robert Andrew and Robert Barry Chapman, because her only sister had, in their opinion, married beneath her station, and Emma was their last hope of snagging a son-in-law/brother-in-law worthy of a Chapman bride. (Her mother died before Edmund came into the picture, so it's impossible to say what her attitude would have been.) So they opposed the match. But they had not reckoned on the resourcefulness and talents of Edmund, or the determination of Emma. Resolved to show his merit, Edmund left the shipyard and went to sea where he soon proved a natural sailor with an ability to lead men. By 1872 he had his Master Mariner's papers and was captain of a sailing vessel—whether one of the Chapmans' or another, Helen doesn't say.

Meantime, Emma waited in Rockland for the love of her life and continued to defy her family's opposition to the match, declaring that she would marry Edmund O'Neal despite "all the Chapmans between here and Hell." Her bold determination and Edmund's growing success wore down all resistance and they were married in 1876 at her brother's home, with her father in attendance. Soon afterwards she found herself at sea with her husband who, like many other captains of the time, took his family with him on his voyages. Besides being a nurse to the sick and injured, as well as surrogate mother to young crewmembers, she played a central role in the shipboard services insisted on by the strongly Methodist O'Neals.

### *The Rescue and the Watch*

In the course of time Captain O'Neal left the Age of Sail behind and followed the future into the Age of Steam. By 1889 he was Master of the newly built cargo steamship *Aldborough* owned by Aldborough Steamship Company (F. Woods) of London. On October 18 they were in the Red Sea, probably returning from India, when they spotted a lifeboat full of people. We do not have Captain O'Neal's account of what happened next because his logbook wasn't preserved, or if it was I know nothing about it. But as it turns out there was another vessel involved in the rescue, and it appears to have played a more dramatic role in it



than did the *Aldbrough*. This was H.M.S. *Plover*, a small British gunboat skippered by Lt. Commander Ernest G. Rason, who wrote a letter to the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* (and probably to other British papers as well), giving the fullest account we have. The Bath paper published an edited version in its November 14, 1889 issue. The events themselves took place from 16 to 19 October. I condense Commander Rason's account to the essentials of interest here, and add a few details from other sources.

While steaming through the Gulf of Suez (via the new Canal opened in 1869) *Plover's* crew spotted a large (for those days) steamship that had run aground on a reef along the Arabian coast, flying distress signals. Immediately turning towards her, they were met by a lifeboat with some of the vessel's crew on board. It was from the *Marcobrunner*, a British-built but German-owned cargo ship on her maiden voyage from Bremerhaven to Calcutta with a load of iron and thirty-one passengers and crew. When the Germans reported that their captain had refused to leave his ship, Commander Rason steamed towards the wreck with the intention of rescuing him. As *Plover* drew nearer it was discovered that a number of Arab "beach pirates" (who apparently made their living preying on wrecks) had boarded the stricken vessel and were looting her. Commander Rason immediately sent off an armed boat's crew, whereupon the Arabs jumped into their canoes and paddled furiously for shore. The captain was found on board armed with a large knife, and while he had made good use of it—and was apparently willing to do so again—"there is no doubt that he owed his life to the opportune arrival of the British gunboat," the *Chronicle* noted with satisfaction. By this time there were twelve feet of water in the *Marcobrunner's* engine room, with more pouring in through the fifteen-foot square hole in her side, and the feisty captain, seeing that there was no hope of getting the vessel off the reef, was "eventually persuaded to go on board the *Plover*," which then went in search of the remaining crew. It found several on an island and then set out to find the other lifeboat, "which contained the chief mate, an English merchant, and four German missionaries." Late that evening, October 19, the *Plover* met and hailed the northbound *Aldbrough* and found that she had picked up the second lifeboat and its occupants. The four missionaries were transferred to the *Plover* for passage to Aden, while the captain and crew of the *Marcobrunner* were taken on board the *Aldbrough* and delivered to Suez. On the following day the Arab pirates returned to their work and, after plundering whatever remained of value, finished the job properly by setting fire to the wreck.

This much (and a few things more of little relevance here) I learned from the newspapers and online information on individual vessels—of which there is an amazing amount. What I was unable to discover was any account of a reward for the three captains. This doesn't necessarily mean that none exists, just that, unless one were extremely lucky, it would be a monumental task to comb through all the German and English newspapers to find one. Since shipwrecks and much more heroic rescues than this one were common at the time, I imagine the presentation of a watch didn't get all that much notice, and indeed if Commander Rason hadn't written to the *Chronicle* we would have very few details about the incident itself. Yet, we have incontrovertible proof that Kaiser Wilhelm presented Captain O'Neal with a watch for his part in the rescue—whether in person or through a third party is of course unknown. And if Captain O'Neal received it for his relatively minor role, it is inconceivable that Commander Rason didn't get one too. Indeed, to judge by the number of Kaiser's watches still in existence (they can be viewed online, and are very valuable), it seems that Wilhelm was fond of giving them out to those he thought worthy. One would think that the *Marcobrunner's* captain would get even more recognition. (Let's hope it wasn't in the form of a demotion for running onto the reef.)

Whatever the case, we have Captain O'Neal's watch, or at least some very good pictures of it, so let's have a look at it.



Made by the Eppner Brothers of Berlin, who were among the best watchmakers in Germany and well known for their naval chronometers (the Kaiser was a big fan of the navy), it is a fine piece of work. It is open faced, mounted in a gold carrying case the back of which is stamped and enamelled with a stylized "W" (for 'Wilhelm', of course). The back opens up to reveal the Kaiser's profile and the inscription in English, which reads: *Presented by the Emperor of Germany to Captain Edmund H. O'Neal, Master of the Steamship Aldborough in recognition of services rendered the crew and passengers of the German steamship Bremen Marcobrunner in the Red Sea in 1889.*

In light of the tragic events that came later, it may be worth putting the Kaiser's gracious gesture in its historical context.

When the rescue occurred, Wilhelm had only been on the throne for sixteen months, not long enough to develop the imperial ambitions that led him to challenge the naval supremacy of Great Britain and earn pariah status among the English. Until well past the turn of the century he was still Queen Victoria's favourite grandson (although intensely disliked by most of his other English relatives) and Germany was still seen in a generally positive light, much admired for her achievements in science, industry and the arts. Would Commander Rason and Captain O'Neal have come to the rescue of the *Marcobrunner's* crew if the grounding had occurred twenty years later? We would certainly hope so, but a question remains.

### *Epilogue*

Early in the new century Captain O'Neal and Emma "retired ashore" to Glasgow where Edmund became Marine Superintendent of the Glasgow Steam Shipping Company. (Whether this was before or after the *Aldbrough* was wrecked near Cuba in 1904, I don't know.) Here they lived in a fine home they named "Acadia" where Emma hosted her great nephew, Frank Dobson, who had been wounded in the Great War, and nurtured memories of "those far away happy days" at Mount Allison. In 1917 Edmund retired and the childless couple returned to New Brunswick, this time to Dorchester, where they bought a Moore house near "Woodlawn," the mansion where Sir Albert Smith's widow lived. Almost immediately, they turned their attention to the first restoration of the Methodist Burying Ground (now known as the Dorchester Pioneer Cemetery) built on land purchased from Emma's great grandfather, Yorkshireman John Weldon, the first Anglo-phone settler in Dorchester and a major pillar of the Methodist Society.

Soon after the project was completed in 1919, Captain O'Neal died of heart failure on what was supposed to have been a restorative voyage to Bermuda as a guest of his former employer. (Don also sent me two letters describing the sad event in great detail.) Emma lived out the rest of her years (she died in 1931) as one of the shiretown's two *grande dames* (the other was Lady Smith, with whom she became friends in spite of bad political blood between Sir Albert and her father and brother), being chauffeured around in her elegant dark-blue MacLaughlin-Buick as she did her important work with the Methodist (later United) Church, the I.O.D.E. and the local schools—to which she bequeathed sums of money for prize-winning essays on such topics as "Temperance" and "Kindness to Animals." To her many nieces and nephews—and grandnieces and grandnephews—bearing the names How, Dobson, Ward, Palmer and Chapman, she was "Aunt Em," a stern but beloved matriarch and the subject of much family lore, some

of it charmingly repackaged in Doug How's novel *Blow Up the Trumpet in the New Moon*.

Did Aunt Em proudly display the Kaiser's watch or—given the bitterness of the war—did she keep it tucked away where few would notice it, a lonely relic of a happier time and a saner world? Don said that everyone in his extended family knew about it and that, given what his father—who met her when he was but a boy—told him about Aunt Em, he couldn't imagine her hiding it, even during the War. That is what I would like to think, too.

Whatever the case, the watch was considered a family heirloom and Emma apparently willed it to a grandnephew whose name just happened to be Edmund (Chapman), and who seems to have had a special relationship with his great uncle. I say 'apparently' and 'seems' because Don isn't sure of the details, but the important point is that Edmund Chapman ended up with the watch. He also ended up becoming Don Chapman's grandfather, but there is another twist to the tale. Edmund had a son named Edmund O'Neal Chapman who, following the logic of the watch following the name, should have been its second inheritor. But he predeceased his father, as did a brother, leaving Don's father, Stewart, as sole surviving male heir. So, Stewart inherited the watch in spite of having no 'Edmund' in his name and he intended to pass it on to his eldest son, Terry McLeod Chapman, who laboured under a similar deficiency. However, Terry also predeceased his father, so Stewart passed it on to Don and therewith it returned to another Edmund, at least in a secondary sense: Don's full name is Donald *Edmund* Chapman and I am sure that Aunt Em, up in Methodist Heaven as she undoubtedly is, is highly pleased that it now rests with a namesake of her beloved Captain for whom she once defied "all the Chapmans between here and Hell."

*Gene Goodrich*

## AN 'UPDATE' ON THE DATE OF KEILLOR HOUSE

In the June 2015 issue of the Newsletter I published an article on the dating of Keillor House, explaining why the plaque by the Dairy Room entrance placed there by Historic Sites in 1967 says it was built in 1813. Since there was nothing in or on the building itself to indicate a precise date (one earlier estimate placed it in the 1795-1800 range) this had to have rested on the oral tradition gathered by Lloyd Machum, the Society's first President. I traced this tradition back to a window in the door of the Dairy Room that got broken in the late 1940s on which were etched the words "The Keillor 1813" and from there back to Edessa Chapman McQueen, a great-granddaughter of John and Elizabeth Keillor who married High Sheriff Joseph McQueen and bought the house from the estate of John and Elizabeth's youngest son, Thomas, in 1902. After noticing in the old photograph from the 1880s hanging in the entrance hallway that there was no door in the Dairy Room at that time, and that the window with the words "The Keillor 1813" on it must therefore be later—probably after 1902 when the McQueens remodelled the annex—I speculated that Edessa supplied the information from family tradition.

At this point I introduced some new evidence in the form of a dendrochronological analysis that was done on Keillor House in 2002 but for some reason not shared with museum staff until I tracked it down for the 2015 article. Dendrochronology, just to remind you, is dating by the counting of growth rings in trees. If sufficient data are available, it can reliably date the felling of a tree to the exact year, and since trees were used for the beams and posts in Keillor House—even though it is mainly of stone—the analysis done in 2002 should have been able to determine the earliest year construction could have started. (It's pretty hard to put in the sills and joists before the tree is cut.) Unfortunately, there was a frustration. Four successful samples (meaning ones that had all the rings) were taken from major beams in the attic. Two were dated to 1814 (posts) and two to 1815 (post and floor beam). This means that the attic couldn't have been finished before the end of 1815, and most likely sometime in 1816. But could construction have begun in 1813 or earlier? The way to find out would have been to test the sills, and one of the students working at the dendrochronology lab at Mount Allison that carried out the initial work actually did that somewhat later. Unfortunately, the core samples he took 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. Soon afterwards, the dendrochronology lab stopped doing tests on old buildings owing to increasing demands that were interfering with the researchers' main work, and so it looked like we could never be sure whether Keillor House was really 'built' in 1813 (realizing that it could not have been finished much before 1816).

Not until now, that is, for we have a rescuer. Paul Bogaard of the Tantramar Heritage Trust is working on a project to identify and date early houses in Sackville, particularly frame houses that may have been built before 1800, and he managed to get some funding that included a budget for dendro dating. Intensely interested in the work I did on the Keillor House (in fact he helped me figure out a lot of things I wouldn't have been able to on my own), he kindly offered to have his dendro expert, Ben Phillips, take another stab at getting a good sample from the sills and floor beams of Keillor House. (We also did the Bell Inn and Rocklyn while we were at it.) This time it was successful. Enough of the cores had their all-important terminal growth rings still intact and Ben was able to determine that the trees had been cut in the fall or winter of **1814**. (It was widely believed—although it may not be true—that winter-cut trees are stronger and less likely to check or split.) Thus, construction of Keillor House most likely commenced in the spring of **1815**. The attic wood would have been cut that winter and the house finished probably in **1816**, no doubt with a few touches yet to be added.

This may not be the news we were looking for, but historians are in the truth business, wherever it may lead, and this seems to be the truth according to the current state of our evidence. As a compensation, being out by only a couple of years is not too bad a show for oral tradition. Many oral traditions do a lot worse than that.

As another compensation, Ben was also able to date the joists under the kitchen to 1858, neatly confirming my hunch that it was remodelled a few years after Elizabeth Keillor's death in 1851, probably under the influence of Thomas' wife, Mary Jane, whom he married in that year. We have to take our satisfactions where we can get them.

*Gene Goodrich*



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**Museum Hours**

June 10 to Sept. 9 2017

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 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)

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SALUTING OUR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS: THE BERNIE BRIGADE



For a number of years, Bernie Melanson, our volunteer gardener, long time WHS supporter and physics teacher at Matthieu-Martin high school (See the article on him in the February 2012 issue of the Newsletter), has persuaded some of his students and former students to help out at our Haunted House Nights and Victorian Dinners. Full of energy, always polite, hard working and devastatingly charming, they have brought a new level of enthusiasm to our events. The three individuals pictured here with Bernie (second from the left) are former students currently enrolled in the engineering programme at the University of Moncton. They are from left to right: Marc Drisdelle, Louis Savoie, Martin Drisdelle. *Thank you, gentlemen, for all your help!*