

WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been another great year thanks to our Museum Manager, Donald Alward, Dee Milliken our Supervisor at St. James, Alice Folkins our Activities Coordinator, and our many volunteers. As well, I want to thank the Board for its guidance and continuing commitment to the future success of the Society.

Fund-Raising and Event Highlights

This year's Haunted House Nights (Oct. 19-20, 26-27) raised over \$8,000 for the museum. Once again Mike Shea and his crew redesigned the 'set' and provided another unique—and 'bone chilling'—experience for our visitors. Marilyn and Ted Wheaton and their friends worked with Mike, putting in very many hours over many weeks. Other volunteers—up to 40 per night, 'manned' the museum making the experience the best of its kind in the province. Our Victorian Dinners (Nov. 24, Dec. 1) were a great success, with many thanks to Bernie Melan-

son and his student volunteers. (See p. 16.) The fabulous decorations at Keillor House were created and mounted by Maurice Gautreau and Joanne Corey, who came from Halifax—for four days—to do the decorations. Thank you Mo and Joanne for such a great job! Both nights were sold out, with over \$2,800 raised for the museum. Keillor House hosted the New Year's Levee in partnership with the village and, as always, the hot food was greatly appreciated by the many participants of the 'Polar Dip'. Thank you Alice and Ritchie for making this event such a success.

'Behind the Scenes'

As many of you know, a great many hours are put in by our Museum Manager, Donald Alward, in finding grant opportunities and preparing applications, and I thought members

might be interested in the scope of his efforts. Since WHS hosts Canada Day celebrations, a submission was made for a Canada Day grant in the fall. In October, Donald applied for a \$10,000 grant for a 'Museum Textile Enhancement' project to display our extensive costume and textile collections—one of the largest and most versatile in the province, and not now accessible to the public. Two chimney caps at Keillor House need replacement. An application to Built Heritage for \$4,000 has been submitted after soliciting quotes (Alice). Under Young Canada Works, applications were submitted for a Curatorial Assistant, a Program Coordinator, and two Official Language Guides with funding to 75%. Under the Canadian Museum Association, application was made for a Textile Museum Assistant. In the next two months separate applications will be made to Canada Summer Jobs, and

KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM — SPECIAL EVENTS

Mother's Day Tea- Keillor House Museum

May 11 2:00-4:00 pm

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

Call for tickets

506-379-6695

Susan Spence

Keillor House & St. James Openings

June 8 2:00 pm

Opening Remarks and Refreshments.

Free guided tours with costumed staff

Canada Day-Dorchester Veterans' Centre

July 1 1:00-3:00 pm

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

Keillor House and St. James Museum Tours 10:00-12:00, 3:00-5:00

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ST. JAMES REPORT: THE MILLVILLE LOOM

As promised in our previous issue, here is some more information about our newly-acquired loom.



To recap somewhat, in July last year we received a call from a husband and wife team of antique collectors in Riverview, N.B. who had had a Millville Loom stored in their garage for the last twenty-five years, and were wondering if we would be interested in having it. Would we?! Of course! Millville Looms are a part of New Brunswick history. They were manufactured in Millville, New Brunswick during the 1920s by two brothers under the trade name of *G&J Craftsmen*. Originally made for the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design in Fredericton, they were replaced by more compact (and less finicky) looms in the 1970's. Of course we wanted the loom, but the question was whether to put it in storage for a future exhibit, or to re-arrange Pamela's looms at St. James in order to fit this one in.

The Millville Loom has a 45" weaving width, and 4 shafts (harnesses) but a slightly larger "footprint" than other maker's looms of the same width. It is slightly wider and deeper than Pamela's 4-shaft 45" loom, which is a LeClerc Mira, made in Quebec in the 1920's, and still a popular model to this day. Interestingly, the loom at St. James is serial #230, and the one at my home studio is #238. Mine folds for storage when not in use, but the one at St. James does not. Both of them are made from New Brunswick maple, including some components manufactured of lovely birds-eye. They are sturdy, heavy looms and very versatile, easily adaptable to various types of weaving—everything from a light, lacy curtain to a durable, heavy rug for the floor

Our museum floor-plan was examined and reimagined, with much consideration to arrangement, work space and traffic flow. Donald and I agreed that our new acquisition should be put on display. Once the space was re-organized to accommodate our new addition, summer students Lucas and Sam assisted Donald in assembling the loom (with guidance from me, as I have one of these looms in my own studio at home.)

This new arrangement of our centre exhibit/working space led to the spinning wheels and carders being moved to the entry area, while Pamela's pride and joy, the 250+ year old barn loom was re-positioned (very carefully!) to the opposite end of the building from where it has stood since 1985! Being used to the previous arrangement for the past thirteen years, this new set-up took some getting used to, and also resulted in some wording changes in our guided tour. Now, we love how this change has opened up the space by showing more of the beautiful three-paneled stained glass windows at the front of the building, which allows more natural light to shine through, as we demonstrate the complete process in order, from raw fleece to finished product. The change has made for a beautiful, well-lit spot to spin yarns, and offers a better view of arriving visitors, who I very much look forward to welcoming this coming season.



Denyse Milliken, Supervisor

to Community Museums and Collections for additional funds. Thank you Donald and Alice, for your commitment and initiative. Well done.

Next Year – Extended Opening Hours

Following Donald's recommendation, we will operate seven days a week from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, with the Visitor Information Centre and both museums open from June 8th to September 13th. As well, admission to one Museum will include free admission to the other. Heritage Fair Day will be on a Sunday. Following a suggestion from the Sandpiper Festival Committee, it will include more things of interest to children, such as old-fashioned games like horse shoes, croquet, and lawn checkers. These will be welcome additions and will not require additional staffing. .

Properties Update

Work on the newest apartment in Landry House has been completed with plumbing (new shower, new sink), new tiling in the kitchen area, new shelving, flooring and baseboards. A special thanks again to Reg Tower who donated a set of kitchen cabinets, delivered and installed them. He is also fabricating a new kitchen 'island' that fits the historic character of the Landry House.

Thanks once again to all of you. Your commitment keeps our museums open and our heritage alive.

Cole Morison

Notice to Students

Keillor House is now accepting applications for summer employment at the museums

For further information contact

keillorhouse@nb.aibn.com

“UP THE CENTRE AND DOWN THE MUDDLE:” DOUG HOW'S TRIBUTE TO FOSTER HEWITT

Editor's Note: Last February I received the following letter from Mr. Allen Tower of Mississauga, Ontario. It is self-explanatory; what needs explaining is why it has not appeared in the Newsletter before. The answer is simple: too many other items in the pipeline at the time of reception. Now that the pipeline has cleared somewhat, I hope Mr. Tower will forgive the wait.

Feb.5, 2018

Dear Mr. Goodrich,

My great friend, 99 year old Douglas H. Cochrane, sent me an article from the May 1978 edition of *Reader's Digest*. It is a beautifully written story about three young hockey-mad Dorchester boys having a wonderful experience during the Depression.

I do not know if this fits with your editorial criteria but many older people, particularly hockey fans, can certainly relate to that era. I am twenty years younger than my friend, and I know enjoyed the story a great deal.

P.S. I grew up in Dorchester also, having left in 1956, but have visited that great little town many times since.

Continued on p. 4

“UP THE CENTRE AND DOWN THE MUDDLE”

Reader's Digest May 1978

Mr. Foster Hewitt,
Hockey Hall of Fame,
Toronto, Ont.

Dear Mr. Hewitt

I see they have you in the Hall of Fame now, along with all the hockey greats. For millions like me, that's as it should be. In the Depression years particularly, your radio broadcasts touched our lives with a certain magic. But it's too bad you never knew how you affected the late David Cochrane, Commander, Royal Navy, retired.

I was a village kid in the '30s, and Mr. Cochrane's son Doug was my pal. We played hockey with all comers on frozen marshes, on frozen ponds, in the streets with the hard, rounded contributions of passing horses, and if none of these were available we played on the wide veranda of my home or on the floor of Bill Palmer's big barn. At the very peak, if we could raise the \$1 to rent it for an hour, we faced our contemporaries in the closed-in rink. There were no coaches, no organization, no leagues, no parents muscling into the act, and it was great. In short, we were certifiable puck psychotics, that is to say, average Canadian kids.

Doug tended goal in his boots and rubbers, with a frayed pair of pads and a tired goal stick. He even did this when our pick up teams rented the rink. It embarrassed the purists among us, but there it was. He was the best goalie we had, skates or no skates. I was a forward, skates and all, never very good but monumentally enthusiastic.

In winter weeks our lives were crowned by entering hockey heaven on Saturday nights. The two of us sat in a state of worship around the Cochrane's old table radio and into our world came "the Voice"—yours—enunciating with clarity and passion the activities of the Toronto Maple Leafs and their opposition of the day. We sweated with the Kid Line, shared the combats of King Clancy and Red Horner, and when you pitched The Voice to proclaim "He Shoots, HE SCORES!" we rose perceptibly from our seats.

Mind you, there were people who thought you were a bit partial to the Leafs, but there is no doubt in my mind now that in those years when the economy stalled, when unemployment was a nightmare, when snow made the railway the one winter outlet for many communities like ours, you,

Mr. Hewitt, helped the nation keep its sanity, its perspective and its sense of belonging together.

For Doug and me, the trouble was that your influence stopped short of Mr. Cochrane. He'd been sent over years before as a Royal Navy officer to help get the infant Canadian navy going, and though now a civilian he was still very much part of the Nelson tradition: big, stern, gruff and totally impervious to the scenes you sent catapulting through our minds. Sometimes he would sit in the same room, trying to read but only making us uncomfortable. Then he'd make it temporarily worse: he's get up and leave because he couldn't concentrate. Old Country games he might understand; his son represented a transition which appeared to be beyond his sympathies or his grasp.

His Scots' burr would do dreadful things to that "r" at the end of your first name. Your on-the-run analysis of a game, almost biblical in its impact on us, came through to him as a pilgrimage into chaos. He even had a pet phrase which summed up his reaction to you and everything you stood for. He'd sit there, occasionally muttering in disdainful mockery of The Voice and of the confusions of hockey itself.

"Up the centre," he'd growl, "and down the muddle."

Then a remarkable thing happened. Mr. Cochrane, like most everybody, had his economic troubles in the '30s, and that may explain a lot. But late one fall he got some money to compensate him for injuries he's received in the Halifax explosion, and out of the blue he announced that Doug and I and Bill Palmer, all of us between twelve and fourteen, were to be his guests on a trip to Moncton, twenty-two miles from Dorchester, our New Brunswick village. And, remarkable beyond belief, we were going to see two National Hockey League teams, Montreal Canadiens and Boston Bruins, play a preseason exhibition game, the first we'd ever heard of in the Maritimes.

I forget how we got to Moncton on the Big Day—I suspect it was on a flying carpet—but that night Mr. Cochrane went all the way. He stood in front of the Brunswick Hotel and ordered a taxi to take us to the Stadium. We were most impressed; we'd never been in a cab in our lives. We climbed in and were just about to pull away when two men came out of the hotel and shouted to the driver. They, too, wanted to go to the game. Mr. Cochrane conceded—he was grace itself that day—and in they got while we three boys packed in beside the driver.

With naval aplomb, our host saw that introductions were made as we started through the snowy streets, and to our ears there came incredible news. One of the strangers said his name was Jean Pusie. The other said his was Eddie Shore. The taxi driver later said it was the only time he ever saw three heads turn ex-

actly and automatically as one.

Jean Pusie was one of the current bad men of the NHL, a roughhouse, hell-for-leather defenceman with the Bruins. But Shore! Eddie Shore was quite simply a legend, the Bobby Orr of his day, a defenceman without parallel since hockey began. No need to tell you that. We'd heard The Voice describing his activities for years. And our startled eyes confirmed that the two of them were for real. We recognized them from the hockey cards we got with bubble gum.

Well, as you know, Mr. Hewitt, they said a lot about Eddie Shore in those days, and later: superb at his craft but a no-quarters guy, implacable, brutally competitive. All that I can say is that for ten or fifteen glowing minutes in that taxi he was magnificent, and so was Mr. Cochrane. Seeing our reaction, he burred that we were hockey players of some local note and got Shore talking. In a quiet, fatherly way, he gave us tips about the game. Even after more than four decades, I clearly remember him asking Doug if he knew how to handle a forward coming in on the goal from the side, and then telling him.

We parted at the Stadium door, and we watched the game. For a while, every time Eddy Shore came on the ice we dug one another in the ribs. Pusie was good for shared glances. The Canadiens' great Howie Morenz didn't play that night and we were disappointed. But we'd seen NHL teams in action for the first time, we'd conversed with deity, and that was enough.

Back home it took awhile to convince our contemporaries that the saga of that taxi ride had actually happened. Then we were, for a time, celebrities. Doug, destined to become vice president of a trust company, claimed that he was abiding by Eddie Shore's advice, and that it must be obvious that his boot-and-rubbers goal-tending was improving immeasurably. Bill, destined to die in World War II, played forward with new verve. I continued monumentally enthusiastic.

The first Saturday night of the regular NHL season, Doug and I were back in the Cochranes' parlour, in front of the radio, ready for The Voice, more ready than ever to comprehend the wonders you purveyed. Then halfway through the first period, Mr. Cochrane stuck his head in the door and muttered his familiar disdain.

"Up the centre," he growled, "and down the muddle."

But this time he winked.

You see what I mean? You'd gradually been getting to him all along. I'd score it as goal for Foster Hewitt and an assist for Eddie Shore.

Sincerely,
Douglas How.

DORCHESTER'S THIRD JAIL AND HANGING

In the last issue we learned that the brick courthouse built in 1820-21 to replace the wooden structure built in 1802-03 and burned by some escaping prisoners in 1820 was itself replaced by another wooden structure in 1876-77. The original budget was \$10,000 but, as was usual in such ventures, this quickly inflated and the final cost was \$16,500, roughly \$500,000 in today's money. This seems like a bargain, probably because labour costs were relatively much lower at that time. A planning committee was appointed comprising one representative from each parish in the county, and it decided to build the new courthouse in the fashionable Second Empire style employed in a number of the finer Dorchester homes of the day. The result was a handsome edifice that stood as the shiretown's third courthouse and beloved landmark until its own destruction by fire in 1965, also said to have been deliberately set.



I also said in the last issue that the jail built in 1820-21 apart from the courthouse (unlike the first one) was not replaced in 1876-77, and is the one still standing. Besides its architectural similarity to the 1820 brick courthouse (of which a photo survives), my evidence for saying this was that I found no mention of a jail in the record of the General Sessions of the Peace that approved the new courthouse, although I could not be sure there was none because of the near impossibility of reading the clerk's atrocious scrawl. I now have to announce what appears to be solid evidence that a new jail was in fact built along with the new courthouse in 1876-77 or perhaps a little later. It comes from a newspaper description of the gallows erected in 1892 for the third of Dorchester's hangings, the main focus of this article. By this time, the law required that hangings be performed inside the jail, not outside in public view as was the case in the first two of our series. According to the newspaper, "it was supposed that a place had been provided within the *new jail* for such purposes, but although such a place was shown on one of the plans, it was not built that way." Instead, a wooden enclosure was constructed outside especially for the event. It is possible, but it hardly seems likely, that "new jail" referred to the one that was new in 1821, so, in the absence of further evidence (which may yet turn up in one of my romps through the records), I will now have to hedge my bets on the date of the existing jail. I promise to keep you posted.

The Queen vs. Robert Olsen, alias "Buck," and "Jim Doe" 1892

Twenty-eight years separated Westmorland County's third capital crime from the hanging of Amos Hicks in 1864, and even so, the perpetrators were not locals like Hicks and Amos Babcock, but transients suspected on good evidence of being members of a roving gang of professional criminals. The late 1880s and early 1890s were, from the economic point of view, not happy ones in either Europe or America. The period of strong economic growth fuelled by the fury of railroad building and westward expansion after the American Civil War was followed by the inevitable contraction that was actually labelled the "Great Depression" at the time. Indeed, it was the most severe one the modern Western world had experienced before the real "biggie" of the 1930s.

The combination of railways and hard times produced a large number of extremely mobile tramps (to use the label of the day), many of whom supplemented their intermittent casual labour by robbery. The professionals among them were well organized, complete with a networking system and a code of honour that put a high value on loyalty to one's pals and a deter-

mination never to rat on them in the face of the law. Needless to say, they were very unpopular with the general public, especially in quiet, peaceful, and upright places like Moncton, where the crime under discussion took place. We can know about it in great depth because not only was it well covered in many newspapers throughout the province, the *Moncton Daily Times* reported in almost excruciating detail virtually every event from start to finish within hours of its happening. This included among many other things: eyewitness accounts of the murder, interviews with the arresting officers and the prisoners, almost verbatim transcriptions of the coroner's inquest as well as the two trials, and all the gruesome details of the hanging itself. It's quite a story, not least because the two men convicted of the crime turned out to be interesting characters who in the end elicited considerable sympathy in many quarters. There is no way I can do justice to it here (it would be worth a book, although none has been written to my knowledge), as the reports in the *Times* alone run to over seventy pages in my transcription, but this is the gist of it.

On Friday July 29, 1892 a store was burglarized in Chat-ham, the safe blown open and a large quantity of money taken that included some Mexican silver coins. The *Times* reported it on Monday August 1 and people almost immediately spotted two "hard looking characters" that had come to Moncton on Saturday and were staying at "Mrs. Donnelly's," a well known lower-class guest house and brothel. When this came to the attention of City Marshal (police chief) Charles Foster, he telegraphed the store owner and, after receiving a list of the stolen goods and a general description of two suspects, decided to raid the house and arrest them on grounds of "reasonable suspicion," as he didn't have a warrant. About nine o'clock that evening he and three other policemen, one of them Joseph E. Steadman, surrounded the house. When Marshal Foster entered the front door, revolver drawn, one of Mrs. Donnelly's daughters, who was apparently an "inmate" (the story is not without its sordid aspects) and the first to see him, went into the dining room where the suspects were lounging and said "here's Foster," or "the cops are about the house" (the reports differ). One of the men, who went by the name of "Buck," immediately pulled out a revolver and calling out "Hi Jim," roared out the back door by way of the woodshed, preceded a few paces by his more nimble partner, and stumbled into the arms of Officer Steadman who had stationed himself there. Jim somehow managed to skirt past the policeman and escape after firing four shots in the general direction of the house. For some reason, probably for lack of time, Steadman didn't draw his pistol. Instead, he seized Buck with one arm and with the other belaboured his skull with his billy club. The two went into a clinch and

two shots went off, one into Buck's leg and the other into Steadman's chest, just above the heart, fired so close that a powder burn was found on his coat. By this time Officer Scott arrived on the scene and, reaching over Steadman's shoulder, knocked Buck almost senseless with his billy club, at which point they all fell down together into the street. In the next moment Marshal Foster was there, and the two slapped the handcuffs on Buck. In the meantime Steadman had stood up, staggered back a few feet, thrown up his hands, and with a cry "My God! I'm murdered," fallen down dead.

The coroner's inquest commenced the very next day, August 2. Following standard practice, Sheriff Joseph McQueen (who would later own Keillor House) empanelled a six-man jury to view the body, hear the sworn testimony of the police officers and other witnesses, including some of the Donnelly girls, and decide on the cause of death. Adding more detail to the accounts that many of them had already given to a *Times* reporter on the morrow of the murder, the witnesses, a number of them bystanders who had followed the police to the house hoping to get a glimpse of the action, told pretty much the same story. Among the most interesting of the added details is Officer Scott's statement that when they took Buck to the city lockup he said, "My God, don't hit me again, my head is broken." When Scott replied, "You didn't get half enough," Buck said, "I did not do it." Throughout the entire drama he maintained either that he didn't do the shooting, or if he did, he had no memory of it. After hearing from the witnesses and Dr. McCully, the physician who did the post mortem and affirmed that death was caused by the .32 calibre bullet he had extracted from the body and was now presenting, the jury found that Steadman died from a revolver shot fired by the prisoner known as Buck "with intent to kill and murder the said Joseph E. Steadman."

The coroner's inquest was followed on August 3 and 4 by the preliminary hearing before Stipendiary Magistrate Wortman (a stipendiary magistrate was a Justice of the Peace on salary) and it was packed with spectators anxious to get a look at the prisoner. It was here that Buck first gave his real name as Robert Olsen, which also turned out to be an alias. After hearing from most of the same witnesses who testified at the coroner's inquest, including Officer Scott who reported finding silver coins on him, Olsen, alias Buck, was formally arraigned. He pled not guilty and was sent to the county jail in Dorchester to await trial. On the day of his arrival, Saturday the 6th, he gave an interview to a *Times* reporter detailing his life at some length. He said he was thirty, a Norwegian by birth and an only child who had settled with his parents on a farm in Minnesota about twenty years before. His parents died when he was fifteen and he became a sailor on the Great

Lakes for about five years. The last ten years he worked in railroad construction, including the C.P.R., in machine shops and mills, and most recently as a coaler on a transportation boat through the Welland Canal. He then traced his itinerary through the Maritimes, where he said he first arrived about two months previously, claiming that the closest he ever came to Chatham was Chatham Junction where he met Jim, also for the first time, on the train to Moncton. To the end, he maintained that he had had nothing to do with the Chatham burglary, although he changed his story on when he first met Jim.

Not surprisingly, the murder of Officer Steadman occasioned great shock and outrage in Moncton—indeed throughout the province. It was the city's first, the victim was a policeman, and "Joe" Steadman was very popular. He had been connected to the Moncton police force longer than anyone else, having been appointed City Marshal when the town was incorporated in 1875, and for some years he was its only policeman. About three years before the murder he went into semi-retirement as a night policeman and had won many friends and admirers through his affable manner and fearless performance of his duty. The *Times* did not fail to include the pathetic story of how his faithful dog had to be restrained from attempting to guard the body. Magistrate Wortman recessed Buck's preliminary hearing so that participants (except Buck, of course) could attend the funeral. With over eighty carriages, a coronet band, and two lodges of marching Orangemen, it was the largest ever seen in Moncton. When the first wave of grief had abated somewhat, public attention turned to Jim.

The story of Jim's capture on August 12 was like a scene out of an old Western. Almost from the moment of the murder, there were many sightings of suspicious characters who fitted the descriptions of Jim, most of them mistaken, as well as a number of false arrests as far away as Truro and Halifax. The government offered a \$500 reward for his apprehension—a lot of money in those days—and others besides the Moncton police wanted a piece of the action. One of them was Officer Peter Carroll of the Pictou police force. He had read the newspapers diligently and decided that Jim was the man seen a day or so before near Bass River (in the vicinity of Harcourt), and that he couldn't be too far away. After delivering a prisoner to Dorchester penitentiary, he went on to Moncton where he revealed his plan to a member of the police committee whom he happened to know and who heartily approved. A special constable, D.M. Wilbur, was sworn in to help him and the two travelled in disguise by night train to Harcourt. By asking around

they learned of a break and entry and then of a tramp who had slept the previous night in a barn. The owner joined them in the hunt and they soon picked up footprints in the mud that led to a farmhouse where, as it turned out, Jim had spent his last quarter buying a meal. Carroll went to the door alone and, seeing someone who fitted Jim's description "to a nicety," asked the man of the house, a Robert Carter, if he had seen any suspicious looking characters lurking around, all the while eyeing Jim for sudden movements. Quickly stepping to the side of him, he asked his suspect where he belonged. Answered that he was working for a farmer about nine miles away, Carroll asked Carter if he knew this man (meaning Jim). When he replied in the negative Carroll asked him to tell the other men to come into the house. With that Jim put his hand in his pocket very quickly and Carroll as quickly grabbed his wrist, but not before Jim had his revolver half way out. Carroll, who was much bigger, dealt him two blows with his fist that sent him sprawling to the floor, picked him up, heaved him out the door, and finished disarming him outside where his bullet couldn't harm anyone else.

While being handcuffed with two pistols (Wilbur's) held to his head, Jim asked his captors to shoot him then and there, as he would be hanged anyway, adding that he fired four wild shots that night, that if he had killed Steadman he didn't know it, was very sorry for it, and if he did, was willing to be hanged. On the train down to Moncton he became very talkative, describing his ordeal in the woods with nothing but berries to eat, tormented by insects and frequent impulses to put the gun to his head. He also told something of his earlier life, although not too much. He said he had taken courses at a business college but after leaving home had lost contact with his family and fallen in with a gang of toughs, which led him to where he was today. Breaking down and weeping like a child, he said he hoped young boys would take a warning from his story and not hasten too soon to leave the nurturing warmth of the parental home. Those who listened to him in the car were touched.

Soon after arriving in Moncton reporters were allowed to talk to him. To them he freely admitted, as he had done to Carroll himself, that he would have shot his captor if his gun hadn't caught in his pocket. But he expressed admiration for the "big fellow," saying he had "great stuff" in him, as few others had ever dared to take him (Jim) on. Like others of his kind, Jim was not without a certain amount of braggadocio. Regarding the fatal night at the Donnelly house, he admitted firing four shots, but said he fired low, and that he had told Buck many times that if he ever had to shoot, to shoot low, the clear implication being that they had a policy of firing only to intimidate or wound, not to kill. He wanted there to be some

doubt in the minds of a jury as to whose bullet killed Steadman, and would say nothing that would injure Buck's chances at a trial. In general, Jim came across as well educated, well read, and very articulate. Although he said he hailed from Toronto, later rumour had it that he was from a prominent Saint John family. This might in part explain his steadfast refusal to give his real name, which was apparently never extracted from him: he didn't want to embarrass his family. When pressed on the matter he said that, since his partner called himself Buck, he would say he was Jim Doe. After a preliminary hearing before Magistrate Wortman, he, too, was arraigned (plea: not guilty) and sent to Dorchester to await trial. He could have been charged as an accomplice of Buck, but it was decided to hold two separate trials.

The trials, held in the new Dorchester courthouse at a special session of the New Brunswick Supreme Court on circuit, began on September 13. Things did not bode well for the two prisoners when Judge Fraser, in his charge to the grand jury (a preliminary vetting body of twenty-three citizens who decided if the evidence warranted proceeding to trial, since abolished everywhere except in the US and Liberia) called Steadman's killing "one of the most cold-blooded affairs that had ever taken place in any part of the province." After hearing a summary of the evidence presented at the coroner's inquest and the preliminary hearings, the burden of which was that Buck had knowingly killed a police officer in the legal discharge of his duties, and that Jim had shot at an officer with intent to kill and was also subject to several lesser charges yet to come, the grand jury duly found "true bills" against the pair, and their cases proceeded to trial before a petit jury of "twelve good men and true." (Women jurors were still in the future.) Given the overwhelming evidence relating to the killing, its task, the judge said, would be to decide on the intent. Was the crime murder or manslaughter?

Buck's trial came first and lasted three days with adjournments. Again, there were a large number of spectators, including many ladies, something the *Times* reporters thought worthy of notice. Also noticed was the coolness of the prisoners, especially Buck, whose apparent nonchalance throughout the whole ordeal elicited both irritation and grudging admiration. The crown's case was opened by Attorney General A. G. Blair, who was also Premier of the province, assisted by H. R. Emmerson, whose grand house still stands on Station Road in Dorchester. (On a personal note, my wife and I owned it from 1970-75.) They agreed that the main issue was whether the killing was murder, which carried the death penalty, or man-

slaughter, which entailed life imprisonment. To them, it was murder because, even though Foster had no warrant, the arrest was legal and justified on grounds of reasonable suspicion of a felony, in which case the law does not require a warrant, and because Buck knew that Steadman was a policeman intending to apprehend him. Reasonable suspicion rested on the news of the Chatham burglary, a detailed description of the money stolen, and a general description of two suspects, one dark and the other light, telegraphed by the store owner, as well as reports of rough looking characters arriving at the Donnelly house the day after the burglary. Evidence of Buck's awareness that Steadman was a police officer making an arrest, and of his intent to kill, included the Donnelly girl's warning, which she testified to having given, that "the cops were about the house" as well as all the testimony previously cited to the effect that his gun had fired the fatal shot. (The .32 calibre bullet taken from the body exactly matched the revolver found near the scene of the scuffle.)

There was also additional testimony that hadn't been heard at the coroner's inquest or the preliminary hearing (but was laid before the grand jury) that added a bit of controversy and courtroom drama. Not satisfied with his heroic capture of Jim and half the reward, Officer Carroll took it upon himself to go down to Dorchester a few days after Jim arrived and arrange with Sheriff McQueen and Jailer Tait to stay a night or two in a cell between those of Jim and Buck in order to listen in on any conversations they might have. He testified in court that, among other things, he heard Jim say, after the two had commiserated with each other on the hard time they had had, "We will have to take our chances, you made a hell of a job of it." Buck replied, "Perhaps you would have done the same if you were in my place. When I fired that shot I thought I would get clear, but the other *policeman* knocked me stiff with a club." Later in the conversation they talked about "putting up a job" on Carroll, and Jim said, "It's a pity I didn't fix the big fellow but he was too quick for me." At this point in the testimony, Buck laughed in derision from the prisoner's box. Later he staunchly denied that any such conversation ever took place, saying that they knew they were being closely guarded and would never have been so dumb as to talk like that.

Buck was defended by David Grant, a young lawyer who did his best, but may have overplayed his hand. In both his cross examinations of the witnesses and his two and a half hour address to jury, he attempted to cast doubt on Buck's involvement in the Chatham burglary, on the legitimacy of the arrest when there was no warrant, no clear unambiguous description of the suspects and no absolute proof that they had committed the burglary, and on whether Buck could have known Steadman was a policeman. To the crown's claim that he must have known, otherwise he would have had no reason to flee, Grant suggested

rather fancifully that he may have thought the police were raiding the brothel and, like any decent man, would flee to avoid embarrassment. He also questioned whether the revolver found by a bystander twenty-five feet from the scene was in fact Buck's, as no weapons or bullets were found on him. Even if it were his, the sudden clout on the head from a billy club may have made him think he was being attacked by a robber. Probably, the billy struck the trigger and the shot was accidental. He attempted to counter Carroll's testimony by character assassination, saying that no one vile enough to do such eavesdropping could be found in Westmorland County; they had to go to Pictou to get their snitch. Furthermore, he said, if you were to try the two men from their looks, Buck would stand sentry and Carroll would be in the prisoner's dock. And anyway, it was impossible for Carroll to hear the conversation on account of the separation of the cells and the iron doors on them. Unfortunately for Buck, the character assassination didn't strengthen Grant's argument, particularly since Carroll was seen as a hero by many, if not most. It was further weakened when Jailer Tait testified that night time conversations could easily be overheard in the Dorchester jail.

Here I will editorialize a bit by saying that, although Grant was probably right to sow as much doubt as he could (this is part of a defence lawyer's duty), many of his points were rather far-fetched, and I couldn't help wondering why he didn't take the most obvious line, at least to a layman: that Buck did all the things the witnesses said he did; nonetheless, even though he drew his revolver, he did not intend to kill, but only to intimidate, or at most wound, the officer. In any other situation that would have been manslaughter, not premeditated murder. Was the accidental, or even unintentional, killing of a police officer in the line of duty *ipso facto* murder? If so, the trial should have been about whether Buck fired the shot, not his intent. Grant called no witnesses, and no doubt the only one who might have exonerated his client of wilful murder was Buck himself. But according to the law of the time, those indicted on a capital crime were not allowed to testify in their own defence, although they could now hire lawyers to make their case for them. At least some progress had been made in the judicial system since Amos Babcock's trial, when counsel was only allowed to advise on points of law.

Attorney General Blair had little difficulty mounting an effective rebuttal. Besides the consistency of the witnesses' accounts leading ineluctably to the conclusion that Buck fired the fatal shot, and that he knew Steadman was a policeman, he hammered on the reasonableness of the

grounds for reasonable suspicion, and hence the legality of the arrest without a warrant, the one possible weak spot in the crown's case. Of course he belaboured Grant for his character assassination of Carroll, whose wee hour snooping, he thought, was fully justified. "I think when you get hold of a couple of desperadoes you are justified in getting evidence. That is the only way to cope with these scoundrels sometimes."

The most damaging part of the trial from Buck's perspective, however, was the judge's charge to the petit jury that would render the verdict. A judge's duty, then as now, was to explain to the jury the principles of law that must be applied to the facts as established only by the jury, based on the evidence. It wasn't as though Judge John Fraser was ignorant of this. A trained lawyer, he had served in the provincial legislature as an anti-confederation member during Albert J. Smith's brief reign and after Confederation as president of the Executive Council (provincial senate) and then, like Blair, as both Premier and Attorney General (1872-78). After running unsuccessfully for a seat in the federal parliament, he was appointed to the New Brunswick Supreme Court in 1882. Shortly after the trial of Buck and Jim he served as Lieutenant Governor until his death in 1896. He was thus fully conversant with a judge's duties, but he seems to have taken this case particularly personally. In his charge to the grand jury he had called Steadman's killing one of the most cold-blooded affairs in the province's history and to the petit jury he editorialized that Grant wanted to divert the crime from murder to manslaughter but, by the principles of law, this verdict was inadmissible. "I am clear on this point. They were justified in going to this house and making this arrest." To constitute murder, it needed only to be shown that Buck had some knowledge that an officer of the law was effecting his arrest, and the evidence for this was overwhelming. The only question for the jury to decide was whether Buck fired the fatal shot, and if he did, it was murder, not manslaughter. He could not see how they could conclude otherwise. Speaking with great emotion amid deep silence in the courtroom he said, "It is no doubt a painful duty, but life and property must be protected. If men like these are to roam over the country at will and endanger life and property... then the administration of justice would be an entire failure... You have got to decide according to the evidence and I have got to lay down the law before you. We are both under the sacredness of oath. I feel I have discharged my duty and now I leave you to discharge yours."

After deliberating an hour and twenty minutes, the jury returned a verdict of guilty with a "recommendation to

mercy,” meaning life imprisonment, rather than hanging. Juries’ deliberations are never recorded, and none of the jurors seems to have talked to the press afterwards, so we can never know for sure what their thinking was, but it appears that, although they felt constrained by the judge’s charge to find wilful murder, the defence had sowed enough doubt about Buck’s actual intention to warrant punishing the murder as manslaughter. It was probably a compromise decision, as the alternative would have been acquittal. Another possible reason, speculated on in some newspapers at the time, is that at least some of the jury were opposed to capital punishment, a position not unique to the twentieth century.

Buck greeted the verdict with complete *sang froid*, somewhat to the consternation of the spectators. His face betrayed no emotion as it was delivered while he played with a couple of dogs that had strayed into the prisoners box. A short time before, he was seen in his cell enjoying a quiet smoke as though he had not a worry in the world. Back in jail it was a different story. He railed against Sheriff McQueen for allowing Carroll to eavesdrop, saying that if he was hanged he would return and “tear the damned heart out of him.” Carroll was a “damned liar” who must have known that only a couple of chumps would have talked the way he said he and Jim did that night, when they knew there were officers around. Furthermore, he was an American citizen and was requesting a meeting with the US consul to see what could be done, as there was no possibility of a fair trial after the judge’s charge to the jury.

The crown’s case against Jim was also presented by Blair and Emmerson, while Jim was defended by a new lawyer, R.B. Smith, said to have been paid for by a rough looking member of a Montreal gang. Jim was finally indicted on seven charges, any or all of which he could be convicted or acquitted, viz: that he had shot at a police officer with intent to 1. kill; 2. maim; 3. disable; 4. disfigure; 5. wound; 6. do grievous bodily harm to; 7. prevent the lawful arrest of Robert Olsen. Smith asked, and Judge Fraser granted, that Buck’s sentencing be postponed until after Jim’s trial. His reason soon became apparent.

The crown called many of same witnesses that testified at Buck’s trial, basically to prove that Jim had fired shots towards Steadman with intent. Smith’s defence strategy, apparently worked out in consultation with his client, was to admit that Jim was a bad character, but to get him acquitted of the most serious charge, namely intent to kill. Another aim was to help Buck avoid the death penalty by raising new doubts as to whether he intended to kill, whether

he could have known Steadman was a policeman, and—a new wrinkle—whether either of them fired the fatal shot. This time the defence called witnesses, and one of them was Buck, who, although he could not testify in his own defence, was allowed to in Jim’s. Once on the stand, he repeated a version of events he had given to a reporter the day before that was very different from those of the witnesses: He was “paralyzed drunk” that night—had been for several days, didn’t hear the Donnelly girl’s warning about police coming, staggered out the door after Jim, tripped and fell, and was being picked up by Jim when someone fired a shot into his leg. It couldn’t have been Jim as he had hold of him at the time. Jim dropped him and left, and right after that he was struck with a club. “I pulled a revolver out of my pocket...I thought this man assaulted me and I...intended to fire over his shoulder. Something struck the revolver and it went off. That was the only shot I fired and that was accidental...I do not know what happened after that.” Besides the explanation of how the shot could have been accidental—curiously similar to one of Grant’s suggestions—the other important part of Buck’s testimony was a mysterious third party whom he and Jim were expecting to arrive at Mrs. Donnelly’s that very evening. (It was actually his revolver, and Buck was just cleaning it for him when he was spotted doing so by a Donnelly girl.) Unfortunately for the believability of his testimony (besides the testimony of so many others), when Blair began his cross examination by asking him where he came from when he came to Moncton, Buck refused to answer. Pressing his advantage, the Attorney General said he had no further questions. Again Judge Fraser “charged hard against the prisoner,” and after fifty-five minutes the jury returned a guilty verdict on four of the seven charges, viz: intent to maim, disable, wound, and prevent a lawful arrest. But Jim beat the rap on intent to kill, disfigure, or do grievous bodily harm.

At this point, Grant applied for a new trial for Buck and gave his affidavit listing all the reasons to the press, which duly published them. Besides many of the points he had brought up at the trial, he cited flawed reports of the evidence in the newspapers, which certain members of the jury had been allowed to read, and, most importantly of all, the judge’s error in charging the jury, which should have been instructed that it could have legitimately found manslaughter. Intent to kill, he argued, was assumed by the crown to be implicit in the facts of the case, but it was not proven beyond reasonable doubt. The judge thought it was a matter of law, Grant that it was a matter of judgment that had to be left to the jury.

Sentencing took place on September 22 and it, too, was the occasion of considerable courtroom drama. Jim's came first. Following long judicial tradition, Judge Fraser began with a moralizing lecture to the effect that Jim and Buck were members of a band of roving "robbers, burglars, and murderers," and that it was "time the law laid hold of this class of persons." Jim might have been found guilty of the most serious counts in the indictment, he said, but out of mercy the crown did not press the jury to that verdict. Nonetheless, "you had murder in your heart." Just as he was about to pass sentence, Jim interrupted. "Excuse me, will you allow me to make a statement?" "Certainly," agreed the judge. Saying, "I probably know more about this case than any other man," Jim then launched into an extremely well-crafted and eloquent narrative of the events, designed to sow renewed doubt as to who actually killed Steadman and to show the police and the court proceedings in as bad a light as possible. He began by asking why none of the officers reported seeing him flee, although there were plenty of witnesses, and suggested that they had seen him all right but were afraid to confront him, and didn't want to be charged with cowardice. (Again, the braggadocio.) Then he opened a new route to doubt, one that he would follow again at a later date. At the time of Buck's arrest, he said, he had a .32 calibre revolver in his hand, and when he found out later that it was a .32 that killed Steadman he got rid of it. If he had been arrested instead of Buck, he had no doubt that he would now be in "the position of that unfortunate man over there." Then there was the third man. The officers denied seeing him, but it was for the same reason they denied seeing Jim. "That man was in our company a few hours before the shot was fired, and he was seen by the wife of the dead man in our company (in fact Mrs. Steadman did report seeing three scary looking tramps under a bridge, also reported in the papers, but could not say that two of them were Jim and Buck)... There was a third party that night and it will never be known, in all human probability, who fired the shot that killed Steadman." As for Carroll's report on the jailhouse conversation, Jim, too, stated that it was wholly false. He and Buck knew a close watch was being kept on them, and he was always "careful not to give away anything which would implicate Buck or myself." He wanted to take the stand at Buck's trial, but Buck refused, saying, "they are going to hang one of us and I might as well hang as you. He thought he would get a square trial and that it was no use to place my life in jeopardy." Jim then attacked the fairness of the trial, especially the judge's charge, and finished with a rhetorical flourish: "The Steadman murder was not a premeditated affair; it was not a cold-blooded murder. The expression of sorrow (on the way down to Moncton after his arrest)

was sincere... I have heard Buck express similar sentiments for that man's death. I know Buck was shot and knocked down at the door. As I said before, I have no hope of justice from this court." According to the *Times* reporter who heard them, "Jim's remarks were clothed in language seldom heard from criminals of this stamp."

Judge Fraser agreed that it was an impressive speech and expressed very great sorrow to see a man of such ability in Jim's position, but he could believe very little of it in light of all the other evidence given under oath. When he pointed out that the four shots Jim admitted firing that night came a .38 calibre revolver (the bullets were found in the woodwork) Jim quickly replied that he had two pistols, one of each calibre but when he learned during his flight from a man named Steeves that a .32 calibre bullet was found during the autopsy, he got rid of the .32. The judge thought that was even richer, but continued to admire Jim's ability, which he described as "remarkable indeed," and to express his sorrow that such talent was wasted on a life of crime. Addressing Jim's assertion that there was no hope of justice in this court, he declared, "I tell you, prisoner, I am here to administer justice and have no feelings against you. Any feelings I have would be in your favour." But these burglaries must be put a stop to, and "the object of the law is to deter others as well as to punish crime." Accordingly, although it was a tough one, he was imposing a sentence of twenty-five years in the Dorchester penitentiary, but he held out a hope that it might be mitigated by repentance (which Jim had not hitherto shown) and good behaviour. Judge Fraser, it turns out, was not as hard-hearted as he may at first have seemed. "Toward the close of his address he spoke very feelingly, the tears welling up in his eyes and his voice being choked with emotion."

Then it was Buck's turn. Asked if he had anything to say, he answered "No, sir." Fraser followed with a sermon to the effect that Buck was evidently one of a class of travelling criminals, that he didn't believe his statement at Jim's trial about being drunk and firing accidentally, etc., as he "had an inducement to make a statement [he] thought would go abroad throughout the length and breadth of the land and create some sympathy," but he did believe Carroll's report on the late night conversation, which he took to be a virtual confession of having fired the shot in order "to get clear, sacrificing the life of this brave officer," and leaving his "wife a widow and his child fatherless." Steadman had been called to meet his God without a moment's notice, but the law would be more merciful to Buck, who would be given two and a half months to think over and repent his evil deeds. The judge advised Buck to send for a spiritual advi-

sor and confess his sins before his Father Above, for, “as long as the light holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return.” The pronouncement of the terrible sentence, to be carried out on December 1, was very difficult for Fraser. It was his first time, and it weighed very heavily on him, but he had to perform his duty. The jury had recommended mercy, and he would pass that on to the proper authorities, but he didn’t think it would be upheld. He hoped only that Buck would remember his few words and make his peace with God before his execution. “Tears stood in the judge’s eyes during his closing utterances and his voice trembled with emotion all through his remarks.” Buck, by contrast, remained impassive and appeared very little concerned, which, in the reporter’s opinion, “removed much of the awful solemnity of the occasion.”

The sentence was no sooner passed than public sympathy began to rise for “poor Buck” and “that unfortunate man,” as he was increasingly called in the newspapers. In November some twenty-five petitions, one of them with over 4,000 names, were sent to the Governor General asking for commutation of the death penalty, while David Grant filed the appeal mentioned above to the federal Minister of Justice. Both petition and appeal also alleged a new reason Buck was unlikely to have known Steadman was a police officer: The night was very dark (contrary to the crown’s statement that there was sufficient light) and, although it was not brought out at the trial, there was medical evidence that Buck was blind in one eye and couldn’t see very well out of the other. Another supplicant was Father A.D. Cormier, Roman Catholic chaplain at Dorchester penitentiary, who had become Buck’s spiritual adviser and apparently taken a great liking to him. In two letters to the Minister of Justice he, too, criticized Judge Fraser’s charge to the jury and stated his thorough conviction that Buck was not guilty of wilful murder.

Of course, not everyone agreed that the sentence should be commuted. Most probably agreed with the editor of the *Chatham World* who excoriated “maudlin sentimentalists” for claiming that it was not satisfactorily proven which of the desperadoes held the fatal revolver. Let them snivel. Jim and Buck were, after all, “professional robbers...resolved to kill rather than be arrested.” The shot was fired in circumstances that legally proved malice, and if it was unclear which of the “precious pair” fired it, they should both hang. “What curious obliquity of vision is caused by maudlin sentimentality.”

No one wanted Buck to escape the hangman’s noose more than Jim. At his own trial he had hinted that he, Jim, may have fired the fatal shot, although not, of course, with intent to kill. On November 10 in the presence of the Warden, the Inspector of Penitentiaries and Father Cormier he penned, in a clear beautiful hand that suggests advanced business training (you can view a digital

image online from Library and Archives Canada), a confession that he fired the shot from a .32 calibre pistol that killed Steadman and threw the gun away in the woods where he was arrested. He made the statement “voluntarily and fully believing that it may cause the forfeiture of my life...to serve the ends of justice and to save the life of an innocent man.” Of course it wasn’t believed, and there is no way of knowing whether he thought it would be.

Not surprisingly, on the advice of department lawyers, the federal Minister of Justice rejected both the petitions and Grant’s appeal, ignoring any possible new evidence and essentially repeating Judge Fraser’s arguments that Buck and Jim had committed the Chatham burglary, that there could be no doubt whatsoever that Buck knew the police were coming to arrest them, and that Buck had fired the fatal shot. Furthermore, there was nothing wrong with the charge to the jury, nor were there any irregularities in the trial, as Grant alleged. On November 28 the Governor General’s letter arrived in Dorchester formally declaring that the law must take its course, and that the execution would go ahead as scheduled on Thursday, December 1.

Buck received the news without a murmur, for he never expected a commutation. Throughout his incarceration he maintained the same outward calm and apparent nonchalance displayed at his trial. But that doesn’t mean he was aloof. He freely talked with reporters and other visitors, always very politely, and often joked, even indulging in a bit of gallows humour on occasion. His best remembered quip came when a group of visitors who had come some distance to see him announced that they would be leaving Dorchester on Tuesday. “Well,” said Buck, “I leave on Thursday.” He also added details to his life story, continuing to insist that his name was Robert Olsen—Robert *Beck* Olsen, just to give it the full Norwegian touch. Besides the story about being born in Norway and emigrating to Minnesota, he said he was brought up a Roman Catholic and still attended church occasionally after his parents died, but then became negligent of religion and soon drifted from bad to worse. Liquor was his greatest curse and he spent his earnings on it. Of a roving disposition, he spent some time in the West Indies where he killed a Negro with a club while in a fight, but got off with a plea of self defence and a fine of fifty dollars. He was also imprisoned for a year in England for criminally assaulting a sailor. Of Jim he would say very little, and that contradictory. He first said he was only with him two or three days before the shooting; later he said he had met him in a fashionable saloon in Bangor. He insisted that he didn’t know his real name. Then, apparently in order to further confuse matters, he denied ever go-

ing to sea and stated that the story about killing the Negro was also untrue. Both Father Cormier and David Grant said his real name was not Olsen. He had disclosed it to them but neither of them would reveal it without his permission, Father Cormier saying it would only grieve innocent parties and would serve no purpose. Once he had revealed that he was brought up a Roman Catholic, anyone who knew much about Norway should have been suspicious of his claim to be a Norwegian, as there were no more than a handful of Roman Catholics in that country at the time. Like Jim, he really took great pains to save his family from embarrassment. (He told Grant that he had a brother in Chicago and a sister in Buffalo, giving their names.)

So, he habitually fibbed about his life, but did he at least die an unfeigned Christian? Certainly, he drew close to Father Cormier, who spared no effort in pointing out the danger his soul was in and encouraging him to give his heart to God. He had a Bible and other religious books in his cell and when alone spent much of his time reading. Father Cormier sincerely hoped it was doing some good and for the most part he believed it was. Buck said all the right things, declaring that he felt fully reconciled to God and hoped to meet Him fully forgiven of all his sins. When Father warned him not to make a show of bravado for public effect (the sin of pride) he replied that he showed no fear because he had decided to abide by the decision of the law. He continued to insist to his confessor that he may or may not have fired the fatal shot, and before God he could not say. Father Cormier hoped that all this was true, but at times he had his doubts, perhaps harbouring a disturbing suspicion that Buck was telling him what he wanted to hear out of politeness. Others also expressed some doubt as to the depth of his religious conversion, chiefly it seems, because of his continued show of bravado and his refusal to break down weeping, wailing, and trembling as a true penitent should. To those less concerned about his place in eternity, the show was impressive. To a visitor on the 29th of November who told him to bear up and meet death like a man he replied smiling, "I do not think I have ever yet shown the white feather in anything and I do not intend to do so now." On the 30th a County Councillor visited while he was heartily eating his dinner of soup, meat, and pastry and at one point remarked that there was no hope of a reprieve. "No," said Buck, "I have been told there is none, but perhaps it is all for the best. I believe if I had got clear it might have been worse for me in the future. Nobody can tell. I intend to die like a man if I have to go."

Besides Father Cormier, the other person most concerned about the state of Buck's soul was Jim. Deeply affected by Father Cormier's ministrations, he passionately urged his friend to repent and ask God's forgiveness. He was allowed to visit the evening before the execution and their conversation was jovial as well as serious. They could even be heard laughing occasionally, as when Jim asked if he wanted any tobacco and Buck replied, "No, I have enough to last me through." Jim offered a short prayer and, according to the *Times* reporter "appeared deeply concerned about Buck's fate." They talked over the evidence of the trial but said nothing new. They came to the conclusion, as Buck had told the County Councillor, that it might be for the best that they had been captured and convicted, as they might have come to a worse end. On parting Jim said, "Good bye, old fellow, bear up." Buck's last words to Jim were, "Take care of yourself up there," meaning the pen up on "the hill." For two men who had allegedly known each other only a short time, they seem to have been pretty close friends.

The hanging was a class act. Buck could hardly have been sent off with greater ceremony and sense of occasion if he had been a celebrity off on a voyage to an exotic land. After Jim left, Father Cormier and another priest conducted an hour-long service in the cell. Then Mrs. Atkinson of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and Mrs. Emmerson, wife of the crown attorney and a prominent Baptist, sang hymns (among them "There is Life for a Look at the Crucified One" and "Mercy is Free") and talked some time with Buck. He thanked them and told them he was happy. Father Cormier stayed on all night at the jail, talking at times with Buck and then going to an adjoining cell while the doomed man rested or dozed. Buck arose without being called at 7:00, ate a hearty breakfast of buttered toast and three boiled eggs, which he called "angels' food," and went to a brief mass at 7:30, where Father Cormier, after hearing his confession, gave him holy communion. At 8:00 Mrs. Atkinson was back, followed by recently appointed Supreme Court Judge Pierre Armand Landry, who remarked that, "Buck had extraordinary nerve and is the coolest man of the party." Just before, he had appeared in the jail corridor for a moment, looked at the people, and smiled.

The procession to the gallows formed at 9:30. It was headed by Sheriff McQueen and his Deputy, the Sheriff and Deputy of King's County (who were invited up for the occasion), Judge Landry, the Warden of the Penitentiary and the Jailer of the County Jail, several physicians, and members of the press. (Admittance was by ticket only.) Buck was brought out of his cell and shook hands with the sheriff and others in the corridor. Evidently, he and the sheriff had reconciled somewhat since the trial, as, a few days before, McQueen had given him some tobacco. (That is why he had enough to "last him through.") He



Drawing of Buck, said to be from a photo, and a good likeness.

then joined the procession, arms pinioned behind his back, followed by Father Cormier, two other priests, and another physician. He “walked forth without tremor and never changed colour,” while Father Cormier recited the Roman Catholic litany and prayer for the dying.

The gallows was erected in a separate enclosure between the jail annex and a woodshed, with walls high enough to shut out the stares of the vulgar. Following the latest trend in gallows design, it did not employ the old “drop method” that released the condemned man through a trap door, as that was now considered inhumane. Death often came mainly by strangulation, particularly if the hangee was light (Buck weighed only 135 pounds); it could take quite a while and wasn’t very pretty to watch. The new model consisted of two upright posts topped by a cross beam, in the centre of which was a pulley. The noose went, with about three feet of slack, from the man’s neck through the pulley, then through another pulley on the side of one of the posts to a 364-pound weight (specially cast for the purpose at the Record Foundry in Moncton) resting on a platform triggered to collapse at a signal.

It may have been more humane, but when Buck was placed between the posts “many turned away in horror or were affected by tears.” Father Cormier asked in Buck’s name for forgiveness of all who might have been injured. Buck repeated after him “God have mercy on my soul and forgive me my sins.” Father Cormier said, “I will meet you in heaven, Buck, where we will all meet our friends.” The hangman, who was no longer the sheriff as in the two previous hangings, but a semi-professional especially brought in from Ontario, pulled a black cap over Buck’s head. A voice was heard, “Go to heaven, Buck.” “Thanks,” he shouted, “Let her go; God have mercy on my soul.” The hangman then asked Father Cormier if all was ready. “All ready; let him go to his God.” Buck said “Goodbye, gentlemen” and at 9:40 sharp was summarily jerked into eternity. (I will spare you the rest of the clinical details.) Father Cormier, whose voice had choked with emotion throughout the trying ordeal, “broke down and sobbed like a child.” The *Times* reporter had to observe, however, that, “all through, the cool bearing of the prisoner detracted much from the solemnity of the occasion.”

A few days before the execution, Jim sent Buck a letter through Father Cormier. It read in part: “Dear Friend. I am sincerely sorry you must die. Old friend, it is some consolation to know that you have devoted the last days of your life in preparing your mind to meet God. No one could sympathize more sincerely with you than I have. I would have done something in my power to save your life, but I am as powerless to aid you as you are to help yourself...I wish I could shake your hand once more, but if I never do it will be a source of satisfaction the rest of my life to know you died like a good Christian...Good bye, old friend...May God bless and take you to Himself is the frequent prayer of your old friend, Jim.”

Who says there is no honour among thieves?

Gene Goodrich



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June 8 to Sept.13 2019
 Seven Days a Week
 10:00 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 five 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 (1815) 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, E4K 2Z1.(506) 379-6682. morc@rogers.com

Annual Fees (Includes Newsletter)

- Individual: \$15.00
- Family: \$20.00
- Student: \$5.00
- Life: \$150.00

Research Associates

Judith Rygiel, Jamie Heap
 Editor, *Newsletter*, Gene Goodrich

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SALUTING OUR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS



For the last several years 'Bernie's Boys'—former and current students, of Bernie Melanson, a well loved teacher at Matthieu-Martin, and a long-time contributor to Keillor House (*See Newsletter, Feb. 2012*)—have volunteered at our fundraising events. They have worked our Haunted House Nights and a cadre of these dedicated gentlemen have, year after year, 'set the right tone' at our Victorian Dinners. Dressed formally (but with *red* bow ties) they welcome guests, serve the meal, pour the wine and generally move the evening along in an elegant fashion!

At left are some of Bernie's Volunteers at the Victorian Dinner, December 1, 2018. Among this dedicated group are three veterans who have volunteered for many years: Marc Drisdelle, Louis Savoie and Martin Drisdelle.