

WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy 2023 to all our members! I'm really hoping it will be a good one for all of you. I know 2022 was a good one for the Society as we were able to hold most of our events this year. We did, however, have to forego the Halloween Haunted House Tour as we had a shortage of staff and were not able to recruit the number of volunteers we needed to host it. We may have to change to another Halloween activity in the coming years, one that requires less time and resources. But all our other fall events for 2022 went very well, thanks to Alice and all of our volunteers.

Bernie Melanson's former physics students showed up to wait on us at the Victorian Dinners this year. They have come every year, except during Covid, and always do such a wonderful job. Gene Goodrich has provided us more details on the 'Bernie Brigade' in this Newsletter. While the students are grown and now professionals in their

own right, and with some of them becoming engineers and doctors, we are very lucky to have them come back each year.

Bernie has also agreed to step up as our Event Committee lead. This will be a huge benefit to Alice. Bernie has great energy and great ideas, so we are really looking forward to him taking on this new role. Nevertheless, as new members are stepping up older members will also be stepping down. This year I will be one of the ones stepping down. After seven dedicated years, I just felt it was time for me to take a step back. I had taken on three major roles for the society over the last few years. I was the President as well as the Treasurer and Committee Finance Chair, and for a time I was also the Property Manager and Executive Secretary. Whatever role was needed at the time, I'd step in. It was a very busy time, one with

not a lot of breaks. However, like all volunteers, sometimes we get burnt out and just need a breather, and it was time to take one. Therefore, in December I spoke with Miriam Andrews to ask if she would be ready to step in as our acting President, and she has agreed to act in that role. I chose December to make my departure announcement since there are no activities for the next several months. I felt it would give the board more time to plan and regroup before the AGM in June.

Miriam has been our VP for the past few years, so I am quite confident she is the right person to take this on. While I have resigned from the President's role I will not be gone; all past presidents remain on the board for two years. Hence, I'll be just working in the background to support Miriam in

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KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM —SPECIAL EVENTS

For updates on this year's Special Events, please check our website and/or FaceBook on a regular basis

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BERNIE'S BOYS ARE BACK!

We were all very gratified at the return of the Victorian Christmas Dinner to Keillor House on November 26 and December 3 after two years' absence due to Covid. What made it even more gratifying was the return of the barbershop quartet and the 'Bernie Brigade' of first class waiters recruited from the Mathieu-Martin High School boys by their beloved teacher and long-time WHS gardener and special volunteer, Bernie Melanson. Both the quartet and the boys did their usual wonderful job and we are grateful as always. In chatting with some of Bernie's lads I was struck with how well they are doing in life, so struck, in fact, that I asked Bernie for some more specifics. Here is a rundown of their names, the years they served at the Victorian Christmas Dinner, and what they are doing now. It would be hard to find a more impressive lot. Congratulations to all of them, and especially to Bernie for mentoring such a fine brood.

Marc Drisdelle: 2016, 2017 and 2022 civil engineer

Martin Drisdelle: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2022 civil engineer

Louis Savoie : 2015- 2019 and 2022 mechanical engineer

Olivier Chiasson: 2019, 2022 nurse

Pier Olivier Lebrasseur: 2017. 2018. 2019 and 2022 wealth management advisor

Dominic Cormier: 2017, 2018, and 2022 financial advisor

Philippe Landry: 2017. 2018. 2019 and 2022 accounting manager

Justin Lacenaire: 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2022 medical student

Tarik Nait Aijou: 2017, 2018 medical student

Michel Léger: 2018, 2019 medical student



2016



2017



2022

her new role and helping her with any management issues along the way.

Events

Our fall events went well. Our quilt raffle raised \$385, thanks to all the volunteers that sold tickets. Our online auction netted \$978 and we raised another \$1055 at the Christmas Market where we hosted a booth at the Lady Smith Manor. The two Victorian Dinners were also a success, netting us \$3898. The total net income for our fall events was \$6,316 this year. Alice, Bernie and all our volunteers did a wonderful job.

Graydon Milton Trust

The trust was up by \$13,621 as of the month of November, a positive sign that the inflation issues impacting much of the market earlier in the year may have peaked. We also took in \$9464 in dividend earnings year-to-date.

Properties

The Bell Inn lost a valued tenant. Natshi Designs, the fabric shop in the Bell Inn, gave their notice for the end of January. The space will be available in February. It would make a perfect spot for any small business, and it could even be renovated into an apartment if we can set it up with a stove and shower. Over the next year, the board will need to decide how they want the space to be utilized in the future. Nathalie will be advertising it as a small business space soon.

The Payzant Card building is currently fully rented thanks to Nathalie. Over the last few years, she has done a wonderful job as our property manager and in finding us new tenants as well as caring for these properties.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank the Westmorland Historical Society (WHS) for the opportunity to be your President, and Vice President for the four previous years. I came on as President when Covid19 struck and while navigating through Covid19 was tough, we came out of it very well. It took a great deal of effort for me to navigate our Graydon Trust back into the markets over the last few years. You just never knew if you were timing it right, however we succeeded. With all the financial impacts of Covid19 we never had to make any withdrawals on our trust fund investments, which speaks volumes of our team. Donald helped a lot with Covid grants. I also managed to get the \$40,000 Covid19 loan, which luckily we never had to use but it was a nice to have just in case. The online auctions also helped support us. I'd like to thank Miriam and Alice for all their efforts with that.

In closing, I would like to congratulate our volunteers, staff and board members for all their work over the years. While I will be no longer attending our routine board meetings, I still hope to see you all at our AGM and other events. Miriam and I have agreed to meet regularly to make sure things continue in a positive direction. I wish the WHS much success in the coming years.

Bonnie Swift

NELLIE PALMER RYAN: THE LIFE AND LOVES OF A DORCHESTER SHIP-YARD DAUGHTER PART II

IN THE LAST ISSUE WE TRACED THE STORY OF NELLIE PALMER from her elite childhood as the beloved daughter of one of Dorchester's leading shipbuilding families through her years at Mount Allison Ladies College, followed by her troubled and ultimately broken engagement with leading gynecologist Dr. J. Clarence Webster. If you wish to refresh your memory of that tale—probably a good idea before proceeding here—and can't put your hands on the last issue, just go to our website and click on 'Newsletters' at the bottom of the homepage. Now for the rest of Nellie's story:

There is no direct evidence as to how Nellie's family or the Dorchester gossip machine reacted to the breakup with J. Clarence Webster, but it must have been a bit of an embarrassment, to her parents at least. Hiram and Bella were very proud of the great 'catch' their daughter had made. This we learn from a congratulatory letter to Nellie from a distant cousin in Atlanta whom the Palmer family had visited some two years before January 16, 1896, when it was written. This would have been about six months before Webster returned to Canada from Edinburgh. Fred Cole was very happy to learn of her engagement because he had liked her since the morning of their meeting, "wrapper, curl papers and all," and was particularly impressed by the article on Webster in the *Saint John Sun* that her mother had sent him. Bella probably sent copies of the article, which "certainly portrays a man of unusual accomplishments and ability," to a lot of people. Having to tell them that the wedding was now off would most likely have been very painful to the status conscious Palmers.



Courtesy Mount Allison Archives

No doubt Nellie shared her parents' embarrassment, but she seems to have picked up the pieces fairly quickly. She decided to continue her musical training, specifically voice, and to that end sometime in November or early December 1897, about three months after the breakup, she wrote to a cousin who had grown up in Dorchester but had moved to a suburb of New York with her parents and was now teaching in a private school as well as coaching and acting with amateur theatre groups. Nellie wanted to know if Edith thought she was too old to attend the school in order to take voice lessons. In a letter dated December 13, 1897 Edith answered that she was *not* too old, that several of the girls had been going for specialized studies long after they had stopped taking the regular course, and that they would all welcome her with open arms if she decided to come. Life in Dobb's Ferry would not be dull, as "the girls here have the craze for theatricals" (she specifically mentioned *The Merchant of Venice* with herself as Shylock) and they could both "have fun going to New York for lessons."

A letter dated February 22, 1898 from a lawyer cousin, E. W. Palmer of Moncton, acknowledging Nellie's thanks for helping to retrieve a jacket that had been confiscated by US customs officials (they could be nasty then as now) and expressing satisfaction at her safe arrival in New York, suggests that she got there about mid-month. Palmer also mentions an opera company "supposed to be the strongest ever down this way (Moncton)" adding that "quite a number went up from Dorchester." The popularity of opera in Dorchester would no doubt make Nellie even more popular when she came back. "I suppose when you come back you will be such a 'star' singer that you will require a great deal of coaxing to get you to favor non-musical people with a selection."

Nellie did indeed come back, and rather sooner than we might have expected. On May 3, 1898 a Dorchester relative or friend named Dolly wrote to her saying how glad she will be when she gets home, even hoping that the Spanish-American war, which broke out at the end of April, would frighten her into leaving. Dolly also shared the latest tidbits on Dorchester life—the births, deaths, teas, nasty colds, etc., and I can't resist including "Mrs. Keillor's swell party." (This would be Mary Jane, wife of Thomas.) "Everything was lovely; lovely custard made with one pint of milk, yolks of ten eggs & a cup of cream, cream whip, Russian Bear & all sorts of delicious things. It was quite an undertaking for such an old lady don't you think?" (Mary Jane was about 78 at the time.)

There is no way of knowing exactly when Nellie returned to Dorchester, but Edith wrote her a letter on January 19, 1899 beginning "It was so good to hear from you, in such a nice long letter, that I am going to answer at once..." This clearly implies that she

had left New York some time before. Later in the letter she narrows the time frame by mentioning two new friends she had made since Nellie left. They “came here from Terrytown this fall,” clearly meaning the fall of 1898. Thus, we could guess that Nellie was in New York from about mid February to about mid September or October 1898 taking singing lessons and enjoying the cultural scene. Why did she cut her time so short? Evidently, if she ever had plans to follow in Edith’s footsteps and become a teacher, she abandoned them now. But why? There is an answer to that in Edith’s letter as well. In her “nice long letter” Nellie had reported on her mother’s latest. “What a fearful attack dear Auntie Bella had,” Edith responded. “It is a wonder you didn’t have an attack of nervous prostration after it was all over. Mamma said she was so glad she wasn’t there to witness it. She would probably have had to have a dose of morphine too. I hope she hasn’t had any return of the pain.” So Bella’s condition had worsened and from the description we have to suspect cancer or some kind of serious stomach condition. Nellie must have gone home to look after her—again. Of course she reported on other things in Dorchester, one of which we learn from Edith’s reply. It is worth repeating as a concrete example of Dorchester calling card protocol. “I agree with you that it seems rather a queer performance of Daisy’s visiting the Teeds without the announcement first. I don’t envy her, do you?” Nellie was fully back into the Dorchester social round.

She was also back into sewing. In a letter written the following week, Edith responded to another letter from Nellie asking her advice on remaking some kind of a fancy skirt (she called it a ‘nine gore skirt’) and went on to discuss the latest fashions in New York. She also mentions having gone to a performance of Wagner’s *Lohengrin* at the Metropolitan, so it seems that Nellie was keeping up her musical interests as well as her stitchery.

We learn a bit about Nellie’s social activities from letters from two Amherst ladies, Helen Pipes and Nellie Chapman, written in August 1899, sending regrets at not being able to attend the dance she was putting on. Nellie Chapman was particularly sorry because she had enjoyed Nellie’s previous dances so much. They must have become a regular event at Woodlands and it appears that Nellie was now the chatelaine, when she could spare the time from care giving. Another diversion was taking trips to Saint John to visit friends, do a little shopping, and attend cultural events. Another correspondent living in New York, who identified herself only as ‘Moo’, wondered “what attractions Saint John is having in the way of theatre this winter (1900).” In May of the same year Edith wrote saying that she had enjoyed Nellie’s account of her Saint John visit and asked how she was getting on with the shirtwaists. “I think you asked us for hints on how they are made...we aren’t using yokes any more.”

After Edith’s letter of May, 1900, there is a hiatus in the surviving letters that friends and relatives wrote to Nellie until about Christmas of 1907, so there is no more direct evidence on what her life was like in the intervening seven years. But we can pretty well surmise that it was not much different from what it was in the first year of so after her return from New York: She settled in to living with her parents, enjoying the usual ‘drop ins’ from friends; inviting the Robbs and the ‘Belmont’ Palmers to ‘tea’ or being invited by them (with whist or euchre afterwards, of course); attending musical or dramatic events, locally or occasionally in Saint John; shopping; making or making over clothes; driving around the village or over to Sackville, etc.; and looking after her mother, and probably increasingly her father. On September 16, 1907 Nellie turned thirty-three and to all appearances she was now headed for spinsterhood and long term care giving to her aging parents. Then came the *deus ex machina*—or perhaps ‘knight in shining armour’ is a better term—and whisked her away into a future that made up in spades for whatever regret she may have felt over cutting the line on Clarence.

His name was George Ryan, and my researches added only his date of birth and death to what Helen Petchey knew about him. What follows is largely based on her account, supplemented by important details on Nellie and Bella from correspondence in the Palmer papers that Helen didn’t mention, as well as other details from Doug How’s *One Village, One War* and additional material from my usual sources: online research and general knowledge.

George was born in 1863, only a couple of months after J. Clarence Webster, into a prosperous family in Millstream, New Brunswick, where his parents owned a large elegant house known locally as ‘Ryan’s Castle’ (destroyed by fire in 1963). Both he and an older brother, John, became dentists, studying at the prestigious Pennsylvania College of Dental Surgery in Philadelphia. Both were highly successful (shades of Clarence!) and both eventually sought out the even greener pastures of Paris. In the second half of the 19th century, particularly after the vast rebuilding programme associated with the name of Haussmann that followed the devastation of the Franco-Prussian War and the crushing of the Commune, ‘Gay Paris’, became a magnet for painters, writers, and other artsy types from around the world, especially the United States. A large American expat community formed that also included businessmen, diplomats, and other people of wealth attracted by the magnificent

architecture, pleasant climate, and superabundance of cultural, social, and intellectual activities that made the 'City of Light' the acknowledged centre of contemporary civilization. American money in turn attracted physicians, dentists and other professionals in search of an affluent clientele living in an attractive place. American-trained dentists were particularly welcomed, as modern dentistry had developed in the United States. Soon, Dr. John had a flourishing practice on the Champs-Élysées and Dr. George another on the Avenue de Bois-de-Boulogne, which led into the famous park of the same name that was Paris's answer to Hyde Park in London. George was already established and living in Paris before he became engaged to Nellie shortly before Christmas of 1907. Helen seems to have been unaware of this but it is clear from several letters to Nellie congratulating her on her engagement.

A logical question stemming from this fact is: how did they meet? Helen didn't answer it and all I can do is speculate and surmise. It stands to reason that George was a man of culture and that both before and after he moved to Paris he was frequently, or at least occasionally, in Saint John to take in the scene there, as was Nellie. It is not impossible that they were introduced by Mariner George Teed and/or his wife, Margaret Hanington Teed. George Teed was the eldest son of John Francis Teed, 'Dorchester's Master Builder', as Helen called him. He became a lawyer and practised in Saint John, but not before marrying 'Madge', the daughter of Daniel Hanington, who had served briefly as Premier of the province (1882). A member of Trinity Anglican Church, Madge taught Sunday school there for a number of years, and Nellie was one of her pupils and later a life-long friend. It would be strange indeed if Nellie didn't visit the Teeds whenever she was in Saint John, and she could very well have met George Ryan on one or another of those occasions. There was another Teed connection as well. George Teed's younger brother, John Francis Jr., became a physician, and one of his patients was Nellie's mother. (He later married Nellie's Belmont cousin, Ada Palmer, after the death of his first wife.) However it happened, Nellie met George Ryan, they were engaged, and it looked like happiness was again just around the corner. It was, but not before a painful delay that put Nellie through new trials.

By January 1898, as noted above, Bella was getting attacks so painful that she was taking morphine. We can only imagine what she must have been suffering by the time of the engagement. Clarence, in consultation with Dr. Teed, was giving her medical advice as early as 1896-97 and wished he had her at the Royal Victoria. This finally happened late in 1907 or early in 1908, although Webster was now in Chicago. I know this from a letter Nellie received from a J. Anderson in Atlantic City dated February 19, saying she/he was glad to have been able to help her while away the time in the Royal Victoria—it was also the writer's first experience in a hospital. He/she hoped "your mother is now convalescent, thereby enabling you both to say goodbye to the R.V.H." So Nellie stayed there with her mother, but the next sentence, "trusting you are now in the full enjoyment of your former good health," tells us that it was not just to keep her company. The strain of care giving had taken its toll on Nellie, and she, too, was ill enough to require hospitalization in Montreal. From another letter to Nellie written during their stay at the R.V.H., this one from Cousin Ada of 'Belmont', we learn that by March 22 Nellie was feeling "pretty well and ...putting on weight," suggesting that she had been extremely run down by her care giving and other duties. Ada confirmed this by adding, "If you can only be good to yourself when you come home and take life as easy as we do, you will be far happier. It is a great pleasure to entertain one's friends & be doing nice things for them all the time, as you both do, but you must begin to be good to yourselves now..."

Bella's condition wasn't nearly as good. From Ada's letter we learn that she was probably being sent home to die, and also that a letter to Dr. Teed from one of the R.V. H. physicians confirmed that she was very weak, what with her night sweats, diarrhea, and cough. Ada advised getting a Pullman so that Bella didn't have to sit up during the long train ride from Montreal. She also suggested hiring a girl and maybe also a nurse to help out when they got home and asked if they should prepare a bed in the wagon when they met her at the Dorchester train station. In advising Nellie to take it a little easier on herself she also reminded her that there was another person who needed her care. "You must think of yourself too, Nell, for though you will feel like giving up all your time & strength to your mother, it would not seem just right & fair to Dr. Ryan... You have always been more than faithful & always will be, for you couldn't be anything else, nor would we have you be, but you know it is going to crown your mother's happiness by seeing you happy." Prophetic words, although it didn't require a prophet to pronounce them, given Bella's condition. A month after they were written Arabella was dead.

Ada's words were also a testimony to Nellie's character, and they weren't the only ones. Mary Gibson wished she knew Dr. Webster so she could congratulate him on his excellent choice of a bride and 'Birdie' bade her tell the Doctor (Clarence) that she says he 'couldn't have found a dearer nice piece of humanity.' Flo White heartily congratulated 'Mr. Ryan' and knew he was alright "since my Nell loves him, but he is mean to take you so far away from us." George's sister, Sarah Wells, had

heard “many good things” about her, and “not just from George,” while Cousin Gideon Palmer, now a physician in the States, although he never met “the lucky man”, was sure Ryan must be “all to the good,” or he couldn’t play in Nellie’s yard. To a degree that Clarence perhaps couldn’t fathom, Nellie’s life was about loving and caring for others. Bella must have died happy in the knowledge that her beloved daughter was going to marry the man she deserved, and who deserved her.

Whenever she could turn away from the grief she felt over her mother’s illness and death, Nellie must have been cheered and excited at the prospect of Paris. She had studied French at the Mount Allison Ladies’ College (and no doubt in school as well) and would now get a chance to use it, although American expat communities were not known for their fluency in the local language. But more exciting would have been the culture—all the things that were right up her alley: music, theatre, art, and of course fashion (and what fashion it was, too!). When it came to culture, Paris made New York and London—to say nothing of Edinburgh—look like the boondocks, and it had a pleasant climate to boot. It looked like the ending of Nellie’s story was going to be decidedly ‘fairy tale’. To a large extent it seems to have been, but the woods were not entirely free of wolves.

The wedding took place in Trinity Anglican Church on September 3, 1908. Helen says that “on the following day she and her husband received guests at Woodlands, together with the bride’s proud father.” George had travelled over from Paris for the occasion but he probably didn’t find Dorchester quite as ditch-water dull as had Clarence. He even had roots here in a manner of speaking, or at least close by. His grandfather was an Irish settler at Point de Bute who served in a number of local offices in Westmorland Township in the 1790s. His father also lived there as a boy before moving to Millstream. No doubt the family was Church of Ireland (i.e. Anglican) and he probably regretted with Nellie and her father that the wedding couldn’t have been performed by Roy Campbell, who was now blind and living in Hampton. They would have regretted even more that Bella was not there in the flesh although I am sure they believed she was present in spirit.

We don’t know exactly when the happy couple left for Paris, but to judge from comments in letters congratulating Nellie on the engagement (“I suppose you will be sailing away to ‘Gay Paris’ some of these fine days too;” “I’ll venture you will be doing some French study this winter—*n’est ce pas?*”) it must have been soon after the wedding. George had already acquired the house on the Avenue de Bois-de-Boulogne and it would have been a grand one. From Cousin Gideon’s congratulatory letter we learn that Nellie sported a large diamond engagement ring that was a real eyeful, so there is every reason to suppose that there was a wedding ring and a house to match. It probably wasn’t as large as Clarence’s shack on Charlotte Square, but I’ll bet it wasn’t as cold and damp, either. One of the other fine houses on the Avenue was that of Claude Debussy. As a pianist and music lover, Nellie would have liked that, although she would no doubt have strongly disapproved of the composer’s scandalous private life as a serial adulterer.

The pleasures and treasures of Paris were in due course supplemented by new ones, courtesy of the stork. On May 5, 1910 Nellie gave birth to a daughter, Helen, not in Paris, however, but in Montreal. She and George must have been home for a visit, but the Montreal location suggests that there were difficulties with the pregnancy that made specialized attention advisable—something they could well afford. The Ryans must have returned to Paris soon afterwards, as on December 28, 1911 the stork brought them a slightly belated Christmas gift in the form of a second daughter, Alice, who was born in the City of Light. Until I looked up the children’s birthdates and places of birth on the genealogy sites that are so easily available nowadays but not when Helen Petchey was writing, I assumed that the Ryans remained in Paris throughout World War I, but this appears not to have been the case. On March 22, 1913, more than a year before the outbreak of the war, a son, Donald, was born in *Toronto*. George must have had connections there, maybe even a dental practice. A possible indication of this is the fact, courtesy of Helen Petchey, that the two sons moved there after World War II (more on that below) and both George Senior and Nellie, together with their daughters, ended up there as well. That the Ryans did not remain in Paris during the First Great War is further indicated by the birthdates and places of their last two children. George Jr. was born on June 26, 1917 in ‘Canada’ (the genealogy site does not specify a city) and Kathleen on April 28, 1921, likewise in ‘Canada’. My guess would be Toronto.

Did you notice anything interesting about these dates? To do so, you would have to have remembered that Nellie was born on September 16, 1874. This means that she was thirty-five and a half when her first child was born. She was just three months short of forty-three when George arrived, and only five months short of *forty-seven* when Kathleen joined the family! Whatever gynecological problems she may have had before Helen was born must have been resolved soon afterwards. Her joy over the stork’s five visits would have only been dampened by the reflection that her children never saw their grandmother.

It is certain that the Ryans returned to Paris after the war, but not when. There are, however, certain signposts that allow a

reasonable guess. Hiram Palmer died in 1923 and Nellie would probably have wanted to at least visit him during his final days, which would have been difficult to do from Paris. 1924 saw another relevant death, namely that of George Teed, husband of 'Madge' Hanington Teed. Doug How, who most likely got it straight from Madge (she died in 1947, and Doug would have known her, as would Helen Petchey), tells us that not long after her husband's death, while her son Gerald was at Oxford University, Madge and her daughter Connie "spent months in Paris" where they stayed in the Ryans' home near the Bois-de-Boulogne. Gerald was born in 1903, so assuming he was in his early twenties when he attended Oxford, we could peg Madge's Paris visit at about 1925-27 and conclude that the Ryan family were either there at that time or returned soon thereafter to the house that they still possessed.

Paris during the 1920s and 30s was at least as exciting as it had been before the Great War. Artists, musicians, writers, etc. flocked there as before, as did wealthy expats. If anything, the city was even more the cultural capital of Europe, as its only serious rival, Vienna, had entered into dark days. No doubt the family enjoyed it immensely, perhaps even more so as there were regular visits home. Helen Petchey tells us that when in Dorchester they always attended services at Trinity Anglican, and perhaps they stayed at Rocklyn, the summer home of Madge Teed. Woodlands had long since fallen into other hands, and there were probably some regrets about that—certainly lots of nostalgic memories. Helen also says that "of local interest were the three modishly dressed daughters from Paris with their mother whose beauty only seemed to increase with age." Chips off the old block, it would seem, and very pretty ones at that.

Unfortunately, we know almost nothing about the Ryans' time in Paris except that it came to a sudden end with the German invasion of France in May 1940. It is Doug How who recorded that story, again probably on the basis of conversations with Madge Teed. (Doug never was a hand to reveal his sources.) My only contribution to this final episode is to summarize his words here.

The Germans were very close to Paris when the Ryans decided to flee. (As Canadian citizens/British subjects, they would have been considered enemy aliens by the occupiers.) George had scoffed at the idea that the Germans would take Paris—they hadn't done so in the first war, and they wouldn't this time either, so he thought—but Alice, now 28, convinced everyone that it was best to get out and back to Canada. George Jr. now nearly 23, had already left to join the British Army, and Donald, now 27, soon followed. Alice and Helen made their way to southwest France and got away to Britain, while Kathleen and her parents, now 64 and 75, got out of a frontier village and into Spain and thence to London just as the Germans were jack-booting their way in. It was probably just as well. Clarence Webster's daughter, who married a French artist, was incarcerated by the Nazis and died in captivity. From Britain, George, Nellie, and their three daughters left for Canada, specifically for Dorchester and Rocklyn where they had known they would always be welcome ever since Madge Teed told them they would be during her visit to Paris. Helen and Alice got there in July. They called from Halifax and when they arrived in Dorchester Madge was at the station with a cablegram saying the others were safe in London. George, Nellie, and the girls were reunited in Rocklyn in August and here they stayed for a time until Dr. Ryan took over a practice from a Saint John dentist who had enlisted. Helen and Alice took jobs in Toronto and Kathleen went to college there. After the war Donald and George Jr. joined them and at some point George Sr. and Nellie moved to Toronto as well, perhaps to retire. All we know for sure is that George died there on June 8, 1951 at the age of eighty-seven and a half and Nellie sometime in 1954 in her eightieth year. It seems, then, that, after a period of trials and tribulations, Nellie's story had a fairy tale ending after all—or at least one as close to it as reality generally permits.

Gene Goodrich

ANOTHER UNDERUSED SOURCE OF LOCAL HISTORY: THE TRUEMAN FAMILY FONDS AT THE MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

THE STORY OF NELLIE PALMER'S EARLY LIFE down to the breaking of her engagement with J. Clarence Webster simply could not have been told without the collection of Palmer records in the Mount Allison University Archives. If Nellie or her mother had, in a fit of pique, tossed all his letters into the trash can, as he did hers, we (meaning Helen Petchey and myself) could never have learned of their relationship, which is unmentioned because unknown about in everything else ever written about Webster. Similarly, I could not have filled in the details of the life of Josiah and Sarah Wood of Dorchester (June 2021 issue of the Newsletter) if Jane Trites had not unexpectedly discovered a large box of documents in a store room above her recently deceased mother's kitchen pertaining to her great-grandfather, Josiah Wood of Sackville, and decided to offer them to Keillor House, rather than just chucking them out. Another major source of information on Josiah of Dorchester is the collection of bills, statements of account, and other documents pertaining to the settlement of his estate that were for some reason preserved at Cranewood by his grandson, Josiah of Sackville, and later given to the Mount Allison Archives when University President "Big Bill" Crawford bought the stately Sackville look-alike of Dorchester's Rocklyn and decided to donate, rather than destroy, all the old books and papers he didn't want. Without source material there can be no history that anybody knows about, and source material invariably has its own history, with all the twists and turns that its preservation or disappearance entails. Sometimes the preservation history of source material is almost as interesting as the material itself. As a case in point, I want to tell you about another collection in the Mount Allison Archives, one that is unique in the local context both for the scope and variety of its contents and for the span of time it covers. Then I will illustrate its interest and importance for local history with an example of the kind of analysis that can be extracted from it, followed by a transcription of a short document in it that caught my whimsical fantasy.

I am talking about the Trueman family fonds, a vast collection of diaries, note books, letters, land surveys, deeds, account books, receipts, invoices and other financial records, as well as artifacts, school and church records—and much else besides—collected by several generations of the Trueman family of Point de Bute. The Truemans were part of the Yorkshire Immigration that came to the Chignecto 1772-1775 and were closely related to the Keillors in the first two generations. (John Keillor's maternal aunt was married to William Trueman Senior and John's eldest sister, Elizabeth, married William's son—and thus her cousin—William II.) More fecund and more successful as farmers in the succeeding generations, the Truemans also outlasted their Dorchester and Amherst Point relatives as residents of this area. There are no Keillors left around here, but descendants of William II are still farming the same land acquired by William Senior, and still doing very well at it. This tenacity and continuity of residence helps in part to answer the obvious question: how did all this invaluable historical material get preserved long enough to end up in the Mount Allison Archives, and who was responsible for getting it there? When archivist Donna Sullivan compiled the first edition of the indispensable Finding Aid, or guide to the collection, in 1984, she discovered that there was "no record of the provenance of the fonds" (i.e. of where they came from) but surmised that it "was probably donated to Mount Allison University in the first decade of this century." My considerable researches over the last several years into the fonds and also into Trueman history allow me to confirm Donna's surmise and also to shed a bit more light on the "provenance" and preservation history of the fonds. I think it's an interesting tale.

For one thing, the Truemans were great record-keepers from the beginning. Back in Yorkshire, William Senior was a joiner (a highly skilled and specialized carpenter) and millwright, but he also had a general store which he ran together with his young son and only surviving offspring, William II, who took over the management when it became apparent that he couldn't follow in his father's footsteps as a joiner owing to a withered arm, the result, it was said, of some accident caused by the carelessness of a nurse. The younger William was thus well versed in bookkeeping and he continued the practice after arriving with his parents in the Chignecto in 1774, marrying Elizabeth Keillor, and taking up farming, milling, cattle dealing, and small scale commerce. He even brought over some of his ledgers from the Yorkshire store—perhaps as a memento—and it is from them that we learn the few details we have of that business back in the old country.

One of these ledgers was barely begun when the Truemans left for the New World, so it had a lot of blank space as well as a mate that was totally empty. The two of them lay lonely and unused on a shelf someplace until May of 1802 when William was fifty years old, had been in the Chignecto for twenty-eight years, and had a brood of ten children. Perhaps as a legacy to them, perhaps as an exercise in Yorkshire thrift, he decided to fill in the unused pages with what he called his "Memorandum of Events," a kind of log book recording what he did each day—or more accurately what he did on the days he made the entries, which was not every day and got more sporadic over time—as well as: notes on the weather; the marriages of his children; the births of his many grandchildren; the visits to and from friends and neighbours; his business trips to Sackville, Dorchester, Amherst, and Halifax; the deaths of neighbours or prominent people in the area due to accidents, illness, childbirth, natural causes, and exposure to the elements while under the influence of alcohol; and too much else to list here. "What he did each day" included his farming and milling activities: sowing and reaping, often stating what grain (wheat, oats, barley, rye, etc.) he sowed or reaped and how much he harvested; haying; cutting and hauling wood; building and repairing his mill dam; grinding grain for the neighbours; pasturing livestock and taking them to market; and again too much else to list here. My point is that William's Memorandum of Events, which he continued to record, albeit increasingly sporadically, until a couple of years before his death in 1826, is a uniquely rich treasure trove of information on the economic and social life of the Chignecto during the first two generations of Yorkshire settlement. But it is only one of a very large number of other records that William, or William and his father, generated or received: business letters, account books, day books, receipts, 'shopping lists', bills of lading, etc., etc. They were preserved and very greatly added to by succeeding generations of Truemans, very largely, I believe, because William II passed his bookkeeping habits and his penchant for keeping old papers kicking around on to his seven sons. The one most relevant here is his youngest, Thompson, who inherited his father's house and main farm, 'Prospect', named, I imagine, for its magnificent view of the Tantramar Great Marsh. (The original brick house was unfortunately replaced by an 'update' in the 1920s, but the farm is still in the hands of a descendant, Ron Trueman, and the view is still as magnificent as ever.)

Thompson was also an assiduous record-keeper, but in order to keep records for very long you need some place to store them where they will be safe from the best-laid plans of mice and mould. Other progressive farmers in the area like William Wells also kept records—we know this because one of his ledgers also ended up in the Mount Allison Archives—but most of them were not preserved because they were not properly stored and their heirs and successors didn't want to keep old junk lying about. But the Truemans had a great place to store their records, and it was nice to look at, too. Thompson's oldest brother, Harmon, learned the joiner's trade from his grandfather, William Senior, and besides framing buildings, building farm implements and carriages (of course he was also a farmer), he made furniture of such high quality that experts have compared it to the finest made in the province (which had a reputation for fine furniture-making). A number of his pieces ended up in museums while others are still treasured in their homes by members of the various Trueman families. Among them is a secretary desk, complete with locking drawers, now in the home of Thompson's great-great grandson, George Trueman of Point de Bute. William II kept his records there, as did Thompson and two of his sons, Albert and Howard, both of whom lived in the charming brick house at Prospect Farm until the early years of the twentieth century.

By the end of the nineteenth century there was thus quite a collection of documents. No doubt they were valued family memorabilia, but nothing guaranteed that following generations would continue to value them. What saved them from one of those periodic house cleanings that all too often efface local history was the fact that Howard (1837-1908), besides being a farmer, was also a keen and able family historian and genealogist. Drawing on the material in the desk, and collecting much additional information on "those families connected by marriage with the first and second generations of Truemans, and also...of the first settlers of the old township of Cumberland..." he published his well known book *The Chignecto Isthmus and Its First Settlers* in 1901. Reprints are available in the Keillor House Bookstore. Howard passed his interest in the history of the region on to one of his sons, George (1872-1945), who first became a teacher, then went on to earn a PhD in education from Columbia University and in 1923 was appointed President of Mount Allison University, a position he held until 1945. Although I, too, have no direct documentary proof, given the family relationship between Howard and George (courtesy of the current Trueman family historian, Genie Coates), together with George's well-attested interest in the Chignecto region—he wrote an important book on the Tantramar Marshes—I think I can now confirm Donna's surmise and add that it was President George who brought the fonds to Mount Allison and thus preserved it for posterity.

As mentioned above, the fonds contain a great deal of information on various aspects of the Trueman domestic economy. I made a start towards exploiting it with a couple of articles, as yet unpublished, on the mills and farming operations. One part of

the latter study looked at the Trueman livestock operations, and one aspect of these was driving cattle to the Halifax market. It may seem illogical, or at least uneconomical, for farmers to have driven cattle all the way from Point de Bute to Halifax in order to sell them. Butter and cheese were another matter, as they could be transported by water, but cattle had to be driven overland, and wasn't it too great a distance to be practical? Wouldn't there have been prohibitive costs associated with moving the cattle so far to market, and wouldn't the Halifax butchers have been able to get all they wanted from farmers closer to the city? I found some answers in the Trueman family fonds and offer them here as a modest contribution to the economic history of early post-Acadian Chignecto. Most of my evidence dates from the time of William Trueman II (1762-1826).

Until he started getting on in years, William kept about 20-25 milk cows of no particular breed except that they were suitable for both milk and beef. During the last years of his life the number was reduced to about ten. As an aside I can add that, like those of every one else, they were not even half the size of today's cattle and gave no more than a quarter of the milk produced by modern dairy breeds. (I found the figures proving this in various documents in the fonds.) Of course the cows had calves every year and since the males (roughly 50% of the calves) had severely limited potential as milk cows, they were destined for the dinner plate except for those few who became draught animals. When more calves arrived than could be consumed in the home, the Truemans and other progressive farmers with a surplus looked to sell them. Of course neighbours with few cattle were obvious customers, but Chignecto farmers were for a time also able to take advantage of the Halifax market. This is because there was (and still is) very little farmland immediately around the city, so that most of its beef had to be brought in from areas that had a surplus. One possibility was the area around Shubenacadie, some thirty miles away. There was good farmland there but most of it was taken up in grain production, whereas cattle surpluses could best be achieved on extensive dyked marshes yielding abundant pasture and hay. The closest of these to Halifax were in the Windsor-Grand Pré area, and no doubt they supplied a lot of the city's demand. The Chignecto also had abundant marshland and relatively large herds of cattle, but how could its cattle compete in the Halifax market, being so much further away?

Evidence in the Trueman family fonds answers the question. If the cattle had had to be driven overland all the way via Amherst, Debert, Truro, Shubenacadie, etc., a distance of some 130 miles, it would have taken at least 8-10 days to get them there because even under the best conditions cattle cannot be herded more than 15 miles a day without running so much beef off of them as to make them unmarketable. In fact, it would no doubt have taken longer than 8-10 days because, until the 1840s, the road through the Cobequid was no more than a treacherous trail. So, going by that route would have been impracticable at best. Yet, numerous entries in William's Memorandum of Events prove that the Truemans regularly took cattle to Halifax—sometimes several times a year—and *returned to Prospect* within ten days in fair weather and a dozen in foul. They could do this because they took another route that was shorter, easier, and much faster. It is traceable in the Memorandum and confirmed by several other documents in the Trueman fonds.

From Prospect Farm they went down to Fort Cumberland (Beauséjour) and over to Amherst Point where they probably stopped to say hello to William's brother-in-law, Thomas Keillor and family. From there it was down the Southampton Road to where it meets the road to River Hebert, then down through the Boar's Back to Partridge Island just outside of Parrsboro. This was a distance of about 45 miles and would have taken about three days. Here there were two taverns/hotels for the convenience of travelers, as well as a packet boat to transport people and goods, including cattle and other livestock. It was the packet that really cut down on the time needed to get to Halifax. As described by a very old 'old timer' for the *Halifax Herald* in 1900, it was a small schooner that ran between Parrsboro and Windsor, Horton, and Wolfville twice a week. It was owned and operated by James Ratchford and his son, Thomas, traders and shipbuilders of Loyalist background who were among the early settlers of the township. The Ratchfords also owned one of the hotels. Later it became known as Ottawa House and is still standing as a museum. That William Trueman II used the Ratchford packet is proven by a bill of lading preserved in the Trueman fonds dated at Parrsboro July 17, 1808: "Received of William Trueman eleven head of cattle to be forwarded to Windsor by packet for Messers Reece & Albro [signed] Thos. Ratchford for James Ratchford." On this occasion William did not go all the way to Halifax with the cattle but turned them over to Ratchford to be delivered in Windsor to the Halifax butchers Reece & Albro, who would take them on to Halifax. (More on the butchers later.) But there is plenty of evidence in the *Memorandum* that William and his eldest son, Harmon, frequently went the whole way themselves, using the packet of course. The distance by water from Partridge Island to Windsor is roughly 30 miles and, depending on the winds and tides, a schooner could expect to sail along at 5-6 knots, or 5.75- 6.9 mph for a sailing time of 4½ - 5½ hours. This means that even counting loading time, etc. Windsor was easily reached in one day, rather than two, with the cattle rested

enough to carry on a bit farther along the remaining 33 mile stretch to Halifax. Thus, they would have arrived in Halifax about 5½ days after leaving Prospect. Without the cattle to slow them down, the return trip was much faster. If the weather was decent and they got to Windsor in good time to catch the packet to Parrsboro, they could probably have made it in three days, leaving lots of time to do a little shopping in Halifax, which I know from numerous documents in the fonds that they often did.

Besides the route the Truemans took and roughly how long they were on it, the fonds and a few other sources I managed to scare up, including some common sense surmises based on my own youthful experiences driving cattle (admittedly rather ancient ones now), can answer some other questions of interest: How many cattle were on an average drive? Did the Truemans drive them all by themselves or were there also professional or semi-professional drovers for hire? Did they drive them on horseback or lead them on foot? How often did they drive cattle to Halifax? Were there any other destinations? Whose cattle were they and to whom did they sell them? For how long did the cattle drives to Halifax continue, i.e. were they a permanent feature of the Trueman farming operations and if not, why not?

How many cattle were on an average drive? The first mention of a cattle drive in the Memorandum is dated July 12, 1802 when William “started for Halifax” with 30 steers and returned to Prospect ten days later having had “a very good time,” presumably shopping and visiting. On September 27 of the same year he “started” with 24 head and did so again the following August (1803) with 29. These numbers were somewhat higher than average. In subsequent years the number of cattle recorded on any one drive ranged from a low of 6 to a high of 30, while the total for the year ranged from a low of 6 (in 1808) to a high of 54 (in 1802), with more typical totals of 31, 35, 30, and 25.

Did the Truemans drive the cattle by themselves or with the help of professional or semi-professional drovers? This question is not answered in the *Memorandum* but rather in a family oral tradition preserved by William’s grandson, Howard Trueman, who mentions the cattle drives in *The Chignecto Isthmus*: “Ten days was the usual time taken on these trips. [Actually, they ranged from ten to thirteen days, depending on weather]. The drovers would start some hours, or perhaps a day, in advance of Mr. Trueman. He would go on horse-back, in knee breeches, and with the old fashioned saddle-bags.” Howard’s hint of professional or semi-professional drovers—whom he didn’t remember personally as he was born long after the cattle drives to Halifax had ceased—is confirmed in the *Halifax Herald* article of 1900 mentioned above: “There were in those days men called drovers who would travel the country from Amherst to Parrsborro passing through River Hebert over Boars Back, so called, with great droves of cattle and sheep, cross over [to Windsor on the packet] and drive them to Halifax. They generally commenced driving the first of June and continued by intervals till December...” From this it appears that William (or Harmon) did not drive the cattle themselves but rather supervised the operation, probably catching up with the herd and the drovers—all of them young men, no doubt—at designated points along the way where pasture and water were available. Anyone driving down the Boar’s Back today can easily spot numerous possibilities south of River Hebert and around Pettigrew Settlement.

Did the drovers drive the cattle on horseback or lead them on foot? There is no way of knowing for sure from the sources I was able to find, but for what it’s worth I think they went on foot. Since the steers were going directly to the Halifax slaughterhouses, not to pastures for further fattening, William would have wanted to walk them along at a comfortable pace so as not to run the beef off of them and herding them with horses would have done just that. He was paid by the pound, live weight, and would thus have wanted them to weigh as much as possible when they arrived. Because they were in the barn all winter and around people much of their time, the cattle of this area were no doubt much quieter than those in the ‘wild west’ of my youth. I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that some of the steers were halter-broke and could be led by one of the drovers to act as the lead animal. Besides ensuring a steady pace, this would have helped prevent other animals from straying from the herd. It would also have greatly facilitated getting them onto the boat.

How often did the Truemans drive cattle to Halifax? As mentioned in the *Memorandum* (which is not necessarily a complete record) there were two drives in 1802 and 1809, three in 1808 and 1812, one in 1803, 1805, 1807, 1810, 1811, and 1813, and none in 1804 and 1806. So the answer is that the number varied from none to three, depending (presumably) on the availability of cattle and (perhaps) market conditions, and that about half the time there was only one drive.

Were there other destinations for the cattle besides Halifax? On June 24, 1811 William noted in his Memorandum that “Mr. Robert Bryan from Newfoundland purchased a load of cattle and some bulls.” On July 1 William and his drovers “went to Bay Verte

with a drove of cattle and sheep.” The next day they “put 32 head of cattle and 116 sheep on board for Newfoundland.” The following day William “went to Amherst to buy cattle for Robert Brian.” On August 12 he “shipped [another] 32 oxen and 100 sheep for Newfoundland.” Two letters from William Trueman to “Messrs. Robert and John Brine of Newfoundland” dated September 4 and October 30, 1811 and preserved in the Trueman fonds reveal that the Brines/Bryans/ Brians (William was never a consistent speller) were butchers/and/or cattle dealers—probably from St. John’s—who were shopping for bargains in the Chignecto where, Trueman assured them, “there is great plenty of cattle in the country.” The Brines apparently intimated that they might be back for more the following summer and William offered to buy some hay for them and haul it to where the vessel would be loaded. However, we hear no more from them, so perhaps they found a closer and cheaper source (on P.E.I?)

Saint John, N.B. would seem to have been another logical destination for Chignecto cattle, and there were certainly drives in that direction later on. But the only reference to one in the Trueman fonds is in a letter, dated February 25, 1824, from Samuel Freeze of Sussex County to his son-in-law, Thompson Trueman, who inherited Prospect Farm from William. Thompson had been thinking of such a drive but Samuel advised against it because a sudden thaw had swept out most of the bridges around the city and the prices were not good because the Saint John butchers “get what they want from a less distance, and [will] take every advantage if [the cattle] have not been contracted for.”

Whose cattle were they and to whom did the Truemans sell them? As we would expect, most were surplus animals from the Trueman herd, but not all of them. Among the twenty-nine William drove to Halifax in August of 1803 were three belonging to fellow Yorkshire settler James Metcalf of Maccan to whom he charged a small drover’s fee that he called ‘drift’. Other documents in the Trueman fonds record ‘drift’ charged to near-neighbour and fellow ‘Yorkie’ William Wells of La Coupe and to a William White whom I do not know. In informing his favourite Halifax butcher/cattle dealer that he expected to have twelve to fourteen steers ready for market the coming summer, 1812, Trueman added that “John Keillor Esq. hath 4 good oxen [viz. steers] he wishes you to have with mine. They are fine oxen. They are likely to be good 15 July.” Most of the Halifax-bound cattle were sold to John Albro, a tanner, butcher, and later prominent merchant who made enough of an impact on Halifax society (he was an MLA and a lake is named after him) to merit an article in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Another prominent Halifax merchant who bought cattle from Trueman was Winkworth Allan, a brother of William Allan, a Justice of the Peace for Westmorland County and a neighbour of the Truemans. Albro came to the Chignecto several times to buy cattle and always stayed with the Truemans. He also commissioned William on occasion to buy cattle on his behalf and deliver them to Halifax. The Brines of Newfoundland also commissioned him to buy cattle (and sheep) for them and most of the animals that were shipped out of Baie Verte in 1811 were probably not Trueman surplus but ones he bought locally for the Brines.

For how long did the cattle drives to Halifax continue? The first direct evidence of a cattle drive is the entry in the Memorandum of Events on July 12, 1802, but the Truemans had owned the Mauger farm (inherited by Harmon) since 1777 and Prospect since 1788, while the Halifax demand for Chignecto cattle was probably greater than what it was after the turn of the century owing to the paucity of closer supplies, so I would guess that the drives began sometime in the 1790s. The years 1802 and 1803 saw 54 and 29 head delivered, respectively, but after that the numbers slacked off—going down to as few as 6 or 8—until 1811 (20 head), 1812 (30 head) and 1813 (25 head), when demand may have been stimulated by the War of 1812 (or rumours of it). The 1813 drive appears to have been the last one. At least it is the last one for which there is any direct evidence. One possible explanation is that the Halifax butchers were now getting supplied by producers closer to the city owing to a general increase in the number of cattle with the development of farms and pasture lands. In this context William’s statement to the Brines in 1811 that “there is great plenty of cattle in the country” may be significant. It is also possible that the Truemans had simply lost interest in the drive. William was now in his early sixties and probably no longer as vigorous as he once was, while Harmon had married in 1807 and had other interests.

Semi-humorous addendum to fill up space: Sometimes the Truemans and their drovers would have been caught out in nasty weather and as a result come down with colds. But they had a remedy, and it must have been a good one, as they preserved the instructions long enough for them to have been included in the fonds that came to Mount Allison. Entitled “Receipt for a cold by the late Doctor James of London,” it must have been brought over from Yorkshire and long since stood the test of time:

Take a large teaspoon full of linseed [oil], with two penny's worth of stick licorices and a quarter of a pound of "raisons of Sun" [sun-dried raisins]. Put them into two quarts of soft water and let it simmer over a slow fire till it be reduced to one. Then add to it a quarter of a pound of brown sugar candy pounded [and] a table spoon full of white wine vinegar or lemon juice. Note the vinegar is best to be added only to that quantity you are going immediately to take, for if it is put into the whole it is apt in a little time to grow flat. Drink half a pint at going to bed, and take a little when the cough is troublesome. This recipe generally cures the worst of colds in two or three days and if taken in time may be said to be almost an infallible remedy...it has been known to cure colds that have almost been settled into consumption in less than three weeks.

Gene Goodrich



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