

# Cornwall Township Historical Society Newsletter

## December 2008

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### The D.D. Place



The grand white Victorian two storey house stands majestically on a hill on County Rd 18. For years, it's been known as the D.D. Place and for the past 58 years it's been home for Aileen McDonald. Step inside this 125 year old home and you'll receive the warmest welcome going from the petite 99 year old resident.

It was a beautiful fall Sunday in late October when Don McIntosh, Maureen McAlear and Kaye McAlear paid a visit to one of South Stormont's oldest and fiercely independent citizens to find a little bit about the D.D. Place. The house was built in 1888 by Donald D. McDonald; hence, the shorten D.D. name. The 250 acre farm backs on to the Raisin River to the south and offers views to the north of gently rolling farm land. Years ago, the farm was known as one of the most prosperous in the township. An early 1900's story from the book *History of the Cornwall Cheese and Butter Board* says, "Mr. McDonald owns a productive 250 acre farm located Lots 26, 27, Seventh Concession Cornwall Township, is generally recognized as one of the most progressive and substantial farms in the district. His farm yields annually 1,000 bushels grain, 100 tons hay, 150 tons corn, 100 bushels potatoes besides 100 gallons maple syrup." The farm passed to Donald's son George sometime in the early 1900's. George D.D. carried on the tradition of productive farming practices and in 1905

built an ultra modern 'bank' barn. Banks barns got their name not because of a farmer's heavy indebtedness to the bank; rather, they were constructed along a bank of land or hillside that provided access to the barn on two levels, each from the ground.



A Typical Bank Barn

The lower level housed animals, the upper levels served as a threshing floor and storage area. The hillside entrance gave easy access to wagons bearing wheat or hay. Fodder could also be dropped through openings in the upper floor to the stable floor below. The bank barn was a prized possession of George D.D. Aileen says that the barn was built by a contractor named Merpaw who also built the barn on the Valade farm, the original place where Simon Fraser had his grist mill (see our September Newsletter). Mr. Merpaw built the two barns simultaneously, working with his crew on the Valade barn in the morning and the McDonald barn in the afternoon until supper time. Despite being on the shy side, George's wife Anna Grace was well known as a good cook and provided a hardy supper meal which explains why the workers chose to do the afternoon work there.

The barn stood behind the house for 100 years, razed just three years ago. Through those 100 years, with its stately cupola on the roof, it complemented the D.D. farm house. Not long ago the idyllic setting inspired township resident Gerry Walsh to put the view on canvas. The painting was donated to Aileen and she proudly shows it to all callers. (See painting next page)

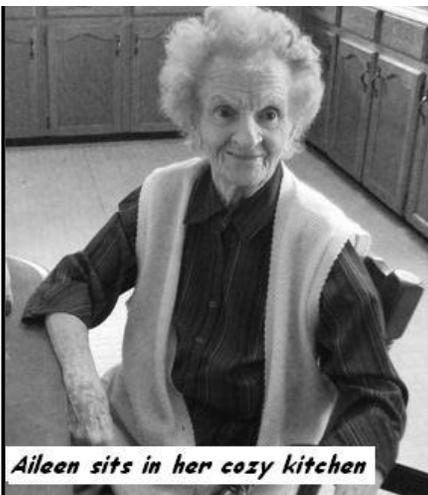


*Painting of the D.D. Place by Gerry Walsh*

George D.D. ran a prosperous farm and was as meticulous about his appearance as he was with his farming operation. Aileen says her father-in-law was a perfect gentleman, neat and elegant. When it was time to go to the grist mill in St. Andrews to have the grain milled, George D.D. would change from his farm clothes into suitable attire making himself more presentable. The dapper gentleman would often purchase a new suit for the funeral of a friend or neighbour.

The farm required more help than George and his sons Garnett and Stuart could provide so a full time farm hand was necessary. The farm hand lived in a small log house just east of the D.D. place. That log house still stands and is currently owned by Bob and Norma MacDonell. Bob and Norma have made several additions and improvements to the house but one can still clearly see the log ends in the original portion of the old farm hand's house.

The story behind the D.D. place wouldn't be complete without knowing a little about Aileen. Aileen was a founding member of the CTHS in 1978. She was born on her father's, Nathan McLaughlin's farm on February 22, 1909. The farm was located on Lot 22, 8<sup>th</sup> Concession Cornwall Township. The farm was known as Irish Hill, probably due to the strong roots that Nathan and his family had in Ireland.



*Aileen sits in her cozy kitchen*

Aileen married George D.D.'s son Garnet, (a relationship that started and blossomed through Sunday church services in St. Andrews), in 1941. The wedding was

celebrated at the popular Brophey's Hall in Harrison's Corners and through stints living in Alexandria and Cornwall, three boys were born: Gary, Donald and Larry. Gary became a Roman Catholic priest but died in 1997 at a far too young age. After George D.D. died suddenly in 1950, Aileen and husband Garnet moved their young family into Garnet's home place; a place Aileen has called home ever since.

Aileen's 30 year career in teaching brings back fond memories for her. She began in a one room school house in Bonville teaching grades 1 to 8, finishing at St. Bernard's School in Long Sault in 1975. After our short time with Aileen, one can clearly sense her religious convictions and compassion for others. Teaching at Willy Allan School near Bonville in 1958, a terrible accident occurred that rocked the community. Three Hughie Duncan McDonald boys (two brothers and one cousin) were killed while cycling home from a local swimming hole. Out of compassion for Hilda McDonald, the mother of two of those boys, Aileen resigned as teacher and gave the position to Hilda to help the grieving mother overcome her tragic loss. These gestures of kindness are still a part of Aileen's life today. Neighbours and friends frequently ask for Aileen's prayers when they need special help from a higher power. And she is more than happy to oblige.

Aileen is looking forward to celebrating her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday this February. "The D.D. place is my home for life", she says. "I want to stay her as long as God allows me to."

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Hearty congratulations to two couples who celebrated their Fiftieth



Wedding Anniversaries in October 2008. They are our long-time hard-working members Alma and Ken McDonald and new, and already active, members Hazel and Gerald MacDonald. We wish you many more happy, healthy years together.

## Reminder

Are you an annual dues paying member? For those paying your CTHS dues annually, please be advised that dues payment for the year 2009 must be received by Dec. 31, 2008. To determine if you are an annual member, check the mailing label on the envelope this newsletter arrived in. If your name is followed by an (A), please remit dues ASAP to Marg MacDonald, 17109 Valade Rd., St. Andrews W. ON K0C 2A0. In 2009, the newsletter will only be mailed to paid-up annual (A), life (L) and honorary (H) members.



Welcome new members  
Sheila Cadieux and  
Frances MacDougall.

## *Ontario Heritage Trust Commemorates John Sandfield Macdonald Gravesite*

On Thursday November 13, the Ontario Heritage Trust Foundation unveiled a plaque and raised the Ontario flag in St. Andrews' historic Pioneer Cemetery. The occasion was one that Jim Brownell MPP worked long and hard to bring to fruition. "This area is rich in culture and heritage. It saddens me every time I drive by the cemetery in St. Andrews that there is no marker honoring Ontario's first premier buried here." Jim's life long goal is finally achieved. In 2007, under a Premier's Directive, Dalton McGuinty appointed the Ontario Heritage Trust to mark and commemorate this site, as well as all resting places of Ontario's deceased premiers.



L to R

Father Bernard Cameron, Jim Brownell MPP, Alan Sullivan, Ont. Heritage Trust unveil plaque.

Jim paid tribute to the CTHS and in particular Maureen McAlear for her encouragement and

the passion she has for this historic cemetery. "Not only do we have Ontario's first premier buried here, we are also the first event for the Heritage Trust's recognition program," Jim says. In his address, South Stormont Mayor Brian McGillis reminds people of the rich history that we have here in the former Cornwall Township. He is also pleased to announce that Council recently passed a motion to name the park at St. Andrews in honour of explorer Simon Fraser, another historic figure buried in the cemetery.

At the conclusion of the official ceremonies, CTHS hosted a reception in the St. Andrews Parish Hall.



Alan Sullivan and Jim Brownell raise Ontario's flag near John Sandfield Macdonald's gravesite. Mayor McGillis and family descendants look on.

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## President's Pen

By: **Ranald McDonell**

At this time I want to thank the Township of South Stormont for the repair work done on the sidewalk leading to the Raisin River Heritage

Centre.

Lack of a quorum prompted by a significant snowfall led to the cancellation of the October meeting. In early November, I was talking to Hugh P. MacMillan, author of the book *Adventures of a Paper Sleuth*. He is all for moving the stone from the site of Simon Fraser's grist mill to a spot where it would be more visible. We'll discuss this at the November meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

In this the eleventh month, it is paramount that we remember the sacrifices made by Canadians in numerous wars. Recently my wife Elizabeth and I had the pleasure of seeing the Canadian film

Passchendaele. It was excellent. According to an article in the October 25<sup>th</sup> edition of the Standard Freeholder, a total of 15,654 Canadian soldiers alone were killed or wounded at Passchendaele.

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## ***Cornwall Township Historical Society a Hit at Queen's Park***

Oct. 15, 2008

*By CTHS member delegate Art Buckland*

I had not been optimistic from the outset. Arriving at Wal-Mart for our 4 a.m. rendezvous with the Delaney bus for our trek to Toronto, I was even less optimistic about MPP Jim Brownell's plan to showcase the Stormont-Dundas- South Glengarry riding to cabinet ministers and MPPs. To meet with several Cabinet Ministers in 20 minute sessions to lobby them successfully for more recognition and funding for our far eastern riding seemed an unrealistic aim. But, the project turned out to be quite successful.

Highlights of the expedition included introduction to the MPPs in the house by Jim B. (from our seats in the Preferred Guests section of the gallery), a tour of the legislative building, the bus trip with companions Charmaine Mitchell (Akwasasne), Eugene Kyer (UCV), Rob Taylor (Brigadoons Celtic band), Dundas politicians; lunch in an Irish pub, formal brief presentation to the Hon. Minister of Education Kathleen Wynne, who said on introduction, "Art Buckland, I know you". However, will this mean more or fewer funding dollars for our riding?



L to R David McDonald, Upper Canada School Board; Eugene Kyer, U.C.Village; Syd Gardner, City of Cornwall; Art Buckland, CTHS.

The climax of the day was the reception in the Queen's Park conference rooms. Carol Godard's CD of the area's tourist and historical sites attracted the attention of

many MPPs and at least one Cabinet Minister (Jim Watson, Municipalities) as did displays of Education, Agriculture, Social Needs, Native Culture and Upper Canada Village. The Mohawk Drummers provided music as did the Brigadoons. A first was achieved when a CTHS member and Joanne MacDonald- Haley (Ken & Alma's daughter) danced a Celtic number. Apparently 'twas the first time there had been dancing at such sessions. Jim Brownell also did some fancy steps. Some of the ideas presented: (1) fund historical societies to aid present over-taxed volunteer organizations. (2) Historical societies should be grouped together, not thought of as individual, independent societies. (3) Perhaps a free tourist bus tour of our sites in SD&SG.

Leaving at 4am and returning at 2am next day meant a long, long day sans the afternoon nap. It also meant missing the informal receptions of the night before and also the Duke of York reception after our departure the following night; thus, I cannot report on their activities, hmmm.

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### *Upcoming Meetings.....*

Our next scheduled meeting is Tuesday November 25 at 7:30 pm. November being the month of remembrance, our guest speakers will be veterans John Lameroux and Jack Rowden. Their topic is: Memories and Experiences of the Korean War.



Our final meeting of the year is Saturday December 6 at 12:00 noon. This is our potluck, Christmas party and grand finale for the year all wrapped up in one big bash. Bring your favorite dish along with a friend. Entertainment is by the Stang Family Music and Dance.

### *Update on Simon Fraser History*

Don Benson of New Westminster B.C. has recently published a book entitled, Simon Fraser: *The Perilous Journey*. CTHS has arranged for volume discounts on this new release. If you are interested in purchasing a copy at \$20.95, call Dale Duncan at 613-534-

2463 or email

[info@cornwalltwphistorical.ca](mailto:info@cornwalltwphistorical.ca)