

Cornwall Township Historical Society Newsletter

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www.cornwalltwphistorical.ca

Editor: Don McIntosh

1950s Patrons Complain to Township about Conditions at Ault Park

Editors Note: *The following narrative pertains to the original Ault Park located on Sheek Island prior to the Seaway development project. In 1914, as a lasting legacy of the family, Levi Ault donated property, at the "Head" of Sheek Island, to the Township of Cornwall which became Ault Park. In 1960 after the completion of the Seaway, Ault Park was reopened at its new location east of Long Sault and is now home to the Lost Villages Museum. Sources for this story are from various Standard Freeholder articles and the reminiscence of CTHS member Art Buckland.*

For generations tourists and locals alike enjoyed the splendour of Ault Park on Sheek Island. On summer weekends, hundreds of tourists and locals alike headed to the park to escape the heat and enjoy the majestic beauty and unsurpassed view of the Longue Sault Rapids, a site many held in awe. But by the 1950s conditions at the park had deteriorated to the point where a visit became almost unappealing. Despite its natural beauty, many visitors found the conditions of the park anything but satisfactory and expressed their concerns to Township Council. One patron said that Ault Park is reputed to be one of the most naturally scenic spots on the St. Lawrence River. But it no longer attracts, rather repels strangers.

Complaints were made about the lack of garbage receptacles; consequently, several unsightly refuse dumps were clustered around the park. Even though there was a well on site, it was damaged, so no clean drinking water was available. Parents with young children complained about the lack of playground equipment. The minimal equipment available was unsafe to play on.

American visitors who were important to the local tourism industry saw the park in a similar light. Too few benches and tables, no outdoor fireplaces, no bathing accommodations, no protected lookouts from which to get a close view of the boiling torrent of the rapids were some of their criticisms. A suitable building for changing into swimming trunks was another needed accommodation.

The Township of Cornwall, the body that administered the park, faced a dilemma. It was bound by the conditions imposed on it by the former owner and benefactor, Levi Ault, which banned commercial use of the scenic playground. Therein lay the apparent reason for the conditions that existed as they did. Since there was no revenue derived from the park, no money could be returned for its preservation. And the council at the time was unwilling to lay out taxpayers' money for which there could be no return.

Concessionaires at the park were well aware of the shortcomings of the park and felt powerless to do anything about them. One of those concessionaires was Mrs. Clifford Kyer. She complained that the township allotted her the concession on a yearly basis only. She found fault with that short period and maintained that if a five-year lease was allotted, she would have willingly invested in improvements. "But improvements take money that are impossible to recover under the current one-year lease agreement", she said. Under a five-year lease, however, she would be able to install new swings, slides, sand boxes and sufficient tables and outdoor cooking facilities.

Situated on the south-eastern portion of the island was a small sandy beach ideal for bathers both young and old. But the trip to the beach was somewhat of a problem. It involved the choice of two evils. One was a long trip along the rocky shore of the river, while the other required trespassing on a neighbouring field followed by negotiating a fifty foot drop to the beach. The field was owned by farmer Leo Taillon, who made it clear to trespassers that the sandy beach was not part of the park property. He complained that his pastured cows were being mistreated by the trespassers who frequently left rubbish lying around. Campfires lit by the bathers were often far from the water's edge and were a menace to his farming activities.

Mind you, Taillon must have had some entrepreneurial spirit in him. For a ten-cent fee he would willingly allow bathers direct access to the beach from his property.

Despite the problems, Ault Park continued to fulfill the vision of the original owner; that is, to provide weary residents with a public park from which to enjoy one of the most beautiful wonders of the world, the Longue Sault Rapids. But that fateful Inundation Day in 1958 silenced the rapids, and that vision was lost forever.

Picturesque beach on Sheeek Island was popular with bathers but was highly inaccessible. Bathers had a choice to make between either a dangerous or pricey journey to reach the beach. Picture courtesy of Lost Villages Archives. →



Young girl contemplates the conditions of dilapidated playground equipment at the park. Photo from Standard Freeholder.

The following narrative, submitted by CTHS member Art Buckland, is an abridged version of his 1969 canoe trip from Kirkland Lake to Moosonee Ont. At the time, Art was a school teacher living in Kirkland Lake. It's just coincidental that shortly after this epic journey he moved his family to civilization in Cornwall where he continued his teaching career at St. Lawrence College, far from the remote north.

VENTURER CANOE TRIP '69

My Venturer Scout plan seemed exciting, novel and possible. We were living in Kirkland Lake, once world famous for its Mile of Gold Mainstreet in the '30s, now a depressing town of derelict mineshaft buildings and mountains of tailing waste.

One town highlight was that 28 professional hockey players were from Kirkland Lake. I was adult leader of the area Venturer Troup, 14 - 16 year olds moved up from Senior Scouts. They were a great group of boys. We had done many things together of outdoor nature: camping in 40 below (identically chilly in Fahrenheit or Celsius), canoeing, constructing rope bridges. The hunting ventures were interesting. Two Cree boys from Moose Factory Reserve were in our troop. They had the ancestral tracking skills which would allow them to get close enough to the game (rabbit or grouse) to touch them thus when they fired my .410 gauge shotgun, there was nothing left but fur and feathers. Contrast that with my novice Kirkland Lake hunters who would rarely get close enough for a shot. They would see feathers and fur, but only flying or fleeing out of sight.

My Canoe Trip '69 plan was to paddle Mike and Joe home in June. The local YMCA sponsored Cree boys from James Bay Reserves, for high school and put them up with families in Kirkland Lake. Mike Tippeneskum and Simion Joe Makagee were two of these sponsored students.

After the winter's planning, a few camping canoeing trips, the KL Venturer Troop left. The Moosonee Expedition was on. Leader Art, Venturers, Carl, Mike, Joe, Lonny, George and Dave packed into my Ford

station waggon and on top and on my trailer my 18 foot Chestnut cedar strip canvas Prospector canoe, a 16 foot aluminum, a borrowed trapper's and the unchristened 10 foot Kayak (Troop constructed).

My waggon and trailer were stuffed with the boys' packs, our food packs and the camping canoeing packs. We went through Swastika, joining Toronto's Yonge St. Extension (400 miles North)-Highway # 11; we sped past the Timmins turnoff; (45mph max) to avoid flying canoes, continuing north on Highway 11. We stopped at Cochrane to buy some more fibreglass patching (a precautionary step from my ancestral Presbyterianism; things will be bad) and first aid supplies which Lonny had forgotten- in spite of the boy scout motto "Be Prepared." At Smooth Rock Falls, we left Hwy 11 and picked up # 807 and travelled to road's end-Fraserdale.



Far Left, Art Buckland, Leader, with his Venturer Scout Group discussing their canoe trip to James Bay, including paddling two Cree members home to their James Bay reserve.

Plan A was to launch from near Fraserdale, paddle to Otter Rapids to the power dam on the Abitibi River. The dam was a "storage and release" style. Water from the former 85' falls was stored until the toasters were plugged in for breakfast in Toronto; then the gates would open and the turbines would generate.

We concluded that we could paddle all the way with daily 4 -2hour shifts of paddling, from 6:30 to 6:30. Daylight was not a problem, because the northern sky was light at 4AM and there was still light in the sky at 11PM. We made camp.

We launched on a cold snowy morn, though it was June; Simion and I in my Prospector, Carl and Dave in his father's canoe, Mike and Lonny in the trapper's canoe and George in 'Lakeshore.' A pessimistic pall seemed to settle on the boys. A further "down" moment was sometime later when we realized we had left the meat pack up in the tree safe from the bears. And now safe from us. No turning back on a river flowing at 3-5miles per hour. The meat pack may be there yet.

The Otter Rapids Ontario Northland agent told us to use the handcar to portage our gear past the dam and then carry everything down to the shore, keeping it high on the bank because in the morning when the dam opened, the river would rise at least 20 feet. He also said we could sleep in a nearby trapper's cabin if we wanted-we wanted. The fight for beds was settled; if you got a mattress, you were on the floor, so that some else could have the bedspring.

At exactly 6:30 am just as we were preparing to weigh anchor, the dam sections all opened up, powering the dynamos sending electricity to Toronto toasters- all done remotely; strange to us in the '60s. The river changed from a trickle, to rapids, to a calm rising lake; the river rose not from a waterfall, but filling the huge basin from the bottom as the water flowed out from the turbines. We attempted to launch but realized it was futile. We beached the canoes and kept dragging them further up the shore as the water in this large bay filled. Our maps showed us that paddling the Abitibi would be too hazardous. So right! We decided to wait for the train and count on luck that we could ship the canoes and 'Lakeshore'. Fortunately, when the ONR Polar Express arrived, it had a normal baggage car not just the 18" narrow door mail car we had been told about. We loaded up, sat in the baggage car with the door open admiring the northern scenery. I thought of Simon Fraser and felt better.

The Abitibi joined the Moose River at Moose River Crossing where the Ontario Northland Railway crossed on the bridge. We disembarked and put in on the wide Moose River.

Our routine continued, though number 2 cook team menu was ghastly. We missed the lost meat pack at every meal. I shall never eat canned spam, spork, dork or ham again. We camped at two spots where I had camped on a previous trip.

At trip's end we camped on an Island between Moosonee and Moose Factory, a former Hudson Bay post. Simion and Mike left us to find their families in Moose Factory. We were keen to travel to James Bay to discover it for ourselves; I knew someone from a previous trip who said he would take us out in his boat. We were unable to find him but we found his boat. A "cousin" said he would take us for \$18. The cold north wind created waves, spraying water in the boat. We stopped at Shipyards Island at the mouth of the Moose river and James Bay. We looked north to 1000s of geese and the Bays Henry Hudson discovered in 1610-11. James Bay was named for James VI of Scotland, named James I at Union of England and Scotland in 1601.



Day Eight

We got up, had breakfast, and proceeded with packing our gear. It was low tide- a new canoeing experience. It was tricky getting our canoes from the Island through to mainland Moosonee. It was a mile portage from the dock in Moosonee to the station. We loaded everything in the ONR boxcar of the waiting train. We unloaded our canoes and gear on the stop at Fraserdale Station, loaded up my station waggon, drove to Fraserdale, had a tour of the Abitibi power station, then home to Kirkland Lake.

My Venturer troop declared it “Canoe Trip of a Lifetime. Let’s do another one next year. But let’s remember the meat pack.”

Rapids on the Abitibi River

Mural Updates: After encountering some problems in 2021 related to COVID-19 circumstances, the plan is to have the historic mural in place in St. Andrews sometime this year. The mural will measure 10’ X 20’. The artist commissioned to do the mural was Laura Stevens. Laura won several awards for the art work she did for International Plowing Match 2015. The painting is impressionist style and consists of three themes: the founding of the village of St. Andrews, Simon Fraser the explorer, John Sandfield Macdonald and the Heritage Centre/ former convent. Complementing the mural will be a plaque with a description interpreting the various themes of the mural.

Even though we received partial funding for this project from the S.D.& G. Tourism Regional Grant Program, a significant amount of the cost will have to be covered by CTHS through fund raising and donations from members. At some point in the future, we’ll be asking for members to open their wallets and help us finance this worthwhile project. We’re still registered as a charitable organization so all donations will be tax deductible.



A must see video. <https://youtu.be/0N-16sjmzsM> . Locally produced youtube video captures the stories of various men and women from Glengarry who served their country. The video features Glengarry War Memorials to highlight in story the remarkable Glengarry’s remarkable contribution to Canada’s war effort. The video is about 50 minutes long but well worth the time to sit and enjoy. It is one of the legacy projects of the late Glengarrian author, Robin Flockton

How Many Names Do You Recognize? Years ago the local newspaper published the names from area schools of the students who made the grade and advanced on to the next level in their academic studies. This is the list of St. Andrews students published in the summer of 1949.

St. Andrew's Promotions

List of promotions at St. Andrew's School, St. Andrews West, is as follows:

GRADE 1 TO GRADE 2

Cameron, Clayton; Chisholm, Laurie; Dicaire, Agnes; Gagne, Pearl; Lalonde, Ray; Levac, Rita; O'Farrell, Brian; Quinlan, John; Quinlan, Monica; Tallon, Raymond; Walker, Joan.

Recommended—Louis Boisvenue.

GRADE 2 TO GRADE 3

Craibe, Keith; Levac, Albert; MacPhail, Dorothy; Walker, Richard (honors).

Recommended — Craibe, Karl; Tallon, Wilfrid; O'Neill, Barbara.

GRADE 3 TO GRADE 4

Andre, Dorothy (honors); Cameron, Dwayne; Chisholm, Doreen (honors); Chisholm, Pauline (honors); Craibe, Kenneth; Disotell, Darlene (honors); MacDonald, Kathleen; O'Farrell, Colleen (honors on year's work); O'Farrell, Noreen (honors); Proulx, Marjorie; Wheeler, William.

Recommended — Gagne, Helen; MacDonald, Marren.

GRADE 4 TO GRADE 5

Disotell, Eleanor; Emond, Florence; Gagne, Edna; Labelle, Edward; Levac, Fernande; MacDonald, Ian; MacPhail, Beverley; Maloney, Hazel; Maloney, Ruth; Quinn, Patrick; Tallon, Doreen; Tallon, Jacqueline.

Cameron, John (R).

GRADE 5 TO GRADE 6

Amell, Wilfred; Cameron, Robert; Cameron, James; Currier, Alfred; Gagne, Teresa; Glancey, Howard; Lauzon, Claire; Levac, Claire; MacPhail, Billy; Proulx, Kenneth; Quinlan, Eileen; St. John, Darlene.

Maloney, Gerald (R); O'Farrell, Denis (R).

GRADE 6 TO GRADE 7

Amell, Pauline; Chisholm, Donald; Disotell, Francis; Labelle, Mark (H); Lalonde, Adele; Lauzon, Andrew; MacPhail, Betty (H); Maloney, Kelvin; O'Keefe, Mary Teresa; Quinlan, Cecelia; Theoret, Gisele (H); Wheeler, Valeria; Wheeler, Vincent.

Levac, Rene (R).

GRADE 7 TO GRADE 8

Charles Cameron, Stella Cameron, Shirley Chisholm, Jeannine Gauthier, Francis Labelle, Marcel Levac, Chester Lalonde, Marie Maloney (Hon.), Gerald MacDonald (Hon.), Carl O'Keefe (R), Muriel Vincent.

GRADE 9 TO GRADE 10

Cameron, Berna; Curriere, Jeanette; Maloney, Oris; McGillis, Donald; MacDonald, Evelyn; MacDonald, Harold; MacDonald, Marina; Proulx, Victor.

The following pupils are recommended for Grade X, but have failed in the subjects listed: Barnhart, Mary (Maths.); Lalonde, Irvine (Maths.); MacDonald, Lionel (Maths.) (French); McDonell, Helen (History) (Geog.); Mitchell, Jean (Maths.) (History).

GRADE 10 TO GRADE 11

*—Credit for nine subjects.

Brunet, Agnes; Beaudette, Emile; Cameron, Bernard; Cameron, Grant; Courville, Elaine; *Derouin, Claudette; *Lamoureux, Ange Almee; *Latour, Noella; *Macdonald, Frances (honors); MacDonald, Grace; MacDonald, Myrtle; *McDonell, Helen; *McMahon, Kathleen; *O'Neill, Jane (honors); Seguin, Aida; Seguin, Vincent; Seymour, Leon (honors); *Theoret, Vanita; *Wheeler, Noreen (honors).

Recommended: Maloney, Morris (French); MacDonald, Kenneth (Mathematics); McGillis, Bruce (English).

School officials announced Middle School results will be published within a few days.



Readers who receive their newsletter via Canada Post (snail mail) will notice the special postage stamp we used on their envelope. The poppy stamp was issued by Canada Post to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the adoption of the poppy as a symbol of remembrance in Canada. The Royal Canadian Legion adopted the poppy as a symbol of remembrance in 1921. The anniversary stamp was issued to honour the more than 117,000 Canadians who have died in service to their country.

The crimson red poppy on the stamp was specially designed to match the one worn by millions of Canadians each year leading up to Remembrance Day, November 11. The poppy even has a spot of metallic ink that represents the pin used to attach it to lapels.

Pics from the Past

This painting done by local artist Brenda Beaudette is the historic Quinn's General Store in Bonville as it appeared in the 1960s and 70s. If you look closely on the far right under the veranda you'll notice a figure of a man sitting in a chair. The character portrays the long time owner of the store Ernie Quinn.

The building holds historical significance as it is believed that Sir John A. McDonald once stayed there overnight when it was being operated as The McPhail Hotel. This year the S.D.&G. Tourism Department is planning to commemorate the building with a plaque making it part of the Counties historic tour. Other notable buildings receiving plaques this year are Quinn's Inn and the O'Leary House east of St. Andrews.



Newsletter Update: Over the past several years we have been publishing a biannual newsletter. Currently, the newsletter goes out to approximately sixty recipients in both electronic and hard copy form. It is no secret that over these years our membership has declined to the point that we only have about ten or twelve members attending our monthly meetings. Publishing a newsletter comes at a cost in both time and money; therefore, we are at a juncture when we have to decide if it's worth continuing with our newsletter for a handful of active members.

At our October 2021 meeting a motion was approved that unless there is a keen interest in continuing with the newsletter, it will cease to be published at some point in the near future. Even though it's now on life support, members can still have their say as to which direction we should go from here. Maybe there are other options you wish to share with us. Have your say. You can contact the current editor Don McIntosh any of these three ways:

Email: don_louise@sympatico.ca, Tel: 613-534-2075 Mail: 16615 County Rd. 36, Long Sault, Ont K0C 1P0



It looks like we may have rounded the corner regarding the COVID -19 pandemic and things are slowly returning to normal. We may be faced with a few more months of instability but as of this writing we're counting on proceeding with our spring meeting schedule. Currently, there are no capacity limits for our meeting room at the St. Andrews fire hall. Also, proof of vaccination is no longer required; however, mask wearing is still mandatory in the hall. As we all know things can change in a moment's notice and meetings could be canceled. I have listed below our nominal meeting schedule hoping things proceed as planned. If a stay at home order is issued again, you can assume our meeting during that period will be cancelled.

I will also post meeting dates and cancelations on our website meetings page, www.cornwalltwphistorical.ca/meetings.html

Therefore, the nominal meeting schedule for the spring session is as follows:

Tuesday March 22, 7:00 pm

Tuesday April 26, 7:00 pm

Tuesday May 24, 7:00 pm

Note, this will be the last newsletter before we adjourn for the summer so if you plan to attend any of our meetings, please mark your calendars accordingly.