

NEWSLETTER

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John Leaning, President

Jennifer Roddick, Editor

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

With more than 60 people in attendance our Annual General Meeting, May 27th, was a considerable success.

In his opening remarks, President John Leaning reported that Heritage Ottawa consists of 453 members, a 15% increase over 1978, and 18 members of the Board of Directors.

We are, most regrettably, losing three of our most valuable Directors: Bob Haig, a most efficient treasurer, Julian Smith, best known to you for his Newsletter sketches, and Mary Bridge, our hard-working and patient recording secretary. The members of the Board will miss them all immensely.

John also reflected on past accomplishments of Heritage Ottawa including our support for endangered structures, such as: The Rideau Club ruins; the Cattle Castle, Lansdowne Park; Clegg House; Martineau Hotel; Alexandra Hotel; 14 Metcalfe Street; First Avenue School; and the City's elm trees.

Three Certificates of Merit were awarded to: St. John's Ambulance ~~Brigade~~ for the restoration of 312 Laurier Avenue; Mr. George Wilkes for his restoration of 112 Daly Avenue; and Mr. Clifford Ham, Heritage Planner for the City of Ottawa, for his contribution towards the preservation of our heritage.

In his acceptance speech, Mr. Ham commended Heritage Ottawa on past assistance towards his goals. He encouraged us to continue our good work and pointed out that we have considerable leverage when dealing with the City and that we should continue to use that power when confronting the issues.

Following a regular Board Meeting, members were treated to a delightfully humourous and informative slide presentation by guest Harold Kalman, Consultant in the History and Conservation of Architecture; and, later, refreshments.

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

The first Board of Directors meeting after the annual general meeting was held on Tuesday, June 10th at the Fraser Schoolhouse. Much of the meeting was taken up with housekeeping matters - the election of a new slate of officers and committee chairpersons for the following year.

John Leaning was reelected President for another term; William Keenan assumed the duties of Treasurer and Anne E. MacDonald became Secretary to the Board. The Nominating Committee, which presented the above slate of names to the Board for its consideration, was restruck to propose names for the position of Vice-President for the next meeting to be held on Tuesday, July 22nd.

William Keenan agreed to be the Chairman of the Finance and Fundraising Committee which also includes such areas of responsibility as membership, house tours and merchandising.

Albert Adey will take on Chairmanship of the Programmes Committee with the help of Vera Campbell, one of the new Board members.

Jennifer Roddick will continue to be responsible for Publicity and the Newsletter.

It was agreed that the Premises Committee as it stood was too cumbersome; therefore Gerry White would be responsible for Buildings and Exhibitions and Irene Lackner for Docents and Archives for the coming year.

Ontario Heritage Foundation has written to Heritage Ottawa requesting that we commemorate the centenary of McKay by preparing some activities to take place in conjunction with the plaque the Foundation will be erecting adjacent to the Fraser Schoolhouse in September. The Board was told that both City Hall and the Ottawa Historical Society are planning exhibits to coincide with the event.

Vicki Grant, also a new Board member, agreed that she would set up an exhibit with the help of two other members in honour of the centenary.

Heritage Sandy Hill has received a Youth Development Grant to do an aural history of senior citizens in the area. Anyone who knows of people who have lived in Sandy Hill for a number of years is asked to contact Vera Campbell at 236-8009.

Anne E. MacDonald

ACTION SANDY HILL

The Heritage Committee of Action Sandy Hill held a very successful evening on May 12. The evening, titled, "How to Research Your Home", featured three guest speakers: Barry Podolsky, who told of his work on the "Marble Works" Restaurant; Kathy Seaver, who outlined her research on the Billings Estate and the Billings family; and George Wilkes, who described his research of his home at 112 Daly Avenue.

A pamphlet entitled "A Guide to Tracing the History of Your Home in Ottawa" was available to all who attended the meeting. A few copies are still available from Vera Campbell, 229 Stewart Street, or telephone 236-8009.

Vera Campbell, Chairperson
Heritage Committee, Action Sandy Hill

THE HISTORY OF SACRED HEART CHURCH (Part 1)

It was early evening on November 24, 1978. Father Levac, the parish priest of Sacred Heart Church in Sandy Hill had just finished Mass and was mingling with his parishioners in front of the majestic greystone building on Laurier Avenue East.

Suddenly, someone shouted "FIRE!" and, rushing back into the church, he was appalled to see flames leaping from the wooden statue of Christ high above the chancel to the screens and panels scattered throughout the church. Fire eventually engulfed the building in a spectacular blaze that reddened the sky for hours and brought out hundreds of spectators.

Father Levac and his colleague, Fr. Robitaille, dashed about, saving some of the church's artifacts and vestments, but were finally warned away by the fire-fighters. Fortunately, the records of the human events that had taken place in the church -- the baptisms, marriages and funerals -- escaped damage because they were in storage in the basement. An official enquiry later blamed electrical malfunction for the blaze.

Fire was no stranger to Sacred Heart Church. On June 10, 1907, also in the early evening, flames broke out in the just-completed building. It was totally destroyed in a firestorm during which one fireman was injured and a peg-legged spectator had to be hastily righted when he toppled over in his haste to escape a collapsing wall. The then Mayor of Ottawa, D'Arcy Scott, later declined an invitation to the City for a donation to the building funds, saying it could not be held responsible for the late arrival of the fire reels due, it was alleged by the Church, to the bad condition of the streets. However, a reduction in the next year's water rates was offered and the Mayor also suggested he might accompany a parishioner on a personal canvass to some of the wealthy citizens of Ottawa.

The decision to build the new church had been taken in 1889 because the population of St. Joseph's, the original parish, had grown too large for the existing church to handle. The diocese decided to divide the parish; henceforth St. Joseph's would serve English-speaking Catholics and a new church, Sacred Heart, would minister to the spiritual needs of the French. The final touches had just been given to the interior.

Beautiful paintings were in place, the columns, cornices and flying buttresses were adorned and a magnificent pipe organ had been installed. A jewel of artistic loveliness, the church was one of Ottawa's treasures and the whole city was touched by the tragedy of its loss. The origin of the fire was never discovered.

The ashes were still smouldering when donations -- from English, French, Catholic, Protestant -- began to flow in. Emmanuel Tassé was the first donor, and his wife asked to be allowed to pay for a new bell. The Chief Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, Hon. H. Taschereau, sent \$1,000 and many other notables contributed. While the church activites were moved to the basement of the nearby Museum of the University of Ottawa, subscriptions were called for, door-to-door solicitations were begun and "kermesses" and "tombolas" were held to fill the coffers. One "kermesse and tombola" (Dutch for a fair with much noisy merrymaking and lottery draws) under the patronage of Ladies Laurier and Taschereau raised the magnificent sum of \$3,188.37! The first Mass in the new Church was sung on Christmas Eve, 1910 and on October 29, 1911 it was officially inaugurated with a concert on the pipe organ by Henri Gagnon of Quebec City. The concert drew a large crowd, among them Sir Wilfred Laurier, then living in Sandy Hill.

(To be continued...)

Janice Sutton

Many thanks to Janice Sutton, Anne MacDonald and Vera Campbell for their contributions. Please send your submission prior to the 10th of the month to: The Editor, 44 Carmichael Court, Kanata, Ontario K2K 1K2 or telephone: 592-4209.