

NEWSLETTER

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MAY 1981 Vol. 9 No. 5 John Leaning, President Jennifer Roddick, Editor

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Just a reminder that the Annual General Meeting will be held Monday, May 25th at 8:00 p.m. in the NRC Building, 100 Sussex Drive.

Following the meeting and election of officers will be a talk by Bob Haig from Parks Canada. Mr. Haig will give a presentation on the planned celebrations for the Rideau Canal 150th Anniversary.

BOARD NOMINATIONS

Members are invited to submit nominations for the Board of Directors before the Annual General Meeting, May 25th.

If you would like to join the Board or if you know of an interested candidate, please call the following people: Stella Kirk, 745-0551; Jenny Morgan, 234-1090; or Bill Keenan, 692-2400.

SCHOOLHOUSE OPENING

The Exhibit and Schoolhouse Opening May 9th was an overwhelming success. More than 50 people gathered to sip sherry, taste cheese and admire the talented artwork of Erica and Herbert Dassel.

The paintings, scenes of old Ottawa done in watercolour and oils, will remain at the Schoolhouse several weeks for your enjoyment. Do plan a visit.

VOLUNTEER NEEDED

The new look of the Fraser Schoolhouse, although bright and clean, needs to be cleaned regularly. If you know of someone who would be willing to help out for an hour every second weekend please call Stella Kirk at 745-0551. This would be an excellent way for a young student to make extra money.

MERRICKVILLE MUSEUM OPENING

On behalf of the Merrickville and District Historical Society I would like to extend an invitation to members of Heritage Ottawa to attend the 1981 Opening of the Merrickville Blockhouse Museum in Merrickville, Ontario, Saturday, June 6th at 2:30 p.m.

Mr. J.W. Bonser, Superintendent of the Rideau Canal, will be on hand to officially open the Museum. There will be a boat display, a live band, and the Rideau Canal Theatre trailer - plus a tea.

Alice M. Hughes
President

TRACE

Initiated to serve as a national and international forum for the discussion and presentation of architecture, TRACE is a promising new Canadian quarterly focussing on architecture, architectural history and urban design. Though not a professional magazine, its coverage of architecture is as scholarly as it is readable.

Impressive in visual presentation, the first issue includes a photographic review of a home designed by Quebec artists Ernest Cormier, a tour of ten remarkable buildings in Halifax, a study of the work of Toronto architect John M. Lyle and an illustrated chronicle of the Cap Trinité project of sculptor George Trakas.

Readers may subscribe to this new publication by writing to: TRACE, 69 Front Street East, Toronto, Ontario M5E 1R3.

REGIONAL COUNCIL SPRING MEETING

Members of Heritage Ottawa are invited to attend Heritage Canada's Regional Council Meeting, Saturday, June 13th between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

The Meeting will commence at the Merrickville United Church Hall, Merrickville and will end with a tea sponsored by the Merrickville and District Historical Society and held

at The Willows.

The fee for coffee, lunch and the tea is \$6 which should be mailed directly to the Merrickville and District Historical Society, P.O. Box 294, Merrickville, Ontario K0G 1N0.

PROPOSED DEMOLITIONS

President John Leaning has been advised that applications for demolition permits are pending on the following buildings:

Abbotsford House, the Glebe and 155-157 Wilbrod Street at Cumberland Street

The latter application has been made by University of Ottawa who wish to replace the row of French-Empire design houses with a parking lot for their students.

If you wish to express your concern please write to City Hall, Sussex Drive, Ottawa as soon as possible.

THE EXPERIMENTAL FARM

As far as anyone knows, Ottawa has the unique distinction of being the only capital city in the world with a working farm in its core area.

We are lucky to have it, for not only does it bring pleasure to Ottawans every season of the year but the work done there over its 95-year lifetime has benefitted all Canadians and made our heritage richer and more varied.

Farming is very much part of our heritage. Canada was for many years a nation of farmers. Many of us still earn our livings on the farm, and, by so doing, make a great contribution to feeding the world's hungry.

Closer to home, the Farm has played a part in our own lives here in Ottawa. How many Ottawans have tried out their first skis on the slopes of the Arboretum? How many of us remember fondly the thrill of speeding down those same slopes on our Red Devil sleds, landing with a satisfying thump at the bottom? How many pictures of blushing brides and serious grooms or proud graduates rest on mantlepieces in the city; the photos having been taken at the Farm?

And aren't our hearts gladdened and spirits lifted each spring when we see the rows and rows of flowering crabapple trees burst into bloom. They tell us that the long night of winter is over and forecast summer's delights.

Not only do we have the intangible heritage of these and similar experiences at the Farm but we as Ottawans and Canadians have very tangible evidence of the Farm's importance to us in the form of the many attractive buildings on the site and the animal and plant varieties developed there, many of which play a part in our daily lives. How were we so fortunate as to have this unusual place set down in the middle of our city?

In the early 1880s, as the West was being opened by immigrants and the railway was pushing out toward the Pacific, it was realized in Ottawa that Canada had a great future in farming but that, in order to realize this potential better, methods of crop production had to be developed through carefully controlled experiments and testing. So a Select Committee of Parliament was set up to look into the question of how farmers might best be helped to grow bigger and better crops adapted to Canadian conditions.

In 1886 the Committee recommended the creation of an experimental farm and the same year 466 acres were purchased just outside Ottawa. It must still have been wild land, because in 1888, while on one of their outings, members of the Ottawa Field Naturalists Club had to flee from mosquitoes emerging from the swamp on the land. The Ottawa Farm was to be the "mother farm" for four others across Canada. Of course, the Farm and its "children" have increased over the years until today it consists of 1200 acres here, with some 43 research facilities all across Canada.

Many new varieties of fruits, vegetables and grains were developed there, a large number of which have appeared on our tables over the years, including the famed early-maturing Marquis wheat. The introduction of this wheat is said to have overshadowed any other single event in Canadian agriculture, bringing about a new era in the agricultural life of the West and leading one author to say "the wealth of the nation was founded on wheat". Charles Edward Saunders, Dominion Cerealist, was the brilliant son of the first Director of the experimental Farms Service and in 1906, after many "chewing" tests he developed the Marquis strain.

In the '20s and '30s Isabella Preston, the "Lilac Lady" hybridized crabapples, lilies, iris and lilacs. To this day, the Isabella Preston trophy is competed for in the North American Lily Society. Dr. W.T. Macoun achieved notable results in apple-breeding and developed the Lobo apples, among several others. Also in accordance with a bequest by an Ottawa resident, he directed the work of beautifying the grounds around the Civic Hospital. Many of his flowers and plants can be seen in our gardens today, named after his children, who still live in the Ottawa area.

These are just a few of the people who contributed to our gardens and orchards; and the work continues today.

Hedges - now what could hedges mean to the heritage-minded? Just think of the picnics, lover's trysts, games and fun that we have all had under, near, or beside hedges. The old hedge collection at the Farm was begun in 1894 and without the work of the Dominion Horticulturalist in developing hardy, fast-growing and thick hedges some of those activities would not have been so successful nor such fun. And many of our fine old buildings are surrounded by hedges, often as old as the buildings themselves.

Many attractive and interesting buildings grace the grounds of the Farm.

The Maple Drive office with its broad porch and the Administrative Offices of the Animal Research Centre, a gabled and turreted white frame building, were both built in 1900. The Dairy Barn was built in 1914 on the ashes of an earlier barn, at a cost of \$12,000. The barn is open to visitors all day every day and many a city child has learned there that milk does not in fact come from those square waxed containers one buys at the corner store. The domed redstone building near Carling Avenue was for years the Dominion Observatory. Remember "At the beginning of the long dash, the time will be..."? It is now the Earth Physics Building and visitors can see the equipment used to measure earthquakes and tides in its lobby.

So we have a place close to home where we can see another aspect of the Canadian tradition, a place that contributes to our "Canadianess" and is continuing to do so for our children. Our great agricultural heritage is fostered by the work done at the Farm. And the Ottawa tradition of "going for a Sunday stroll at the Farm" will no doubt continue to be part of our fortunate heritage.

Janice Sutton

Please send your submissions before the 10th of the month to:

The Editor
Heritage Ottawa Newsletter
44 Carmichael Court
Kanata, Ontario
K2K 1K2

or Telephone: 592-4209

Many thanks to Janice Sutton for her contribution.

Jennifer