

Quebec Heritage

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News



Fishy Business

How Alvah Patterson's hatcheries kept the waters teeming

Affair to Remember

Lachute Fair history tracks changes in Lower Laurentians

Blast From the Past

Outdoor market celebrates neighbourhood beef baron

Quebec Heritage News

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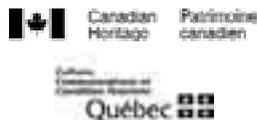
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Cover: Fishing on the Grand Cascapedia River, circa 1880, photo courtesy Grand Cascapedia River Museum, from *The Grand Cascapedia: A History*, by Hoagy Carmichael.

EDITOR'S DESK

Table manners

by Dwane Wilkin

Food, and the various means by which humanity has sought through the ages to obtain and control its supply, say much about a society's welfare that's not recorded in yearly grain yields or historic hog-belly prices. Having had the good fortune to come into this world at a time and place favoured by circumstance to be able to furnish most Quebec households with abundant wholesome foods year-round, I've no memory of scarcity.

Unlike my grandfather in the early 1900s, I don't regard an orange as a rare and precious Christmas gift, whose fragrant peel might be stored in a drawer of winter socks and savoured afterward for months. I am blasé about broccoli in February. Giant supermarkets bursting with all manner of goods from around the world surely stand as proof of the wondrous blessings of the modern global food system.

Such incidents as the recent deadly outbreak of listeriosis, spread by coldcuts shipped from a Toronto meat-packing plant, or last June's salmonella contamination of imported Mexican tomatoes and peppers, or the 2007 recall of Chinese-made pet chow found to be laced with a poisonous industrial chemical occasionally test my faith in regulators' capacity to enforce food-safety guidelines, but the power and the glory of the international food system remains intact, along with many stark contradictions: farmers produce more food today than at any time in history yet more than a tenth of the world's population lives in hunger; mechanization, consolidation and specialization of farm operations, coupled with the adoption of high-yield, high-input dependent crop varieties have resulted in impressive productivity gains, but lower real returns for producers in many of the countries where the imported foods we eat is grown.

And there is evidence, reported by the author Raj Patel in his latest book, *Stuffed and Starved*, that concentration

of control over all sectors of the global food trade in the hands of a few large corporations, far from contributing to lower grocery bills, is actually inflating retail prices by reducing competition.

This is to say nothing about the social and economic challenges that rural communities everywhere face as farmers struggle for footholds in the precipice between cheap-food agricultural policies and the shareholder-driven practices of agro-industry. Many indeed give up each year, hastened to their fall by the added burden of crushing debt-load for equipment, seed, fertilizers and pesticides.

My mental image of hardy peasants tending golden wheat fields, of ox-carts and grist mills and pretty country villages may bear some resemblance to Quebec's preindustrial past, but the fact is that agricultural heritage itself has been wholly transformed in the last two centuries by what American writer John Collier has described as the "pulverizing uniformities of free-market economic operations."

Just as it was imagined in the early 1600s that the establishment of France's feudal agricultural system would be a suitable way to settle and clear lands for Canadian colonists, the complex challenges of ever-changing economic and environmental factors that today affect food producers and rural communities may be traced to the forces of industrialization and free-trade doctrines that started to take hold in parts of Quebec in the early 1800s. Under the French regime, the peasant household composed the basic unit of society: small-scale farm families who cultivated their own land holdings, ate most of what they produced and supported the seigneurial and religious elites by their surplus production. The notion of a world controlled by forces of competition among self-seeking individuals was alien and would have probably struck most colonists as a grotesque aberration of human nature. The only source of food systematically

exploited for its commercial value as a trading commodity was cod fish, which had been luring European sailing vessels to the Gulf of St. Lawrence since the late 1400s.

By the time that American and British immigration to Lower Canada had peaked in the mid-19th century, the growth of industrial towns and cities was radically changing the face of farming. Anglophone producers, early adopters of techniques such as crop rotation and selective breeding of farm animals, sought higher yields.

Self-sufficiency in agricultural staples such as butter, cheese, bread and butchered meat steadily declined as farmers tailored their production to meet the demand of expanding U.S. and British markets. Horticultural societies and county agricultural boards arose to help producers improve their crops and livestock, and many, such as the Argenteuil Agricultural Society, profiled by Sandra Stock in this issue, remain active in some form or another to this day.

Rural-based industries also developed to take advantage of the expanding trade. When demand south of the border spiked during the American Civil War, for instance, entrepreneurs in the Chateauguay River Valley responded by becoming leaders in the manufacture of mechanical hay mowers and horse-powered threshers. Canada's first butter factory was built in Athelstan in 1873. By the end of the century, nearly 2,000 cheese factories were turning out Quebec cheddar for export to Great Britain and the United States. Many surviving vestiges of rural built heritage relate to this period, including an ever-diminishing number of neglected and sagging wooden barns—buildings which had once been the pride of a prosperous agricultural class.

Since the 1950s the abandonment of mixed farming has only accelerated, replaced by specialized dairy, meat and poultry operations which visibly al-

tered the landscape. Alternating monocultures of corn and soybean crops interspersed with massive metal-sheathed animal sheds and concrete manure holding pens are the norm in 2008, as are the numerous pathogens and chronic metabolic livestock diseases linked to growing methods that make it possible to bring a broiler chicken to my table just five weeks after hatching.

Between 1961 and 2006, the year of the last census, the number of working farms in Quebec dropped by two-thirds, from 95,777 to just 30,675. These highly capitalized operations, with their focus on economies of scale and faraway markets, are now every bit as much a part of Quebec's food heritage as the Fameuse apple and the Canadienne cow. But the triumph of corporate agriculture has not entirely obliterated older ways.

On a recent holiday in the Charlevoix along the St. Lawrence River's north shore I discovered a small commercial dairy making batches of delicious cheeses exclusively for local consumption. A soft ripened variety named Fleurmier whose flavour I particularly liked (and which was superior to any of the travel-battered wheels of imported Camembert or Brie I have suffered occasionally to bring home from the nearby Maxi) won't soon make the ac-

quaintance of my palate again; as a matter of policy the dairy's owners don't ship their cheese out of the region. In French, there is an expression to denote this relationship between food and geography; it's called "gout



de terroir," meaning literally, the taste of the land—a sort of culinary DNA that carries in its flavours a sense of local pride and tradition that you don't expect to find on a shelf in a chain-store supermarket. If there's one aspect of food heritage most people agree should be saved, it's taste.

The revival in recent years of small seasonal public markets around Quebec, where consumers can buy locally from small growers, artisanal bakers, cheese makers and meat and poultry producers, is a development that seems to be bucking the trend towards globalization. Since modes of production and distribution reveal

much about a society's character and development, it's not surprising that historical societies around the province have also become involved in projects aimed at raising awareness of Quebec's older rural traditions. One group in Montreal's southwest borough of Point St. Charles is even planning to revive a neighbourhood market (Timelines, current issue).

Quebecers apparently also boast the highest number of community-supported agriculture operations in Canada, whereby consumers obtain their annual supplies of fresh vegetables by investing in growers in the spring and then taking delivery of their share of the harvest as each crop ripens through the season. One of the side features of this arrangement is that people who might otherwise never appreciate how food is produced get to visit the farms they support.

Is this going to end the ongoing tragedy and moral crisis of chronic hunger and malnutrition among the planet's less fortunate inhabitants? Of course not. But then, neither has the highly corporatized international food and agricultural system in which most Canadian producers are now deeply integrated. Maybe, just maybe, the cultivation of closer links between table and farm in our home communities will yield a wiser, more just path to our dealings abroad.

Letters

Stones turning over

I take offence at the very suggestion that Heather Darch is fighting a losing battle ["Grave future," page 5, May/June].

While I agree that many old grave sites are in dire need, this reality is not unique to Quebec.

Thanks to a small group of dedicated and effective people, as well as initiatives taken by QAHN, this problem is being turned around. People are being sensitized to the problem and small, local groups are

taking steps to preserve and promote this very important sector of our heritage.

On May 28 and 29, very successful, interesting, and informative workshops sponsored by QAHN were held to focus on this problem and possible solutions. I attended the one in Mille Isles and came away very encouraged.

My message to Ron McIntosh and all those other people who have family members buried in small church cemeteries is that they continue to send donations to the re-

spective churches to help finance the restoration and maintenance of our old graveyards.

Maybe a compilation of the various graveyards and family names could be published in the Heritage News and on the QAHN website, giving an address where funds for the graveyards could be submitted. I would certainly be willing to make such a list for this area.

*Beverly Prud'homme
Rawdon, QC*

Blast from the past

19th century-style outdoor market celebrates neighbourhood beef baron

by Gloria Er-Chua

Visitors to this September's Joe Beef Market will be treated to surprise guests—19th century locals. These ghosts from the past, more precisely, actors in period costume, will interact with visitors to give them a taste of the historical outdoor market experience.

The Société d'histoire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, in collaboration with the Point St. Charles Community Theatre, is hosting the one-day event on Sept. 13 in Point St. Charles's Joe Beef Park in southwest Montreal. Artisans and farmers are invited to rent display tables, at \$25 apiece, and encouraged to show up in costume from the mid to late 1800s. This year, the park's namesake will be honoured.

McKiernan, better known as Joe Beef, opened Joe Beef's Canteen in 1870. The Irishman served under the British army during the Crimean War, where he earned the nickname for his knack of scrounging up meat whenever his brigade's rations fell short. McKiernan became known for never refusing soup and bread to anyone who couldn't afford to pay for a meal. In an interview with *La Patrie* in 1882, he estimated that he saw over 300 non-paying customers a day.

The second floor of his building became a dormitory with 100 beds. Men paid 10 cents for a blanket and a warm night's rest in the makeshift hostel, which gained a reputation for being sanitary. "I would be the most unhappy of men," McKiernan was quoted as saying, "if the public learned one day that some poor wretch died of hunger or cold at my door."

Now the Société is combining the well-known figure with the popular 19th century outdoor market most Montreal neighbourhoods had. The event will be held on the site of the historic Saint Gabriel Market. These local af-

fairs began to decline in the 20th century, board member Fergus Keyes notes. "Markets, in general, became a little passé because of the start of retail stores."

Keyes, who also works with the Theatre, says organizers hope the event will instil in the younger generation a sense of pride for their community's history. "Characters like Joe Beef who helped to build Montreal should be remem-

bered by a new generation," Keyes says. "The people who are mostly involved, most of them are in their 50s, but we're trying to attract some kids."

The city has allowed the Société to use the park, as well as tables and chairs, for free. Keyes says there are currently no plans to host the event more than once a year, because it requires a lot of time for two groups that are active in other areas. Talks are already underway for next year's event, which will celebrate a different figure. Marguerite Bourgeois has been suggested, Keyes says. Bourgeois, the first

woman named to sainthood in Canada's Roman Catholic Church, opened and ran a few girls' schools in Montreal.

For now, the focus is on a decidedly more worldly, though no less generous, community man. Actors will take on the roles of McKiernan, his wives—after his first wife, Margaret, died in 1871 he married her sister, Mary—and working-class men who might have visited the tavern. The Montreal Firefighters Museum will also send people over in the famous red coats and other equipment firefighters wore in that period.

The scheduled rain date is Sept. 14. To rent display space, contact Société president, Gisèle Turgeon-Barry, at 514-937-4756.



Carved in stone

County museum retells history in former military barracks

by Sandra Stock

The Argenteuil Regional Museum, one of the lesser-known museums in the Lower Laurentians, is also one of the more beautiful. Housed in the Carillon Barracks National Historic Site, it was established at this magnificent site 65 years ago by the Historical Society of Argenteuil County, and is now owned and maintained by Parks Canada.

There is a rich history behind this very large stone structure, on the north bank of the Ottawa River. It was designed as a storehouse during the building of the Carillon Canal. In 1837, at the start of the Lower Canada Rebellion, the British colonial government took over the building as a military barracks and it remained under military control until 1840.

From 1864 to World War I, the building was used as a hotel by the Ottawa River Navigation Company and was purchased by Felix Hungerbuhler in 1936 and donated to the Historical Society of Argenteuil County. There are close to 7,000 articles in its collections, mostly donated over the years by residents of the Lower Laurentians.

Among the present materials on display, the most interesting is the exhibit of historic costumes that date from the early 19th century up to the mid-20th. These dresses, accessories, and also military clothing, have



been expertly restored and conserved mainly by volunteers at the museum. There are also artefacts, photographs, and art works that reflect the agricultural heritage, river transportation, and religious life of the area. There is a collection, done many years ago, of stuffed birds, many of which are now extinct, that illustrate the

natural history of the region. The museum is a beautiful location for a picnic and there are also many other historic sites close by, such as the Carillon Canal entrance, the Long-Sault Park and hydro-dam, and St. Mungo's Church in Cushing that is presently starting a restoration project. In Saint-André-d'Argenteuil there are many heritage homes along the North River as well

as historic Anglican Christ Church, now serving as a community cultural centre.

This area is an easy day trip from Montreal or from anywhere in the Lower Laurentians. The ferry from Point Fortune across the Ottawa River docks at Carillon, a few metres from the museum, and is an adventure cruise of sorts as well. These run about every 15 minutes and give a wonderful view of the landscape.

The museum is open from Wednesday through Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and has a small tea-room and reception area. For more information call 450-537-3881 or visit the website museearg.com.

Dollars for history

Quebec church fund pushes for heritage conservation funds

by Gloria Er-Chua

For more than a decade, one of Quebec's largest Protestant religious organizations has been quietly helping to maintain churches and cemeteries by providing a source of much-needed financial support for heritage conservation. The United Church Heritage Trust Fund, founded in 1988, was originally intended to help with the

upkeep of church archives. Susan Stanley, an archivist, found that most of the 150 churches in the United Church's Quebec Conference had their archives stored with their local municipalities, and so she set out in the early 1990s to find a permanent, centralized home for them.

In 1995, she convinced the provincial govern-

ment to store the archives with the Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec (BANQ), where they would be kept professionally in a permanent repository at no cost to the church conference. As a result, the money that had already been collected had to be used elsewhere—thus, the idea of funding other heritage-related projects. “It was a responsibility that wasn’t really being paid attention to, and I just decided it was time,” says Stanley, who is currently leading a fundraising campaign aimed at bringing in \$100,000 by the end of the year.

The fund has been continually active ever since, apart from a two-year hiatus in 2006, when Stanley left to join the provincial Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec, the body which oversees Quebec’s state-funded religious heritage foundation. The United Church Heritage Trust Fund is mainly used to help individual congregations maintain church cemeteries and repair deteriorating buildings.

This year’s ambitious fundraising target is partly in response to the increasing number of churches who’ve requested help for projects that aren’t currently eligible for support by the provincial government. Stanley was asked to represent the United Church on the Conseil, which funds up to 70 per cent of eligible heritage projects. She originally hoped it would eventually replace the need for the United Church’s own fund. However, “because of the grading system for religious properties based on architectural merit and so on, very many of our churches don’t qualify for funding,” she says. “Our heritage fund fills in these gaps for churches that might not have a high enough ranking.”

Each year, religious organizations fill out forms for funding by their region’s committee, the Conseil’s project manager, Marie-Claude Ravary, says. Each region sends a request for the total amount needed to the head office, which in turn asks Quebec’s Ministry of Culture for its yearly budget. The amount varies each year; for 2008-09, the Conseil received \$2.5 million. Since its creation in 1995, the Conseil has received \$148 million from the government. Most of

the money is spent on building restoration and religious-art preservation. Any religious edifice built before 1945 is eligible for funding.

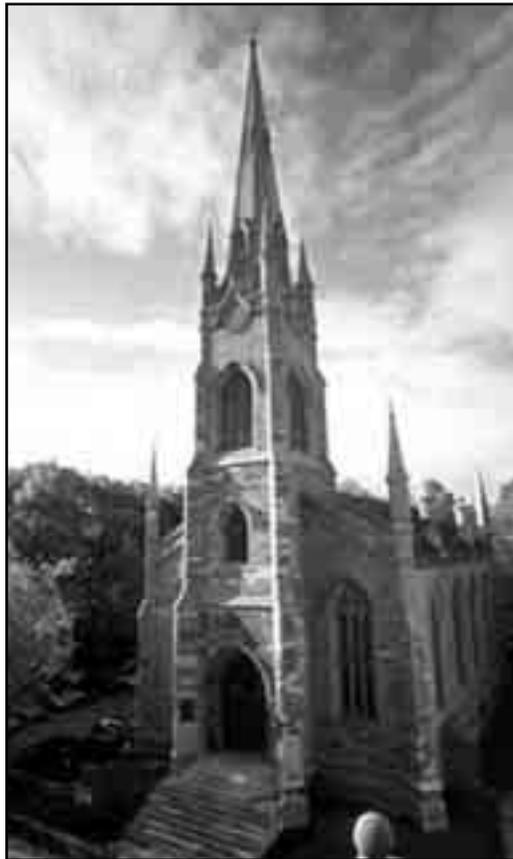
Ravary says most of the requests she receives are for brickwork and roofing projects. Many Catholic churches receive funding for their stained glass windows, due to the fact that they tend to be the oldest and most deteriorated places of worship, Ravary says, adding that Catholic churches represent 80 per cent of the religious buildings in Quebec. “It’s not about denomination because we’re really dealing with the buildings. We have to be separate from religion in order to really represent all our members.” She has representatives from different religions on her committees.

“Not many synagogues and mosques were built before 1945,” Ravary explains. “When we can help them, we try to direct them to people or organizations that might be able to support them.”

Stanley knows what it’s like to slip between the cracks. Many United churches are small and have simpler architecture than Anglican or Catholic counterparts, meaning they don’t receive as much funding as they need, she says. She’s not opposed to working with other denominations but has struggled to reach agreements with them. The Heritage Trust Fund has sponsored projects from other denominations in the past, such as a Presbyterian cemetery in Hemmingford. The Anglican Diocese of Quebec has its own incorporated Church

Society, formed in 1844, that oversees funding for the province’s 93 congregations. There’s no annual funding drive and donations are taken on a rolling basis. They are used for cemetery and building maintenance, as well as church administration.

There’s a need for the continuation of such trust funds, Stanley argues. “The church, at one time, was the most important building in the community, so there’s a strong historical connection.” In the face of declining church attendance and an ageing church population, she says restoring the older buildings is even more important. “I argue that if you can get the church in better shape, it could bring more people in.”



Yellow fever

Repeal of ban on coloured margarine ends Quebec butter's distinct status

by Gloria Er-Chua

Spread the news—pale margarine has finally been taken off the shelves to make room for its yellower cousin. In early July the provincial government quietly struck down the 1987 regulation prohibiting the sale of margarines that were similar in colour to butter. The dairy lobby, which petitioned former premier Robert Bourassa for the ban, argued that yellow margarine would be confused with butter, which could threaten butter sales. Instead, margarine has been sold in Quebec in an unappetizing, off-white colour similar to lard.

But margarine's second-class treatment goes further back. Margarine, patented in 1870, was banned by the federal government in 1886. The ban was lifted in 1917 to offset wartime butter shortages and reintroduced in 1923. Margarine was finally declared legal in 1948 and provincial governments were given control of regulating its colour. Many provinces had laws that required consumers to squeeze yellow dye into colourless margarine themselves, but most never enforced them.

The margarine wars continued in Quebec where, in 2005, the Supreme Court upheld the province's right to regulate its colour. It had been challenged by food manufacturer Unilever, which argued that having to produce two colours of margarine—white for Quebec and yellow for the rest of Canada—added an additional

\$1 million annually to the company's expenses. After years of pressure from Canada's western provinces, all big producers of the canola oil found in margarine, Quebec finally relented and repealed the ban.

It's about time, says Sean McPhee, president of the Vegetable Oil Industry of Canada organization. McPhee estimates that it costs manufacturers a combined \$5 million annually to produce colourless margarine for the Quebec market. The government's decision to hang on to the law for as long as it did has nothing to do with a palette for quality butter, he says. "Food heritage?" he scoffs. "No, it had nothing to do with tradition. It was wanting to protect the dairy lobby from competition." Margarine makes up 58 per cent of the food spreads market in Quebec, compared with 70 per cent in the rest of Canada.

Dairy farmer Trenholm Morin still thinks margarine should be white, to clearly distinguish it from butter. For him, a new colour will take some getting used to, but ultimately he's not worried about his industry. "It won't affect butter sales," he says.

Some Canadian food producers are still wary of Quebec's dairy industry, which they see as the province's sacred cow, so to speak. They argue that Quebec dairy farmers, who owned half of Canada's 14,651 dairy farms in 2006, form a political elite with unfair benefits from the provincial government.



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AFFAIR TO REMEMBER

Lachute Fair history tracks changing tastes in Lower Laurentians

by Sandra Stock

For the 183rd year, the Lachute Fair opened in early July to delight summer patrons with agricultural competitions, carnival rides, and tables of locally-grown food. The Argenteuil Agricultural Society, founded on Feb. 2, 1826, has hosted the fair since its inception. It appears that the fair is the only remaining traditional agricultural fair north of the St. Lawrence River, as well as being one of the oldest continuous fairs in Canada, with possibly only a fair in Nova Scotia being older.

What began as a one-day exposition is now a four-day event with agricultural competitors coming from all over Quebec, Ontario, and even the United States. The Lachute Fair maintains farm-based events, like draught horse contests and poultry exhibits, along with family-friendly content such as pony rides, a petting zoo, and samplings of local food products. Another familiar part of the fair is the fiddle festival.

The first fair was held in 1826 in Saint-André-d'Argenteuil, then the largest settlement in the seigneurie of Argenteuil. At that time, Argenteuil wasn't a county but still the much smaller seigneurie, which bordered the Ottawa River. The first farms were along the Ottawa and North rivers where the land was fertile and fairly flat. The rockier, mountainous parts of the administrative district of York, of which the Argenteuil seigneurie was a part, were mostly unexplored

wilderness, although by the 1830s some pioneering farms had been established in the areas now called Lakefield, Gore, and Shrewsbury. The far end of what later became Argenteuil County (now Mille Isles and Morin Heights, for example) remained terra incognita for some time and is rather amusingly



marked on maps of the period as "The Wasteland of the Crown," decorated with tiny fir trees and inaccurate river systems.

In the first fifty years of the agricultural society's existence, the fair was rotated among then-major towns of Argenteuil: Saint-André-d'Argenteuil, St. Phillippe, and Carillon—all along the Ottawa River. It was, at first, held in the autumn to correspond with the harvest. However, in 1877, with the growth of the town of Lachute on the North River outpacing these older towns, the fair was moved permanently to its present location at Ayersville, on the outskirts of Lachute. It became known as the Lachute Spring Fair. The present exhibition grounds were presented to the Society in

1877 when Henry Hammond made a donation of 15 acres of land. In 1949, this land was augmented by the purchase of more acreage. There have been several types of exhibition buildings at the fair grounds over the years, the last being the new arena erected in 1995.

Cyrus Thomas, in his *History of Argenteuil County*, published in 1897, writes that much of the early history of the agricultural society wasn't recorded. Thomas was only able to find a small, four-page pamphlet detailing a general meeting held on Mar. 25, 1826 that launched its creation. The pamphlet, titled "Rules and Regulations of the County of York Agricultural Society," outlines the Society's objectives "to promote, by its efforts and example, the sci-

ence of Agriculture throughout the County, to give premiums in money or pieces of plate, agricultural publications or implements, to the practical farmers who shall excel in the art of ploughing, cropping, raising stock of all kinds, in the dairy, planting of fruit trees, and the general improvement of Farm and Home Manufactures." The pamphlet further explains that any man from the county could join, at a rate of five shillings a year.

There remain no records of specific details of these agricultural promotional efforts from the Society awarded at the Fair, but it's clear that, from the middle of the 19th century and well into the early 20th century, the Laurentians was a potentially productive agricultural

region. At that time more than half the population of Canada lived on farms or worked in related trades such as blacksmithing and animal breeding. Until the 1950s, at least two-thirds of the permanent residents of the Argenteuil region were on family farms.

However, the reality of the climate, the very rough terrain of the upper part of Argenteuil, and changing social and economic times led to the eventual decline of farming throughout the area, especially in the mountainous townships of Gore, Mille Isles, and Morin. In these areas farmers al-

Agricultural Society until 1895. From this time onwards, for many years, records were lost, but the Society continued to exist and cattle shows and ploughing matches were held annually. Commissary C.J. Forbes was president for some years and William Beaton, a teacher and bailiff of St. Andrews, was secretary, succeeded by Erick Harrington, who in turn was succeeded by Henry Howard. The earliest records Thomas was able to obtain after the pamphlet were those of a meeting held in Lachute on Dec. 31, 1869. They describe the fair, saying, "The grounds and buildings which are leased to the Agricultural Society

musical shows. There are demolition derbies, arm wrestling contests and even a lingerie show in the beer tent—not the sort of entertainment the sober farmers of 183 years ago might have organized. Along with changing tastes affecting the Fair, the economic base of Argenteuil and the entire lower Laurentians, is certainly no longer agriculture. However, new developments, such as organic vegetables, ostriches, elk, and other recent methods of farming appear to be prospering throughout the district.

One of the more interesting, and consistent, aspects of the Lachute Fair has been the handicraft exhibit.



ways had to augment their incomes with other activities beyond the farm. In the flatter, milder areas, agriculture did prosper and was able to adapt to modern, mechanized farming methods. Around Lachute, very productive farms have remained in the same families for almost 200 years. The mini-climate of Arundel, in the northwest part of Argenteuil on the Rouge River, still remains partly agricultural. This flat and fertile district is like a bowl, surrounded by high mountains, and appears to have been the floor of a large glacial lake. It would have profited with the encouragement from the Fair's "general improvement" ideas, but the rocky uplands saw most of its farms vanish by the 1960s.

Thomas goes on to briefly outline the progress of the Argenteuil

for its exhibition are neat and spacious, and their annual fairs are second only to those of the large cities of the Province, and invariably attract a large concourse of people."

The Lachute Fair often featured many distinguished opening speakers, most of them politically prominent in their time, although only vaguely remembered today. For example, the Honourable William Cottingham delivered a speech at the fair's 1955 opening ceremony. Cottingham was Minister of Mines in the Union Nationale government of Maurice Duplessis and the transcript shows his speech seems very much a period piece in content and tone, praising the accomplishments of his government. Recently, the fair has taken on more of a carnival atmosphere with more emphasis on rides, games and different kinds of

This features various types of home-related skills like quilting, knitting, sewing and cooking. Historically, this was an exclusively female domain and gave an opportunity for farmers' wives, daughters, and other relatives to shine. Now it isn't unusual for many farms to be run by women. Although the Lachute Fair has evolved with changing economic and social trends, there remains a basic continuity and tradition of displaying the achievements and skills of the people of Argenteuil County.

Sources: The Porcupine, # 3, July 1999, Morin Heights Historical Association; Archives of the Argenteuil Agricultural Society, Lachute; Thomas, Cyrus, "The History of Argenteuil County, Quebec and Prescott County, Ontario", 1897.

Common ground

Soak in the delicious colours of harvest. Admire those ribbon-worthy tomatoes, and marvel at a plateful of blue potatoes. Then chew the fat with the farmer who grew them.

A trip to the horticultural building during fair time is more than a delightful way to spend an afternoon; it is a time-honored tradition that continues to provide a valuable source of growing know-how for rural gardeners.

Peopled by serious amateur and commercial growers alike, the traditional horticultural society is a living repository of plant knowledge that simply can't be found in magazines at the local gardening centre.

That's because once upon a time—long before scientists and seed companies got into the action—the task of crop enhancement fell to local farm communities. In fact, the evolution of animal husbandry and crop science, the basis of our modern food heritage, owe much to the county fair.

Garden clubs and horticultural societies sprang up across Canada in the 1800s at a time when seed stock was not always easy to find and pioneer growers had to learn by trial and error what crops they could and could not coax out of our northern climate.

Word of new plant varieties back then was sown at the county fair, not publicized at commercial trade shows.

Today, traditional horticultural societies are affiliated with county fair boards. They raise their own funds through card parties and raffles and do their best to combat ignorance about food production. And behind every mouth-watering vegetable display during fair time lurks an avid gardener who is eager, willing, and able to share his or her years of experience.

County horticultural societies traditionally played a vital role disseminating new plant varieties, with members trading seeds, slips and bulbs and sharing their observations from the field. But the importance of horticultural societies declined in the last half of the 20th century as farms grew bigger and more specialized.

Beginning in the 1940s and from the 1950s onward, seed companies have come to dominate the distribution of new varieties of flowers and vegetables.

Though the origins of many farm-producer groups that exist today in Quebec can be traced to local horticultural societies, the concentration and specialization of farming has weakened them.

The No. 1 goal of commercial farm groups such as the powerful Union des Producteurs Agricoles (UPA), for instance, is to lobby the government and influence market conditions, not to share gardening tips.

And new vegetable variety trials are conducted mainly by the Department of Agriculture nowadays, with the interests of large-scale producers in mind, not home gardeners. Which is another good reason to consider visiting an old-fashioned horticultural show this summer: there's no telling what interesting but forgotten heirloom vegetable you'll dig up. Potatoes are a good example.

Although some 200 varieties of potato are registered for production in Canada, only a half-dozen varieties make up close to 90 per cent of the market. And in some cases the only place you'll find some of the more unusual, older varieties is through horticultural societies, because large commercial food producers just don't grow them any more.

—Dwane Wilkin

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THE KNOWLEDGE BUILDER

Publisher J. J. Harpell championed worker rights in an age of ruthless capitalism

by Anne Collette



When James John Harpell was twelve years old, he quit school in his native province of Ontario because it didn't interest him. Instead, he took on an apprenticeship with a blacksmith, but was soon encouraged by an older machinist—and the foundry owner—to return to his studies. Little did these men know their gentle prodding had sown the seeds of Harpell's passion for promoting self-betterment through education. Studying at home, Harpell eventually completed high school and, at age 24, was accepted at Queen's University.

In 1907, Harpell and a fellow Queen's alumnus, Alexander Longwell, purchased the Canadian Mining Journal and entered the publishing business. They formed the Industrial and Educational Publishing Company Ltd. in Toronto and bought the Biggar Wilson Company. Through various acquisitions, they came to publish the Pulp and Paper Magazine of Canada, the Canadian Textile Journal, the Canadian Mining Journal, the Farmer's Guide, the Canadian Fisherman, the Canadian Miller and Grain Elevator, Iron & Steel of Canada, and the Journal of Commerce. They would later obtain the contract to print the Reader's Digest Condensed

Books. The printing business expanded to a second plant in Old Montreal, which moved to Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue on the western tip of Montreal Island in 1917.

Harpell chose this small francophone community for its location at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers, and for the presence of stations for both major railways in the village. Inexpensive land and low electricity costs were also considered. The second plant, called Garden City Press, was opened in 1919.

From the start, Harpell ran his business contrary to how industrialism taught its followers. He saw himself as responsible for helping his employees, mostly plant labourers, to better their situations. "Failure of employers to do their part ... has been responsible, to a considerable extent, for the trouble and hardships of the industrial world," he was quoted as saying. He held New Zealand—where "there are neither millionaires nor beggars," he noted—close to his heart and spoke out about non-exploitative working conditions, in a time when industrialists were more concerned with profit than ethical employment.

Harpell was influenced by Robert Owen, a Scottish businessman from New Lanark. Owen believed that the

right environment was necessary to create rational, good people, and he especially valued education. He stopped employing children under 10 years of age and sent them to the elementary schools he built. Older children worked shorter hours and attended secondary schools. Harpell followed suit, establishing the Institute of Industrial Arts in 1922, in order to encourage “the industrial worker to study his job and provide courses of instruction and study best calculated to assist the young industrial worker to make the transition from the classroom ... to the industry,” Jack Quarter writes in his piece, *James John Harpell: an adult education pioneer*. The school, staffed with highly skilled professionals, produced graded correspondence courses for tradespeople in the various industries for which the company published periodicals.

Harpell also arranged night courses for his own employees, hiring an instructor and covering the costs. Although these courses were not mandatory and the working days were long, he made it clear that he viewed these courses as a means for advancement. Successful completion of a course usually resulted in a 10-15 cent hourly pay raise. His drive to help others to help themselves extended to the community as well. In the same year he opened the Institute, he formed the Study Club of Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue. Members could study a variety of subjects, attend lectures, and take examinations. In the winter of 1934, 114 people wrote the final examination, a third of whom attained the average needed to graduate—this at a time when the average worker hadn’t completed elementary school. His grandson recalls how, when he would go help his grandfather’s gardener and the weather turned bad, he would be expected to read and study in the library.

From July 1909 to August 1910, Harpell and his family travelled throughout Europe where he visited many industrial centres to study their methods of employee training. While in England, he became familiar with the ‘garden city’ urban planning movement championed by Sir Ebenezer Howard since 1898. Howard favoured the construction of smaller, less dense communities surrounded by green spaces as a response to the overcrowded and polluted communities caused by the Industrial Revolution. His idea was realized in parts of New England and Ontario and, under the guidance of Harpell, in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue in the early 1920s. Harpell recruited employees from the local population to create the Garden City Development Company Ltd. The company built residences for his employees and assisted them in owning their own homes on a co-partnership plan, which meant the houses were self-financed by the workers who lived in the complex. By 1923, 23 houses had been built. The small community, named Gardenvale, paid for all of its establishment and development expenses for more than 20 years.

The publishing business gave Harpell an opportunity to fulfill his social goals. He had, for a long time, been concerned about the exploitation of the ‘average

Canadian’ by large financial institutions. In 1933, he famously criticized Thomas Bassett Macaulay, president of Sun Life Assurance Co., calling him one of the “world’s greatest crooks” and a swindler. Macaulay took the matter to court, charging Harpell with defamatory libel. Harpell was found guilty and sentenced to three months in jail. *Time* magazine reported with gusto on Jan. 2, 1933 that, “For years Publisher James J. Harpell of the Montreal Journal of Commerce has been editorially gunning for Sun Life Assurance Co., largest in the British Empire, of which he is a policy holder. Last week Sun Life gunned him.” True to his nature, Harpell started a library for inmates while in jail. Throughout the 1930s Harpell organized two co-operatives, the Arts and Crafts Co-operative and Sainte-Anne’s Home Builders, to help people cope with the impact of the Depression. These groups assisted in the financing of homes, shops, libraries, gardens, and schools. Harpell survived the Depression without having to fire any of his employees.

Longwell, Harpell’s lifelong business partner, died in 1940. Harpell bought Longwell’s share of the business from his estate and sold the business in 1945 to his employees in two separate co-operatives, one in Toronto and the other in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue. “An industry belongs essentially to the community in which it is situated and there the ownership and control of that industry should always reside,” Harpell said. Garden City Press changed its name to the Harpell Press Co-operative. Meetings were held two nights a week to help with the transition, as the employees weren’t familiar with the co-operative structure. The original selling price was \$500,000, to be paid out of the company’s revenue in monthly instalments over 10 years. \$300,000 was to be paid directly to Harpell and the remainder into the co-operative’s Educational and Welfare Fund. In 1953, in a gesture of generosity, Harpell settled for \$412,000 and forgave the remaining amount, selling at a price much less than the value of the company.

Harpell died of cancer in 1959 at the age of 85. He had been a hands-on manager and, without his dynamic management, Harpell Press Co-operative gradually lost its strong position in the highly competitive publication market. It was sold in 1996 and closed its doors definitively in 2000. The building has been transformed into luxury condominiums. It remains as a monument to this staunch social critic, philanthropist, industrialist, and educator, who owned one of Canada’s most important printing presses in his time—not bad for a former dropout.

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BY ANY OTHER NAME

Surviving heirloom apple trees are living links to homestead tastes from yesteryear

by Gloria Er-Chua

Centuries of history have painted a complex and seductive picture of the apple. It surfaces as a tart, green fruit—the Flower of Kent variety—that struck Sir Isaac Newton, leading to his discovery of the laws of gravity. Its skin was golden in the Greek myth of Hercules’ labours, and bright red when William Tell famously split one with a single arrow while it rested on his son’s head. The apple has long held an inexplicable allure in folklore and has taken on an equally important, though decidedly less glamorous, role in Canada—as an economic powerhouse.

Apples are the largest fruit crop in Canada, generating an average of \$165 million a year. Quebec is the third largest apple producer in the country, after only Ontario and British Columbia. In Quebec, production has been concentrated in a few key geographical areas, most notably the Châteauguay Valley, where apples are the region’s leading crop.

It began in 1850, when George Edwards opened the first commercial apple orchard in the region, in the town of Havelock. At the time, most orchards were kitchen orchards, meaning they produced just enough apples to be eaten

at home and the leftovers sold at a market to keep a family at subsistence level. George, on the other hand, brought his apples by horse-drawn carts to the town of Hemmingford to have them shipped on train to Montreal. They sold well and his orchard won international acclaim for its many apple varieties. George exhibited his produce at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, where he received an award for having the largest collection of apple varieties in the world.

Among his varieties was the dainty Snow apple, one of the most popular cultivars in the 19th century. Brought over by French settlers in 1739, the Snow has almost dropped out of producers’ lexicons today—rather ironic, as its French name is Fameuse—having been gradually replaced over the last 70 years by the ubiquitous McIntosh. Fewer people, still, will know today that the Fameuse, or Snow apple, is itself the parent of this quintessentially all-Canadian variety.

Loyalist John McIntosh bought a near Ottawa, where he found 20 Snow apple trees. In 1811, from a mutated Snow tree, McIntosh began to grow a new variety, which later took on the name of its cultivator. The McIntosh really proved its worth in the winter of

1933-34, when particularly harsh winds and cold temperatures destroyed many of the other varieties, including the Snow apple. The McIntosh, a bigger and more robust apple than the Snow, soon took over as the most cultivated in Canada, largely because it adapted well to the winters.

The Edwards farm, now owned by George’s great-great-grandson, Greg, has also become a McIntosh orchard. “The Fameuse was a big, big seller until the 1930s, and I guess it was just agricultural evolution,” Greg says. He doesn’t think his ancestor would mind the loss of his heritage varieties. In fact, soon after the McIntosh arrived on the scene, George began planting McIntosh trees in his Châteauguay Valley orchard to replace the ageing Snow trees. He died in 1928, just before the McIntosh’s popularity reached its height.

Today, the farm only has one Snow apple tree left, which Greg admits may be replaced by another variety when it dies. “You just keep replanting and planting what the market demands,” he explains. He doesn’t sell the Snow apples but picks them for his family to eat. He says while he’s not carrying on the legacy of the apple variety, he’s continuing the heritage of George’s business

Saving the Melon Queen

The history of the Montreal melon hit a low point in 1991. Reporter Barry Lazar had heard about the elusive fruit that had captivated taste buds for over a century, but couldn’t find one.

It wasn’t until 1995 that melon seeds were found in a seed station in Iowa, being maintained by the United States Department of Agriculture. The melon, which originated in Montreal in 1694, has since

been added to Canada’s ‘Ark of Taste’ for food products.

The melon’s unique, spicy taste earned it the nickname ‘Queen of Melons’ from the late 19th century until the Second World War. The delicate rind made it difficult to ship, and a special basket had to be created to transport the fruit. It met with great success in New England; in 1921, a slice of Montreal melon cost \$1.50 in Boston, more than the price of a steak. This luxury fruit, which requires a lot of attention, lost its appeal as more people entered the large-scale farming business, and was all but replaced by the cantaloupe in the 1950s.

Lazar’s extensive search

brought some attention back to the melon. In 1997, he asked Ken Taylor, an organic farmer from Île Perrot, to grow melons from the Iowa seeds. Taylor sent seeds from his crop to small seed plants across Canada, some of which now sell the seeds to backyard gardeners and hobbyists.

“I wasn’t surprised at all when seeds were found [in Iowa],” he says, adding it’s because Canada’s focus on large-scale production has discouraged local farms from preserving unique crops. Taylor hopes he, and other like farmers, can change that. “I’m just trying to bring Canadian fruit back to the Canadian farms.”

style. "They weren't hobbyists here on this farm at all," he says. "They farmed apples here on a commercial basis."

Fellow Châteauguay Valley farmer Tim Petch agrees with him. "I'm in that direction myself for commercial production," he says. Petch does, however, hold a special place in his heart for heritage apples, instilled in him by his father. Petch's grandfather opened the orchard in 1920, with apples now considered heritage cultivars. When Petch's father took over, he continued to use old production techniques on the older trees. "My father was an historian and liked old varieties," he explains. Although they grow new varieties for large-scale production, his father found a way of grafting the Snow onto a dwarf tree and has been growing a few of these heritage apples since 1994.

Many producers today hesitate to grow old varieties because the standard trees required for them take up more space, and are harder to maintain, than the popular dwarf trees. The apples produced aren't very popular among consumers, who are used to newer varieties like the McIntosh and the Cortland. These cultivars are grown on dwarf trees, which begin producing fruit within three years of being planted, whereas standard trees won't produce a crop until they're about 10 years old. Dwarf trees tend to stop growing at three metres in height while standard trees can reach six metres high, making them difficult to prune and to pick the fruit at the top.

Growing the Snow apple on a dwarf or semi-dwarf tree makes it more worthwhile for the Petches. There's still a market for them, albeit a small one, Petch says. "There's always people interested in it but not a lot of volume that's being bought," he says. He estimates the heritage apples make up only one per cent of his entire orchard. There used to be more, but many old standard trees died during a harsh winter in 2004. Petch removed the last two standard Snow trees a few years ago and now all of his Snow apples are grown on dwarf trees. "We just have a few to keep the variety going," he says. He doubts there are many others like him. "We're now going to the future, to the variety that's easier to grow, that will bring you the returns for your investment."

Linda McMillan, owner of McMillan Farm, would like to see people continue to grow heritage apples, but admits

those involved in commercial production likely won't feel compelled to keep the old cultivars around. She, like the other two growers, has Snow apples almost by chance. "At our age, it's not viable for us to change the whole farm into a high-producing farm," she says. McMillan is a retired nurse who took over the orchard in 1999 as a hobby. Her family bought the land for \$1,400 in 1904, and most of their trees are standard and produce heritage apples. If she had her way, she would cut down all of the standard trees and only grow dwarfs and semi-dwarfs. "If I was to grow dwarf trees, it would take four to five years before it produces, and that's not saying anything about purchasing the new equipment—" she pauses. "We're never going to live long enough to pay for it."

She's aware she has a unique orchard, and has taken advantage of the situation to create a niche for her farm in the self-pick orchards industry. The younger tourists who visit like the older varieties because, for them, they're a new taste. "We also have a few elderly couples, they come in and they're looking for the apples they grew up with," McMillan says. Along with the Snow, she also grows heritage varieties Pomme Gris and Wolf River.

The Pomme Gris, a small, greenish-yellow apple, was brought to the St. Lawrence Valley by French or Swiss settlers, who had been growing it in Europe since the 17th century.

Wolf River, a big, pale red and yellow apple, originated with William Springer, a Quebec lumberman who emigrated with his family to the United States in the 1850s. According to one account, which appears on the website of a North Carolina heirloom nursery and orchard business, Springer reputedly planted seeds of the Alexander variety on his Wisconsin farmstead and later noticed the new apple growing from a mutated tree.

McMillan argues that heritage fruits are important to preserve for future generations. She thinks there could eventually be a bigger market for them, as more people are turning to tried-and-tested heritage crops as a result of the recent tainted food scares. "You notice how people buy heritage seeds and there's a demand for heritage tomatoes now," she notes. "I'm hoping someday there'll be a demand for heritage apples."

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FISHY BUSINESS

How Alvah Patterson's hatcheries kept the waters teeming: A daughter's tribute
by Greta Patterson Nish



In early explorers' accounts of the Gaspé Peninsula, the coastal waterways were always described as brimming with fish, and not just cod—arguably North America's first global trade commodity. Indeed, long before overfishing led to the collapse of Canada's commercial cod stocks, this region of Quebec had already established a strong salmon sports fishery, which continues to lure anglers from all over North America. Strict conservation policy and, perhaps more directly, fish hatcheries, have helped to guard against the loss of this rich natural heritage.

My father Alvah Patterson saw his first fish hatchery at his cousin's home in the town of Gaspé where he began to work in 1934. After being there only a few months, he was given the opportunity to try what would become a lifelong passion. A certain Mr. Lindsay from the provincial government's fisheries department came to Gaspé looking for someone to build and maintain a small Atlantic salmon hatchery in the village of Cascapedia, about 300 kilometres south along the Chaleur Bay coast. The immediate goal was to stock the Grand Cascapedia River. An adventurous man, Dad immediately said he would take the job.

This was not an easy assignment because the location of the new hatchery was several miles outside the main village, in the tiny hamlet of Jonathan, which is impossible to find on a map today. Dad had to move his wife and three young children to the backwoods and live in a one-room house, attached to the building that contained the fish troughs. There was no electricity when they first arrived and minimal furniture. My brothers spent their first few months sleeping in a wood-box that my mother lined with hay. The preferred method of transportation was dogsled, and there were two dogs of the Newfoundland breed to bring the children to school everyday.

Work at the hatchery was difficult. It included the spawning period and raising the fish from eggs to a size suitable for release into the wild. Salmon have to be raised in special conditions, one of which is a cold environment. Holding the fish in the troughs, Dad had to carefully press the eggs and sperm out of their bodies and mix the spawn himself. The fertilized eggs were later placed on trays while the children picked out the white ones, which were dead. Once the fish were six to eight inches in length, they were let into the Grand

Cascapedia River. The water was so cold that Dad did most of his work in wool gloves, which were dried and warmed on a woodstove every night in preparation for the next day's tasks. The pay was minimal and it was necessary to keep a cow for milk, butter, and cheese, and to hunt game. During the winters, Dad supplemented his income by working as a logger at a salary of \$25 a month.

After ten years at the hatchery, the family returned to Gaspé in 1944 in hopes that Dad would find more lucrative employment. It was a difficult time, as war veterans were returning and competing for the same jobs and, when the opportunity again presented itself, Dad agreed to take on the responsibility of starting another hatchery. Mr. Lindsay appeared on the scene in 1945, this time seeking someone to move to the Eastern Townships to build a larger provincial fish hatchery. It wasn't an easy decision because, by this time, Dad was 43 years old and had six children (including me), but he consented.

When he arrived in Baldwin Mills, a hamlet in the Coaticook region, in 1945, my father had his work cut out for him. The area where the hatchery was to be located was very swampy and covered with brush. He hired some local men to help him drain the land and cut the brush. Then they built rearing ponds, by using horses to pull boards in a circular pattern to dig out the earth. It was also necessary to put up a small shed and a building to contain the fish troughs. The establishment of the hatchery was an economic boost for Baldwin Mills because it gave jobs to many locals in both the summer and winter. This time Dad was asked to raise trout to stock lakes Lyster, Massawippi, and Memphremagog. Occasionally, prior to releasing them, he would poison the lakes to kill existing carp and pike, which were not as popular with anglers and which competed for food and habitat.

At first we lived in Coaticook but, in 1952, we moved into a new house that the government built for us right beside the hatchery. For Baldwin Mills, the four-bedroom house was considered very big and comfortable for a family of, by this time, seven children. Besides fish production, the hatchery workers were also responsible for ploughing the snow off local roads, maintaining the public skating rink, and improvising a small zoo.

The zoo, which was attached to the hatchery, had an eclectic collection of animals. Most were donated from community locals, who had caught on to the popular movement at the time to buy animals through cata-

logues, only to find out later their homes were unsuited to raising them. Once, the zoo received a squirrel monkey, named Jimmy, from a woman who had kept him in a bird cage until she couldn't care for him anymore. There was also a bear from Granby Zoo and, for a few days, a baby alligator. But when the small reptile was placed in the same pond with a group of old turtles, they quickly chewed it to death. The zoo was very popular and, at its height, saw several hundred people every Sunday.

The director of the hatchery during this time was Louis Roch Seguin, and he and Dad, who was the foreman, had a great working relationship. Seguin had the diplomatic skills to work with the bureaucrats in the Fish and Game Department and Dad dealt with the workers and the day-to-day running of the hatchery. He was known to be a very dedicated worker and rarely took a day off because he was always concerned about a pump breaking or the electricity shutting off and killing the fish. There were many times that private organizations tried to lure him away to establish other hatcheries but he chose to stay where he enjoyed the workers and the location.

In the early 1960s, Seguin left and the hatchery went under new management. The new manager closed the zoo, giving Jimmy away and shooting the bear. He and my father disagreed over how to run the hatchery and, after only a few years of working together, Dad left his job in 1964, going to work instead as a lakes, rivers, and wildlife inspector for the Fish and Game Department.

Though his formal schooling had been cut short at 17 by the death of his own father, Dad's work experience eventually taught him more about the care of fish than most biologists who occasionally came on the scene. When he retired in 1970, he pursued his love of running fish hatcheries by building two private ones, one in Hatley and another in Barnston, from which my brothers continued to supply fish to local fish-and-game clubs and private businesses. The Barnston hatchery even counted Canadian actor and Eastern Townships resident Donald Sutherland among its customers.

As the Gaspé coast and other regions struggle to keep a check on overfishing and to balance human wants and needs with those of other species, it's worth remembering the vital role that people like my father and their hatcheries played preserving one of Quebec's truly remarkable natural resources.

Greta Patterson Nish grew up on the Baldwin Mills hatchery.



GETTING AWAY

Laurentian farm hotels supplied memorable summers for many a Montreal family
by Gloria Er-Chua



Visit the Laurentians northwest of Montreal today and neat rows of cottages line the rivers that weave their way through the mountain range. This has become a favourite vacation spot for Montrealers, but it wasn't always this way. The region, which stretches east to the Saguenay River and south to the St. Lawrence, has struggled historically to find a niche industry to propel its economy.

The Laurentians towns close to the Ontario border, notably Lachute and Saint-André-d'Argenteuil, have been strong agricultural producers since the early 19th century. However, immigrants who arrived from Ireland and Scotland in the 1830s found themselves being given plots of land in the eastern Laurentians, where the ground was uneven and large areas were covered by swamps or thick

forest, which made large-scale farming impossible. French-speaking immigrants in the 1870s and Jewish immigrants in the 1890s met with the same difficulties, struggling to rise above subsistence level due to the short growing season and harsh winters.

Priest Antoine Labelle famously pushed for the Canadian Pacific Railway to build a line from Montreal to St-Jérôme, which was completed in 1876. The railway was soon extended north to Ste-Agathe, connecting Montreal with previously isolated communities in the Laurentians. By this time, logging was becoming a prosperous economic activity. Nevertheless, the farmers who logged in the forests still needed more work to supplement their incomes. When they realized that the splendour of the Laurentians' rocky terrain was more fitted to tourism than commercial-scale agricul-

ture, they seized on the concept of the farm-hotel, inviting city dwellers to stay with them in the summers for a real farm experience. Many cottage owners today had their first taste of the Laurentians in one of these farm-hotels.

Since racist discrimination prevented Montreal Jews from being able to rent cabins, Jewish farmers living near the community of Ste-Sophie began opening up their own version of the farm-hotel. These family-run resorts were unique for offering kosher dishes and on-site synagogues for guests. They developed into close-knit communities and most of the advertising for new boarders was done through word of mouth.

Nathan Rosenberg records his childhood on one such farm in his memoirs. In 1905, his grandparents, Ida and Nathan Kottenberg, emigrated from Russia and bought a small farm in New

Glasgow, just outside of Ste-Sophie. Ida, who enjoyed cooking for her large extended family, kept a vegetable garden nearly the size of two football fields. The family convinced the seasoned hostess to open Kottenberg's Hotel in 1910. The resort was unique in that the Kottenbergs kept a kosher kitchen, meaning they had two separate sinks, two sets of dishes, and two sets of utensils, one for dairy dishes and the other for meat dishes. This is in accordance with kosher law that meat and dairy must not be consumed together. Chief Rabbi Hershorn of Montreal brought his wife to the hotel for their honeymoon and they became regular guests.

In the summer, guests stayed in the family's 15-bedroom house while the family moved into the chicken house for the season. In the spring, most of the 1,000-odd chickens had to be sold and the house cleaned in preparation for the family to move in. "We slept on mattresses and cot beds separated by sheets strung across wires that were put up between the different families," Rosenberg recalls. Over the years, the younger generations built bungalows on the farm for each family for the summer months.

As the hotel business grew, the Kottenbergs bought the neighbouring farm and built two more guesthouses. While the family continued to work on the farm, Ida asked Rosenberg's father, Joseph, to run the resort. Rosenberg and his siblings and cousins were expected to help. "Every one of the children helped, including the ones who had other jobs or attended school in Montreal." Rosenberg was put in charge of the on-site convenience store when he was 10 years old. He ordered candy and soft drinks from Montreal. On particularly hot days, he and cousin Sammy would go into Ste-Sophie to buy ice cream from the local dairy, which he remembers always sold quickly.

Though the resort was popular, there were questions about who would take it over when the older generation died off. "Originally all of us lived there," Rosenberg remembers. "Then we moved to different places." His older brother and cousin stayed to run the resort but nobody took it over from them. The hotel closed in 1952 but the farm is still in operation today.

Around this time another hotel, in Joliette, was slowly becoming the choice resort for Jewish Montrealers. Harry Schwartzman and his wife Dora Bern-

stein bought the property in 1924, with the original intention that it would be a tobacco farm. For a few years, they worked on the farm while still holding other jobs in nearby Montreal. They also began taking in short-term boarders to augment their income. "From that start, the boarders became more and more integral to their income," grandson David Schwartzman recalls. In 1930, a fire devastated one of their two barns. Since the couple hadn't insured the barn, they suffered a huge loss and were forced to sell part of the property, which they eventually bought back in 1936.



Bernstein settled onto the farm full-time, converting it into a large resort with 50 cabins. Most resorts of the time were run by women, who would deal with the cooking and all of the administrative tasks while their husbands ran the adjacent farm. Harry kept his job as a cutter in a cloth factory, driving from Montreal to Joliette a few times a week to help his wife. The resort was very much a women's environment, as mothers usually vacationed there with their children while their husbands stayed in Montreal to work. On Friday evenings, a bus would bring the men to the farm for the weekend. "The bus would stop right by the farm because there were so many people getting off," Schwartzman recalls. "The children would be lined up there waiting for their fathers to come."

There was a rhythm to the pattern of these country weekends. When the men arrived, their first order of business would be settling their family account at the convenience store Bernstein ran. She kept a tally of how much each family

owed in rent and groceries for the week, writing each entry into her master ledger. Schwartzman remembers that his grandmother, who would open the store every day at 7 a.m., often worked late into the night. "She was a very strong woman," he says. Once, she asked him to build steps in front of the store. "I kept putting it off and next thing I see, she was there with a nail and hammer ... and she was building it herself." Bernstein was in her mid-70s then.

In those days, cabins were let for as little as \$14 a week. Boarders could also place orders at Bernstein's store for kosher meat and other products that were only available in the city. Harry Schwartzman would bring the orders with him from Montreal. Unlike other resorts, Bernstein didn't grow her own food on the farm or cook for the boarders. Instead, she asked her teenage grandchildren to run an on-site restaurant, allowing them to keep all of the profits.

Throughout the 1950s, the resort was always at capacity. Many of the Jewish families in Montreal had emigrated from Eastern Europe, where they hadn't been allowed to own land. To be able to own a cottage was a privilege, and those who could afford it bought one. Those who couldn't, rented. "It was the most they could afford in terms of achieving the ideal of getting away," David Schwartzman recalls. "At least they could say they got their kids away in the summer."

Once economic conditions improved, more families began buying their own properties in the Laurentians and resorts like the Schwartzmans' lost their customer base. Bernstein closed the resort in 1962 and sold the land three years later to Serge Joyal, who later became a senator. Joyal remodelled the farmhouse and the city turned it into the Maison Antoine-Lacombe museum, named for its first owner.

By the 1970s, the era of the summer resort had come to a close across the Laurentians, but the memories have lived on. When David Schwartzman tells people his last name in Montreal they sometimes ask if he's related to Harry and Dora. Many of the children he played with on the resort are now in Toronto or the United States but he hears from them occasionally. "My cousins may email and say they ran into someone who went there," he says. "They always say they had a wonderful time."

REVIEWS

26 Objects in Search of Authors and Wabanaki

Stewart Museum, 20 chemin du Tour de l'Isle,
St. Helen's Island, Montreal

26 Objects in Search of Authors runs until October 13, 2008
Wabanaki runs until September 1, 2008



The Musée de la Civilisation has a knack for high-concept exhibits. **26 Objects in Search of Authors** is one such experiment, and thanks to an exchange agreement with the Stewart Museum, lucky Montrealers can currently catch it on St. Helen's Island.

These artefacts are not all marked with historical significance, nor are they linked through a captivating narrative. Rather, the attraction of this exhibit is in the concept: an object is selected for every letter of the alphabet, from an armoire to a Zouave uniform. Then, a well-known Quebec author, whose last name begins with the letter, is charged with writing a small piece that involves the object. The results are diverse in format and tone, from cheeky fictional letters to intimate poetry.

Playwright Michel Tremblay spots within his *Tableau of Place Royale* evidence of an illicit love affair. Jean-Claude Germain uses his object, a gargantuan multi-slice toaster (*grille-pain*) that was used in the National Assembly during the 1930s, to criticize the excess of Depression-era politicians. Memories of past lives mark many of the authors' works, whether dealing with a checkerboard, kimono or urn. Indeed, if an overall theme can be distilled from the writings, it is a respect for these objects, which act as windows to other times and places.

To some extent, though, one gets the sense that the exhibit champions the concept to the

detriment of the individual objects. For example, hung between the collection and the visitors are large, semi-transparent panels with the text and an accompanying image of the author's eyes. The intent is to drive home that we are seeing the object from that artist's perspective. Clever, but after being intrigued by a story, getting a good look at its subject proves frustrating.

In the end, this is more of an exhibit of creative writing than of artefacts. If one embraces the concept and is ready to spend a good deal of time reading, the exhibit can be surprisingly touching, with its unique elements providing a mixture of inventiveness, humour, and sadness.

Some will certainly be moved enough to seek out the accompanying book for purchase. It is strange that, given the excellent English translations in the exhibit—Guy Fournier's bawdy ode to a commode chair even retains its rhyming scheme—only a French volume is available. In any case, for those with whom such an experiment strikes a chord, the stories will resonate long after the visit.

Visitors should also take a look at **Wabanaki**, a modest but thought-provoking exhibit of Abenaki objects from the collections of S. Rivard, Lands in Sights, and Thérèse O'Bomsawin. This exhibit draws on the experience of the proud people of Odanak, founded in 1670 and now home to one of the largest Abenaki

bands.

Unfortunately, like many other Aboriginal nations, the Abenaki have endured the effects of hundreds of years of colonial rule and persistent attempts at assimilation. Thus, it is estimated that only about 12 people in the world can still speak this Algonquian language fluently. However, the Abenaki culture persists through remaining rituals and its material culture. In this way, the collections presented here take on an importance perhaps not readily apparent.

On display is an assortment of clothing, baskets, and, perhaps most interestingly, tourist art. The Abenaki were among the first to start producing items for the sole purpose of selling them to Europeans, beginning in the late 18th century, as it was already becoming more difficult for them to survive with traditional subsistence methods such as hunting and fishing. Although the greatest demand for the objects was in the Victorian period, followed by a decline in the 20th century, a few craftsmen in Odanak still carry on the tradition, tailoring their designs to a tourist aesthetic with a mixture of modern and traditional materials and techniques.

Though the exhibit may only take a few minutes to view, it is worth taking the time to appreciate a fascinating culture that, while on our doorstep, is not always this accessible.

Reviewed by Tyler Wood



Mary Catharine (Minnie) Gill, Quilts: An Exhibition and From Rustic Country to Village Community: The Birth of North Hatley

*Lennoxville-Ascot Historical and Museum Society, 9 Speid Street, Sherbrooke
and*

Colby-Curtis Museum, 535 Dufferin Street, Stanstead

Mary Catharine (Minnie) Gill runs until December 14, 2008

Sara Peck Colby runs until October 26, 2008

Quilts: An Exhibition runs until September 30, 2008

From Rustic Country to Village Community: The Birth of North Hatley runs until October 13, 2008

It's the summer of women in the Eastern Townships, but this entirely by chance. The Lennoxville-Ascot Historical and Museum Society (LAHMS) has an exhibit on 19th century Townships artist **Mary Catharine (Minnie) Gill** while its museum co-habitant, the Uplands Cultural and Heritage Centre, is running a show for artist Sara Peck Colby. It's a coincidence, Uplands director Nancy Robert says, albeit a good one. Women artists have historically been overlooked and showcasing their work, which spans two centuries in these exhibits alone, is a reminder of their longstanding presence.

Upstairs in the two-storey heritage house, a one-room exhibit features Minnie Gill's works, accompanied by short descriptions of her life. Gill was born in Pierreville in 1861. After her father died in her teens, her mother married the Reverend F.J.B Allnatt. He was appointed dean of divinity at Bishop's University in 1887 and the family moved to Lennoxville to live on the campus. Gill, who was 26 at the time, found herself in a male-dominated environment; it wasn't until 1903 that Bishop's allowed female students into programs leading to diplomas. It appears she fit in well, painting

alongside male artists and playing the organ for the affiliated Bishop's College School's chapel. In later years, she taught drawing and painting there.



In the summers, the family stayed at Cap-à-l'Aigle, where Allnatt led a parish. The surrounding landscape became Gill's preferred choice of subject, and her best work arguably comes from her scenes of daily life there: a view of the town from atop a hill, or a laundry line in front of a summer home. From 1897 to 1920 she exhibited at the Spring Exhibition of what is now the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Gill kept her personal life intensely private and, indeed, the exhibit contains few pictures of the artist herself. As was unsurprising for career women of her time, she never married, causing much talk amongst local residents. Those stories, likely exaggerated, offer what may be the only glimpse into

Gill's private life. That could soon change, LAHMS president Lu Rider says. She hopes those who knew Gill will visit the exhibit and share their memories of her. For now, Gill's work is her only memoir but, if a picture is worth a thousand words, the 31 paintings on display should tell plenty.

I walk downstairs, past the **Sara Peck Colby** exhibit that isn't open on the day of my visit. Montreal-based artist Peck Colby has been painting the Townships, where she spends

her summers, for over thirty years. Like Gill, her paintings capture the region's beauty in different seasons, although Peck Colby's style leans more towards the abstract.

Following the Townships Heritage Trail, I arrive at the Colby-Curtis Museum in Stanstead where it's a women's milieu once again. The **Quilts** exhibit has been expertly woven into the rooms of the 19th century house. Quilting originated in the Far East and was brought to Europe by the Crusaders in the 11th century. It was quickly accepted for its utility in making warm clothing and bed-covers for the damp winters. Knights reportedly used quilts under their armour for comfort and extra protection. Women eventually formed social clubs around the

craft, and one can imagine the stories shared during the meetings that led to unique pattern names such as Grandmother's Flower Garden and Ohio Star. Some quilts are accompanied by explanations, like Victoire Paquette's quilt skirt, which was an 11-year project finished just before she got married.

It's difficult to leave the exhibit's cozy atmosphere—I've discovered a large dollhouse in the playroom, fulfilling a childhood fantasy—but there's another exhibit in the back of the house. The museum received a \$50,000 donation in 2007 to create exhibits on different Townships towns over the next five years. This year's exhibit traces **North Hatley's** development from 1886 onward. Today, the town of roughly 700 people attracts tourists from across the province, but this might not have come about without the help of American tourists. In 1870 a station was built in North Hatley as part of the Boston and Maine railroad and it seemed the area was ripe for development. A recession

hit, however, and it was only with the arrival of American tourists in the 1890s that the economy picked up.

Families from Maryland, and later more southern states, began asking for cottages along Lake Massawippi. This created a building boom and a sawmill and door factory sprang up. Residents served as carpenters and masons, and offered specialty services such as laundry. It's estimated that most locals made three-quarters of their annual income catering to the 1000-odd tourists during the summer months.

The greater influx of people created the need for more services. A library and four churches were built, including a Baptist church where many black slaves from the south worshipped. In an oral account—one of several in a video set up in a corner of the exhibit—a man says the slaves liked North Hatley, where they were free to worship in the same churches as white people. He notes that they

could be seen chatting by the lake most nights, having finished the chores for their masters.

Like most of the other speakers in the oral history segment, he wouldn't have been born until after 1914, the last year the exhibit covers. At times, the exhibit appears to struggle with lost time, leaving certain display objects unexplained and using some photographs of historic buildings taken as recently as this year instead of archival images. It's no surprise, as vacationers likely brought everything back with them to the United States.

The research for the exhibit was intensive, residents donated artefacts and knowledge, and one learns interesting facts about the thriving community. Perhaps the occasional lapse in detail serves only as a reminder of the importance of preserving heritage—it's the difference between an exhibit on a community's birth and one on its death.

Reviewed by Gloria Er-Chua



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Heritage Summit at the Morrin Centre

Celebrating diversity among English-speaking communities

OCTOBER 11TH, 2008

Field Notes

Concern for cultural heritage is at an all-time high, with community groups in the forefront. What's driving this movement? What are its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities? Leaders of Quebec City's English-speaking heritage organizations and ethno-cultural associations discuss the challenges and rewards of supporting local heritage preservation initiatives.

Culture Web

English communities of Quebec City are composed of people belonging to many different ethnic traditions, each in its own way helping to shape the character of this historic Canadian city. Historians present highlights from a growing body of research into the little-known multicultural heritage in one of North America's oldest cities.

Looking Glass

What does it mean to belong to an English-speaking community in a predominantly French-speaking culture? Have Quebec City's diverse anglophone and allophone populations anything in common besides language? Participants share perspectives on what the future might hold for the city's English-speaking heritage.

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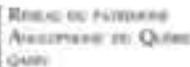
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Morrin Centre

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