



The Old Train Station News

Newsletter #15

May 2010

In April I flew to New York City to spend a week with my daughter, Helen, who had just completed her training at the Sterling Style Academy. Imagine shopping at Macy's, Bloomingdales and Lord & Taylor with your own fashion consultant! Besides browsing the huge department stores and the lovely little boutiques, we strolled through Central Park, took the subway to see the Statue of Liberty, sipped on a glass of wine at the Empire State Building, walked by Ground Zero, marveled at all the glitter and glitz in Times Square and caught a delightful rendition of the Broadway musical, *Mary Poppins*. Determined to see the historic Garment District, we set off for the fashion center in search of the gigantic button and needle sculpture. Next to it stands an eight-foot tall bronze sculpture of *The Garment Worker*, symbolizing the importance of immigrant labour in the growth of the city's fashion industry. New York has clearly been the center of American fashion since the mid nineteenth century when the development of mass production led to the growth of the garment industry.

Before long, New York's successful fashion industry spilled over into Canada and touched the lives of folks right here in Antigonish. In fact, the museum houses a small collection of fashion magazines that were published in New York – two copies of the *New York Fashion Bazar* (March 1888 and January 1889) and two copies of *The Delineator* (April 1892 and April 1893). Graciously donated by long-time museum volunteer, Florence Helm, this collection once belonged to her mother, Ellen Fraser-MacDougall.

Young Ellen Fraser went to Boston “because all the young people did,” Florence told me recently. While she was there, Ellen studied nursing and then stayed on to work at her profession. “Each summer she would come home” and, of course, these magazines came with her. How many more young women came home with copies to share with their sisters, mothers, neighbours and friends? Florence doesn't recall ever seeing these magazines when she was young but admits that they came out of Ellen's trunk – no doubt, tucked away for safekeeping.



Women of the day would have been absolutely delighted with both *The Delineator* and the *New York Fashion Bazar*. Ellen's copies are clearly worn from hours of perusal. What a wonderful distraction from the monotony of everyday life in small town Antigonish and its surrounding communities! Filled with illustrations and some color plates of the latest fashions of New York, these magazines came with detailed descriptions that could easily be duplicated by the experienced seamstress or garment maker. In fact, *The Delineator* featured Butterick sewing patterns that could then be ordered at a cost of ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five or thirty cents.

There was something for every woman in these magazines. For the lady who liked to crochet, knit or tat, there were detailed patterns. Gardening articles dealt with hotbed instructions, mail-order plants and their care, and the newest plants on the market. The dressmaker could benefit from tips on spring fabrics, stitching and sewing, lace and accessories, fancy stitches and embroideries, as well as laundering and care of garments. Young ladies could spend hours reading all about beauty, the latest fashions in New York, London and Paris, and how to be "strictly à la mode". The lady of the house could get advice on home furnishing and housekeeping, recipes for delicious pies, dainty ways to serve potatoes, and suggestions for an Easter luncheon or dinner. The young mother could read an article on "the training of the child" or learn new stories and pastimes for her children. The accomplished musician would appreciate a new piece of music and the dance enthusiast could find detailed instructions for the newly fashionable round dancing. There were lessons in modern millinery and photos of stylish spring hats, articles on athletics for women and others on women's occupations. Surely someone would benefit from a piece on fashionable mourning attire. Women of all ages would scan the advice columns for helpful hints. "*A betrothal ring is worn on the third finger of the left hand.*" "*It is legal for first cousins to marry, but is not generally deemed advisable.*" "*Misses of sixteen should not drive with gentlemen unchaperoned.*" Both magazines contained a fine sprinkling of short stories and fiction that would have caught the eye and tugged at the heartstrings of all the ladies. The advertisements probably created quite a stir too -- the corset that fit like a glove, the best antiseptic on the market, the abdominal belt that made the wearer feel fifty pounds lighter, the ball-bearing Arlington sewing machine that cost only \$14.75 but was equal of any \$40 to \$65 machine, the newest styles in Crawford shoes for \$3.50, and special offers on bulbs and seeds. Who could resist the temptation of whiling away a few hours with a copy of one of these magazines?



Did these publications impact the life of Ellen Fraser? To answer this question, we must first know her story. According to her daughter, Florence, Ellen returned home from the Boston States to marry Hugh MacDougall in 1912. She was thirty-three years old. Her fiancé was a stonemason who worked on the railways "doing bridge work". The beautiful bride was married in a navy blue wedding suit. Under the jacket, she wore a beige linen blouse that she had stitched for the occasion. A string of embroidered yellow flowers graced the front of the blouse. "My mother was very fashionable when she came home from the States," Florence admits.

Hugh and Ellen spent their early married life at Port Hastings but returned back to Antigonish, to the top of Hawthorne Street, in 1921. At Port Hastings, the young MacDougall children were unable to attend school. Hugh worked away all week, Ellen had more babies at home, and the schoolhouse was five miles away – just too far for the children to walk. At the same time, the oldest girl was nine years old and still not formally educated. Finally back in Antigonish, the three oldest children all started school together at the Mount Saint Bernard School, the local school for girls.



Ellen was a capable woman but what choice did she have? Her husband's work was seasonal so while he was away, she was left to raise the six little girls, manage the house and carry out the chores. Ellen's last child, her only son, was born after they had moved to the farm on Hawthorne Street. By now, she was a very busy woman; however, according to Florence, she had lots of help from her children. "We all had our chores."

All of the children's clothing, the curtains, and the bedding were made on the Singer sewing machine. The patterns for their clothes, she often made herself but "she probably ordered patterns from the *Family Herald* too. What Ellen couldn't sew, came from the Eaton's Catalogue." The lovely nightdress and child's christening gown displayed at the museum are but two examples of Ellen's accomplishments as a dressmaker. While the nightgown spent years in her mother's trunk, the christening gown and matching slip made many appearances over the years. All seven of Ellen's children wore it to their christening and so, too, did all of her grandchildren.

"About sixty children were christened in that gown," Florence recalls. Ellen's intricately stitched and completely handmade christening gown had become a family heirloom.

Like other women of her day, Ellen could turn her hand to many a task. She was a wonderful cook and she loved to garden. She learned to be a good knitter of socks and sweaters – even though, according to Florence, it was Ellen's husband who taught her how to turn the heel on a sock. (Imagine that!) Rug hooking was another one of her passions. While she purchased some patterns, she designed some of her own rugs too. Of course, Ellen passed many of her talents on to her daughters. When Hugh expressed concern over one of the girls using the Singer sewing machine, Ellen was quite adamant in her response. "She has to learn and she won't learn unless she sits down and sews." The girls learned to hook rugs as well. Florence recalls the large mat that one of her sisters hooked for the family home. "It was beautiful." Maroon and white in the center, there were flowers in each corner and then a black border all around. "It's still around somewhere."

Ellen was a young, attractive, fashionable lady when she came home from Boston and she continued to be quite smart looking "until the day she died." She liked clothes, she liked to dress up, and she always owned a stylish hat. As she got older, she continued to take pride in her appearance. On occasion she was heard to say to one of her girls, "Not one of you has the waistline that I have." Not to be outdone, her daughters would promptly reply, "Well, none of us wears a corset!"

Ellen's magazines date back to the time when she was single, young and living in Boston. After her marriage to Hugh MacDougall, she was far too busy to waste time in idle pursuits but, according to her daughter, Florence, she certainly "kept up with reading the papers." Her lengthy career as a nurse in "the States" had made her an educated, sophisticated, modern day working woman and had, no doubt, broadened her horizons beyond life in a small town; yet she returned home to Nova Scotia, and eventually, to Antigonish, where she happily settled down to raise her large family. In the end, what's most important is the fact that these magazines were actually found tucked away in her trunk, perhaps for sentimental reasons or maybe as a source of inspiration for some of the wonderful projects she completed over the years. "We weren't allowed in the trunk," her daughter confesses – and maybe just as well because now, thanks to Florence Helm, we're all able to appreciate Ellen's keepsakes.

Catherine MacGillivray

Comments from Our Readers

We sincerely welcome comments and questions from our readers and thank the following for their responses.

- Rosalie MacEachern commented on one of the love stories in our February Newsletter. *Regarding the Valentine's story you had of the girl who was spirited away from Cape George by her lover to live in Inverness: I don't know when the Campbells left that property at South Side Cape George but by the 1880s it belonged to my great-grandfather. I always think of her when I see that property. He had only to sail into Ballentyne's Cove and come down over the hill for her. Or maybe she met him at the cove, who knows! Great story either way.*
- Helen MacGillivray wrote to us from Calgary regarding the Carroll Letters: *I am so happy that I live in the 21st century where I can e-mail, text, phone, fly, etc. because your newsletter has made me super appreciate the luxuries of our society. I was impressed with the price of rent and groceries.*

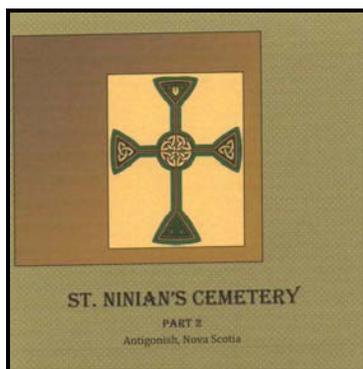
Researching and Recording History

Rosalie MacEachern is hoping that someone may have some information on Marcella MacLellan, second wife of John MacDonald, adjutant of the 10th battalion Nova Scotia Militia. Those of you who read our February Newsletter will remember Marcella as the young lady who composed the haunting Gaelic love song, *Fear a 'Bhata* or *Oh, My Boatman*. Rosalie is convinced that Marcella has descendents still living in Antigonish. "It is so sad that no one seems to know her story. She had to have been a remarkable woman." Rosalie is piecing together stories of pioneer women in Antigonish. "How such amazing women can be completely forgotten says a lot about the history we were taught."

Upcoming Workshop

Learning the Basics of Encapsulation and Document Cleaning -- On June 8, 2010, Jocelyn will be putting on a one-and-a-half hour hands-on workshop. Anyone interested in participating is asked to bring a document for encapsulation. (Do not exceed 11x14.) Please phone ahead to register for the workshop.

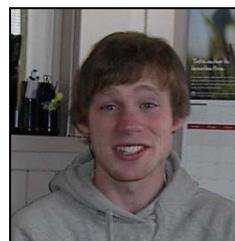
Cemetery Inscriptions by Marleen MacDonald-Hubley



Over the past few years, Marleen Hubley has done considerable work collecting and compiling photographs and inscriptions from headstones in a number of our local cemeteries. To date, she has gathered data from graveyards in Egerton, Lismore, Arisaig, Georgeville, Morar, Maryvale, St. Joseph's, Ohio and Antigonish. She recently completed Part 2 of the St. Ninian's Cathedral Cemetery. This latest CD contains over 2000 entries. Most of her material is available on CD at the museum at a cost of \$25.00. Some CDs contain more than one cemetery. Please inquire at the museum for details.

"Bon Voyage" to James – one of our former summer students

James Goldie stopped by the museum recently to say "good bye." He is off on an adventure to South America where he plans to tour for the next three months. In September, he will be in British Columbia to study *Learning English as a Second Language*. We wish him well.



Recent Acquisitions



Lewis MacDonald of Heatherton recently donated a very old set of bagpipes to the museum. Dating back to at least 1823, these pipes belonged to previous generations of pipers in the MacDonald family. The dating of the pipes was based on the drones. After 1823, a new type of drone was introduced on the instrument.

The pipes originally belonged to Lewis' great-great grandfather, Hugh "Miller" MacDonald of Maryvale. (Hugh and his wife, Christy, lived in the house that today belongs to Hugh's great-grand daughter, Alma MacLean, on the Old Maryvale Road.) In time, Hugh's son, Hector, inherited the farm – and the pipes. Hector often played at the dances around

the county. His son, "Willie Hector" was also a piper and he, too, played at the local dances. Willie married Bessie Siddle, another talented musician. "Mrs. Willie Hector", as she was known, was the organist at St. Mary's Church in Maryvale and then at St. Ninian's Cathedral where she played for many years. This talented couple produced two more pipers, Francis and Dougall, and two drummers, Roy and Lewis.



Jim Boyd of the St. Andrews district brought in a photo of John Dougald MacGillivray, veteran of WW1 and recipient of the Military Medal. John Dougald (Jack) was a native of St. Joseph's. His children include Doris, Charlie Joe and Pud MacGillivray.

New Books

- Thank you to Laurie Stanley Blackwell for her kind donation of Stanley T. Spicer's book, *The Age of Sail – Master Shipbuilders of the Maritimes*.
- The museum had recently added another fascinating new book to its collection – *Fabulous Fakes – A Passion for Vintage Costume Jewelry*.



Show and Tell

Does anyone recognize this label? If you look carefully, you will notice that Bradshaw's Beans were packed by the Antigonish Food Company right here in Antigonish. Can anyone fill us in with more details?

The Final Word

In our September edition of *The Old Train Station News*, we featured the delightful little newspaper *Christmas Greetings*, first published in 1898 by J. and A. McNeil “in the interest of Antigonish town and county.” This review made every effort to enlighten the local reading public but, unfortunately, its existence was short-lived and publication ceased in 1901. Who were the McNeil brothers and what ever happened to them? Did they go on to pursue great journalistic careers as they had hoped in their first publication? Because the museum has only one copy, we have little more to go on and so we were left wondering. Now, thanks to local historian Ronnie D. D. MacDonald, we can enlighten you with a little more of their story.

“It appears that John and Archie MacNeil were the sons of Michael MacNeil, a printer in the 1860s with the Antigonish Casket, at that time being published by Angus Boyd, the half-brother of John Boyd, the founder of that weekly. Michael MacNeil shows up on the Assessment List of 1865, but after that time there appears to be little mention of him.

His sons, John and Archie, do show up at a later time. It is likely that both brothers went to Boston, perhaps in the 1880s, to serve as printers for one of the many Boston papers at that time. In the early 1890s John is back in Antigonish. He is married to Marie Gogeun, an Acadian woman of Cocagne, New Brunswick. Marie was a very vigorous woman. In the mid-to-late 1890s she ran a restaurant and bakery in Benjamin Power’s building, which stood on the site of the Antigonish 5 Cents to \$1.00. Later on she ran a similar outlet in Michael Ledbetter’s old building, later on the site of the Curiosity Shop, nearly opposite the bottom of Acadia Street.

In 1910 she and John sold out and went off to Boston. Shortly after that time John and his brother Archie bought a farm at Cloverville, and each summer John and Archie took a month apiece to spend their vacation on that farm. As for Marie (Gogeun) MacNeil, she returned to Antigonish each spring and took over the management of the Central House, a tourist and rooming house, which stood on the site of the Capitol Theatre. There, for six months or so, she catered to the travelling public. Each month she paid rent to the owner of the property, Mrs. Aubrey (Jean) Kirk.

Marie gave up the Central House in the early 1920s, mostly for the reason that the Cashin Sisters, who were raised at the top of the hill just north of the Court House, took over the place. They were willing to pay rent for twelve months of the year, and of course, this was more satisfactory to Mrs. Kirk. So Marie MacNeil, for the time being, was without a rooming house to run.

But in 1926 she was approached by Dr. J. J. Cameron, who wished to have someone take over the place known for many years as “Smith’s Hotel.” For several years Angus Tulloch MacDonald and his wife, Flora, had run the place, but when Dr. Cameron hiked up the rent in 1926, the MacDonalds left, moving to a house on Bay Street, in recent years the offices of Drs. Hickey and Steeves. Faced with the prospect of having no tenants, Dr. J. J. Cameron went to Marie (Gogeun) MacNeil and asked her to take over Smith’s hotel, perhaps at a rent that was a little more reasonable than what he and hoped to get from Angus Tulloch.

Marie made a deal with Dr. Cameron and for the next twelve to fifteen years ran what had been Smith’s hotel (later on, the Colonial House, which was razed in the mid 1980s to make room for the Muffler Shop, just across Court Street from the Court house). Marie gave new names to the old hotel, first calling it “Hotel Marie,” and later, the “Blue Bell.” She served meals there to guests. In 1931 her husband, John, came up from Boston by car. He caught a cold on the trip which developed into pneumonia. Within a week or so in getting back to Antigonish, he died.

In the late 1930s Marie’s son, Eddie MacNeil, came into the business. In 1939 Dr. Cameron sold the property to Parker Glencross, originally of Country Harbour Mines, although Eddie stayed on to do much of the cooking for the guests at the hotel.

Around 1942 Eddie MacNeil joined the Canadian Army. Overseas he served as a cook for the troops. In the late 1930s he had married Rose MacDonald of Cloverville, and they would have two children, a boy, Donnie, who lives in Cloverville, and a girl, who is married in Dartmouth.

Eddie MacNeil moved around a bit, but in the 1960s he moved back to Antigonish and here ran the Rose Bowl Restaurant (now, with renovations, the Alcove Restaurant). At the same time he ran a restaurant, called “The Barra,” which was located at Jack’s Brook (almost directly across from the Oasis Motel, being part of the Irving Service Station operation.”

-- Ronnie D. D. MacDonald