



The Old Train Station News

Newsletter # 104

June 2018

Dear friends,

Well, spring is here – I think. It has been a strange winter but true summer (the kind that feels warm rather than the date on the calendar) always seems to take forever. In Nova Scotia winter hates to give way to spring. But spring is hopeful. We look for positive signs. The first flower, robins, the eagles sitting on the nest, longer days, more walkers at the Landing. What is more beautiful than the colour variations as the long-awaited first leaves and flowers begin to appear on the hillsides? It is truly wonderful to see the rebirth of nature and to recall what we remember as signs of spring from our youth. Are they still the same today?



Three things always mark spring from my childhood. The first to come to mind is pussy willows. They seem to be everywhere, in ditches, wet areas and along river banks. We would gather an armful and put them in a large container and wait for the buds to burst forth with their furry catkins. These soft silver tufts are named for their resemblance to tiny cats' paws, and they feel so much like fur. The soft coating of hairs acts as insulation to protect these early bloomers from cold temperatures. I remember the delight in patting those tiny silken hairs. As they bloom they are dotted with an abundance of messy pollen and then it was time to throw them out. Pussy willows do not spread their pollen via the wind, instead, they rely on insects for pollination who are attracted by their strongly scented nectar. The pussy willows in full bloom gain the full attention of the many bees and flies that also awaken early in the spring and are desperate for food.

The second sign of spring from childhood was picking Mayflowers to present to my mother (I picked dandelions, made chains, and got brown gunk all over my hands too, but that doesn't count). The scent of Mayflowers is intoxicating, and the flower is so small and dainty in shades of white to deep pink. Nova Scotia adopted the trailing arbutus (*Epigaea repens* L) or Mayflower as its official flower in 1901, when an Act of the provincial legislature stated that it "is hereby declared to be and from time immemorial to have been the emblem of Nova Scotia." As far back as 1825, it was used as a decorative motif on the front page of the Nova Scotian, on militia buttons, and on postage stamps. The Mayflower likes acid soil, which is commonly found throughout much of Atlantic Canada, and certainly here in Nova Scotia. It is a subshrub, creeping along the ground with woody stems and leathery, hairy leaves in woodlands, preferably in deep mulch around oaks or pines. The West Lochaber school report of 1918/19 notes that on the first fishing trip with the pupils on April 29th was out to the falls on MacNab's Brook where they "got some Mayflowers". While they were abundant when



I was a child, they have been disappearing in some parts of the province. They don't like to be disturbed, can't be transplanted, and picking them is now discouraged.

My last memorable sign of spring is one that was both fascinating and scary. Known as both the May or June beetle, these ugly beetles are usually brown or rusty without patterns such as spots or stripes, and rather hairy underneath. They belong to a large family of beetles called scarabs. As with other scarabs, they are oval, stout, and have clubbed antennae with segments that can press tightly together or can be fanned open like a feather. They are nocturnal and are attracted to lights at night. They walk and fly clumsily and could be heard banging into windows and screen doors on warm evenings. Often several could be found stunned or dead on the step to be crunched beneath your feet as you made a trek to the outhouse before bed. I can recall freaking out because sometimes their legs got caught in my hair.

Ahhh, spring! A time of rebirth and renewal. There are so many aspects of spring from beating the dust out of mats to the birthing of animals. It puts a "spring" in our step and joy in our hearts. Let us know, "What are your youthful spring memories?"

"The Epistolarian"
We'll be back in the Fall

Pierre Benoit: First Settler in Tracadie

The first white settler, Pierre Benoit, whose ancestors died at Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, came to Tracadie about the year 1776. He built a log house on the eastern point of the harbour called, to this day, Cemetery Point. Benoit was a great friend of the Micmacs (Mi'kmaq), over whom he exercised considerable influence. He spoke their language fluently and was, on occasions, their interpreter with the missionaries and others.

Following are a few of the events in the life of Pierre Benoit. He was at Merleguiche (Lunenburg) in 1749. At that time *The Sphinx*, a sloop of war commanded by Hon. Edward Cornwallis, was cruising along the coast having no pilot to guide her in entering Halifax Harbour. The story Benoit told, and which is still related by the old men of Tracadie is this, that he and two men were taken aboard *The Sphinx* as pilots. They successfully piloted the ship into Halifax Harbour. Governor Cornwallis rewarded him and sent him with a message to Governor Mascarene at Annapolis.

Sometime after he had been settled in Tracadie, a report came to Canso that a vessel had been wrecked at, or near, Musquodoboit Harbour and that mostly all the crew had perished. It was in December when Benoit heard of this, and he started from home on snowshoes, with his gun and a small stock of provisions. Through the trackless forest he made his way to Musquodoboit and after a long search, found a woman, a survivor of the wrecked vessel, who was nearly dead with hunger, fatigue, and exposure. She was sitting by an uprooted tree and her eighteen-month-old child lay dead by her side. When Benoit found the woman, she was speechless and overcome with hunger and cold. Besides other food Benoit had with him, a goose, which he had killed on the way. In all haste he made a fire and with broth made out of the fowl, he succeeded in reviving the unfortunate woman. He made a camp, provided wood, and leaving some food with the woman, he proceeded in all haste to Halifax and informed the authorities of the facts. Under his guidance men were dispatched at once, who brought the woman to the city.

According to the parish register of Tracadie, Pierre Benoit died in 1811 at the age of 82 years.

Louisa Delorey, 1934

FATHER'S DAY

Over the years
As we grow old,
We remember our father
So brave and bold.

In the garden,
Leaning on the plow,
He would listen to me;
I see him now.

He would give advice
And understand;
He was always there
To lend a hand.

God made fathers
Strong and firm,
For he knew our lives
Would have great concerns.

So he gave us fathers
To teach us to pray,
And guide our lives,
And show us the way.

So on his day
Let's take the time
To say "Thanks, Dad.
I'm glad you're mine."

By Mary Frances Bogle

Father's Day

In Europe, the customary day for the celebration of fatherhood in Catholic Europe is known to date back to at least the Middle Ages, and it is observed on March 19th, as the feast day of Saint Joseph.

In the United States, the celebration of the first Father's Day has been a matter of dispute. On July 5th, 1908, the first recorded celebration of Father's Day in the US happened after the Monograph Mining Disaster in West Virginia, which killed 361 men and left around 1,000 children fatherless in December 1907. Another claim for the first Father's Day was on June 19, 1910, in Spokane, Washington when Mrs. Dodd wanted to honor her father for raising 6 children on his own. The Lions Club has named Harry C. Meek as "Originator of Father's Day." Because he claimed it was his idea in 1915. Father's Day did not become a permanent national holiday until 1972, when President Richard Nixon signed a law declaring that it be celebrated annually on the third Sunday in June.

Here in Canada we have followed the American tradition of celebrating on the third Sunday of June. However, you choose to celebrate, take time to remember what Father has meant to you in your life. If he is still living, spend some quality time with him doing the things you enjoy together. If he has passed, remember how he has influenced your life as a father or a mother to your children. Take a moment to visit his grave. If he is far away, give him a call and tell him what he means to you.

★ Welcome New Members ★

Elizabeth Beaton – Whidden Park, Antigonish

Anna MacDonald – Volunteer

Colette Rennie – Pomquet

David Brown – Lochaber

Please Note: Acadian Display has been postponed until September

Heritage Association of Antigonish Business

The month of June is the period when the **Heritage Association of Antigonish** raises funds to support our ongoing work and that of the Antigonish Heritage Museum. The Heritage Association of Antigonish is a registered Canadian charity and issues tax receipts for all donation made. We encourage you the readers of this newsletter to consider supporting us financially. You can either mail a check payable to the Heritage Association of Antigonish to 20 East Main Street, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, B2G 2E9 or donate online with Canada Helps at the following link.

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/heritage-association-of-antigonish/>

Angus MacGillivray, Chair – Finance Committee

Arbor Day 1928

Friday May 9, 1928 was Arbor Day. Morrison, St Ninian, Lanark and Williams Point school children combined to put in 800 seedlings of Scotch Pine at Mt Cameron, back of the Mother House of Bethany. The trees were planted under the direction of W B Fraser, Chief ranger for Pictou, Guysborough, and Antigonish Counties, assisted by R A (Roddie Angus) MacDonald, St Josephs, one of the county rangers. Cars to transport the party were furnished free by the Eastern Auto Co., the MacLaughlin Service Co., Rev E Lockhart and Inspector MacDonald.



New Display

One of our newest and interesting displays at the Museum is of old bottles, both clear and coloured. It also includes a couple of old preserving jars. The following is an article from “Simon Louis Landry Speaks of Pomquet” published in 1990. Simon was born in Pomquet in 1902.

“We had no jars in those days. People couldn’t afford to buy jars. They took a quart bottle and tied a piece of yarn around where they wanted to cut it, and they’d set fire to the yarn. It would burn around the bottle and then they’d shove the bottle in cold water and it would break off right where the yarn was. Some made a ring. A ring that would put the bottle wherever they wanted to cut it. They’d heat the ring in the stove until it turned red hot. And they’d put it on the bottle, they’d hold it there just a second or two, then they’d plunge the bottle in a bucket of cold water, then, it would break right there. They’d put the preserves in, and then, they’d put egg-whites or sealing wax on top, so it made it air proof. Then they’d put a piece of paper over that and tie it with a string. Then you were all set for the winter.”



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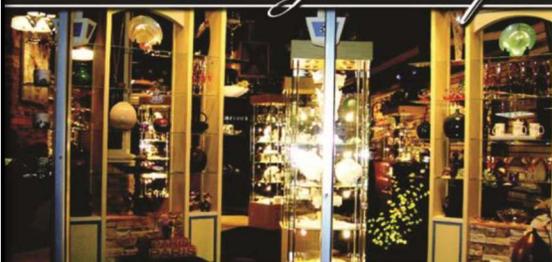
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