

# The Old Train Station News

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**Newsletter # 117**

**November 2019**

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Dear Friends,

I wonder what our ancestors would say if they were to visit a grocery store today. It would be a wonder! All those fruits and vegetables (never seen before) in those clear plastic packages we love so much. They say we are addicted to plastic. All kinds of convenience items on display. Could they imagine what to do with it all?

Life for our ancestors was mostly about the basic necessities of life; food, shelter and clothing. Once they learned how to get those together in this new land and climate, they looked for ways to make the work a little easier. They recognized that life was hard, they had to be tough and luxuries would make them soft. They were practical.

When I look around the museum, I see many items born out of necessity. Plain practical and useful items. Many were “jerry-rigged” to fix a problem that occurred when they didn’t have or couldn’t afford the available tool. What we see at the museum tells us much about the people who lived and worked here.

Growing up in the post-war era, I have seen many changes and certainly expected more from life. However, as a child, we did not have much. Flour bags were washed, bleached and used for diapers, dishtowels or to make aprons. Clothing was used, reused and recycled. Cans were used for potted plants. Twice a year the few items that were considered garbage were taken to a low area back in the woods and covered with branches from last winter’s wood cutting. My mother would buy “Cheer” detergent because they put the best bonuses of dishtowels, face clothes and hand towels in their boxes. When I got married, I got some from her stash. We all lived a simpler life.

Several years ago, we visited the Embera people in the jungle of Panama. They were befriended by an anthropologist and the government had employed him to transition them into the modern world because their children had to go to school and that cost money. (That is another story!) A couple of years before, he had brought their Chief to Panama City to give him an idea of the world the children would be introduced to by attending school. He got to ride in an airplane that he had only seen flying overhead from the jungle, and the wonders he saw at every corner were beyond belief. He was asked to choose something to bring back to his people and he immediately asked for a ceramic toilet. Imagine! For him, of all the wondrous things he saw, the only useful thing was a toilet. If tourists were going to visit his village, they needed a toilet they would be comfortable using. It was still a pit in the ground surrounded by a shelter with a thatch roof, but a tourist could sit in comfort.

It reminded me of being a child and going upstairs in the local general store where we could see a selection of Christmas toys we could wish for from Santa. And so, I wonder, what would our ancestors bring back from our modern grocery or local store? What would they deem as useful?

*“The Epistolarion”*

### Business Mourns the Loss of Wooden Barrels

During the half century Johnson & MacDonald Limited have been in business in New Glasgow serving the grocery trade the once familiar wooden stave barrel has just about disappeared. In the early days flour came and was sold by the barrel; so was sugar, which vanished in the thirties. The 98 to 100 pound bag took the place of the barrel and, in the case of flour, the 24 pound, for the convenience of the apartment dweller. Sugar dropped to smaller packages still and is now sold in 5 and 10 lb. paper containers.

The cracker barrel has been replaced by the more sanitary paper and cardboard package. Even molasses has dropped the barrel business. It is still shipped to this country from the West Indies in puncheons and barrels. Then, it is switched by modern sanitary means to paper containers which go on the grocery store shelves and fit conveniently in the housewife's kitchens.

With the disappearance of the barrel has gone the know-how of coopering. "A few years ago, we brought in a few barrels for a special customer," D.W. MacDonald recalled to *The News*. "But they were very poor barrels by what they used to be when we started out in business. The staves didn't fit closely enough and fine flour sifted out whenever the barrels were moved. That sort of thing just wouldn't do twenty or thirty years ago but then nobody thought the cotton and paper bag would drive the barrel out completely."



Flour Barrel courtesy - West Hants Historical Society Museum

#### Item:

**In May 1897** - a brick of gold from the **Modstuck Gold Mines** at Country Harbour, weighing 175 ounces and valued at \$3,400 was brought to Antigonish Town last Saturday. It was the result of a clean-up after three weeks crushing at the mine. - *The Casket*



**WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

**The Heritage Association of Antigonish** has approved entering into a partnership with 4 other Heritage Organizations to have each local **1878 Ambrose Church Map** digitized and placed online. This project will interface with the **1881 Census** for these four counties. The cost associated with this partnership is **\$6000**. This is truly an exciting project and we are asking you, the reader, to assist us with financing this ambitious project. No donation is too small and income tax receipts will be issued. A donation of \$100 or more will result in your membership being paid for a year.

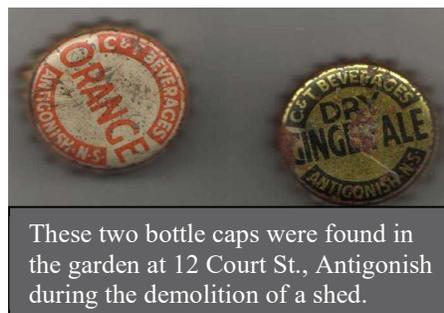
**Help us make this project a reality!**

## The Crawford & Thompson Beverages Company

The **C & T Beverages Company** was founded by brothers-in-law Ronald “Bun” Crawford and Terrance “Terry” Thompson. The Crawford & Thompson Bottling Company was present in Antigonish from the late 1930s to the early 1960s. The factory was located in the East End of Main Street but moved in the 1950s to James Street.

**Bun Crawford** (1910-2004) was the son of Herbert and Minnie (Lockhart) Crawford, of Hampton, New Brunswick. He married Mary Thompson (Terry’s sister) and they had a large family of ten children. He was an accountant, working in banks in several communities in the Maritimes. After he returned from the war, he began his partnership with Terry to form C & T Beverages. **Terry Thompson** (1911-1977) was the son of James and Mary Ellen (Minnie) Thompson of Cloverville. He married Dorothy McInnis and they had eight children.

According to Bun’s son, Doug, Bun focused on most of the accounting side of the business while Terry had more to do with general management. They hired about 12 employees in the summer, including truckers, and about 6 in the winter months. They held the Coca Cola franchise name, but they also made their own beverages on the side, including orange soda, root beer, gingerale, and cream soda. They sold their product locally and shipped it to Inverness and Guysborough Counties. In the early 1950’s, Terry and Bun decided to increase the scale of their company and moved to a bigger building on James Street, where the old Canadian Tire was located. Unfortunately, they did not yield enough to cover the costs of the new location. After a couple years, the pop factory went bankrupt, closing its doors for good in the 1960s.



These two bottle caps were found in the garden at 12 Court St., Antigonish during the demolition of a shed.

## Our Women During World War II

“Here was a small petite girl, snugly dressed, handling calipers, gauges, micrometers, cutters, files, wrenches and levers with truly amazing skill. From the rough block of steel, she was shaping a section of the great gun equipment. Her work called for delicate precision. The cutting was in the thousandths part of an inch. It required the closest attention. It was surely an intricate task. Yet the girl was not rattled. She was as cool as the proverbial cucumber. She concentrated on the job that was hers and knew that the least error would spoil the thing. She wasn’t taking any chances. She had a job to do and she was doing it. It was no play task. Nothing could be left to chance. Soon an inspector would come and scrutinize the finished job. It had to be perfect in every regard. There was no leeway, no margin for error. There was a particular place on that gun in which it must fit and fit with utmost precision. Looking on, one wondered at her definite skill and composure; and too, wondered how very important her task was. It was a component part of that fine gun that would sooner or later go into action. That it should work perfectly in all regards probably would depend on the life of many of the brave boys at the front, or on the high seas. Under fire they put their trust in the perfect operation of that gun. These women were essential to the great struggle for freedom, liberty and peace. They were an integral part of the great fighting forces of empire, for without them there would be no guns, or fewer, to wage the terrific conflict that will ultimately pronounce the victory and assure peace in this strife-torn world.”

- *Eastern Chronicle*, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1943



### For Grief

The grave is for grief:  
The wreath that is laid there,  
The flowers that fade there,  
The rose and the leaf,

The myrtle and mound,  
The tree that grows taller,  
The slab that wears smaller,  
The burial ground

Are for grief. It requires  
A big cemetery.  
What else we may bury,  
In earth or on pyres,

With grille-work enclose,  
In a fine sepulcher,  
What else we inter,  
Needs no leaf, no rose.

-*Marion Stropole*, WWII



**New Acquisition:** This beautifully crafted wooden **Water Keg** was made c. 1825 by an unknown artisan in Eastern Nova Scotia. The artisan would have understood the properties of various wood and took great pride in his detailed workmanship. It has an original plug in the bunghole. The keg is staved, and swallowtail banded (one-piece), creating a beautiful piece of workmanship. The water keg was used to carry water when on a journey or taken to work in the fields or the woods.

**Reading:**

Cape Breton author **Lesley Crewe** will be reading from “**Are You Kidding Me?! Chronicles of an Ordinary Life**” at the Museum. Leslie says, “*I got into writing as a way to avoid housework, and I’ve been on a diet for sixty-years with no success.*” Her down-to-earth style and humour is well-known to her many readers.

**Antigonish Heritage Museum  
November 6, 2019  
6:30 to 8:30pm**

**AT THE MUSEUM**

**From our Displays:**

**November:**

**Lest We Forget** there will be a display for November 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Books:** We have a number of new(ish) books of historical value for sale in the resource room. Come in and take a peek in the display case above the bookshelves. Make great Christmas gifts!

**Of Particular Interest:** The book, “**First World War Honour Roll of Antigonish, Nova Scotia: 1915-1927**” which is sponsored by the Heritage Association of Antigonish is available at the Museum. Price: \$20

**FYI:**

**Congratulations:** the winner of the **Wall Hanging** was **Denise Davies**, Antigonish. Thanks to all who supported this effort.

**Great News! Jocelyn** is working on a couple of interesting **Daytime Presentations** that she will be presenting herself. These may include film or slides with a demonstration and/or short discussion. More details to follow.

**Museum Support:** There are many ways to support the work that goes on here at the Museum. If you have some time and an interest in our history and culture, come in and speak with Jocelyn about how you can help. Remember us when making a donation as it helps us make the Museum a better experience for the public. Have you become a **member of the Museum** or remembered to renew your membership? Your continued support is important to us and our work.

Please consider our **appeal for financial help** with a new project; see page 2.