



Antigonish  
Heritage Museum

# The Old Train Station News

Newsletter # 94

December 2016



Rebecca Kinney, a daughter of Thomas and Amelia Kinney, was born in Linwood, Antigonish County in 1869. As a young adult she found employment in the dressmaking department of the H.H. McCurdy store, Antigonish. After a year or so, she, like so many women of the day, she went to the Boston States. She worked as a domestic with a family in West Somerville, MA. Rebecca became engaged to George H. Cameron, a native of Pitcher's Farm, Antigonish. He began a career with the AURORA, an early Antigonish newspaper; continued in the printing business with a Boston publication. In January of 1907 Rebecca and George were married and shortly thereafter they left Boston for Western Canada. In September of 1907, George Cameron established the first newspaper in Watson, Saskatchewan.

The following excerpt was published in the **Watson Witness** in 1952 and features the recollections of Rebecca Kinney Cameron.

## Christmas 75 Years Ago on a Canadian Farm

**“CHRISTMAS HAS CHANGED; IT HAS BECOME COMMERCIALIZED.”**

Each year, as the festive season approaches, we read, and we hear, remarks from gloomy individuals who insist that Christmas has changed and that it has become commercialized. To find out how much Christmas has changed, we obtained information on the observance of Christmas some seventy-odd years ago from one of Watson's oldest residents, Mrs. Rebecca Elizabeth Cameron, who was born nearly 84 years ago on a small farm on the coast of Nova Scotia.



In those days, first came attendance at the little country church for Christmas services. This might be on Christmas morning or a few days earlier depending on how many districts one minister might have in his charge. The congregation joined in singing some of the same carols that we sing today. Then, as now, the churches were crowded at Christmas time.

When Christmas day arrived every member of the family was home for Christmas if possible. Going home for Christmas was part of the Canadian “way of life” then, as now. An absent member of the family was remembered with something reminiscent of home. Incidentally, Mrs. Cameron’s ‘touch of the old home” this year is a Christmas tree. A fir tree six feet high, grown near her old home in Nova Scotia, was shipped to Mrs. Cameron here as a gift from her sister and brothers in Nova Scotia.

Christmas dinner has changed little in seventy-five years for Mrs. Cameron although, when she was young, nearly everything on the table was grown or raised on the farm. Standard fare for Christmas dinner included roast goose, apple and cranberry sauce and a variety of vegetables.

Did children hang up their stockings on Christmas Eve 75 years ago? Yes. The stockings were filled with home-grown apples, home-made cookies, and other tidbits, and always there were toys for the younger children.

We were interested in the toys of 75 years ago, and wondered how they would please a youngster today. Usually, but not always, the toys were homemade. The hand fashioned rag doll received by a little miss seventy-five years ago was just as dear to her, as the curly-haired, walking and talking doll is to Miss 1952. The top and whistle that father made with his jack-knife seventy five years ago made his little boy just as happy as a toy truck will make Junior today.

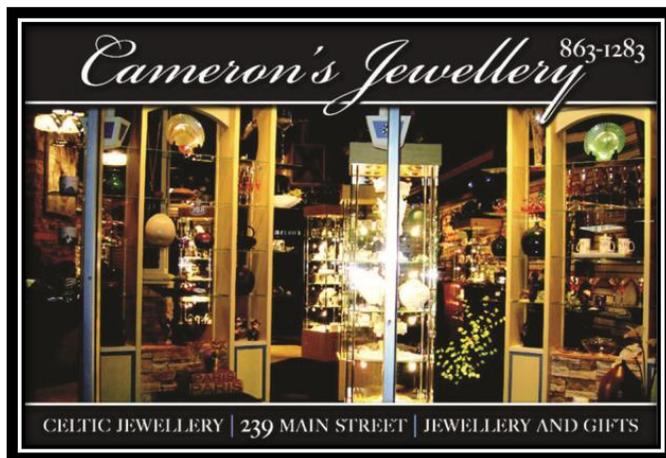
But there were other toys 75 years ago, too. Mrs. Cameron still has a number of toys brought from her childhood home and all are over 60 years old. A large wicker doll’s cradle, complete with rockers, is in perfect shape. A set of doll’s dishes and cutlery has a few pieces missing. A tiny brush, comb and mirror set shows the ravages of time only in the comb. But the prize of them all is a sail-boat about two feet long, complete with masts and rudder, although the sails have long since worn out. The sail-boat was made by Mrs. Cameron’s father about 75 years ago. The boat itself is hollowed out from a solid piece of wood and the masts and rudder are added. Mrs. Cameron’s home was near a small bay on the seashore. The children could set the sail and rudder so that the ship would cross the bay while they ran around to meet it when it reached the other side. We wouldn’t wonder if some youngster of today would trade his toy airplane for that boat and a bay of water on which to sail it.

Children of 75 years ago also received more practical gifts, dresses for the girls, shirts for the boys, and shoes for both, all homemade. Shoes were made from farm animal hides treated at

the nearest tannery to provide a good quality leather. The lasts were home-made, carved from a solid piece of wood. As a child's foot grew larger, a new last was made. Mrs. Cameron has several lasts that were used by her father to make shoes for the family. Those shoes may not sound very exciting to a modern youngster, but we doubt if a modern Miss will be any more thrilled with a snazzy pair of baby doll slippers than Mrs. Cameron was when, as a child, she received a brand new pair of shoes made-to-measure by her father, the best shoemaker for ten miles around.

Maybe Christmas has been commercialized. But the spirit of Christmas that fills our churches to honour the Nativity has not changed. The spirit of friendliness and goodwill, that causes family and friends to gather round the festive board, has not changed. The spirit of faith in which children hang up their stockings, and the loving kindness with which those stockings were filled, have not changed.

No matter how much Business tries to commercialize Christmas, the spirit of Christmas will never change."



### **Recent Acquisitions**

Willie Duykers, Greenwold donated a child's bonnet, which she salvaged from the Opp. Shop. Never know what you are going to find!

Keith Skinner, #7 Hwy donated lumber measures, a manual for teachers and a Sears and MacIntosh yardstick.

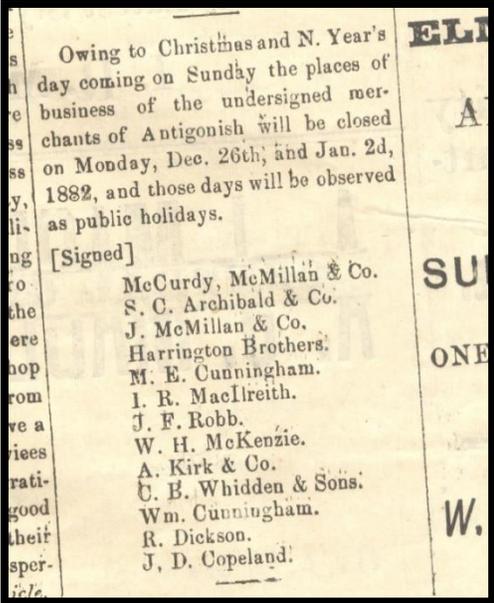
Margie Linkletter donated documents related to the Livingstone's Cove Post Office and other textual material.

Mike O'Leary donated family papers and pair of vintage eyeglasses used by his grandmother – Bridget (Connors) Cameron of Bayfield.

**James C. MacIntosh**  
Barrister, Solicitor & Notary Public

33 Greening Drive  
Antigonish, NS B2G 1R1

Tel. (902) 863-4805  
Fax (902) 863-8086  
jim@macandmac.ca



The AURORA DEC 15 1881

**Heritage Association of Antigonish**

**Patrons Program:**

**Platinum Patron**  
**Gold Patron**

Angus MacGillivray, Williams Point  
Irene Brown, Antigonish  
Fran & Hugh Haley, Antigonish Harbour  
Doug MacLellan, Cloverville  
ASAP (All of Us Society for Arts Presentation)

**Silver Patron**

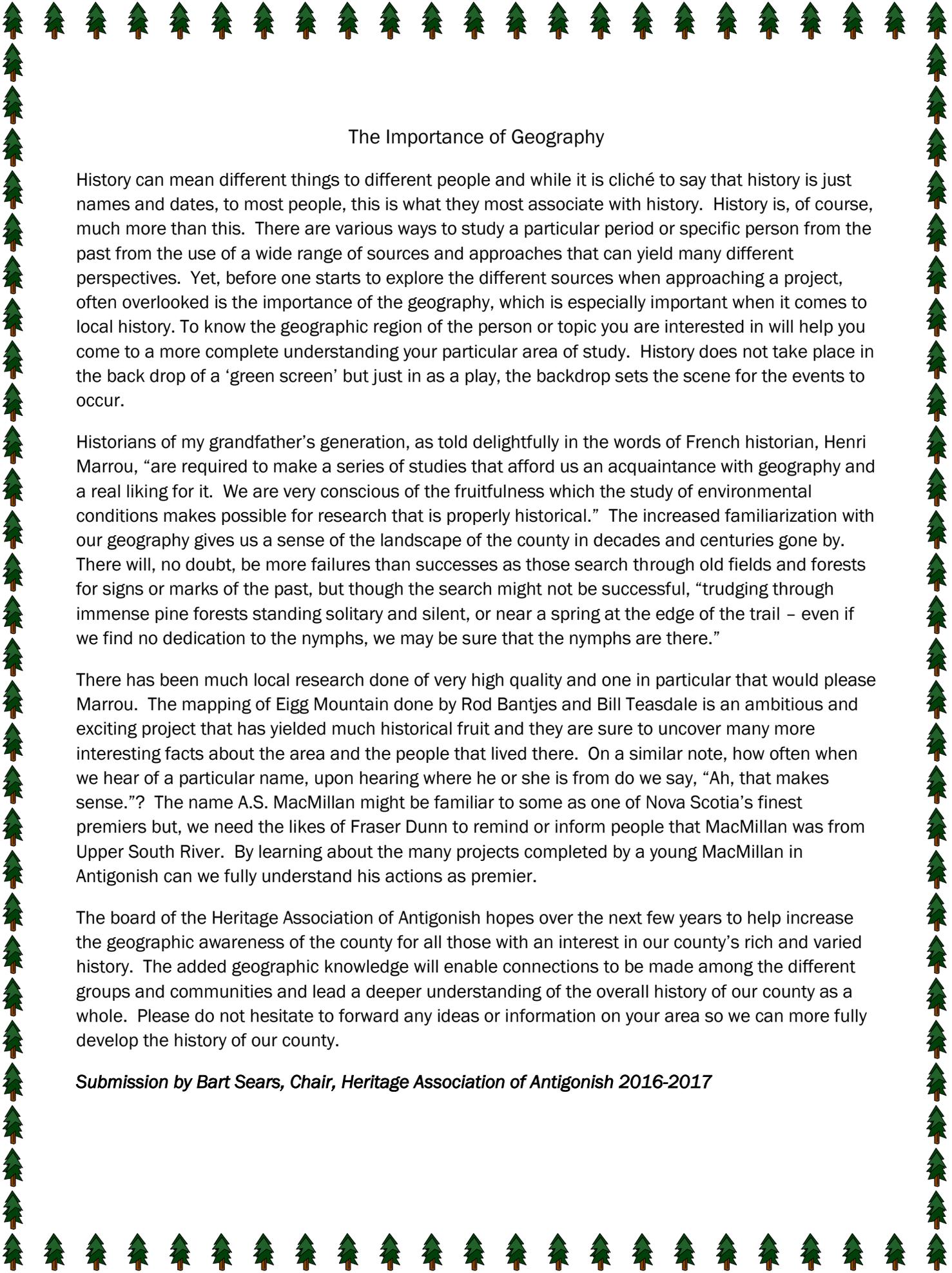
**William's Point Memorial Park Donations**

C & R DeCoste  
Mike & Lillian Power  
Mary Grant  
D & B MacFarlane  
Kenneth & Brenda MacFarlane  
J & A MacFarlane  
James C MacPherson, Vancouver

**RON MacGILLIVRAY**  
CHEV BUICK GMC

  **GMC**

75 St Andrews Street, Antigonish      863-2803  
[www.ronmacgillivraychev.com](http://www.ronmacgillivraychev.com)



## The Importance of Geography

History can mean different things to different people and while it is cliché to say that history is just names and dates, to most people, this is what they most associate with history. History is, of course, much more than this. There are various ways to study a particular period or specific person from the past from the use of a wide range of sources and approaches that can yield many different perspectives. Yet, before one starts to explore the different sources when approaching a project, often overlooked is the importance of the geography, which is especially important when it comes to local history. To know the geographic region of the person or topic you are interested in will help you come to a more complete understanding your particular area of study. History does not take place in the back drop of a 'green screen' but just in as a play, the backdrop sets the scene for the events to occur.

Historians of my grandfather's generation, as told delightfully in the words of French historian, Henri Marrou, "are required to make a series of studies that afford us an acquaintance with geography and a real liking for it. We are very conscious of the fruitfulness which the study of environmental conditions makes possible for research that is properly historical." The increased familiarization with our geography gives us a sense of the landscape of the county in decades and centuries gone by. There will, no doubt, be more failures than successes as those search through old fields and forests for signs or marks of the past, but though the search might not be successful, "trudging through immense pine forests standing solitary and silent, or near a spring at the edge of the trail – even if we find no dedication to the nymphs, we may be sure that the nymphs are there."

There has been much local research done of very high quality and one in particular that would please Marrou. The mapping of Eigg Mountain done by Rod Bantjes and Bill Teasdale is an ambitious and exciting project that has yielded much historical fruit and they are sure to uncover many more interesting facts about the area and the people that lived there. On a similar note, how often when we hear of a particular name, upon hearing where he or she is from do we say, "Ah, that makes sense."? The name A.S. MacMillan might be familiar to some as one of Nova Scotia's finest premiers but, we need the likes of Fraser Dunn to remind or inform people that MacMillan was from Upper South River. By learning about the many projects completed by a young MacMillan in Antigonish can we fully understand his actions as premier.

The board of the Heritage Association of Antigonish hopes over the next few years to help increase the geographic awareness of the county for all those with an interest in our county's rich and varied history. The added geographic knowledge will enable connections to be made among the different groups and communities and lead a deeper understanding of the overall history of our county as a whole. Please do not hesitate to forward any ideas or information on your area so we can more fully develop the history of our county.

*Submission by Bart Sears, Chair, Heritage Association of Antigonish 2016-2017*

**Mary Beth Carty**  
*sings*  
**Robbie Burns**  
*Featuring Lilly Carty & surprise special guests*

St. Paul's Anglican Church  
 98 Church Street, Antigonish  
 Friday, December 30th at 7pm  
 \$10 at the door



**Central**  
*An outstanding selection of Building Materials,  
 Home Improvement, Garden & Landscape  
 Products at the Lowest Prices Everyday.*

**STELLARTON**  
 60 Lawrence Blvd. (beside the Holiday Inn)  
**755-2555**

**ANTIGONISH**  
 35 Market Street (across from SuperStore)  
**863-6882**

ALSO IN SYDNEY, WINDSOR, INVERNESS,  
 GUYSBOROUGH & PORT HAWKESBURY.  
[www.centralns.ca](http://www.centralns.ca)  
*We deliver to your home or job site six days  
 a week from sun-up to sun-down!!!*

**PLEASE PATRONIZE OUR SPONSORS!**



Christmas Eve is a time for tradition! Seen here are Nolan Brown & Brad Kennedy accepting accolades from David Burke for their win in the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Kennedy Brown hockey game.

*Merry Christmas to All...*