

Cornwall Township Historical Society Newsletter

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Editor: Don McIntosh

1938: Frustrated Relief Recipients Make Demands for Change at Township Council Meeting

Throughout its history, many of Cornwall Township's council meetings were lively but seldom did things get out of hand to the point where the police were needed to quell a disturbance in council chambers. But that was the case in February 1938 when both the Ontario Provincial Police and the Cornwall Township Police were summoned to subdue a delegation of relief recipients who were angered by council's refusal to grant their demands. 1938 was during the depths of the depression when high unemployment rates forced destitute families to turn to municipal government, the administrator of relief programs. Before the arrival of annexation in 1957, Cornwall Township encompassed a much larger urban region that included an area that surrounded the town of Cornwall. At the time, some 200 mostly urban families relied on the relief program whereby the head of the household worked for the municipality and in return received payment in the form of relief vouchers redeemable at local merchants.

The monthly council meeting at Cornwall Centre started routinely enough in the morning. But just prior to a noon recess about 100 relief recipients began to arrive demanding that their concerns be heard over their dissatisfaction with the present relief system. Advocating on behalf of the delegation was local lawyer Mr. Rudy Danis. He informed council that the present relief system and its



Former Cornwall Township Hall was built in 1855. The building was sold after amalgamation in 1998.

allowances made by the municipality were inadequate to meet the needs of families on relief. Mr. Danis made it clear that the current benefits were not meeting the basic human necessities of life for families and that the men he represented disapproved of the unreasonable actions of the relief officer Mr. Charles McEniry. A petition was presented demanding improved benefits in addition to the dismissal of Mr. McEniry and that he be replaced by J. B. Lalonde who held the post in prior years. Reeve John Lawrence McDonald advised Danis and the delegation that council was sympathetic to their concerns but nothing could be done immediately and a thorough investigation would follow.

Their Demands During this era, able bodied heads of households were expected to work two days a week for the township and receive 30¢ per hour with payment in the form of a food voucher. In addition, each family received one cord of wood every twelve days and one or two quarts of milk daily depending on the size of the family. In special cases clothing was also provided. The delegation stated these benefits were insufficient and demanded work for three days per week with a commensurate increase in pay, an allowance for bread for each family, two quarts of milk daily for each family, fuel allowance every eight days, payment of rent and an adequate supply of clothing.

After Mr. Danis addressed council he left the meeting but for some in the delegation it seemed the reeve's assurance that council would look into the matter was not enough. They lingered in the hall during the noon hour adjournment munching away on sandwiches while waiting until the meeting resumed. Council had hardly taken their place at the table when the fireworks started. About 25 men stood up demanding that council endorse their petition. When council refused they jumped the railing surrounding the council table making threats, demanding that their requests be granted. As the swarming grew larger, Deputy Reeve Edmund Maloney was knocked to the floor amidst the onslaught along with cries for him to sign the petition. Reeve McDonald escaped safely to the office of the township clerk, **Vincent McDonald**, where he immediately called township police Chief Bertrand requesting he send some men because a small riot was going on. Meanwhile, Deputy Reeve Maloney was left behind in the council chambers to deal with the angry mob.

After gathering to his feet he was bodily hauled over the railing and on to the floor of the hall where he was struck about the head and chest and knocked down a second time.

Archie Chisholm to the Rescue Hearing the ruckus from the clerk's office, township public works superintendant Archie Chisholm raced to the assistance of Maloney but could barely make his way through the crowd of men. Standing over 6 feet tall and weighing in at over 300 pounds, Chisholm had a reputation throughout the area for his strength and courage. The superintendant plowed his way through the crowd after seeing Maloney lying vulnerably on the floor. Eyewitnesses said that the giant man didn't strike a direct blow, but depended on his bulk and strength to push the men aside and clear a path so Maloney could get up. They saw him reach for two men at a time, one in each hand, lifting them out of his path. Modest about the part he played in the rescue, Chisholm later said that when he saw Ed Maloney on the floor he knew he just had to help him to his feet.

Police Arrive With the arrival of both the Ontario Provincial and Cornwall Township police, the disturbance quickly subdued. As soon as the police arrived many of the men taking part in the disturbance were seen fleeing up the roads and across the fields on foot. As order was restored Reeve McDonald refused to continue the meeting until the hall was cleared and that two constables remain posted at the door so that order is maintained. Still upset by the whole ordeal and nursing a bump on the head and a sprained finger, Maloney was able to continue with the meeting while contemplating whether he might lay charges against the instigators. As he told the members, "I haven't given the matter a great deal of thought but the way I feel now I am going to take court action against the men who struck me." And later he wryly commented, "I am not a well or a young man otherwise I would have taken a hand in the business myself and some of those men would have been sorry." When the meeting returned to normal Reeve McDonald suggested that the Department of Public Welfare in Toronto should be contacted and have them send their own investigators to conduct a thorough investigation into the relief situation in Cornwall Township. He blamed the disturbance on a few agitators who were in it for their own gain.

Improvements Made The next council meeting in March was a stark contrast to the previous one. A smaller delegation of some 25 men presented their petition in an orderly fashion and council listened to their complaints. Council agreed to numerous changes recommended by the department of welfare which included adopting the standard relief voucher handed out strictly according to the regulations of the department. A new relief office was opened at 44 Montreal Rd. which was open four days a week. A new relief investigator was appointed and on the recommendation of the department this person was chosen from outside the area. Council appointed Mrs. E. Archambault of Glen Robinson to the position at a salary of \$35 per week. The reeve finished off by promising that those who participated in the attack against Deputy Reeve Maloney would be prosecuted.

Notice to Members: Mayor Jim Bancroft advised us that council will be starting 2018 budget deliberations this October. The intake for funding applications from community organizations such as ours begins then. This year we missed their February cut-off because of our winter break for the months of December January and February. So if you have any ideas that would merit funding by the township please bring them forward in the upcoming meetings. Remember, we only have three meetings left this year: September 26, October 24 and November 28.

Vincent McDonald was a brother to Reeve John Lawrence McDonald and served as township clerk for more than 25 years. He was known as a careful painstaking individual who had municipal procedure and law at his fingertips. He was born at Harrisons Corners, educated at Cornwall township schools and was a graduate of Cornwall Commercial College. After WWI he delivered mail for a period and then like his brother John Lawrence, he spent some time out west, in Banff Alta. before spending two years working in the mines in Copper Cliff Ont. When he returned home he farmed for a short period before being appointed Township Clerk in 1931. He moved to Cornwall Centre where he lived until his death. A father of four, he died a widower in 1957.

Archibald "Archie" Chisholm was township superintendant of public works for many years. He was one of the best known and highly respected residents of the area. Besides his duties with the township, Archie operated the family farm east of St. Andrews where he was born and raised. Well known throughout the district for his size and strength, as a young man, like many others, he worked out West at railroading helping to build the Transcontinental Railway employed by McMartin Brothers, railroad contractors. A father of 3 sons and 2 daughters he died at age 63 in 1945.



We would like to thank Sandy McDonald for the excellent presentation he gave to our members at our April meeting. Capt. McDonald led a group of cadets to France to take part in the 100th anniversary of Canada's victory at Vimy Ridge in World War One. He said that the Vimy Ridge Memorial was truly awe inspiring standing some 300 meters high. What was shocking to learn is that there are isolated areas on the battle field that are off limits to the public because there are still live unexploded shells buried below the surface!

We are saddened by the loss of long time CTHS member Dr. Max Irwin who died on April 4. For years Dr. Irwin was an active member but unfortunately for the past few years ill health had prevented him from attending regular meetings. He was very knowledgeable on WWI battles and likely under a different destiny he would have shared his knowledge on the Vimy Ridge Battle with us on this 100th year anniversary.

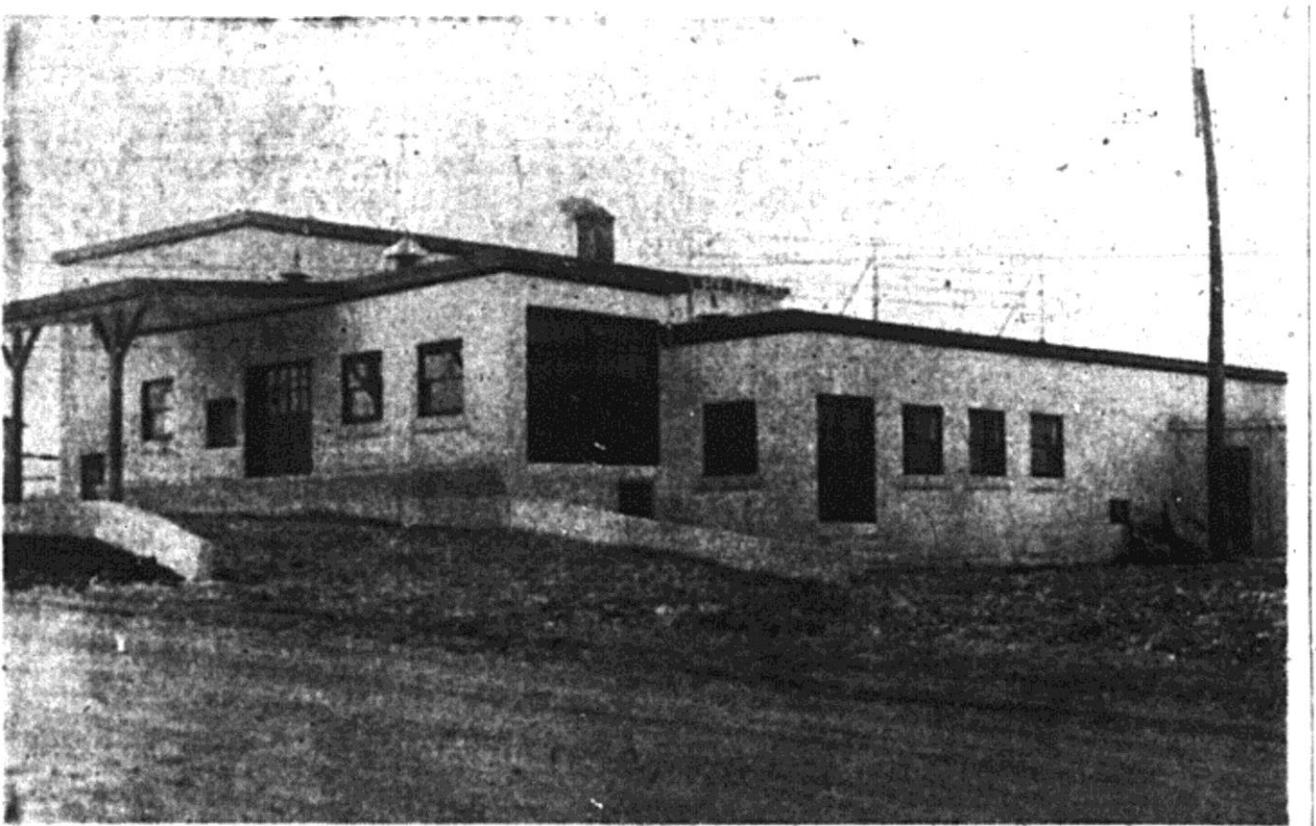
Donation Made for Bishop's House Reno



At our March 2017 meeting Brenda Baxter from Glengarry Fencibles Trust updated us on the progress of the preservation and restoration of the historic Bishop's House located at St Raphaels. The Bishop's House was once the home of Bishop Alexander Macdonell whose work in the early 19th century raised the Glengarry Fencibles for the War of 1812 which defended Canada and Great Britain. He was the first bishop of Upper Canada and he acted tirelessly to help large numbers of ordinary people of all faiths in their dealings with government.

Members of CTHS feels that the efforts of the Fencibles Trust is a worthy cause as it will send a message that we need to preserve the past if history is to live on. It was agreed almost unanimously that we contribute \$2,000 which will be matched dollar for dollar by a Parks Canada grant. In the photo presenting the cheque to Brenda Baxter are Left to Right Don McIntosh, Ken McDonald, Brenda Baxter and Johanne Cameron.

A Look Back It was 70 years ago in 1947 that construction began on the new and modern Glenco cheese factory in Bonville. Built at an estimated cost of \$65,000 by life-long resident and 35 year veteran of the cheese making business Elias Truax, the new factory was fitted with the most modern equipment available. With four vats and modern refrigeration system the new factory was far advanced from the one Truax operated at the North Branch. Opening ceremonies were held Monday April 5, 1948 with dairy industry dignitaries from Kemptville and Toronto attending.



When it opened Glenco Cheese factory was one of the most modern in Eastern Ontario

Did you know?... It was 40 years ago this December that the Cornwall Township Historical Society was founded. The first meeting was held December 8, 1977 in St. Andrews Parish hall in an effort to save the former convent from demolition. The property was owned by the S.D.&G. Separate School Board. At the meeting Wilfred Amell was appointed president and Felix McLaughlin vice president. On December 27, 1978 Cornwall Township Council passed by-law 3418 designating the former convent as a building of historical value and interest. It wasn't until April 1979 that we were officially incorporated as a charitable organization.



As summer wanes and we embrace autumn, it's time to thank everyone who volunteered as greeters at the Heritage Centre, took part in the cleaning bee and participated in Doors Open this past summer. It seems that as our membership continues to dwindle it places a bigger burden on the fewer remaining members to uphold our mandate to preserve and promote our local heritage. Well done people.

A big thank you to Dan McPhail and his crew for their fine work tiling the floor in our old meeting room at the Heritage Centre. Dan readily took on this project which has improved the air quality in the building and the aesthetics of the room. Let's hope we can return there soon.

In their recent newsletter, Ginette Guy from the SD&G Historical Society wrote a fascinating story about Christine Waggaman, wife of John Sandfield Macdonald. If you're interested in reading it contact Don McIntosh (613-534-2075) and he'll forward you a copy.

MTO Reveals Final Draft for Hwy 138 Design Changes



Here is what MTO officials have proposed to protect the St. Andrew's cemetery stone wall from being struck by errant vehicles. It amounts to about a 5" raised concrete barrier curbing above the ramped sidewalk on the south east corner of the fence where damage is a recurring problem. Will a 5" barrier curbing stop an 18 wheel from striking the wall? Highly unlikely. The poor pioneer souls buried there deserve to rest in peace. Outside professionals don't seem to appreciate the historic significance of the wall and the value that our local community places on it.

A new addition to the cemetery this year is our guest book which allows us to track visitors who

stop by to view this historic site. We have had visitor from many of the provinces of Canada as well as from Ireland, California, Mexico, Georgia, and Alaska. To date, the total count of visitors who signed the book stands at 150. We'll add this number with our Heritage Centre guest book. The count is used when applying for government grants. For those who want to view it, we'll have the guest book available at our upcoming September meeting.

Change of Venue for Future Meetings As you have probably heard by now, a recent draft engineering study on the building that houses our Heritage Centre has revealed some safety issues. As such, until these issues are resolved by the township (the owner of the building) meetings in the immediate future will be held at a new location. Starting with our September 26 meeting our new venue will be at the newly constructed fire hall at St. Andrews West. It is hoped that this change is temporary and that we'll soon be able to return to the Heritage Centre.

Mayor Jim Bancroft has been scheduled to attend our October meeting when he'll address the issue of the Heritage Centre closure as well as plans for its future use. We, as stakeholders in the building, have been promised by Mayor Bancroft that once more studies are completed, CTHS will be fully informed of the findings and we'll be consulted on the determination of future uses of the building.

Don't Forget Our Next Meeting



Our next meeting is Tuesday September 26 at 7:30 pm at the *new* fire hall in St. Andrews. Guest speaker is Guy Lauzon speaking on his recently released autobiography *From Law Breaker to Law Maker*.