

Cornwall Township Historical Society

Newsletter December 2010

www.cornwalltwphistorical.ca

Editor: Don McIntosh

Johnson's Antiques & Collectibles: Turning Back the Hands of Time



Doug Johnson stands in front of a few antique clocks he has on display.

Stepping into Doug Johnson's antique store is like stepping back in time. It's easy to imagine how people lived years ago when looking at the scores of lamps, clocks and furnishings in the densely arranged store. Doug Johnson operates Johnson Antiques and Collectibles on Highway 138 in South Stormont. For Doug, antiques are more than a hobby; they're a way of life. Apart from the living the business offers, Doug enjoys providing items to people that they can't find anywhere else. He says that he's not particularly fond of history but he loves the antique business. "There's a sense of satisfaction when you salvage something from an old barn that may have ended up in a landfill", he admits.

Who would have thought that an excess of household furniture would turn into a successful business. It all began in 1975 when Doug moved here from Sherbrooke Que. to work for Combustion Engineering as a welder. He ended up buying too many pieces for his small apartment so he had a yard sale to sell off the excess. This endeavor proved

to be profitable so he turned it into a side line where he spent Sundays at the Stittsville Flea Market as a vendor. In 1985 he built and moved into his present 6,000 sq. ft. warehouse and hasn't looked back. "It wasn't quite what I had in mind when I moved here as a welder", he says "but the antique business is what happened."

Like any other successful business, Johnson Antiques has had to change with the times. Items that were popular 10 or 15 years ago just don't sell now. Old china and silverware are just not popular now. "The current generation just doesn't want it. You just don't see the same numbers of young couples buying antiques as you used to", he admits. What's popular today is the reproduction furniture. For a fraction of the cost of true antique furnishings, people can custom order authentic looking, practical reproduction pieces. Younger couples with high disposable incomes who are the movers in the economy have become more discriminatory when buying antique

furnishings because of the top quality reproductions now available. Consequently, true antiques are a harder sell. Doug responded to this trend and now has three cabinet makers making custom reproduction tables, chairs, hutches etc. Where does he sell? Only 30% of his sales are local. He ships regularly to Toronto and as far as Victoria B.C. You can find some of Doug's work on display at the Museum of Civilization in Gatineau. When the museum curator needed some authentic looking tables and chairs for a historic pub display, Johnson's Antiques got the nod.



Some of the numerous pieces of tightly packed antique glass on display.

With this many years in business, there were some memorable moments that stand out in Doug's mind. With a chuckle, Doug recounts the story of a well dressed lady who was examining some of the fine china in the store. Doug could tell by her demeanor that she had cultivated taste. Along with several fine dishes, she arrived at the check out counter with a chamber pot. Quite innocently she asked Doug if the pot she held in her hand was micro-wave safe. The question left Doug baffled, wondering why someone would want to put a chamber pot in a micro-wave oven. She must have read the puzzled look on his face when she further asked, "Is this not a soup tureen?" Many of you know a soup tureen as a wide deep bowl with a lid not unlike a chamber pot. When Doug explained that what she held in her hand was far from a soup tureen (but still no less practical) the embarrassing moment was soon eased by laughter by both Doug and the naive customer. I suspect that this embarrassing moment would be trivial compared to one of serving her family and invited guests soup from a chamber pot while dining on fine china!

Doug is proud to point out the difference between his store and a museum. Unlike a museum people who come here are free to pickup and touch anything in his store. And if they want it, they buy it and take it home. Johnson's Antiques is doing its part to preserve and keep history alive.

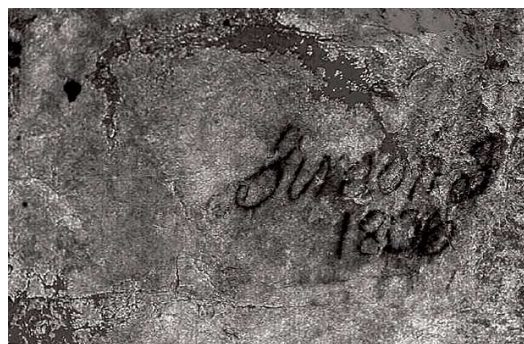
100 Years Young!



This past November, longtime resident of Cornwall Township in Bonville, Mr. Eddie Beaudette celebrated his 100th birthday. Eddie was one of the founding members of CTHS back in 1978 when the old convent was abandoned by the Sisters. Eddie is in a retirement home in Pickering and is well looked after by his daughter Lucy McPherson.

Simon Fraser Signature Authenticated

**From *Postmedia News*, October 21,
2010**



A signature etched in red ochre on the rocky shore of a British Columbia lake was almost certainly left 204 years ago by the famed explorer Simon Fraser, two Parks Canada archeologists have

concluded after a detailed probe of the mysterious scrawl.

The faint inscription — "Simon F. 1806" — has been hailed as an iconic and intimate link to a towering figure in the history of Western Canada, where Fraser was instrumental in extending the fur trade to the Pacific Ocean during his pioneering career as an explorer and fort builder in the future British Columbia.

But the simple message, only discovered in 1975 by an RCMP officer patrolling Stuart Lake in the central B.C. interior, had never been subjected to a comprehensive scholarly analysis.

Now, Calgary-based federal scientists Peter Francis and John Porter have concluded that "various lines of evidence" regarding the signature's creation — including handwriting analysis and a review of Fraser's movements in 1806 — "cumulatively make a reasonable case for its genuineness."

Fraser, the two researchers write in a 17-page study of the signature published in the latest issue of the *Canadian Journal of Archaeology*, "made the inscription on the rock in 1806 with his own hand, perhaps to say only that 'Simon Fraser was here.' "

Fraser wasn't the first Canadian historical figure to leave their mark on the landscape. That is literally true in the case of two of Fraser's predecessors — famed explorer-fur traders Alexander Mackenzie and Samuel Hearn — who respectively left their names carved into rocks on the B.C. coast in 1793 and in northern Manitoba in 1767.

Federal officials first examined the Fraser signature in 1976, soon after its discovery. A chemical analysis at the time determined that the etching was made with red ochre, a natural pigment found in rocks that are present along the Lake Stuart shore.

The same source of reddish pigment is believed to have been used by First Nations in the area for centuries to produce pictographs along the very rock wall where the "Simon F." inscription appears. Francis suspects Fraser was inspired by the aboriginal markings

when he scratched his own "graffiti" along the lakeshore.

A layer of calcium carbonate has partially obscured Fraser's original inscription. But using a photographic image-enhancement technique called DStretch, the Parks Canada archeologists were able to discount the possibility that the "1806" might really be "1808" — a date that would have proven the etching was forged since Fraser was nowhere near Lake Stuart that year.

The deterioration due to calcium carbonate layering also made clear that the signature was carved in the 19th century, the researchers concluded, further diminishing the chances that a forger had made the mark.

Fraser's own written account of his travels during 1806 proved vital to building the case for the signature's genuineness, Francis and Porter say in their paper.

"A possible clue lies in a letter from Fraser to John Stuart dated September 29th 1806," the authors state. "Near the end of the letter he states: 'The greatest curiosity I saw on my voyage to the other end of the Lake (Stuart Lake) was spoons and a metal pots . . .' This clearly indicates that sometime during the late summer of 1806, Fraser undertook a journey up Stuart Lake. It may have been during this voyage by canoe that the signature was created."

Born to Loyalist parents in Vermont in 1776, Fraser and his family eventually emigrated to Montreal, the hub of the North American fur trade.

He joined the North West Company and quickly rose to prominence as an explorer and fur trader, playing a key role in establishing trade routes west of the Rockies to the Pacific Coast.

Fraser died in 1862. B.C.'s largest river and Burnaby, B.C.-based Simon Fraser University are named in his honour.

© Copyright (c) Postmedia News

Pot-Luck



Our season ending pot-luck luncheon is scheduled for Saturday December 4th at 12:00 noon. Arrive early and meet some old friends or make new ones.

Reminder

Are you annual dues paying member? For those paying your CTHS dues annually, please be advised that dues payment for the year 2011 must be received by Dec. 31, 2010. Annual fees for individual: \$5.00; family: \$8.00. To determine if you are an annual member, check the mailing label on the envelope this newsletter arrived in. If your name is followed by an (A), please remit dues ASAP to Marg MacDonald, 17109 Valade Rd., St. Andrews W. ON K0C 2A0.

In 2011, the newsletter will be mailed only to paid-up annual (A), life (L) and honorary (H) members.

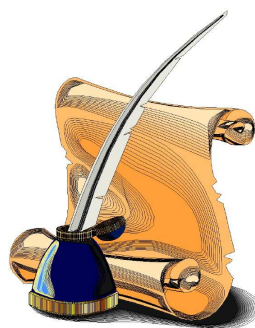
Can You Help With Information?

Mr. Thom Racine, a columnist with Seaway News is asking for our help regarding a WW I war veteran. Mr. George Drew died March 10, 1916 and is buried in the cemetery at the United Church in Martintown with a Commonwealth headstone.



Thom would like to know how this veteran died. What makes this story puzzling 94 years later is how George Drew died. You see, all the information obtained for his attestation papers was recorded and approved between Feb. 28 and March 2 of 1916. Evident on his grave marker is 10th March 1916, his date of death. It is unlikely that Pte. Drew could have been given even the basics of training, shipped overseas, and wounded in less than 10 days. He would have to have been wounded pretty much on arrival and died while en route home—or was his death accidental or medical prior to leaving.

If you have an answer to this puzzling case or know someone who may, please contact Thom racinetrio@sympatico.ca.



The President's Pen

Some more brief ramblings from the pen. I was quite busy with events and

activities leading up to and culminating in Remembrance Day. I have been committed to the Poppy Campaign for over 40 years and regard it not as an annual duty but a sincere privilege. After all, surely what we do as a Historical Society is largely dedicated to “remembering” the past.

We know that winter is a coming but that didn't stop us from enjoying that great stretch of beautiful fall weather that we had. Good enough to get all the neighbours' leaves collected and bagged and, with Myra's help, get things ready for winter coming.

And that reminded me that we also have work to do on our Memorial Plaque project. To that end, a small committee was organized comprising Donald McIntosh, Kevin Wheeler and myself to try to get things going. In fact the committee is having an “on site” meeting with Kevin Amelotte of South Stormont Township on November 19th, when we hope to view the “stone” and then have a look at the proposed site of the plaque. Hopefully, we will then be able to give you an up-to-date picture at our upcoming meeting on November 23.

See you there.
Bill Costello