

Great Village Historical Society Notes



Richard Akerman discusses his research on Captain Wilbur Johnston with Helen MacLaughlin. (Shears photo)



Members of the Great Village Historical Society enjoy a chat following the meeting. (L-R) Shirley and Arthur Chisholm, Logan Spencer, Arnold Hatfield, Murray Giddens, Eileen Eaton. (Shears photo)

By Linda Shears

Fifteen people were present for the April 6th meeting of the Historical Society. We were pleased to have Velma (Hatfield) Sutton attend with her brother Arnold. Since it was the annual meeting, a nominating report was given by Arthur Chisholm. Last year's officers have agreed to remain. President: Logan Spencer, Secretary-Treasurer: Meredith Layton, Vice-President: Richard Akerman and directors: Richard Akerman, Murray Giddens and Arnold Hatfield.

Richard told us about the launch of a two-volume publication called Planters and Grantees of Cobequid, Nova Scotia, 1761-1780. This represents 1000 pages resulting from ten years of research by authors Carol Campbell and James F Smith. The same two researchers are publishing a second book called Necessaries and Sufficiencies - Planter Society in Londonderry, Onslow and Truro Townships 1761 - 1780. Both books will be launched in May.

Arthur Chisholm showed his tartan necktie and noted that April 6 is Tartan Day in Nova Scotia. Members were asked to be thinking of possible destinations for our end-of-the-season outing.

Richard reported work is continuing on the next panel for the pergola, which will feature the 1889 Currie pictorial map of Great Village.

For the evening's program, Richard Akerman provided an interesting talk on Captain Wilbur Johnston. Richard became aware of the existence of this colourful character from reading Judge R.F McLellan's book on the McLellan family history. In it, there were references to Captain Johnston and a couple of quoted excerpts from Johnston's unpublished book, "High Spots". After searching unsuccessfully for several years to find a copy of "High Spots", one was unexpectedly handed to him. Richard has been collecting information and researching Johnston's life in preparation for getting "High Spots" into print.

Captain Wilbur Johnston was born on St. Patrick's Day in 1854. The eldest of eight children, he attended school to about grade 6 in the old community school which is today the Community Centre. He became a carpenter and worked in the shipyards, helping build the Wave Queen which was completed in 1874. Captain James Wilson took the young Johnston on as a seaman on the first voyage of the Wave Queen.

In 1883, he wrote for his captain's papers. He sailed on the Wave King with Captain Bordon Marsh from Economy (who captained the Stanley expedition to Africa). Johnston became captain of the Wave King, which ran aground in a storm in 1886 in the Carribean.

Johnston married Anne Laura Delay, daughter of the owner of the Londonderry Hotel (in Great Village on the site of the present day Bell Aliant building). He was manager of this hotel until 1898, when it burned. He then moved to Vancouver and became involved with the Gold Rush, setting up a supply business.

In 1915, when Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon McLellan, another native of Great Village, organized a regiment called the Western Irish Fusiliers, Johnston signed up, claiming to be 45 years old, though he was in fact 61. (Another Great Village native signed up with the same regiment at that time — Raleigh Layton, father of Robert Layton). The regiment sailed for Europe in 1916.

By 1918, Wilbur Johnston had seen enough of the war and admitted his real age. Though he had performed all tasks given him, army brass allowed he looked "older than age given" and he was quietly "mustered out". In the 1920's he was back to sea on a steamship. In the 1930's he was living in Hollywood, California. In response to requests from his children, he wrote an account of his life's adventures. He died in Hollywood in 1945.

The excerpts which Richard read from the book were proof that Captain Johnston could tell an engaging story. If anyone has any knowledge of living descendants of Captain Johnston, Richard would appreciate hearing from you. The Historical Society's e-mail address is: gvhistorical@gmail.com

Next month, the meeting is on May 4 at 7:30 PM and the guest speaker will be my sister, Kaye (Williams) Crowe. She will speak about the Weston Tour of 1953, in which she, along with 49 other Canadian girls, spent 6 weeks touring the British Isles and France, and observing the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Since 2003, the "girls" have been having reunions and have recently collaborated in producing an impressive 200-page Memory Book.



Roy Rushton from Glenholme is a regular at the Debert & Area Kitchen Party. He always tells a great joke before he sings. He certainly looks like he is enjoying himself. (Lynn Strong Photo)

Debert Legion Notes

By Danny Martell

The standing as of April 19th for the In House Crib League shows Debbie Cock and Ron "Easy" Eastcott pegging along in first place with 1284 points, holding down second spot is Tommy Manley and Bobby Pash with 1386 points. Rounding out the top three is Debbie Buchanan and Norm Eastcott with 1447 points.

Debbie and Ron have the most winning nights, with 4. Jo-Ann Bartlett and Lauchie Rector have most hidden scores with 4. There has been 38, 24 hands and as of now Gerry Dykens has the only 29 hand.

Talking about Gerry D., he has been off work for a while after back surgery and it seems Danny Martell dropped in a time or two for a game of crib to help Gerry pass the time, well folks that didn't last long, Gerry whomped Dan so bad he (Dan) is still in hiding. Doesn't go anywhere, just mutters to himself.

In keeping with Crib, the NS Provincial Championship Play-offs were held here at Branch 106, on Saturday the 16th of April, with a team from Branch 28 in Stellarton taking home top place with a score of 0, boy they must have been catching good cards. There was 160 players/80 teams vying for top spot and for a team to score 0. I think that was super. Congratulations Stellarton.

There were six teams from our Branch, with Debbie Cock and Ron Eastcott being the best of our lot with 5 points. For their fine showing Debbie and Ron will get to play in the Maritime Championship Tournament which will be held in the Miscouche Legion, in P.E.I. on May 16th. Deb and

Ron, good luck and hopefully good cards.

Our 1st Vice President Comrade Norm Eastcott welcomed all the Crib players to Branch 106 and wished them luck.

From all reports it was an excellent tournament and very well organized. The fish chowder, burgers, onion rings and all the foods prepared by Linda Slack, Shirley Lewis, Leona Harvey and Marcia Eastcott were excellent. Linda, Shirley, Leona and Marcia thank you very much for a job well done.

To Cathy Joudray (Provincial) and all members of our Branch who helped organize these playoffs, thank you very much and finally to all businesses and individuals who donated prizes and goodies for the Tournament, thank you very much, it is because of your hard work and generosity that the Tournament enjoyed a huge success. (Thank you Earl)

The Debert Mixed Dart League has finished another very successful regular season and the Play-offs are now in full swing. I must apologize for not having the final stats available for this edition of "The Shoreline", hopefully next month.

By the time you read this article, the Hockey season

will be pretty much over for another year.

Here in West Colchester the season pretty much comes to an end with the "Peter Kohler Friendship Tournament", and for Deanna and I, it means the end of many long cold hours in rinks in Colchester, Cumberland and Pictou Counties as well as up and down the Ottawa Valley.

This year as in other years the Kohler Tournament attracted teams from all over the Maritimes and enjoyed much success. This success is due in a large part to the hard work and dedication put in by Jennifer Ferguson and her committee (staff).

Jennifer, a tip of the hat and a very big thank you is passed along to you and your committee for a job well done.

Happy Birthday wishes for April are passed along to Danny McInnis, Cassandra McCully, Gerry Dawson, Shawna Higgins, Debbie Rushton, John Totten and Dorothy Adams. Happy Anniversary wishes for April are passed along to Pam and Jim Patton.

Don't forget to thank a Veteran; it is because of their sacrifices that we are able to enjoy our freedom and our country. Please say a prayer for our troops in Afghanistan and their families.

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