

# The Old Wentworth Valley Schoolhouse



Carol Hyslop, a director of Friends of the Old Wentworth Valley Schoolhouse, views a section of the new kitchen area recently built at the heritage one-room school. An open house was held September 18th. (Bridgewater Photo).

By Hope Bridgewater

Upgrades were recently completed at the Old Wentworth Valley Schoolhouse. The upgrades were viewed by the public on September 18, 2010 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. The upgrades are a significant improvement to this old school building which was constructed by contractor Alexander Munro in 1903 for the sum of \$540.00.

The public were informed about the renovations and repairs: new wheelchair accessible ramp; new well and water system; new septic system; new foundation; and, inside at the back section, new hardwood floor, stove, refrigerator, kitchen sinks, kitchen cupboards, two toilets (one wheelchair accessible), and a storage room. Near the back section, there is a new wood stove and in the center section new collapsible tables with new chairs.

These upgrades are greatly appreciated by the community and were funded by ACOA (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Nova Scotia Economic & Rural Development, the Cumberland County Municipality, and Friends of the Old Valley Schoolhouse.

The contractor, Robert Hunt, who once attended this Valley school, showed his creativity when he removed a portion of clapboards from the old woodshed and made them into a wall hanging for the kitchen. On the old clapboards are inscribed in their own handwriting the names of students who were attending the school.

Although the repairs and renovations are important for the preservations of this 1903

building, the atmosphere of this one-room school with one teacher for grades primary to 11 is kept by retaining the three blackboards, the outdated globe and huge pull-down map, the teacher's desk, and the desks which individually have room for two seated students.

Once called the Wentworth Station School, the name changed to Wentworth Valley School Section No.14 when the once active business hub at the Station declined. Trains once halted frequently at the Station for passengers coming and going, for loading off huge supplies needed in the Wentworth area and beyond and for loading on the train large quantities of lumber from this area.

The Station then had a large railway station, a station agent's house, freight and lumber sheds, the Fraser Hotel, a carriage shop, a harness shop, two stores, a post office and several homes. The old Station mountain road, where students living at the Station walked back and forth to the school located on the Valley floor, still remains in use for the homes built on the mountainside.

In 1958 the Valley School closed due to the amalgamation of all six Wentworth area schools, with grades primary to six going by bus to a new Consolidated Elementary School at Wentworth Centre and with grades seven to 11 going by bus to Pugwash District High School. The last teacher at the Valley School was Flora Little.

In 1959 the Community Hall Association was formed to buy at a low price the

school building and use it as a hall. During the 1960's, the hall (old school) was used by a Rifle Club and for Ski Club sessions. By 1969 renovations and repairs were needed in order to hold meetings and fund-raising.

In 1994 and onwards, the Wentworth Valley Community Hall Association began doing more renovations and repairs. They created another legal name, Friends of the Old Wentworth Valley Schoolhouse, and spent many volunteer hours: painting, deck waterproofing, door repairing, floor scrubbing, window washing, firewood stacking, making new steps, installing curtains, nearby forest clearing, landscaping, grass mowing, snow plowing, and doing erosion protection from a nearby brook.

The Friends were delighted when government funding was received a few years back to help build a new storage shed and when the County of Cumberland declared the Old Wentworth Valley Schoolhouse a heritage site.

Each year the Friends remember the World War II veterans who once attended the Wentworth Valley School: Roy Barclay, Ken Betts, Ernest Cumming, and Lonnie Letcher. Three came home safely, except for Flying Officer Ernest Cumming of the RCAF, a Spitfire pilot who flew photo-reconnaissance missions out of England and who, out on a mission, vanished without a trace on April 10, 1944, at the age of 21.

He is one of 3,050 Canadians with unknown graves whose names are inscribed at the Runnymede Memorial overlooking the River Thames in England. As well, Flying Officer Cumming is commemorated on page 284 in the Canadian Second World War Book of Remembrance, and his name is engraved on the black granite stone of the Cenotaph in Wentworth.

Those who attended the Official Opening of Completed Upgrades on September 18, were able to view Ernest Cumming's own handwriting of his name on the old clapboards wall hanging in the new kitchen at the Valley Schoolhouse.

Ernest Cumming, the only son of Howard and Frances Cumming, married in England and was father to a son. He had asked his wife that if he were killed to visit his parents in Canada. His wife came for a brief visit after his death and then returned to England with their son.

# Wentworth Pioneers help prepare resolutions on Senior's Concerns

By Hope Bridgewater

Members of the Wentworth Pioneer Club decided to leave our community for a trip to Truro in order to dine at Murphy's Fish & Chips. We asked nine-month old baby, Alexander Cochrane, to come as well.

The reader may ask why you ask a baby to come along to a senior event, but we had our reasons: #1. Baby Alexander was a guest because he and his parents were invited to represent the younger generations; #2. Pastor Steven Cochrane is our minister at the Wentworth United Church and the father of Alexander; #3. Melissa, the wife of the Pastor and mother of Alexander, usually comes to church carrying nine-month old Alexander, who sits quietly listening to his father; #4. Pastor Cochrane took pictures with a digital camera at Murphy's Fish & Chips, two of which will be published with this article, and then the reader will see why Alexander was invited as a guest.

After meeting to car-pool in the yard of the Wentworth United Church, the social time began as people chatted while driving along in the cars to

Truro. At Murphy's Fish & Chips restaurant, the Pioneers were given a special section in which to dine. Attending were Pastor Steven Cochrane, Melissa Cochrane, Alexander Cochrane, Betty Curry, Doug Curry, Bob Smith, Jan Smith, Pearl Crowley, Thelma Redmond, Vernon Sprague, Eleanor Sprague, Myrtle Sprague, Marion Gower, Bernell MacAloney, Carolyn MacAloney, Peggy Patriquin, Winston Patriquin, Ida Murray, Pearl McNutt, Florence Harnish, Ella Patriquin, Joe Patriquin, Georgie Patriquin, Twila McMaster, guest Greg Bridgewater and myself. Baby Alexander joined in the laughter and became the center of attention. The mingling of the generations added a zest to the entire meal.

After the meal, the Pioneers said good-by to the Cochranes and many gave baby Alexander a special wave. Many of the Pioneers were remembering when their own children were babies and thinking of those days. After driving out from Truro, the Pioneers met at the Fire Hall of the Wentworth Volunteer Fire Department as the Recreation Centre was booked by another group. The

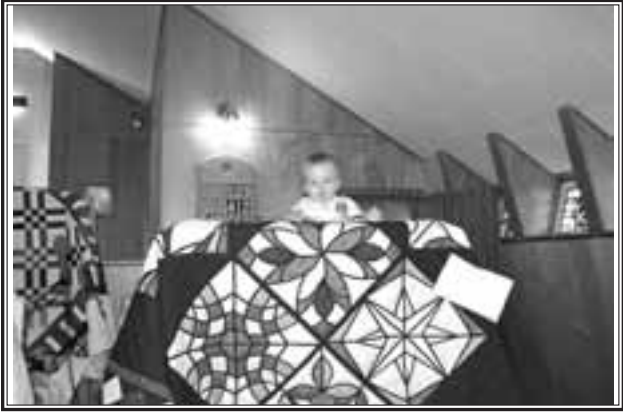
Fire Hall has a very nice meeting room where a wall is covered with plaques of achievement done by members of the Wentworth Volunteer Fire Department. A painting called "Hands of the Future," done by the students at the Wentworth Elementary School, occupies another wall. Pioneers ended the evening of fun by playing Auction 45's and Dominoes.

This past year, the members of the Pioneer Club usually meet at the Wentworth Recreation Centre on the second and fourth Fridays of each month. Of a serious nature, the Wentworth Pioneer Club joins with all the other Nova Scotia Senior Clubs in preparing resolutions about senior concerns, which reach the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors and other relevant government departments each autumn through their meetings with the Federation of Senior Citizens and Pensioners of Nova Scotia.

This spring in April and May, the Wentworth Pioneers were offered a Taoist Tai Chi program with funds provided by the Pugwash and Area Community Health Board. Beginning on April 15, Pioneers and friends met from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings at the Wentworth Recreation Centre for six sessions. The Taoist Tai Chi program of exercises improves coordination and balance, and, since falls are the greatest cause of injury among seniors, it is important to learn about the techniques and philosophy of this tradition. Instructor Tam Flemming recommends to those who wish to learn more about Taoist Tai Chi to phone the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Truro at 902-893-8500.



Nine month old Baby Alexander is enjoying his time as invited guest with the Wentworth Pioneers at Murphy's Fish & Chips. (Bridgewater Photo)



During the Wentworth United Church Wild Blueberry Quilt Fair and Tea, baby Alexander Cochrane, aged eleven months, examines the prize-winning quilt "Cathedral Windows" created by Bev Peck of Amherst. Baby Alexander is the son of the United Church minister, Steven Cochrane and his wife, Melissa. (Bridgewater Photo)



Vernon Sprague, former Fire Chief of the Wentworth Volunteer Fire Department and farmer/lumberman, and his wife and accountant, as members of the Wentworth Pioneers Club, enjoy their meal at Murphy's Fish & Chips. (Bridgewater Photo).

## Small Business Week Luncheon Business Awards Ceremony

October 21, 2010

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