

Issue 96

October 1991

Outlook

The Hastings County Historical Society

Next Meeting

**Tuesday,
October 15
8 p.m.
Coffee -7:30 p.m.
Quinte Living
Centre, Belleville**

Speaker

Mrs. Rona Rustige
Curator of the Hastings County Museum
(Glanmore House)
Author - Tyendinaga Tales (1988)

Topic

"What is a Museum?"
(An illustrated presentation)

*Visitors, Members
and New Members
welcome.*

Advance Notice

**Tuesday Nov. 19
8:00 p.m.
Coffee-7:30 p.m.
Quinte Living
Centre**

**Speaker -Mrs.
Ann Rowe**

**Topic - Getting
started In
Geneology**

200th Anniversary of Arrival in Canada of Tavern Owner,

Margaret Simpson of Belleville

Margaret Simpson was the first woman tavern owner in the Midland District. Her tavern stood at the south east corner of South Front and Dundas Streets.

Most town meetings and political meetings were held in Simpson's tavern. Petitions were displayed there for the inhabitants to sign, the local militia was organized there, so were parties and dances. One of the most important meetings held at Mrs. Simpson's was for the choosing of the name "Belleville" for our fair city.

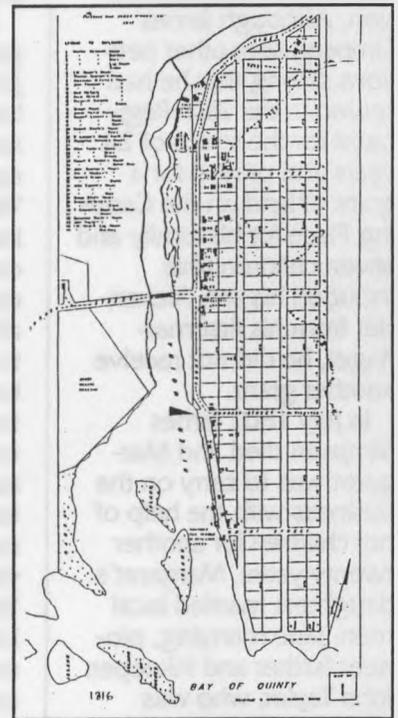
Margaret and her first husband, Peter Russell, and their four children came to Canada in 1791 from Scotland. A relative, James Russell, who was already living in Canada, had told them that, "on their arrival into this Province they would be entitled to a proportion of his Majesty's most gracious bounty land".

They came to Kingston where their relative, James

Russell, was employed as foreman and master carpenter in the Engineering Department. He had worked in the Tower of London before volunteering his services for America in 1776. He had also received a grant of land in Fredericksburgh along the Bay of Quinte.

Margaret's husband, Peter, died soon after their arrival. Her son, James, procured a position in the Engineering Department and hereafter was designated as James Russell, The Younger or Junior. Margaret and her three younger children, Ann, Jane, and Elizabeth, all in their early teens or younger may have lived on the Russell farm in Fredericksburgh.

On November 14, 1793, Rev. John Langhorn recorded in his register this marriage: "James Simpson, Ernesttown, widower, and Margaret Russell of Fredericksburgh, widow". They continued



to live on the shore of the Bay of Quinte in Fredericksburgh.

Their son John was born in 1795 and on Jan. 23, 1797 George was born. Margaret, James, and their children of age sent many petitions to the Government praying for land but the grants they received were in Rawdon Township.

In July, 1797, when George was six months

Margaret Simpson of Belleville

old, the family moved to Meyers Creek. Here they built a log house in which they also kept a tavern. They had received permission from the Mississaugas to build and paid them an annual rent. Their buildings were on the east side of the mouth of the river just below the present Dundas Street.

By 1799 the Simpsons had built a framed house and the following year they built a framed stable, both with Indian permission. Although James Simpson sent other petitions stating that he had served in the 26th Regiment for the space of 24 years and prayed for a grant of land on the Carrying Place for his family and seven children (this included his son Alexander from his first marriage), he did not receive another grant.

In July 1802 James Simpson died and Margaret was to carry on the business with the help of her children for another twenty years. Margaret's daughters married local men; Jane marrying, pioneer farmer and innkeeper, John Taylor, who was almost a neighbour. They lived just outside the village on Dundas Street near the present George Street.

In the book, "Settlement of Upper Canada", Dr. Carniff quotes Alexander Oliphant Petrie as saying that when he came to Belleville in 1809 among those living there were Mrs. Simpson, Innkeeper, and Hugh Cunningham, storekeeper at Mrs. Simpson's. Dr. Carniff also wrote that "Abraham Cronk, of Sophiasburgh, bought a female slave from Mrs. Simpson, of

Meyer's Creek, for \$300. After a time she returned to Mrs. Simpson, with whom she lived till her death...".

In March 1816, Samuel G. Wilmot, Deputy Surveyor, commenced the survey for the Town Plot. The Town Lots being laid out for Belleville were to be granted to those who had some claim of building or improvement on the land. Each lot had to be petitioned for and a fee paid.

On July 13, 1816, Margaret Simpson wrote to James McNabb to ask his help in her petition for land: "Dear Friend, I expected to com up with William and finds it very inconvenient for me to com....Dear Sir, I shall depend upon you looking after my Right with regard to my improvements on loats no. fifteen and sixteen with goar and pot-tash, John for the sixteenth loat and me for the fifteenth....and I shall please my whole Dependance on you till I com up with Wm. on his return which if I am alive and well you may realize on my coming up with him - Geo. has writ you concerning a Loat which if he is not allowed for a Loat we will applay for James instead of Geo. By taking nottage of My Letter will mutch oblige your humble Margaret Simpson. " Margaret's spelling and grammar, though considered poor today, were remarkable in her time, when few men and fewer women could read and write.

James McNabb delivered Margaret's petition and also included a note: "Sir: I have the honor to enclose for your perusal a letter which I received

from the old Widow, Margaret Simpson of Thurlow Village at the Entrance of River Moira. The poor old Woman's buildings are placed upon Town Lots No. 15 and 16 in the front range of the New Town, and her Pot-Ashery stands upon the water lot in front of her dwelling House and Stables. Another wishes to obtain a title for those lots from His MAjesty's Executive Government, in that her buildings may be saved from falling into other hands than that of her own connexions."

Her son's petition was also endorsed by McNabb: "I certify that I have known John Simpson, son to MARGaret Simpson, of the Moira Village, that he behaved well as a Militia Dragoon during the Late War in Captain Christopher Fralic's Company - and that I verily believe him a Loyal Character." Margaret and her son John each received the lots petitioned for.

Interesting articles appeared in the Kingston papers: On April 23, 1819: Died - At Belleville, Bay of Quinte, Upper Canada, on the 12th April, William King, shipwright....Much praise is due to Mrs. Margaret Simpson, of Belleville, and her family, for the kindness and attention manifested in this poor man in her house whilst sick, and the decent manner in which the funeral was conducted at her own expense."

On Dec. 1, 1816 this advertisement appeared: "Resolved that the Petition, this day adopted to Sir Peregrine Maitland, be left at Widow MARGaret Simpson's, Belleville, for Signatures, until Monday, next, 9th instant."

Many years later, in the Intelligencèr, James Bickford of Oswego remi-

nisced: "I arrived in Belleville August 1818, put up at Mother Simpson's Hotel, where I found her two sons, John and George, who soon introduced me into "society", not exactly composed of that element I should not seek, but I will say I was always treated kindly by people in Belleville and by John and George in particular."

About 1820, Margaret's son, John Simpson, built the impressive Inn on the north east corner of Front and Dundas Streets which he sold five years later to the Wallbridge family. The house stood until 1973.

In 1822 Margaret Simpson, after a long and busy life, sold her tavern and property to her son, George, who was my great, great grandfather.

Lols Foster

Election Fever

The upcoming municipal elections should hold extra interest for members of the Historical Society. President Jack Arthur is running for the office of Reeve in Sidney Township, and Past President Gerry Boyce has entered the race for a seat on Belleville's City Council. Good luck to you both.

Registry Office Records

We reported in the April Outlook that we had protested to the Ministry of Commerce and Corporate Relations over their intentions to remove all pre-1867 original land documents from the local Registry Offices. However, over the summer this was done, so research on earlier buildings will have to be done from microfilm.



The Tweed News and The Community Press provided excellent coverage of the September meeting. In this picture (courtesy of Joanne Courneya and The Tweed News) Society president Jack Arthur, Tweed councillor Oscar Thurston, Deputy Reeve Murray Holmes, and Tweed and Area Historical Society vice president Evan Morton prepare to cut the cake.

History and politics meet. The four people in the picture are running for municipal office: Jack Arthur for reeve in Sidney and the others for council in Tweed. Historian Evan Morton was the most recent to enter the political ring.

Speaking of which, Gerry Boyce (historian, author, educator, and jogging enthusiast) is running for alderman in Belleville. Hopefully he'll not use his "County News" column to campaign for election. Watch it, Gerry.

September Meeting In Tweed

Our September joint meeting with the Tweed and Area Historical Society was a great success. Almost 70 members and friends attended the event in the historic Tweed Playhouse.

Rodger C. Greig, a former president of our Society and the organizer of many tours of historic buildings, delighted the group with his illustrated talk on Tweed's ten (or so) most interesting and architecturally important buildings and streetscapes. His pictures covered a century of Tweed's history and compared views of past and present.

Evan Morton, vice-president of the Tweed and Area Historical Society, gave an excellent, illustrated talk on the types of materials being collected by that society for its Heritage Centre. Displays from the Heritage Centre

and from private collections added to the evening.

A decorated cake saluting the village on its hundredth birthday and the historical society on its third successful year had been designed by Ruth McMillan of Belleville, a former occupant of the manse (across from the Tweed Playhouse). The cake featured the old jailhouse and the gathering sang "Happy Birthday", before eating the cake. Rumour has it that the jailhouse did survive the meeting, but was consumed soon after.

Deputy Reeve Murray Holmes brought greetings to the meeting, on behalf of the council and the citizens.

Society "Good Citizen" certificates were presented to the citizens (through Deputy Reeve Holmes), the

Tweed and Area Historical Society (through president Joanne Courneya), and Evan Morton. We also presented the Tweed society with copies of the slides (prepared by Gerry Boyce for the two presentations) and copies of documents relating to Tweed's history.

We are indebted to the Tweed and Area Historical Society (for helping to sponsor the evening and arranging for coffee and cookies), to the officials of the Tweed Playhouse for providing the auditorium at a nominal cost, to the presenters and organizers of the event, and to our members who provided transportation from Belleville.

Downtown Belleville

Things are looking up! Work has resumed on the old Liddle tailor Shop. In its metamorphosis into a German-style brew pub, the red brick walls and stone window lintels and sills appear as new after the removal of the familiar coat of grey paint. The owners are also restoring the original appearance of the Pinnacle Street facade by replacing the main floor picture windows with two windows which match the others on the front of the building.

Around the corner on Front Street is another transformation, at the old Star Theatre, where the role has changed from that of the Parlour maid to the Prima Donna! Previously the only adornment to the rather plain brick front was a triple round headed window on the second floor. Now the main floor is completely opened up with large glass windows. A link with the Corby-Bone building up the street are the classical Corinthian capitals on the shallow brick pilasters all around the building. The Hastings and Prince Edward Housing Authority have already moved into second floor offices.

There has also been some tidying up at the old Cablevue site across from City Hall. And across the river, the Old Billa Flint house stands in splendid isolation. The exterior has now been restored to its century appearance. The four chimneys are back in place. New windows faithfully copy the old and are freshly painted. The brick walls have been cleaned to a mellow glow. Now all it needs are neighbours!

Beth Green
Building Research
Committee

County News

by Gerry Boyce

Thanks to the editor for the election plug. I now have no need to mention that I'm running for public office in Belleville.

However, I do wish to advise the readers of The Trentonian that I am not a bigamist. My wife's name is "Bev". "Betsy" Boyce, the author of the soon-to-be published "The Rebels of Hastings County" is not my wife, but a dear friend. The Trentonian's error (Sept. 18) is easy to understand. Both Betsy and I are active in this Society, are avid researchers and writers, and have the initials "G.E." I'm Gerry and

her late husband was George. For several years Betsy lived in Trenton, where George was the manager of the Hinde and Dauch paper plant.

YOUR SOCIETY and the Sidney Historical Archives and Research Committee sponsored a busy and successful joint display at the Quinte Mall as THE QUINTE ARTS COUNCIL celebrated 25 years of service to the community. The Quinte Region Branch of A.C.O., and the Hastings County Museum also had interesting displays. We wish the Quinte Arts Council "A HAPPY 25th".

Architectural Conservancy of Ontario Inc. Quinte Branch 1991 Series

Barn Tour - Prince Edward County Sunday, October 20, 2:00 p.m.



Join a car tour of county barns of Heritage interest. These structural marvels of varying shapes and sizes have oft-times been forgotten or ignored when we think in terms of Architectural Conservancy.

These barns were quite utilitarian; always with the large capacity required to store necessary forage and grain which fed the livestock over the long Canadian winters.

A working farm will also be visited in Athol Twp.

The car tour will leave Macauley Heritage Park at 2:00 p.m.

**For further information call 476-7211
or 969-0734**

**No charge - everyone welcome
Refreshments at approximately 4:00 p.m.**

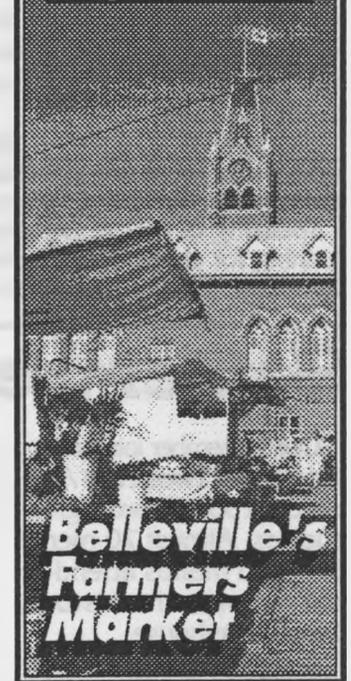
WE HONOUR THEIR MEMORY. ANDRE MERCIER was a life member of the Society, a strong supporter for more than a quarter century, and our link with the francophone community. PAT and PAUL HARTMANN, who died following a tragic accident, were members for several years. Pat won awards in our writing contests and also helped Glanmore open in 1973. We'll miss her enthusiasm and story-telling talents. ROY BUSH, formerly of River Valley, was the husband of the late Bessie Bush, an active director in the 1960s. JIM EADIE of Napanee was one of the Quinte area's most respected historians, teachers, and authors. His research covered Lennox and Addington, Deseronto, the Rathbun family, politics, and military units. Our sympathy goes to the families of these friends.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE INTELLIGENCER for its new Sunday section, "Remember When..." Edited by Barry Ellsworth and William Hunt (the son of the author of Booze, Boats and Billions), it contains great stories and pictures, reminiscences (including some vivid, true stories about Eugene Lang's past), and a front page from a past issue. The first copy (Sept. 15) is already a collector's item.

THE COUNTY NEWSPAPERS are printing more historical

features. The Bancroft Times has "Time Travel" (with pictures from Mike Burns and others) as well as a column on Algonquin Park history. The Madoc Review calls its picture series "Remember When? The Tweed News has Evan Morton's excellent weekly column and a frequent Centennial Seniors illustrated series of interviews with local seniors, written by Joanne Courneya. The Trentonian has a regular column of news from past years and, like many other papers, occasional pictures from the past. It's great to see the emphasis on local history.

Snap Shot Quinte



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Outlook

The Hastings County Historical Society Newsletter

Outlook is published monthly for the Friends and Members of the Hastings County Historical Society. It is edited & produced by Joe VanVeenen. Anyone wishing to submit articles or information can contact the editor at 613-969-0001 Fax: (613) 969-1053, between 9-5, or visit him at Design Perfect Communications, 121 Dundas St. East, Belleville, Ont.