Dedicated to Preserving the History of Glengarry

The Annual General Meeting will be held on February 3. This year, a slight change - to allow more time for socializing and tasting the delicious offerings, there will be no guest speaker. First, a time for socializing at 6:30pm, next the Potluck supper followed by the annual reports from the committees of the Society. But, let’s face it, the main event of the evening will be the....

Annual General Meeting
It’s Potluck Supper time!

- **Date:** Feb 3, Social Time 6:30PM, followed by Supper at 7PM, with Annual Reports to follow
- **Place:** The Church on the Hill, Alexandria

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

For all current members, unless you are already a lifetime member, a bargain at twice the price as Dane Lanken frequently points out, February is the month for membership renewals. Please drop by the membership desk at the February AGM, to take care of this, or send in your renewal to the Society address. The annual fees are $20, or $25 for a family membership. No better bargain exists in Glengarry.

From 2010 - See P.4.
The Steam Donkey

About forty years ago, soon after we got this place on the First of Kenyon, we were looking around in the big block of woods on the south side of the road, and we found a little pond. It was deep in the woods, all by itself, with trees all around, and quite full of water. The setting was wholly natural, but looking at it, we saw that the pond must have been man-made because, among other things, there was still a mound on one bank where fill had been shoveled up and piled.

We would sometimes visit the pond after that, and wonder about it. But we never made any progress on the mystery of its origins until one day in the mid-1970s when an old man came to the door and said about fifty years earlier he had been part of a crew that cut big elm trees deep in those woods.

"Did you ever see a little pond down there?" he asked, and our eyes widened. "I helped dig that," he said. "We had a steam donkey, and we needed a water supply."

Steam donkey, I mulled, imagining some engine used to saw up logs. It was only decades later that I Googled steam donkey and learned that it was a stationary steam-powered winch, a heavy wooden frame with a steam engine bolted to it, and a piston that powered a winch with a heavy rope or steel cable that pulled logs from where they were cut to some central spot (called a landing). It did work that was done earlier by horses or oxen, and is done nowadays by diesel-powered winches or skidders.

The steam donkey was invented in the 1880s, enjoyed a heyday in the 1920s and '30s, and disappeared in the 1950s. They were common wherever there were lumbering operations, with the biggest ones out on the West Coast where the trees were huge and the terrain sometimes rough.

They were very powerful machines. When the rope went taut and the log started moving, workers were well advised to stay out of the way. Apart from that, the greatest danger with them was running out of water and having the steam engine explode. Thus the importance of a secure water supply - like the little pond in our woods. That said, I found one chilling account on-line of a man who said he could coax a little extra power out of his steam donkey by holding the safety valve closed with a stick.

There were other applications of steam donkey as well, notably on board ships where they were used, among other tasks, to load cargo. David Anderson reminded us of that enduring Canadian folksong:

Was you ever in Quebec, stowin' timber on the deck
Where ya break yer bleedin' neck, ridin' on a donkey?

Way hey and away we go, donkey ridin', donkey ridin'
Way hey and away we go, ridin' on a donkey.

Dane Lanken

ANATOMY OF A STEAM DONKEY.
In Review - 2010

What a year it was too.....

If you missed the great presentations at the Glengarry Historical Society General Meetings, perhaps it’s because you aren’t a member - see elsewhere in this newsletter for instructions on how to remedy this oversight....

February 2010 - Off to a most interesting start with a presentation by Commander Allan F. Kennedy (Retired) on the explosion aboard HMCS Kootenay in 1969. After the presentation, the traditional, and always enjoyable, social Potluck Supper of the Annual General Meeting.

April 2010 - Closer to home, Ron Lajoie and Maurice Gauthier give a fact-and-anecdote filled recounting of the history of the Green Valley area, and it’s role in the 1916 “Regulation 17” brooha. After this, no drive through Green Valley would be the same....

May 2010 - On the again road with Ed Kipp and George Anderson, as they took us on a previous (and upcoming) bus tour of the Mohawk Valley. If we didn’t know before, we certainly knew afterwards of the roles of Sir William and Sir John Johnson in much of the area of eastern Ontario, New York state and Pennsylvania. We needed a rest after the speedy and intense travels with Ed and George, which brought us to....

June 2010 - and the Annual Picnic. This year it was held at the church of St. Alexander Lochiel. A piper was on hand with traditional welcome, and Bill Gilsdorf enlightened the audience with the history of Lochiel, including the GHS personalities, Hugh P. Macmillan, and Basil McCormick

September 2010 - We were honoured in September with a presentation by Sheila Fraser, The Auditor General of Canada. Ms. Fraser is a native of Dundee, Quebec, and shared her reminiscences and comments on finance with a huge crowd at St. Andrews Church in Williamstown.

October 2010 - Guest Speaker Alexander(Sandy) V. Campbell gave a presentation on The Royal American Regiment: Glengarry County’s Other Military Founder, pointing out some of the key roles this regiment played in the settlement of Glengarry and other areas.

November 2010 - Rounding out the year, Susan Robertson talked on the subject of the Tweedsmuir Histories, or Diaries, and their role in preserving community histories. Susan also spoke on the Woman’s Institute and its efforts in shaping government policies.

In short, what a year !!

Dictionary of Glengarry Biography  sales are going well. A steady stream of orders is coming in for Royce MacGil livray’s Dictionary from far and wide, with a surge in internet sales as the knowledge of the book spreads in the past few weeks. A recent very positive article in the Ottawa Citizen has made a new group aware of the existence of the book.

Kelly Egan ends off her Ottawa Citizen article with the comment “It is a great thing MacGillivray has done; generations yet unborn will thank the man who, for the sheer love of history, wrote it all down.”

Volumes are still available, so if you haven’t yet purchased a copy, go to the PUBLICATIONS area of the GHS website (www.glengarryhistoricalsociety.com), or contact Ronna Mogelon at (613) 525-4960

NOTE...Tickets are NOT available at the door!
The Minutes of November 4th Glengarry Historical Society Meeting (Pending Approval)

( Held at the Church in Alexandria)

President Allan Macdonell opens the meeting by asking the secretary to summarize the October meeting minutes. After doing so, Richard Bleile moves to have the minutes adopted. Bruce McPherson seconds the motion. Passed.

Included in David Anderson’s customary introductions is a reference to Len Fourney’s publication of “Len's Military Life”.

Don Wood is called upon to present the treasurer’s report, which is then seconded by William MacMillan.

Brenda Kennedy (Nor’ Westers & Loyalist Museum) reports that the museum grant has been confirmed. She is getting involved in some winter projects such as storage.

No new business allows for immediate focus on this evening’s guest presentation. Dane Lanken introduces Susan Robertson to speak on preserving community histories in her role as Tweedsmuir Coordinator for the Bainsville Women’s Institute. Lady Tweedsmuir, wife of the Governor General (1935 to 1940), had taken a great interest in the Women’s Institutes and encouraged them to record local histories.

Susan Robertson informs the audience on the work of the Women’s Institutes (WI). The WI group started in 1897 with support of the Department of Agriculture and became official in 1919. After starting out in Ontario the women’s organizations spread to become an international movement in 108 countries. Mrs. Robertson lists a number of the accomplishments: bread packaging, painted lines on highways, street lights, libraries, health inspectors, funds for hospitals and parks. By the 1950’s there were over 17,000 members in Canada. An observation seems to indicate that WI average age is about seventy; younger women show little interest.

Karen Davison Wood thanks the speaker.

Harold MacMillan moves to adjourn the meeting and the assembled history enthusiasts gravitate to the lunch counters in social discourse.

Richard Bleile (recording secretary)

The Story of Martintown, A Pioneer Village, by the late C.M. Grant has been newly revised from it’s original 1974 printing. It traces the history of the town from 1780’s to the present day. It covers the times of the War of 1812, the Upper Canada Rebellion in 1837, the days of fur trading, the lumber years and the days when Martintown was a major cheese making centre. The new edition costs $29.95. You can order a copy from Onagh’s Book Nook in Martintown at 613-528-4488.

Become a Member

Membership in the Historical Society means you are an integral part in preserving local history. You are invited to each of the regular meetings, which usually feature an interesting guest speaker or presentation. You will receive the Newsletter (several per year), and advance notice of Historical Society events. Membership in the Glengarry Historical Society is $20 ($25, Family) annually, or $200 Lifetime membership. The Glengarry Historical Society is an affiliate of the Ontario Historical Society.

I WANT YOU TO PAY YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES

The Story of Martintown, A Pioneer Village, by the late C.M. Grant has been newly revised from it’s original 1974 printing. It traces the history of the town from 1780’s to the present day. It covers the times of the War of 1812, the Upper Canada Rebellion in 1837, the days of fur trading, the lumber years and the days when Martintown was a major cheese making centre. The new edition costs $29.95.

You can order a copy from Onagh’s Book Nook in Martintown at 613-528-4488.

Pictures from Page 1.....

Commander Allan F Kennedy (retired) (Feb 2010)
Ed Kipp and Bill Gilsdorf (May 2010)
Sheila Fraser (Sept 2010)
Alexander (Sandy) V. Campbell (Oct 2010)