



GLENGARRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

newsletter

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next issue: May 2004

Date:	Thursday, April 1, 2004
Time:	8:00 p.m.
Place:	Church on the Hill, Kincardine Street, Alexandria, ON
Topic:	THE SISTERS OF HOLY CROSS IN GLENGARRY

The Sisters of Holy Cross in Glengarry

There will be many of you out there who, over the years, have been taught by the Sisters. After all, they have been in Glengarry for 148 years this past January. The Sisters of ‘**Congregatione Sancte Cruce,**’ to give the order its proper Latin name, first came to Canada from France in 1856. They came at the invitation of the unforgettable Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal. As the Bishop of Montreal, Bourget’s career spanned the years 1840-1877. (Montreal was not raised to an Archdiocese until late in the nineteenth century under Archbishop Edouard-Charles Fabre). McGill University historian, Yvan Lamonde, in one of his many articles, characterized Bourget as having had “a spectacular religious career.” Bourget firmly believed in the sacred mission of French Canadians to bring Catholicism to North America. In addition to the Sisters of Holy Cross, Bourget brought a plethora of other religious orders to Canada including the Oblates, the Sisters of Providence, the Misericordes, the Josephite Brothers, the clerics of Saint-Viateur (who established beautiful Bourget College on Rigaud Mountain), and the Fathers of the Holy Cross, to name only a few!

Shortly after the Sisters arrived in Montreal, Bourget hastily dispatched a few of them to Alexandria to establish a school. For the most part a teaching order, the Sisters of Holy Cross applied themselves to their task with a vengeance. They assumed control of Iona Academy in St. Raphaels and soon added Iona Commercial College to the Academy. Located in a small building on Frog Hollow Road, the Commercial College’s two dedicated teachers, Sister Ina and Sister Lucille, soon turned the College into a premier institution with students coming from as far away as Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal. In addition to Iona, the Sisters established another small school in St. Raphaels, Roman Catholic Separate School Charlottenburg #19 and, of course, taught for many years at the Alexander School and St. Joseph’s (the present day St. Finnan’s).

The Sisters did not confine themselves to Glengarry by any means but also taught both Primary School and High School in Cornwall. Those of us from ‘away’, however, were not forgotten. The Sisters also taught at St. Joseph’s in Ottawa and in Montreal’s suburban Saint-Laurent, at both Immaculata and Holy Cross High School (my own alma mater!) so I have good first hand knowledge of the wonderful work they have done over the years. In a conversation with Sister Kathryn Cameron last week, I pointed out to her an anomaly of the times we live in. If you go into any school today, probably in all of Canada, you will find a fair share of “No Smoking” signs, but in the late 1960s, when the world

was going mad with drugs, there was nary a 'No Smoking' sign at Holy Cross High. We didn't need signs, we had THE RUSTLE OF THE SKIRTS. No-one, and I mean no-one, lit up on the school grounds and yet I can honestly say I never heard one of the Sisters raise her voice!

Today, the Sisters fulfill a very different role here in Glengarry. They have branched out from teaching to fulfill a variety of worthy functions in our community. As an example, until very recently, **Sister Jane Burns** acted as an ad-hoc guidance counsellor at our non-sectarian GDHS. Her voluntary mission to the High School was to teach family values. Her approach was "Preach the Gospel and, if necessary, use words." Sister Burns encouraged the GDHS students to bring in videos for analysis that provided a moral for family values.

The most amazing thing about the Sisters is that they NEVER RETIRE, now isn't that something? Last December, my sister and I, through the good offices of Sister Kathryn Cameron, had the pleasure of being reunited with our former English teacher from Holy Cross High, **Sister Audrey Eccles**. Well over 90 now, Sister Audrey informed us cheerily that she has a job she visits and sits with the 'elderly' at the Sister's pavilion in Saint-Laurent! And I was hoping to pack it in at 60!

Sister Kathryn Cameron will speak to the Historical Society on **April 1, 2004 at 8.00 p.m. at the Alexandria United Church (Church on the Hill)**. Many of you are already acquainted with Sister Kathryn. A native of Glen Roy, Sister Kathryn has devoted her life to education and music. She has been involved with singing and the music program at St. Finnan's Cathedral for more years than any of us cares to count. Sister Kathryn has taught for many years in Glengarry and Saint-Laurent as well as acting as the Religious Education Director in Cornwall.

As I'm sure you can tell, by the length of my missive, we are very excited that Sister Kathryn has agreed to come and recount for you the history of the Sisters here in Glengarry. Believe me when I tell you that her stories are touching and a monument to their 148 years serving our community. So, please do join us in welcoming **Sister Kathryn Cameron** on **April 1st**.

Who let the Irish in? Who? Who?

Many thanks to Ken McKenna, Gwen Morris, Velma Franklin and all the participants from the audience who made our March 4th meeting so enjoyable. In future, we shall heed Ken's advice that St. Patrick should not be called 'Paddy' any more than St. George should be called 'Georgie' or St. Jean-Baptiste, 'Johnnie.' We were delighted to hear that Gwen's maiden name, Cleary, is one of the oldest of Celtic names, although please note, folks, she has reverted to the Gaelic spelling, Clerigh, as anyone who has seen her license plates knows! As to Velma (aka Fitzgerald), she provided a wealth of information on the building of the Beauharnois Canal by the Irish as well as anecdotes about the elusive 'Little Ireland' in Glengarry.

E-mail Subscribers

As mentioned in an earlier Newsletter, we have been experimenting with a variety of ways to get the Newsletter to you in the best possible electronic fashion. As a result, we recently purchase ADOBE ACROBAT whose claim to fame is that anyone can read it, as the ADOBE READER can be downloaded for free. If you have successfully received your NEWSLETTER this month along with the ADOBE READER, please let us know at glenbook@glen-net.ca so that we'll know whether or not our endeavour has been successful. PS: I'm still fiddling with our logo to fit with the text, suggestions, anyone?

Don't Forget! If you would prefer to receive the Newsletter by e-mail, forward your e-mail address to Membership Secretary, Fred Boyko, at glenbook@glen-net.ca.

See you on April 1st !