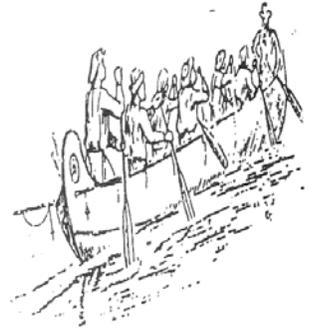

GLENGARRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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NEXT MEETING

Date: Thursday, April 7, 2005
Time: 8:00 p.m.
Place: Alexandria United Church-on-the-Hill
Topic: **Adventures of a Paper Sleuth**



Adventures of a Paper Sleuth

As most of you know by now, Penumbra Press recently released **Hugh P. MacMillan's** memoirs of his many years with the Ontario Archives. For once, my big mouth is silenced by the excellent book review done by **Margaret Caldbick** for the February 2, 2005 edition of *The Glengarry News*. **J.T. Grosmith**, editor of *The Glengarry News* has very kindly allowed us to reprint the article below. Thanks, J.T.

Glengarry's Paper Sleuth relates 27-year adventure

By Margaret Caldbick
Special to The Glengarry News

For Hugh P. MacMillan, hunting down historical letters, manuscripts and other relics of the past is a psychological necessity – it's in his blood. But, how does one become a paper sleuth?

In his latest book, *Adventures of a Paper Sleuth*, Hugh P. explains how he managed to do what so many of us dream of,

that is, turn a hobby into a self-directed career and a life's work.

The first autobiographical chapters set the stage with early seafaring adventures on Canada's Pacific coast, soldiering, and failed stints at farming and selling insurance. Finally, Hugh's lifelong fascination with the history of Glengarry and his family roots here neatly evolve into a 27-year career tracking down rare and unusual relics and manuscripts for the Ontario Public Archives.

This page-turner will appeal to readers of all stripes. It's a detective thriller and whodunit, Canadian history, autobiography and genealogy how-to guide under single cover.

There are adventures and misadventures as Hugh catches wind of a fascinating cache, in one case a collection of Royal Stuart family portraits in Scarborough, Ontario, part of a dispersed collection of exceedingly rare items passed down by descendants of James Keithlock Edgar, private secretary to King James.

What Hugh didn't get to see on that caper was a large tin box brimming with 450 Edgar letters dating back to 1680 in Scotland,

along with clippings, poems, a handwritten Shawnee-English dictionary, and even records of 19th century Toronto séances.

A year later, a housekeeper's daughter contacted Hugh with news of the box – it had been thrown out, reconsidered and retrieved, after languishing in an old farmhouse since World War II. Today the Ontario Archives has more than five feet of wall space dedicated to the Edgars.

Each chapter is fascinating. There are thieves, sneaks, safecrackers and confidence men, obsessed collectors, duels, religious cults, pioneers and adventurers.

The cast also includes Louis Riel, Buffalo Bill, early Canadian blue-bloods, fur traders, politicians, aviators and many, many more. What comes alive is the history itself, and we learn to appreciate the talent and perseverance needed to be an ace paper detective. At the centre of it all is the passion of the chase with its lost leads, red-faced embarrassments, serendipity and happy coincidences.

The book launch for *Adventures of a Paper Sleuth* took place at the National Archives in Ottawa on January 10.

The author appeared his usual congenial self, which is, needless to say, not quite that of your typical octogenarian.

Without a trace of affectation, Hugh P. as we know him in Glengarry, wears a replica of an Indian crafter gorget at his throat and on his right hand a sterling ring with the Mohawk insignal motif denoting friendship.

The event was hosted by Librarian and Archivist of Canada, Ian Wilson, Hugh's old boss at the Ontario Public Archives, who couldn't refrain from telling the audience that during Hugh's 25-year stint as Liaison Officer for the archives he managed to break every rule in the book.

The result? Today, Hugh MacMillan is credited for tracking down a large body of irreplaceable Canadian historical documents

and delivering them into the care of museums, historical societies and archives across the country.

But Hugh is quick to add, "What I did, I did not do alone. I am indebted to too many people to count, all across Canada, people who offered me leads, provided expert advice, and made known to me unknown stories of Canadian history." This is the huge network of colleagues, historians, librarians, friends and acquaintances, that Hugh depends on in his searches.

Many of Hugh's finds relate to Glengarry and he is recognized internationally for bringing a great many irreplaceable Glengarry historical documents into the care of the Glengarry Historical Society and the Ontario Public Archives. These collections, preserved in controlled archive environments, now occupy a proud position in each archive's collection.

Hugh's efforts to preserve Glengarry history have been considerable. He is a founding member of the Glengarry Historical Society, co-authored *The Lochaber Emigrants to Glengarry 1792-1802*, and his tireless work finding Glengarry artifacts had enlarged and enriched the Nor'Wester and Loyalist Museum in Williamstown and the Pioneer Museum in Dunvegan.

But there has been controversy. Years ago when Hugh was on the prowl using his formidable powers of persuasion to convince Glengarrians to part with family papers and manuscripts, some folks mistook his advances as that of an outsider eager to spirit away the valuable family heirlooms. But today, because of his work, researchers from around the world have access to an extensive repository of historical information about Glengarry history.

Hugh MacMillan's roots run deep in Glengarry. His great-great grandfather John Roy MacMillan came from Lochaber to Glengarry in 1792. One of this great-great-

grandfather's brothers, Allan, and his first cousin, Archibald, brought 446 kinsmen to Glengarry and Buckingham, Quebec in 1802.

And from where I sit writing this piece in the hamlet of Lochiel, the view from my front window is of a fine old red brick farmhouse built by Hugh's great-uncle Alex MacMillan in 1882-83.

Through another window facing west I can see another landmark, Jim and Valerie Johnson's grand old brick home built by Hugh's grandfather and great-grandfather circa 1882. And if I walk east along Lochiel Road past Old Military Road, standing high on the north side is one of the first homes built on the old 14th, the oldest stone house in Glengarry, built by Hugh's great-great-grandfather, John Roy MacMillan.

In 1984, in recognition for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Ontario Archives, Hugh MacMillan was awarded a Doctorate of Letters from Laurentien University in Sudbury, Ontario.

With regard to Hugh's talents as a paper sleuth, Ian E. Wilson puts it this way: "Combining the skills of a great detective with patience and tenacity, he rescued many fragile records of our experience.

His passion for history has been infectious, enlisting the help of many in the cause, and triumphing over bureaucracy and indifference. His achievements have been real and numerous. His exploits, though, are the stuff of legend."

These days, many modern historians are content to haunt the libraries, the archives, the internet. But the real work of preserving the past still belongs to the indefatigable bloodhound, the investigative manuscript detective in search of a story that has been cold for many years.

His job is to hunt down and collect the irreplaceable, the suppressed and the forgotten, because after all, once these

artifacts have vanished forever, who will be left to tell the tale?

Writer-editor Margaret Caldbick has worked for Time-Life and Canadian Cyclist among other things. She lives in Lochiel Township.

A Founding Father

We have many reasons to be thankful to Hugh P., not the least of which is that he was instrumental in founding the Glengarry Historical Society and the Glengarry Pioneer Museum in the late 1950s. In fact, Hugh was the first President of the GHS, serving from 1958 to 1960. I offered to return the Presidency to him, but he declined. Hmm, I wonder why?

As Hugh tells it, "When I moved from Vancouver to Lochiel in 1952, there were a series of Folk Schools being held in the county over four to five day periods at the homes of various individuals. At one of these Folk School meetings, a committee was struck to start both a historical society and a museum to preserve the county's heritage and guess who was appointed to head up the search committee?"

The most difficult part of the search lay in finding a suitable home for a museum, bearing in mind that we had no money. Our first choice was the old co-op which, at the time, formed part of today's Priest's Mill in Alexandria. But the no-money thing didn't exactly impress the owners. We then tried the same tactic with the Mill in Martintown, with the same result.

I believe it was the late John D. MacLeod who finally suggested we try to obtain the old, log inn located in Dunvegan. We contacted the then-owner, Margaret Crane, who was an actual descendent of Donald MacMillan (no relation) who had run the inn and the bar. Mrs. Crane very generously donated the inn to our fledgling

historical society for a nominal sum and a Museum was born.”

Hugh P. will be discussing both his book on **Thursday, April 7, 2005**. In addition to Hugh’s presentation, Past President, **David Anderson** will read excerpts from *Adventures of a Paper Sleuth*. We do hope you will join us for what should be an interesting and informative evening.

GENE-O-RAMA !

The Ottawa Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society(OGS) will host a conference on Friday and Saturday, April 8 and 9 at the Ottawa Public Library, Ben Franklin Place, 101 CentrepoinTE Drive, Ottawa, Ontario. Keynote speaker will be **Bruce Elliot**, Professor of History at Carleton University presenting “Emigrant Recruitment by the New Brunswick Land Company.”

Of particular note to members of the GHS is the Saturday afternoon lecture by **Lyll Manson** on “**Stormont Dundas & Glengarry Genealogical Resources**”. According to the OGS website, “Lyll was born in Cornwall, Ontario and grew up in the “Lost Village” of Mille Roches. He attended Ottawa Teachers' College. He taught for over 34 years with the Cornwall Public School Board and the SD&G County Bd. of Education. An interest in history led to a long association with the SD&G Historical Society and the SD&G Genealogical Society.” To view the full program, go to the OGS website at www.ogsottawa.on.ca/geneorama.

Volunteers PLEASE !

The GHS would like to host a table at this conference, but we need Volunteers

BADLY. So, please, if you can come to the conference and man the GHS table, let me know. You can reach me by calling at 525-1011 or send an email to rosemary.oflaherty@sympatico.ca. The time slots for which we need volunteers are: Friday, April 8, 7-7.45 pm and 8.15-8.45 pm Saturday, April 9, 11.30 am – 1.30 pm, 2.30-3.00 pm and 3.30-4.30 pm.

And MORE volunteers ... are needed to contribute articles, stories, memories, pictures, anecdotes, etc. to our proposed website. As you know, GHS member, **Evelyn Scullion**, is master minding this effort. She’s going gang-busters on it but she cannot do it alone. She needs your help and your input. If you have anything to contribute, let me know (see phone number and email address above or collar me at a meeting) OR email Evelyn at ev.scullion@sympatico.ca. **We really need your help.**

GHS Members Honoured

GHS members, **Donald Simon Fraser** and **Blair Williams**, were this year’s winners of the Ontario |Heritage Foundation’s community Recognition Awards, presented on Tuesday, March 29, 2005 in Alexandria. Fraser was honoured for sharing his far-ranging knowledge of Glengarry’s history and genealogy while Williams won the award for his long-standing contribution to the Glengarry Pioneer Museum as well as the preservation of historic buildings in and around Glengarry.

See You on April 7th

... Rosemary O.