



THE GRENVILLE SENTINEL

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Upcoming Events: The GCHS Annual dinner will be held at the Prescott Golf Club on October 18th with Social hour at 5:30 and dinner at 6 pm. Our guest speaker this year is Tom Gobeil and he will be speaking about the people buried in the Blue Church Cemetery. Tom looked after the cemetery for some time and spent a lot of time cleaning the stones and became fascinated with the family histories of the many historical people buried here. He has lots of stories to share with you. Dinner will be barbecued chicken or roast beef \$45.

Spencerville Mill: 11 Water Street, Spencerville. This was a flour and grist mill located on the South Nation River which changed to a feed mill as the owners adapted to the needs of the community. The museum is operated by the Spencerville Mill Foundation volunteers and there is much history and genealogy to be found there. Opens July 2nd to September 4th 10 am to 4 pm.

Merrickville Blockhouse: 279 St. Lawrence Street. Merrickville. This two-storey blockhouse of masonry and timber was built from 1823 to 1833 and is a good example of an early defensive structure built on the Rideau Canal to protect the canal system. The blockhouse is open June 27th to August 18th 7 days a week 10 am to 6 pm and August 19 to September 8 on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 10 to 6.

Student Award SGDH: Devin Leeman, a student at South Grenville District High School, was the recipient of the \$1000 GCHS Goldie Connell Bursary this year for his prowess in history. Congratulations, Devin, and good luck in your studies this coming year. This bursary was named in honour of Goldie Connell, one of our volunteers who spent most of her life collecting and sharing the history of Grenville County.

EARLY MERCHANT LIFE IN PRESCOTT

From its earliest days, Prescott had an impressive number of merchants selling a wide variety of goods and services to the general public. As early as 1834, when the town was scarcely a quarter of a century old, the town's population was estimated at about 2000 inhabitants. At that time there were eleven grocery stores, twelve general stores including two that sold drugs, and three butchers, two bakers and six confectioners. Merchants dealing in non-food items included two cabinet makers, two saddlers, two watchmakers, two tallow chandlers, six tailors and a hatter. In the professional category, there were three lawyers, a notary public and four physicians and surgeons.

In 1858, a quarter century later, the list of merchants had grown in line with the town's population which was around 4000, roughly what it is today. There were over twenty grocers and roughly the same number of dealers in dry goods and general merchandize. They included my great-great grandfather, Samuel Glasgow, who operated a general store on King Street, which in the 20th century was called Glasgow House.

When Samuel opened his store on King Street in the 1840s, it was simply referred to as Glasgow's general store. It would be a stretch to call it a dry goods store, however, as he sold beer and liquors too in addition to general merchandise. One of the major brewers in town was Thomas Crichton, a fellow Presbyterian. Samuel



must have thought a lot of Thomas because in 1853 he had a son who he named Thomas Crichton Glasgow.

The store right beside Glasgows on King Street, which was built at the same time by an

Alexander Smyth, sold saddles, harnesses and leather goods. The two men had bought adjacent lots that ran between Water and King Streets. They each built their own stone store buildings on King Street and together they built an inn on Water Street that had a distinctive carriageway through the centre. In Glasgow's half of the inn, a hotel and saloon was operated by a tenant named John Gibson.



At Sandy Hill Cemetery in Prescott, Alexander Smyth and his family are buried a few meters away from Samuel Glasgow and his family, in the Presbyterian section of the cemetery (these old sections were originally established to distinguish the burial places for the Anglicans,

Methodists, Catholics and Presbyterians but fell into disuse in later years). The Smyth monument shows the name of a son named Henry, who died in 1857. That same year the Glasgows had a son who they named Henry. Neither of these Glasgow children, Thomas Crichton nor Henry, lived to adulthood and are buried beside their parents.



Former Gibson Hotel, 251 Water Street, Prescott, photo taken several years ago

Prescott was a tight knit community in its early days as indeed it remains to this day. It never grew much beyond its maximum size in the nineteenth century, given the physical restrictions of its land area surrounded by two townships and the St. Lawrence River to its south. Its population grew by one-third after the Second World War, and a lot of new housing was built, but then subsided again when the post-war industries shrank in the latter part of the twentieth century. Families also shrank in size so that while the Glasgow family, with six surviving children out of ten who were born, was fairly typical in the Victorian age, today

the average is fewer than two children per couple. So the result is today the town has more households than in the nineteenth century with roughly the same population.

Today Prescott has far fewer stores and merchants selling goods to the public. The stores that it has are generally much larger and outside the downtown core. The remaining stores on King Street selling goods are relatively few. Many of the storefronts of the nineteenth century buildings are now given over to businesses that sell services.

Restaurants were not around in the Victorian period although meals could be procured in one of the many hotels that existed then. Only a couple of bars exist today compared to many in the nineteenth century. The three buildings built by Glasgow and Smyth still stand on King and Water Streets. The inn is empty but has been restored on its outside and is awaiting further redevelopment. The Glasgow store is now Dollar Bazaar selling general merchandise and the Smyth building, which for many years housed the Prescott Journal, is now vacant and awaiting a new owner.



Glasgow Smyth building in 2023

Samuel Glasgow would be heartened to learn a business similar to his was still being carried on in his store a hundred and sixty year later, minus the booze.

Fraser Laschinger, July 5, 2023

Movin' On The Alpheus Jones House Has Changed Hands



Alpheus Jones House,
320 Dibble Street. Prescott Ontario

Stories of our collective past are often rooted in the historical buildings that populate the gem of the St. Lawrence, Prescott.

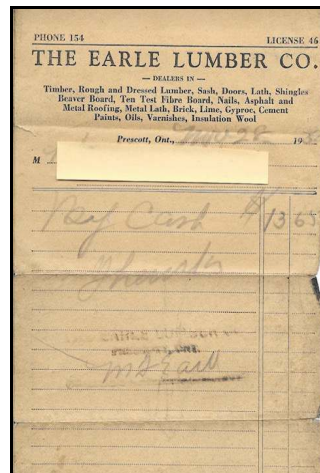
One of those stories is in transition in 2023. Owners of one of the grandest homes in Prescott have sold and are moving on after more than 20 years of residence at 320 Dibble Street. Martin and Susan O’Hanlon are going to a new home in the Thousand Islands area.

The O’Hanlons appreciate the historical significance of their former home. “We loved every bit of it and revelled in the links to the past”, said Martin O’Hanlan. Mr. O’Hanlan and his wife Susan raised

two daughters and a son at 320 Dibble, who have moved out on their own.

“The history of the Alpheus Jones house is why we bought in the first place”, said Mr. O’Hanlan. “We considered ourselves as caretakers of a legacy. That’s why we never modernized – we just fixed it up and restored to the original state where we could.”

The O’Hanlans are not related to the builder of what is affectionately known as “Chestnut House”. (The one acre lot boasts many mature Chestnut trees) Alpheus Jones built the Georgian style manor next to what is now the town hall of Prescott with the help of stonemasons he recruited from England. It was constructed between 1827 and 1832. Limestone from the Kingston area was used for the front facade. When first cut, the stone was said to have a bluish tint, so the new house was known as *The Blue House* and later as *Holmstead*.



This appears to have a 1950 date.

The grand house was heated by eight fireplaces until the 1930s, when a hot water heating system was installed. In 1937, it was sold to the Earle brothers, who divided the interior into two living areas. They started a

lumber business in the rear coach house, which was torn down in the 1970s. After 190 years of service, the house remains a handsome testament to the skill of its builders.

Alpheus Jones was one of the early settlers in the Prescott area. He arrived from Augusta in 1813 – the youngest son of Ephraim and Charlotte Jones. Alpheus was postmaster at Fort Wellington from 1816 to 1828. As Prescott grew and prospered, so did Mr. Jones. He served the town as postmaster and Collector of Customs from 1823 to his death in 1863.

The O’Hanlans’ last days at the house Alpheus Jones built were spent in July of 2023. The O’Hanlans carry with them fond memories of raising a family in a stately old home which has provided a story in Prescott’s rich history...with a new chapter about to be written.

David Graham, July 2023

David is now on the Board of Directors for the Grenville County Historical Society and is making contributions to the newsletter.

William Headlam Diary – Part 13

The next entry in the diary is at the start of 1883, a hundred and forty years ago.

Feb. 1883 The kind of law disbursed in Prescott is as follows. About the 2nd of Jan. S. Bellamy in one cutter and Dr. McNamagh raced down Main Street.

Bellamy fined \$5.00 McNamagh fined \$1.00.

It would appear the doctor was let off with a much smaller fine, which might have been due to his standing in the community or a desire not to offend someone who might be called on in future to save the magistrate’s life.

March 3rd Joe Tanner and friends got in river near Brockville from an iceboat today. Close call.

This entry reminds us that iceboats were a popular form of winter sport on the St. Lawrence River that would be more difficult to do today with climate warming.

Oct. 29th Joe Dubrule went to work for McArthy (sic) Sons Brewers to-day in place of Windy Whalen.

In the last column we learned that Joe Dubrule had bought a saloon in October so going to work at the brewery seems a logical move.

Nov. 2nd Put away boat to-day.

1884 Jan.13/84 Str. Transit laid the telephone cable from Wisers to Ogd. Shipyard.

This is the only entry made for the entire year of 1884. It does recount a significant milestone in technological advances in forms of communication. Alexander Graham Bell had invented the telephone in 1876 and a mere two years later the first long distance telephone call was made

from Ottawa to Pembroke and shortly thereafter from Ottawa to Montreal and Quebec.

Fraser Laschinger, July 2023

Prescott's Citizen of the Year Award



Our illustrious president and dedicated volunteer, Fraser Laschinger, received Prescott's 2023 Citizen of the Year Award in a ceremony of July 31st. Since coming to Prescott in 2010, Fraser has immersed himself in the town of Prescott, the hometown of his father, serving as a Prescott town councillor for four years and as the curator of the Prescott Museum and the former Fowarders' Museum.

He has been on the boards of the Prescott Heritage Committee, the Shakespeare Festival Company, the St. Lawrence Academy, the Sandy Hill Cemetery, and the Grenville County Historical Society. He is a dedicated worker taking a leadership role in all these organizations. Fraser was presented with a plaque, a certificate, and given thanks for all his hard work by Gauri Shankar, the mayor of Prescott. Congratulations, Fraser, for receiving this honour.

Memberships

Annual Membership: \$20.00

Life Membership: \$200

Make checks payable to Grenville County Historical Society Inc. and forward them to:

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Bonnie Gaylord, Editor