



THE GRENVILLE SENTINEL



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Upcoming Events:

Unveiling of Lighthouse Panels in Prescott

On Saturday, May 18th at 11 am there will be a ribbon-cutting at the lighthouse on Water Street for the new historical panels in the lighthouse depicting Prescott's waterfront over two centuries. Fraser Laschinger and our summer employee last year, Christina Nightingale, researched and wrote the information on the plaques and the town of Prescott prepared them and had them mounted in the lighthouse, a good co-operative venture. Please come and join us.

Research Now Available on Saturdays

In addition to our regular Tuesday hours, the archives will be open by APPOINTMENT ONLY Saturdays from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. by Jane Ramsay. In order to secure your request you must contact the Society no later than 1 p.m. the Tuesday prior to your Saturday date. Please contact the Society via our e-mail address or phone at 613-925-0489 and leave a message concerning the date, time, and subject. One of our volunteers will contact you to confirm.

The Bytown & Prescott Model Railroad Club

The Railroad Club held their 1st Annual Model Train and Toy Show on April 13th, 2024 at the Leo Boivin Community Centre in Prescott and it was a tremendous success with a huge crowd checking out the displays. There were many operating displays of model trains, opportunities to buy or



swap train regalia, and meet with so many train enthusiasts. Our group had a table there and met many people interested in the history of our area and in learning about South Grenville's connection to the railroad industry.



Volunteers Jane Ramsay and John Wilson, as well as several others, manned our booth at the train show.

William Headlam Diary -Part 16

May 19th 1890 My old friend J.R. Roach struck town last night and had a big drunk. While on spree he lost his watch and chain.

Today there are widespread warnings by governmental health agencies and doctors speaking out about the dangers of heavy drinking, including binge drinking. The temperance movement was gathering steam in the latter part of the 19th century and we have already seen in a previous entry the passage of the Temperance Act of 1878, spearheaded by Sir Richard Scott, a native of Prescott. Heavier restrictions were to come in the next century with outright prohibition enacted in the

United States and Canada. None of these measures appeared to have been completely successful in the eradication of this human scourge.

May 29th Let coal stove out.

Coal had replaced wood to heat and cook in many homes and businesses in Prescott. There were several prominent coal dealers on Water Street where Headlam had his saloon, including Isaac Plumb and the Buckleys. With the arrival of warm weather Headlam is probably referring to a stove that heated the saloon and not a kitchen stove.

June 4th The first race of Prescott Sailing Club took place 24th May

19 foot class: *Jack*, owner J.P. McCarthy (sic), sailed by C. Horwood 1st

Octopus, owner Dubeau, sailed by E. Horwood 2nd

Proctor Knot, owner Dubeau, sailed by E. Dubeau 3rd

22 foot class 2PM:

Cunctah, owner Jones, sailed by Jones 1st

Katie D, owner J. Dubeau, sailed by Dubeau 2nd

Viking, owner Dorwin, sailed by C. Plumb 3rd

20 ft class: *Electro*, owner A.E. Port, sailed by Port 1st

Flirt, owner T. White, 2nd

22 ft class: *Katie D.*, owner Dubeau's, sailed by Dubeau 1st

Muriel, owner C. Harvey, sailed by Jones 2nd

Now Then, owner Horwood's, sailed by White 3rd

Light winds Dubeau won by fluke.

Interesting there is no mention of Harlow Wiser as he was the instigator of forming the club the previous month. However that was to change in September.

Sept. 2nd Dubeau beat Harlow Wiser today 17 minutes Katie D for \$25 aside

13th Horwood beat Ike Wiser today 6 minutes for \$25 with *Now Then*

It is interesting that the sons of the richest family in town, the Wisers, liked to place side bets on races that were amateur events for the most part. And \$25 was a hefty sum in 1890, a labourer's monthly wage.

Oct. 25th E. Dubeau died today.

Three Dubeaus are referenced in the above account of the 1890 races. E. Dubeau, J. Dubeau and simply Dubeau. E. Dubeau was a cooper and may have worked either at the Wiser Distillery or Labatt Brewery. He was 42 in 1890. J. Dubeau was 30 in that year and probably a cousin.

Jan. 9th 1891 H o r s e s crossed today for first time this winter.

How times have changed! Today they would have to swim across the St. Lawrence in January.

Jan. 20th Went to Ottawa 17th back today had a grand visit.

This is the final entry in the diary that Walter Kingston transcribed in 1938 and what a note to end on! Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister, died 5 months later. And the massacre at Wounded Knee in South Dakota would occur late in the year.

In that same year, the Prescott Journal published an article on the diaries kept by Headlam and said they dated from 1868 to near 1890. Kingston commenced his transcription from January 1879, so the first ten years were omitted. The reason for this is unknown. The 1938 article also provided a few entries that Kingston omitted for some reason.

These additional entries are as follows:
Feb. 20 1878 – first annual ball of Prescott Fire Co.

Sept. 30 1879 – Miss Minnie Purkis married to Mr. Miller of Morrisburg in Presbyterian Church – Crowd large and much damage done to pews.

Oct. 27 1879 – Henry Ford and Miss Pearson married at Maitland, then left for States. No fuss.

Minnie Purkis was the daughter of I. D. Purkis, a prominent Prescott businessman. One supposes he would have made up for the damages to the

church. And that is not the Henry Ford who went on to automotive fame and fortune.

Portolano Canada Shuts Its Doors

Portolano’s outlet store in Prescott has closed down, marking the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. Portolano Products (Canada) was the company’s only Canadian distributor and was a bonded warehouse shipping premiere quality leather and cashmere fashions worldwide. It had been a mainstay in Prescott since 1986 and was the sole remaining outlet store of its kind in eastern Ontario.



Portolano Products Canada Manager Sandra Shay in the Portolano mini-museum formerly located in Prescott, April 2024.

Manager Sandra Shay says it was time to switch from bricks and mortar to an online-only store. “We’re divesting and re-organizing. We have a New York office and I will run a website for Canada. We don’t need the old brick building and warehouse anymore to do the job, even though it’s beloved in this town.”

There’s a lot of history in that old building located at 840 Walker Street. James Elliott, a skilled carpenter, built Prescott’s first carpentry shop and planing mill on the site in 1890. Elliott Brothers later manufactured wooden spools for electrical wires and burial caskets.

Children playing hide and seek in those caskets is just one of the tales heard by Karen Price, who curated the Portolano mini museum, with help from the Grenville County Historical Society. “When we set up the museum at the store we heard stories about how successful Portolano, and earlier the Fischl Glove company, was at bonding with the community. It was more than just a local business that grew. Founder Louis Fischl brought over 200 Czech and Italian Jews in the late 30s and early 40s to work here in Prescott. They escaped the Nazis and thrived, working at a company that emphasized top quality work.”



Portolano mini-museum, formerly located at Portolano Canada outlet store, 840 Walker Street, Prescott.

The human touch that went into glove making ended in the late 1960s. Rising costs forced Fischl to become a wholesaler but the company was finished by 1985.

Enter the Portolano family, experts in tanning and gloving in Italy since 1895. Due to customer demand in North America for quality leather gloves, Portolano Products established operations in New York and Toronto.

In 1986 the company bought the old factory at 840 Walker Street and built a new warehouse next door. Timing and location were everything, says Ms. Shay, who has managed the operation since 1990. “We were a bonded warehouse, keeping product without paying duty. We added products like cashmere apparel and shipped all over the U.S., Australia, the world.”

But times, and business, have changed. Ms. Shay says, “Portolano’s now has a big warehouse in Mt. Vernon, New York. Customers can’t wait 72 hours for us to clear a product through customs channels. Sellers never touch a product and customers go directly to web sites.”

The closing of the Portolano’s outlet brings back memories of other closures in Grenville County, including RCA Victor, Newell Manufacturing Co., Hathaway

Shirts and Ferroxx Iron. Markets change. Technologies change. Customer needs change. Making things by the hands of skilled tradespeople is from a bygone era. And it’s something that is missed.

But treating customers like royalty will be emphasized by Ms. Shay as she develops the next stage of her career. “I’m doing what I enjoy. I am building a **Portolano** (<https://portolanocanada.com/>) web boutique that will offer that feeling of specialness and prove you can sell very high quality gloves on the internet.”

Artifacts and information from the Portolano mini museum will be distributed to the Grenville County Historical Society and some previous owners.

David Graham, March 2024

Marsden Kemp Photographs

Marsden Kemp took many photos in the late 1800s to the early 1900s, many from 1900 to 1914 and they are housed at the Archives of Ontario in Toronto. Kemp lived in Picton for some time and during his travels through Eastern Ontario, he took many photographs of buildings, people and scenery, including many in Leeds and Grenville Counties. The Ontario Archives has digitized these photos and made them available to the general public. These images are

online, free to share and to download.

Some of the photos I discovered there were: Knapp's Roller Boat; Merrickville; Miss Dowsley of Prescott; Prescott pines 1898 - 1920; Prescott Railway station 1903 -1907; Miss O'Neill playing the piano in Prescott 1898 -1920; Mr. and Mrs. O'Neill, Prescott; Mrs. Dowsley and another woman, Prescott, 1898 - 1910; Ruined windmill or lighthouse, Maitland; SS Rapids King running the Long Sault Rapids 1898 - 1920; Saloon bar, Prescott 1903 - 1907; Schooner sailing by the elevator 1903 - 1907; Windmill Point, Lighthouse, Prescott 1898 -1920; Block house, Merrickville; Bishop's Mills Church, as well a many others. A majority of the images do not indicate where they were taken.

Historical Newsclippings

Alan Reid was a journalist in this area in the 1950s and 1960s writing articles on the history of the area for The Prescott Journal, The Recorder & Times in Brockville, and articles for Ottawa newspapers. Recently his daughter Jean Richardson made digital copies of the ones she had in her collection and shared them with us for our archives. There are some interesting tidbits in the collection. Come in for a visit and peruse these articles at your leisure. Jean also shared some moving religious

poems she had written over the years and these are included with her father's works.

Digitization of Prescott Newspapers

Unfortunately our application to have our newspapers digitized was not accepted by the government for this year, but we will submit another application next year and hopefully will be more successful next time.

Extracts from On This Date, Recorder & Times, Brockville, ON

Dec, 23, 1828 - Archibald Dunham, Augusta married to "the amiable Miss Emily", second daughter of Reuben Sherwood, Elizabethtown.

Dec. 23, 1843 - Rev. Joseph Young, Methodist minister, was born in Augusta.

Memberships

Annual Membership: \$20.00

Life Membership: \$200

You may etransfer funds to gchs@truespeed.ca or make checks payable to Grenville County Historical Society Inc. Specify that the money is for membership and forward them to:

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