



THE GRENVILLE SENTINEL

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Upcoming Events: Our archives will be open 10 to 4 every Tuesday this summer.

Another Piece of Prescott's History Disappears

On January 23rd of this year, 2023, the demolition took place of 642 West Street, an old wood frame house dating back to the late 1800's. The house was included in Sandra Robertson's book, *A Century of Houses-Prescott 1800-1900*. The book was published in 2013 and in it Sandra described the house as "looking very tired today". That was somewhat of an understatement. I am saying that because I lived just a few doors down on West St. and walked by it with my dogs almost daily.



642 West Street, Prescott

The white paint on the Victorian style wooden exterior had long faded away to a grey colour and the wood in many places under the roofline had come away and exposed the interior of the attic. Pigeons and other birds could be seen flying through the holes. Some stones had fallen out of the foundation so who knows what other animals made a home for themselves in that house. The house was split into rental units and the owner was referred to by the neighbours as an absentee slum landlord.

I remember when the town ordered the landlord to have the exterior front of the house painted, as the man who did a lot of my renovation work was given the contract. The paint job amounted to a slap-dash effort as that is all that the contract called for. A few boards were tacked up on the soffits to close the holes. Some plywood was put

up against the holes in the foundation. The house came to an ignoble end but had started out as a very well constructed home built by James S. Elliott in the 1890s. Mr. Elliott was the owner of the lumber company in Prescott that went by the name James S. Elliot and Sons. It occupied a large site north of Wood Street and on both sides of the Grand Trunk (later named CNR) railway line. In 1895 they started making high-quality coffins shipped widely across Ontario and in Quebec. Today a couple of the buildings previously owned by Elliott are Portlanos and Prescott Finishing, two turn of the century stone structures. Most of the buildings which were wood have disappeared.

The Elliotts owned town lots along Wood, George and Park Streets and constructed many wood frame single family homes and duplexes. Most of these still exist but are covered in vinyl siding except for the house that Elizabeth Elliott, James's granddaughter, lived in at 342 Park St. West, which still has its original wood siding. When I moved to Prescott in 2010 that house had a lovely yellow paint finish with dark green shutters, which were original. When the owners installed new windows, all the dozens of shutters were removed. Today, the paint on that house is seriously peeling.

In 1899 James gave the house on West St. to his son Fred Elliott, who continued the business with his brother Milton after their father under the name

of Elliott Brothers Ltd. The house remained in the Elliott family until 1973. I assume the house was in nice shape when they sold it. But forty years can inflict a lot of damage to a wooden building if maintenance is neglected.

A larger house of the same design was built by James Elliott at 292 Wood St. West and is included in Robertson's book. It is in lovely shape and painted blue with white trim and an original Victorian style front porch. Given the loss of 642 West Street, it is comforting that another example of this period of architecture is located just around the corner.

Fraser Laschinger, February, 2023

“Everything is Connected to Everything”¹



Charles Melville Hayes

¹ Basic Principles of Naturalized Knowledge System, Dr. F. Henry Lickers, Akwesasne Notes, Volume 1 #2, p88

The Chateau Laurier, Ottawa’s elegant Grand Trunk Railway hotel, is planning a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the movie *The Titanic*. The headline is “Fairmont Chateau Laurier’s unsinkable Titanic Link.” Woefully when Charles Melville Hayes went down with the Titanic, so did his plan for a Prescott Grand Trunk Railway hotel.

Fast forward to Moxie Whitney, a



Moxie Whitney



Former Gibson Hotel, 251 Water Street, Prescott

Prescott lad who loved music and the River. Moxie and Jennifer Whitney had renovated and restored the west unit of the former Gibson’s hotel at 251 Water Street - the third floor being where he

kept all of the music and papers connected to his musicality. In 1967, Moxie Whitney brought his Chateau Laurier musicians to Prescott to help us celebrate Canada’s 100th anniversary

Fast forward again to the 1980s when the Chateau’s Concert Hall was being transformed by architect Robin Clark into Zoe’s, a beautiful space named after Sir Wilfrid Laurier’s wife, Lady Zoe. In 1989 the rejuvenated Prescott Harbour was created and Robin Clark – always with an eye for the perfect spot for the perfect hotel, found the 3.8 acre site on Fort Wellington Bay. Sadly Robin’s plans were sunk during the 2008 financial crisis and these lands returned to Town ownership, well protected by federal letters patent and ready for the right development ever since.

Now years have passed and times have changed; climate change and national and international events have created a different planet requiring drastic new approaches. Moxie’s son Paul, after a life of adventure, has flown back to his dad’s home turf – to the St. Lawrence River and the historic village of Cardinal and with a strong commitment to the sustainability of our



Paul Whitney, owner of African Bronze Honey Co., Cardinal

environment. Paul and his partner have established the African Bronze Honey Co. supporting local bee-keeping and sustainable community business initiatives. Learn more at

<https://www.africanbronzehoney.com>.

Finally – hats off to our Grenville County Historical Society and their saving of the Grand Trunk Railway Station – alive with so much interconnected history!

Sandra Lawn, Guest Contributor

William Headlam Diary – Part 11

The first entry in this segment has no date but was made between Mar. 29, our last entry and May 19th, the next in the diary.

No date Harlow Wiser and Cocle rowed a double scull race with Sharpe and Easter. Sharpe and Easter won.

This is the last reference to Harlow Wiser in this diary for a number of years. His father was to send him to the United States for several years to oversee his extensive cattle operations in Kansas and the Oklahoma Territory.

May 19th Sam Blacklock and Vermont Thomson were put in the coop for being drunk. Fined \$3 and costs.

No mention where the disorderly conduct had occurred but possibly in Headlam's own saloon, as he was familiar with the details of the event.

May 30th Captain Lang J Thomson J.P. McArty (sic) and others went to Brockville on the *Buckley*. Coming home we got caught in a fog. We cast anchor opposite Capt. Miller's and all got rowed ashore by Bill Miller. Pilots Corrow and Daniels were drunk.

The steamer Buckley had been acquired by Whitney and Plumb in April of the previous year (Sentinel No. 315). Having two drunk pilots aboard didn't help when they encountered a fog bank.

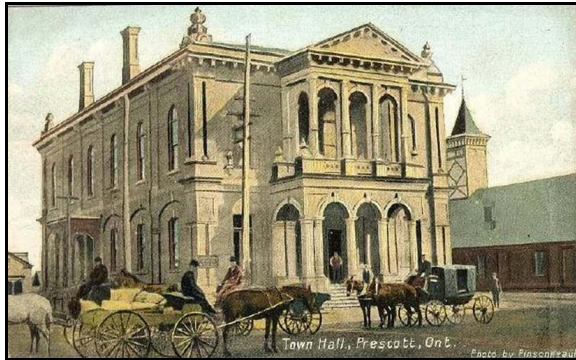
July 6th Capt. Moore fell down the hatch of his boat.

This laconic entry without further elaboration leaves one wondering if alcohol didn't play a role here as well as in the previous entry.

Aug. 25th The great steam boat race between the *Sport* of Alexandria Bay and *Lancet* of Ogd. came off at 3:15 10 miles and turn. *Lancet* wins.

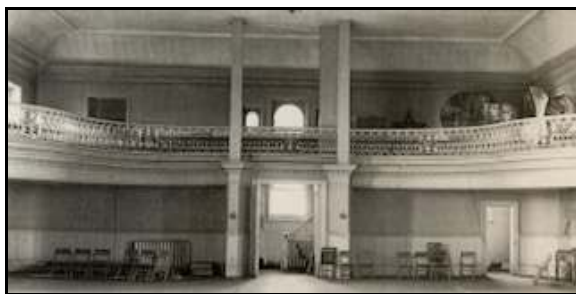
One imagines bets were placed on this race but as no local parties were involved, Headlam might have refrained from placing a bet himself.

Nov. 11th 1881 Went to the opening of the new Prescott Opera House. Play “London Assurance”.



Town Hall, Prescott ca 1910

The opera house was located on the second floor of the Prescott Town Hall on King St. and named Victoria Hall. It is interesting that it took over five years to open the new hall after the building had been completed. This suggests that funds were not available until then to finish the interior space including a large stage and balcony.



The beautiful balcony was located in the old Prescott Town Hall, which was built in 1874 and demolished in 1962

For many years this was to provide the preeminent entertainment centre for

Prescott, which has never really been replaced since the building was demolished in 1962.

Dec. 16/81 Jerry Higgins died today.

Jerry (Jeremiah) and Dennis were brothers, sons of Patrick Higgins and Ellen O’ Donnell. Their baptisms were listed in the St. Mark’s RC Church records at our archives, as were their marriage records. Dennis was listed as a Hotel Keeper when he married and his parents’ names were given. Jerry was 32 years old when he died in 1881 and he is buried in St. Mark RC Cemetery in Prescott.

Fraser Laschinger, February, 2023

Royal Request

A request arrived from Sarah Jane Dumbrille seeking the current name of the little 10 year-old-girl from Toronto, Tina Fisher, who presented a bouquet of flowers to Queen Elizabeth II when she visited Prescott in 1984. The queen was celebrating her Platinum Jubilee and Prescott was celebrating 200 years since the first settlers arrived here. Tina came to Prescott by herself on the train from Toronto to stay with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Etheridge of RR 3, Prescott, so she would be able to see Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. Fortunately, she was

able to present her bouquet of white carnations, yellow daisies, and baby's breath to the queen with the assistance of a sympathetic Ontario Provincial Police officer. Sarah Jane wrote a book about the Queen's visit here in 1984, *The Royal Visit to Prescott: Its Preparation and Staging*. The book tells of the many incidents that happened during the event and includes many photos of the Queen and Prince Philip at the fort. The story was picked up as well by Joanna Lumley, a well-known English author, who included the story in her book, *A Queen For All Seasons*. If you can help Sarah Jane find Tina Fisher, please let us know and we will get the information to her as quickly as possible.

Rapids in the St. Lawrence



Rick Carson gave us a copy of this postcard of the Rapids Prince in the rapids in the St. Lawrence River between Prescott and Montreal that used to be in the St. Lawrence River before the Seaway was built.

National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week is being celebrated April 16th to 22nd this year and we have a very hard-working group of volunteers devoting their time to the Grenville County Historical Society. Valerie Schulz, Fraser Laschinger, Gini Leonard, Dave Robertson, Jane Ramsay, Tom Van Dusen, John Wilson, Christina Nightingale, and myself look after the many different jobs that need to be done to keep us operational and to preserve the history and genealogy of our area. Thank you to these dedicated individuals for the many hours they have spent volunteering for the society.

Memberships

Thank you for renewing your membership for 2023. It is much appreciated. If you did not renew, this will be your last issue. There's still time to do this before the next newsletter.

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