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**GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR HERITAGE SOCIETY**


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# The Mill Whistle



## Our New Home!

Mary Kelly

In early February, the Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society had one of their greatest dreams become a reality as the keys to the former mill Training Centre were handed over to Deputy Mayor Mike Browne, representing the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor. Deputy Mayor Browne then handed over the keys to Society President Lucien Forbes. After many years of wishing and waiting, the Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society finally has a permanent home in the best location possible. What better place for our many artifacts to be housed than on the site of the paper mill that was responsible for the town we live in?

The 2019 Annual General Meeting of the Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society was held in our new building on Wednesday, February 20<sup>th</sup>.

Members in attendance were treated to tours of the building and were as enthusiastic as the members of the Board in recognizing the potential that this site holds for our Society. Over the next few months, we will be sprucing up the place and making sure that all of the artifacts that have been gifted to us over the years are displayed in just the right place. We have an impressive collection already but we anticipate that as word spreads about our new home, we may be gifted with many more pieces of the history of our town and its peoples.

### In This Issue

1. Our New Home
2. Society News
3. The Northcliffe Nook
4. Collection Report
5. Bryan's Blog
6. In Memorium

### Cover Photo

The new home of the Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society centre. The former mill Training Centre, Scott Avenue.

### CONTACT US

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MEMBERSHIP: \$10 for a multi-year  
term (renew in 2020)

(Cont'd from page 1)

In addition to the building, we have been gifted with some of the land surrounding the former training centre. This is great news as we have had a group of dedicated volunteers working on getting one of the old Abitibi tractors up and running. It will be wonderful to see it sitting outside our new home. This additional space will also allow us to display other bigger items, should they become available to us. The volunteers with the Society will be spending quite a bit of time moving our collection from our old home in the Town Square Mall to our new home and setting things up just right. If we need help, we will be in touch!



We are very thankful for donations to the GFW Heritage Society. In 2018 we were pleased to accept a commercial photocopier from Re/Max Real Estate. Making the presentation L-R: Aaron Cashin, Dena Thomas, Justin Cox, Gloria Kelly, Mark Beson (Owner), GFW HS Chair Lucien Forbes and Shelley Hutchings.

Please stay tuned for the announcement of the official grand opening of the new home of the Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society. We are quite excited to finally be able to welcome one and all to our new home!

## Society News

### Mary Kelly

The executive board has held nine meetings since the start of the new year. We usually meet on the first Wednesday of each month. As usual, we have been busy on many fronts; helping to manage our RIVER GOLD fundraiser, cataloguing and organizing our extensive collection, working on a tractor project, welcoming visitors and answering inquiries, among other things! Our biggest acquisition was our new home! That was certainly a dream come true!

Our RIVER GOLD fundraiser has been a wonderful fundraiser for our group and we could not do it without the many volunteers who come out every three weeks to help with the count. Thank you all! Some of the money that we have raised has been used to purchase equipment and supplies that allow us to properly catalogue and preserve the artifacts in our collection. On a go forward basis, some of the money will also go towards the operation of our new home.

One of our latest projects has been the restoration of one of the tractors that was used many years ago in

the mill operations. When it is up and running and fully restored, we look forward to displaying this outside of our new home. We hope to add to the collection of items that could be displayed on the grounds of our new home.

We were fortunate enough, through a government grant, to be able to hire two people to help us to digitize a portion of our collection of photographs and negatives. Hopefully, we will be able to put more names to faces.

### Who are they Session

#### Audrey Burke

On Friday, April 26, 2019 we held a Picture Identification Session at the Corduroy Brook Nature Centre. Approximately 50 people attended and helped us identify people and places in our photo collection. We were especially happy that the bride shown on the promotional poster for the event was also in attendance. Mrs. Champion told us that her wedding dress cost \$35 and her cake was made by her aunt- Abigail Pelley. We were able to provide Mrs. Champion with more pictures of her wedding.

# The Northcliffe Nook

## The Paper Mill Opens

### Colin Wall

It was 110 years ago, in the last months of 1909, the new paper mill at Grand Falls opened and began production, with the first roll of newsprint for the market coming off the line on December 22, 1909. This was a significant event, not only for Grand Falls, but also as a major move towards industrialization in Newfoundland and Labrador. The magnitude of the financial investment and work in the four years prior to opening was amazing—not only was a paper mill constructed, but a new and modern town had been built and a workforce of over 1,000 people had been drawn to the centre of the island to begin a new way of life.



Group of guests invited to the official opening of the mill on Oct. 9, 1909. The photo is taken in front of the Log Cabin which was built for Mason Beeton.

In George Hicks' account of the banquet that was held in the mill buildings to celebrate the opening of the paper mill on October 9, 1909, Alfred Harmsworth's remarks after the dinner highlighted some of the skepticism that had surrounded the project and the warnings of failure they'd received. "We were told that there was no wood here and that the Exploits River could never be harnessed to power, on account of the ice. We were told that no foreigner would ever come to stay here and some experts told us that we could never dry our paper because the climate was so moist," Lord Northcliffe said that night.

The paper mill on this site prospered and operated for 100 years, providing newsprint not only to the Harmsworths' publishing empire in London but also to publishers and newspapers around the world. The town grew and flourished alongside the paper mill just as Lord Northcliffe had envisioned when he expressed his hopes for the future of the community: "...to make Grand Falls a Garden City, whose homes will be as good as any in the island..."

## The Collection Report

Audrey Burke

For a number of years there has been a large collection of negatives, slides, photos, original cartoons, other archival documents and artifacts from the estate of Albert Hillier stored at the GFW Heritage Centre. This collection was donated by David Hillier, a nephew. Albert Hillier was the official photographer for the AND Company. He had his own photography studio and took hundreds of family and wedding photographs. He also immortalized special events and the growth of the town. In addition to this he was a prolific artist. He left behind a collection of cartoons and drawings of buildings that have long since been torn down. This collection was stored in everything from grocery bags to cookie tins.

In 2017, with the help of a grant, the society was able to purchase negative scanners, protective sleeves and binders to house the vast collection. A large group of volunteers then set about the monumental task of sorting, organizing, cataloging and scanning the collection. Two years later approximately 12,000 negatives, slides and prints have been scanned, stored and made available for viewing. We are now in need of volunteers to help identify the people and places the subjects. Among the photos are a large number of family and wedding photos.

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Boxes and Bags of Negatives



Some of Albert Hillier's Photos Cataloged

## Bryan's Blog

by Bryan Marsh

On the site of the once humming, roaring, buzzing and smoking behemoth there now remains a relatively small and once out of place building, not totally dissimilar to one that stood there before Newfoundland's first great industrialized complex came to be.

You can look from the site of the original Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company Main Office and see the Abitibi Training Center. Only about 600 feet separate the sites of the first and last buildings that once belonged to the paper mill.

The old general office was reportedly built in 1906, though it may have been a little earlier, maybe the first offices of the AND Company were in a log building. In the early years of the Company it housed the General Office's, Engineering Department and the Woods Department. In this nascent years of the Grand Falls operation the floors of this building echoed with the footsteps of: Beeton, Lincoln, Hardy, Scott, Wood, Judge, Dorrity, Tulk and even the Harmsworths themselves. Those same figures now memorialized in the pictures and artifacts that will be housed in the training center.



*The original general office was demolished in the Spring of 1962*

another purpose, through the efforts of the local Member of the House of Assembly Al Hawkins and the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, an agreement was reached with the provincial government where this building was turned over to town, who then gave it to the Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society. To me it seems appropriate that the areas heritage will now be housed near to where it all began, in a building near the Exploits River



*The original general office of the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company*

As the mill expanded the general office was outgrown, by 1924 the offices of the AND Company had moved to the familiar facade of the mill itself. I believe at some point the old building might have been used as a dwelling and possibly something else. In 1934 it found a new purpose. It became the first public library in the town of Grand Falls, The Daily Mail Library and for many years it existed as that.

In 1962 after having no further purpose the old daily mail was torn down and a vacant space was left where it once stood. The training center is the only building left of the Grand Falls mill complex. It was one of, if not the newest building on the site. It was built sometime in the 1990's. Originally slated for demolition or for



*Former mill training centre - now the home of the Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society*

## Labour Day - 2019

Holly Rowsell

This year has been an eventful one for the Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society so it was only fitting that our float in the annual Labour Day Parade featured the major project that we, as a society, had taken on...the restoration of a 1929 Caterpillar tractor that had been originally used by the A.N.D Company for logging.

This gem in the rough was discovered in a beaten-down shed, on a boggy hill in North Harbour. It took a lot of maneuvering, but we successfully returned it to our town for a complete make-over.



The tractor when it first arrived

Restoration began on December 3rd, 2018 and Bruce Rowsell (with complete support from the Society) adopted the herculean task of restoring it back to its original glory. After much research, building parts, replacing parts, painting and polishing, the tractor not only looked totally refurbished, but the engine was also brought back to life that rendered the tractor drivable! It was a no-brainer that this remarkable piece of equipment would be featured in the Labour Day parade!

Featured on the float with the tractor was the old mill whistle. With the help of a laptop, an amplifier, and a sound bite, we were able to regale the crowds with the sound

of the iconic mill whistle as we followed the parade route from Main Street to High Street. The expressions of recognition and nostalgia on the faces of people in the crowd was a heart-warming sight. We saw as parents bent down to tell their small children, who were too young to remember the sound, all about the whistle and what it meant to the citizens of Grand Falls-Windsor.

We look forward to putting this splendid piece of our history on display at our new centre for all to enjoy!



The original mill whistle, brought back to life



After complete restoration. Painted the original gun metal grey



A young citizen admiring the GFW Heritage Society float.



### In Memory of Cathy Simpson

We remember with great affection our dear friend Cathy Simpson. Cathy was our Secretary at the GFW Heritage Society for a number of years. She spent many hours performing her duties as secretary and writing our quarterly newsletter. In fact this is our first newsletter since her passing in February of 2018. Cathy was very passionate about preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of Grand Falls-Windsor. She loved this town that she grew up in.

Cathy was a prolific artist and writer. Her books for children are read and enjoyed by children near and far. Her knitting and embroidery skills were second to none. Many of her friends were grateful recipients of her works of art.

Cathy is greatly missed by her fellow volunteers at the GFW Heritage Society. We extend our sincere condolences to her husband Jerry Oxford and her son William Oxford.

