

Magog's 100th
anniversary issue



**the
Record**
Tuesday, May 31

Magog's centennial: Life during summer of 1888

THE VILLAGE

In the summer of 1888 — exactly one hundred years ago — Magog stood at a parting of the ways. On the one hand, it still moved much as it always had to the music of running water and the steady plod of horses' hooves — there were still five blacksmiths in town (John Perdue, Francis Grenier, Baptiste Payette, Remi Palurday and Edward Paquette), a saddler (Charles Renaud) and a harness-maker (Joseph Dupuis). H.L. Knowlton dealt in hides for leather and P.D. Longeway ran the livery stable.

Besides the horses, most people in Magog also kept a cow or two, a few pigs and chickens so that on warm and windless days the village would have been redolent of manure and outdoor privies. There were dogs and cats and children in the streets and on dry days merchants still found time to stand in their shop doors smoking pipes in the sunshine.

"During wet weather," John Pe-

ters wrote in his memoirs, "mud on Main Street was 8 inches deep. Common sight to see husband pick up wife — hoopskirts, bustle and all — and carry her across the street. Worth watching on windy days."

But Hoyt and Atwood, Hoopskirt Manufacturers, were gone from Magog and the scream of steam whistles repeatedly insisted the machine age had come, that a village once run by water was now being driven by steam, that the independent village craftsmen were being displaced by machine-minders and factory hands. Steam boats and steam trains had brought prosperity and population — it was now around 2,000 — and the old creaking water-wheel powered mills, and the rickety bridge without handrails that graced a thousand parlour walls, were gone forever. The Village of the Outlet was swiftly being replaced by the Town of Magog.

THE MILL

The largest employer was the Magog Textile & Print Works, ca-

pitalized at a million dollars (when a million was worth something) and employing 200 hands. Even so, it was expanding that very summer by installing new machinery to increase the workforce to 500. It would soon turn out eight to ten million yards of printed cloth annually.

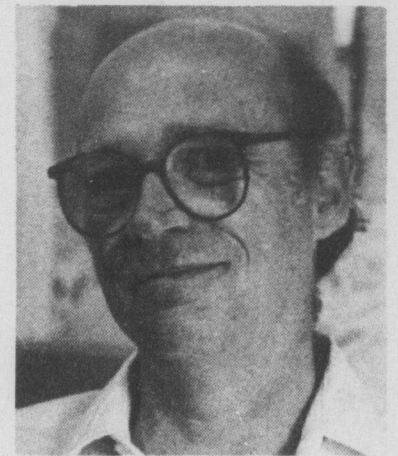
In June, 1884, it had been the first mill in all Canada to print cotton cloth. The town had encouraged its creation and exempted it from taxes for 15 years. Stanstead granite had been barged up from Cedarville for foundations, window and door sills, and the William Hobbs Cotton Mill in Coaticook had been bought out. Hobbs became Vice President and General Manager of the new plant and went to England to buy machinery and hire skilled operatives.

"Wages ran 9 cents an hour for general labor," Peters recalled, "12½ cents for carpenters, 13½ cents for machinists." Printers and Engravers received the highest pay and these — along with management — were all English. J.K. Ward was the President, W.J. Pullen Secretary-Treasurer, R.B. Lindsay Cashier and David Whe-

well Superintendent. Master Mechanic was J.E. Perdue, Fireman Robert McFerlane, and the foremen were William Boyd, A. Chalk, J.A. Donigan, E.B. Taylor and Robert Smith.

Unskilled labor was mostly French Canadian and they earned as little as 40 cents a day for 11½ hours, 75 cents a day on the average, and fines were levied for spoiled work. Hours ran from 6:30 in the morning when the workers were expected to be at their machines, to 6 o'clock at night, half-day Saturdays.

In 1882, a Royal Commission had visited 465 mills and factories across Canada and found 2,000 children below the age of 14 working in them, 173 below the age of 10. A new Royal Commission on the Relation of Capital and Labour was gathering testimony during that very summer of 1888 and learning that girls as young as 13 and 14, boys as young as 10 or 11, were working in cotton mills. This encouraged Premier Mercier to revise Quebec's Factory Act in 1890 to ban boys under 16 and girls under 18 from working in mills that were 'unhealthy and dangerous'.



Bernard Epps

Even then, parents desperate for another wage to feed enormous families, often lied about their children's ages.

"The Magog Hosiery Company," said the 1888 Eastern Townships Business and Farmers' Directory, "is also an important industry... giving employment to about 50 women and girls, and turns out a large quantity of first class work."

There were a number of smaller factories besides — the Magog Steam Carriage Factory (L.K. Drew, manager) did not make steam-powered carriages but made carriages by steam-power. There was a steam saw mill and a steam grist mill (George Ayer, Prop.) and a steam sash and door factory.

THE RAILROAD


On June 1st, 1888, the Canadian Pacific Railway formally took possession of the old Waterloo & Magog and steam trains whistled into the little station several times a day from Montreal and Megantic. The W&M had brought rails to the village in 1877 but it had lost money every year and when the CPR offered to buy it out for about 45% of the value of its shares, its directors had no choice. Canadian Pacific directors let it be known they were quite prepared to build a rival route and drive the W&M out of business anyway.

In fact, a section of the new CPR Short Line was being laid that very summer north of the Magog River because the old W&M tracks south of the river were judged unsuitable. When the new section was finished in November, 1888, the old route was closed. The W&M, wrote Derek Booth, had been "a highly speculative, shakily financed, marginal branch line operation; it was a dream."

On June 6, a violent windstorm blew down some 2,500 feet of the new 50-foot-high trestle over the Missisquoi at Eastman (it collapsed again in 1907) and traffic had to be rerouted for six months over the old W&M line. Construction gangs on the Short Line and the trestle were largely Italian and — construction workers being the



The first bridge over the Magog River at Bolton at the Outlet, as the town of Magog was then called. From a print circa 1837.



Normand Chicoyne, druggist

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Magog: 'a rip-roaring, wide-open town' votes its self 'wet' in 1888

From last page

same everywhere — there was sometimes trouble in Magog. "It was a rip-roaring, wide-open town," wrote John Peters, "with an old man of 140 lbs. as Bailiff for a police force."

Actually there were two bailiffs in Magog in 1888, M.A. Chamberlain and F.X. Gamanche, and booze was not the problem it had once been. Under the Scott Act, Stanstead County had been 'dry' for four years until it voted itself 'wet' again in 1888. Richmond voted itself 'dry' that year and Brome County was also 'dry'. Sherbrooke remained steadfastly 'wet' but the **Women's Christian Temperance Union** held its 5th provincial convention there that summer and boasted of membership in almost every township.

There was a billiard parlour (N. Lepine) in Magog but, besides the two hotels (**Park House**, William Jamieson, Prop. and **Union House**, under Napoleon and Zephirin Alard, the village's social life revolved mainly around the two schools and four churches.

Father Charles E. Millette shepherded the Catholic community — French, Irish and Italian — Rev. M. Lidstone the Methodists, and Rev. C.P. Dow the Millerite Church of the Advent. The Anglican minister was the Rev. James Hepburn and John Peters remembered; "I have seen Rev. Hepburn of the Anglican Church hold service in the morning, snowshoe ten miles to Georgeville, hold service in the afternoon, snowshoe back and evening service in Magog."

Mrs. Hepburn, Eva Susan Tuck, was pregnant that summer of 1888 and on September 15 gave birth to a baby boy. He was christened Channel Galbraith and, although born in Magog, he grew up in Richmond where his father was transferred soon after to become Archdeacon Hepburn, Honorary Brigadier, Military Cross and Commander of the British Empire.

THE LAKE

"Magog is a favorite summer resort for tourists," said the 1888 **Directory**, "the romantic scenery and pure bracing air attracting many people hither from all parts of Canada and the States...Lake Memphremagog is one of the most beautiful and one of the most romantically situated sheets of water upon the continent."

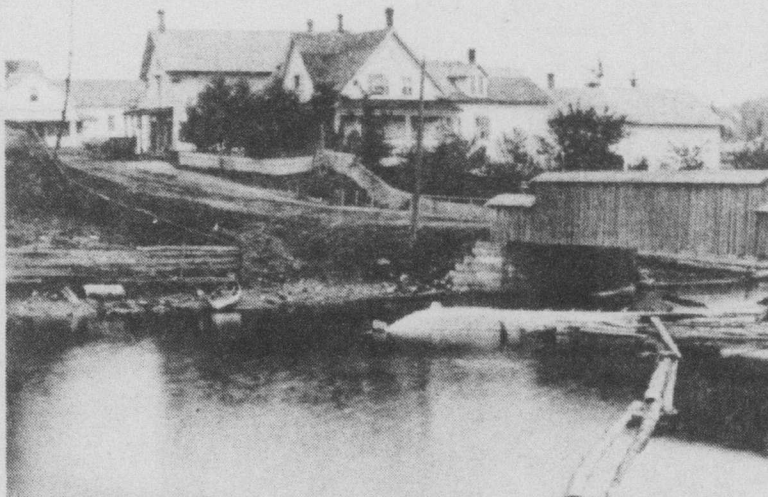
Excursion trains ran out from Montreal on summer weekends bringing holiday makers to the lake. They could be let off right on the wharf beside the steamers **Mountain Maid** and **Lady of the Lake**. The schedules of both boats were adjusted to meet incoming and outgoing trains.

Steam had first come to the lake in 1851 when the **Jenny Lind** was launched. (Jenny Lind, the 'Swedish Nightingale', had had her triumphant North American debut

See next page



The George B. Kent general store about 1905.



The house built by Alvin H. Moore at 12 Merry St. South, near where the Bank of Montreal now stands. Moore married Ralph Merry III's great-granddaughter Julia Merry around 1860 and organized a meeting in 1855 to change the village name from the Outlet to Magog. He ran the town's general store after buying it from Ralph Merry V, Ralph III's grandson.



The house built in 1814 by Magog's first settler, Ralph Merry III. The Merry house is still standing at the corner of Merry and Main streets in Magog.

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By the lake: Magog home of steamboats

From last page

in September 1850, then went on tour under the capable management of P.T. Barnum to become the rage of the age.) Her name was changed to the **Mountain Maid** soon after and she was later purchased by the **Waterloo & Magog** and completely refurbished to haul both passengers and freight the length of the lake. New wharves were built and a system of nine lighthouses to aid navigation in poor visibility.

She was joined by the **Lady of the Lake** in 1867, sold to the **Connecticut & Passumpsic** in 1885 to operate from its terminus in Newport, Vermont. On July 11 that summer of 1888, another bad windstorm

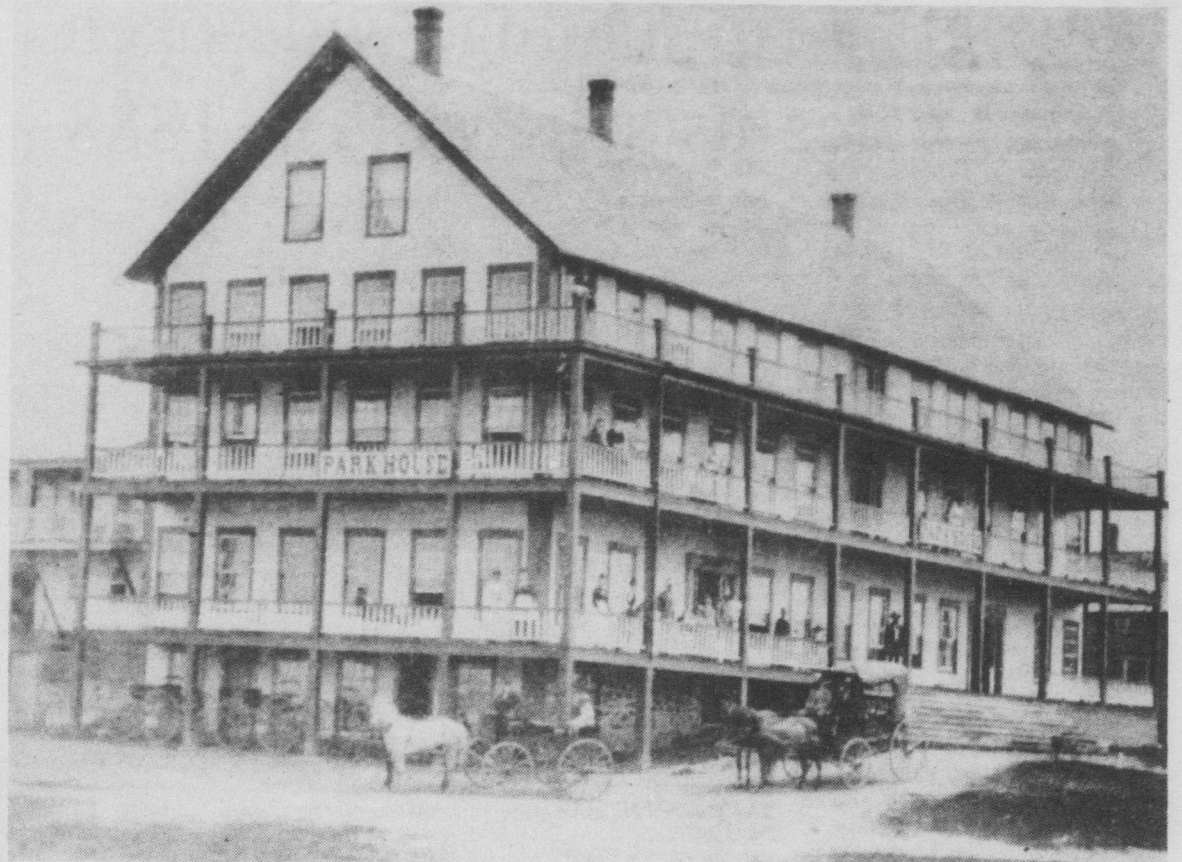
drove the **Lady of the Lake** aground on East Shoals near Magog. The **Mountain Maid** rescued the 150 passengers aboard and the lightened steamer was floated off next day without any real damage.

THE PEOPLE

Magog's mayor that summer was A.H. Moore, proprietor of a general store, resident director of the **Magog Textile & Printing Company** and Justice of the Peace. L.A. Audet was the town's secretary-treasurer, clerk of the commissioners' and magistrates' courts, commissioner of the Superior Court, notary public and insurance agent.

The **Directory** listed 183 farmers

See next page



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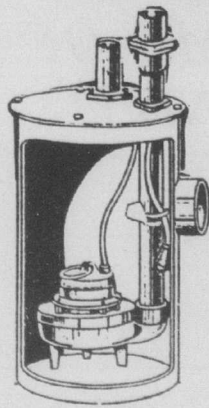
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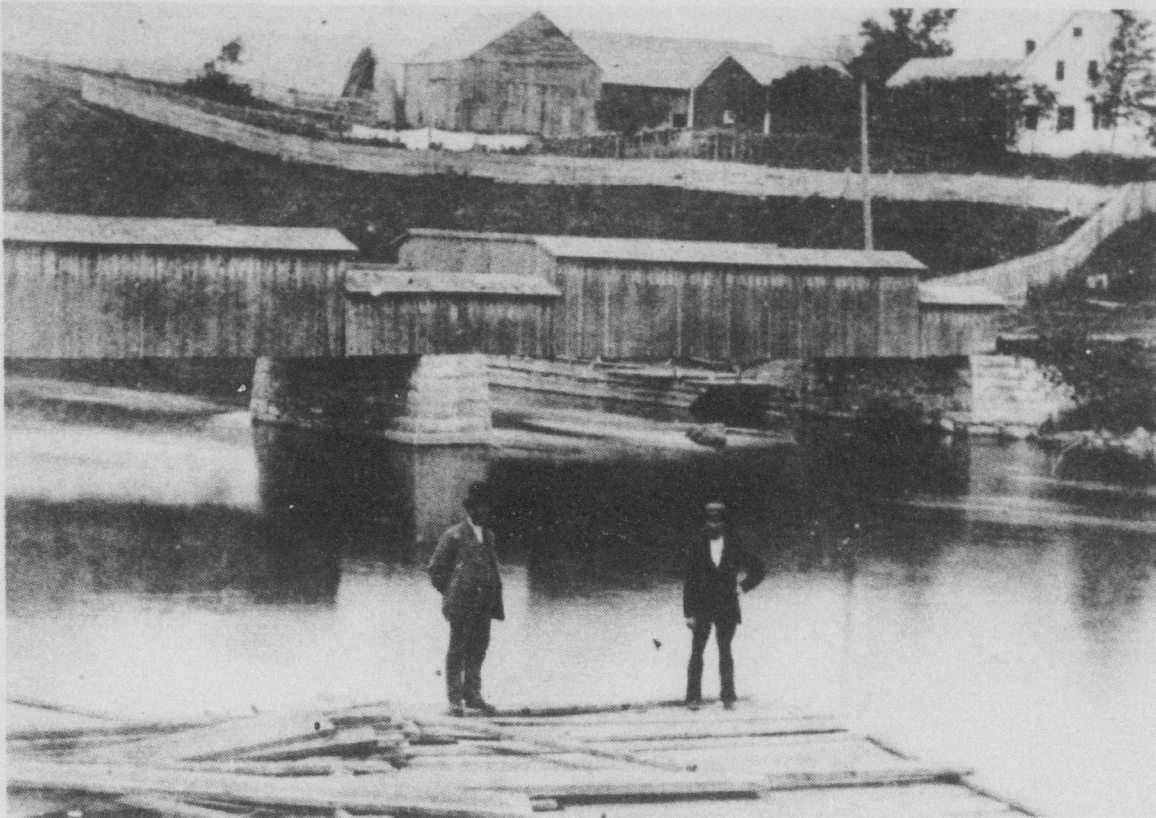
1136 King East, Sherbrooke
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Night emergency 569-9977



*Top:
The Park House Hotel at the corner
of Merry St. South and Bellevue in
1880. The hotel was destroyed by
fire in 1905.*

*Bottom:
Magog's business centre: Merry St.
South in 1875.*

The Record would like to thank The Memphremagog Library for the use of these old photographs.



The Merry St. South bridge circa 1888.

1888: 2 doctors, 4 general stores

From last page

in Magog Township in 1888 and there were extensive lumbering operations going on, mostly by Prouty & Miller of Newport. There was also a government fish hatchery "under the management of Mr. R.M. Moore, which hatches out from one to five million salmon-trout and white-fish ova annually, which are deposited in the various sheets of water in the Eastern Townships, and which are beginning to exhibit satisfactory results."

There were two doctors in town, G.O. Somers and A.G.H. Beique, but only one undertaker, J.H. Ellis, and he had to supplement his income by selling sewing machines and parlour organs. W.R. Brown and V.E. Chamberlain sold agricultural machinery. The Bell Telephone exchange was operated by E.H. Guilbert who doubled as a merchant tailor.

Besides A.H. Moore & Co., general stores were run by L. Pratt & Co., Albert Gleason and T. Guilbert. There were three butchers in town (Joseph Deragon, Laurent Gendron and Paul Gaudreau) and just as many bakers (Hugh Comtois, F.X. and W.H. Dalpre).

James Shedrick & Son, Joseph Cepilon and L.S. Fournier were grocers while A.D. Boucher ran both a grocery and a boarding house. Other boarding house operators catering to mill hands, railway workers and holiday makers were Alfred Chevalier, David Blouin, L.E. Rexford (who also sold furniture) and Mrs. Isaac Bou-

tin. Two other businesswomen in traditional trades were Miss Senecal, dressmaker, and Miss E. Chamberlain, "ladies furnishings and fancy goods."

There was one barber, Patrick Desnoyers, and just to prove that shrill factory whistles and steam-driven machinery had not entirely

taken over the village, George Gould still worked as a cooper and John Gustin as a wheelwright. John Fontaine was a commercial fisherman on the lake; William McKenna, Joseph and E.F. Gauvin were tinsmiths and the Directory listed several others as 'gentlemen' who did nothing at all.



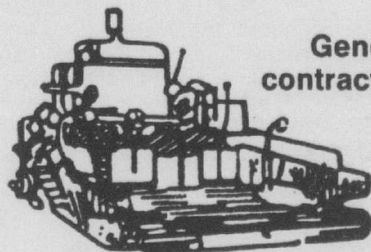
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This is a picture of Lady of the Lake taken in 1915, the last season the boat was in operation on Lake Memphremagog. Shown are Captain Bullock and Pilot Jack McEwan. Bullock died the following winter.

Proud to be part of the
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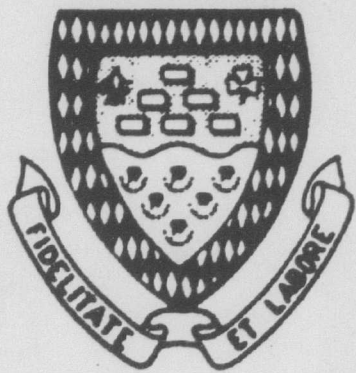
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Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Fields (centre), present owners of the Merry House, among the capacity crowd at a

speech given by historian Marie-Paule Labrèque about Magog's first settler Ralph Merry III.

Ralph Merry III: early pioneer

By Roy MacLaren

MAGOG — One thing that Marie-Paule Labrèque is sure of is that Magog's first settler, Ralph Merry III, was definitely not a United

Empire Loyalist.

What leaves the historian puzzled is why Merry left the comforts of life in well-established Providence, Rhode Island in 1798 or 1799 to come to the wild frontier along

the banks of Lake Memphremagog.

"He was not just an adventurer or a land grabber," Labrèque said at a recent talk about the Eastern Townships pioneer at Magog town hall. "Was he a shrewd businessman who foresaw the future possibilities of the land, was he naive or too confident in his transactions? We have no ready answers."

LaBrèque's speech was part of the town council's 100th anniversary celebrations.

Ralph Merry III was born on March 16, 1753 at Lynn, Massachusetts, the grandson of a wealthy English shipowner who had come to America early in the 18th century.

Merry first moved from Lynn to Providence, Rhode Island and later moved on to St. Johnsbury, Vermont around 1792. At this time St. Johnsbury was still a primitive village in the process of being hacked out of the wilderness, and was a world away from the cultured cities of the Eastern Seaboard Merry had left.

The settler was drawn by land grants available in the new townships of Lower Canada, which were being advertised in the *Rutland Herald*. He soon purchased large tracts in Bolton and Hatley. Merry was also extremely interested in obtaining land in Acton, but his requests for property in this area were denied by the government land committee.

"I don't know why he wanted to be in Acton, which as far as I can see was then just a cedar swamp, when he could have been here at the mouth of beautiful Lake Memphremagog," Labrèque, herself an Acton Vale resident, said.

When Merry arrived at the Outlet in Bolton (as Magog was then called) with his wife, children and

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Alexandre Beique at his apothecary's shop in about 1908 (above), and a few years later (below) after Dr. Eudore C. Cabana took over. Photos courtesy of druggist Marcel Courchesne, who to-

day operates one door down the street. The store's motto hasn't changed: 'Where we help people to live to 100 or close.'



La caisse populaire
de Magog-Est

"On the occasion of the Town of Magog's Centenary, the Caisse Populaire Magog-Est is taking the opportunity to salute its English members."

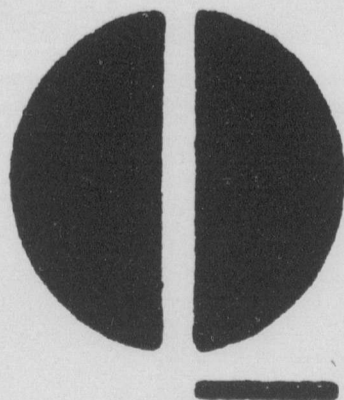
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Despite prosperity Merry III met with much tragedy

From page 6

livestock, he found an area with no roads, no schools, no police, no justice system and no medical services. It was 1798 or '99.

"Adding to this, total confusion developed in the mode of land concession, complicated by politics, incompetence, greed, and sheer ignorance," Labrèque said. "It is very hard with today's imagination to understand the misery these people went through."

Coming to Bolton from St. Johnsbury was "surely a harrowing trip that may have taken several days over snow and ice," Labrèque said. She told a story about settlers in Shipton who were bringing their family to the homestead by sled. When they stopped for the night they found two of the children frozen to death.

Ralph Merry quickly built a grist and saw mill, and by 1809 had tried to mine iron. The ore was not rich

enough to sustain the venture, however, but a Merry woollen mill was in operation soon afterwards as well.

In 1823 Merry financed the opening of a general store, and local settlers began to move in around his holdings.

Despite his relative prosperity, Merry also met with financial difficulty, and his brother Jonathon, a merchant in Boston, bought back much of Ralph-and-son's land. In

1816 a large part of it was seized by the sheriff and sold. The reason the store was financed by Merry and not owned by him outright was probably because he was having problems with creditors and felt it better to have the store in someone else's name, Labrèque said.

Ralph Merry III also met with much personal tragedy. His ten-year-old son Benjamin was lost in the forest the year after the Merrys arrived in Bolton. Benjamin had been very badly frightened and was mentally unstable. He was known to have fits and remove his clothes. Search parties scouring the woods found Benjamin's clothes but failed to find the boy himself.

Two of Merry's other sons met with unfortunate ends. Joseph died

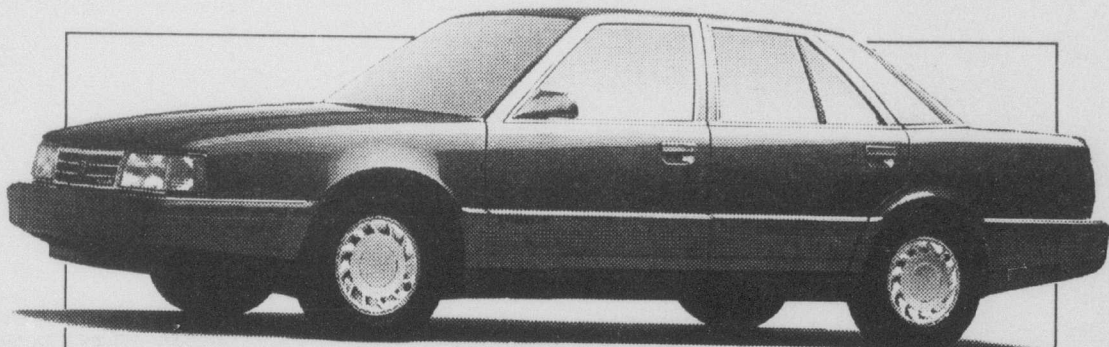
when he was 17 and Ralph IV had a crippling accident while working in the sawmill. In 1814 Ralph III's wife Sarah also died.

Ralph Merry III died in 1825. The Merry name is remembered in Magog through the name of one of the town's main streets, the town beach, the federal wharf and a point on Lake Memphremagog.

"Heritage seekers have a magnificent memento in the very house that he built, which is carefully preserved. Through the 19th century the Merry family has been associated with the development of Magog," concluded Labrèque.

Special guests at the speech were Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Fields and Mr. and Mrs. Garth Fields, present owners of the Merry house.

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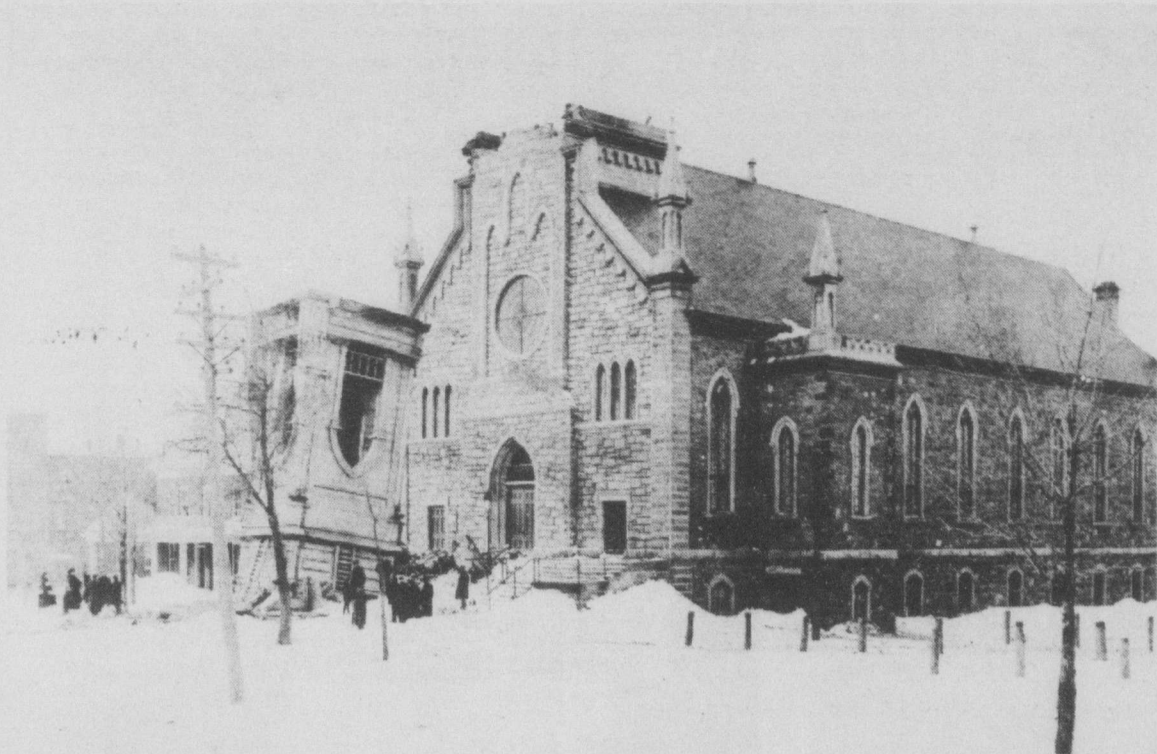
Expect the Best.



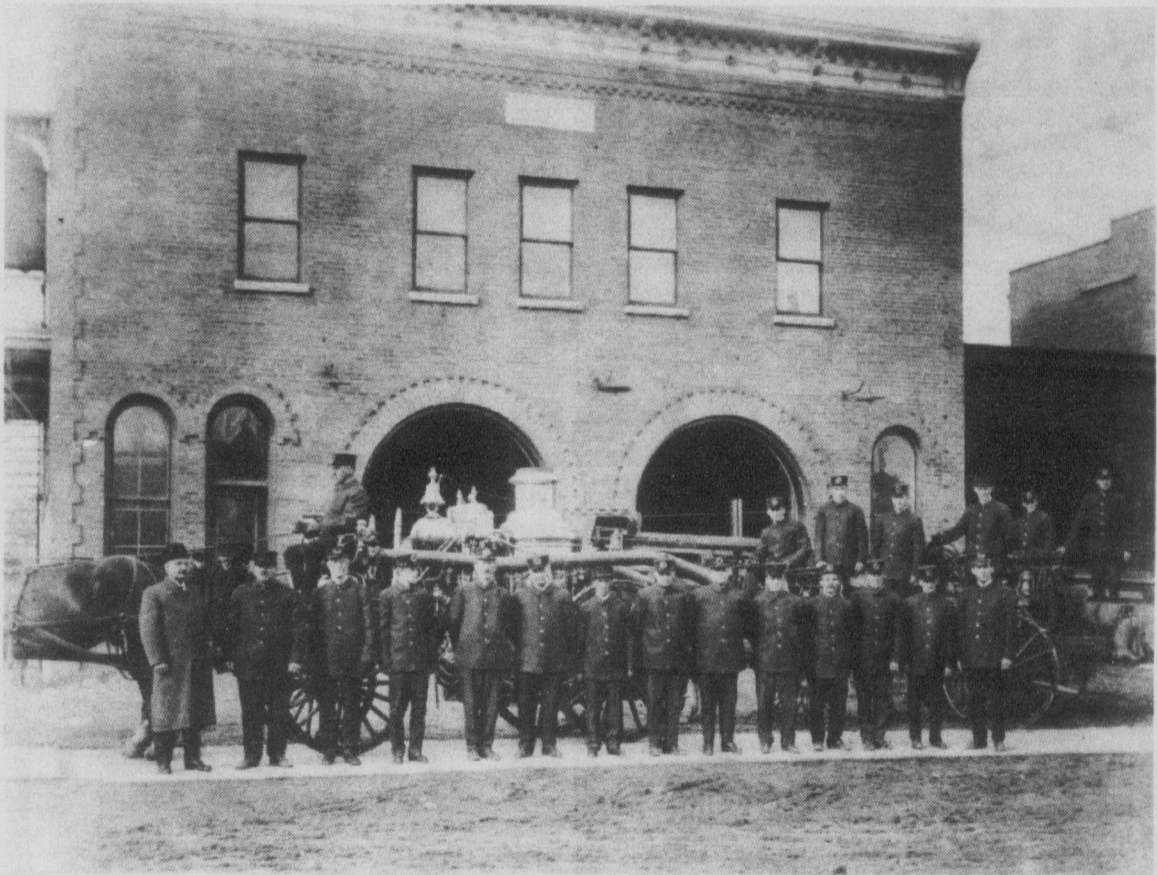
Historian and lecturer Marie-Paule Labrèque signs Magog's guest book under the watchful eye of Jaques Boisvert (left) and town councillor Jacques Juby.



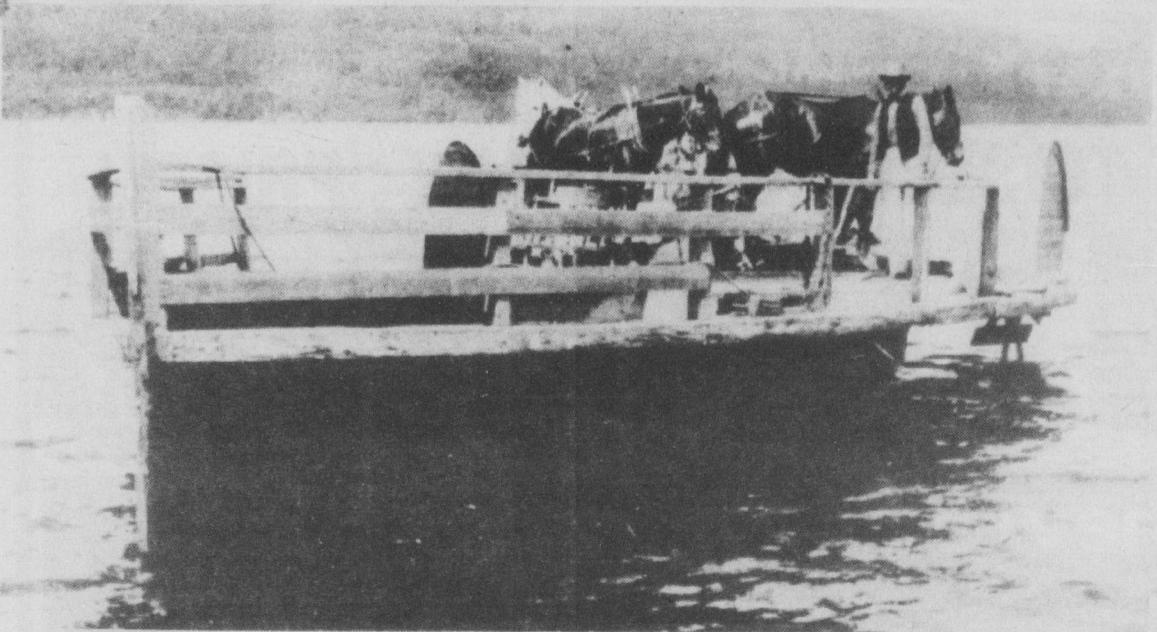
An early form of transport in Magog: the oxcart.



The steeple of St. Patrick's parish church in Magog was toppled by a storm in 1918. It was reconstructed the same year.



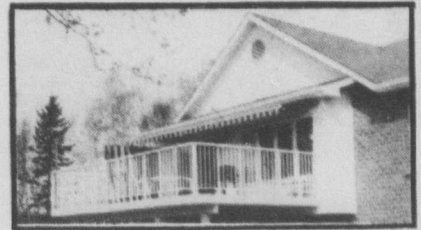
The Magog fire department with horse-drawn equipment in front of the fire hall in 1901.



Horse powered ferry the 'Ho-Boy' circa 1850

POLY-KIT^{md} Patios

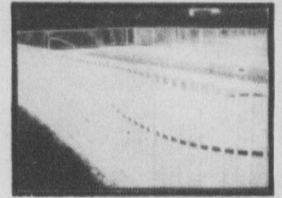
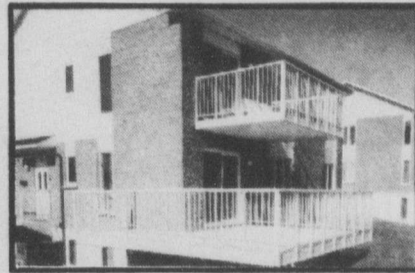
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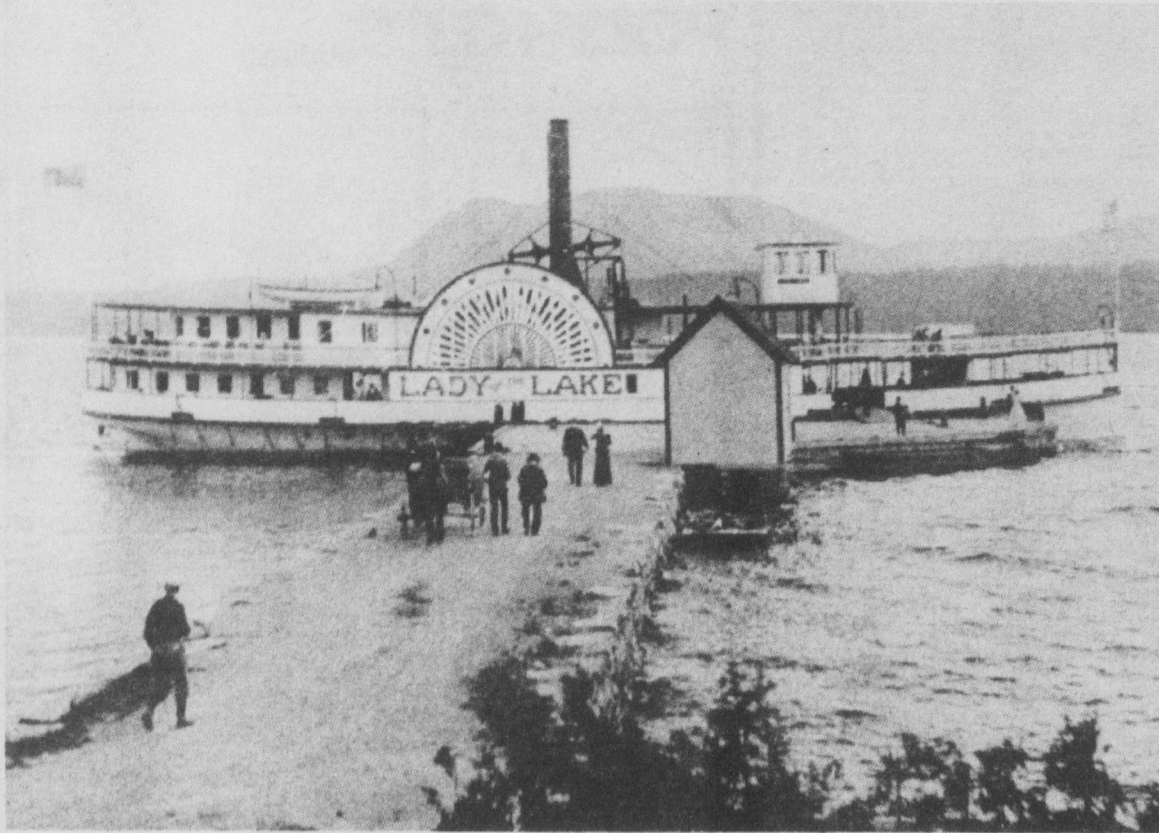
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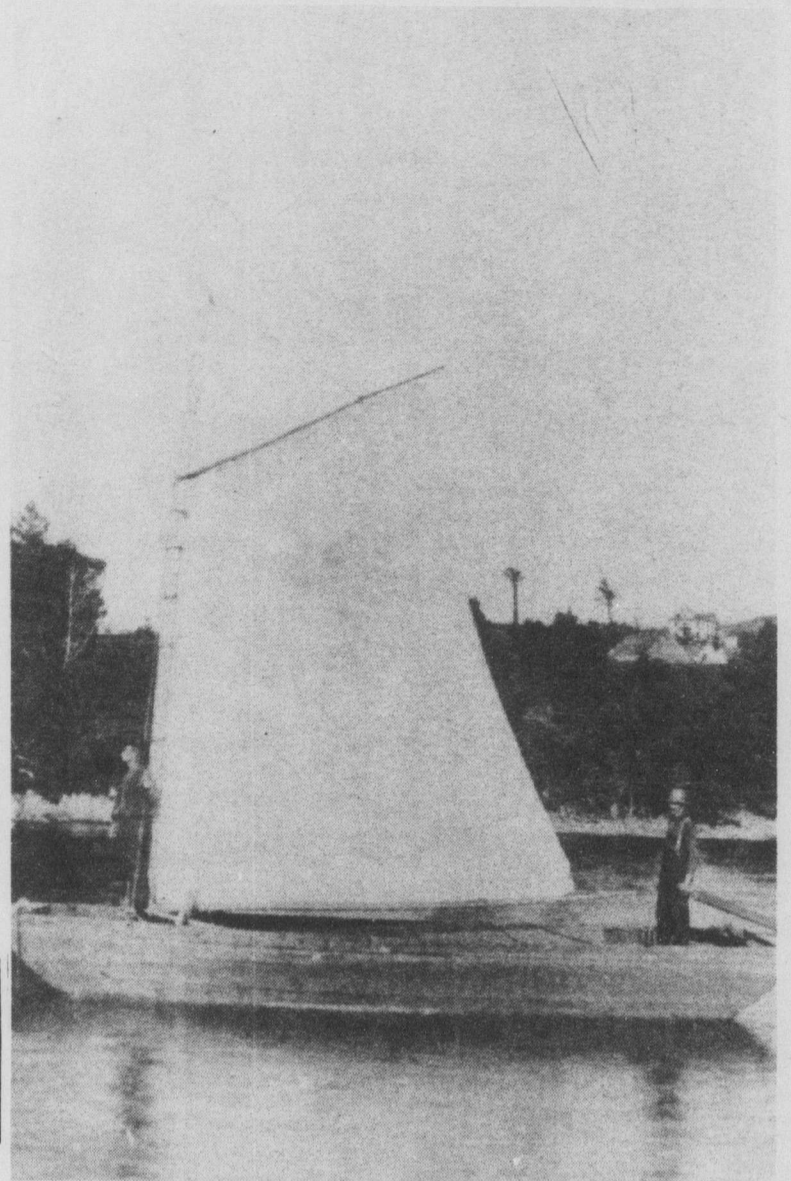
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The Lady of the Lake at the wharf in Georgeville. This beautiful steamer worked the length of Lake Memphremagog along with the Mountain Maid in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



An early sailboat on Lake Memphremagog near Georgeville

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Ludoric Francoeur (far left), Gérard Lacombe, Mrs. Giguère, and Mr. Paradis in front of Dominion Stores circa 1950. The store is now Magasin Bonjour Santé.



The wreck of the steamer Anthemis at Magog in 1950. It started sailing the lake in 1909.

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Dominion Textile company houses on Main St. West. The houses are now occupied by Studio R.C., and the restaurants Le Moulin à Poivre and La Grosse Pomme.



The house on Sherbrooke St., which was demolished to make way for the City Hall parking lot, during the 1950's.

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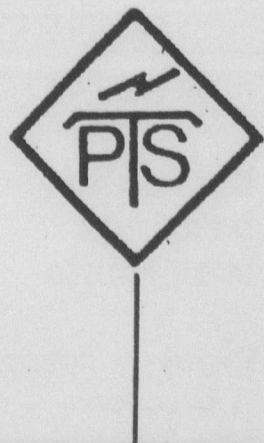
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