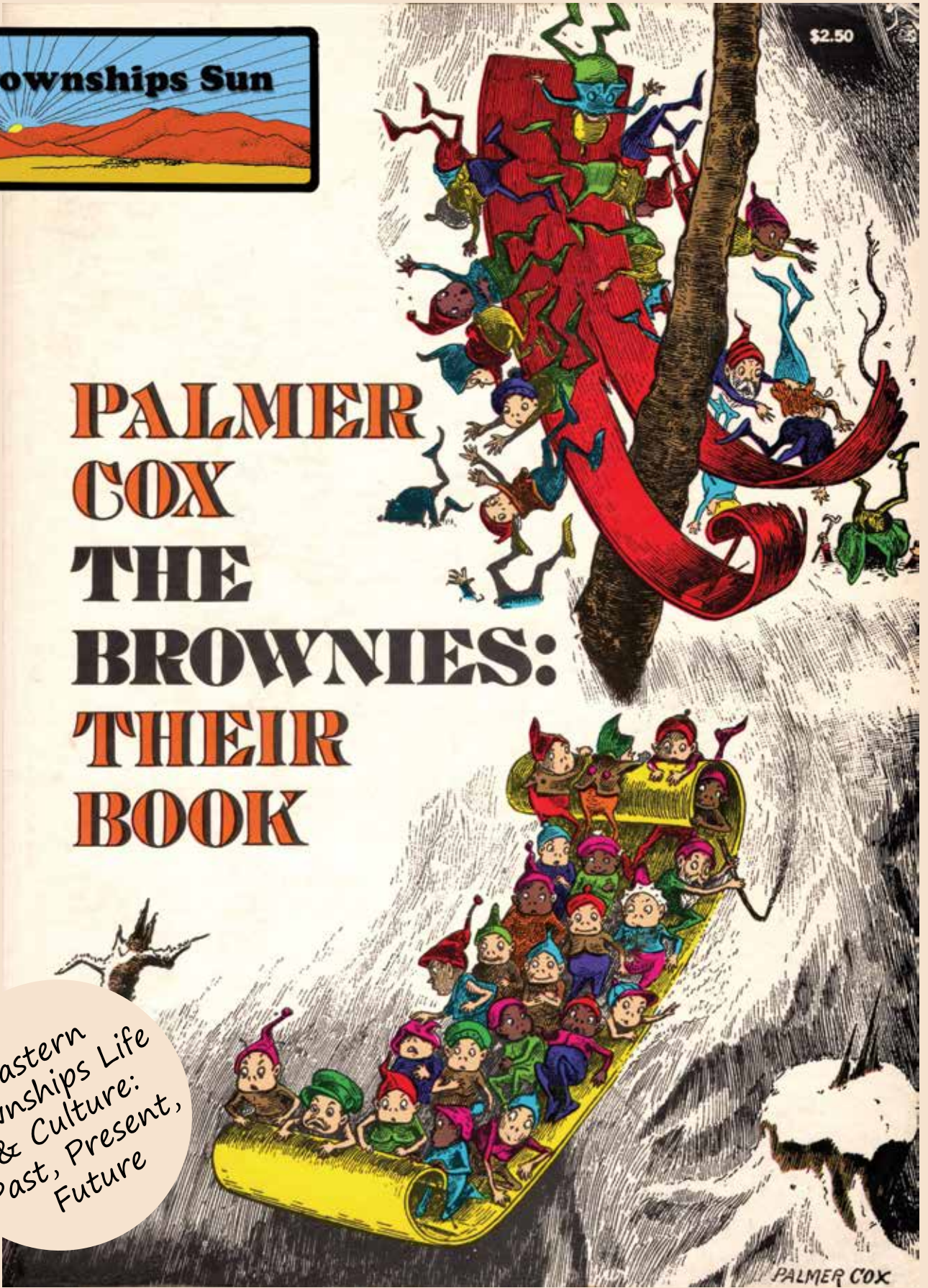


Townships Tales, Spooks, Sprites, & Witches

PALMER COX THE BROWNIES: THEIR BOOK

Eastern
Townships Life
& Culture:
Past, Present,
Future





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Photo: John Mackley



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This year, we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of The Townships Sun. We invite submissions of articles, stories, poems, art and photos on Townships life and culture. Please see our CONTRIBUTION GUIDELINES on our website, TownshipsSun.ca, or request them from the editor at editor@townshipssun.ca.

Welcome to our Annual General Meeting!

The Townships Sun warmly invites our members and friends to our Annual General Meeting. We're on the move—find out what's up. Participate.

- ✓ **Archives project to digitize almost 50 years of past issues**
- ✓ **Townships Young Voices, to involve a new generation**
- ✓ **New Website, YouTube Channel, Instagram accounts! Facebook flying!**

WHEN: Tuesday, October 18, at 4:30 p.m.

WHERE: 3355 College Street (Lennoxville Borough), Sherbrooke; conference room (lower level).

INFO: 819-566-7424, contact@townshipssun.ca

Would you like to zoom to the meeting? Please contact editor@townshipssun.ca or 819-640-1340

28 pages!

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FRONT COVER

Cover of **The Brownies: Their Book**, by Palmer Cox (1887), an unaltered republication in 1964 by Dover Publications (public domain). Art by Palmer Cox of Granby, Quebec. See article on page 16.

BACK COVER

Incident on the Vaillancourt Road. Narrative poem by Steve Luxton, with a link to hear him reading his poem on YouTube. (Photo: John Mackley)



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The Long Ago, Here and Now

by R.A. Garber

"The long ago is still in the here and now," said someone whose name I forget.

The Long Ago

Researching the "Why Witches?" story on page 20, I felt the erstwhile New Mexico village and adjacent graveyard seemed rather invisible, hidden in the "wastelands of the Crown," as the southeastern flank of the Eastern Townships was once called (Frederick Edmund¹¹ Hurd's *Footprints into Newport Township*, 2021). Sometimes you have to scratch the surface pretty hard to uncover the long ago in the here and now.

On the other hand, peering into the huge hole that is the Jeffrey Mine, it seems that sometimes the scars of the past are so profound that they grip our psyche with an iron hand (see page 14).

I'm thinking of the many losses we endure in our little lives. Those who have suffered the effects of asbestos mining. Those with family who have died in war, or in the Holocaust. Those of us who have lost dear ones to illness. Those whom society has ostracized, whose differences were damned rather than celebrated.

And, oh yes, the loss of Queen Elizabeth II. The monarchy is surely a prime example of the long ago in the here and now, a shining remnant of the British empire.

Here and Now

Over the past year, we at the *Townships Sun* have been blessed with new voices in our pages. This issue concludes my first year as editor, and I am grateful to all our contributors, new and old. My thanks to Marie Moliner for her wisdom and energy as Assistant Editor. To Melanie Cutting and Janet Angrave for their stalwart copy editing and layout. To publisher David Wright and accounting clerk Marion Greenlay for their steady hands at the helm. To Jennifer Brown for her knowledge of the whats and wherefores of past actions, and her expert captaincy of the *Townships Sun* Facebook page and advertising sales. And to Beverly Taber Smith for her constant support, willing hands, and good ideas.

Spearheaded by Marie Moliner, the Townships Young Voices project is exciting for the new partnerships we're forging: Abigail Witcher of Townshippers' Association has given a jump start to our new Bishop's U. student videographer, Léa Coté. Scott Stevenson and Cécilia Alain have joined the Write Here, Right Now! team of Jan Draper, Rebecca Welton and me to lead the workshops. And Michelle Lepitre and Maggie Severs of Townshippers' Association are organizing the Awards competition.



Our archives project to digitize almost 50 years of the *Townships Sun* is a labour of love by John Mackley, scanning page after page. Some early issues had more than 50 tabloid pages! And our new website has been created by Corey Cutting. Have you taken a look at the very first issue of the *Townships Sun*, dated February 8, 1974? You can see a pdf of it right there, at TownshipsSun.ca.

Our AGM is coming up on Tuesday, October 18 (see details on page 2). We extend a warm welcome to our readers, writers, photographers, and artists. I'd love to see you there!

Community Forum

Have a comment? Email editor@townshipssun.ca or post on Facebook/ TownshipsSun. Comments may be published in print or on our Facebook page, and edited for length, clarity, and accuracy.

Townships Sun YouTube Channel

Visit our new YouTube channel, featuring video "nuggets" and hot tips on writing or creating art or photos that can be published in the *Townships Sun* or other magazines. Also, see short videos of authors and artists published in these pages.

We're on Instagram!

Visit us at [@townshipssun](https://www.instagram.com/townshipssun) and [@tyvoices](https://www.instagram.com/tyvoices). See what's up with the new Townships Young Voices project, and see posts about upcoming articles.



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ETRC Townships History Quiz

by Jody Robinson

Question 1. The man pictured here was known for his curious ability to nail through glass, a talent visible in this photo with the bottle nailed to the side of the tree. Originally from the Magdalen Islands, he came to Randboro in 1921 and made his living as a carpenter. His ability to put a nail cleanly through all types of glass made him a legend in the area. Who was “the Glass Man”?



(Courtesy Eastern Townships Resource Centre, P244, Freeman Clowery collection)

- A- E.D. Worthington
- B- Bill McCallum
- C- Northrop Frye
- D- Freeman Clowery

Question 2. For nearly a century, this area boasted that they possessed the world’s only floating island. Descriptions and photographs of the island indicate that it was quite substantial, featuring mature trees and was even home to boathouses for a time. The floating island, which was made up of plants growing on a buoyant mat of plant roots or other organic detritus, would remain in one place for a number of years until a storm would blow it to a new location on the lake. Its final big move was in 1966. While this incredible natural phenomenon was not unique in the world, it seems to have been

unique in the Townships. Which Townships lake was home to the floating island?

- A- Magog Lake
- B- Waterloo Lake
- C- Spider Lake
- D- Silver Lake

Question 3. Some of the most infamous tales of the Townships are rooted in real events that have been embellished and taken on different shapes over time. One example of this is the Megantic Outlaw who, being wanted for an alleged arson and for killing a constable, evaded arrest for 10 months while sympathetic neighbours harboured him around Lake

Megantic. What was this outlaw’s name?

- A- Murdo McIver
- B- Angus MacDonald
- C- Donald Morrison
- D- Murdo Morrison



Jody Robinson is archivist of the Eastern Townships Resource Centre. She also works with a number of historical societies across the Townships.

Erratum and Answers on page 11

Remembrance Day Quiz

by Don Martin

- Q1.** What is the name of the last remaining Eastern Townships veteran from the Battle of Hong Kong during World War II?
- Q2.** What was the name of Canada’s Member of Parliament who went overseas during World War I?
- Q3.** What did they convert the Quebec Central Railroad shops in Sherbrooke into during the Second World War?

Q4. When was the first wreath laid in Quebec in honour of the 100,000 Home Children who were sent, unaccompanied, from Britain, from the 1860s to the late 1930s?



Don (Buddy) Martin is a history buff whose heart is still in the Townships. He enjoys sharing its rich history.

Answers on page 11



A Road by Any Other Name

by John Mackley

Roads were the life's blood that opened up the Eastern Townships to what has been called "modern civilization."

For untold millennia, the region had been indigenous "Abénaki" territory, left in its pristine state. Hunters traveled by waterways or followed foot trails. The region remained a nearly unbroken "bush" of continuous forestland.

On March 15, 1803, the Township of Bury was established, but wilderness living conditions and a complete absence of good roads or even passable trails discouraged potential settlers.

A settlement in this area was first attempted in 1835-1836. "At this time a road was made to Robinson [Bury] village from Taylor's farm, about two and a half miles east of Cookshire; also one through to Victoria," wrote Channell.

A great deal of time and energy were invested in the construction and maintenance of good roads. The better planned and engineered, the better for everyone.



Unless a new road was named for a political dignitary or the road builder himself, the long-established convention was to name a road for one of the towns or villages it served to connect. This also seems to be the natural tendency; "The road to Somewhere" is soon shortened to "Somewhere Road."

Which leads us to the awarding of this month's Townships Moon to Canada Post's computer system.

Residents who live on Victoria Road in the Bury area say that their mail deliveries are being delayed. Based on information from the computer system, friends, family and businesses across the country are being told that Victoria Road does not exist. However, if and when mail destined for homes on Victoria Road does arrive in the Bury Post office, the local employees certainly know where this "non-existent" road is located and seem to have no difficulty in finding these "incorrect" addresses.

As the major road between Bury and Victoria, Victoria Road is of great historical significance, constructed when the former village of Victoria was established in 1836. All documentary evidence would indicate that people

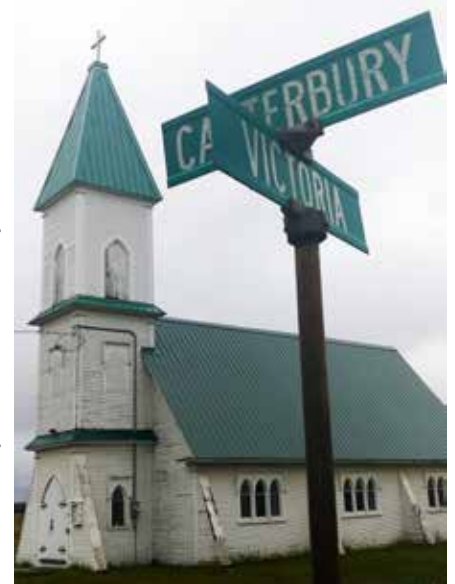


originally and consistently referred to this route as Victoria Road for all of the past 186 years. Sign posts all along the route still indicate Victoria Road, and arriving

in Scotstown, one finds the main street in the village bears the same name.

This route was officially recognized by the Government of Quebec Toponymy Commission as "Chemin Victoria" on January 1, 1980, and to this day is listed as such on the government website.

Nowadays, people living on that road in Bury have been informed by Canada Post to change all their contact information over to "Route 214." No exception is made for residences located within the town limits, even though municipalities hold the legal prerogative to name and change the names of roads within their municipal limits. Route 108 passes through Cookshire and is known as "rue Principale" from one end of town to the other. Canada Post's computers have no problem with that!



In the interest of retaining our history and heritage for future generations, let's not allow road and place names such as "Victoria Road" to be eclipsed out of existence by a number. A Moon to Canada Post!

John Mackley lives, loes, laughs and writes in the Eastern Townships. Photos: John Mackley. Map: Excerpt of the 1897 Map of Montreal and the Eastern Townships, published by E.R. Smith & Son; ETRC P996/099/008/001 ETRC Cartographic Materials collection; courtesy Eastern Townships Resource Centre)



The English Ghosts are Everywhere

by Alex McGregor*

The English ghosts are everywhere. Their names are seen in streets and place names.

Take a walk along the St. Francis River—listen carefully. You may hear the ghost of Major Robert Rogers as he goes downriver to attack the St. Francis Indians (Abenakis). Later the same Major Roberts was to become an ardent defender of Canada against the rebels from the U.S.

Yes, the muddy old St. Francis was the river of destiny to our ancestors. On its banks the English ghosts lived, loved, fought and went to their ancestral homes underneath the fertile sod.

The English—oh yes, the Scots, the Irish, and the French, too. Here is a cemetery, but the tombstones let us know that the language of these ghosts was neither English nor French, but the words of the gods—Gaelic.

Listen and you might hear the sound of the Megantic Outlaw Morrison. Do his descendants still love justice with Morrison's unquenchable thirst for decency? The CBC didn't think so—and produced one of the worst historical travesties ever to disgrace the T.V. screen, namely "The Megantic Outlaw."

Peaceful Border

There is the border. At the moment peaceful, yet a few years ago the young Americans who refused to fight in a war not of their own choosing crossed the line. In this act, they were followers of a long tradition. Young Americans who have refused to fight in foreign wars have been crossing the border since 1812.

Many a young Yankee in the 1860s crossed the line. There were many fine young Southerners who sought refuge in Canada during that war, too. Some of the bolder Southerners got together and raced across the border to St. Albans, Vermont, and raided the place. Their act almost plunged the U.S. into war with Canada. Their spirits, too, haunt the Townships.

Lennoxville Supported the South

The people of Lennoxville, you see, were strong supporters of the South in the Civil War. The Southerners who summered in Canada were gentlemen, who always stepped off the sidewalk to let the ladies pass. True, they had their black slaves with them, but to the gentlefolk of Lennoxville, black slaves were rather similar to servants. Besides, Blacks were simple people who we were doing a favour by providing them with jobs.

The manners, conversation and culture of the Southern gentlemen stood in strong contrast to the crude ways of the Yankee peddlers. Besides, the Southern gentlemen and ladies were Anglican—and not like the Yankees of Vermont—Methodists.

Stanstead, on the other hand, the home of the Methodists, was fiercely Pro-Northern in the War. The North stood for freedom, liberation of the poor oppressed men of the South against the planter aristocrats with their "high falutin' manners an' uppity ways." In Stanstead, the spirit of Cromwell and his Roundheads rose high against the spirit of Charles I and his Cavaliers at Lennoxville. Perhaps the ghosts of the past walk when Bishop's College School (B.C.S.) plays Stanstead at football on a fine fall day—the B.C.S. Cavaliers attempt to crush the Stanstead Roundheads on the gridiron, where their ancestors once attempted the job in battle.



Ghosts Walk on Windy Nights

These ghosts too walk. Perhaps on a windy night the ghost of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, walks Lennoxville streets, tormented by the thoughts of lost battles, over to Bishop's to play chess and re-fight Gettysburg, or over to B.C.S. to hear once more the ghostly song of Southern boys singing "Dixie" and "Along the Southern Shore."

The house where President Davis lived stands unmarked by plaque or memento of this great and gentle man. Maybe the ghost of Jefferson Davis stops at Bishop's University. Here is the home of numerous ghosts and lost causes.

There is the ghost of Professor E.E. Boothroyd, perhaps the finest teacher of History that Canada has ever known. There is the ghost of Reverend Harold F. Hamilton,

author of a world-renowned book, to which even a Pope made reference. The book, *The People of God*, is forgotten in the cloistered halls where it was written. The ghost of the great Principal Arthur Huffman McGreer may haunt Bishop's to remind them of their glorious past.

Some of the more recent ghosts we knew, loved and admired. To be with Sidney Jellicoe was to be in the presence of greatness. The gentle scholarly man, who was superior to any of the world's great scholars,

"The Townships stand with their past, which is so incredible as to be mind boggling. Giants walked our lanes and lived in their historic mansions."

walked with such humility that few were aware of his worldwide greatness. Other ghosts we knew too—gentle, great and kind—Roderick Thaler and Laurie Allison. Their immense contributions were scarcely comprehended, let alone appreciated, by their contemporaries—now they too have gone with the great ghosts of the past whom they respected and loved.

The ghosts of the great at Bishop's have gone to join the ghosts of the great at the Lennoxville United Church. Would the ancestors of the present generation of members have sat idly by and watched the proliferation of the booze trade in the Townships?

No, the old Methodist tradition was death to the demon rum. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was the most outstanding example of women's lib that Canada has ever seen. Women of Canada asserted themselves and proclaimed the kind of society they wanted. Backed by the Church and their own unquenchable vigour, they made politicians come to heel and they closed down the bars and improved the general prosperity of the country.

Their ghosts too are gone. No one now expresses an opinion on anything in the Townships—it could upset someone.

Ghosts are Gone

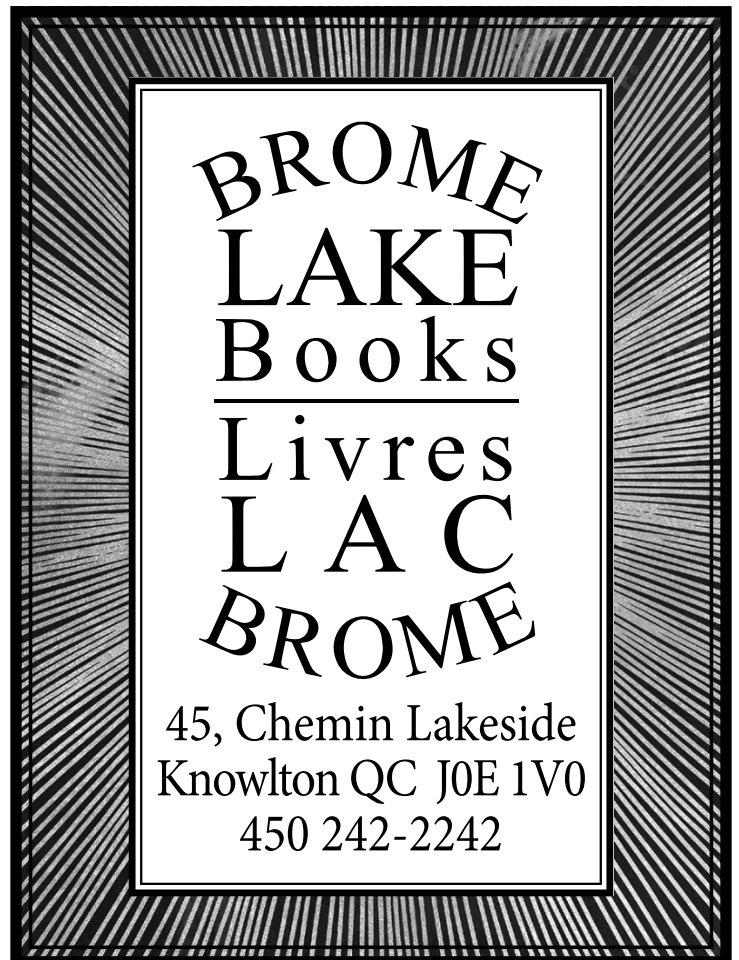
Yes, the ghosts are gone—where is that old entrepreneur Alexander Tilloch Galt? Where is the spirit of enterprise that is needed to awaken the Townships from their torpor? That too is gone.

The Townships stand with their past, which is so incredible as to be mind boggling. Giants walked our lanes and lived in their historic mansions.

Eastern Townships writers have spun their tales and created their works in this area. With a past as great as the one that we have and a memory of it alive and green, it is fairly unlikely that the English of the Townships will forget and go quietly to their graves, silently, stealthily uttering no word in English, French or Gaelic.

In the long run, it is rather more likely that the English will realize that just as their ancestors were good Townshippers, Quebecers and Canadians, in that order, so will the present inhabitants take pride and spirit from the past greatness of their ghostly ancestors and go and do as their ancestors did—build a Townships so great that the future generations will be convinced that the streets of Thetford, Megantic, Coaticook, Stanstead, Sherbrooke, Magog, Knowlton, Sutton, Cowansville, and Stanbridge were, indeed, peopled by giants in the 1970s.

**This essay and drawing were originally published in the Townships Sun on February 22, 1974. The article has been lightly edited and does not reflect the views of the Townships Sun.*



The True Spook Behind the Drummondville Ghost Story

by Scott Stevenson

One particular Townships' ghost story from Drummondville less than 50 years ago reverberates with the haunting echoes of the American witch hunts 330 years ago, particularly in the telling of that story right here in the *Townships Sun* pages, August 1977.

"All of the bizarre happenings occurred in the presence of a girl about the age of ten, and none of them happened in her absence. The girl did not seem particularly scared by the events, while the rest of the family and other witnesses were terrorised and traumatised, to say the least," wrote Gerald Prince in the 1977 story, "The Drummondville Spook: A Townships family spends a week of fear in the presence of the unknown."

I might consider one of my ancestors, who lived for a period in Drummondville, a kind of spook himself, not because he made "picture frames jump off the wall..., flower pots jump off the window sill," but because of the way he treated his kin, particularly women, and the way he haunts them still today. I might also consider myself a kind of spook for the way I've too often found humour in hiding and jumping out at people. But I wouldn't be one to put much credence in a story about a "frightening series of events," written as if for a sensational modern-day social media site.

Many times, when one feels the need to profess that one is not a certain way, the opposite is true. "To avoid sensationalism, and to stay away from the leering curiosity of the type of people who read the *Townships Sun*, all the people who were caught up in this frightening series of events have kept the utmost secrecy, to the extent that it took me prodigious amounts of work to succeed in getting the facts," Prince wrote.



"A Townships family spends a week of fear in the presence of the unknown," was the subtitle of the article this photo illustrated in the August 1977 *Townships Sun*. Photo: Doug Robinson. "When a table cloth climbs up your leg, across your shoulder, and caresses your face..."

Okay then, Gerald, we'll just believe you. Wink, wink.

Why not? It's the month of All Hallows' Eve.

"The story took place in a home in the centre of Drummondville, that industrial town that was featured in last month's issue of the *Townships Sun*," Prince wrote in 1977. "The frightening events occurred last November, within a period of seven or eight days. The events began suddenly without any apparent reason, and just as suddenly ceased, never to reappear again."

"The Vicar of a parish in Drummondville was called for by the terrified family. He made his way immediately to their home, and as soon as he arrived on the scene, he called on his *curé* to come as reinforcement, because the whole situation was over his head."

Prince also tells us that if such were to occur in Europe, people would call the police. But in Quebec in

the 1970s, it seems people still called for help from the church.

"The *curé* had not long arrived when both he and the Vicar became aware of the cause of the unnatural fear of this family—there was some strange unknown force present in the house. The *curé* had only just entered the room when a portrait showing a religious scene jumped off its hook and fell heavily to the floor. The *curé* got up and put the holy picture back in its place. Once again the picture fell heavily to the floor with a loud noise."

Prince goes on to list various other "strange" events. "And so it continued for several hours—the family scared out of their wits, the priest and the Vicar trying to figure out what in hell was going on."

The author then tells us about other similar events that had happened elsewhere and speculates, with the help of his apparent experts, on the “Explanations???”.

“Most of the time, one person seems to be directly related to the events, and usually it is a young girl, whom the specialists refer to as an ‘epicentre,’” Prince wrote. “The events only occur in the presence of a young girl, and stop as soon as she leaves the building... She is an ‘epicentre’ in the sense that she seems to be the centre of some strange power that only manifests itself in her presence.”

Prince finishes his yarn with “the strangest and most chilling part of the Drummondville ghost story,” in which a tape recording of an old-time Quebec music radio program, when played back, “the music cut off and was replaced by a shrill, shrieking voice...[that] screamed the worst obscenities, and threats and insults to the members of the family.”

Once again, it seems that a woman is to blame. “Witnesses who know the family and friends very well could not identify the voice. All they could say was that it was feminine, adult... almost human.”

Many of the Townships’ first colonists—many of our ancestors—came from New England, including Massachusetts, where more than 200 people were accused of witchcraft in 1692 and 1693. “The episode is one of Colonial America’s most notorious cases of mass hysteria,” writes Gretchen Adams in *The Specter of Salem*, as reported in Wikipedia.

“The trials were started after people had been accused of witchcraft, primarily by teenage girls such as Elizabeth Hubbard, 17, as well as some who were younger,” it goes on to report, from Amy Nichols, author of *The Salem Witch Trials*.

And yet while we might say society has come to its senses against hanging women for witchcraft, we can see that related fears and prejudices persist even in what may have been an attempt at a harmless ghost story in an early edition of this otherwise usually serious publication.

One of the underlying messages is to be wary of women, echoes of which continue, indeed, to haunt us all today, as we know from recent reports of threats and aggression against female politicians, journalists, and other leaders—in last month’s provincial election campaign and beyond.

The true spooks are the purveyors of prejudices and fear-mongering.



Scott Stevenson farms and writes at his home near Island Brook. (Author’s photo by Verity Stevenson.)

Townships Quiz Erratum: First Consolidated School

The ETRC and the *Townships Sun* would like to correct an error appearing in the September 2022 Townships Quiz, concerning where the first consolidated school was built in the Eastern Townships. The correct answer should have been Kingsey, which opened in 1905, and not Kinnear’s Mills. We apologize and would like to thank Barry Husk for bringing this error to our attention. He wrote:

“You mention the [school] in Kinnear’s Mills built in 1905.... The Kingsey Consolidated School was in operation that year, so [was] probably built during 1904.



See the attached photos and the 1992 article on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of St. Felix de Kingsey, in which it is mentioned as being the first consolidated school in the province. Much of this information came from Clifford Moore and Yolande Allard. Members of my family attended this school from its opening in 1905 up to the 1940s.” (Photo: courtesy Barry Husk)

Answers to Jody Robinson’s ETRC Townships History QUIZ:

- Question 3: C
 - Question 2: B
 - Question 1: B
-

Answers to Don Martin’s Remembrance Day QUIZ:

1. Hormidas Fredette, who lives in New Minas, Nova Scotia. He was originally from Richmond, Quebec. He celebrated his 105th birthday April 11, 2022.
 2. Lt. Colonel George (Harry) Baker of Sweetsburg, Quebec, who lived 1877–1916.
 3. The shops were converted to house German Prisoners of War. The Camp was called Newington Prison from 1942 to 1946.
 4. On November 6, 2021, at the cenotaph in Bury, Joel Barter laid the first wreath in remembrance of their hardships and courage.
-

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From Horror Tale to Eco-tour

by Alden Chorush

How does a kayak tour on a lake at the bottom of an open-air asbestos mining pit sound to you?

It sounded great to the nearly 100 participants who jumped at the chance last month to descend into



Bernard Coulombe guides a kayak tour of Jeffrey Mine in September 2022. (Photo: David Martel)

the Jeffrey Mine in Val-des-Sources, once the largest chrysotile mining operation in the world, per the Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration.

Developed by Bernard Coulombe, director of Jeffrey Mine, and David Martel, founder, director and guide of *Sherb-histoire en kayak*, the tour was touted in its August 29 press release as “unforgettable” and even “historic.” I caught up with Martel to get his perspective.

“It was fantastic,” Martel said. The tour was already nearly full a mere 72 hours after it was launched, and the enthusiasm never let up. “All the participants wanted to stay in the water when the tour was over.”

During the tour, kayakers navigated the two-kilometre-wide lake with Coulombe serving as guide for this pilot project. They learned about the history of the mine, and the flora and fauna of the area. The tour also included information on the semi-precious stones that Jeffrey Mine is world famous for, such as the serpentine that gives the lake its striking turquoise tint.

Participants discovered that the ever-rising lake is formed from underground water that pours in at two million gallons per day. They also learned about reforestation efforts and topsoil development in the mine and vicinity.

Such environmental concerns seem worlds away from the troubled history of asbestos mining in Quebec’s so-called “asbestos belt,” the 100-km stretch from Val-des-Sources to East Broughton.

Industrial mining began in the area in the 1870s with the discovery of chrysotile, or white asbestos, near Thetford. The deposits of the mineral were so massive that by the early 1900s, Canadian asbestos accounted for 85 percent of world production (minesandcommunities.org).

The fire-resistant properties of this naturally occurring fibrous mineral were known in antiquity. In the modern era, asbestos has typically been used in construction and fireproofing, but at one time was incorporated into everything from brake linings to theatre curtains and even cigarette filters and makeup. In English, the word derives from “inextinguishable” while French *amiante* comes from

“undefiled,” both of Greek origin and both reflecting the indestructible properties of the mineral.

The ancient [Romans and Greeks noted lung ailments](#) in slaves who mined the material. We now know that when asbestos is broken, microscopic fibers are released into the air and, when inhaled, can lodge in the lungs. Asbestos exposure in sufficient quantity causes three major diseases: lung cancer, mesothelioma (cancer of the lining of internal organs) and asbestosis, a scarring of the lungs ([McGill Journal of Medicine](#)).



Jeffrey Mine, while it was being mined. (In the *Townships Sun*, November 22, 1974)



Jeffrey Mine, September 2022 (Photo: R.A. Garber)

Numerous early deaths and lung disease in asbestos mining towns were noticed in the early 20th century. Then began a documented push by the asbestos industry to cover up the health risks of asbestos.

The Quebec press sounded the alarm in the 1940s, with *Le Devoir* publishing scathing critiques of the industry (*Townships Sun*, March 1975). At that time, Jeffrey Mine was owned and run by the American firm Johns Manville, with Anglophone officials presiding over the miners, almost all of whom were French Canadian. In the asbestos strike of 1949, miners demanded the elimination of asbestos dust at the mill. Many historians credit this strike as planting the seeds of the Quiet Revolution.

Throughout the next two decades, the industry continued efforts to keep the public and the miners in the dark (niche-canada.org). In one grotesque example, Johns Manville secretly removed the lungs of dead asbestos miners in the 1940s and 50s and drove the tissue across the border for study. Manipulated studies published in the 50s advanced the myth that chrysotile asbestos was safe (*American Journal of Industrial Medicine*). The advent of television gave asbestos companies a new platform on which to promote their cash cow.

The *Townships Sun* took up the cause in the 1970s, publishing a series of articles on the health hazards of asbestos, the appalling working conditions at the mines, and the cover-up by the asbestos industry. By this time, mining companies had set up their own clinics to examine ailing miners, and, as interviews in the *Townships Sun* revealed, doctors found them to be in tiptop shape, despite all the wheezing (March 1975, p. 15).

As the *Townships Sun* reported then, those fortunate enough to be examined by doctors at the Compensation Board set up in Montreal were given more accurate diagnoses. But compensation amounts were so paltry that they often had no choice but to keep doing the job that was killing them.

This is the sort of horror that routinely went on in the mid-20th century in the name of profit and progress. I

wonder if the trauma of such injustices may have left a scar in the collective psyche not unlike the mining scars gouged in the earth.

Either way, the town and greater region would apparently just as soon put such scars behind them. Today's media coverage of the region is mostly oriented toward a narrative of rebirth and prosperity.

Since the dissolution of an industry that once employed much of the population of Val-des-Sources, the town has found creative ways to profit from its legacy and to rebuild. *Le Devoir* reported last June on the town's determination to rebrand and revitalize, with ventures like Slackfest (slackline walking over the mine pit) and the Moulin 7 microbrewery tour proudly honoring the town's mining past. These events attracted visitors eager to learn more about it.

And now we have the Jeffrey Mine kayak tour. As Martel pointed out, the municipality has been very proactive in its support of projects like this one. The press release calls the tour another potential *phénix* for the town. In light of its past and the lingering stigma, the label could hardly be more apt. (*Phénix* was in fact one of the proposed name changes for the town previously known



Jeffrey Mine, 2022, aerial drone photo. (Photo: John Mackley)

as Asbestos, but got bested by the more environmentally evocative moniker Val-des-Sources.)

The shift in political winds since the 1940s has been tremendous. While Quebec premier **Maurice Duplessis sided with big business** in breaking the 1949 strike, in 2012 the newly elected Parti Québécois of Pauline Marois cancelled the \$58-million loan made by the liberals to get the Jeffrey Mine up and running. The PQ announced that this money would go instead to diversifying the local economy.

The federal government took longer to come around. While Stephen Harper was promoting the asbestos industry back in 2009, Quebec public health officials were expressing dismay at the false and misleading information on Health Canada's website. Finally, also in 2012, the feds did an about face on asbestos, as noted in *Le Devoir*. Four years ago they announced a ban on the

Continued on p. 22

Brownieman... Who Knew?

by Marie Moliner

My childhood was full of tales of magical creatures and legends. Yet, like Eloise Poncet, who wrote



So that's where the famous Brownie camera got its name! (Photo: M. Rathfelder, Wikimedia Commons)

about the brownies in 2019, I too had never heard of these characters, these “little household spirits, really popular in Britannic folklore.”

“Legend is that each family possesses a personal brownie who, when the house is asleep, carries out the household tasks such as cleaning, tidying, polishing the floor, etc. Brownies are seen as nice and helpful spirits, but they can get mad quickly and become ‘Boggarts,’ evil/nasty little elves who are always messing around and break everything in their path,” wrote [Poncet in a McGill newsletter](#).

What is even more surprising to me is the unknown history of Palmer Cox (1840-1924), who could very well be Canada’s least known and yet first internationally famous artist. His beloved illustrations of the brownies were based first on Scottish folklore, but also tapped into children’s fables around the world. His marketing acumen diffused Brownieman globally, far ahead of the commercialisation of culture which took hold in the 20th century.

Cox was born in the Third Ward of Granby Township, Shefford County, of Irish immigrant parents. Cecilia Capocchi, Director-General for the Haute Yamaska Historical Society, wrote that “as a child, he composed poems and drew a lot during school hours” [free translation]. These talents did not endear him to his teachers, wrote Ariella Hofmann in a *Townships Sun* article (June 1976).

“Instead of proceeding sedately with his lessons, he made drawings on slate, to the delight of his classmates, but, needless to say, to the annoyance of his teacher. The curriculum made no provisions for these drawings. The caricatures which he produced were so telling that as a punishment, he was often made to stand on the schoolroom floor, exposing his work. Nevertheless he continued to draw—slates and boards and papers were covered with the most whimsical figures (of which local art had previously no conception!).”

Cox’s brownies were mischievous creatures, apparently male in gender, and known for a variety of good and lesser deeds. He later expanded these early brownie characters to include an international troupe reflecting personalities from around the world. Not surprisingly, his depictions contain the ethnic clichés of his era, many of which are now seen as inappropriate.



Palmer Cox’s Brownie Castle in Granby, Quebec, now privately owned. (Photo: R.A. Garber)

In his twenties, Cox moved from Granby to San Francisco. The quality of his illustration work was quickly recognized and he eventually landed in New York where he “made it,” so to speak. There, he began to write and illustrate his brownie books in earnest. He traveled around the world, and made friends, including with Rudyard Kipling, 25 years his junior.

Were he alive today, he would give J.K. Rowling a run for her money. [Jeanne Solensky of the Baltimore Winterthur Museum](#) wrote “Throughout, the brownies were on the cutting edge of trends, engaging in sports like bicycling and tennis, riding cars, and visiting the Brooklyn Bridge and the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago even before the fair opened. While they did experience minor accidents and problems along the way, the brownies always overcame these with good cheer.”

Cox’s many books, staged musicals, and merchandise rival the commercial success of the Harry Potter empire. Royalties from 40 publishing houses made him a very

In the first series of Cox’s brownie stories, the brownies, small male spirits, were represented with very similar characteristics. These soon expanded as his ideas took shape and he introduced separate characters like the Dude, the Policeman, the Soldier, the Irishman, until there were forty-two different brownies.

“Then the brownies went on a voyage around the world. Each national type acted as cicerone in the country which he represented. The Canadian was on snowshoes, and when they reached Canada, they went skating and tobogganing. They traveled from country to country till they had circulated the globe.”

(Hofmann in the Townships Sun, June 1976)

wealthy man and he was undoubtedly the first Canadian artist to make a fortune from his work. [Teresa Rogers of the Estate Chronicles](#) wrote that “by the 1890s, the brownies were doing licensed endorsements and their images appeared on everything from coffee to cookies, toys to teacups, soap and other products. Cox is said to have been the first cartoonist (years before Walt Disney) to turn his characters into a commercial enterprise.”

Cox wrote at least two plays including *The Brownies*, performed to great acclaim. According to [Capocchi](#), the *New York Times* called it “the best show in New York in recent years. Demand from the public was so great that management did not limit the number of performances” (free translation). The show toured for five years across North America, drawing crowds in every city, including Montreal and Toronto.

The brownies’ most famous endorsement was probably George Eastman’s Kodak Brownie camera. [Wayne Morgan](#), an acknowledged expert on Palmer Cox spoke about the brownie craze to the The Photographic Historical Society Of Canada in 2007. That lecture makes it clear that being among the first to license merchandise, Cox faced unauthorised use of his images by many, including Kodak, who quickly realized that merchandise with brownie images dramatically increased sales.

Indeed, the popularity of the name *Brownie* persists. The iconic lapel pin worn by Girl Scout Brownies suggests a connection to Cox’s illustrations and to a book by Juliana Horatia Ewing, author of *The Brownies*. Ewing and Cox, born a year apart on opposite sides of the pond, were both inspired by brownie family folklore. Her book was published in 1871, when she was 30, and his illustrations made their debut in print in 1883, when he was 43.

[Poncet](#) wrote: “Robert Baden Powell, founder of the worldwide Scouts’ movement, had troubles with a section of the Canadian girl guides, the 7- to 10-year-old girls. Originally called ‘Rosebuds’ the young girls didn’t really like their name and asked Baden Powell to change it for something they felt more related to. At that time, the legend of the brownies, from the children’s book *The Brownies* by Juliana Horatia Ewing was a common story told to children. Inspired by these characters, the name of Rosebuds was changed to Brownies.”

Folklore has it that Cox fell in love with a young woman in New York who worked at one of the publishing houses for his books. Unrequited

as the love was, he nonetheless fantasized that one day she would join him in Granby. Having established his career, he returned to Granby and built a home known as Brownie Castle, with 17 rooms, located at 145 Elgin Street. Its Rapunzel-style turret is the signature feature of this residence.

Hofmann heard rumours in her youth, she wrote, about the house becoming haunted when the secretary would not marry him, and he remained a lonely man with no heirs. Today, Brownie Castle’s exterior remains largely untouched. Hofmann described the interior in 1976 as retaining much of its original structure: “Pictures, sketched by the author, were on the walls, little brownies were ingrained into the wood on several of the doors, and a large stained glass window depicting a brownie adorns one room.”

Continued on p. 18

Continued from p. 17, Browniemanía

Cox died at age 84, while vacationing near Quebec City. Hofmann noted that "In conformity with his wishes, he was buried [in Granby's Cowie Street Cemetery] under a massive brown, high head field stone weighing several tons, which Cox had selected personally a few years before on the family farm." The original plaque was stolen in 2012. A replica reads: "PALMER COX 1840-1924 IN CREATING THE BROWNIES HE BESTOWED A PRICELESS HERITAGE ON CHILDHOOD."

So if the name Palmer Cox is unfamiliar to you, you are not alone. It is truly remarkable that a Townships author and illustrator, whose characters' renown rivals Winnie the Pooh and whose marketing acumen rivals Disney, remains so unknown to so many Canadians.

Marie Moliner is Assistant Editor of the Townships Sun and enjoys the magic of her surroundings every day. For more information about Palmer Cox, visit the Société d'histoire de la Haute-Yamaska (shhy.info) and its permanent exhibit of Brownie objects and Palmer Cox books. If anyone has other Palmer Cox stories, we hope you will share them with us on our Facebook or Instagram page.



For more information about Palmer Cox, visit the Société d'histoire de la Haute-Yamaska (shhy.info) and its permanent exhibit of Brownie objects and Palmer Cox books. If anyone has other Palmer Cox stories, we hope you will share them with us on our Facebook or Instagram page.

"He lived in this house long enough," said the old lady. "But it's not lucky to name him."

"O Granny, we are so hungry and miserable, what can it matter?"

"Well, that's true enough," she sighed. "Trout's luck is gone; it went with the Brownie, I believe."

"Was that he, Granny?"

"Yes, my dear, he lived with the Trouts for several generations."

"What was he like, Granny?"

"Like a little man, they say, my dear."

"What did he do?"

"He came in before the family were up, and swept up the hearth, and lighted the fire, and set out the breakfast, and tidied the room, and did all sorts of house-work. But he never would be seen, and was off before they could catch him. But they could hear him laughing and playing about the house sometimes."

"What a darling! Did they give him any wages, Granny?"

"No! my dear. He did it for love."

(In *The Brownies and Other Tales* by Juliana Horatia Ewing)



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Black Cat Books: Bought

by R.A. Garber

We are immensely pleased the Black Cat has passed into good hands, Esther Saanum wrote to me.

And then, there she was among other members of the Black Cat Books fan club who came out the evening of September 14 at the Amédée-Beaudoin Community Centre. In all, 24 readers of all ages attended, matching the 24 years that Janice LaDuke has reigned at the Black Cat Books. The store is the principal Townships purveyor of used and new English books this side of Knowlton, where Brome Lake Books holds sway.

Organized by Christian Collins of the Lennoxville Library, the meeting was billed as a community discussion about how Black Cat Books could be saved as LaDuke's retirement approached. But at the last minute, it turned into a celebration when purchaser Anne-Marie Bailey stepped forward, all the way from Bishopton.

"I always wanted to be an entrepreneur, she said. "At different times I thought I'd like to have a bookstore, or something of that nature. I'm a reader, and I'm a collector. So when the Black Cat came for sale, it really appealed to me."

Questions arose, and answers came.

"Are you going to change the name?"

"No," was Bailey's prompt reply.

"Will you keep on selling English books?"

"Yes."

"Are the hours going to change?"

"Not for now. For the next few months, I'm not going to change very much."

How does LaDuke feel about Bailey's buying the Black Cat?

"I think it's perfect. She's young, she's local, she's obviously a book lover. You've got to want to run a

business, but you've also got to love books."

Looking back on her 24 years, LaDuke said, "it's certainly had its ups and downs. But I was determined to make it work. It was really a fragile thing for a long time. But it's on a good upswing right now." Two notable challenges were the rise of Amazon, and the extended Covid epidemic.



Owners of Black Cat Books: Anne-Marie Bailey, new, and Janice LaDuke, former.

As the only English bookstore in the area, she said Black Cat has books for everyone, young and old. "You can't say it's mostly seniors, or mostly parents with young families. You can't say that about any one group; they're all coming in."

Nor can you say her clientele is mostly English speakers, she said. "I find a lot of Francophones, if they read in English, they'd rather read in the original language than read a translation. And English books

are cheaper."

She said some customers come regularly with lists of books to buy, from as far away as Quebec City or Lac Mégantic.

"I just can't believe how this community really expressed itself," LaDuke said. From the beginning there was so much concern and interest, but I just felt I'd have to liquidate. And then when Christian put this meeting together, I was just blown away."



Collins had the last word: "If there had been a crisis and we didn't have a new owner, I think we would have had a lot more people here tonight. I feel blessed."

"The library board believes in the synergy between the library and the bookstore, in a town like Lennoxville, and they didn't want to see the Black Cat disappear."

And so, town or borough, the Lennoxville community keeps its bookstore. May Anne-Marie

Bailey and her Black Cat live long and prosper!

Drawing specially created by Aislin for Black Cat Books.

Why Witches?

by R.A. Garber

These are the tales you tell in a low voice, your eyes flitting over your shoulder into the gloom beyond the campfire. Your listeners lean into your every word.

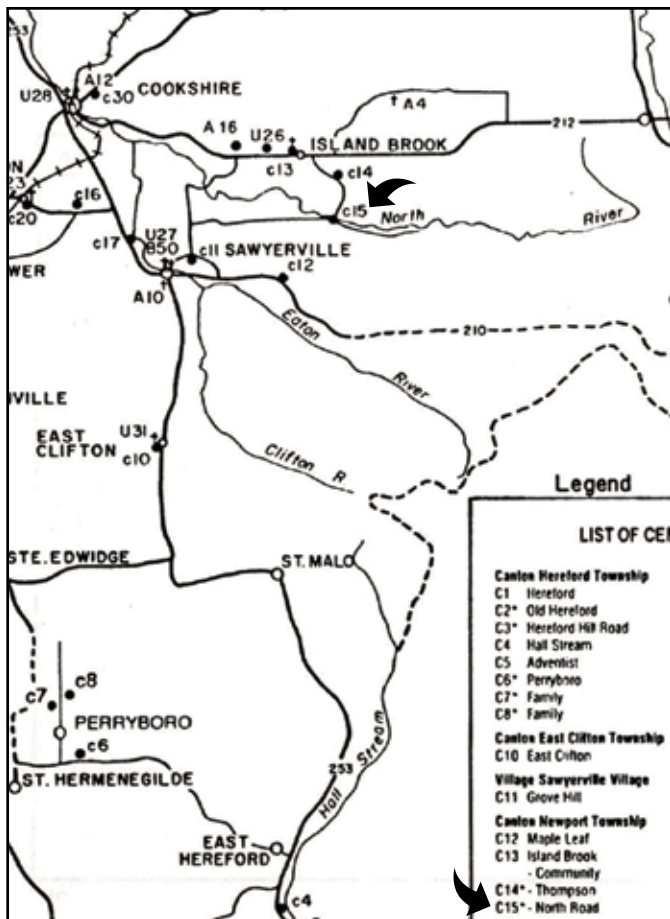
Amanda of Witch Bay

This is the legend of Amanda, described by Linda Seccaspina in the *Townships Sun* (April-May 2017). We are told Amanda was an Indigenous woman in Fitch Bay at the end of the 18th century; someone the storytellers perceived as different. Her difference marked her as suspect. “She wore a dark coat and had a disheveled appearance and tousled hair. She was considered an outcast by the villagers and sowed fear amongst some of its inhabitants,” wrote [Ricardo](#).

“She was said to possess gifts that made her able to heal the body and spirit of those who crossed her path. On nights when there was a full moon, she used herbs



Witch Bay Castle in Fitch Bay. (Photo: R.A. Garber, 2022)



In the erstwhile New Mexico settlement on New Mexico Road near North River Road, the “North Road Cemetery” (C15) was described as “neglected or abandoned” and can no longer be easily seen.

and plants to make miraculous potions and visited the bedsides of the sick and infirm, her bag filled with these healing remedies. Despite the help she generously provided, her disturbing looks, lame legs and her gift of premonition made her a threatening presence in the eyes of some villagers. They were scared of her healing abilities and were hostile to her each time she appeared.”

Their fears led them to hang her on November 1, 1800, near the bay. But from beyond the grave, Amanda appointed a successor more than a century later, the story goes. The new witch was guided by an indescribable force to Fitch Bay and lived in Witch Bay Castle. “She devoted herself to occult rituals and secret practices. It is said she welcomed the soul of Amanda into her body where she now lived at peace with people and nature.”

Ezra B. Rider built the house in 1880, I guess just in time for the reincarnated Amanda to inhabit it along with the Rider family. The castle got new owners in 2000 who made it into a tourist attraction, wrote [Richard Howie](#) in 2010. I stopped by recently; the witch-on-her-broomstick weather vane no longer rode atop the turret, and the windows were dark.

Witch of New Mexico

Further east in the Newport Township, near Island Brook in the 1880s, the story goes, entire herds of cows had gone dry. But why? The farmers laid a trap in a cattle barn, and caught a large white rabbit. They suspected supernatural foul play, and put several notches in its ears before setting it free.

Soon after that, an “old Irish farmer’s wife named Peggy Green” died. The farmers noticed her ears were notched, just like the rabbit’s. They had found their witch. They buried her in the Irish cemetery on New Mexico Road, but the cows still did not have milk. So they walled-in her grave to contain the ghost. Only then did the curse lift, and the cows began to produce milk again.

In *Ghost Stories of Canada*, John Robert Colombo wrote that “the U-shaped walled-in area may be seen to this day.”

I’ve explored Thompson Cemetery on New Mexico Road, and so did Grant Myers, as he reported in the *Townships Sun* (May 2009) and again in *Quebec Heritage News* (Winter 2009). There, we saw no gravestone bearing the name of “Green” and we saw no U-shaped wall.

But no wonder. We were likely looking in the wrong cemetery. We should have been exploring another cemetery at the intersection of New Mexico Road and the North Road, today called the North River Road, very near the site of the New Mexico village of the 19th century. A number of old maps confirm its existence, as do multiple mentions in Frederick Edmund¹¹ Hurd’s *Footprints into Newport Township* (2021).

In the mid-1800s, Newport Township had five communities: Maple Leaf, Randville (now Randboro), New Mexico, Learned Plain, and Island Brook. The first settlers in New Mexico were from Mexico, Maine; hence the name. In the 1880s, Hurd wrote, New Mexico was “a busy agricultural settlement comprised of mostly Catholics, both francophone and anglophone, including recent immigrants from Ireland” (p. 218).

James Millar and his Irish wife Mary (née Henderson) moved to Island Brook in 1868. “Mary Millar was the local midwife in the early days of settlement in this part of Newport,” he wrote. “She brought over a hundred babies into the world without losing a single mother or baby.... Mary acted as a nurse when there was a sickness and laid out the deceased after a death.”

Origins of Witch Fables

Mary Millar is not Peggy Green, but both were Irish. Accusing a woman healer or midwife of being a witch is certainly a familiar theme, and could be in play in the legends of both Amanda and Peggy Green.

Another influence in the Peggy Green story could be the olden myth of “butter witches” changing themselves into

the shape of hares to steal milk by suckling a cow’s teats. Such tales could have come with the settlers from Ireland (folklorethursday.com; [The Topography of Ireland](#)).

But even closer to home were the Salem Witch Trials of 1692-1693, leading to the death of 25 persons. Salem, Massachusetts, was 20 miles from Boston, where lived the founder of Newport, Quebec, Edmund⁵ Heard, born just 50 years later. Only 15 miles away was Ipswich, the birthplace of his father, Edmund⁴ Heard.

The stories of women and some men who were accused, tortured, and killed for witchery over the centuries interweave a number of prejudices. Sexism contributed to targeting women who did not conform to social norms, making them objects of fear, derision, respect and, too often, violence. Religion and belief in the Devil also came into play: “If the mass of the Irish Catholic population believed in fairies and butter-witches, the Protestant settler population saw witches in demonic terms, as a serious threat to produce, livestock and human life,” wrote [Andrew Snedden](#) of Ulster University.

Social and cultural prejudices also played a role. A variety of interpersonal, political and religious conflicts could be at the root of accusations of witchcraft, he noted. The Irish Witchcraft Act of 1586 was finally repealed in 1821, but notions of witchery still lurk in our minds just beneath a thin veneer of rationalism.

In fact, [BBC News](#) noted three cases of witchcraft prosecuted in Canada since 2007, under Section 365 of Canada’s Criminal Code. The law stated it was illegal to “fraudulently pretend to exercise or to use any kind of witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration.” The most recent example was in 2017 when astrologist and psychic Murali Muthyalu was “charged with witchcraft after a client allegedly paid \$100,000 to have a curse removed.”

The law was interpreted as targeting women and cultural groups where belief in magic are more widespread, and has since been repealed. In its essence, the crime is fraud.

The question to ask is: How could someone fall prey to this type of fraud? The answer might relate to why we lean into tales of the supernatural, huddled around the campfire, glancing over our shoulders. We are but children whose imaginations are seized by fears of the unknown.



Wicked Witch of the Eastern Townships, a drawing published in the Townships Sun, October 1990 (artist unknown).

use, sale, import and export of the material (cbc.ca).

All well and good. Perhaps the horrific past is better off forgotten, or at least not harped on. At any rate, the town continues to proactively and creatively rise from the ashes of its past. That's the main point of this article.

There is an elephant in the room, though, at least for me: air quality in the mine pit. I admit that having a relative believed to have died in the 1970s of asbestos exposure may be playing into this concern. Many people in my entourage tell me they would not think twice about it. Studies of the air in Thetford Mines released in 2009 purported the air concentration of asbestos to be "very small" (cbc.ca). And a [2012 article in Le Devoir](#) said "miners exposed since 1975 appear to be protected."

I asked the town of Val-des-Sources about air quality studies inside the mine, and was referred to the tour operators.

Martel told me that he has no concerns about air quality. There are strong drafts of fresh air on the lake, he said, and the surface rock is undisturbed. All the chrysotile is deep underground, and the tunnels are sealed off and flooded with water.

He also mentioned that, as a rock artist, he has experience in mines around the world. "I've done 10 years of art exhibition underwater for the divers in the same industry in Thetford mines." If someone has air quality concerns, they will choose another tour, he ventured. People don't seem so concerned; there are already 80 on the waiting list for the next tour of the Jeffrey Mine, he said.

Instead, Martel emphasizes the reforestation efforts, the growing signs of life at the mine, the small fish in the lake, croaking frogs, and swooping vultures keeping the area clean.

"Nature is coming back," he said. "So it's very nice to see that."

I can't help but agree. I find myself remembering the message of hope at the end of Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*: Care "an awful lot" about the environment, and from one seed, a forest can grow.

And it occurs to me that the town of Val-des-Sources is proving to be like asbestos itself: indestructible.



Alden Chorush is a writer, musician, teacher and vegan cook, happy to have chosen to live the Eastern Townships since 2015.

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Mena'sen Islet, Steeped in Legend

by Jean-Marie Dubois & Gérard Coté

Mena'sen Islet is a rocky islet in the Saint-François River, just upstream from its confluence with the Magog River in Sherbrooke. It was once a meeting point for the Abenaki. They called it *Mena'sen*, meaning *rocky (sen) island (mena)*.

According to an Abenaki legend reported in an 1855 Canadian Department of Indian Affairs document, toward the end of the 17th century, two warriors, one Abenaki and one Mohawk, each representing their own nation, engaged in a competition. They both had to run around the islet until the first warrior became exhausted; the other was declared the winner. The victory went to the Abenaki warrior.

According to another legend told by Oscar Massé in 1922, the islet is related to the attack on Deerfield, Massachusetts, by the French and Abenaki forces led in February 1704 by Jean-Baptiste Hertel De Rouville. On their expedition up the Saint-François River, they may have danced around the islet in order to bring about good fortune. Indeed, such a geographical feature as this islet seemed to have a mysterious meaning for them.

The attack ended in a great victory. They would have made their way back with many prisoners to Chambly and Saint-François-des-Prés at the mouth of the Saint-François River. Massé told that among them were Robert Gardner and his fiancée, Alice Morton, who managed to escape and tried to canoe upriver. When they made it to Mena'sen Islet, Alice was probably exhausted and died. Robert likely buried her in an opening on the islet, covered her with gravel and planted a young pine tree. While attempting to continue his trip, it is probable that he drowned.

In 1815, the surveyor Joseph Bouchette made a note of the existence of "this high and singular rock on top of which stands a lonely pine." According to the study of tree-ring growth made in 1982 by Father Joseph Clovis Kemner Laflamme, Professor of Natural Sciences at Laval University, this 40-foot-high tree was more than 200

years old. On November 23, 1913, it was uprooted during a wind storm. Parts of the pine tree can still be seen at the Musée de la nature et des sciences in Sherbrooke.

In 1934, the *Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste du diocèse de Sherbrooke* (SSJB), following a public subscription of funds, put up a 35-foot-high illuminated cross on the islet. The cross was assembled in the workshops of John S. Bourque and was inaugurated June 24, 1934, to mark the 400th anniversary of the discovery of Canada by Jacques-Cartier and the 75th anniversary of the SSJB. At the time, the City of Sherbrooke promised to maintain and light up the cross in perpetuity.

On January 14, 1936, the SSJB purchased the islet from the Quebec Department of Lands and Forests. To recall the event, a granite monument with a bronze commemorative plaque was installed at the entrance to the Mena'sen Park by the City of Sherbrooke on June 24, 1988, as part of the 50th anniversary of the Saint-Sacrament Parish in 2006. The monument still stands, but the plaque was stolen sometime after 2013.

Over the years, the islet was given various names. The most common name was Solitary Pine Islet or Solitary Pine Rock, likely since Bouchette spoke of the solitary pine tree in 1815. This place name also appears on the 1934 cadastral map. The name Mena'sen seems to come from Oscar Massé's 1922 novel, *Mena'sen*. The islet's present name, replacing the popular name of Solitary Pine Rock, was made official on October 6, 1983, by the *Commission de toponymie du Québec*. Near the islet, a park along the shore has also been called Mena'sen since 1988 and there is a Pin-Solitaire Street since 1951.



In *Mena'sen* (1922) by Oscar Massé. *Typographie Dussessault & Proulx, Québec*, p. 6 (after a postcard c. 1913).




Jean-Marie Dubois (*Université de Sherbrooke*) and **Gérard Coté** (*Lennoxville-Ascot Historical and Museum Society*)

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The Craft

by Kathleen Y. Rattigan

“Through the flow of ages and the rise and fall of cultures, a secret codex has been inscribed with tales and stories, the rites and rituals of priestesses who are emanations of the Eternal Goddess, caretakers and guardians of our Mother Earth, Terra Gaia.” (In Gaia Codex by Sarah Drew)

Shall we walk together and explore a realm of ancient voices? We will walk with mystery, lore and legends, and an unending spiral of love, danger, and dedication.

Known as “The Craft” (commonly called witchcraft), this topic has been honoured, maligned and misunderstood throughout the ages. The long and dark history of the harm caused to innocent women is well known to humanity and need not be repeated here. I personally prefer to use the more modern term of *Wicca* as opposed to *witch*, partly due to the negative energy connected to the older term even though it is used honourably today.

A time of intense spiritual exploration led me to our west coast, and I moved to the gorgeous Vancouver Island. I ran into a coven of white wiccans and I walked with these wonderful women for a few seasons, learning to see, feel, and reconnect with our Mother Earth’s energy with love and respect. Imagine being by the ocean at night, moonlight dancing on the waves, golden firelight bathing us in warmth and starlight filling the heavenly sky above us as we sang, chanted, prayed and gave thanks to the feminine divine. The Wiccan way forever changed me and taught me to walk gently upon the earth.

To my shock, I realized how much ingrained fear I had—the fear of daring to explore different realms and teachings outside the norm, the fear of being judged, fear of the power I felt. I was also shocked to see just how visceral these fears were on every level of my being.

Where did these fears come from, I wondered? Was it ancestral, or social conditioning along with the history of Salem and the endless persecution of wise women, healers and those who worshipped the feminine Divine? This history is just like so many other cultures that have had their personal beliefs and practices attacked and suppressed! I realized it was “yes” to all of the aforementioned. In this awareness I became free, and fear turned into courage! If you are interested in knowing more about this truth, I recommend the book *When God Was A Woman* by Merlin Stone. Be prepared for a shocking journey into the past.

I have women friends today who walk the *Wiccan Way*. They are also mothers, grandmothers and career women. The difference is the sparkle in their eyes, their wild and

wonderful energies, the little swagger in their walk and the courage to freely express themselves. We honour them as Maidens, Mothers and Matriarchs.

The ancient voices of our ancestors are still alive in the flourishing culture of men and women who can now openly practice the mystical paths of religious and spiritual beliefs that our Mother Earth is alive. These beliefs teach us that we are the guardians and protectors of life, and that whether we dance under a full moon or sit in a church, whether we call God *Mother* or *Father* (or both), we are free to choose.

I really hope that this article will help bring a new peace into our spiritual lives. To allow the presence of a divine Mother along with a Divine Father brings a balance back into our souls, a gentleness that has been missing for far too long. Blessings on your journey.

“Nobody owns the truth, just as nobody owns God, the Great Spirit, the divine harmony and the essence of life. There are many different and wonderful spiritual pathways which embrace so many of the same teachings, just expressed in different ways.” (In Coming Full Circle by Lynn Andrews)



Kathleen Y. Rattigan has been a counselor and motivational speaker for over 30 years. She lives in the Chateauguay Valley (Ormstown).

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Signs Your Body is Addicted to Sugar - Part 1

by Anita Duwel

With Halloween just around the corner, I thought I would do a two-part mini-series on sugar addiction. Today we will look at the signs of sugar addiction and the follow-up article will discuss reasons to ditch it and tips on how to do just that.

We all look for a sweet fix now and then. Whether you prefer candy, chocolate, sugary drinks, or desserts, a sweet-tooth craving once in a while is relatively common and okay. However, sugar addiction is not okay. Simply put, sugar addiction is the psychological or emotional reliance on sugary foods and drinks.

When you eat a meal with lots of sugar (like a bowl of cereal), it can raise your blood sugar level, which provides a short burst of energy. Your body will then release insulin to help remove it from your bloodstream. Next, you will experience a sugar crash, which can lead to feeling hungry and tired, to eating more sugar, and more insulin being released ... and on and on and on. You can see how starting your day with a jolt of sugar can put your body into a vicious cycle.

The problem is that your body starts to adjust to your sugar intake and over time you will need even more of it to get that sugar high. Excessive sugar consumption can lead to multiple health and psychological issues such as heart disease, obesity, inflammation, and depression.

So how do you know when your cravings for a sugary treat are too much? Here are some signs that your body may be addicted to sugar, some of which you may already know and others that just might surprise you.

You consume large amounts of food or drinks loaded with sugar. Eating this way is one of the most obvious telltale signs of sugar addiction. Here's just a small sampling of foods laden with sugar: juice drinks, sport drinks, granola, cereals, condiments such as ketchup, breads, and yogurt with fruit.

You need to eat or snack all day. It's not just cake and chocolate you crave. Intense cravings throughout the day for bread, pasta, chips, and baked goods could be a sign of sugar addiction. Personally, if I have something sweet at the beginning of the day, I am craving sweet and processed foods all day long!

You make excuses. If you find yourself coming up with reasons to justify why it's ok to consume specific sugary

foods or drinks, it could be a sign that you have a sugar addiction. For example, "Well, it's low fat!" or "It's organic!" Make sure to check the label for sugar content.

You hide the sugary goods. Do you hide the sweets in the back of the cupboards or the far corner of the pantry so no one can see them? Or sneak around to eat your sugary treats and desserts? Do you lie to yourself or others about what and how much you eat? These are sure signs of an addiction.

This is a good one. I used to hide my treats all the time and pull them out when no one was around! That was a long time ago and I no longer do that. It's also something my clients would tell me they did. I believe it is more common than we may realize!

You can't get enough. Every time you eat something sweet, your body craves more. You need more and more sugar

over time to satisfy a craving. The other thing is that the sweet doesn't taste as sweet anymore so you keep eating more to try and get that sugar fix you are looking for. It could be a sign your brain has become desensitized, and you've built up a tolerance for sweets.

You've tried to quit and went through withdrawal symptoms. If you've attempted to quit or cut back before, but experienced headaches, nausea, mental fog, or mood changes when you didn't have your typical treat, it could be signs of withdrawal. Other symptoms to look for include cravings, insomnia, muscle pain, lethargy, gas, inflammation, and bloating. But know this: after a couple of days of sugar withdrawal, the symptoms start to go away and you will feel better.

If any of this resonates with you, it doesn't necessarily mean you're doomed to live a life with sugar addiction. But I hope you are now aware and ready to tackle it.

I'd love to hear from you. Can you relate to any of this? How has it affected your life and the people around you? Feel free to email me and let me know!

Anita Duwel is owner of *Love the Life You Live/Aging with Vitality*. She is a Certified Holistic Nutrition and Health coach, Workplace Wellness Consultant and helps people who struggle with weight and low energy to feel healthy and vibrant so that they can live a life of quality and vitality. Learn more at www.AnitaDuwel.com or email Anita at AnitaDuwel@live.com



Lift Off the Roof

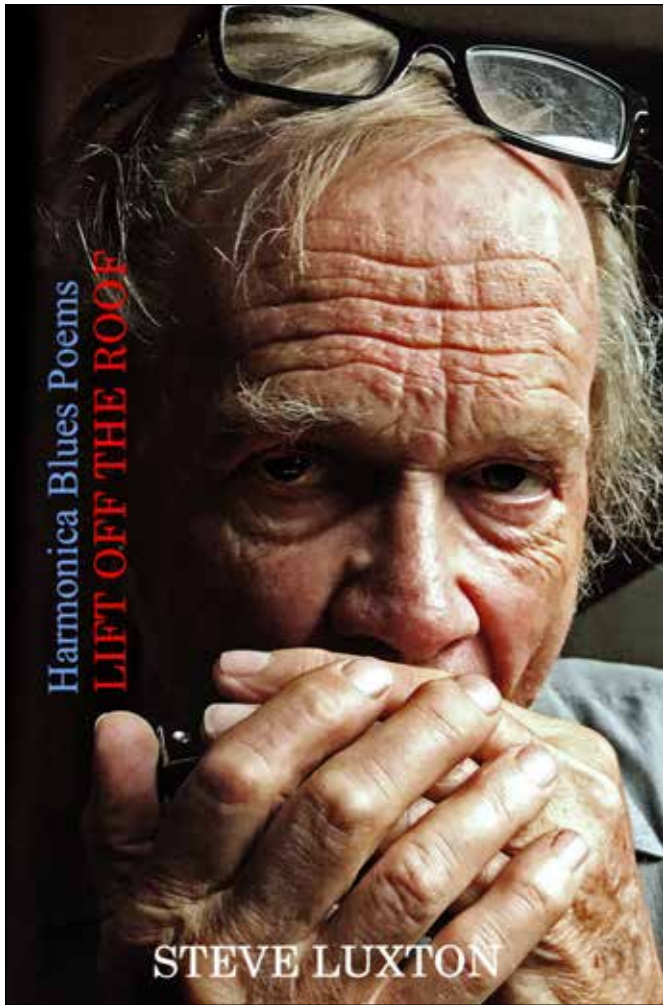
Book Review by Barbara Lavoie

Lift Off The Roof: Harmonica Blues Poems

by Steve Luxton (2022)

Shoreline Press, 95 pp., \$19.95

In his recently released book, published poet, musician and Blues aficionado Steve Luxton gathers under one roof, as it were, a collection of poems he offers as tribute to both the lowly yet versatile harmonica and the Blues, a similarly adaptable genre of music originating in the American Mississippi Delta.



He details his love affair of more than 50 years with the tin sandwich, gob iron, or simply the harp. He tells about the moment, around an evening bonfire, he was smitten with the harmonica, and how it and the Blues figure largely in his present retirement plan. "The two are synonymous," he says. From what he calls his "verbal music," we can easily understand the harmonica and the Blues are integral to who he is and has become.

Listen closely as you read and you can almost hear the chirp, the choke, the skirl, the shrill, the howl, the moan,

the wail of the harp. It echoes through the words he writes about his own state-of-the-Blues, recounting life stories of joy, passion, regret, disappointment and other emotions in communion with the music and with his readers. The ups and downs of his life reverberate with the sounds of the harmonica.

The book definitely places his poetry front and centre, 60 pages out of 95. But it is also a compendium of knowledge about early harmonica/Blues greats: Bessie Smith, Sonny Boy Williamson, Little Walter, Muddy Waters, Paul Butterfield, James Cotton, Robert Johnson, Big Mama Thornton and others.

He also tips his hat to a current Canadian Blues leader, Ottawa's multi-award-winning harmonica player and vocalist Steve Marriner, and thanks the late King Biscuit Boy and Dutch Mason.

As we read, we travel autobiographically with Luxton. The places, the people and experiences he writes about, Blues landmarks with storied histories such as Grossman's Tavern in Toronto, catch our attention and draw us into reminiscing our own feeling landscape. It's good to remember.

A poem that particularly touched me was "North Country Blues." Luxton tells us Indigenous people believed the loon "sang its sad song while sitting on a lake formed from its own tears." The poem begins:

Blue loon

*I saw you swimming alone
right here in the freezing marsh,
statuesque as a shelf-piece
with just a catch in your voice.*

Luxton is a published Townships poet with six books, now a seventh, to his credit. A retired college and university professor of literature and creative writing, he continues to work on perfecting "those sizzling, classic licks" on his harmonica and writing more "verbal music" in the form of poetry.

Lovers of stories, lovers of nature, lover of blues, and lovers of poetry will all certainly cherish this book.

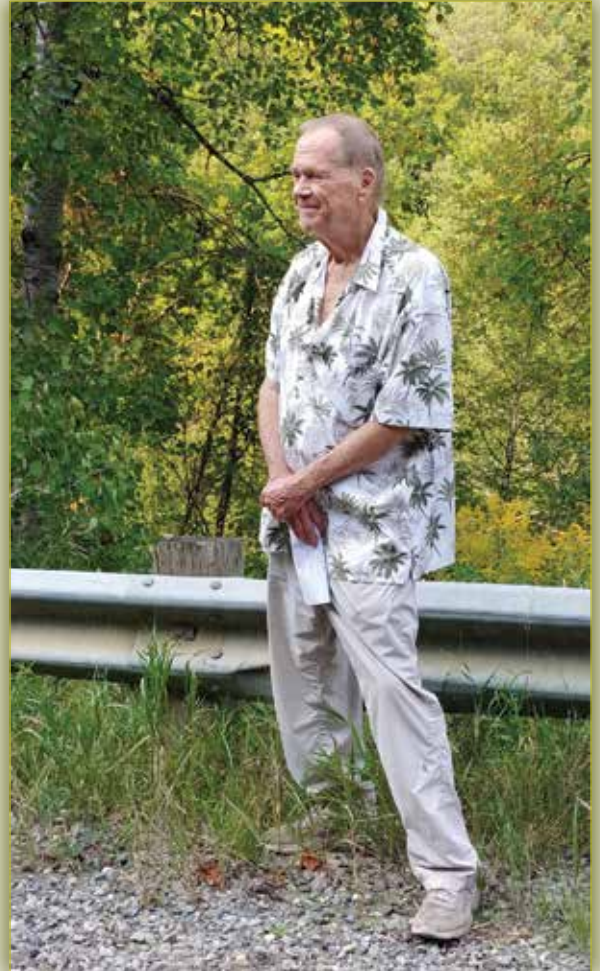
Barbara Lavoie, a freelance journalist/photographer, is a self-described "serious Blues fan." She has volunteered on several occasions at the Blues Foundation's International Blues Challenge in Memphis, TN, and contributed articles and photographs on Quebec-based Blues musicians and bands for the now defunct e-zine *Le Net Blues*.



Incident on the Vaillancourt Road

by Steve Luxton

Now and then I wander up there, the rising
Vaillancourt Road with, on one side, the sliced bluff's shale cliff
and, on the other, a steep slope footed by a swamp where
many years back the corpses were found.
Or so I was told by a local guy.
There were three or maybe more dead.
The victims had been lined up on the road-edge,
backs to the drop, and, Bang! Bang! Bang! one-by-one, shot.
Seems the killings or rather executions were the outcome of
a collision between some outlaw bikers and
a respectable French-Canadian farming family.
Believe me, it's quite the story, would make a film.
It's mostly word of mouth again, but I heard the family
enjoyed a peaceful cabin on the shore of
a puddle-sized, nearby lake, when, surprise!,
the outlaw bikers moved in right next door.
—Swaggering, slouching, cursing and with
their "choppers" coming and going, including late at night.
Also, bikers will be partyers and, often, their cabin
was in an uproar with howling and screaming,
shattering liquor bottles, wall thumping brawls, drunken guests
pounding the wrong door, pissing in the yard or
on the farm family's beach.
The family must have conferred, then visited.
I like to imagine the nervous but firm bearings of
the farmer and his two wiry, clean-cut sons as
they lodged yet another complaint, tried a further appeal.
No doubt the Wild Ones could barely hide their smirks, had dealt
with cow managers of their sort before,
and growled menacing threats and leered at
the farmer's teen-age daughter.
So, the unruly revelry continued....
Then, one pale pre-dawn when even the chronic carousers
had nodded off, the farmer and sons,
armed with deer rifles, slipped through the club house
door, roped up the dazed occupants, trucked
them to the top of the Vaillancourt Road and
dispatched them!
In their final moments, did the bikers wonder
where were the police?
Taking on that tight farm family, they'd got
a tad more than they bargained for.
—Talk about home-brew justice!
I hear the court was quite lenient with the plaintiffs.
My neighbour tells me they're all out now tending their milkers.
I don't know if I got the details right. Maybe not.
They change.
It's the sort of story that, from tongue to tongue,
grows and grows....



*Steve Luxton, of Coaticook, Quebec, at the site of the Vaillancourt Road killings. He is author of seven poetry books, most recently **Lift off the Roof: Hamonica Blues Poems** (see page 27). As writer-in-residence at the Lennoxville Library, he is the subject of a series of four videos, **Literary Rambles**, about historical Townships poets. (Photo: John Mackley)*

*John Mackley recently videoed Luxton reading his poem, **Incident on the Vaillancourt Road**, at the likely location of the incident near Hatley, Quebec.*

*To watch the video, visit **YouTube/Townships Sun**, or click on this QR code:*

