



The Probe

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Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Ottawa

June 2011, #62

Change of Date

Our July Meeting will be on the 20th instead of the 27th

Spring Fling 2011

Spring Fling this year was organized by the Kingston and Gananoque Clubs at the Italo-Canadian Club, just off the 401 at Kingston.

On May 17th, fifteen of our members: **Bob and Marie-Neige Atchison, Ed and Cathy Borza, Merle and June Brown, Stella Constantinidas, John and Kawsar Kruitof, Wib and Edeltraud Neal, Walter and Gwen Terentiuk, Keith and Joyce Walker** made the trip to Kingston. The weather was great – a nice day for driving – and the fellowship was most enjoyable.

The room at the Italo-Canadian Club was filled to capacity, 288! This may be a problem for next year when **Perth** is hosting on May 15, 2012, since their venue can only handle 200 and will require some innovative allocating for each club wanting to attend. The price this year was \$30 each and it will be the same next year.

The luncheon was opened by **Chris Whyman**, an award-winning **Town Crier from Kingston**, who won the world championship at the Chester World Town Crier Tournament in England in 2010. What volume! And his diction was good too! Then we settled down to a choice of three main courses – sole, chicken, or vegetable stir fry – actually the sole looked pretty good, but we didn't have any.

The lunch was tasty and there was lots of time to move around a bit taking pictures and visiting. Then the seven member **Cranberry Dixieland Band** took over and played some pretty good jazz – even sounding like Louis Armstrong and his Hot Five or All Stars at times – not bad at all!



Bob and Marie-Neige Atchison enjoying lunch at the Spring Fling

Before the luncheon I attended the Presidents Meeting, mostly hearing about how other clubs operate and the difficulties they have with finding sufficient accommodation. For those with waiting lists to join and a long-time member from another club moving into their area who wants to join, it can be awkward. Fortunately we have not run into that kind of problem yet, but some day – who knows!

Bob Atchison

PROBUS' Vital Purpose ...

To stimulate thought, interest and participation in activities at a time in life when it is easy to become complacent and self-centred.

Sparks Downtown

Our April speaker was Nicholas Sparks through the medium of his gt-gt-gt-grandson, **Brian Hull** who lives in S.S.No. 1 Goulbourn (see page 98 of Joy Forbes' book – Joy was our March speaker).

Sparks was born in Wexford in 1792 and emigrated to Canada in 1816. His family raised horses for the Duke of Marlborough but after Waterloo (1814) the demand dropped precipitously. In Liverpool he met Ruggles Wright, a son of Philemon Wright. Ruggles offered to pay his passage to Canada in exchange for a 5-year indenture to Philemon. Nicholas agreed and made his way to Wrightstown (later Hull, now Gatineau) where he looked after Philemon's horses for 5 years at 50 pounds per year.

About the time his indenture ended, John Burrows Honey offered 200 acres of land to Wright for 100 pounds. Wright had already given Sparks some swampy land south of the river in lieu of wages and was not interested in acquiring more. Sparks was. He offered Honey 95 pounds, which he borrowed from Wright, and became the owner of a tract from Bronson to Cumberland, and Wellington to Laurier.

In 1826, Sparks married the widow of Philemon Jnr. and so became step-father to 7 children (they later added two more to the brood). That same year, his big break came when the Duke of Wellington wanted a waterway from Ottawa to Kingston. Due to some suspected insider trading, the original route – due north from Dows lake – was scrapped and the current route chosen. Recognizing his opportunity, Sparks donated the land for the canal and made a fortune selling the lots alongside the waterway. He used some of his fortune to bankroll new settlers. In one case he repossessed land when the debtor could not pay and immediately sold it for 600 pounds where the debt had been for 75. His biggest deal was for Barrack Hill, now Parliament Hill. He offered it to Col. By for 500 pounds. By refused and homologated it. Sparks fought it through the courts and, 20 years later, was awarded 27,000 pounds!

Sparks and Wright "built" the first bridge across to Wrightstown. Col. By had his Royal Engineers build the first arch – which collapsed. Sparks and Wright started with a rope bridge then made it ropes and planks – precarious but it served.



Sparks died in 1862 and is buried "across the river".

Brian was asked about the move to rename Wellington Street after Sir John A. Macdonald. His view is that without the Duke's decision on the canal, Ottawa would now look like Hawkesbury or Pembroke. He also mentioned that he has met the descendants of many Waterloo veterans who were given land in Canada to avoid having them "clutter up" the UK.

Another question was on the bridge. The first collapse was in 1838 and a ferry service was established until 1843 when what was then the longest

suspension bridge in the Americas was slung over the Chaudière Falls.

John Wright (no relation to Philemon) introduced Brian and Nicholas. Bob Atchison thanked Brian (and/or Nicholas) on our behalf.

Now first among our old landmarks,
Comes Laird of Bytown, Nicholas Sparks,
Who came across in '26
From Hull, his lucky fate to fix
Upon a bush farm which he bought
For sixty pounds—and little thought,
While grumbling at a price so high,
That fortune had not passed him by.
He little dreamed of Ottawa now,
When 'mongst the stumps his wooden plough
Stir'd the first sod in times of old;
He knew not then, that 'twas not mould
He turne'd up, and tilled, but gold.
'Tis not my business here to flatter,
Or with enconiums to bespatter
The shadows of departed men
Whom we shall never see again.
Yet I may say, who knew him well,
And of him would not falsehood tell,
That as poor human nature ran,
He was an honest upright man,
"Close fisted" as the need occurred,
Yet one who always kept his word.
Whate'er the cost—I say no more
Of Nicholas Sparks—who for the shore
Unknown, has shaken out his sail
Where riches are of no avail
To win calm sea or favoring gale

William Pittman Lett

Archives

We picked a good time to have Paul Henry, City Archivist, talk to us. The Archives are in the process of moving into new, purpose-built premises.

Paul started with a sample of photographs from the 2 million in the collection. The ones he selected were “Black and Whites” from the 1950’s, including Elvis Presley (1957) on his only tour outside the US (except for entertaining troops in Germany); The Queen at the Civic Centre (1957); Mayor Charlotte Whitton – a rather formidable-looking lady - taken in 1954; a street car crash at Sussex and Rideau (1954).

He described the Archives as a gateway to the past and a map to the present. When the city decided to work on King Edward Avenue, the original plans were available but in many ways they did not reflect what was really in the ground. The Archives had annotated plans which probably saved the city millions of dollars.

Another photo showed the Central Canada Exhibition parade (1959) and is a shot of elephants lined up in front of Parliament Hill. Paul made an unkind comparison between the elephants outside and inside. The By-ward Market fire (1957) resulted in the loss of many records. The final photo was of a 1955 fashion show and drew a reaction but whether it was shock or nostalgia was hard to tell.

Paul then went on to tell us about the first parking meter, installed in 1958 at Laurier and Metcalfe, and its first victim who was so incensed that he uprooted the meter and took it to City Hall. Ottawa was a test location for the “white man” walk signal. Mayor Whitton sensed a photo-op but the picture shows her crossing on a red light! Not only did we have the first walk light but also the first jay walker.

Another anecdote concerned a Mayor who put the chain of office on the roof of a car and then took off along the Queensway. (Editors note. While Paul did not identify the Mayor, I have heard the story first hand and can reveal that it was a former speaker at our club.) The key for the Carleton County Jail is in the collection and is now the template for the key given as the ‘Key to the City’.

The second part of the talk dealt with the new building and its contents. There are 75,000 linear feet of records, including the original by-laws, original council minutes, plans, deeds, private sector records, church records, etc. They will accept anything which contributes to the



Alex Meldrum and Paul Henry getting their heads together

Ottawa story (Another note from the editor: Maybe copies of The Probe???)

Relocation planning started in 2002. In 2004 the proposal was to move to 2020 Walkley – it didn’t happen. In 2005 the proposal was to use the fire hall at Blair and Innes – no room for expansion. In 2006, Council approved a move to CentrepoinTE – didn’t happen. Finally, in 2007, the new building was approved. There is some adjacent land for future expansion which Paul calls ‘The Cricket Pitch’, his reasoning is that there are not enough cricketers to make a fuss when the land is reclaimed compared with the potential angst if it was a football or baseball field..

The building is “fantastic!”. There are two 10,000 square foot vaults, each having capacity of 136,000 linear feet. The vaults are carefully climate controlled. Sprinkler systems are state of the art. Robots find and re-shelve items. Paul waxed particularly eloquent when describing the chairs.

Visitors are welcome - but call ahead.

Question. Preservation of photos? Envelopes for the 2 million photos have to be changed every 10 years, so digitization is a priority.

Q. New items? We are proactive and look for new material – we do not just wait for things to be handed to us.

Q. Queen Juliana? We have a complete set of the formal photos and documents from the birth of Princess Margriet at the Civic Hospital.

Q. Do you offer preservation advice? Yes

City of Ottawa Archives

You are cordially invited to an Open House with tours of the new facilities, including the conservation lab, vault, and more

When: Saturday, July 9, 2011, from noon to 4 p.m.

Where: City of Ottawa Central Archives, 100 Tallwood Drive at Woodroffe Avenue
(bus routes 94 and 95; free parking)

Don't just sit and listen, come and see it for yourself!

William Pittman Lett

Lett provides a bridge between Brian Hull and Paul Henry, our two most recent speakers. The lines on Nicholas Sparks (page 2) are from "Recollections of Bytown and Its Old Inhabitants" a mammoth history in rhyme. The whole poem runs to about 3,400 lines.

He was a contemporary of Nicholas Sparks and much more than a versifying historian. In 1855 he was invited to become the first City Clerk of the newly-named municipality of Ottawa. It was a post he held for 36 years, until declining health forced him to retire in 1891.

The Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives suggest that the archives should be called the **Lett Building**.

Country Life

Cathy and Ed Borza again invited the Management Committee to hold their June meeting at the Borza's country cottage.

After the usual intense round of discussions, the group were able to relax, enjoy a pot-luck lunch and test the waters.

Thanks, Cathy and Ed!

July 20th - Travelogues

Note the change of date.

It's 'been there, done that' time for five of our members who have signed up for our July meeting. **Allen Taylor, Joan Evans, Joyce Wright, Mike Charrier** and **A. N. Other** (must be a new member - the name is not familiar) are all set - or they were before we changed the date. We have to confirm that they are not setting off on another trip.

Just in case - have **YOU** taken a trip that you would like to talk to us about?

Prepositions

Is a preposition something modern English allows you to end a sentence with? It's a preposition proposition!

August 24th - Royal Mint

The Mint has promised to provide our August speaker, but has not yet named the lucky person.

As well as the normal operations of the Mint, we asked for a few words on counterfeiting - not, we hasten to add, as a step-by-step or do-it-yourself project.

If we are lucky, perhaps they will hand out samples of the new, plastic, \$100 bills that went into circulation this week.

Moncton Probus Club - 20 Years

Moncton Times & Transcript published an article commemorating the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Moncton Probus Club. It lists the original executive which includes Russell Hammond as the Vice-president. Russ became the first President of our club and, later, President Emeritus. Russ and Eva were regular visitors to Moncton and kept up their contacts with Probus members there.

Probus Centre Canada Inc. Officers 2011- 2012

Our Director, Peter Doyle of Kanata Probus, is moving up the Probus hierarchy. He was Secretary in 2010-2011 and he will be the Vice-president for the coming year..

Keith Trail (Nanaimo) takes over the Presidency from Gordon Springate (Kelowna); Steve Campbell (Grand Barachois) replaces Peter, and Judy Saunders (Ancaster) retains the keys to the Treasury.

How to find us

We meet on the 4th Wednesday of each month except December (2nd Wednesday) and, unusually, on July 20th this year, in the Hall of Gloucester Presbyterian Church, 91 Pike Street (corner of Lorry Greenberg).

Our meetings begin at 10 but members start arriving soon after 9:30 for coffee and chat. Try it - you'll like it!