

AMHERST ISLAND BEACON

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THIS ISSUE

- Ian Murray

Don Tubb has agreed to return to a more active roll with this publication. He will be looking after photos and joining the text (which I am responsible for) and the photos together for the printer. Don will also continue looking after the subscriptions and I'll make sure the Beacon gets to its readers (usually with some help). Thanks to Sue Murray for all her layout work on past Beacons.

DOROTHY ELIZABETH (McMASTER) KILPATRICK

- Staff (photos and eulogy next issue)

Dorothy died at the L&A County Hospital on March 25 surrounded by her family.

She was predeceased by her husband William R. (Billy) Kilpatrick, her parents Raymond McMaster and Frances Tugwell, and her sisters Gene McDonald and Helen Smith.

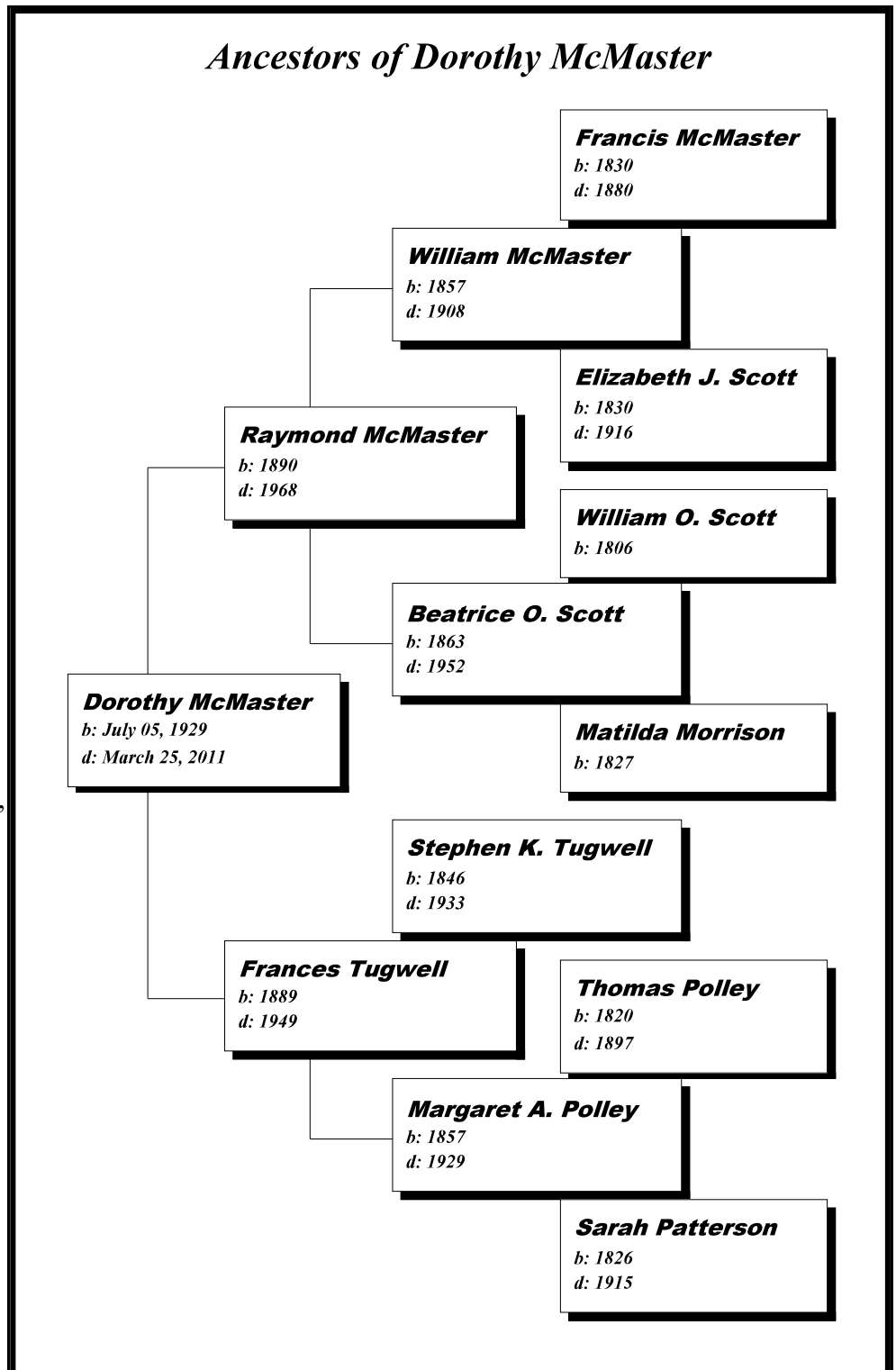
Dorothy is survived by her four children, Warren, Laurie, Kevin and Mark. She is also leaves behind 17 grandchildren.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

- Mary Kay Steel

The regular monthly meeting of the Women's Institute took place on March 16th, at the St. Paul's Church Hall, commencing at 7pm. The Vice-president, Sharen English, was in the chair. The evening started with a

Ancestors of Dorothy McMaster



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A.I. Beacon
14775 Front Rd
Stella, ON
K0H 2S0

(613) 389-3802
E-Mail:
aibeacon@topsyfarm
s.com

Editor

Ian Murray
c/o
aibeacon@topsyfarm
s.com

**Photo and
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Don Tubb
aibeacon@topsyfarm
s.com

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very interesting presentation on the Fair Trade organization, Ten Thousand Villages, by two women who volunteer at the Kingston Ten Thousand Villages location at 235 Princess Street. We welcomed Wendy Worling from Kingston, and our own Anne Henderson. Each puts in a few hours a week at the shop, serving customers, unpacking new stock, taking inventory, and many other little chores. And both spoke of how rewarding their volunteer experience has been. Ten Thousand Villages was started by a member of the Mennonite Central Committee in 1946 with an arrangement with artisans in Puerto Rico, and has grown to about 50 stores in Canada, over 150 in the US, and in some 60 countries in total. The organization buys from some 60,000 individuals, mostly via local artisan groups, in 35 countries, and pays them a negotiated fair price for their work. Many of the artisans are women working in small groups, for whom this is their only source of income. We were shown via video many artisans at work in their own locales, in Haiti and India as examples. Thus opportunities are created in developing countries for artisans to earn income through long-term purchasing arrangements, while at the same time, unique skills often reflecting their heritage, are fostered. We then enjoyed our usual delicious refreshments

while viewing sample products from the Kingston shop; many of us bought wonderful items.

The business part of our meeting then got underway, with approval of minutes and the treasurer's report. Much of our business was of a routine nature. We noted that our indoor walking program on Monday afternoons has been fairly

popular; we will try to extend it to the outdoors, once spring is here. Joyce Haines reported on all things district; the annual district meeting will take place in Selby on May 17th. Several of us will attend. Other key dates for district and area level events were presented. We continue to communicate with Councillor Ashley and the Township staff towards resuming a library service here on the Island. Members were asked to total up the volunteer hours they have put in on WI matters since last April, as we will soon make a report to the Ontario office as part of the fiscal year end. Mary Kay Steel, Promotions Head, will call members to collect the numbers. Our next meeting will be held on April 20th, at Leslie Gavlas' home, and the main business will be our annual election of officers.

JANET'S JOTTINGS

- Janet Scott

Heard but not Seen!

On Friday as I went out to start up the bus I heard a soft, but very distinct "peent". This is a familiar sound of Spring that many of you have probably heard but not associated with a shorebird that nests here on Amherst Island. It did not feel like spring as this past week has been brisk and cold but the stars were absolutely brilliant and bright and that super moon was now waning so more and more stars could be seen in the southern sky. I was enjoying the stillness and quietness of early morning when I heard that familiar sound. It was an American Woodcock.

Many ask why our birds such as Robin, Kestrel and Black Duck are prefaced by American. This is not to say they are only found in United States but rather that they are native to the Americas, either North or South. We had to let the people of United States call themselves as Americans, after all could you imagine addressing them as United Statesians. That sounds rather awkward doesn't it?

The American Woodcock is a chunky, oddly proportioned bird with large eyes set well up on his head and equipped with a long, sturdy beak which he uses for poking in moist soil to find delectable morsels to eat. His head is larger than the body size would indicate and he appears to have no neck. He is about 11 inches or 28 cm. in length and is beautifully camouflaged for the woodland floor. The head is barred along the back and the rest of him is mottled

browns, warm caramel, gray and dark brown.

The Woodcock is the only shorebird in North America that has adapted to living year round in the forest. When the Europeans introduced earthworms into Ontario and opened up suitable habitat, the American Woodcock thrived on this preferred food. You may not see him on a walk through the Owl Woods on a summer's day but you will certainly hear him as he flushes suddenly and his wings make a twittering sound.

The reason we hear him now at either dusk or dawn is because he is doing his amazing courtship flight. He is known by the aboriginals as Sky Dancer because of this behaviour. After returning in early March the Woodcock finds a suitable field to call home. In order to attract a mate he flies high above this spot looping and spiralling higher and higher. As he flies each wingbeat is audible as the wind whistles on every stroke through the three stiff, narrow flight feathers at his wingtips. He makes vocal chirping sounds as he zigs and zags and then plummets back the 100 yards to his starting point with chirping and wing twittering as he falls. Shortly after landing one hears the pleased "peent" again to announce that he has arrived. The whole skydance just lasts about 60 seconds and can best be seen by facing west at dusk so that he appears against the softly glowing sky. He will repeat it many times. After an hour the "peents" fade away and our hero slips quietly off into his forest retreat.

The breeding survey conducted in this area found 4,350 pairs nesting in the Kingston area and make it our third most common nesting shorebird but I bet most of you have never seen one. Keith McIlwaine reported one this March near his property on Front Road, Ross Haines has found them near his place and I've flushed them in the Owl Woods so watch for them in damp, quiet areas. He may not be beautiful but "the woods would be very silent if no birds sang except those that sang best". Henry Van Dyke.

Good Birding.

AIMS March 12 Meeting

- Dave Meikle

A hearty breakfast was prepared for the group by Gladys and Reilly Lambert, Doug and Cheyenne Shurtliffe and Cindy Marshall.

Presentation by Janet Scott on the Christmas Bird Count

The annual Christmas Bird Count was started in December of 1900 by Frank Chapman and 27 early conservationists. At the time interest in wild bird populations was based more on their taste rather than their conservation. The term 'birder' had not even been invented yet. This small group persevered. They went on to form the Audubon Society in 1905 and continued their winter counts. By 2010 the Christmas Bird Count had grown to where 2160 different regions were counted. 382 of these counts took place in Canada, 1671 in U.S.A., 107 in Latin America, the Caribbean, Bermuda, and the Pacific Islands. 60,753 people took part in the count. Of these 51,482 people performed field counts and 927 did feeder counts. Edmonton Alberta had the biggest number of participants with 483. In the U.S.A. 51,581,105 birds were counted. In Canada 3,138,839 birds were counted. In the other participating regions 1,231,763 birds were counted. All told, 2319 species were identified. In Ontario the highest species count was in Blenheim, with 115 species. At the other end of the scale was Nunavut where 3 species were identified. This is up 1 species over last year. The Common Eider and the Common Raven are joined by the House Sparrow as Nunavut winter residents.

The Christmas Bird Count is the longest running citizen performed scientific survey in the world. A count takes place within a designated area, for a specified limited time. Data is collected on temperature, wind conditions, and weather as well as bird species numbers and populations. The Amherst Island count covers the whole of the Island. This year it ran from 7:30 am to midnight on December 30th. Twenty-five hardy birders attended. They had the community centre as their home base. Janet Scott and Bonnie Livingstone rewarded their efforts with hot chili. Their hospitality and the special features of the Island bird populations are likely why most participants return year after year. Some travel long distances to be involved. One gentleman travels from Calgary and one couple from Mexico. The volunteers identified 55 species this year.

The Audubon Society has tracked this data for over 100 years. Anyone interested can view the historical data archived on their website at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc.

This data is used to evaluate trends in population numbers. Every four years the Audubon Society

works with the other bird conservancy scientists to determine which birds are of serious conservation concern. Some of these trends have been disturbing. Over the last 40 years 20 of the most common birds have had population decreases of 50%. The Northern Bobwhite, The Northern Pintail, the Greater Scaup, the East Meadowlark, the Common Tern, the Loggerhead and the Shrike populations have all decreased by 80%. This process of assessing trends recently identified a concern with Short-eared Owl populations. Based on the Christmas Bird Count data Amherst Island was identified as having a year round population of Short-eared Owls ideal for study. Kristen Keyes, whom many of you met during her 18 month stay here, was dispatched to Amherst Island by Bird Studies Canada to study the owls in their habitat. Not all of the trends revealed by the Christmas Bird Count have been bad news. Bald Eagles have been making a comeback in this area. There have been some significant increases in waterfowl populations. Both these improvements have been the result of conservation efforts.

Bird Studies Canada has monitored the Christmas Bird Count since 2000. Bird Studies Canada promotes research programs that advance the understanding, appreciation, and conservation of wild birds and their habitats. Each year more than 20,000 volunteers actively participate in Bird Studies Canada activities to promote research and education.

Janet closed her wonderful presentation by quoting Geoffrey LeBaron, the Editor-in-Chief of 'American Birds', "The scientific value of the Christmas Bird count is a shining example of the incredible contribution to science that birdwatchers can make. As bird lovers we seem to have a mutually dependent relationship with the objects of our ardor. Birds need birders. We help define their ecological needs, monitor the health of their populations and protect the environment upon which we all depend. And birders need birds. They give us beauty, song, wonderment and provide us with an overwhelming desire to get out and experience the natural world."

Business Meeting Discussion

Discussion Seeking Ideas for AIMS Meeting Speakers The membership was invited to suggest ideas for future breakfast meeting speakers. Interest was expressed in continuing to have new members speak on their lives. The membership also supported the idea of seeking Islanders willing to present living

history narratives. A suggestion was also made to seek speakers to talk on local history, or local health issues such as tick borne disease. It was also suggested that many of the members have unique interests that would make interesting topics as well. The membership was in agreement controversial or divisive topics should continue to be avoided.

WHERE IS GOD IN THE EARTHQUAKE?

- Zander of DUNN INN

We have, within a little more than a year, witnessed three major earthquakes. The earthquake in Haiti almost totally shattered the country and left over 300,000 dead. The earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand, destroyed all the major churches there and left thousands homeless and countless businesses in ruins. The earthquake in Japan was one of the most forceful in recorded history and terrified the population of the north part of the country. Although the damage caused by the quake was significant it was nothing compared to the destructive tsunami which followed and which led to the meltdown of the nuclear power plants.

All the world has been shocked by the power and the devastation of these earthquakes. We have all grieved over the thousands who have died, the thousands who have been injured, and the thousands who are missing. Many prayers have been offered up by Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Taoists and people of other religions, asking God to bring healing and rebuilding to those lands.

Why pray to God in the first place? Didn't God allow these disasters to happen?

Why didn't God stop the quakes? Why didn't God save the people from death?

First, let's admit there are many things we don't know. We can see things only from our point of view, not from God's vantage point.

Second, let's note that God has no favourite people. The quakes hit Haitians, of African descent, mostly Roman Catholics; New Zealanders, of English ancestry, mostly Protestant Christians; Japanese, native to their country, Buddhists, Shintoists, Taoists.

Third, let's observe that we knew those quakes were coming. We didn't know when, but scientists who study earthquakes knew each country hit was in an earthquake zone. The three recent quakes have been recognized as warnings to the West Coast of

North America, from California to British Columbia, that an earthquake is expected to hit there.

Fourth, let's remark on the fact that thousands of earthquakes, much smaller than the recent shocks, are recorded every year around the world. That's another way of saying that we are living on a moving earth which adjusts, expands, contracts and twists. Only in most of Western and Central Canada are we relatively free of earthquake worries, although we know there is an earthquake zone running down the Ottawa river. In North Bay, for example, new public edifices must meet more stringent building codes which guard against earthquake damage.

Fifth, if we believe God created the world, we can say God is continuing to create our world and that earthquakes are a natural part of the adjustments God is making. God works through laws of nature and does not make exceptions for people to such laws.

Sixth, let's admit that humans have mistakenly chosen to live in the wrong places. True, most of them did not know that those places they inhabited were earthquake zones but that does not change the point that they were "wrong" to live there. God cannot be blamed for the mistakes we make.

Seventh, it is sad that most of the people living in the paths of future earthquakes either cannot afford to move or refuse to believe they will get hit and so they stay where they are. Many people blame God when an earthquake hits but they are like the people who build next to an airport and then complain that the airplanes make too much noise.

Eighth, while God may continue to create our world through earthquakes, God is not in the damage of the earthquakes or the deaths of the people. Rather, God is in the often weak attempts of the people to rescue the injured and homeless.

Ninth, God is in the work men and women of good will around the world, of every religion and no religion. God works through people. People are the channels of God's grace. Christians believe God came especially in the man, Jesus, to embody all the good and the love God has for creation. When people who seek to follow the ways of Jesus they are allowing God to work through them.

When people of other nations, both rich and poor, rally to provide clean drinking water, tents, blankets, beds, clothing there is God at work.

When people of other nations search for the trapped, the missing, the forgotten, the lost, there is God at work.

When people of other nations provide monetary assistance to help the people start again, there is God at work.

My hope is that Amherst Islanders, like Canadians everywhere, will be the agents of God's love for victims of earthquake disasters in Haiti, New Zealand and Japan and in the future quakes which are surely coming.

HERE AND THERE

- Ian Murray

From The Ontario Farmer, March 8, 2011-03-31:

USA jailed persons to farmers is 3:1

Canadian jailed persons to farmers is 1:6.

It may appear to some that our political representatives in Ottawa and Toronto are trying to improve on this ratio by increasing the prison population while reducing the number of farmers.

Congratulations to Steve Hart for being named Trees Ontario Green Leader for his tree planting efforts on his property on the western shore of Amherst Island. Steve has put a lot of time, energy, thought and money into planting and maintaining trees on his property.

Unfortunately, the Trees Ontario article about Steve and the Island would lead the non-Island reader to understand that Steve's tree-planting efforts are unique.

I suspect that there have been over half a million trees planted on this Island in the 40 years that I've been here. Only a very small percentage have survived drought, voles, rabbits, and deer – often in combination - but that's still thousands trees surviving (so far).

Jack Sylvester (Tom's father) and his son Peter, planted at least a quarter of a million trees at the south-east end of the Island on the west side of the Lower 40 Foot. A few thousand have survived, a tribute to their many hours of work. Tom and Jackie have also planted trees on their property.

Alan Kidd's property had about 30 acres of trees planted in the 1970s - with quite a few surviving.

Geoff and Marnie Mathews planted a lot of trees around this Island in the 1970s and encouraged others to do so. The thriving Locusts south of our farm shop came from them.

The Barr family - part owners of our well-known Owl Woods - have created a wooded area that is valued by the thousands of visitors that have come to see the birds.

Eric and Ted Welbanks have planted trees on the Welbanks' South Shore property.

Doug Martin and Mark Raymond of the Amherst Men's Society have been planting trees for those interested for several years. They have also planted many trees on their respective properties.

Topsy Farms, of which I am part owner, has several hundred treed acres in bush and fencerows directly north of Steve Hart's property. This year we are planning to continue fencing on both sides of more fencerows - to keep out the sheep - and planting more trees. We are very aware that the Emerald Ash Borer will drastically alter our farmscape.

From the Trees Ontario website: "Trees Ontario works with local tree planting agencies in Ontario, including regional Conservation Authorities and local Ontario Stewardship councils to implement its tree planting subsidy programs. Planting agencies then work directly with landowners to determine site eligibility, allocate funding and coordinate tree planting." Details are available on the website.

Those thinking of planting a tree on this Island should bear in mind this advice: don't plant a tree unless you are prepared to water it in dry years and somehow protect it from voles, rabbits and deer.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Issue 10, Vol. 3, April 17, 1979

RESTORING THE RUFFED GROUSE AS A RESIDENT OF AMHERST ISLAND

- Geoff Matthews, Amherst Wildlife Foundation

This township, like Wolfe and Simcoe Island, has a peculiarity in its resident bird population; there are no Ruffed Grouse! The only other comparably-sized tracts of land in Canada without Ruffed Grouse are the Arctic tundra and the most treeless portions of the southern Prairies. A wildlife manager, if he is to successfully increase the diversity of valuable wildlife species on Amherst Island, has to ask himself, "why?" and the answer is not simple.

In the history of Ruffed Grouse - hunter relations, no Ruffed Grouse population has ever been exterminated by over-gunning. This is true even

within a ten minute drive of New York city where week-end hunting pressure reaches truly frightening proportions. So what caused Ruffed Grouse to become absent in this township if not intentional constant hunting by man?

The answer has to lie in the habitat; the cover and food supplies by which these birds live.

The habitat requirements of Ruffed Grouse are woodlands of various age with the accent on young growth. If we could look back in this township's history 100 years to 1879, I think we would discover that a relatively large agricultural population was intensively farming the cleared land on Amherst Island in an effort to produce hay, barley, oats, and perhaps some wheat. Small grain prices at that time were even higher than now - if measured in relative wealth units - and, if rangeland was required for horses, cows and sheep during the summer, these animals were turned into the woods to forage.

There was no agricultural extension service at that time to advise farmers that little nourishment was to be gained from browsing woodlands and no forestry service was cautioning our early farmers that all natural tree regeneration would cease in an intensively grazed and browsed woodlot. At that time trees were something to be cleared, not cared for. The intense ranging of livestock in the township's remaining woodland probably went on from around 1850 to 1930; a long time! With the natural woodland regeneration went the understory cover and food requirements of Ruffed Grouse and with the habitat went the birds. They did not go over-night, but probably by the turn of the century Amherst Island farmers were telling their sons about the "partridge" that they remembered from their youth.

Even a superficial glance at the township today tells the wildlife manager that there is now sufficient habitat to support a constant population of Ruffed Grouse if an adequate re-introduction is made. That population will not be large due to the fact that, at present, only about 10% of the township is wooded and, of that acreage, only about 75% is suitable to Ruffed Grouse. What it would mean, however, is that Amherst Islanders for possibly the first time in 100 years will again hear the distinctive spring "drumming" of the male Ruffed Grouse and a walk in the woods could easily involve the breath-taking excitement of flushing a family of these birds. Your first impression is usually that a bomb has gone off six feet ahead of you, then you see a couple of hen-

pheasant sized birds disappearing into the trees. No hunter should underestimate the challenge of this game bird. Before coming to Amherst Island, I used to regularly hunt Ruffed Grouse around Lake Simcoe and in all my life I have never hunted a more challenging, more handsome, or exciting quarry; nor come to think of it a more humbling quarry.

If ever I thought I was getting to be a good wing shot there were always enough Ruffed Grouse around to prove me wrong.

This is the last article on the game birds which I would like to see on Amherst Island. It's a lot of work to convince an apparently immovable government that these introductions and re-introductions are sufficiently important to warrant official recognition but I've no doubt its worth it. The reason it's worth it is not so that I can go out and kill a bird, nor even so you can do so. If that were all we could gain, then it would be easier and more sensible to travel to the mainland and do so. I believe the one great reason,

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which must stand out beyond all others, is that without maintenance of valuable wildlife populations the upcoming generation of young Amherst Islanders will be inheriting a biological void and their attitudes and actions will be determined by that void. In 1948 a professor with

the strange name of Aldo Leopold looked at his sons and asked of himself a very demanding question. From Leopold's researches in answer to the question most of our real "breakthroughs" in environmental science have stemmed.

"I have three sons. I hope to leave them good health, an education, and possible even a competence. But what are they going to do with these things if there be no deer in the hills, and no more quail in the coverts? No more snipe whistling in the meadow, no more piping of pigeons or chattering of teal as darkness covers the marsh; no more whistling of swift wings when the morning star pales in the east?" ("A Sand County Almanac", Aldo Leopold, 1948.)



ISLAND RADIO FUND DRIVE 2011

Monday, April 25th through Friday, April 29th

The door is open at CJAI during live broadcasts for free coffee and homemade goodies each day between 6 and 10am or during the afternoon between 4 and 7pm.

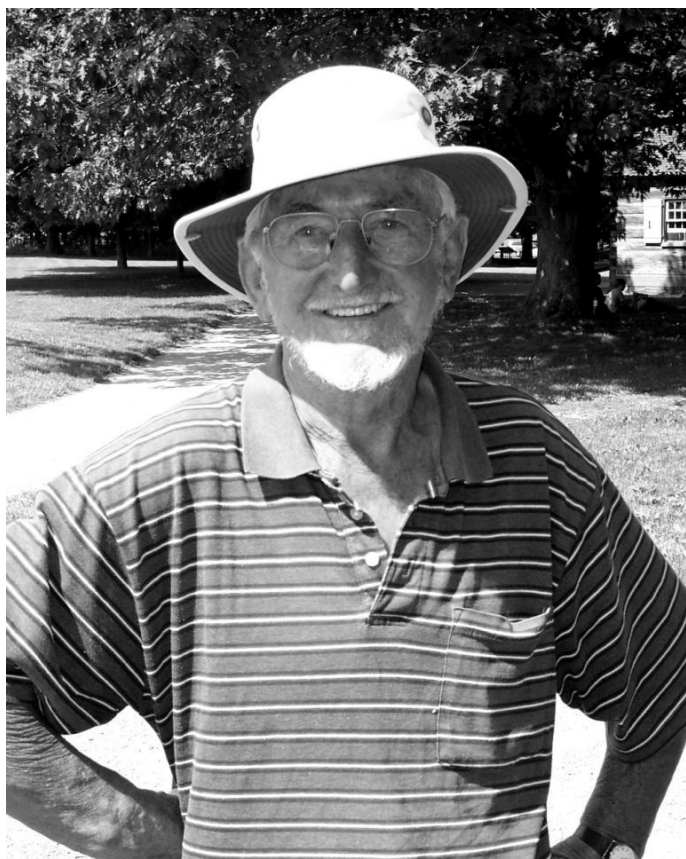
A dedicated team of Amherst Island Public Radio volunteers has given you five years of unique broadcasting and it is only with your financial support that Island Radio can continue.

Please drop into the station or phone 613-384-8282 with a pledge to keep the smallest radio station in Canada afloat. There'll be lots of prizes during the 2011 Fund Drive.

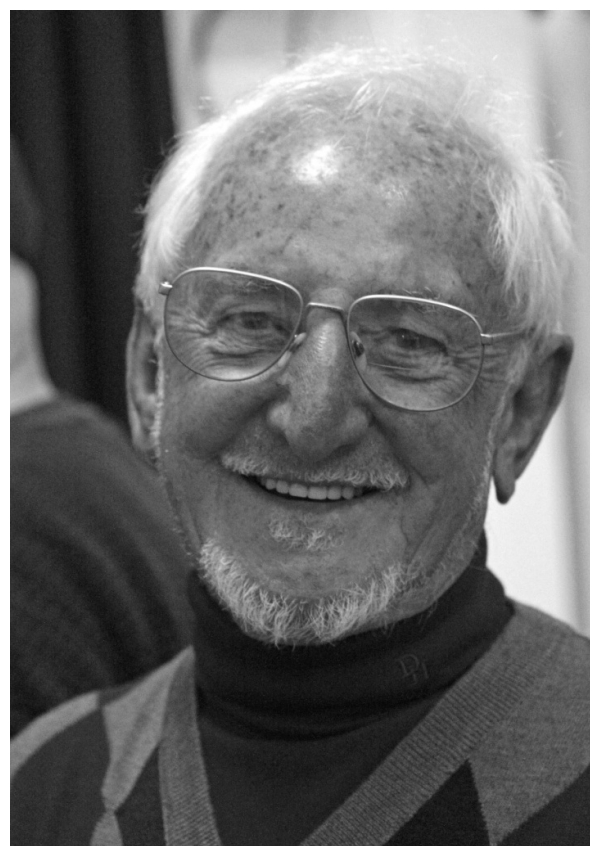
What You Missed Last Month



Courtesy of Lynann Clapham

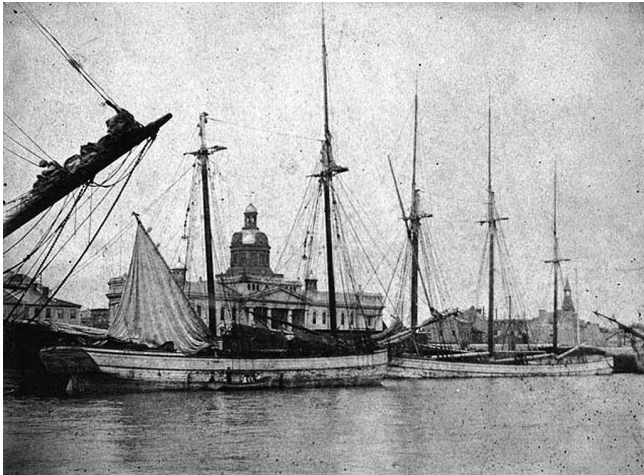


Courtesy of Lynann Clapham



Courtesy of Lynann Clapham

The Heritage Project article should have had three pictures. The top one is for Dakota Wolfrey's project on the B. W. Folger.



Courtesy of the Wolfreys
The B. W. Folger in Kingston Harbour.



Photo by Brian Little
Stephan McGinn with his project

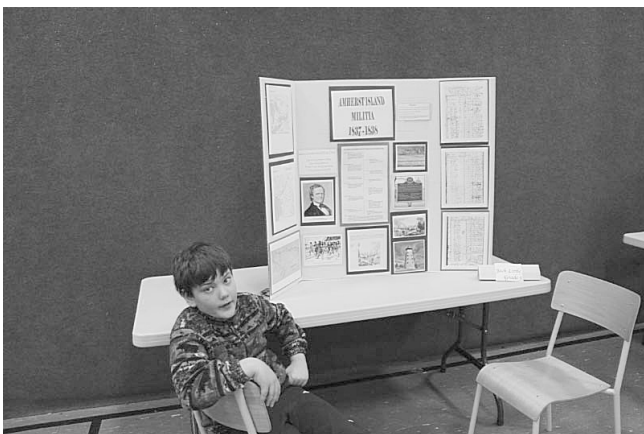


Photo by Brian Little
Jack Little with his project

Terry Culbert's article about the St Simmons Island Lighthouse was to be accompanied by the following picture...

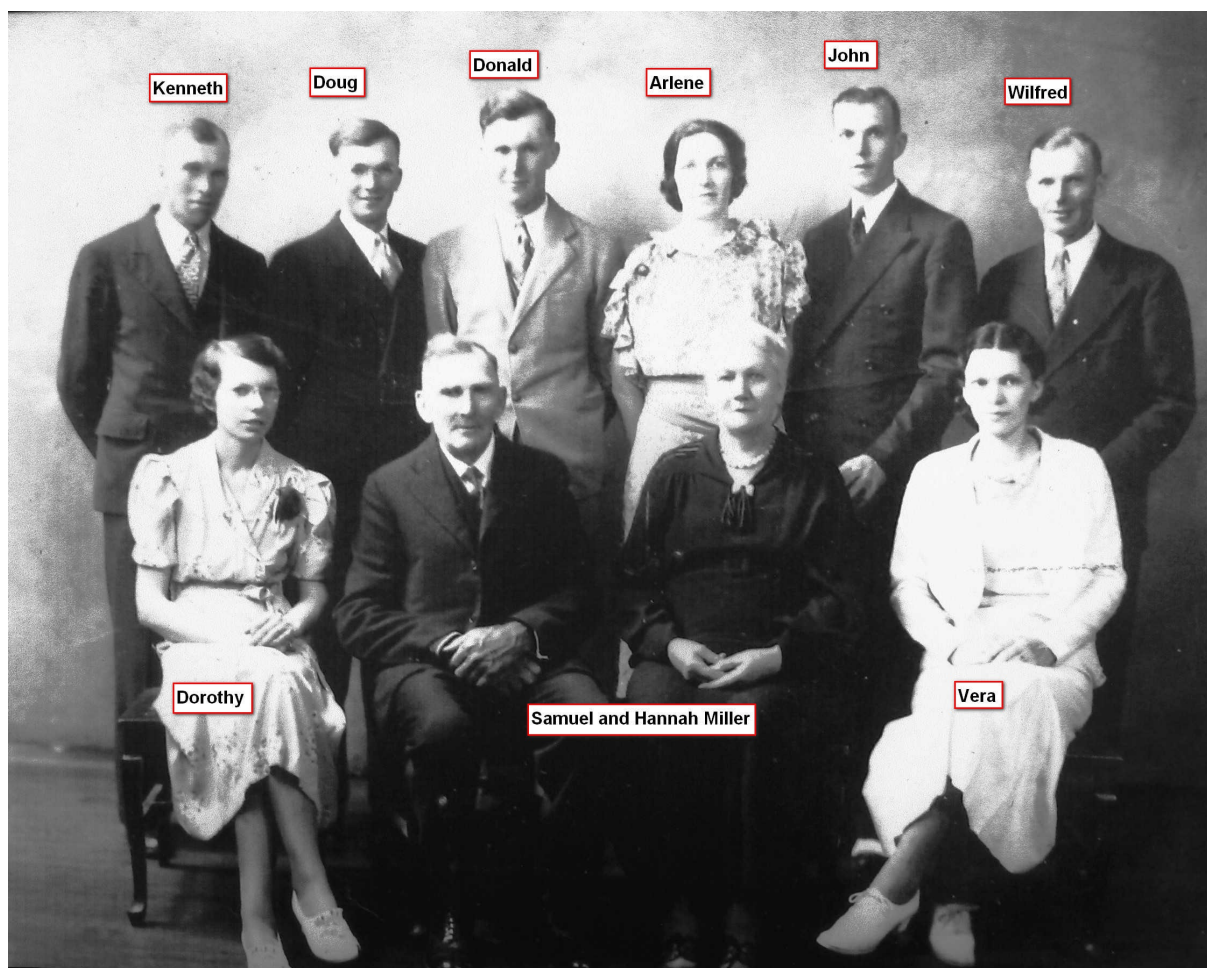


Photo by Terry Culbert



Photo by Shirley Miller
Keith Miller posing with a coyote

There were to be three pictures for Vera's 100th Birthday article last month.



Courtesy of Gord Miller



Photo by Liz Hogeboom



Photo by Beth Forester

The A.I. Women's Institute with Vera at the Lodge on the occasion of her 100th Birthday. L/R top row: Nancy Dunn, Coralee Marshall, Joyce Haines, Liz Harrison, May Kay Steel, Anne Henderson. Bottom Row: Leslie Gavlas and Vera



Photo by Terry Culbert

Ula Stief, second from the right, gave permission to dozens of birders to photograph from her garden. These birders were from New York City, New Jersey, North Bay and Aurora, Ontario. They stayed the February 5th weekend at The Lodge on Amherst Island.

The pictures for Terry Culbert's Northern Hawk-Owl article.

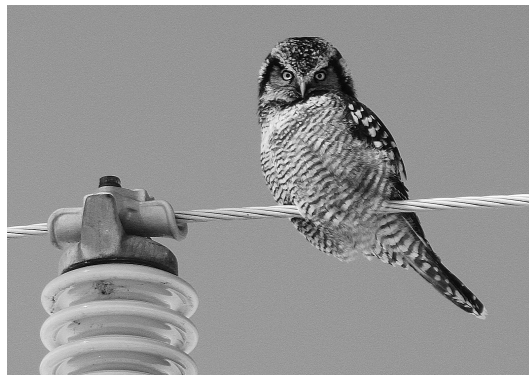


Photo by Terry Culbert Feb 5, 2011
Extremely rare sighting of the Northern Hawk-Owl.



Photo by Terry Culbert
Canadian and American wildlife photographers tramping through the snow on Ula Stief's South Shore Road property.



Photo by Terry Culbert

A camouflaged bird photographer from New Jersey.



Photo by Terry Culbert
"I'm up here!" the Northern Hawk-Owl seems to be saying to the photographers from the upper right of this picture.

We go from this....



Photo by Brian Little

to this....



Photo by Don Tubb

in a couple of months... absolutely amazing!!