

The Massie Messenger

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue N° 10. Spring 2012

Memories of Massie



Can you identify the people in the photograph?

I discovered the on-line Massie Messenger by accident a year ago, and have enjoyed reading the articles and viewing the pictures from past issues. I got in touch with Renee Fedun, to thank her (and others) for their work on this publication, and she requested that I write an article about my experiences growing up in Massie in the '50s and '60s.

To make this interesting, I will not reveal my name. It will be up to readers to figure out who I am. I will drop several clues so that current (and former) residents shouldn't have any problem figuring out who I am. Perhaps this will encourage others to write in and correct any of my foggy memories... and add some of their own.

The blacksmith shop is one of my

earliest memories from Massie. It was a fascinating place, with the forge always going, red-hot iron being hammered out by George Rice for horseshoes, ploughshares and various implement repairs. For a little kid, watching Mr. Rice at work and listening to the conversations was one of my introductions into the man's world of rural 1950's.

I can remember one particular incident at the blacksmith shop: a draft horse was inside being shod, and there were money bets placed (how much, I cannot remember) on whether a young man (once again, I don't know who it was) could lift the horse off the floor using his back. Four men – my father among them – got down on their hands and knees to make sure that each

hoof rose off the floor. The young man did lift the horse up, as I recall; very impressionable stuff for a little kid!

Mr. Rice also made the baseball bats for the local teams. His bats (we referred to them as "George") hit many a home run. I believe my older brother still has one!

It occurred to me as a child that changes were happening quickly in my world. My older siblings remember when we had no electricity; I remember not having a bathroom. I also recall watching my father ploughing with a 2-furrow plough with our team of horses, while our neighbour was working with a 5-furrow plough and a tractor to pull it!

Picking up rocks with the horses, using a "stoneboat" that they pulled behind them, was a job even a little kid could do—as I did. Even a kid can drive a team of horses safely, as I soon learned!

The one-room schoolhouse shaped all our lives. The older students were as much teachers to us as was the teacher himself (or herself). Each fall, a truck would deliver the supplies needed for the coming school term. We always checked for the sports equipment: that was most important!



Do you know every single person in this photograph? Do you recognize anyone?

We learned many lessons at that one-room school. Some were provided by a regulation leather strap; others, such as “spin the bottle”, were provided in the woodshed. (I missed out on that one!) Can anyone else remember when the entire school would play “fox and deer” at lunchtime?

One year on the first day of school, we were surprised to find a big glass bookcase full of novels — our first library! I was so excited when I saw all those books! I think the bookcase and books were a donation from the Howey family, but I may be wrong on that.

Probably the most important lesson we learned was that even though we all came from simple rural roots we could become anything we wanted and go anywhere in the world. We could become teachers or engineers or artists or, yes, even stay in Massie to become farmers. I realize that most of us moved away after graduation from high school, that is the way of the world in rural Canada. Very few of us get to stay in our little village all our lives, and

I congratulate those who have.

We had a men’s baseball league for several years and a great baseball diamond across the road from the school. I have fond memories of the cool summer nights when most of the village came out to watch the men’s teams play ball. Who can forget the players: young men like Stewart and Jim Hamill, the Norton brothers, the Neelands boys, the McKessocks, John Nuttall, Austin Ramage and many others—all of them hitting home runs with George Rice’s homemade bats! After each ball game someone would buy a case of popsicles from our corner store and distribute them among the kids — who was that?

Who can remember the gas pumps at the corner store in the 50’s — was there one pump or two or were there really pumps at all?

We brought the radio from our 1952 DeSoto into our house after our local electronics wizard Gordon Cook added a transformer. In the summertime, you could pick up radio stations from the U.S. Deep South — that was my first in

troduction to Blues music and southern Gospel. It was pretty exciting to listen to that music as a kid, you never heard that stuff on local stations!

The local grist mill was another fascinating gathering spot, where we could watch and listen to the local menfolk. Owner/operator Gordon Lang would extend credit during the year to many people, including my father, and wait for payment when we sold cattle or cows. The mill was quite noisy when in operation, especially when Mr. Lang was sawing logs!

Sometimes at night in the spring when the rainbow trout were running, my father and Mr. Lang would do a little fishing. It was easy to catch the trout at the base of the mill. My mother, who came from New Brunswick (where my wife and I now reside), loved fish and every spring our family and others would have several “feeds” of trout.

Who could forget threshing time? There were only a couple of the big old threshing machines in the village (who

owned them?) and the families would help each other as the grains ripened. This was better than any local fair! I think it was all about the food. Every family would cook massive amounts of food to bring to each farm when it was their turn for threshing. It was “all you can eat” which was great since threshing was very labour-intensive! I loved the desserts — again all you could eat. Each farm wife would bake her specialties. I do miss those desserts, but not the hard filthy work that went along with the threshing.

It was a terrible shock to us all when Dutch Elm Disease spread through our area. I believe that one-third of the trees were elms, and they are now long gone. I remember years before the trees started dying, one of the local farmers, Jake Vlieland, was telling my father that something was wrong with the elms.

I was back in Massie 10 years ago, with most of my brothers and sisters. We had placed my mother's ashes beside our father's grave in a cemetery in Port Elgin. We toured around Massie after that, and checked out our old schoolhouse and the church. We walked over by the mill pond (no mill now) and the hill to our old family farm. We did not walk in the laneway, just looked at the farm from the road. It looked quite different; some additional buildings are there now. We all commented that everything looked “smaller”. Well, most of us had been away a long time, and of course things looked different. That's the way things work, that's life. It was heartening to see that most of the farms are still being worked, with new families in them. The village is populated by a different and innovative generation of families now — all the more power to them.

I hope to re-visit Massie soon, perhaps this summer, and I look forward to visiting old friends and meeting many new ones! So, who in Massie now knows who I am?

Massie Recipe Book Still Available

For those who missed the millennium publication of Our Recipes & Memories you will be delighted to know that there are still half a dozen copies left for sale at the bargain price of \$10 — with proceeds going to Massie United Church.

This is a gem of a little book packed with recipes and charming anecdotes from life in Massie. Here's an example from Dona Norton:

“[About 1960] Massie sported a girls' softball team — some of the players being M. Norton, C. Lang, M. Crannie, H. McDougall and E. Ramage. The uniform consisted of frilly blouses, short shorts and dark glasses — the rims being of bright colours. Because of the glasses, most of the fly balls were missed. The girls looked great but did not make their claim to fame in this sport.”

Here's an original recipe to whet your appetite submitted by Pat Campbell:

SOUR CREAM DATE PIE

9 to 10 inch baked pie shell
2 Tbsp cornstarch
¾ cup granulated sugar
1 tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp cloves
3 egg yolks, lightly beaten
1 ½ cups commercial sour cream
1 cup chopped dates
½ cup chopped walnuts
½ tsp vanilla extract
3 egg whites
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp cream of tartar
1/3 cup granulated sugar

Thoroughly combine cornstarch, ¾ cup sugar and spices in top of double boiler. Stir in egg yolks and sour cream. Set over boiling water and cook until thickened, about 10 minutes. Stir often. Stir in dates for the last few minutes of cooking, remove from heat; stir in walnuts and vanilla. Preheat oven to 400F.

Beat egg whites, salt, cream of tartar until foamy. Gradually add 1/3 cup sugar, beating well until stiff and glossy. Pour date mixture in pie shell; top with meringue, sealing to edges. Bake 8 minutes or until meringue is slightly browned. Slice in small wedges.

Many thanks to the Neelands girls — Wendy, Connie, Pat (Campbell) and Marcia — for putting together this wonderful little book. Thank you as well to Johanna Wit for the lovely illustrations and to everyone who submitted a recipe or memory. Contact Con Neelands at 519-794-0168 or conneelands@gmail.com to pick up a copy of the book.

Guess Who



Massie Hall Presents 2012 Coffeehouse Series

Pete Miller and Massie Hall are pleased to introduce our 2012 Live @ Massie Hall Coffeehouse Concert Series. This year marks the sixth season of intimate concerts featuring the finest Canadian musicians across a spectrum of musical genres in the charming hamlet of Massie.

Coco Love Alcorn

Saturday May 5th, 8 pm

Doors open at 7:30 pm

\$16 (all ages) includes coffee/tea/goodies

www.cocolovealcorn.com



Coco Love Alcorn

".....her extraordinary voice and some outstanding material. The more I listen, the more I hit repeat" - Vancouver Province

COCO IS CURRENTLY TOURING NATIONALLY IN SUPPORT OF HER LATEST ALBUM, *PLAY*, released in March of 2011, a combination of her diverse musical influences including Jazz, Pop, R&B and Folk. Playful and witty, Coco loves improvising and engaging with the audience. Her voice has been hailed as 'extraordinary' (Vancouver Province) and 'stunning' (Star Phoenix).

David Newland

Saturday June 16th, 8 pm

Doors open at 7:30 pm

\$16 (all ages) includes coffee/tea/goodies

www.davidnewland.com



David Newland

"His debut studio CD Give It A Whirl features the smiles, simplicity, accessibility, warmth and stripped-down beauty that is typical in a David Newland work of art, and he has never sounded better." - Andy Frank

FOLKSINGER, SONGWRITER, UKELELE PLAYER AND BLOGGER DAVID NEWLAND released his first-ever studio record, *Give It A Whirl*, in February. It was produced by two-time Juno nominee Gregg Lawless and features the likes of Dala and the Good Lovelies! Since 2003, David has hosted the annual Gordon Lightfoot tribute, "The Way We Feel".

For tickets contact Peter Miller at petemkit@explornet.com or call 519-794-3652

Massie United Church News

Stained Glass Window Restoration

The Board of Stewards has launched a fund for the restoration of our beautiful, stained glass window in the sanctuary that depicts Jesus with the little children. The Stewards have received an estimate from Garlan Glass of Markdale of \$2,850 (tax included) to restore the window and install protective lexan glass behind it.

Please contribute what you can to this special fund and send your cheque to Massie United Church c/o Carl Seeley, RR4, Chatsworth, NoH 1Go.

Easter Lilies

We are all invited to place Easter Lilies in memory of loved ones in the Sanctuary leading up to Easter (Sunday, April 8th). Please let Ed know if you wish to have a lily placed – 794-2503 or ed_neelands@hotmail.com. The cost is \$12 – please give your donation to Carl Seeley, treasurer.



Christmas Concert

For the second year in a row, the community gathered for a celebration of Christmas at Massie United Church. With Desiree van Dijk serving as Mistress of Ceremonies and Ed Neelands fingering the piano keys, the audience was treated to a delightful evening of music and storytelling.

We enjoyed beautiful singing from Hugh Neelands, Gilbert Howey, Trevor Falk, Michael Henkel, James Dykeman, David Randall from Thornbury and Massie newcomer Paul Perrone who bravely tackled an impersonation of Elvis singing “Blue Christmas”. Lois Keeling read a moving story, “The Magi”, and her son-in-law Rick Ribbel read a passage from the Bible, Luke: chapter 2, verses 1-20, the story of the angels delivering the message of Jesus’ birth to the shepherds who then go to sing their praises to the newborn saviour. Carol Deering got the audience involved in a song that poked fun at the misfortunes of one of our residents!

Under the leadership of Carlie and Steve Currie, the Sunday School children read the poem “The Christmas Story”, with the congregation joining in on the singing bits. Mackenzie Currie and Chloe Hargest were the narrators. Josh Currie appeared as Joseph, Celeste Hargest as Mary, Cayle Hargest as Angel, and Wade and Wyatt Mustard as the shepherds. They also sang “Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer” complete with antlers and flashing noses and Josh playing the guitar (and Ed on the piano).

The older Perrone children also gave performances. James sang “How Great Thou Art”, Joseph played a Bach piece Anna a Clementi Sonatina.

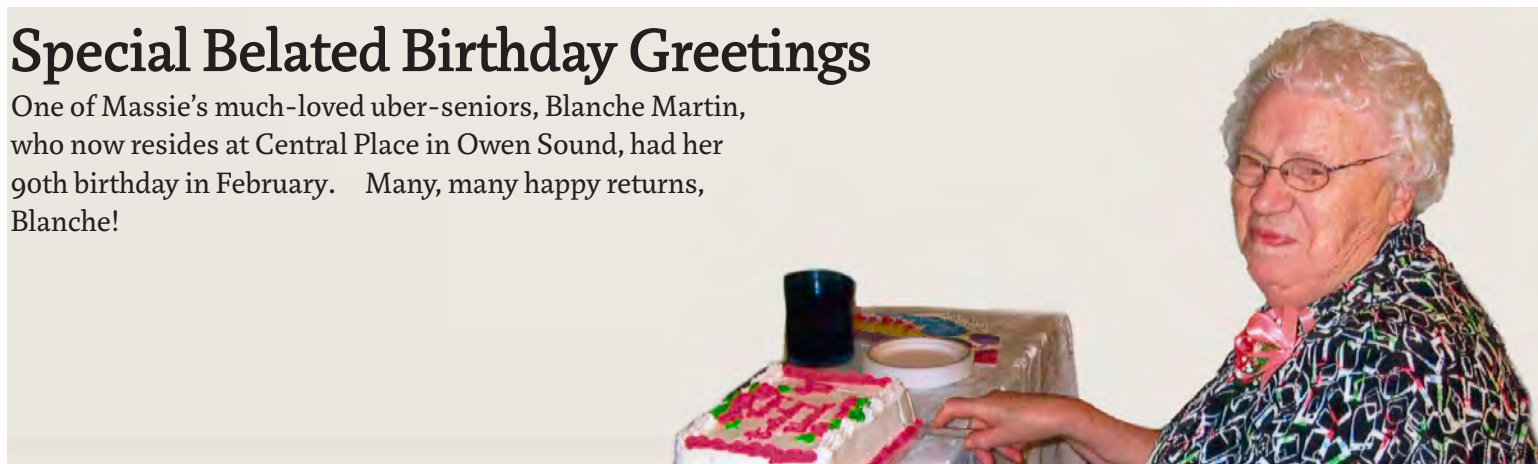
All this was interspersed with opportunities for the audience to sing Christmas carols.

Naturally, the evening would not have been complete without the appearance of a holly-jolly Santa Claus (sometimes known as Dan Keeling) supported by his trusty elf Lisa Downey.

Thank you to one and all for your wonderful performances, and the great food afterwards!

Special Belated Birthday Greetings

One of Massie’s much-loved uber-seniors, Blanche Martin, who now resides at Central Place in Owen Sound, had her 90th birthday in February. Many, many happy returns, Blanche!



Letter to Bernice

Lois Keeling is an inveterate letter-writer (it's a dying art, sadly). She would often write letters and send cards to Bernice Neelands and other lucky recipients in our community. This letter was sent to Bernice a few months before she died.

July, 2010

Dear Bernice,

I hope you are managing to keep cool these days. I wish we had about five more fans or an air-conditioned house. Which do you think I'll get first?

Missed you Sunday, but, I went to Strathaven's anniversary service.

Jane and Rick are on holidays and then we have our grand-daughter's wedding on August 7. I gave Mary (our grand-daughter) my mother's wedding ring and she was very pleased to have such an old one and will wear it. She is the oldest grand-daughter and the first to marry.

It's too hot to cook and I am lucky Jim isn't bringing in hay. (Been there, done that!) I guess you will have many memories of cooking for crowds at haying time.

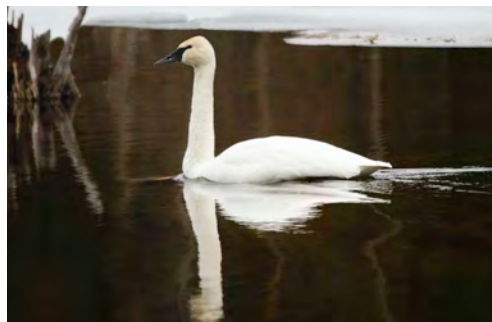
Jim feels the heat too and doesn't go out as much. His hens and rooster are his main chores now, although he does still cut up wood and pile it in, a little at a time. I well remember when he worked 10-12 hours a day and then came home and worked for 3-4 more.

Must close and make our lunch. See you soon.

Love, Lois

Massie..... A Walk on the Wild Side

by Connie Miller



Weather has always been a topic of conversation for Canadians and this past winter was no exception. With cold spells then mild temperatures, and sometimes more rain than snow, we reached for the snow shovels less than in previous years.

Alterations in weather patterns affect wildlife and plants as well. Many records were broken this year. Robins began arriving in mid-February, Tundra Swans migrating north to their nesting grounds in the Arctic were seven weeks early, and Snowy Owls appeared in greater numbers than usual – a phenomenon known as an irruption to birdwatchers.

Snowy Owls are the only bird adapted to live year round in the Arctic. Their main source of food is lemmings, but they can survive without food for many days. In years of high lemming populations the Snowy Owl flourishes, raising large broods of young. As these birds mature, the lemming population is depleted, forcing birds to expand their territory, usually south, in search of food. So widespread was the dispersal of birds this year that a Snowy Owl was spotted at an airport in Hawaii.

Delighted birders, photographers and casual observers have noted numerous Snowy Owl sightings in our area. These owls are often seen high on telephone poles, resting or watch-

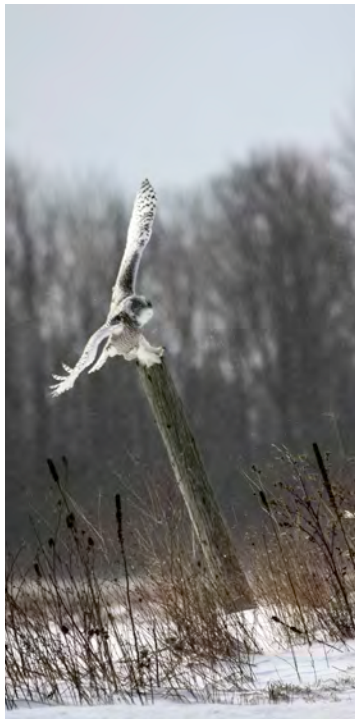


ing for prey. They hunt both day and night. I was fortunate to capture some images of these beautiful birds.

For two days in early February, there was a rare visitor on the Massie pond. Again I was fortunate to see and photograph a Trumpeter Swan. This bird was not shy, gracefully swimming on the pond, softly honking.

The Trumpeter Swan is a western bird, but its range is expanding east. From the 17th to 19th century, the Trumpeter was heavily hunted for its hide and flight feathers. These feathers were used to produce what were considered the finest quill pens. The Trumpeter was an endangered species for a number of years due to the over-hunting. Fortunately, its numbers are increasing as a result of recent conservation measures.

As I was preparing this article, thinking the surprises were over, the Massie Rainbow Run began! A sure sign of spring, the beautiful Rainbow Trout attempt to leap up the falls, displaying their amazing athletic abilities and allowing us brief glimpses of their richly coloured, sparkling bodies. Unlike the Snowy Owl and Trumpeter Swan, Rainbow Trout are with us every year, to enjoy, to appreciate, and to remind us of the changing of the seasons.





Photograph by Kennedy Heathers

Massie 2012 Events

- April 28 **Massie Church & Hall Buildings & Yard Spring Clean-up** - 10a.m. - all welcome
- May 5 **Chatty Car Wash** - one-half of the proceeds will go to Massie United Church - special thanks to Jerry Downey!
- May 5 **Massie Hall Coffeehouse #1 featuring Coco Love Alcorn** - doors open at 7:30pm, concert starts at 8p.m. - contact Pete Miller for tickets, 794-3652
- May 12 **Massie United Church Geranium Tea & Sale** - 1:00-4:00p.m. - Tea & dessert \$5 - Geraniums (red, white, pink, fuschia & salmon) are \$2.50 each - please preorder by May 5th - call Marg at 794-2085 or Pat (Con) at 794-0168
- May 21 **Massie Movie Night** - 7:30p.m. - "That's Entertainment"
- June 9 **Massie Yard Sale** - 8:00a.m. to 2:00p.m. - coffee, tea and muffins served for breakfast, and hotdogs and beverages for lunch - contact Wendy Neelands (794-2836) or Mary Janet Mustard (794-2216) to reserve a site
- June 16 **Massie Hall Coffeehouse #2 featuring David Newland** - concert starts at 8:00

Bulletin: David Wells and Renee Fedun have organized a musical Voyageur canoe trip on Lake Superior this summer featuring DAVID NEWLAND! For more info canoetrips@naturallysuperior.com

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