

# The Massie Messenger

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue N° 5 — Summer 2010

## Massie Hall – The One and Only

by Renee Fedun



Photograph by Ralph Bergman

Where do you find great concerts, rockin' New Year's Eve parties, fun fitness classes, fabulous Fish Fry's, glorious Geranium Teas and loads of community events and private parties? You guessed it – it's Massie Hall!

In 1965, the community of Massie had the foresight to purchase the stone building that had served as a one-room schoolhouse for almost a century. Students attending the school were now to be bussed to the new Holland Chatsworth Central

School. The community needed a meeting place and activity centre, and the Orange Hall across the road, which had long served this purpose, was becoming structurally unsound (part of the floor collapsed during one party!). Massie was the only community in Holland Township that banded together to preserve its former schoolhouse as a public building. So many others in the county were sold to become private residences or abandoned.

Financing the purchase of the schoolhouse required ingenuity and, of course, the people of Massie came through. The blackboards, all the swings but one, the stove and almost anything that wasn't fastened down was auctioned off or given to a museum. Euchre tournaments were held every two weeks, and "they made a few bucks", as long-time Hall Board Secretary Marg Taylor modestly mentions. Rental of the hall for baby and bridal showers, wedding receptions and anniversaries also became popular. Connie Neelands and Carl Seeley – who live across the road from the church/hall – were married at Massie United Church on November 19, 1994, then had their reception at Massie Hall on that beautiful warm autumn evening! More recently, Marg & Jim Taylor celebrated their 60th anniversary at the Hall. Their friends Larry and Linda Ceaser surprised them by delivering them to the Hall in a horse-drawn carriage!

Community members are generous with their time, keeping the hall running and in good repair, providing and preparing food, cleaning up, and advertising new events. Carl Seeley

does a superb job keeping the hall and church grounds well-trimmed in the growing months, with mowing help from Don & Travis Kivell. Desiree van Dijk maintains the lovely gardens. In winter, Rocky Neelands and his Uncle Ed join Carl and Don in keeping the snow cleared.

The original schoolhouse has seen a few changes over the years. In 1986, the large entrance was renovated to include a full-service kitchen, foyer and washrooms. At that time a health-unit approved septic system was installed and the old chemical pit toilets became part of the building's history. The front door, cupboards and basins came from the old General Marine Hospital. Laurens Wit replaced a timber to support the floor in the main room and then redid

that section of the hardwood floor. Wendy Neelands purchased the Disco Globe that lights up our parties and Jerry Downey recently donated the rental of the picnic tables that will be used at this year's Fish Fry!

Carl installed a new door at the back (west end) of the Hall (where there had once been the outline of a window). This involved carefully removing the stone, paneling and wainscoting to painstakingly fit the new door in place, then using a masonry mix as mortar to replace all the stones. Carl did a beautiful job, donating part of his labour.

Massie is immensely fortunate to have a wonderful community hall..and the commitment and



enthusiasm of a wonderful community!

## Host Your Event in Beautiful Downtown Massie



Do you have a reception, meeting, reunion or other event planned but don't know where to host it? Why not rent **MASSIE HALL!?!?**

The Hall is available from April 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Full-service kitchen, large movie screen available, men's and women's washrooms, seating capacity: 50, outdoor stage and athletic field, regulation-inspected water.

Cost: \$50 for community members, \$60 for non-members, \$100 full-day rental

## Robert Deavitt Neelands 1939-2010



To the great sadness of family and friends, Bob Neelands died unexpectedly on May 19<sup>th</sup>. The

funeral service at Massie United Church, conducted by Melinda Cornfield, was overflowing with people who came to pay their respects to a wonderful man who loved music and dance. Bob leaves behind his nonagenarian mother, Bernice, eight siblings, Maxine (Seabrook), Connie, Bill, Hugh, Pat (Campbell), Wendy, Ed and Andy, three grown children, Deavitt, Valerie and Rocky, three grandchildren, Kennedy, Preslee and Kali, and numerous nieces, nephews and extended family members.

A gifted carpenter and craftsman, Bob is remembered for many of his projects, among them a log cabin that he built with son Rocky. With brother Hugh, he purchased the dilapidated Orange Hall and salvaged the lumber.



They moved the beautiful hardwood floor to their barn near Williamsford and organized many Green Onion Barn Dances there. Deepest condolences to Bob's family..

## Audrey Evelyn McGowan 1923-2010



Audrey McGowan (nee Ripley), who passed away peacefully on June 1<sup>st</sup> at

Grey-Bruce Health Services, is remembered very fondly by her many friends. "She was a lovely person," says Blanche Martin, "so upbeat when you talked to her on the phone." Bernice Neelands recalls going for practice drives with Audrey when her friend was learning how to drive. Jean Perdue remembers Audrey as "a wonderful lady" who had lots of interests, especially Nature, but whose family always came first. Sue Wallace, who recently moved out west, would visit Audrey and read to her, and drive her to church on occasion. Ed Neelands loved discussing opera and poetry with Audrey and on his last visit with her she recited the words of one of her favourite poems, *Trees* by Joyce Kilmer.

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the sweet earth's flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

Audrey loved trees, cats, flowers, walking, painting, classical music and talking on the phone! A busy lady raising three children, she would get her exercise horseback riding, walking with her dog and taking Tai chi classes.

Audrey's husband Robert died five years ago, but she is survived by her children Rebecca, Susan and Robert, two grandsons Hari and Charlie, and their families. Audrey will be deeply missed by all.

# Massie Pioneers: The Taylors



In 1863 – almost a century and a half ago – Hugh Taylor secured a Crown Deed for 200 acres of arable land, sugar bush, woodland and swamp in Grey County. Today, the property is bordered to the south by Grey Road 40 and to the east by Veterans Road North, still known to long-time residents of Massie as the Third Line. The Bighead River runs through the northwest section of the farm.

Four generations of Taylors have farmed this land growing mixed grains, hay, turnips & other vegetables, fruit and more, harvesting logs from the bush, and raising pigs, cattle, horses and sheep.

Now in their 80's, Jim and Marg Taylor (nee Tottenham) are retired from farming, but still live in the century-old brick house that James Hewitt built of bricks fashioned from clay on the property. Jim tells of finding bricks in the fields when he was out ploughing.

In his late teens, Jim (one of seven kids) joined the Canadian Air Force,

signing up for the Bombardier's course but he never saw battle in Europe. When World War II ended he decided to apprentice with DC Taylor, learning to repair watches and clocks. Then his father offered him the farm and Jim figured he could take care of the farming operation and work on clocks in his spare time. In the meantime, he had met Marg on a blind date. They "hit it off", as Jim



says fondly, and were married in 1948.

Still newlyweds in the early 50's, Marg and Jim moved in with his parents, Harvey and Ethel, and Marg promptly took over chores in the barn while Ethel commandeered the kitchen. The arrangement suited them both perfectly.

The farm was notable as the site of the Massie Beef Ring. The large barn housed a slaughtering operation and participating neighbours would alternate every week, someone bringing beef (or the occasional pig) to be divided up among them. (One never knew what part of the beef one would get in a given week!) Harvey did the custom butchering throughout the 1920's but there's evidence that the Beef Ring was in operation before then. Neighbours would also bring sows to Harvey Taylor's to breed them with his old boar.

Harvey was also known for his beehives and his fruit trees – he planted many varieties of apples, as well as pears and cherries. The apple trees have survived but the others are long gone.

With a whole stable full of horses, Harvey was a great rider. A neighbour would bring his stallion to breed with the mares. A farm girl from Hoath Head, Marg could easily hitch a team of horses up to the wagon or sleigh to pick up the neighbourhood ladies for a Women's Institute meeting. Marg recalls one winter of heavy snow when she harnessed the horses to the sleigh, picked up Ruth Hamill from across the road, Jean McPherson (next door, more or less) and Marion Sutherland (who lived across from Jean), and headed over to Jean McKessock's on Massie Road for a WI gathering.

Jim did not inherit his father's love

of



loved to organize local dances on Saturday nights and he'd tend bar too!

Marg raised two children, Danny and Dayle, and now has the joy of two grandkids, Joey and Shawn. Apart from performing the farm wife's usual multitude and variety of jobs, Marg was heavily involved in the community. A member of the Juniors in Owen Sound from when she was a teenager, Marg joined the Senior Women's Institute in 1951. She remains Secretary of the Massie Women's Institute to this day. She participated in the Chatsworth Agricultural Society, the United Church Women and the original committee to turn the Massie

horses and they were soon replaced by a little Alice Chalmers tractor. He got into the seed business, buying "a dandy seed cleaner" and started custom seed cleaning. He also hooked up with a couple of friends to start a car dealership when cars were still scarce. Always moving in step with

the times, Jim also brought bird's foot trefoil as a pasture crop into this part of Grey County. At first, the farmers were wary since no one had ever heard of it but Jim was able to prove that trefoil made for good pasture in the second year and sales took off. An enthusiastic Legion Hall member, Jim

School into the wonderful community centre it is now. Marg became a life member of the Ladies Auxiliary in Chatsworth. At one time she organized zone sports but now she plays darts for fun and relaxation.

As Jim says, "it's been a good life". We'll drink to that!

## Beware Invasives

Non-native invasive plants and insects pose a huge threat to the integrity of natural ecosystems and also create massive headaches and expenditures for farmers.

The Wild

Chervil is an aggressive weed spreading rapidly in Grey County. It



can smother other vegetation and it's the host for a virus that infects common garden plants. It is difficult to dig

out due to its long tap root so the best strategy for control is to mow the top growth frequently. If you suspect that you have this plant call the Weed Inspector at 519-376-7337 ext. 1289.

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is an invasive insect that attacks and eventually kills ash trees. It has now been discovered in Huron County. Attempts at control have usually involved cutting down all ashes within the potentially infested areas and chipping them to kill the insects, resulting in the loss of hundreds of thousands of trees in s.w. Ontario. EAB is

difficult to detect and many trees do not show symptoms until the infestation is three or four years old. Some signs to watch for: dieback of the upper canopy, bark cracks, shoots coming up from the roots or along the trunk, branches flagging. **It's most important that we buy and burn local firewood only.** For more information, visit [www.inspection.gc.ca/pests](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/pests).



## 'Live @ Massie Hall' Coffeehouse'



Saturday September 11th, 8 pm

Doors open at 7:30 pm

\$15 (all ages) includes coffee/tea/goodies.

*It's always been part of the Massie mix to introduce local artists whose musical significance and accomplishments transcend our region. We're presenting three of the finest singer-songwriters in Grey-Bruce in one super-concert.*

*Summerfolk Artistic Director, professional performer and songwriter Richard Knechtel ([www.greentreamusic.com](http://www.greentreamusic.com)) will host the evening, sharing some of his over 400 original compositions of swing, pop, blues, country and folk. Richard has recorded several albums on his own Greentree Music label. Whether solo or with a band, Richard (and his alter ego, children's performer and magician Dickie Bird), has become synonymous with top-quality musical entertainment in Grey-Bruce and beyond. Richard has spent the last few years as the programmer for Summerfolk in Owen Sound, one of Canada's finest music and crafts festivals.*

*Hanover native Justin Burgess is no stranger to music ([www.justb.ca](http://www.justb.ca)). He holds a Bachelor of Music Arts degree from the University of Western Ontario, has self-produced eight albums, and toured extensively as a solo act and guitarist/percussionist with several bands. Slinky/snarly guitar, infectious melodies, fat bass lines and big drum grooves are all in his latest album.*

*Rounding out the trio is local singer and Celtic performer/harpist/ guitarist/pianist Tara MacKenzie ([www.myspace.com/taramackenziefolk](http://www.myspace.com/taramackenziefolk)). Tara's latest album *Simple Irish Ballads And Songs For Singing* is chock-full of angelic melodies and harmonies. With husband/blues guitarist Trevor MacKenzie, Tara operates a recording studio in Owen Sound, Vert Productions, where she teaches vocal coaching and singing. She was director of the Owen Sound Celtic Festival for many years, and currently participates in local music projects such as the Silent Film Ensemble.*

*Tres Contante will be a magical evening you'll talk about for weeks!*

Tickets available at Fromager Music on 8th St East, Owen Sound  
or contact Peter Miller at [petemkit@xplornet.com](mailto:petemkit@xplornet.com) or call 794-3652.

# Future Directions

by Desirée van Dijk



An invitation from the Knox United Church in Owen Sound motivated area churches to meet as a group and discuss the future of the United Church in Grey-Bruce. Many churches, including the United Church of Canada, are facing financial difficulties in addition to declining enrollment. A recent article in *The United Church Observer* stated that nationally the number of people with no religious affiliation or who don't attend worship has increased from 31 to 44% in just 20 years. Future trends look even more bleak.

Early spring saw members from Knox, Division, First United, Keady/Kilsyth/North Derby, Annan Woodford, Central Westside, Chatsworth and Massie congregations sharing their concerns about financial and volunteer resources, membership, building maintenance and the various challenges these might present. While a representative from the Northern Waters Presbytery was present, it was definitely a grassroots initiative. This was evident in the informal, open and friendly atmosphere of the meetings attended.

The *Future Directions* committee has been created to find workable solutions to these challenges. In an effort to focus the discussions, three questions were composed for each church to take back to its congregation: 1) What stops the United Church from attracting new members? (What are the underlying issues?) 2) What does "future

direction" mean to you? 3) Why are our kids/grandkids not attending church?

The Massie United Church held a congregational meeting in the middle of May to discuss questions from the *Future Directions* committee as well as questions unique to our situation. What do we want our church in Massie to be? Do we like what we're doing? Are there obstacles? If so, can they be overcome?

It was heartening to know there are many things we appreciate about our small rural church: the fellowship, community outreach, our minister, the weekly worship services, the well-maintained and manageable building size, and aesthetics of the grounds, to name just a few. Yes, there are obstacles. No surprise there. But, we are inspired by the conviction among participants that these obstacles can be overcome, that Massie church has a future in this community. In fact, the drive to keep the church alive is strong *because* it is at the heart of the community. No church, no community.

Recently a paper was circulated outlining possible future options of the national church for the General Council of the United Church of Canada to consider at its next meeting. It suggested that different kinds of faith communities, including those less structured, be supported and accepted. While there may still continue to be "traditional" congregations in the future, other options may exist as viable and valuable Christian communities. House churches, camps, coffee houses, faith-based environmental and social action groups were mentioned as possible alternatives to regular service.

This suggestion gives me much hope. We don't know what the future holds for the Massie United Church. Will there be challenges ahead? Probably. Will it look different in 20 years' time? Maybe. Will it, in some form, still be an important part of the Massie community? Most certainly!

For further reading:

*The United Church Observer*, June 2010, *A wake-up call*, pg 26  
*Planning for a Future Grounded in Faith and Action: The General Secretary's Advice to the Executive of the General Council for Consideration May 1-3, 2010*

## Household Hazardous Waste Day: July 24<sup>TH</sup>

Township of Chatsworth Household Hazardous Waste Day will be held on Saturday, July 24<sup>th</sup> from 10a.m. – 2p.m. at the township office. Township residents are encouraged to bring in any products with corrosive, toxic, flammable or reactive symbols on them as well as needles, syringes and fluorescent bulbs. These items must be kept out of landfill sites to prevent them from contaminating our soil and our water.



## MASSIE REUNION 2010

*Celebrate  
Join us for a*

### MASSIE REUNION Sunday August 15, 2010

94 Years - USS No. 11  
 Holland & Sydenham School  
 45 years - Massie Hall  
 85 Years - United Church of Canada  
 115 Years - Massie Church



10 AM - Parade to Massie

Antique Cars & Trucks  
 Horsedrawn Carriages & Wagons  
 Riders on Horseback  
 People with Pets

11 AM - Anniversary Service

Massie United Church  
 Pastor - Melinda Cornfield  
 Special Music - Featured Artists

12 PM - Lunch

1:30 - Entertainment

Massie Hall &  
 Massie Outdoor Performing Arts Centre

All Afternoon

Hamlet Historical Tours  
 Republic of Massie T-shirts for Sale

RSVP by July 26th

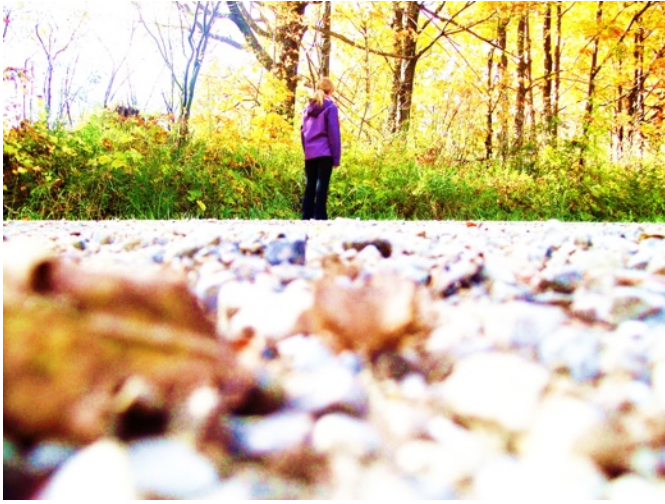
Joyce Downey - 519-376-7689

R.R. #4 Owen Sound ON N4K 5N6

Photograph & Graphics by Ralph Bergman

# PHOTOGALLERY

# *KENNEDY HEATHERS*





Photograph by Connie Miller

## Massie 2010 Events

**July 25<sup>th</sup>** - Massie Hall - **Annual Fish Fry**, Music by Rainbow Country Way begins on the outdoor bandstand at 3p.m. (Please bring your lawn chairs.) Delectable dinner will be served from 5-7p.m. Advance tickets only for this event available by calling Lisa Downey at 519-370-2050 or emailing her at: [ljdowney@hurontel.on.ca](mailto:ljdowney@hurontel.on.ca). You can also contact any member of the Hall Board. Tickets sell for \$13 for adults and \$7 for children 12 and under.

**August 15th** - **Massie Reunion**. See page 9 for more information.

**August 22<sup>nd</sup>** – 11:15am – **Waterside Church Service** at Wendy Neelands – Potluck Lunch. Bring lawn chairs and your contribution to the potluck luncheon. In event of rain, service will be held at Massie Church.

**September 11, 2010** - 8:00 p.m. - **Live @ Massie Hall** - Tres Cantantes featuring Richard Knechtel, Tara McKenzie, Justin Burgess (see page 6 for performer biographies)

**The Massie Messenger** is a community newsletter. What would you like to see in it? Stories from people who have lived here a long time or stories from newcomers? Articles about the houses, churches, barns or other buildings? Recipes? Health tips? Conservation tips? Articles about the natural world in and around Massie? Stories about the artists and craftsmen in our midst? Photographs of people or places or both? Would you like to write an article or a poem or submit your photos or paintings or cartoons? Do you have events you'd like to advertise or stuff you want to sell or rent or lend out? Tell us how you would like **The Messenger** to unfold and we'll do our best to make it happen. Please don't hesitate to make your ideas known. Call

## Editorial Board

**Irene Fedun** — Editor

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**Ralph Bergman** — Art Director

**Pete Miller** — Concert Listings Editor