

The Massie Messenger

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue N° 6- Fall 2010

Massie Reunion

by Renee Fedun



This past summer Massie held a reunion to celebrate four anniversaries: Massie Church was 115 years old, the one-room schoolhouse known as USS No.11 Holland & Sydenham School was 94 years old, the United Church of Canada was 85 years old, and Massie Hall was 45 years old. It was a glorious day and I was pleased as punch to be here. I was especially delighted that the parade passed right

by my door!

On behalf of the community, I would like to thank all the people who put so much work into organizing this memorable event. Your efforts are very much appreciated!

Renee Fedun

Photos by Connie Miller, Dan Taylor, Ralph Bergman, Stephen Norton



Carol Mair donated the balloons for the Reunion and entertained us with her baton twirling skills!





Eleven-year-old Kelly McCarthy leads Angel down Veterans Road

where we used to sit with my Mum and Dad.” Nadine’s family lived in Massie in the late 1930s and 1940s, and she attended school in the one-room schoolhouse.



Ruth Hammil, Blanche Martin, Linda Ceaser, Larry Ceaser

fondly at my two years in Massie as probably the most enjoyable. Congratulations to the team that put this latest reunion together. Keep up the good work and special thanks for the invitation.”



Case Vanderham



Jerry Downey

Blanche Martin: “A lot of people worked really hard to organize this one-day event. It was the perfect day. Everybody seemed to have a good time. Ruth (Hamill) and I really enjoyed our buggy ride!”



Doug Smith, Stephen Norton



Chloe Hargest, Linda Ceaser, Jody Heathers, Kennedy Heathers



Donna Vanderham

Nadine Reid: “I was so pleased to be there! I wouldn’t have missed it for anything. I enjoyed everything about the reunion – it was so well-planned. And I sat in the same pew at church

Douglas Smith: “Well, Massie did it again! Another reunion, and as usual, done up in first-class style. I had the privilege of teaching in Massie in 1953-54 and 1954-55. During those two years, 41 students attended. At this latest reunion I had the pleasure of meeting 18 of them. What a joy! To me this is what reunions are all about. It was great seeing so many former students, hearing of their lives and their families. I love returning to Massie for their music afternoons, dinners and so on. In my 36 years in teaching, I can look back



Marilyn Bergman in her 1960 MGA sports car





Lynn Taylor, Linda Ceaser



Veronica Balogh, Case Vanderham, Blanca Balogh

miles away. It was very generous of him.”



Janice Beattie, Mark, Laurie Misener



Jimmy Taylor, Helen Keeling

Bob Morrow: “My parents had the general store in Massie from 1931 to 1958. I come to most of the reunions and so does my sister Kate. It’s the only time we see people we knew from our childhood.” Bob now lives in Kitchener with his wife Betty. **Mary MacDonald:** “The church was packed. It’s great to know that the Massie church has touched so many people.”

Laurie Misener: “It was a lot of fun! And it was great to see so many people I don’t see very much. Some friends of my Dad’s came all the way from Brantford! The parade was nice and big! I think we should do it more often.”



The Little Bigheads



Carol Deering, Helen Grahlman



Blanca Balogh

Lois Keeling: “The music was really something!”



Isobel Rice, Jack Rice



Marilyn Bergman, Donna Norton, Ralph Bergman, Lois Turk



Peter Campbell: “A lot of work went into that parade. Larry Ceasar brought his horse and buggy from five or six



Paul Heinbecker, Peter Campbell, Gilbert Rice



Kathy Kivell, Bob Dixon



Bill Coburn, Karen Cobutn, Midge Hamill, Rose Bye, Bonnie



Rob Torrie



Celeste Hargest, Preslee Neelands, Cayle Hargest



Marg Taylor



Norton Family



Scott Wilson



Wendy Neelands, Nadine Reid



MArg Taylor, Barb Craig, Lynn Taylor, Jessica Taylor



Bain Rice, Jack Rice, Don Campbell

Massie's New Sign

by Renee Fedun



Our hamlet (as we prefer to call it, despite government bureaucracy's attempts to fashion us into a "tertiary settlement") now has a lovely new sign, completed just in time for August's reunion. The old sign, though

charming, was cracked and peeling, so Ralph Bergman put his creative talents to work. The resulting design incorporates Ontario's coat of arms with the substitution of Massie's farm animals for the original wild

animals. The horse and cow (or bull) are traditional heraldic symbols. The dog that appears on the t-shirts was changed to a rainbow trout to represent the fish in the Bighead River. The motto – literally translated from the Latin as "No one attacks me with impunity" – really boils down to "Don't Mess with Massie"!

A signage company in Owen Sound, have1.com, produced the sign on aluminum sheeting with a weather-protective coating, and Carl Seeley expertly installed it. The cost of the sign was shared between Massie United Church and Massie Hall.

Ralph generously donated over a week's worth of his time to this project. He estimates that the sign, which he calls "my legacy to Massie", will last over 25 years.

2011 Massie Coffeehouse Concerts

Prepare for three more fabulous concerts at Massie Hall next year. Two performers have already been scheduled. On April 30th we'll have the pleasure of hearing Blair Packham from the 80's hit pop band The Jitters, and on June 4th Matthew

Barber, the Juno-nominated alt-country phenom. Matthew has a local connection: his girlfriend, Alexis Taylor, is the daughter of Jim Taylor's nephew John, son of Pat! The third show date TBD will feature blues guitar.

You'll read more about these upcoming concerts in the next issue of the Massie Messenger.

Tomten Farm: The Wits

by Renee Fedun



“If you tell a child a story, that child creates his own pictures in his mind. Those pictures will be different from anyone else’s. Send him to the movies and his pictures of that story will be exactly the same as everyone else’s. He won’t need to use his imagination,” says Johanna Wit. It’s obvious that Johanna and her husband Niek – who had two boys and a girl of their own and now have six grandchildren – love giving children new experiences and teaching them to understand how things work. In many wonderful ways they’ve devoted time and energy to nurturing young lives, young imaginations.

The Wits’ farm, which they fell in love with at first sight 21 years ago, was the ideal place for introducing city kids to the wonders of nature and the joys

of living off the land. It was also the ideal place for *tomtes*, he ful, hardworking elves in the Scandinavian tradition. Naturally, the couple named their new home Tomten Farm.

Both Johanna and Niek had taught at the Waldorf School in Toronto, so it was a natural extension of this work to bring students to their farm. In spring and fall, Grade 3, 4 & 5 kids would come for three nights and sleep on the floor in sleeping bags in the one-room schoolhouse (now Massie Hall). Every morning they’d walk up the road to learn all manner of fascinating things. The Wits had sheep so lambing season was always exciting. And then, of course, Johanna had a spinning wheel so they’d spin wool. They’d help plant the gardens or pick rhubarb and then make

pies on rainy days. They’d press apple cider in the fall. Or they’d bake bread in the outdoor oven. In fact, one group of kids started building the oven and then another group finished it. The same was true for the outhouse, built with the help of neighbours. “The kids loved that,” says Johanna with a chuckle.

When chicks hatched in the spring, they were kept indoors for a couple of weeks until they were old enough to be transferred to the barn. Then each child would be given the task of very gently cupping a chick in their hands and carrying it into the barn. Not all the kids were keen in the beginning. Some would complain, “It tickles” or “It’s dirty”. But they soon learned to overcome their fears and their hesitancy, and enjoy the experience. Johanna says, “It was usually the children who had a hard time in school that were now given a chance. They could make something or do something, even if it was just digging a hole.”

For seven years, in August, the Wits would organize summer camp at Tomten Farm. Twelve children at a time would stay in their house. They would do chores in the morning then help with making lunch. After lunch there would be quiet time when the kids could read or do puzzles...and Jo and Niek could take a nap! After that they’d go for short trips to nearby conservation areas or waterfalls where they could go swimming and

discover the delights of nature. "It was so much fun!" says Johanna.

As artists, both Johanna and Niek have much to offer children. In his woodworking shop Niek used to make wooden puzzles and give carving workshops. He created large bright wooden barns. Johanna loves to carve and can sit contentedly by the stove carving figurines to populate the barns: appealing children in traditional farming costumes, each with a bright red heart or some other accent on their clothes. She carves dogs, sheep and other animals as well as fences and gates to keep them in. "Boys need fences," she

says, "they want to control!"

Johanna is perhaps best known for her watercolour paintings: delicate, spare images or vibrant scenes of nature. Many people have told her they can see in her paintings that she's from Europe! She continues to paint in the studio built by her youngest son Laurens who lived there with his wife for four years before building a place of his own and developing a successful construction business.

Niek and Johanna have made valuable contributions to this community over the years. They are founding members of the Walters Falls Group of Art-

ists and the Massie Shepherd's Play. Niek sang as a tenor in the Georgian Bay Choir for many years. Johanna now volunteers at the Grey Roots Museum. The staff there were thrilled when they learned she could spin and had her own spinning wheel. She managed to lure Niek over to Grey Roots as well, telling him there was a whole field of thistles that needed to be cut down, so he happily donned his straw hat and farmer's duds and brought down his scythe.

The couple arrived in Canada from the Netherlands in 1967 with two babies in tow because Niek wanted to see more of the world. They spent over 20 years in Toronto then, without any background in farming but lots of enthusiasm, moved here. Johanna took a course in sheep husbandry, but even before she could get things set up for the animals, her youngest son presented her with two pregnant sheep. That's the way the Wits do things – they just launch into them. Life may have been hard but it was an adventure, and, as Johanna says, "I wouldn't have missed this part of my life." Besides, they had the industrious little *tomten* to help them.



Arrivals

HAMILL TWINS: Heather and Jamie Hamill are the proud parents (October 13th) of twin girls: Danielle Mae and Bronwyn Violet. Delighted with the healthy baby girls are brother Seamus, grandparents Jim and Linda, and great-grandmother Ruth!

DOWNEY FAMILY ADDITION: Weston Jerry Tennant was born on September 17th to Mercedes Downey and Casey Tennant. Baby brother to Myles, grandson to Jerry and Lisa Downey and great grandson to Bob and Joyce Downey, Weston is healthy and growing fast.

Halloween in Massie

The Hallowe'en party at Massie Hall was great fun, with udderly fabulous costumes that left us all green-faced with envy or drooping sadly when the night came to a close!

Many thanks to Lisa Downey (Bat Princess...gone bad!) and Wendy Neelands (aka Shrek) for organizing, decorating and making up the games...and to Jerry Downey (that snake-charming sultan) for providing the treats and the prizes.



Country Music in Massie



Pat and Larry Thompson recently hosted their annual old-style country music jam at Massie Hall.

Friends of Larry's from all over southern Ontario, including musicians he has played with at Shel-

burne's Fiddle Park, took turns entertaining some 40 people. A good time was had by all!





Massie Fitness Class



Photograph by Patti Given

The Massie fitness classes have been a huge success with 7-13 participants each evening. They have

raised over \$300 dollars for the Massie Hall Board. The classes are Mondays from 7:30-8:30pm and Wednesdays 5:30-7pm until December when the hall shuts down for the winter. Location of the classes for the snowy months is still to be announced.

The ladies are now working at a more advanced level, power walking/jogging up the steep hills of Massie. They had an intense two-hour class on Thanksgiving Monday where they did over 550 squats, a half-hour of abdominal exercises and, of course, outdoor cardio drills. Rocky Neelands' dogs, Beau and Bailey, have joined them for the odd night out!

"The ladies have been successful in increasing their fitness levels – it's great to see the results!" says Lisa Downey. Lisa is to be commended and congratulated for this wonderful initiative!



Massie 2010 Events

November 20th - Massie United Church - **Movie Night,**

- “The Wrong Box” see page 8 for details
- Massie United Church - 7:30 p.m.
- Pot Luck Refreshments Following Show

December 11th – **Massie United Church Christmas Concert**

Massie United Church Christmas Concert - 7:30 p.m.

Contact: Lisa Downey 370-2050 or ljdowney@hurontel.on.ca.

December 31 - Massie Hall - **New Years Eve Party**

Editorial Board

Irene Fedun — Editor

Peter Turk — Website Advisor

Ralph Bergman — Art Director

Pete Miller — Concert Listings Editor

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 Renie at 794-0865 or Ralph at 794-4109 or e-mail editor@massiemessenger.ca.