

Special Edition 2023



HEIRS

Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society

n e w s l e t t e r



*Season's
Greetings*



December Greetings

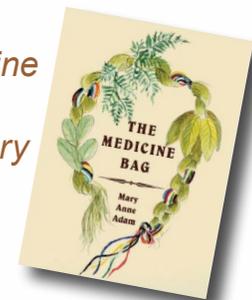
Welcome to a special December newsletter. Things are looking merry around town and festivities have already begun. The HEIRS Resource Centre will close on December 9 and reopen in the new year, on January 9th. However, the elves at HEIRS are always at work and can be reached at heirsont@gmail.com.

If you're looking for Christmas gift ideas for the history book lovers, check out <https://www.heirs.ca/shop> for a list of interesting titles for sale. Don't forget that an HEIRS Membership Gift Certificate is a gift that lasts all year.

Most important of all, from all of us at HEIRS, have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

See pg. 4 for the announcement of the Heritage Farms Project!

We now have limited quantities of 'The Medicine Bag', written by our November presenter Mary Anne Adam with Belle Vue house as a setting. (Stocking stuffer alert!)



November Meeting Recap

On November 23rd we welcomed Mary Anne Adam, director of Belle Vue Conservancy, a group of advocates dedicated to fundraising & restoration of the 200-year old manor. She shared Belle Vue Manor's history, from construction in 1816, up to the present & recent state of decline.

Belle Vue was designated a historic site in 1959 and is one of only two buildings in Canada designated for Palladian style architecture. It's currently owned by the Town of Amherstburg. The fate of the manor was a concern for advocates of the Conservancy, while they waited a decision by town council on whether the property would be purchased privately. On November 27th, this year, Amherstburg Town council received 2 letters from the Caldwell First Nation outlining the importance of holding discussions with this First Nations group regarding the future of the Belle Vue property. Their concern is the potential impact on their rights & integrity of the sacred land upon which it sits. The land holds profound historical & cultural significance to the Caldwell First Nation & they requested consultation with the council. Mary Anne Adam noted that this was good news for the conservancy & Belle Vue's future.



Watch for Mary Anne's next book, also set in Belle Vue, in the spring of 2024.

Prints of Belle Vue are available for purchase from the Marsh Collection in Amherstburg



Local Santa Claus Parades...

- by Lorrie Stephenson

The excitement of the Christmas Season ramps up full blast when the Harrow parade goes down main street every December. But when a worldwide pandemic causes households to isolate, many are shut in and all alone, children are schooled at home through on-line classes, and in-person socializing is prohibited, things can seem pretty bleak.

In December of 2020, at the height of the Covid pandemic, the world experienced a Christmas season like no other in living memory. It was a world without school Christmas plays & crafts, no playing with friends, going to church or visiting family. With the health unit restrictions placed on gatherings too, the traditional Harrow Kinsmen Christmas Parade was cancelled.

***Ray Fischer of the Harrow Rotary recalls:** “Thinking back to the inaugural Drive-Thru Santa Claus Parade, it really was out of desperation. Due to Covid, the Kinsmen Parade along with other ‘traditional’ parades were cancelled. A few of us started talking about arranging a drive-thru style parade.”*

It took some work, cutting through red tape—not the fancy kind you find on some Christmas gifts—but The Harrow Rotary persisted. Ray added: “We really felt that the town and especially the kids needed to see hope... in dark times.”

The Drive-Thru the town parade idea was alive and well. “This was, and continues to be one of the great feel-good moments for Rotary. It is small, but I think the town enjoys this.



*Please look for Santa and friends on **December 20th**, and flick your lights, wave or just smile.*

**IT WILL ALWAYS BE A
MAGICAL TIME OF THE YEAR!**

*This year, the Colchester Christmas parade season kicks off on December 3rd, with **Viewpointe’s Annual Lighted Tractor Parade**. It all began 16 years ago when their Viewpointe Retail Shoppe opened. Each year, families tailgate along the route with hot cocoa and treats while a parade of brilliantly lit tractors winds through the long driveway and parking lot. Santa makes an appearance, as other local businesses have over the years including ER Vollans, The Fruit Wagon, Jack Miner, & the Harrow Fire Department. Each year a festive participant is pronounced as the winner & their name adorns a plaque.*



Santa is back again! Get ready to line the streets & catch candy as the traditional Kinsmen Parade will stroll through town again on December 16th. **See you there!**



Heritage Farm Program

- by Laurie Brett, HEIRS member

Did you know the Town of Essex launched a Heritage Farm Program?

Local farm operators that have been active for over 50 years are invited to apply for Heritage Farm designation. The goal is to recognize long-term stewardship of agricultural lands within the Town of Essex and to celebrate our local history and family legacies.

This is intended to recognize local farming operations that having common familial ownership. To commemorate these heritage properties, eligible farm owners can request a sign to proudly display their designation as a heritage farm in the Town of Essex.

The properties will also be showcased on the Town's website to highlight the history of the property.

HEIRS is working with the town to preserve the history of our heritage farms.

To apply for recognition, please visit the town's website to review program details & complete an online application:
<https://www.essex.ca/en/discover/heritage-farm-program.aspx>

In early November the town recognized these 7 farms:

Platinum (150+ years): Levergood Farms

Gold (100-150 years): Glenn-Ayre Farms

Silver (75-100 years): Defour Farms, Heirloom Farms, Howson Farms

Bronze (50-75 years): Neumiller's Orchard, W & K Strong and Sons





'Christmas As It Used to Was'...

- by Ted Steele, HEIRS member

I've been thinking back to those cold snowy days as a kid—hats, gloves, warm coats, and GALOSHES. Remember them? Yuk! The radio played Rudolph, Frosty and Santa songs, plus a nice mix of true Christmas carols involving shepherds, angels and the coming Saviour—the true meaning of the season.

On Saturdays, we kids went downtown in Chatham (imagine, alone and on foot) to browse the stores that had toy departments and made a mental list of what we wanted to ask Santa for. On the way home, as the trees were often heavy with snow, we let our friends get 20 feet ahead of us, then tossed snowballs into the trees to bury our buddies in an avalanche. **What fun!**

The local Chatham radio station (CFCO) read kids' letters to Santa at 5 PM every day. We'd all listen to maybe hear our own wish list on the radio. Then, a quick supper and out into the snow with my brothers until our mother called us with a loud holler. **Warming up with a hot chocolate, then into a hot bath and off to bedtime, meant time to dream of what Santa might bring.**



Early December meant a hike to a neighbourhood parking lot where the Kinsmen had Christmas trees for sale. My brothers and I (we were a gang of 5) would try to find one with a reasonably straight trunk, then carried it home.

We'd let the branches fall naturally and then try to place it into the stand. Every year we found the trunk anything but straight. More than one Christmas saw our tree tied to the wall to keep it upright. **Then came the strings of lights.**

These monsters needed to be untangled first, and then plugged in. Each light bulb had to be tested, because any one bulb not working, shut down the whole string. This could take some serious time, but eventually the strings lit properly. They could then be put on the tree, followed by the ornaments, and the last one for the tree topper, whatever it might be. I really can't remember what ours was.

Finally it was time for the tinsel.

We began by carefully placing each strand individually in just the right spot. Before long, we were just tossing small handfuls wherever some was not placed already. We hung up our stockings and then we were ready for Santa.

Thinking back, my absolute favourite gift was a small plastic transistor radio, which I could carry in a shirt pocket—tuned to CKLW, the Big 8, Palisades Park, B Bumble & the Stingers, the Ventures... what memories!

So what was YOUR all-time favourite gift?



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Membership

\$30 CDN/U.S. per person or couple. Memberships run **May 1st - April 30th** annually.

Please provide phone, postal address, email & family names you are researching.

Payments

E-transfer payments & donations to HEIRS? Send to: heirsont@gmail.com

Make cheques payable to HEIRS, 243 McAfee St., PO Box 53, Harrow ON, Canada N0R 1G0

NOTE: Members may research for free. Non-members using research library \$10 per visit (+ photocopy fees)

Newsletters & Meetings

HEIRS newsletter is published 9 times/year: full colour digital version by email or B&W print version by regular post.

Meetings held on the 4th Thursday of the month, September to June, (July, August & December excepted).

RESOURCE CENTRE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

CLOSED DECEMBER 9th to JANUARY 8th. / REOPENS ON JANUARY 9th.

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