

Vol. 2 – February 2021



HEIRS

Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society

n e w s l e t t e r



Stay safe...

wherever you call home!

Welcome to the February 2021 newsletter.

Although I've been a senior for the past year (still not saying that out loud yet), I am lucky enough to have my wife and daughter with me to keep me entertained and mostly sane.

Sure the board games we play to fill some time & keep us away from the old boob tube for a while, are monotonous, But even though we're under one roof, It's something we do together, that is the important point.

And yes, I look forward to grocery days now, the chance to enjoy (the former drudgery of) picking up some milk & bread. I'm sure I spend way too long deciding in front of the bread shelves while holding up traffic, impatiently waiting (2 metres) behind me.

But for some seniors, even this kind of 'fun' is just unavailable. It's sad, disheartening, and untenable.

So back in the Spring I thought... "What can I do to help lighten their situation and perhaps start to return some normalcy & companionship into their predicament?"

Since then I have been emailing & phoning an older member of HEIRS who now lives in long term care. We chat about all sorts of subjects, nothing too serious, maybe once a week or so. We have become wonderful phone friends.

But you know, I learned something about these calls...- I feel better afterwards too.
That was totally unexpected - it's like the feeling you get when you drop a few bucks in a Christmas kettle or buy a coffee for that same guy you always see on the street. You give, but you get back as much.

So here's something for your consideration.

I know plenty of you are already helping others folks. But, if you haven't reached out to a fellow member lately, one you chat with at the monthly meetings perhaps, why not make a concerted effort to find their number, give them a quick call and ask them "how are you doing"?

If you are a senior who would love to chat by email or phone, just reach out to HEIRS & we'll see how we can get that ball rolling for you – member to member.

We've got a whole bunch of days ahead of us before we all get vaccinated, and begin to clog up those grocery aisles a bit more. So let's be sure that you get some of that good feeling like I do, whenever I make a call.

By the way... my friend called me. They had just received their first Moderna vaccine and I was so proud that this person couldn't wait to share the news with me.

Stay safe, stay in, and stay in touch with a fellow HEIRS member.

- Rick McCormick

2020 has now come and gone- thankfully. As I look back at the events that we had (and cancelled) during that time, it amazes me how quickly the year passed.

The year began with Richard Herniman and I planning to be the first 2 speakers. I chose to mark Black History Month in January's meeting, & Richard would present his memories and research on the history of Harrow in February.

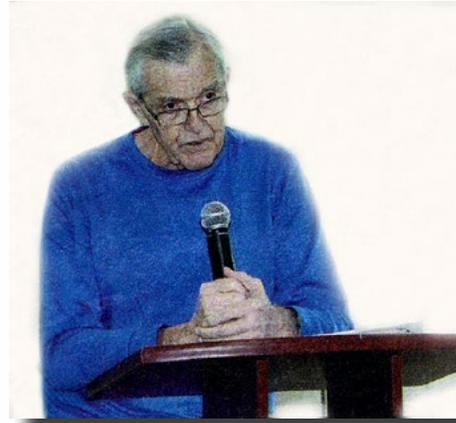
The plan was to hold a March meeting with a longtime teacher at Harrow High, Mr. Jim McTavish. Local blacksmithing expert, Julius Langpeter would then be our April meeting speaker, and May would be our AGM, for which there is normally no speaker. All looked to be in place.

Little did we know that HEIRS February meeting would be the last for 2020, & that we would lose our president, Richard to health problems by year's end.

I still have difficulty realizing that a complete year has ticked by, and we are still fighting this Covid virus.

Richard loved doing research & finding hidden gems that had been shoved aside or just forgotten. His final presentation featured many of the early buildings of the town, like the Sovereign Bank & stores long gone, even though the buildings housing many of them are still with us.

He also spoke of local businessmen like William Wright, John McAfee and Albert Sinasac, who were important members of Harrow's business community in the middle 1800s.



Richard presenting at HEIRS, in February 2020

Thomas Jenner, famous local architect, was highlighted- we learned that he had designed many buildings still present in Essex, Harrow, and Kingsville. He was a son of Harrow, and loved his hometown.

We're hoping 2021 will be a much better year & we'll continue to provide some edutainment for our members through our newsletter until we can meet again.



**H.E.I.R.S.
Harrow Heritage
& Genealogy...**

**Check out our
new FB page!**

Partly due to Covid lockdown and to make use of available technology to communicate with members, HEIRS has set up a new Facebook page. You can find & join our group by searching on Facebook for: "H.E.I.R.S. Harrow Heritage & Genealogy".

A new email address was also needed as we continue to be locked out of HEIRS files and computers at the Resource Centre. Please use heirsont@gmail.com as of now. More info to follow in our next newsletter, in early March.

Brain Droppings...

In the Old West, a drink was often referred to as a 'shot of whiskey'. Today we still refer to the small glass used to measure drink quantities as "shot glasses".

Why?

The glass of whiskey had the same value as a gun cartridge, or 'shot'. A bullet could thus be given as fair exchange for the whiskey, thus making it a 'shot of whiskey'.

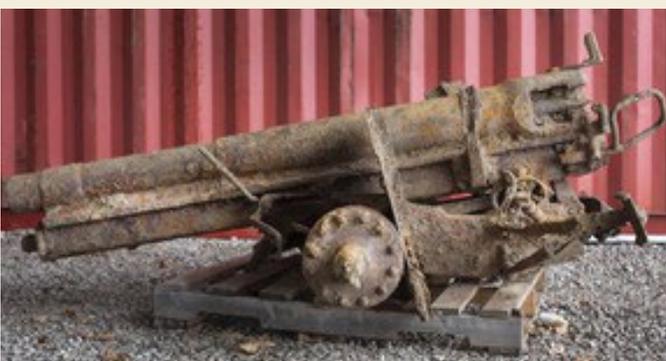
The Big Bang Theory

In Mid-December, a heavy machine operator working on the site of the to-be-built public school in Amherstburg, made an amazing discovery.

His power scoop hit a massive metal object in the middle of a baseball field. It turned out to be a German field gun, or artillery piece, from WW 1 and it may have been used in the Battle of Vimy Ridge, among others.

Research since has shown that it came to Amherstburg in 1922, and was set up as part of a war memorial with a cenotaph, next to General Amherst High School. It was moved in 1971 to Centennial Park, and a few years later, was interred there - and totally forgotten.

Now, after 50 years, it has emerged.



Plans call for a major cleanup / repair project, then displaying it as part of a memorial to the soldiers of WW 1 & 2. It has special meaning, because during WW 2 many large metal items, such as church bells & old unwanted weapons, were melted down for reuse in new armaments.

This cannon is a rare find and has triggered much interest.



Our own HEIRS member, Bill Brundage of Boblo blockhouse repute, is part of the crew of volunteers charged with the cleaning of the old cannon, after which repairs & installation will be performed.

Genealogy of the Deslippe Family

- by Pauline Baldwin

Family lore has it that Philippe Deslippe (Dilsy / Disley) was a British soldier at the time of the conquest of New France in 1759, and he remained in the LaPrairie area near the present city of Montreal.

He was born in London England in 1743, to Philippe Deslippe and Angela Robeson (Robinson). According to the marriage records, he married in 1768, in the parish of St. Philippe, LaPrairie, Quebec.

He was married a second time to Marie Charlotte Remond on April 3, 1780, in the same Quebec parish. Their son, Philippe Bernard Julien Deslippe, was born August 19, 1788, also in that parish, and died April 24, 1835, in Gosfield, Essex County, near Cedar Creek.

The Deslippe family, including 8 children, came to the Amherstburg area from Quebec about 1834. They left in the Fall, & were 9 weeks travelling by cart to make the trip.

A number of other families accompanied them; during the entire trip. They slept inside only 2 nights, and one child broke a limb. It was tended to as best they could, and when they finally reached their destination, it had completely healed.

The parents settled in Amherstburg during the time of the 1837 Rebellion. The father was killed while going down Cedar Creek in Gosfield, driving travellers to what is now Kingsville.

The horses broke away, and the vehicle upset on him, causing his death.

Simon Deslippe, their youngest son, the Great Grandfather of HEIRS director Pauline Baldwin, purchased lot 6, concession 5 in Colchester South, in 1903.

Simon's son Michael, Pauline's grandfather, (1860-1946), inherited this farm and passed it on to his youngest son Nelson. Nelson was the last Deslippe to own this land.

At the time of Simon's death, the Amherstburg Echo obituary stated that there were 55 descendents by the name Deslippe, and children of daughters swelled this number to 125. Daughters of the Deslippe clan married into Deneau, Jubenville and Sinasac families, among others around Amherstburg.

It remains a mystery how Disley / Disly became Deslippe. Did a priest or official confuse the names in parish records?

There are a number of families by the name Deslippe in North America, and all can be traced back to the original Phillipe, who arrived in Canada circa 1759.

The Quebec Deslippe families have compiled a book on the families who remained primarily in the Montreal area. It's available in the Resource Library at HEIRS.

HEIRS would welcome any information that our readers may have on this family, as well as questions or comments.

What will you do with your geneology files? - by Ted Steele

As I grow older, I need a solution to a problem - what do I do with my genealogy files now? Who wants them, & who would also best preserve the info gathered over decades?

Except for a few relatives somewhat interested in the exciting stories of family history, a family mystery (or a black sheep here and there), nobody but me does any actual research on our ancestors. That means my binders and folders full of documents may be gone when I no longer have need of them.

The following two examples of how others are dealing with this issue, have been found in a few magazine articles that I have gathered over the years...

My solution has been to create family books for each surname.

I keep them short, 30 pages maximum (some surnames require multiple volumes, but each volume comprises one generation, including children).

These are 'coffee table' books, to be browsed through casually. Documents are few, because the stories are the focus and not statistics and data. These books can be published fairly easily, and make great Christmas gifts.

Another solution is to create books for sale to other family members. Many people would be interested in books which feature their own branch of the family, and you might even awaken interest in some to follow your lead and continue the family research."

Converting family files

Some years ago I took the family's 8 mm home movies and had them converted to disk. Then it was easy to sort my files into groups, according to who would be most interested in viewing or having them for themselves. A set of flash/thumb drives bought at reasonable prices allowed me to make appropriate files for family members & sell them, gift them, or just pass them out to anyone interested. Having family files circulating within the family in multiple copies also is a great way to make sure they survive, in a better way that single copies of paper documents and photos can do.

HEIRS members wishing help to get files saved, can contact HEIRS for ideas & guidance. Especially so, once we're back in our Research Centre to resume services for members.

Postcard Update... Our last issue featured a postcard with little family info on one side & a photo of an old house on the front. I hoped a reader might recognize the building or names. The 1 cent stamp was from 1903. I was contacted by someone researching family ties & connections, who was quite interested in the card's info. Though he didn't want the card itself, we were glad he benefited from our posting.

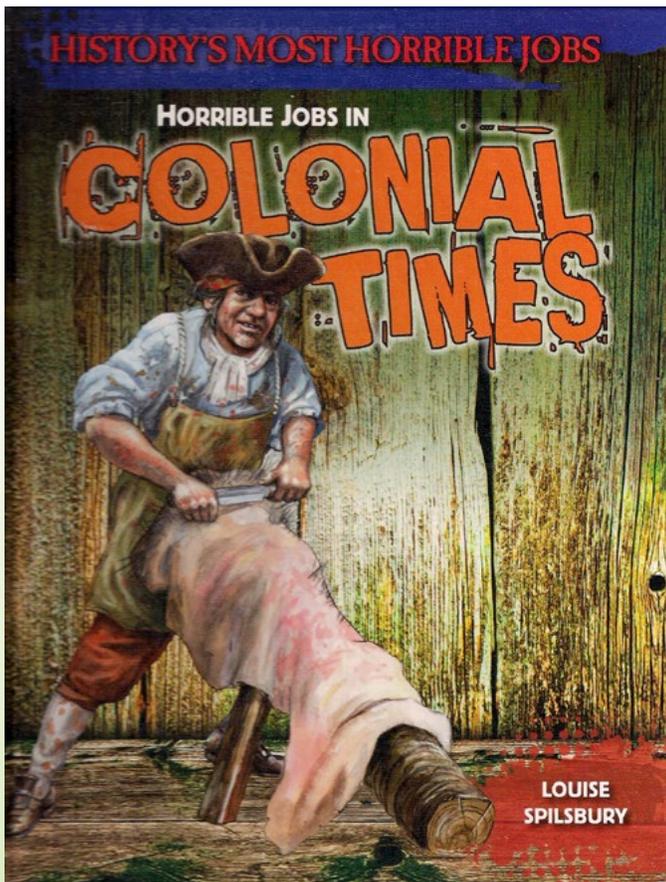


History As It Used to Was...

- by Ted Steele, HEIRS Director

I am always looking for historical facts that can become stories of interest, so when I came across a book sale with one book entitled "Horrible Jobs In Colonial Times", I was immediately interested.

Though it's a book written for kids, it's unusual approach made it ideal for my purposes. (Besides, I like to think of myself as a kid, just an old one.)



The book points out the types of occupations that some of our ancestors may well have had to do to survive- jobs for the uneducated were unsafe and unpleasant, but somebody had to do them, and those who did not own land had few options.

In colonial times, indigo was a popular crop. It was used to colour fabrics a much-in-demand blue shade. Exported to Europe for dyeing military uniforms, both male and female workers planted & cut indigo in the hot sun.

The plants, once cut, were taken by cart to processing plants, stirred, beaten & boiled while the plants fermented.



This step gave off dangerous fumes, and the plants were commonly infested with disease-carrying insects. It is estimated that indigo workers could only work 5-7 years before their health would become problematic. The indigo, once fully rotted, had the water drained away, with the sludge dried into bricks.

Leather was an important material to colonists. Clothing, shoes, boots & saddles, chair seats & leather book coverings were made from animal skins.

The skins were first soaked in urine.

Next came soaking in vats of water & lime to soften them. Next, a soak in a mixture of dog feces with chicken & dove droppings. The hair then was scraped off, soaked again, then dried. After drying, they were soaked in a mixture of sour milk & bark.

This stinky concoction coloured the leather & removed lime. Then chemicals loosened hair & softened the hides, but also damaged the tanner's skin, while the smells likely destroyed any ability to smell.

Millers were men who turned grains into flour. He used 2 heavy wheels set horizontally to each other to grind the grains. These grinding stones were usually powered by water flow & sometimes wind power turning large vanes.



Farmers brought their grain & paid him with a portion of the flour produced. Large quantities were sold to Europe, as bread was a mainstay in diets at the time. Bags of grain were commonly 50 pounds, & were lugged around in his mill all day long. In addition, grinding grains into flour produced a dry, powdery dust that could catch fire, or even explode destroying the mill (& the miller).

Tar & pitch makers used pine trees to produce the tar; when in concentrated form it became pitch.

They waterproofed wooden sailing ships, fixed Leaks & preserved Ropes & sail rigging. The makers burned pine trees & collected sap, which under heat became pine tar. Hot slow burning fires were definitely hazardous to workers. Often working in wooded areas away from any communities, medical help was distant or even non-existent in case of

an accident. It is this same tar that was used to “tar and feather” Loyalists... one of whom was my relative, William Steele.

Wig makers were also high in demand. Head lice were common, and shaving the head was the usual remedy. Wigs then replaced the person’s own hair & they became status symbols as well. Judges & attorneys in Europe wore distinctive wig styles & they were copied in the colonies.

These wigs were made of horse or goat hair, yak’s hair or human hair using a stand to hold them while under construction. The stand was referred to as a ‘blockhead’, the derivation of the term for someone who is “wooden-headed”. The styling & fitting process involved dirty hair, lice & insects, and obviously could not have been an enjoyable task.

Milliners made bonnets for women - protection from the sun, as well as keeping hair somewhat clean & giving the wearer an air of respectability. They were usually creations of linen, lace or cotton. Men’s hats were made by hatters, using beaver pelts, wool, cotton or straw & its style often indicated the wearer’s status in the community.

A beaver pelt is rough & greasy, so the coarse outer layer was removed with a knife or tweezers. The next layer was finer, and was removed using mercury to make it smooth.

Mercury can severely damage skin & its fumes eventually attack the nervous system, causing delusion, muscle twitches, loss of balance & blurred vision. This is the basis for the “mad hatter” character in “Alice In Wonderland”, as well as the expression, “mad as a hatter”.

What we won’t do in the name of fashion!

HEIRS RESOURCE CENTRE

Open September - June (December excepted)

Tuesday & Thursday: 10AM - 3PM

Call to confirm Wednesday or other appointments.

Office is temporarily closed due to Covid restrictions!

Newsletter

Published 9 times per year, in conjunction with General Meetings held on the 4th Thursday of the month, September to June, (December excepted).

Receive full colour newsletters by email, or a B&W print version by regular post. Simply provide your email or street address to our office.

Memberships

\$30 CDN / U.S. per person or couple.

Memberships run May 1st - April 30th, annually.

Send membership cheque to:

HEIRS PO Box 53, Harrow
ON, Canada N0R 1G0

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

Non-member using Research Library

\$10 per visit (+ photocopy costs).

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Harrow & Colchester South
Community Centre (Arena Bldg.)

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Website www.HEIRS.ca

Kudos go to Greg Harrison at The Computer Centre in Harrow, who provides HEIRS support for all things technical to help keep our office running smoothly.

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