

**Association du
patrimoine de Potton**

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**Potton Heritage
Association**

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Historical Notes by Sandra Jewett Camping Havre des Îles | Snowshoeing Excursion 20-01-11

- L'APP welcomes you to this first excursion of 2020. We would like to thank the Gagnons, owners of this lovely territory, known as Haven Isles Camping or Camping Havre des Isles for allowing us to explore along the Missisquoi River.
- This campground has a long and interesting history – located partly in Municipality of East Bolton and Potton.
- Originally owned and developed as a playground and picnic area by Carlton Randall in the 1950's and 60's. Mr Randall was a resident businessman who lived in South Bolton and was the Mayor of the Municipality at the time.
- The development of Haven Isles' coincided roughly with the arrival of several Polish immigrant families who came to the area on a seasonal basis from .
- Principle among these was Walter (Wladislaw Sopala (1912-1986) who acquired a large tract of land at the north end of Potton, near the East Bolton boundary. Eventually his land was subdivided and he sold smaller parcels to others of European descent. The warm weather months of mid-May to Labour Day were most popular for visiting the Townships.
- A seasonal settlement sprang up – and giving rise, some decades later, to summer cottages and the residential area bearing the street names of Chemin Sopala, des Iris, des Lilas, Cricket Hill, and du Malinowa-Aleja (or Raspberry Lane!), which is just off the shores of Sopala Lake, popular with the residents! Another resident of South Bolton, Layton Coté, built a go-cart track to the north of Haven Isle's on 243, the property beside where we will have lunch today. Mr. Coté died in 1962 or 63, and it is unlikely that the attraction lasted much longer. I have no info as to when it ended. Additionally similar entertainment was available at the Lion's Park in Knowlton, where Mr. Randall donated a giant cup and saucer which pleased untold generations of children.
- It may be hard to believe today, but during this era, this small village was home to three, if not, four grocery stores. Lodging and recreational infrastructure was provided by the Lech family on Route 243, where the old Owl's Nest was located (and now is called l'Auberge du randonneur). Additionally, Mrs. Klywak, who owned and operated an inn – restaurant I now known as `La Tanière' (on Chemin de la montagne – yellow building).

- At roughly the same time, families of Polish descent by the names of Mierzwinski, Deneka, Tomera, settled in proximity to Mansonville. Unfortunately, I do not know the names of many of the families – who lived close to South Bolton; however I do know that many were introduced to the area by Mr. Sopala.
 - During this time frame, many European immigrants, particularly from Ukraine, also came to the Vale Perkins community. Mr. Ivan Telishewsky and wife, purchased a large farm, subdivided and sold to many compatriots, some descendants of whom have built homes in the neighbourhood.
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A little more history:

Mr. Randall was the Mayor of the Municipality of East Bolton in the 1950's. He owned and operated a bobbin mill in South Bolton for about 34 years, beginning in 1928.

- (As an aside, - Around 1920, or perhaps earlier, Dominion Textiles, operating in Magog since the 1880's, set up a subsidiary manufacturing plant called Industrial Specialty which made spools, bobbins and other textile equipment. Mr. Randall began working at this facility which specialized in making spools and bobbins, which were integral to the textile weaving process. Bolton and Potton areas had plentiful supplies of the rock maple needed as primary materials).
 - Mr Randall's first mill was located on his farm on East River Road. At the height of production, this operation employed ten specialized labourers in the mill itself; roughly 30 others in lumbering operations, as well as providing spin-off operations to dispose of rejected bobbins and shavings etc.
 - Randall's operation used the Orford Mountain Railway to transport material and product until 1935 when the railway shut down, after which to the railway depots in Foster, Eastman or Highwater.
 - Mr. Randall ceased business in 1962, however Charles Labranche and Philius *(Chick) Hamelin continued to produce bobbins for use in the textile industries located in the U.S. after that time. A bobbin mill located in Potton, on the Vale Perkins road, which had begun in 1950, closed in 1976 – leaving roughly 20 persons unemployed.
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Reference

- Conversation with Patty St. Pierre.
- Volume Five of *Yesterdays of Brome County*.
- See also <https://campinghavredesiles.com>