

## Heritage – and its socio-economic importance

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(translated by S. Jewett)

Note: in this document the word Villégiateur is often used. I know of no single word translation for the term – The word pertains to vacationer – tourists etc., but in this document, it seems to be used more in reference to the second home owner, here on a seasonal or temporary basis. (the newly arrived...)

### Contextual setting

The Round Barn is one of the major elements of the built heritage in the Township of Potton. Its location within the village distinguishes it from the six round barns which remain in the Eastern Townships. Since its citation in 2009 as a historical building, and its acquisition by the Municipality, the Barn has become a vital attraction to Mansonville.

The Barn is part of a varied and significant offering of heritage and cultural resources within our Township. These assets allow a development of the Township based on culture and recreational tourism. This vision is outlined in the Strategic Development plan of the Municipality originally deposited in 2010 and re-affirmed in 2014, in which the importance of heritage is reiterated, and the Round Barn and the covered bridge are included in the future plans for the community.

This Strategic plan proposes, among other, to develop our distinctive characteristics, to complete the development of the Missisquoi Nord river; to build on the complementarity of Owl's Head – the Réserve naturelle des Montagnes-Vertes – and the Fiducie foncière de la vallée du Ruitier; *to develop the Round Barn, the covered bridge, the built, archeological and landscape heritage*; to develop the local artistic community; to encourage micro-agriculture; to re-vitalize the village; and, to acknowledge recreational tourism as the primary driver powering the local economy. Neither concrete action nor investment have bolstered these promising intentions; with the exception of Place de la Grange and the creation of the public market, financed for the most part by the Pacte rural (Quebec and the MRC); and the programme to aid in the restoration of village buildings (Potton and the Société Habitation du Québec). The Cœur Villageois project will undoubtedly reaffirm the principles of the master plan but will municipal investments follow? Remember the '*Imaginons Mansonville*' report (Imagine Mansonville) of 2011? It proposed the revitalization of the village with objectives, costs, and timelines. It was shelved, much as was the *Plan de développement touristique*, (the Tourist Development plan) which has since been withdrawn from the municipal web site.

In spite of the success of Place de la Grange-Ronde, thanks to the public market, heritage exhibitions and cultural activities, an important part of the Potton population still doubts the pertinence of further municipal investments to enact the policies put forth in 2010. This attitude places a damper on the social climate and seems to discourage any significant municipal investment. On October 3, 2016, the Municipal Council did, on a majority vote, agree to invest \$20,000 in the restoration of the Round Barn on condition that \$100,000 be obtained from other sources, public or private. It bears remembering that the triennial plan of 2011-2013 included the investment of \$50,000 for the restoration of the Pont couvert de la frontière. This sum was never spent and the project fell by the wayside, forgotten.

*The preservation and the partial restoration* of the Round Barn are now proposed with a budget of \$200,000. Repairs to the covered bridge are also urgent. Approximately \$100,000 is necessary to repair the bridge abutments which are in danger of collapse. Investments of \$300,000 are required in order to conserve the Round Barn and the covered bridge.

In order to convince both the citizens and refractory councillors to support municipal investment in the development of Potton's heritage, the socio-economic benefits to citizens and the municipality must be better articulated. The natural, built and intangible heritage of our Township is presently regarded as somewhat like the painting hung on the living room wall: nice to look at but what does it give us?

### Analysis

I searched for an approach to analyzing the socio-economic benefits of heritage within our local community. In 2012, Professor Michel Vernières from the Université de Paris, raised the question in his presentation: *La contribution du patrimoine au développement local: enjeux et limites de sa mesure*, ('The contribution of heritage to local development – stakes and limitations')

We will focus our analysis on human development, as did Professor Vernières. It is essentially development of, by and for the population:

- **Of** the population, through favouring progress regarding health and education;
- **By** the population, through ensuring a right to participate in producing and decision making;
- **For** the population, through improving well-being and in reducing the inequalities of wealth.

We adopted as well, the definition of heritage by Professor Vernières: a set of assets, recognized as such by the local collectivity. These assets are tangible or intangible, of which one of the essential characteristics allows the establishment of a connection between the generations – past as well as to future. Heritage is therefore a legacy to be passed on, stemming from history, recent or old. In this sense, heritage necessarily has a collective dimension; and its preservation then, rises from general interest. It is a collective asset in the economic sense of the term. As with any asset, heritage therefore has value as a resource, with the potential to contribute to the development of the region that generated it.

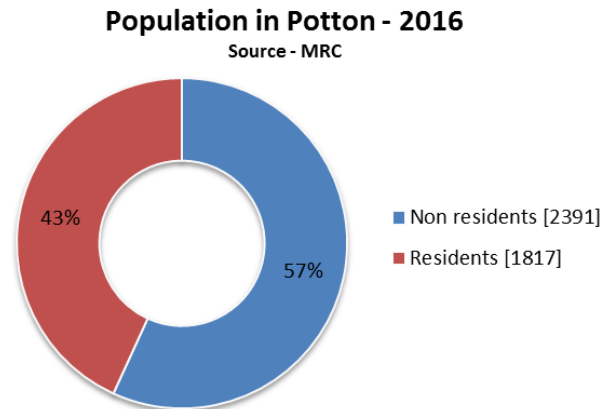
Our local community was built socially and economically from 1797 by the contributions of pioneers first from the American colonies, then by subsequent waves of other arrivals: French settlers leaving the overpopulated seigneuries of Lower Canada, Polish and Ukrainians fleeing war-torn Europe, and most recently, by visitors and retirees opting to make their home in Potton. Agriculture, forestry, and water mills of the earliest days each ceded their place, bit by bit, to the tourism generated by the grand hotels of the 1850's; and then by establishment of seasonal residences, especially since 1950. These changes have profoundly altered the social fabric and economy of Potton's society. Additionally, since 1975, the recreational center of Owl's Head has become the economic driver of Potton, and today, the part time resident population, called *villégiateurs*, now outnumber permanent residents.

**Population development, by emphasizing progress in matters of health and education**

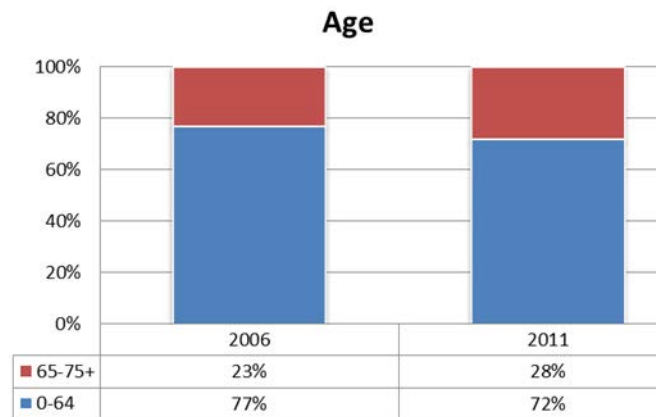
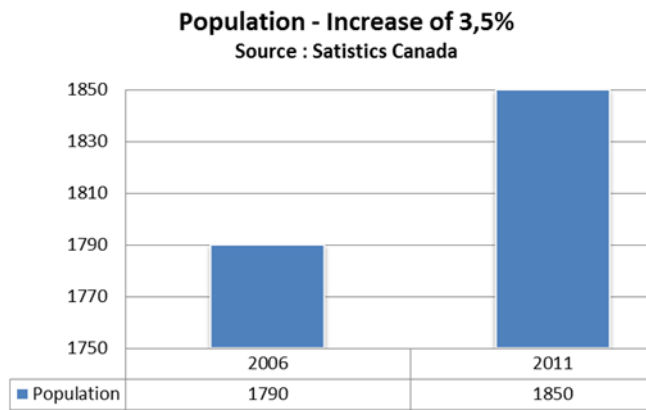
Demographic evolution is a key element of this analysis. When a population decreases, it is a symptom of an inherently weak economic and social dynamism. This symptom is even more pronounced when this population is older than the average of its regional counterparts. The presence of significant heritage is likely to attract new residents and new activities and, therefore, to contribute to favorable demographic change.

Compare the recent demographic data from the MRC Memphremagog and from Statistics Canada. (Official data for 2016 from Statistics Canada will be available only from February 8 2017.)

These statistics include only permanent residents of Potton. Second home owners are counted at their principle domicile. Therein, an important flaw. According to our MRC, we note that 4208 persons were counted in Potton in 2016, of whom 1817 were resident (43%), and 2,391 persons were non-resident (57%).



According to Statistics Canada, from 2006 to 2011 the population grew from 1790 to 1850 residents. An increase of 3.5% when compared to our regional counterparts.



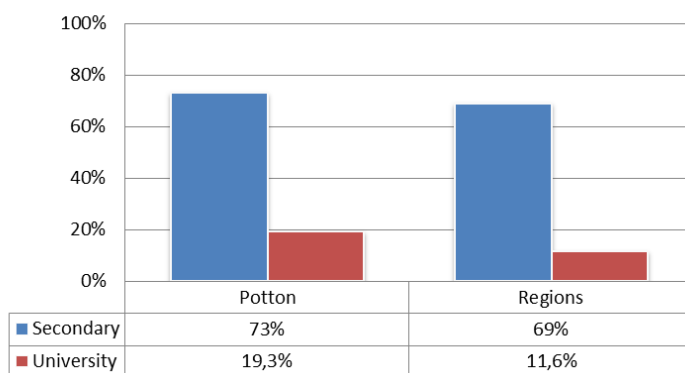
The age pyramid is stable with a slight increase in the aging of the population. In 2011, the 0-64 age group comprised 72% of the population, and the 65-75+ group, 28%, as compared to 77% and 23% in 2006. These figures will be modified in the years to come, given the increase of young households over the last five years, and the number of children in our primary schools. Note as well that the impact of aging is attenuated by the proactivity of the retired: volunteering, intellectual and physical activity.

### The level of education and training

Higher level of education and training is one of the conditions essential to territorial development. The number of years of schooling and the level of diplomas are the usual indicators of this situation.

In 2011, the education level in Potton is higher than found in the group of regional counterparts. 73% have a secondary diploma, trade school, a college or university education, as compared to 69% for the comparable region. It is at the university level that the gap is widest: 19.3% versus 11.6%. The demographic parameters are thus conducive to the promotion of heritage, as evidenced by the growth of cultural and heritage activities within the past decade.

Education level

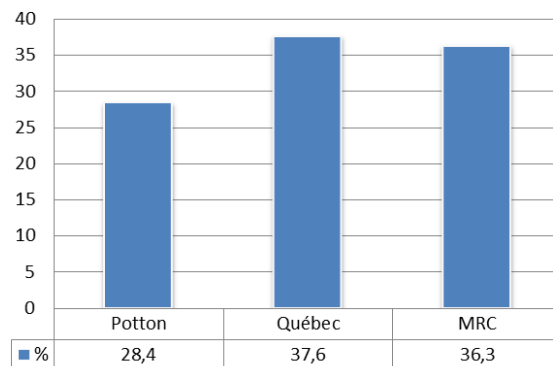


### The state of health

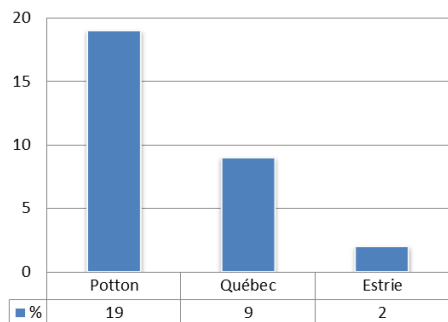
The state of health of populations is an often quoted factor in productivity and well-being; however, the evaluation of the overall health of a population is delicate due to the imprecision and to the complexity of this notion. Potton’s heritage contributes to this state of health due to the importance of the environmental dimension which is found here: low pollution due to green spaces, quiet related to the life style of the retired and newly arrived home owners.

According to the data for Townships’ communities, the indices for combined material and social deprivation are average for the local community of the southern Missisquoi Valley (Potton, Bolton-est, Saint-Benoît-du-Lac and the southern portion of Austin), the percent of single persons and single parent families decreasing in the years 2001 to 2011. As for the disabilities of those in the 65+ category, only 28.4% confirm having some form of disability. This figure compares favourably with the Quebec average which stands at 37.6% and that of the MRC, at 36.3%

Disability- 65 years +



Protected territory - 2016



Environmental quality is an important element in human development, due to its impact on everyday life. The environmental quality of heritage may be identified through the importance of its natural components (forests, parks, nature reserves, gardens), its aesthetic quality, the pleasure sensed in evolving in a context filled with the collective history of a given territory. In Potton in 2016, 19% of its territory is protected from all development. It is considerable when compared to 9% for all of Quebec and 2% for the Estrie region.

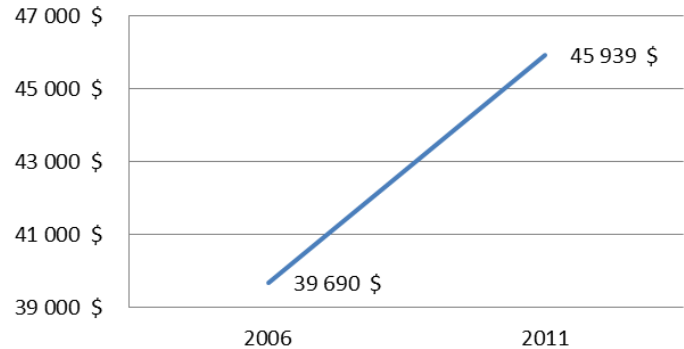
This ignores that this natural environment draws tourists, particularly cyclists and hikers - an expanding tourist sector within the Eastern

Townships. And much more so, the pride of residents reflected in the number of visits by friends and relatives, which, according to Tourism Québec in 2014, comprises more than 50% of all tourists.

**Heritage and development for the population in ensuring freedom to participate in the production and in decisions.**

Household income in Potton is increasing considerably: from \$39,690 in 2006, to \$45,939 in 2011, which is an increase of nearly 16% as compared to 12% for revenues in the Memphremagog region. The active employment rate is stable with a slight decrease of the unemployment rate from 2006 to 2011, from 9.1% to 8.9%. In 2016, this rate likely reached that of the Estrie region, or 6.5%.

**Household income in Potton  
(Increase of 16% vs 12% for MRC)**



We were unable to obtain that portion of revenues attributable to activities linked to recreational tourism and the strong presence of secondary residences within our territory. We know that ski and golf draw hundreds of persons annually. Renovation and the construction of new and second homes has steadily increased. Examination of the data from 2011 allows an approximation. The active employment of 930 persons falls into the following categories.

Number	Sector
110	in professional services
100	in the manufacturing sector
90	into agriculture and forestry
<b>85</b>	<b>in construction</b>
85	in administrative services
85	in health care and social assistance
<b>80</b>	<b>in lodging and restaurant services</b>
<b>65</b>	<b>in retail businesses</b>
45	in finance and insurance
40	in transportation and storage
<b>20</b>	<b>in real estate</b>
15	in teaching
<b>15</b>	<b>in arts, entertainment and leisure</b>
95 / <b>20</b>	in other services of which <b>20 are in public administration</b>

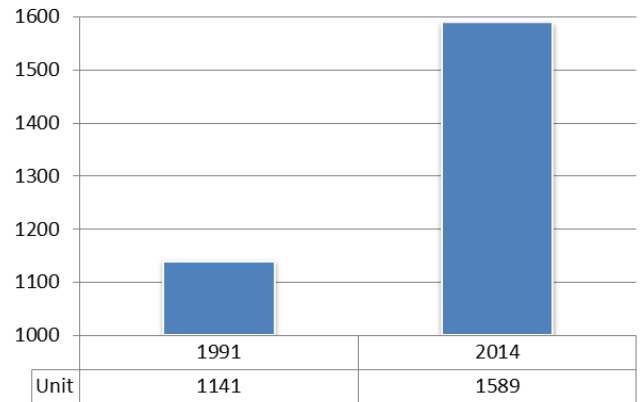
**[Employment in sectors partially related to recreational tourism and to second homes, which comprises 30% of the sector, are indicated in bold]**

The conclusion may be drawn that, as a minimum, 50% of the 285 jobs indicated in bold are attributable to the presence of second-homeowners and recreational tourism; in other words 143 jobs, or 15% of the total.

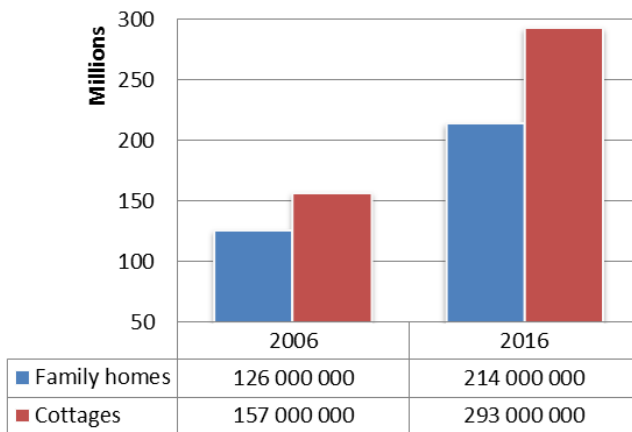
The presence of secondary residents, drawn to the area by the existence of our heritage, particularly our natural landscapes, increases the revenues of workers in the building trades, local businesses and overall, increases the local fiscal resources.

With an increase in the number of second residences, property values tend to increase overall; and this may deter those of lesser means from staying here or from establishing a permanent residence. Often this is termed gentrification. In Potton, the increase in land and building value is considerable. From 2011 to 2014, the increase was 10%, or \$56 million for a total value of the total value of \$624 million, of which, \$495 million for residences. 28% of private properties contain more than 10 hectares. 28% of residences were built since 1991, that is to say, 448 units of the 1589 which were counted in Potton in 2014.

**Number of residences**



**Uniform tax evaluation**



According to data from the Ministère des Affaires municipales, the uniform tax evaluation for Potton in 2006 reached \$126 million for 752 single family homes and \$157 million for cottages. In 2016, there are 795 residences, valued at \$214m, and 854 seasonal homes evaluated at \$293m. The number and the value of cottages or second residences increased by 14% in number and 33% in value.

As positive factors, the availability of nearby services is to be noted: health care, public transit, grocery stores, garages, hardware, banking services, municipal library, cinema, seniors’ residence. On the negative side, the absence of a community centre and the weak hotel and restaurant sectors are also noted.

**Heritage and development by the population, by improving its well-being and in reducing the wealth inequality.**

The volume of employment created by the existence of heritage is a key indicator of impact studies on the subject of territorial economy. We have estimated that a minimum of 143 jobs occupied by Potton residents are related to recreational tourism or the second home owner, or 15% of the total jobs held by permanent residents. These jobs increase seasonally, especially in the construction and service sector. The revenues generated are reinvested, in part, in Potton by way of municipal taxes, services, leisure. The expenses of the second home owners are difficult to decipher, but are very important for Potton. Municipal taxation alone represents a sum of nearly \$2 million, taking into account the property value of cottages and condos. Investment in facilities for the village, such as buildings, parks, public benches, public fountains as the case may be, have positive effect on the quality of life of the residents.

The degree of participation in political decisions, in the case of heritage, is a reflection of the process by which heritage is determined or created as such and the way it has evolved over time. In Potton, the process is attributable in large part, to the Potton Heritage Association, which over its 26 year history, has championed the protection of, and promoted the value of, heritage assets, be they material or intangible. With 200 members, or 5% of the total population, the Association is the most important social group in Potton. However, with rare exceptions, membership is mostly retirees or second home owners who are now permanent residents.

Through its publications and exhibitions, the Association reaches thousands in Potton, in the surrounding regions and even at the national and international level. More than 4000 brochures and folders were distributed in 2016; and 25,000 downloads of documents from the website in 2015 and 2016 are a witness of this influence. Since 2012, the Association has very actively supported the Groupe bénévole municipal de Potton (GBMP) in its fund raising efforts for the restoration of the Round Barn. More than \$60,000 has been collected thus far from citizens and corporations.

In order that heritage be a significant factor for territorial development, effective participation by the population is essential. This participation being only partially found within Potton Heritage Association, how can it be measured?

The level of participation in the referendum held on May 20, 2012 dealing with residential renovation in Mansonville, (many with heritage value), and the results, may enlighten. 922 persons of the 1829 eligible exercised their right to vote. 480 voters supported the programme. 437 rejected it. A voter participation rate of 50% and a majority of 52% of voters representing 26% of the electorate supported the proposal.

On November 30, 2014 a referendum dealt with 2 bylaw changes, zoning in one case and in the other, the use(s) permitted to allow motorized sports activity near a protected natural zone. The voters very strongly rejected the zoning change. Of the 237 registered to vote in the zone, 157 voted against the proposed zoning change, a rejection rate of 66%. The uses permitted for the zone in question were also rejected, 185 of 265 registered, or a rejection rate of 70%. Pottonites are therefore ready to mobilize and to express themselves on heritage-related stakes.

The participation in a social life is very important in Potton. More than 30 organizations and municipal committees are active. The annual celebration for volunteers emphasizes the work of over 100 persons. This vitality and the beauty of our landscapes have made Potton a favourite place for the establishment of some 40 artists and artisans in the sector of visual arts. The success of the Tour des Arts since 1988 is evidence of the dynamism of this sector in Potton, as was the success in 2016 of the Christmas market *C'est chouette*.

## Conclusion

This brief analysis indicates that the principle parameters favouring heritage as an integral element for the human development of the citizens of Potton, are positive.

- In light of the referendum results of 2012 and 2014, we may affirm that heritage is perceived by a majority of voters, as being integral to social development.
- On the economic plan, it is the attraction of natural heritage which Potton possesses, that is significant. The second home owners/new residents, in particular, inject millions into our local economy.
- The socio-economic indicators are conducive to the conservation and the development of heritage in Potton.
- What remains is to persuade the councillors and all of the citizens of Potton of these facts.

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