

**Association du
patrimoine de Potton**

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DEPUIS 1990



**Potton Heritage
Association**

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SINCE 1990

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

... An old year passes, and a new one thus begins ...

Hello my friends!

Though long in coming – this epistle is filled with warmest good wishes for health and happiness in 2019. I regret that so many months have passed since I last wrote to you.

I must, at the outset, sincerely thank Serge for so capably keeping you informed and holding the fort whilst I tried to collect myself. Already the backbone of finances and our web activities, he capably took up the slack for me, along with Chantal and the entire Board, and I am very grateful.

This letter is primarily intended to provide background on questions considered by the Board this past year, and proposed for discussion at the AGM on March 24th.

I would term this past year as one filled with inconvenient truths! Read on!

In the past, the APP coffers have been enriched by the hard-won profits from our canteen at Owl's Head. When we closed up shop in October 2017, we sensed it might possibly be the last of a good run. And so it was! Confirmation came that Owl's Head would be closed during the 2018 fall foliage season. Good that we had budgeted only \$2500 in possible revenues! As rumours circulated in the vapors - careful evaluation of our projected expenses ensued: we chose to reprint fewer copies of one brochure rather than author a new one, and two issues of Histoire Potton History were published. Those expenses alone totalled nearly \$5,000 of the \$6,000 received from the municipality. Key absences coupled with volunteer fatigue prompted the decision to present a montage of previous exhibits for the 2018 season rather than invent a new one. Nonetheless we finished the year with a small deficit. A little over \$5,000 remains in our account, due to accumulated surplus.

Herein lies the rub: fund raising is necessary if we wish to continue past orientations, and more so, if the essential annual grant from the Municipality fails to materialize in 2019. The Board has seriously reassessed how we operate, particularly in regard to our major expenditure of printing costs for publications, which are primarily for the Tourist Bureau.

We rolled the dice, and increased the amount of our funding request from the Municipality this year (2019) for a project better explained by Serge than I. Nothing guarantees success in this regard. We may receive all, some, or, worst case scenario, none of our request!

Sooh folks! How best should the Board adapt to these realities? We know there are no easy fixes, or quick solutions. We are inviting discussion with you. That is question one, and now for question two – below!

As we know, the focus of late has been squarely on renovations at the Round Barn. A small but tenacious and dedicated group of volunteers, many of whom, Association members, have worked tirelessly to secure over \$210 000 in Federal funding for the most essential repair of this municipally-owned asset – its foundation. They are to be congratulated for such excellent results. Obviously much remains to be done, for which more dollars must be found; however, news on that front will come to you from the barn Committee. I have allowed Hans time in our AGM to address the issue. I invite you to contribute to the barn fund if your finances permit. I would remind your that a tax receipt will be issued by the municipality.

The Association has reiterated its support for the preservation of the Round Barn repeatedly. We tacitly agreed to provide annual seasonal exhibits in the Barn, and have done so with success. In addition the Association accepted responsibility for preparing permanent exhibit(s) compatible with the barn's intended vocation as an interpretive center for agriculture, forestry and Potton's landscapes.

The fact remains that the Barn belongs to the taxpaying public of Potton, a valuable and unique heritage asset, intended for use as an extraordinary tourist attraction. The set-up and proper management of an interpretation centre will, in our opinion, require technical help and professional competency from Day One.

Though it is said that a man's reach should exceed his grasp, it is difficult for organizations such as ours, entirely run by volunteers, (some of whom still have jobs) to perform these services on a sustained basis, in addition to the obligation of self-financing. It is simply beyond our capacities.

Our 2017 production 'Tourism in Potton at the turn of the 19th century' – was a full year in its in-house preparation. Volunteer effort, use of archived materials and budget were maxed out. The production in 2016 of our exhibition devoted to the Covered Bridges of the Townships required not only all the same volunteer effort, but also technical and professional assistance for which we paid. Thankfully, these persons worked more out of devotion than for profit. The finished exhibitions garnered compliments and good attendance. It might be said that we have become victim of our own successes.

In October 2018, after much discussion and soul searching, the Board regretfully concluded that it was simply neither realistic nor financially sustainable to commit to the preparation of annual exhibits, to this standard, year after year; much less assume responsibility for the preparation and maintenance of permanent exhibits in the Barn. An inconvenient truth ...

Accordingly, the Chairman of the Round Barn Committee was informed by resolution, wherein we also assured *"of our continued interest, support and collaboration with the Municipality, the GBMP or any other organization in the development of future exhibition contents"*.

Receipt of this resolution understandably precipitated immediate serious discussion with members of the Barn Committee. We do not wish to be unfair, or to amputate expectations. But neither do we wish to perpetuate false promises that your Board considers beyond our capacity.

At that meeting, and In the spirit of cooperation, Serge and I agreed that for the 2019 season, the APP would install an exhibition, using archived materials already in our possession. (likely our 2017 exhibition on tourism) The Board later concurred.

Since the Board's resolution would seem to run counter to commitments previously agreed upon by the membership, we feel that here again, discussion is imperative at the AGM.

There may be however, a promising ray of hope: that of hopping on the 'virtual display' bandwagon! To this end, Serge has been working to gradually upload our printed materials to our website, and has plans to digitize our collections of archived photos. We have submitted a project for funding from the Municipality for 2019. Thanks to Serge's vision – and his knowledge, the Association already has the bare bones for some excellent 'virtual' exhibits of the type that may be seen in the Merry House in Magog.

Not only are such displays popular but they have the advantage of being easily augmented or corrected, as need be. They also have the disadvantage of requiring sustained management, and the awareness that such 'management' requires technical knowledge that not all 'volunteers' possess.

The future is not ours to know, however intended orientations can be developed with your aid. These 'Inconvenient truths' must be discussed openly. To that end, all formalities required for an AGM will be respected; however Directors will give short reports, in the hope of leaving adequate time to hearing your opinions, ideas and comments.

And I'm not done yet ... there's more:

The preservation of Potton's Pont de la Frontière remains a concern, of course. Dollars for its stabilization have not been yet been allocated nor has any commitment for same been reiterated by Council, much less tangibly supported by the same group. The 123 year old bridge is boarded up, and has remained off limits to the visiting public for some three years due inherent safety concerns. It awaits repair – for which hopes fade. Although road signs still indicate its location and we boast of our Potton's unique attractions, this one remains boarded up and inaccessible! How bizarre is that? How do we best foster a re-start of this project?

Sorry to state the obvious, but each of us has personal concerns to preoccupy us. And old Father Time creeps inexorably. A pool of fresh recruits needs be found for the Board of Directors. Now, what else remains to say?

Busy lives mean we sometimes forget! Is it possible that you have not paid your membership fees for 2018? Or 2019? Notices to follow – with the reminder that dues must be paid up to vote at an AGM.

And, one more thing ... 2020 is the 30th anniversary of the founding of our Association. Are celebrations in order? And if so, what would you like them to be?

If you have made it through this epistle, I wish I could promise you more than my sincere thanks! I so look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

Sincerely,

Sandra Jewett

