

Seeley's Bay Newsletter

Seeley's Bay & Area Residents' Association

Connecting the community...

Issue #11, Aug 2011

...and check out events calendar and local resources at www.seeleysbay.ca

"In the city we (are) called upon to be attentive to and responsible for everything. We (are) supposed to be interested, and to some extent involved, in changing fashions, aid to India, professional football, tax schedules, the meaning behind what politicians said...the yelp and whine of the newest, most sensational pop singer (et cetera). This city world lacks time in which to discover what was important, much less to live. ...By contrast, the 'cottage' was a haven and a tower of vantage." (Excerpt from *Of Time and An Island*, John Keats, 1974)

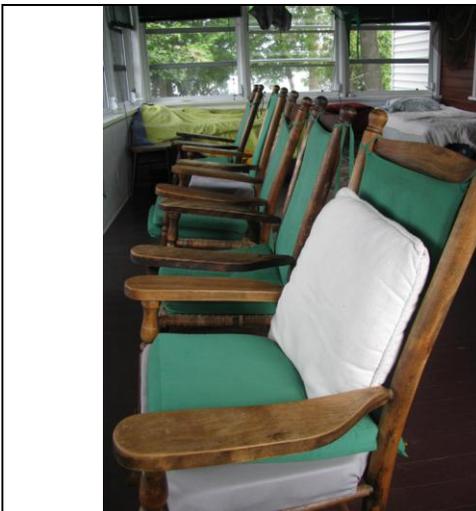
We recently had the privilege of visiting two of our earliest area cottages; both lovingly cared for by their current keepers. First, we met Jack Hartman and Peter Gamber at the Contrary Club on the shores of Little Cranberry Lake, and later we met Frankie Mathias on Hewitt Island. During our visit Ms. Mathias loaned us John Keats' wonderful book (see quote above), as a way of explaining how she feels about her relationship to her island. Both interviews provided fascinating glimpses into days gone by in the Seeley's Bay area, and caused some reflection upon how some of us may be losing touch with the very best our community has to offer, i.e. refuge from a too-busy urban life. Many of us who are permanent residents have filled up our lives here with the chores and demands required by mod cons (noisy lawnmowers, giant TVs, over-powered boats, etc.). Whereas wisely, some of our tourist 'pioneers' still cherish the more peaceful and simple aspects of Seeley's Bay life.

The Contrary Club was created in 1926 by 12 men from Pennsylvania when they were looking for a place to relax and drink, during Prohibition. They arrived in Seeley's Bay in 3 Model T Fords, quite by chance, and stayed at the Coleman Hotel where they were catered to 'in the best of fashion'. The very next day, with the help of the local captain of police, they decided to buy Leadbeater's Point. The following summer they returned and built their club house, which is essentially unchanged in its simplicity to this day. Mr. Hartman, who is the long serving Mayor of the Borough of Cleona, shared their guest log book which records 85 consecutive years of visits, all of which reveal ever-changing fashions, jargon, and social preferences, while also hinting at the tough realities they were leaving behind for a short holiday, including wars, gas rationing, and the many political changes that occurred over almost a century of club existence. The end of Prohibition saw a *bit* more emphasis on fishing at the Club. During one era the members had an annual 'Shit Fishing Tournament', where they blasted off competitors with Roman Candles and gave them two hours to catch

1 crappie, 1 perch and a rock bass; great hilarity ensued. Today's members practice catch and release conservation fishing, and consider Seeley's Bay "the prettiest place in the world".

The first holiday cabin on Hewitt Island pre-dates the Contrary Club. In about 1908, Frankie Mathias' grandfather purchased land from a local farmer (there were 3 nearby farms on the Frontenac side all of which delivered milk to the cheese factory in Seeley's Bay via the man-made cause way and hand ferry from Hewitt Island). William Henry Hewitt had been visiting his wife's relatives (proprietors of the Metcalfe Hotel) and tried fishing at Haskin's Point, where, he reported, the fish basically jumped into his creel. The local people paid little attention to the recreational opportunities then...no one had boats or time for leisure; village life was focused in 'town' at the base of the bay, and the Point was simply a place where cows drank water. But Mr. Hewitt saw the potential and built a summer home on his new 'half an island'. Frankie has early memories of hitching a ride into the village via the ferry with the farmers, and as she got a bit older, rowing over on her own. Due to illness Frankie's father moved the family permanently to Seeley's Bay during the war years, and he practiced medicine at the back of what became known as The Lodge, which Frankie's mom turned into a first class tourist home. Frankie can recall how during the war years the women of the village faced new challenges as they learned to get things done without the men.

Today we know The Lodge as the Seeley's Bay Retirement Home, but the interior layout is still familiar to Frankie who regularly visits life-long friends in 'the bay'. It takes a bit longer to get to the village since the ferry was shut down, but Frankie still uses her boat, or drives around. Seasonal outings to Jones Falls for lunch at the Hotel Kenney, the moon rising across the Bay, picking up deadfall under the island's trees, and watching for the Kawartha Voyageur to come by, are all just part of the lovely annual rhythm of her island.



The Contrary Club – a place for telling fish tales, and relaxing...



...Frankie Mathias on Hewitt Island – a simpler lifestyle

What's happening:

Aug 19 – Village Spruce Up, LDS Youth, 1:30 @ Park
Aug 20 – Steak and Corn Roast @ Legion, 4:00 p.m.
Aug 27 – The Laws @ Firehall, \$15, 7:00 pm, Lion's fundraiser
Sept 3 – Velma Dorman's 90th birthday @ Legion, 2-4
Sept 4 – Old Time Fiddlers @ Legion, 2:00 pm
Sept 6 – School starts; grades 7-8 transfer to RDHS
Sept 24 – Turkey Supper @ Firehall, 4:30 pm, \$12 (kids \$6)
Oct 15 – Rock and Roll @ The Legion, 8-12, light lunch, \$10
Oct 18 – SBARA AGM @ Firehall, 7:30 pm; ALL welcome
Oct 30 – Rick Hansen 25th Anniversary visit; details next issue

Food bank information donrobin@kos.net

There is a lunch time **seniors diners club** in the Seeley's Bay Community Hall every 2nd Wednesday of the month; **euchre** every Thursday night @ Legion

Care packages from home mean a lot

For the 3rd year in a row, the Lions Club of Seeley's Bay is organizing a concert in support of Canadian troops stationed overseas. Last year's concert raised about \$1500 and supplied over 40 soldiers stationed in Afghanistan with care packages. In a recent thank-you note to the Seeley's Bay Lions, Platoon Commander Ellery Burton of Canada's Mission Closure Unit (see below), wrote *"We are truly appreciative of not only the items in the package, but for thinking of us while we are away on deployment. It means a whole lot to our soldiers to receive packages from home and it reminds us that people in Canada truly care."*



Ray Chiasson, a local Lions Club member and his wife Helen both had fathers in the military and chose this way of giving back to men and women in uniform. Helen purchases items for the care packages that most of us take for granted: i.e. lip balm, travel wipes, deodorant, toothpaste, sun block, snacks and drink crystals. Ray now has information from Ottawa on troops stationed in Haiti and Sudan who will be the recipients of this year's packages.

The Chiassons have once again recruited their daughter and son-in-law, Michele and John Law, to provide the music. On August 27, 7 pm @ the Community Hall (\$15 per person at the door), please come out to help the Lions Club to help others, and enjoy this award-winning 'folk-grass' duo.



Seeley's Bay Steps Up!

The Seeley's Bay and Area Residents' Association (SBARA) news includes:

- Submission of funding request to 1000 Islands Community Development Corporation completed
- Ken Miller awarded contract for Main St work
- Received feedback from provincial ministry re Rural Economic grant "no more grant reviews until 2012" ☹
- Welcoming 200 youth on Aug 19 from regional church camp to do spruce up blitz at Park and around village
- Planning our Annual General Meeting for Oct 18
- Planning welcome for Rick Hansen's 25th Anniversary Man in Motion return visit to Seeley's Bay – Oct 30 (mark your calendar for this!)
- Logo Contest – ongoing @ www.seeleysbay.info

If you want to volunteer, donate or get more information, contact: Peggy Sweet McCumber (Chair of SBARA) at sbara@seeleysbay.com



Check out **The Laws** hit 'Same Rain' on You Tube...
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0lv46-1xMU&feature=player_embedded

This e-newsletter is sent to **over 180 households** every 2-3 months. To sign-up and/or to publicize community-oriented events, please write to newsletter@seeleysbay.com. And please print and post a copy on your public bulletin board and/or share copies with neighbours. You can also join the **over 460 people** who 'like' "Support Seeley's Bay Ontario"

