

STE-AGATHE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Watchmaker and His Family



2000

Center: Francoise & Reginald Plourde
L-R: Paul, Carole, "Mom and Dad", Tom and Jim

STE-AGATHE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INCORPORATED MARCH 23, 1978

P.O. Box 237, 534 Main Street, St. Agatha, ME 04772

Preservation Center

Open:

mid June to mid September
12:30 to 4:00 daily, Tues. - Sun.

Email: Staghs77@yahoo.com

Web Site:

www.steagathehistoricalsociety.com

VISIT US ON FACEBOOK

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TOTAL STAHS LIFETIME

MEMBERSHIP- 391

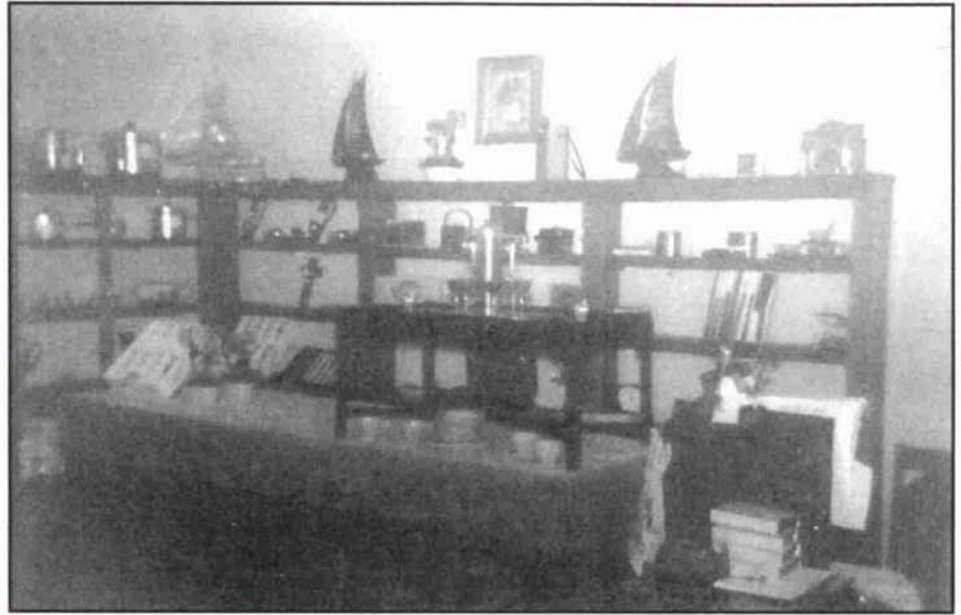
REGISTERED VISITORS FOR 2016 - 439

THE WATCHMAKER'S DESK

Joseph Reginald Gerard Plourde was born April 7, 1929 'dans les consession de la petite montagne a Ste-Agathe, Maine.' He was one of 15 children born to Pierre and Madeline (Ouellette) Plourde. His parents had a large farm. Life wasn't easy with all there was to do on the farm, and everyone was expected to pitch in and help.

Suddenly, one Sunday afternoon in September of 1944, life as Reginald knew it, took a turn which would forever change the course of his life. Reginald and some friends were bicycling to a movie house in the next town of Frenchville, when he was hit by a car, which resulted in extreme damage to his left leg.

After spending a few months in a local hospital, it was determined that his leg could not be saved. An infection had set in. A doctor from a Portland hospital was called in and he had to tell Reginald and his parents that his leg would need to be amputated, so the infection would not spread. So, with great sadness and courage, Pierre and Madeline had to make the decision to send their young son to Portland for the amputation. After spending a few more months in the Portland hospital, Reginald was released and sent home.



1950

Reggie's first business - Groveton Gift Shop, N.H.

What could a boy missing one leg do on the farm? Another decision that Pierre and Madeline would have to make. It was decided that Reginald would leave home again and go to school in Bath, Maine to learn watch repair. Reginald was a good student and found that he really enjoyed this new endeavor.

During this same time, Reginald was traveling back and forth to Boston by train to be fitted with an artificial leg.

Since his leg was amputated above the knee, it was very difficult to get used to, but through hard work and perseverance, he quickly learned to walk very well. After completing his schooling, Reginald decided to go to Connecticut with a friend who was also a watchmaker. Things were going well, but he longed to come back to Ste-Agathe. He returned home and got a job at a Madawaska jewelry store repairing watches. After a while, Reginald wanted to start his own watch repair business. Unfortunately, with Ste-Agathe being such a small town, he was not able to make a living. In 1948, his parents stepped in again and purchased a jewelry/gift store in Groveton, New Hampshire. There was a paper mill in that town and for a while business was pretty good. He made a lot of friends there, including Fr. Heon, the parish priest, who all went out of their way to help [Reginald settle in. Fr. Heon was especially good to him and always helped and encouraged him so he would not be so lonesome for his family back home.



Reginald & Françoise

Right before he moved to New Hampshire, Reginald met a girl who



*Madeline & Pierre Plourde
Gilbert & Alice Martin*

he had become very close to. He missed her. She would write to him almost every day. In July of 1949, Reginald asked Francoise Martin to marry him. They became engaged and made plans to marry in the fall of 1950. So when the time came, Reginald borrowed Fr. Heon's Packard and came to Ste-Agathe. On November 14, 1950, Reginald and Francoise were married and after a few days, moved to New Hampshire. They lived there for a short time, but Francoise missed her family and friends who had moved to Connecticut. With her first child on the way, in September of 1951, they moved to Connecticut to be close to family.

Reginald went to work at Pratt & Whitney. About this time, he

purchased his watchmaker's desk, and set up a side business of repairing watches at home, at night. Eventually, Reginald would work for Benrus Watches and finally at Timex, always doing watch repair at home on the side. After some years, Reginald retired from Timex and set up shop, full time, at home, until 1997, when he finally retired and moved back to Ste-Agathe.

Reginald moved his desk, all his tools and parts inventory to Ste-Agathe. It didn't take long that he was repairing watches for townspeople, as well as Robert's Jewelers in Madawaska. He had come full circle.

Their daughter Carole had also moved to Ste-Agathe from Connecticut a few years before. In 2003, she purchased the home that Reginald's father, Pierre, had built in 1950. Reginald had never lived in the home because he was away in New Hampshire when it was built. When Carole bought the home, Reginald and Francoise moved into the home as well. Reginald continued to repair watches until arthritis set in and his hands could no longer work with such small tools. He was able to sell all his tools and inventory, all except for the desk. The desk was donated to the Ste-Agathe Historical Society.

Reginald passed away on August 12, 2011.



Reginald Plourde

Constance M. Desrosier
1930 - 2016

The Ste-Agathe Historical Society is grateful for the many years Connie devoted to being its secretary. As a member of the board and officer you could count on Connie to sell tickets to her family and neighbors and have them attend the annual fundraiser breakfast in the fall. She was always available to sell the calendars produced by the society and whatever else that was the newest item in the society's inventory. Her husband, Lucien Desrosier, had also served as a director on the Ste-Agathe Historical Society. We miss their enthusiasm and dedication that helped make the historical site what it is today. Connie passed away on March 5, 2016.



2016

**New Lifetime
Members**

**Harold & Joanne (Madore)
Chamberland
Jean P. Jr. & Anne (Sirois)
Chamberland**

**Annual Membership
Don & Anna Mae Raymond**

SUPERINTENDENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS OF THE STATE OF MAINE

December, 1863

Excerpt from Superintendent's Report

Edward P. Weston

Dated: Gorham, December 1, 1863

1863 REPORT

To ascertain the condition of our schools and the progress of educational affairs in the State, we must inquire at several distinct sources for the information needed. The action of the Legislature, and the doings of agents and commissioners appointed in accordance with such action, the reported facts and opinions of town committees, the associated efforts of teachers, and the observations of the State Superintendent, are some means by which we are to reach our conclusions. These topics suggest some of the natural divisions of my report.

ACTION OF THE LEGISLATURE

It is matter of congratulation that the Legislature, never forgetting its character as guardian of the rights and interests of the people, has not neglected to provide for the support of the public schools. If we have sometimes felt that this prime interest of the State has received less attention at the hands of our representatives that it deserved, we have reason to rejoice, nevertheless, in the manifestation, here as elsewhere, of an enlightened and progressive public sentiment in matters of education.

The acts passed by the Legislature of the current political year are recorded below, with some explanation of their origin. And a report of the action taken

in accordance with their provisions. The first of these acts, in the order of their passage, is entitled, -see Acts and Resolves,[p. 241, -An Act to secure the proper expenditure of school moneys in the Madawaska Townships. The necessity of some legislation in this direction was apparent to all persons at all conversant with the educational necessities of those townships. The immediate occasion of the action which was taken was the petition of certain citizens of that territory for an academy, to be located somewhere within the French townships. In the discussion of the subject before the proper committee, it was made to appear that a greater necessity of the citizens residing in said townships, was a better system of public schools, and other persons acquainted with the facts, that the school affairs of these towns were suffering from want of intelligent management, and that a remedy ought to be applied through some special legislation. The matter was taken in hand by representatives from the northern portion of the State, especially interested in the education and general improvement of the French settlers, and a bill was prepared, the essential features of which were retained in the following act:

An act to secure the proper expenditure of school moneys in the Madawaska Townships.

Whereas, There is reason to believe that the moneys appropriated for the support of schools in Madawaska territory, so called, are not expended in such a manner as to promote the education of the people, many of who are of French origin; and whereas no essential improvement in this regard

can be expected so long as the present management continues; therefore,

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives in Legislature assembled, as follows:

Section 1. The superintendent of common schools is hereby authorized to make careful examination into the educational condition of the Madawaska townships, which for the purposes of this act are included in that portion of the state, lying north of the south line of township G in the first range, L in the second range, and seventeen in the third to the ninth ranges inclusive; and he shall annually appoint an agent whom duty it shall be to expend under his direction all funds that may be due said territory or granted by the state for the benefit of schools therein, in the manner hereinafter provided.

Section 2. It shall be the duty of the secretary of state to furnish to such agent on the first day of June a list of the number of scholars returned from each township in said territory, and if any township shall have failed to make its returns at that time or shall have made a return which is apparently erroneous, the said agent shall himself ascertain the requisite facts and make a return of the children in such townships between the ages of four and twenty-one years and communicate the same to the secretary of state.

Section 3. Said agent shall establish schools at such point or points in each township as to give to the inhabitants thereof the benefit of its proportion of such moneys according to the number of scholars belonging in each. But if from any cause a school cannot be opened in any township with a

reasonable prospect of success, then such a portion of the money as belongs to said township shall be expended at such nearest points as will be most likely to secure the object intended by this act.

Section 4. In townships where districts are regularly organized, especially in those settlements where a portion of the inhabitants speak the English language, the agent may in his discretion allow their portion of the school money to be expended by the district agent in the ordinary way, and he shall encourage this formation of districts and the raising of money by the inhabitants for school purposes and the adoption of the school management prescribed by the statutes as fast as they can understand and apply the same.

Section 5. The superintendent shall select such books as may be needed in teaching the children the elements of the English language and no school shall be supported by the funds of the state in which that language is not made a prominent part of the instruction.

Section 6. The said agent.....

Section 7. The agent

Section 8. Such agent shall receive a compensation for his services and expenses in such sum as the governor and council shall approve, to be paid from the treasury on the governor's warrant.

Section 9. All acts and parts of acts inconsistent with this act are hereby repealed; and this act shall take effect on approval by the governor.

In accordance with the provision of the first section of this act, the Superintendent visited the townships aforesaid, in the month of may last, and made such examination as he was able to make in the time which could be spared for this purpose, "into the educational condition and wants" of the

inhabitants. It is not necessary to give minute details of the facts which came to his knowledge in that investigation, as the subject is fully set forth in the report of the agent, presented below.

Commencing at the plantation of Hamlin, on the extreme northeast boundary of the State, I followed up the southern bank of the river St. John, through the plantations of Van Buren, Grand Isle, Madawaska, Dionne, Daigle, Fort Kent, St. John and St. Francis, all lying upon the river. Wallagrass, south of Fort Kent, in range XVII., and four other townships in the same range, lying east of it, but not named, are included in the territory covered by this act. Eagle Lake Plantation, south of Wallagrass, on the Aroostook road is largely settled by the French people, and should be included within the provisions of this act, by amendment. With this addition, the territory embraced by the French settlements, so called, would comprise fifteen townships or plantations.

My investigation disclosed the fact that many of these plantations had lost their organization, and have no legal school officers of any kind. Some districts had kept up a form of organization, while others had failed to do even this. Some plantations had voted to tax themselves for the support of schools, but none, I think, had ever collected any money for this purpose. They have relied wholly upon the Bank tax and other moneys appropriated by the State. But even these appropriations have not always been carefully applied to school purposes; while in some plantations no money had been received from the State for one or two years, through some mismanagement of parties intrusted with the business of drawing it.

Very few school houses were found. Most of the schools, such as they are, have been kept in private houses, -in many cases, certainly, "under difficulties."

The few schools which I found in operation, were sustained by funds already received from the State, or by private contributions, and were very primitive in all their arrangements. Most of them were confined to some rude attempts to read the French language, in the use of books quite too difficult for any children to comprehend. I found a desire almost universally expressed by the people, to have schools established in which their children could learn the English language with the French. The priests whom I consulted, Messieurs McGuirk of Madawaska, Suerron of Dionne, and L'Hiver of Van Buren, all professed an interest in this movement to make their schools more efficient, and promised their cooperation with the agent who should be appointed to carry out the provisions of the act.

I expected to find some opposition to the measure, on the part of persons who would thus be relieved from the care of school affairs and the disposing of school funds. But on consultation with the leading citizens of all townships, I found a very general acquiescence in the measure, with the conviction that the whole matter could be better managed in the hands of some suitable and responsible person, as required by the new law.

Of the several gentlemen named for the position, no one seemed to unite so many qualifications for the place as Col. David Page, for many years a resident of Fort Kent, and well acquainted with the people throughout the whole territory. He was accordingly appointed on the 29th of May, and entered upon his duties, after giving bonds as the act requires, "for the faithful expenditure of all funds received by him." His account of moneys received and expended, as audited by the Governor and Council, may be found in the Appendix. His report on the condition of the schools is herewith presented. The special circumstances in which this report is made and the peculiarity of the schools reported, justify me in publishing Mr.

Page's statement more in detail that it would be possible to print reports of the ordinary town committees.

Mr. Page's Report

In compliance with the provision of an act passed by the Legislature at its last session, entitled "An Act to secure the proper expenditures of school moneys in the Madawaska Townships," having been appointed agent for the expenditure of such funds, I hereby make my report to the Superintendent of Schools.

It may not be considered out of place in this report, to give some account of the origin of what may be called "the Madawaska Settlement," which embraces an extent of seventy-five miles upon the river St. John, commencing near the boundary line about two miles west of the Grand Falls of New Brunswick, and extending up the river to the St. Francis settlement. The territory takes its name from a stream or river which has its rise in the Temiscouata Lake, called the Madawaska, and falls into the St. John at the Little Falls, upon the New Brunswick side, near the center of the Madawaska settlements. It was first settled by a remnant of French families of the population of Grand Pre, (Acadia) who were broker up by the British in the time of the French War, A.D. 1755, and "scattered to the four winds." A remnant of them fled to the St. John and settled a few miles above the city, at a place called Kennebeckasis, and there remained for about twenty-five years. When General Howe's forces were driven from Boston by Washington, in the time of the American revolution, they sailed to St. John, where they were disbanded. They were suffered to encroach again upon this devoted people, who again left their homes and fled up the river to a point above the Grand Falls, where, as they said "British vessels could not follow them." They settled at Madawaska. This first settlement consisted of some eight or ten

families. Later, others followed. It has been about eighty-five years since the first pioneers penetrated this forest. Many of the descendants of the Acadians are inhabitants of Madawaska. Two of these descendants, Firmin Thibodeau and the widow Forney, are each 97 years of age, -the oldest in this settlement. The most numerous part of the population are Canadians, who came across the wilderness from the river St. Lawrence, a distance of eighty miles. They came upon snowshoes and hauled their children and effects upon hand-sleds. For many years, the nearest place from which these people could obtain the indispensable necessities of life, was Riviere de Loup, upon the St. Lawrence, eighty miles distant, and Frederickton, one hundred and fifty miles eastward. Such is the origin of the Madawaska settlement. There were here shut out from the world - for many years surrounded by dense forest, and enduring all the hardships and privations incident to such seclusion. The population upon the American side is now about five thousand, all French, with the exception of a few families at St. Francis, Fort Kent, and Violette Brook (Van Buren). It is not remarkable, then, that this people, being unacquainted with our language, the institutions and policy of our government, possessing a religion different from our own, and strongly attached to old habits and customs, should have felt an indifference to the efforts of the State to improve their condition by introducing our language among them. So far as my observation has extended, the school fund of the State and appropriations heretofore make for the benefit of education in this settlement, have been of little value to the children. Where there should have been some twenty-five schools the last year, there has been but one-half of that number, and of very indifferent character. Much of the money has been drawn from the State by agents in their respective plantations, and never has been appropriated for schools.

And when they have had schools, it would seem that their main object in procuring teachers has been to employ those who would keep for the least wages, regardless of qualifications. Such schools are worthless. I am happy to say that the new plan, in accordance with the act passed last winter, has created a new interest among the people in regard to schools for the benefit of the children. They have cordially cooperated with me in carrying out the requirements of the act. I have established in the last season twenty-four schools, under the provision of the School Act. It was impossible to fully comply with the requirements of the act, with regard to the English instruction, on account of the difficulty in obtaining competent teachers, who had a knowledge of both the English and French languages, as very few of the pupils in the French precincts can speak or understand English.

The female academy at St. Basil, has afforded me essential service, inasmuch as it has furnished most of the teachers for the schools under my charge. Eighteen out of the twenty-four employed, have received the most of their instruction at that institution. Fifteen of them are natives of Madawaska. This academy is situated on the New Brunswick side of the river St. John, about in the center of the Madawaska Settlement, upon a slight eminence, about one hundred and eighty yards from the river - overlooking one of the most beautiful landscapes anywhere to be seen. This institution is under the instruction of three Sisters of Charity. All the useful and ornamental branches are here taught which are regarded necessary to qualify the pupils for their positions in life. Rev. Mr. McGuirk, of the St. Basil Chapel, whose parish extends on our side of the river, rendered me much service in visiting my schools in his parish, and encouraging the acquisition of the English language.

The expenditure for the schools during the season, will amount to about \$1,200.00. Besides the amount drawn by these plantations from the State School funds, there is a special fund of five thousand dollars derived from the surplus revenue, the interest of which – three hundred dollars – is now to be annually distributed among these townships. Thus the State is not directly taxed for the support of the Madawaska schools; which receive only their share of the interest of the public school fund, and the interest of the surplus revenue fund.

It may be proper to explain here the origin of the surplus revenue fund, so called. In 1838, prior to the settlement of the boundary difficulties, the State employed Philip Greely, Esq., to take the census of Madawaska. While he was engaged in the discharge of his duty, the Province authorities arrested and compelled him to desist, when he

had completed only about one-half of the census. Hon. Asa Redington, our State treasurer at that time, whose duty it was to distribute the United States surplus revenue in the towns, plantations and unorganized territories, according to the number of the inhabitants, respectively, the census of this territory being incomplete, computed the inhabitants at 2,000 which would give Madawaska 6,000. He made a record upon the margin of the treasury book at the time, "six-thousand dollars due Madawaska." And there it remained in the treasury of the State until 1861. The undersigned had the honor of representing this district in that year, and caused the matter to be brought before the Legislature. In consideration of the State's liberal appropriations and donations heretofore, it was agreed that only \$5,000. Should be set apart and remain in the treasury as a special school fund, the interest of which should be expended for the benefit of schools in

Madawaska Territory. I am indebted to Judge Redington for his assistance before the Judiciary Committee of the Legislature in showing the facts in the case. The interest of this fund not having been expended last year, the interest of two years became available for school purposes this year.

Twenty-two of these schools had closed on or near the first of November; only one, that in Van Buren, still remaining in session.

Wherever the inhabitants have manifested a desire for schools in their respective districts and were willing to comply with the required regulations, I have established them.

.....to be continued next year with THE SCHOOLS section of the 1863 Report



**July 9, 2016
New Youth
Volunteer
from Wisdom
High School
Riley
Theriault**

2016

Thank You to Our Trail Guides & Volunteers

September 11, 2016 - Appreciation Brunch



*Lise Sirois, "Textile Thursdays Co-ordinator," Trail Guide Dr. Paul Buck, Trail Guide Donna Boucher, Volunteers Doris Staples, Gloria Gervais and Doreen Daigle.
Not in Photo: Trail Guide Sylvia Belanger, Volunteers Roberta Guerrette, Rylie Theriault, Joyce Plourde, Stan Albert, and Jackie Michaud.*

October 16, 2016

38th Annual Breakfast



*Front: Joan Lavoie, Sr. Aurelie Michaud, D.W., Pat Dow, Rachel Marquis.
Back: Aurele Lavoie, Jean Paul Michaud, Alan Dow, Jerry Wentland.*

Annual Meeting



Annual Meeting- Front: President Terry Ouellette, Secretary Diane Castonguay, Treasurer Philip Morin. Directors: Lise Sirois, Jackie Michaud, Harold Chamberland, Gary Boucher, Gaylen Thibeault, Alan Michaud, Judy Chamberland, Carole Plourde. Not in photo: Vice President Gloria Gervais

Ste-Agathe Historical Society's Bowl for Me! Bowl for You!



This fundraiser for the Ste-Agathe Historical Society was unique in the sense (cents) that both parties came away with something. For a small fee the participants met at Susan Gerard's and each made two pottery bowls. The sessions produced over 25 bowls. In photo (center) Susan Gerard delivers the final product to the Ste-Agathe Historical Society's Preservation Center. On hand to receive the bowls were Trail Guides (l-r) Lise Sirois and Roberta Guerrette. One bowl was delivered to its maker and the other was put on sale at the Preservation Center.

STE-AGATHE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMORIAL DONATIONS

November 30, 2015 - November 30, 2016

*In Memory of **Mr. Albert V. & Mrs. Alma C. Michaud**, by Rev. Leo James Michaud.*

*In Memory of **Mrs. Bernice Roberson Morin**, by Philip Morin, Stan Albert*

*In Memory of **Sister Thelma Bouchard, RSR**, by Philip Morin*

*In Memory of **Mr. Philip Guimond**, by Stan Albert, Philip Morin*

*In Memory of **Mrs. Constance Desrosier**, by Ste-Agathe Historical Society Directors, Philip Morin, Stan Albert, Donna & Gary Boucher, Florine Morin Michaud, Alan & Denyse Michaud, Terry M. Ouellette, Bertha Morin & Charles Ouellette, Ned & Cheryl Dubois, James & Theresa Foster, Pauline Plourde, Brad Ouellette, Donna Levesque, Clifford & Theresa Guerrette & Family, Geraldine Morin Souliere, Daniel & Roberta Labrie.*

*In Memory of **Mrs. Greta Thibeault Collin**, by Philip Morin, Stan Albert*

*In Memory of **Mrs. Claudette Lapointe Lewis**, by Patricia J. Morin*

*In Memory of **Mrs. Ernestine Morin Boone**, by Patricia J. Morin*

*In Memory of **Mrs. Gayle Plourde Pelletier**, by Donna & Gary Boucher, Stan Albert, Philip Morin, Merita Gervais, Rita Plourde-Bill & Cheryl Plourde-Patti Minkousky-Don Tremblay-Monica Langelier-Jack Donohoe, Patricia Morin, James & Patricia Nadeau Morin, Francis & Claudia Plourde Morin, Florine Morin Michaud, Pauline Plourde & Family.*

*In Memory of **Mr. Paul & Mrs. Josephine Lagasse Albert**, by Stanley Albert*

*In Memory of **Mr. Alexandre & Mrs. Anastasie Marquis Chasse**, by Stanley Albert*

*In Memory of **Mr. Denis & Mrs. Dorumene Ouellette Morin**, by Philip Morin*

*In Memory of **Mr. Michel & Mrs. Madeleine Michaud Pelletier**, by Philip Morin*

*In Memory of **Sister Candide Corriveau D.W.**, by Philip Morin*



Ste. Agathe Historical Society

534 MAIN STREET

P.O. BOX 237

ST. AGATHA, MAINE 04772

November 16, 2016

Dear Members and Friends of the Ste-Agathe Historical Society,

We had 439 visitors come through the doors for the 2016 summer season. Each visitor is almost guaranteed to find some artifact that will peak their interest or jog their memory back to Pepere and Memere's farm. The Preservation Center received numerous artifacts since last fall. Some rare finds include the late Sr. Christine de Marie's straight back chair, une bombarde, a Gum Box, un braie, a musket, and Amanda Chasse's graduation speech from the Class of 1911. In all over 500 pieces were added to the collection.

Monies from the Maine Acadian Heritage Trail Guide Grant made it possible to have Trails Guides on hand to welcome the visitors from Father's Day to the week after Labor Day. The site is open daily from 12:30 to 4:00 P.M. Tuesday through Sunday. The Board Members each take a Sunday and the Trail Guides and volunteers are available during the week. It was during Carole Plourde's Sunday that Arthur and Cecile Albert's great-granddaughters, Tatiana and Natasha, visited the Center to gather info on their family roots. The young girls came all the way from California to visit their grandmother, Carmen Albert Menard's home town. We never know who is going to walk through the front door, but most of the time we can safely assume they have a St. Agatha connection.

The 50th Class Reunion group gathered at the Preservation Center before attending their banquet at the Lakeview Restaurant. Cecile Chasse Voisine compiled a special album of the Veterans of The Class of 1966 and the reunion committee graciously donated a copy to the society. We'll welcome the 50th reunion group (Class of 1967) to gather at the Preservation Center in 2017 - Note that we have two board members in that class - Jackie Chasse Michaud and Gaylen Thibeault!

On behalf of the society, Philip Morin donated some of our publications to the Archives at Ste-Anne de la Pocatiere, Quebec, where many folks go to trace their roots. Hopefully it will help those looking for their relatives who moved to St. John Valley. Keep in mind that all the albums and genealogy materials are available during the winter months since all of that material is located at the Long Lake Public Library till next summer.

Thank you for your continued support. Find us on Facebook or www.steagathehistoricalsociety.com
Sincerely,

Terry Ouellette, President



*Joyeux Noël
Bonne et Heureuse Année
et le Paradis en fin de vos jours*

Ste-Agathe Historical Society
534 Main Street
P.O. Box 237
St. Agatha ME 04772

Change Service Requested