THE INFORMER

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From the Desk of the Editor

S. Marchand - Terrio

Happy New Year to all!

What a crazy year 2020 turned out to be! It would have been impossible to predict the events of 2020 and the effect it would have on our world. As always, the end of a year brings a time of reflection: what have we accomplished, have we made progress towards our goals for the society and the museum? How do we plan to engage our members and our community? How will we meet the challenges of the coming year? Much time will be spent planning; as a committee we have learned in the past year that planning for one predictable scenario is not the best way to go. We have had to adapt what we do and how we do it; for certain something can be said for learning to roll with the punches!

During 2020 the office and museum were opened at reduced hours and we conducted tours for visitors, although our visitor stats were substantially different from other years. All programming events were cancelled in adherence to protocols to ensure safety of our community. We managed to work on our backlog of artifacts that needed cataloguing; we completed a cemetery census of the Petit de Grat Cemetery and began photographing tombstones in the OLA Cemetery in Arichat. We dealt with research requests and began to develop finding aids for the Community Archives.

With the help of the Dept. of Community, Culture and Heritage, St. Joseph's Credit Union Community Fund and Development Isle Madame Association we were able to take on two much needed maintenance projects at LeNoir Landing. We addressed a drainage issue at the LeNoir Forge and we are in the process of replacing siding, windows and doors in the main office building. Hopefully these improvements will help ensure that these buildings will continue to serve our community for years to come.

The Isle Madame Historical Society's mission is to collect, preserve and exhibit artifacts and documents relating to the social, cultural and natural history of Isle Madame for the education and enjoyment of present and future generations.



Arichat IMHS Ref. # AO-199



Wilbert & Bernie DeCoste- IMHS # AO-055



PDG IMHS, #JAMC-199

From the IMHS Photo Collection

We were grateful to the Young Canada Works Program to have Laurier Fougere return as our summer student for the 2020 season. Laurier completed many projects from photographing artifacts and updating our database on NovaMuse to doing a cemetery census at St. Joseph's Church and many other projects in between. We hope he is enjoying his school year, although we know distance learning has its challenges!

Walk Through Time: History Tidbits

During the winter of 2020 our chair Anne Leavitt took on a huge project to transcribe the early journals of Charles Robin. These journals cover three periods from 1767-1770, 1772-1774, & 1787. The following passage is taken from the *Forward to the Journals* written by Anne and explains what can be found in this document.

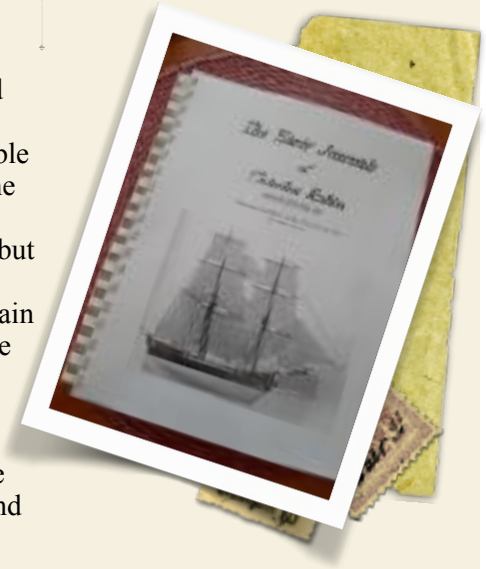
"The original handwritten manuscript of these journals is held in Library of the Société Jersiase in St Helier, Jersey, in the Channel Islands. To anyone interested in an eyewitness account of what life was like for many in these areas at this time, in the early role of the "Robin" company in the emergence of a fishing sector that attained enormous international reach, and in the relations among the various populations of the area (including the Mi'kmaq, Acadians, New Englanders, Jerseymen, British and Quebec authorities), the early journals of Charles Robin are an invaluable resource and fascinating read.

In 2019, a good friend and avid independent scholar of Acadian history, Jocylene Marchand, discovered that a photocopy of the original manuscript was kept at the Centre D'Études Acadiennes Anselme-Chiasson at the University of Moncton in New Brunswick. I wrote to the Centre to ask if they would provide a copy to the Isle Madame Historical Society, as Charles Robin's account of the winter he spent on Isle Madame was of special interest to us. Within days, they had sent me an excellent digital scan of the entire document. The Société Jersiase in St Helier, in turn, gave the Isle Madame Historical Society its blessing to make the document available to the public.

While a couple of summaries of, and lengthy quotations from, the early journals of Charles Robin are available and give readers some insight into the man and the early operations of the "Robin" company, they cannot help but leave a great deal out. To read the early journals in their entirety is to gain a much deeper understanding into the character of a very complex and singular individual, namely Charles Robin himself, as well as a full appreciation of the complexity of the business in which he was engaged and the fascinating world in which he operated. Unpolished and never intended for general publication, the journals appear to have served no other purpose for Charles Robin than as a personal log of his daily activities over a number of years. They are refreshingly direct and candid, and they reveal a great deal about the early years of the "Robin" company and the overall culture and economy of the areas in which it operated."

The transcribed journals are available for purchase ($25.00) with the complete proceeds going to the Isle Madame Historical Society to support daily operations and other projects. If you are interested in a copy please email islemadamehistoricalsociety@gmail.com and we can arrange shipping and/or delivery.

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" Volunteers Corner"

Why should you become a volunteer with the Isle Madame Historical Society:

* You are needed.
* You love history.
* You want to see the Isle Madame Historical Society offer great exhibits that tell our visitors the story of Isle Madame.

Volunteer opportunities are available in many areas.

If you are interested in a volunteer position please contact our office 902 226 9364 or 902 226 2880





Heritage Property:

In this edition of *The Informer* we feature the **LeBrun's Store** situated in Arichat. Although not a designated Provincial Heritage Property, it easily could be, for its significance in history of commercial trade on Isle Madame.

Jean LeBrun was born about 1839 in France. He was the son of Peter LeBrun and Marie Picard and little seems to be known about his early life. As a young man he joined the merchant marine and eventually sailed into Halifax. It was during his time in Halifax, family stories say, that he was accosted, robbed and was left unconscious. He was found by Capt. Felix Forest and it is believed that this connection is what brought him to Arichat. At the age of 24, Jean established a general store on the Arichat waterfront, receiving his first shipments of goods in October of 1863.

The first general store was destroyed by fire in September 1908. This was a substantial loss reported to be $25.000.00 at the time. (In today's dollars that would have been over $700,000.00.) Undaunted by this set back Mr LeBrun decided to rebuild, plans were drawn and John MacDonald of Antigonish was hired as general contractor. The result was a new three story building which still graces the Arichat Harbour.

This building, although slightly changed in appearance from its original structure, is a great example of *Second Empire* style featuring a mansard roof with dormers and decorative trim. It originally boasted 12 dormers on the third floor but some of those have been removed during subsequent renovations. In 1909 it would have been considered a very modern building that included an elevator and gas lighting. The store remained in the LeBrun family until 1985, becoming an IGA in 1959 and then in 1960, adding on a new section to house the growing furniture, lumber and hardware business. Many of us will remember weekly shopping trips, visiting 'Toyland' during the Christmas Season and sticking gold bond stamps which you received with purchases in the store into booklets to be redeemed for goods from the Gold Bond Stamp Catalogue.

Winter 2021

Photos:

Top Left: LeBrun's General Store (LeBrun Family Photo Collection)

Top Right: Repurposed Store (Samson Home) 2021 (IMHS)





Summer & Fall of 2020

Top photos: Much needed renovations to the Lorenzo Building, a work in progress! Right: Photographing and cataloguing artifacts in the Forge. Bottom: A sign of the times in 2020, hopefully we will not be using this sign in 2021!



