

# THE CLOTHES PRESS

CSNS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2007, NO. 90

## CSNS FOUNDING MEMBER ROBERT DOYLE RECEIVES THE ORDER OF CANADA

By Karen Pinsent



The Costume Society of Nova Scotia is proud to announce that Founding Member of the Society, Robert Doyle, has been awarded the Order of Canada in the category of Arts/Stage.

Mr. Doyle was the founding designer of costumes for the Neptune Theatre in 1964. He began his professional career as a dancer with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet Company, which led to his education as a stage designer, working at many of Canada's regional theatres, such as the Manitoba Theatre Centre and Neptune Theatre, Halifax, where he was one of the original company members.

During studies in England at the Wimbledon School of Fine Art, Theatre Division, he also researched 18<sup>th</sup> century civilian and military clothes for Canada's first major restoration, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. On return to Canada, Mr. Doyle undertook this reproduction, training staff to build accurate copies of 18<sup>th</sup> century clothing for the character animation planned for this restoration.

It was at Louisbourg that Mr. Doyle formed the genesis of an education program to train costumers for the professional stage. This he did at Regina University and at Dalhousie University in 1974, where for twenty six years he shaped the course of studies.

Other projects include designing for The Nova Scotia Tattoo, now given the designation of the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo, and art direction for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Pan American Games in Winnipeg in 1999.

Recently Mr. Doyle taught the final year at the Red Deer College, Costume Program. Books authored on costume making are "Waisted Efforts: An Illustrated Guide to Corset Making," "Laundry, The Whys and Hows of Cleaning Clothes" and "Art of the Tailor." These books record the various techniques involved in creating costume for the theatre profession. Mr. Doyle also conducts costume workshops throughout North America.

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### FALL PROGRAMS:

- Sept 10** - New "Lace", Anne Pickard (to be confirmed)
- Sept 22** - Acadian Costume Discussion
- Oct 15** - Hemp Textile Revival in NS, Sally Erskine
- Nov 12** - D'Arcy Poultney (to be confirmed)
- Dec 10** - Christmas party
- April 12, 2008** - AGM

## MI'KMAQ HAT FROM THE NOVA SCOTIA MUSEUM

by Sheila Yeoman



NSM1933.79

This hat is an example of a Mi'kmaq woman's traditional peaked cap from the ethnology collection of the Nova Scotia Museum. It was made c.1857 by the once well-known Mrs. Mary Thomas (b.1775? - d.1878, probably christened Marie, née Morris), Shubenacadie(?), for her daughter, Magdalene Thomas (1842-1931, probably christened Madeleine), when she was 15. Magdalene wore the cap for most of her life, latterly for "dress" occasions, until she gave it to her great-niece, Edith Jane Thomas (b.1912), from whom NSM acquired it in 1933.

The peaked cap was traditional for Mi'kmaq women by the 1600s, but was evidently not a form carried over from the pre-contact period; likely

the design derives from a type of cap originally traded to the Mi'kmaq by the French Basque. This example is made of dark blue wool cloth, formed by two identical pieces shaped like a rectangle standing on end, with an equilateral triangle on top, the highest point being at the upper back. These pieces were not sewn to one another, but to opposite sides of a silk ribbon seam which ran from the centre forehead back to the peak, then down to the back of the neck. On each lower edge, a smaller panel of cloth, often in a contrasting colour (red, navy, blue, or black) was attached in the same manner.

This cap's decorative pattern of double-curve motifs, in yellow, pink, blue, white, and clear glass seed beads, may be derived from earlier painted designs on leather clothing. Seed beads were first used in the 18th century, and were applied by threading them on horse hair, laying this down along the lines of the proposed design, and then couching the hair after every second bead with cotton or linen thread. (Hair was used for threading as the beads were generally too small to allow a needle through, and also because if thread got wet, it could burst the glass beads.) By mid-19th century, the empty area enclosed by the curves began to be filled in with ornamental devices (as seen here), often using coloured glass and metal beads.



Photo N-12,716

This woman, identified as "Mary Paul", is wearing a peaked cap as part of her traditional outfit. (The skirt she is wearing was made by Mary Morris Thomas for her daughter, Marie Antoinette Thomas Sack Noel, and is now in the NS Museum collection, #1910.7. The woman in the photo may actually be Marie Antoinette, mis-identified.) This image was published in 1889 in the "Carnival Number" of the Halifax Evening Mail.

**COLOUR PDF VERSION AVAILABLE: THIS NEWSLETTER LOOKS EVEN BETTER IN COLOUR! HOWEVER, THE COLOUR PRINTING COSTS ARE EXTREME, SO IF YOU WOULD LIKE A COLOUR PDF VERSION TO BE EMAILED TO YOU, PLEASE EMAIL [SEDOUCETTE@NS.SYMPATICO.CA](mailto:SEDOUCETTE@NS.SYMPATICO.CA)**

## “H’ATTITUDE”: THE PRESTON HAT TRADITION

By Sally Erskine Doucette



A presentation about the Preston communities’ cultural tradition of fabulous Sunday hats was presented at the CSNS AGM in 2006. Dr. Carolyn Thomas of East Preston, an historian who is working on a Masters’ degree about the Underground Railway, brought some of her extensive collection. She has close to 100 hats! To locals, she is known as the “Hat Lady”. She explained how this tradition has its roots in the Bible and church attendance. A woman’s head is considered to be sacred, and they wouldn’t be caught without a hat to cover themselves in church.

Currently, hats are very popular in general, and the practice of wearing hats cuts across all ages. Dr. Thomas said that a hat is also thought of as a crown, and Black women must have a metaphorical ‘crown’ hat for special occasions. She showed us the ‘crown’ hats that completed her outfits when she met with Nelson and Winnie Mandela, when they came to Nova Scotia, and for when she met Bishop Desmond Tutu.



Dr. Carolyn Thomas in some of her many hats.

### MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

Just a note to remind those members who have not renewed their CSNS memberships, that unless you renew, we won’t be able to send you any more newsletters! I know I always look forward to the newsletter and exchange of ideas by way of the e-mail list, and I hope you do too.

Perhaps you would like to become more involved in the group. Is there a committee you’d like to work on? We’re always open to ideas from the membership – just let us know. I’m sure you’ll agree that being part of the CSNS is well worth the price. Please contact me if you are not sure about the status of your membership.

*Linda Badcock, Membership Chair*

## "HATS OFF TO YOU": EXHIBIT AT KEILLOR HOUSE

*By Sally Erskine Doucette*

"Hats Off to You" is an exhibit at the Keillor House Museum in Dorchester that celebrates 140 years of hats - 1840 to 1980s. The museum is filled with beautiful hats from top to bottom for this exhibit, which runs from June 16 to September 16, 2007. The collection includes a survey through the periods: Georgian (one example, thought to be created for the theatre), Early Victorian, Mid Victorian, Late Victorian, and Late Victorian - Edwardian.

Most of the hats belonged to local women. In addition, a significant number of hats from the Stanley Collection are represented. According to the exhibit brochure, these hats were worn by former New Brunswick Lieutenant-Governor George Stanley and his wife, Ruth. These hats are drawn from the time that he served, from 1982 to 1987. The brochure highlights special hats: "The diplomat hat was worn at



*Hat worn by Lieutenant-Governor Stanley at the Order of Garter Ceremony in England.*



*Hat worn by Ruth Stanley at New Brunswick Bicentennial celebrations in 1984 displayed with a photo of the event.*

the raising of the first Canadian Maple Leaf flag ceremony. At the top of the stairs is a grey hat worn at an Order of the Garter Ceremony in England. Ruth Stanley wore a Georgian style shepherdess hat fashioned by her for the New Brunswick Bicentennial celebrations of 1984."

St. James Presbyterian Church Museum: In addition to the Keillor House Museum, Dorchester is also home to the Saint James Presbyterian Church Museum (1884) which features the making of textiles in the late 1800s. Their exhibits cover the process and equipment of making linen and wool fabrics. The demonstrate the process on two working looms.



*Nineteenth century quilted bonnet in exhibit.*

## EXHIBITS AND EVENTS

### "THE PERFECT HAT, A HISTORY OF LOCAL HEADWEAR"

RANDALL HOUSE MUSEUM, WOLFFVILLE, UNTIL SEPTEMBER 15, 2007

There is still time to visit "The Perfect Hat" exhibit in Wolfville. Don't miss it!



*Photos taken during the opening of "The Perfect Hat, A History of Local Headwear"*

### "MARY LEE BENDOLPH- GEE'S BEND QUILTS & BEYOND"

ART GALLERY OF NOVA SCOTIA, APRIL 27—SEPT. 9, 2007

This exhibit celebrates the resonance of the strikingly innovative, abstract quilts by a group of African American women from Gee's Bend, Alabama. It also is a major component in the AGNS' African Canadian Art Initiative. <http://www.agns.gov.ns.ca/halifax/index.html>

### QUILTS, FOLKLORE AND TRADITION- CLARY CROFT.

ART GALLERY OF NOVA SCOTIA, SEPTEMBER 9, 2007, 2:30 PM

Stories and song with musician, storyteller and CSNS member Clary Croft, a complement to the AGNS's quilt exhibit.

### "A MARITIMER'S MISCELLANY" BY CLARY CROFT BOOK RELEASE

WORD OF THE STREET, HALIFAX. SEPTEMBER 23, 2007

*A Maritimer's Miscellany* is a new collection of popular facts and trivia about the Maritime provinces from Maritime researcher Clary Croft. Separated into various thematic chapters—customs, fashion, food and drink, work and money, people, the sea—this book covers a wide range of unusual points of interest.

### MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

The Costume Society meets @ 730pm on the second Monday of each month at the *Maritime Museum of the Atlantic* on Lower Water Street in Halifax. Please use Night Entrance.

A heart-felt Thank You goes out to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic for generously providing us with a place to call "Home"!

### LIBRARY RESOURCES

The Costume Society of Nova Scotia donated its library collection to the Costume Studies Program at Dalhousie University. This costume reference library is available to members of CSNS by contacting Dianne Kristoffe @ 494-2178 [dianne.kristoffe@dal.ca](mailto:dianne.kristoffe@dal.ca)

The library collection is housed within the Costume Studies accommodations at 1515 Dresden Row, Suite 202 in the City Centre Atlantic. Please allow time for scheduling visits as the room is used for classes also. Books, journals and videos of Costume Studies fashion shows are available.

### CONSERVATION SUPPLIES

The CSNS maintains a small inventory of conservation supplies suited to textile care. These are available for purchase by CSNS members.

## NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

### MANNEQUIN-MAKING WORKSHOP *by Meg Wilcox*

Bonnie Elliot and I participated in the Federation of Nova Scotian Heritage's Mannequin-making workshop on June 28 at Fultz House Museum in Lower Sackville, along with a healthy crowd of museum-oriented folks.

Susan Charles, the Federation's Director, gave us a fun, informative, and highly productive day. We started indoors with a visual presentation of a wide variety of mannequins from high-end fibreglass to humble department store remakes. Susan did a great job of pointing out the important points that make a good mannequin.

After a refreshment break we repaired to the lovely marquees that happened to be set up in advance of Canada Day. We couldn't have had a much more pleasant classroom for our slightly messy project. I love paper and glue!

Using many different kinds of existing mannequins, each participant got a good

start on a paper tape form, and all the instructions and materials to complete the body. I did my body alterations, final coat of tape, and wire work the next day at work, but I have yet to pad and stitch, which I'm hoping other people will have done so I can see it! (I'm really busy these days!)

While we waited for the first step to dry, we were treated to another visual presentation on ways to put your costume display in context with accessories, poses, and groupings, as well as some examples of good and bad displays for contrast. I found this part really striking, and realize that I will want to consult a good display designer, if I ever get the chance to put on an exhibit.

As usual, the Fultz House folks provided us with plenty of beverages, snacks, a groaning-board of a lunch, and afternoon cakes. Unfortunately, the second half of the program, where we work on heads and hair was rescheduled, tentatively for July 25th, which I'm sure we're all looking forward to.



*Workshop participants including instructor Susan Charles and NSCS members Bonnie Elliott and Meg Wilcox*

### 1882 GOWN REPRODUCTION *By Jenny Stewart*



*Jenny and Jayar Milligan strike a pose for Dartmouth Natal Day*

The original gown, made of brocaded and plain silk satin (see photo) was owned by Arlean Green of Dartmouth, whose family gave it, and a portrait of her wearing it, to the Dartmouth Heritage Museum. I've long wanted to make a dress of this sort, and the DHM's invitation to join them in the Natal Day Parade, combined with seeing this gown were enough to make it happen. Despite the difference in colour choices, and the different appearance of the gown on a small mannequin without all the underthings versus on a modern body, they are really quite a lot alike (did I say I have a really hard time following a recipe without making changes?)

The dress consists of a cuirass bodice with pleated & draped paniers swooping from centre front to centre back, set off from the bodice by tiny piping, and a train (currently missing the edge ruffle) is looped up, over the slightly trained taffeta underskirt, with pleated flounces around the lower portion. The "dress



*Original in Dartmouth Heritage Museum*

enhancer" (bustle) is of the shaped pillow sort. The original gown very cleverly used a single fabric to imitate the look of two different ones, as one "never makes a dress from a single fabric now". The original has bands of floral brocade, but it is arranged such that it looks like a floral and a solid. I used the moire in place of the brocade-patterned floral, and used the shot taffeta in place of the plain silk. Some women are more subtle than others.

I did up the loops on my train for going outside, while the original is displayed trailing; the shape changes a lot there. It happens that this family of plum & egg-plant colours were very fashionable at the time, which is such a bonus, as they are my favourites. Ah, but nothing drapes quite like silk, as hers of course is. Mine is dusty grape moiré and a fabulously firm taffeta in purple shot with black, or perhaps with dark green. It takes on a green sheens as part of it's shimmer in the light. And finally I have a dress with which it is proper to wear grapes on my hat!

### HAT WORKSHOPS AT SHERBROOKE VILLAGE *By Meg Wilcox*

This Season at Sherbrooke, I have been given the go ahead to teach a series of historic craft workshops to the Interpretive Staff. The staff were allowed to choose from a list of six topics, and we were overwhelmed with the results. I will have to give each class three times to fit in all the participants. The series includes Buckram and Wire Millinery, Remodeling a modern Straw Hat, Hat Decorating, Historic Hand-sewing, Free Embroidery, and White Work embroidery. The four hour classes are being taught on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, when the Village is fully-staffed. Since the Millinery classes are the most popular, I started with Buckram and Wire.

At the opening bell, we met in the back room of the MacDonald Brothers Tailor shop, around a deal table, the students on benches, and I on a chair. Surrounded with period irons, ironing boards, and other paraphernalia, we proceeded to the basic principles of buckram and wire. Many times during the day we were joined by visitors who were generally very pleased to see such an industrious group of ladies, making such odd-looking

wire and fabric contraptions! At first, I would answer the visitor's questions, but by the afternoon the Interpreters were taking over. They learn fast! I think they were all as impressed as I was by their quick grasp of the method.

The straw hat class will involve taking a modern braided straw hat apart part-way, and remaking it to the desired shape, wiring the brim, and how to use fabric to cover all or part of the straw.

Later in the rotation, after the Straw Hat classes, we will decorate the hats, with flowers, feathers, fruit, birds (if we can find any good ones!), fabric, lace and ribbons. So much fun!

The ladies are already planning their 'Hat Parade'. I can hardly wait to see all the colourful and individual creations they are turning out.

I'm hoping to develop this idea into a Hands-On-History program for adult visitors. Today, a lady visiting from Colorado saw an interpreter working on her hat, and came to visit Wardrobe for a good chat, while I sat surrounded by a millinery whirlwind. She is involved in a 19th century dancing group, and wished she could have taken the class herself.

We'll see where this all leads, and I'll keep you posted!



*From left to right: Patti Lou McGrath, Susan Hayne, Evelyn Jack, Meg Wilcox, Marlene Kaiser, Edie Humber, Yvonne Dunbar. photo by Robert Jordan-Robichaud*

## THE COSTUME SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA

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### THE COSTUME SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA

The Society encourages interest in the history, development and conservation of Nova Scotian costume and personal adornment, and offers learning opportunities through workshops and hands-on programming. The Society's membership is diverse, including collectors, museum professionals, designers, costumers, reenactors, researchers, historians, and students.

CSNS was founded in 1981 and celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 2006. CSNS is a member of the Costume Society of America, the Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage, and the Dartmouth Heritage Museum.

#### *CSNS Board of Directors:*

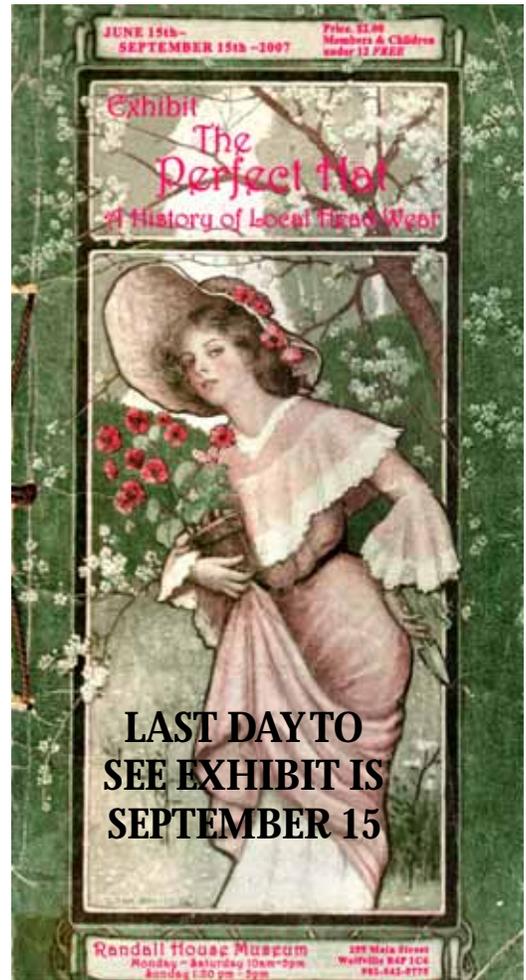
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**LAST DAY TO  
SEE EXHIBIT IS  
SEPTEMBER 15**

#### *The Clothes Press*

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