

# EDITORIAL

## NORTH RENFREW TIMES

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## Capture the spirit

“Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus...”

These wise and reassuring words were penned over 100 years ago in September of 1897 in The Sun newspaper of New York in response to an innocent question from eight year old Virginia O’Hanlon. The story goes that when Virginia returned to school from summer holidays in 1897, some of her less fortunate classmates whose families didn’t have the means to make Santa Claus real said there was no Santa. When Virginia questioned her father, Dr. Philip O’Hanlon suggested she write to The Sun, assuring her that “If you see it in The Sun, it’s so.” Virginia’s letter sparked the most reprinted editorial ever to run in any newspaper in the English language.

The Sun had a policy of never revealing who wrote any of its editorials. Francis Pharcellus Church’s 1906 obituary disclosed publicly for the first time that he had been the author of the Christmas editorial. Church was a war correspondent for the New York Times during the American Civil War, editor of The Army and Navy Journal, and editor of Galaxy literary magazine. He had been with The Sun for 20 years and in 1897 was an editorial writer. When Edward P. Mitchell, managing editor of The Sun assigned him the task of replying to Virginia’s letter, it was reported Church was not a happy man. He had better things to do than answering letters from eight year olds.

Thank heavens he did reply. It was the seventh editorial on the page the day it ran, after editorials on state and local and regional politics, on British naval strength in the Atlantic, on plans for a Canadian railroad to help bring back gold from the Yukon; even after an editorial on a newfangled chainless bicycle.

In his reply Francis Church reaffirms the power of magical thinking. He does not deny the existence of Santa Claus but neither does he blithely say he is real. Church says Santa Claus exists as “certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist... to give your life its highest beauty and joy.”

“Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus,” he says. “The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see... Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.”

When questioned about her letter later in life Virginia “credits the editorial with shaping the direction of her life quite positively.” She became a well-educated woman, receiving a doctorate from Fordham University. She was a school teacher in the New York City School system, beginning her career in 1912 and retiring in 1959 from her position as principal. She died at the age of 81 in May 1971 in New York.

Even today we continue to strive to believe in the spirit of Santa Claus. He is an elusive fellow with many aliases that appear in countries all over the world. He is a combination of legends from different cultures and a melding of mythical creatures. In our materialistic society, he is often hidden under dollar signs, marketing campaigns and seasonal hustle, bustle and noise. But Santa Claus can be captured by giving of ourselves to others and spreading the spirit of peace, goodwill and good cheer.

May everyone in the world capture the magical spirit of Santa Claus this year!

KM



There was some generous gift giving going on at the Valley Artisans’ Co-op with new Deep River Mayor Dave Thompson helping out co-op president, Leslie White. There were 29 gifts given, at a value of over \$800, as a thank you to new and loyal customers. The list of the 29 winners of the “Shop Early, Shop Often” Customer Appreciation Draw can be seen at [www.valleyartisans.com](http://www.valleyartisans.com). Submitted photo

## A very Toastmasters Christmas

’Twas the night before Christmas and all through the town  
Not a creature was gloomy, no-one had a frown;  
The snow was all sparkly, the lights were all bright,  
And down on Beach Avenue there were shrieks of delight;  
The Toastmasters party was well underway,  
And OF COURSE every person had PLENTY to say.

There was Dave who just gave everyone a big smile,  
And Carol whose garrulous voice reached a mile;  
Madu told a truly remarkable tale,  
And Marko, his bark, Oh! it felt like a gale;  
Huiping was leaping through topics galore,  
And Michael recycled old jokes heard before;  
And Kannan and Vaneja, and Louise and Frank,  
Through all the commotion just bumbled and drank.

Giovanni looked canny, Colombian styled,  
While Claudia was gaudier and giggled and smiled.  
And then Consuelo, her halo quite straight,  
Downed her Martini and stepped up to the plate:  
“Listen up, fellow Toastmasters, and most welcome guests,  
Stop your carousing and stories and jests.  
This is important, can’t anyone hear?  
Someone’s on the roof, it is really quite clear.”

They all stopped to listen, their mouths still agape,  
And tried to remember the way to escape.  
There was definitely huffing and puffing and moans,  
And scraping and panting and creaking of bones;  
The noise from the chimney grew louder, and CRASH!  
A red-suited figure fell into the ash!  
“I wasn’t expected,” said St. Nick with a grin,  
“Or else you’d have found me an easy way in!”

And everyone stared at the figure in red  
As he dusted his suit and the hat on his head.  
“For Toastmasters you folks aren’t saying too much,  
Not even those ‘er’ words you use for a crutch;  
But listen, Toastmasters, I’ve dropped in tonight  
To ask for assistance - I’m in a tough plight.”

Well, Dave stepped right up and stuck out his hand:  
“Welcome to Toastmasters. We understand.  
Are you giving a speech? Do you need to rehearse?”  
“Oh no,” said St. Nick, “It is really much worse.  
I’ve been all round the planet delivering toys,  
And Ho, ho-ing my heart out for all girls and boys.  
It’s almost completed, not much left in my sack,

Just a few igloos, and then to get back;  
But my reindeer are tired, they’ve run out of juice,  
Their legs are all wobbly and their antlers are loose.

“Donner and Blitzen have lost all their spring,  
And Rudolph’s red nose is a pitiful thing  
We have to get back now, it’s getting too late,  
If only you’ll help us, that would be great!”  
“Juice!” thundered Marko, “Why, we’ve plenty of that!  
This stuff would revive my great-grandmother’s cat!  
Soon Donner and Blitzen will speed through the night  
And Rudolph’s dim nose will be blindingly bright!”

“Just give them a shot of this wonderful stuff  
(But don’t overdo it, enough is enough);  
They’ll take off like a rocket, and you won’t lose your way,  
You have time for a visit, so come, why not stay?  
Please, won’t you join us, sit down for a while!”  
And Carol’s eyes brightened, and Dave gave a smile.  
Madu took his arm, sat him down near the door  
Stuck a glass in his hand and proceeded to pour,  
And everyone started to chat, as before.

Huiping was leaping through topics galore,  
Claudia enthused in Colombian style,  
And Giovanni’s response was his handsomest smile.  
Consuelo, her halo slipped down on one side,  
Listened to Santa with eyes opened wide;  
And Kannan and Vaneja, and Louise and Frank,  
Through all the commotion just bumbled and drank;  
And Michael recycled old jokes heard before,  
Then picked up a bottle and slipped out through the door;  
On the roof gave each reindeer a good shot of juice  
Till their eyes were quite sparkly and their legs were quite loose,  
And regaled them with stories and jokes heard before,  
While they all rolled their eyes as if saying “No more!”

Soon Santa was ready to go on and about,  
And he thanked the Toastmasters for helping him out:  
“I know now I’ll make it, I owe you a lot,  
Look under the tree and see what you’ve got!”  
And there under the tree, there were presents for all,  
All wrapped and beribboned, some big and some small.  
Then stepping outside in the glistening snow,  
He climbed onto the sleigh and got ready to go.  
All they could hear as he sped out of sight  
Was “Merry Christmas to all, and to all a Goodnight!”

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### ‘New’ school needs a new name

It’s only in a town like Deep River that we would have so much controversy over what to name a newly renovated school that will accommodate students in grades K-12.

Should it keep the name Mackenzie or Morison? Or how about some long-winded, politically correct monstrosity like the Morison Mackenzie Education Centre (do you think that will fit on a football jersey)?

What about something more trendy like Morikenzie or Mackison?

Let’s give the “new” school a new name. Once renovations are complete, the school will be neither Mackenzie nor Morison; it will be a facility with, quite

literally, a new lease on life and new potential for its occupants - both students and teachers alike.

I think we can all attest to the positive impacts both Morison and Mackenzie have had on the lives of students who have passed through their doors (as an alumnus of both schools, I certainly can!), as well as the roles the schools have played in our towns history.

But, it’s time to realize that the schools are just that now - history (much like Keys, now home to AECL employees).

Let’s close the books on Morison and Mackenzie, and start our kids off in a new school with a history all its own that they have the power to write.

Change is coming to this town, whether you are ready to face that or not.

Candice Brown, Mackenzie, 1998-2002;  
Keys, 1994-98; Morison, 1988-94

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