

GSAC GLOUCESTER SONGSTERS HISTORICAL DOCUMENT FOR 30TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR – 2017

A Special tribute to Life-time Members: Katie McNamara, Pat Easter, Jeanette Lavigne, Joy Simper

Updated: December 17, 2016

The Gloucester Songsters are celebrating their 30th Anniversary, the entire year 2017. Perhaps they are trying to compete with Canada’s 150th celebrations? However “The Gloucester Songsters” have been around even longer than thirty years; they are celebrating thirty years working out of the Gloucester Senior Adults’ Centre on Ogilvie Road. The Gloucester Songsters group was “born” in 1972, directed by Pat Easter. Pat, (along with the Youth Group at St. Christopher’s Church in Beacon Hill South), wrote then City of Gloucester Mayor, Bob MacQuarrie, asking for funding for a singing group. Pat says of that era “Incredibly, my proposal (asking for \$200 annually for three years was passed and noted by Council”.) The Gloucester Songsters quickly formed a Board of Directors, with Helen Drayton as President.

Initially The Gloucester Songsters met in the Beacon Hill North Shopping Centre basement. Pat, as Director, was an accomplished musician who had been involved in many other choirs including the Ottawa Police Choir. Her accompanists over the years were Margery Jansen, Janette Winter, Joy Simper, and Edith Strathdee. Wyn Cheney and Virginia Cameron were among the original long-time Songsters. Frank Dunlop was Treasurer and both he and his wife Jean “sang out”.



P1: 1981-Pat Easter



P2: 1987 – Helen Drayton far right



P3: 1986



P4: Helen Drayton receiving award at Gloucester City Hall 1991



P5: 1995 - Pat Easter director, Jeanie Lavigne – rightmost back

The Gloucester Senior Adults’ Centre (GSAC) was formed in 1987. Its initial location was in the Resource Centre (where the Gloucester Emergency Food Cupboard now is, on Arrowsmith Drive). However GSAC quickly outgrew that location and was eager to find a bigger one. The board at the time lobbied vociferously with the City of Gloucester to move to the coveted location above the Earl Armstrong Arena vacated by the Gloucester Library. (The library was being moved to Gloucester City Hall, and the vacated location was in demand by many different groups.) Perhaps the GSAC board “shouted” the loudest as (happily for us) GSAC (with the Songsters) got that location and “Bob’s your uncle”^{*1}.

^{*1}-- **Bob's your uncle**, an expression meaning "everything will be fine", originated when Arthur Balfour was unexpectedly promoted to Chief Secretary for Ireland by the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, in 1900.

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In 1989 Debbie Trickey became Executive Director of GSAC and the Songsters moved to the Earl Armstrong location. In 1989 Katie McNamara joined GSAC and then the Songsters. Immediately Katie became a whirlwind of activity and the Songsters were thriving.. She became the Songsters Librarian in 1992 and President in 2000. Helen Drouin became Librarian when Katie became President. Katie remained President until 2010.



P6: Songsters at Christ Church Cathedral – 1997



P7: Helen Drouin and Katie -2003

The Songsters appeared at events in various churches. In 1997 they performed at Christ Church Cathedral with other senior centre choirs: Good Companions, Nepean Seniors and Centre de Jour Seraphin Marion. (These choirs were all part of the Older Adults Association of Ontario, Eastern Region, and the choirs rented the space for a fundraiser.) At the time the Songsters were also paying rent to GSAC. Debbie Trickey says “Over the years that rental agreement changed so that every member took out a membership in lieu of rent.” Debbie went after grants for them, like the New Horizons grant for their hand bells. She got them a Trillium grant for uniforms and other yearly grants from the Gloucester Arts Council.



P8: Small pic: Standing(L-R): 3-Catherine Smith, 9-Pat Easter, 11-Frank Dunlop, 14-Frank Munroe, 16-Helen Drayton, 17-Wyn Cheney. Sitting: 2-Rose Case, 4-Joy Simper, 5-Katie McNamara, 8-Gisele Madore



P9: 2004

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P10: 2005

**P11: 2010--Back: ?, Joe Fagan, ?? June Lyons, ??, Jill Hardy, ??, Ann Gibbs, Diddi Lalonde, ?
Sitting: Maureen Pilote, ?, Rosemary Carter, ?, Miranda Sealey, Katie, Carole Ann Faucher, Betty Snelson,
Floor: Gisele Madore, Shirley Edmonds, Pat Kealey, ?, Albert Faucher**

In the 1990s, the lady songsters had been wearing long green skirts as their uniform; this was still an era when it was considered “immodest” for women to be dressed in “pants”. But “times were a-changing” and the skirts were getting much too awkward to handle (easy to trip over and drag in the snow or dirt), when going on sing-outs. So...four members took the green skirts and sewed them into scarves and vests—good then for both female and male members. Perhaps the Songsters were then too often mistaken for leprechauns, what with so much green, so they applied for (and got) a grant for new uniforms in 2011. This time they moved to black pants and vests (with white blouses or shirts) and red scarves, which they have to this day.



P12: 2010-Joe Fagan, Katie McNamara, Shirley Edmonds



P13: 2012-new uniforms-Lucy Pasiecznik, June Lyons, Diddi Lalonde, Shirley

Early in the first decade of the twenty-first century the Songsters had more than forty members. Some of the members when Katie retired in 2010 are still members today. Others retired because of health problems or because of other commitments. Among retired long-time-members are Gwen Brown, Les Cassidy, Joe Fagan, Jeannette Lavigne, June Lyons, Gisele Madore, Lucienne Renaud, and, of course, Katie herself. Albert and Carole Anne Faucher were Songsters members from 2009 to 2011 and are currently on the GSAC Board of Directors. Albert has said that a doctor (and singer) friend has told him that singing is one of the best activities to promote healthy lungs and hearts and longevity. In some choirs there are lusty singers well into their nineties. Carol Anne maintains that singing helps to regain both one’s physical and mental health after serious health setbacks.

The Songsters sang out at seniors’ residences, nursing homes, hospitals and churches to much appreciation and acclaim. Then, as now, their repertoire was older songs. Audiences would exuberantly sing along when song sheets were passed out after the main concert. When there are cases of apparent dementia, the musical part of

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the brain is still stimulated. Residents who can't talk are often able to remember and sing along to the tunes of their youth. At many events the Songsters joined up with other Choirs in the city to be part of a super choir, all with differently-coloured uniforms. They sang-out at Gloucester City Hall several times. The then-mayor of Gloucester, Claudette Cain, was an enthusiastic supporter who attended their events and continued to help them obtain grants. Joy Simper was pianist from 1989 to 2000 until Pat Kealey took over. For many years Pat went to Florida and Joy kindly filled in for her.



P14: 2014 R1:Merlene MacDonald, ??, R2: Shirley, ?, Lucy, R3:Ernie O'Neill, Pat Kealey, ?,R4: Ann Gibbs, Betty Snelson, Back: Miranda, Mary, Diddi



P15: 2014: Lucy, Diddi, Ernie O'Neill

Sadly, or happily, depending upon one's point of view, the City of Gloucester was absorbed by Ottawa in 2001. Several years after amalgamation the City of Ottawa decided they didn't want to give the Gloucester Songsters separate grants from GSAC; so the Songsters became a Program within GSAC. Their grant was then part of the City's recreation grant money. (GSAC still keeps "Gloucester" as part of its name as does the "Gloucester Songsters", within it.) After all, most original natives of "Gloucester" know how to spell it!! (People in the United States often "go" with "Gloster"!!)

From GSAC and all your audiences over the years, thank you and hearty congratulations are extended to the Gloucester Songsters for your entire 30th Anniversary Year. We wish you much health and happiness, and especially we wish you healthy long-lasting vocal chords!!



**Singouts April 2016: Maplewood Retirement Residence
Back: Elaine Grimsey, Colleen Patenaude, Lucy Pasiecznik,
Middle: Mary Cunningham, Ann Gibbs, Diddi Lalande,
Front: Betty Snelson, Rosemary Carter Jill Hardy,
Pat Kealey, Shirley**



**P17: Betty, Rosemary,
Elaine Grimsey, Jill**



Garry J. Armstrong Home

(The Resident in the pink shirt and cap sang all the songs.)