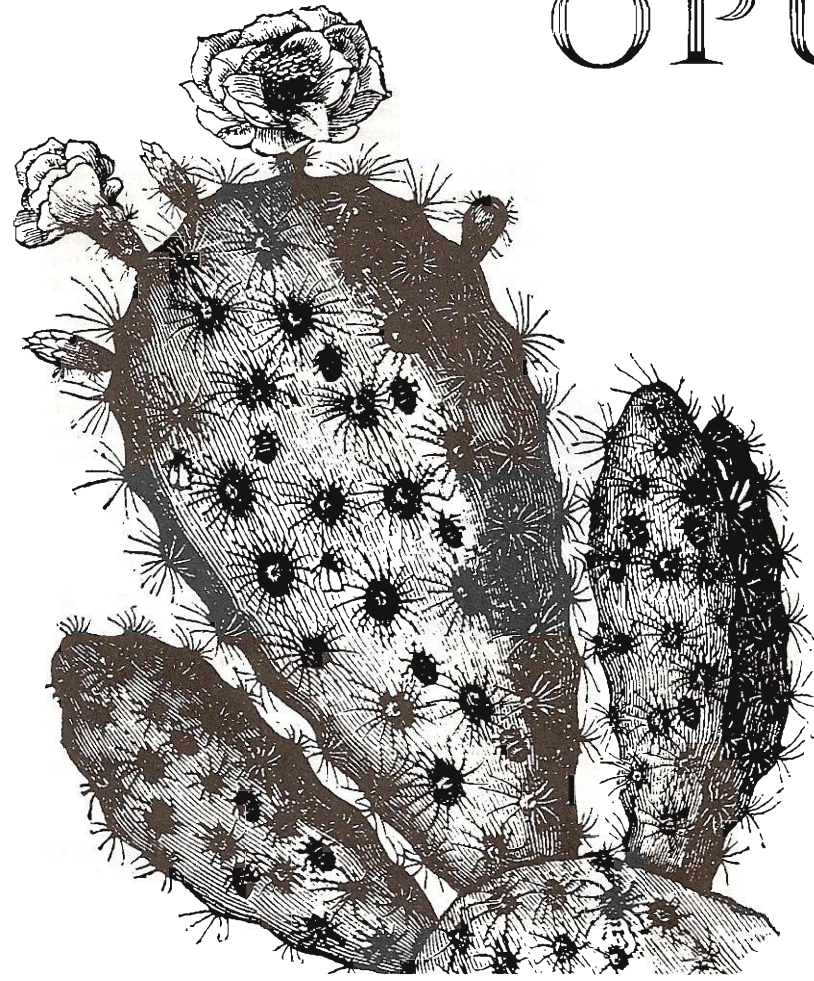


OPUNTIA

31



ISSN 1183-2703

OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. A one-time sample copy is available for \$3 cash, otherwise only to be had in trade for your zine or for letter of comment on a previous issue.

ART CREDIT: Opuntia ficus-indica, as depicted by an unknown artist or engraver from the May 1833 issue of SATURDAY MAGAZINE, page 205.

TORONTO IN '03: This bid, not to be confused with the now-defunct Eclipticon bid by Martin Miller, seems to be humming along. The day before this issue of OPUNTIA goes to press, I received a copy of the minutes of the January 19, 1997, organizational meeting. The list of attendees is too long to retype here, but names I recognized were the Penneys, the Mansfields, Jean-Louis Trudel, Mike Glicksohn, and Ken Smookler.

Most of the minutes are concerned with the boring details of any club's business meeting, but a few highlights are as follow.

There was talk that to relieve stress and burnout on people, the bid committee chairmanship would rotate each year. To start off with, Mike Glicksohn and Larry Hancock will co-chair the committee initially. Yvonne Penney is Secretary, Raymond Alexander is Treasurer, and Ken Smookler and David Warren are co-legal counsels.

In discussing possible themes for the Toronto WorldCon bid, it was mentioned in passing in the minutes that: "... official animal of Toronto is the black squirrel. Not much support for using squirrel as mascot." At this point I had to stop reading the minutes as I was shaking with laughter. The thought of Toronto, an insecure hive of accountants and line workers, choosing to represent itself as a world-class city by using an arboreal rodent was just too much. My laughter stopped when I suddenly realized I have no idea what the official animal of Calgary is. I would hope that it is a relatively dignified animal such as a bull or horse, but one never knows what some past City Council might have got up to. In Red Deer, where I grew up, there was a tremendous controversy a few years ago about making the gopher (Richardson's ground squirrel) official animal. It was heavily defeated after protests from ranchers (Red Deer is an agricultural town), who do not view gophers with the same eyes as city slickers.

Meanwhile, back at the Torcon, known competing bids are Birmingham and New Orleans. Not in the minutes, but in my reading elsewhere, I recall seeing mention of a bid for Cancun.

Pre-supporting memberships are C\$20.03/US\$15, payable to Toronto In '03, Box 3, Stn. A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1A2. If you paid cash to Martin Miller for his bid the committee will honour your membership upon presentation of reasonable proof.

WORLD WIDE PARTY #4: Originated by Benoit Girard and initially publicized by Franz Miklis. A new tradition on June 21st at 21h00 your time, raise a glass to toast your friends around around the world. The idea is to get a wave of celebration circling the planet. Have a party, do a one-shot zine (I'd like a copy), or whatever else seems a fun thing to do.

THE REAL J.R.: THE MYSTERIOUS LIFE OF A PHILATELIST
by Dale Speirs

Like many events that later suddenly hit the newspaper headlines, it began quietly enough. A telegraphic despatch to Ottawa, Ontario, from Terrabonne, Québec, stated that the wife of an Ottawa postal clerk, a Mrs. Hopper, had died in the company of her husband while travelling on a Québec train. The Ottawa newspapers investigated, but there was no Mrs. Hopper reported dead. Ten days later, on September 29, 1893, the matter suddenly became front-page news. J.R. Hooper was on trial for his life.

John Reginald Hooper was born in 1859 at Port Hope, Ontario. He became a stamp collector in the 1870s, about the time the new hobby of philately was starting to be born. (The first postage stamp was issued on May 6, 1840.) After serving in the Canadian Army during the Second Riel Rebellion of 1885, he moved to Ottawa and became an inside postal worker in 1887. He had married Georgina Malo in 1883, but in 1891 committed her to an insane asylum.

In the philatelic world, Hooper was very prominent. In 1887, he helped form the Canadian Philatelic Association. As a result of feuding, he left it in 1891 and formed a short-lived competitor called the Philatelic Society of Canada. Both organizations eventually became defunct. The Philatelic Society of Canada had an annual meeting scheduled for the third week of September 1893, in Montréal, approximately the same time and place that Mrs. Hooper met her death.

Organized philately was very young and ephemeral. The philatelic magazines came and went by the month. Many of them carried on feuds and printed libel that would leave a barrister speechless. KISSINGER'S PHILATELIC POSTAL CARD, a frequent newszine published on a postal card out of Reading, Pennsylvania in the 1890s, wrote that Hooper was "... a sneak, a yellow dog, a snake in the grass ...". American philatelists feuded and founded as many rival societies and journals as did

Canadians. The journal editor of what is today called the American Philatelic Society (55,000 members) was constantly under attack by those who saw no reason why a journal was needed. Around the philatelic world, not much was different; those were the glory days of stamp fandom. Libel and coups were a dime a dozen, and proxy fights at annual meetings were common. Into this mix Hooper fitted in perfectly, and had enemies on both sides of the border.

In Ottawa society though, Hooper was well thought of. Despite his married life being punctuated by frequent and often public quarrels with his wife, he was considered as an upright citizen. Besides his philatelic activities, he was involved in a number of groups such as the Oddfellows. It was said of him that if he took a thing up, it never failed for lack of effort. He was a good-looking man with a handlebar mustache, and quite popular with the ladies. After his wife was sent to an asylum, he began courting at least two different young ladies, passing himself off as either a bachelor or a widower. It was this that led to the tragic events, as he wanted to be free of Georgina. Divorce was not possible in those days from an insane spouse, so he set his mind on murder.

On September 9, 1893, Hooper approached his supervisor, Mr. D. Matheson of the Savings Bank Branch of the post office, and asked for three weeks leave of absence. Hooper showed Matheson a telegram from St. Ambrose de Kildare, Québec, stating that his wife was seriously ill. The leave was granted and, as it turned out, became permanent. Hooper left for Kingston, Ontario that evening, arriving the following day. Contrary to what the telegram reported, his wife was in fact at Rockwood Asylum in Kinston. He immediately took her out, telling the staff he was taking her to relatives who would look after her. The couple caught the steamer to Montréal and arrived the next day on September 11. At this point, Mrs. Hooper temporarily dropped out of sight. On that date, Hooper met a girlfriend, Miss Stapeley, but said nothing about his wife.

September 12 was the first day of a strange series of events. Hooper appeared in the Québec town of Louisville. He approached several people asking them if they had seen a crazy woman. Not finding her, he took the train back to Montréal, where he stayed the following day visiting Miss Stapeley. On that date, September 13, a bedraggled and soaking-wet Mrs. Hooper turned up in Louisville. Hysterical, she found her way to a house at two o'clock in the morning. She woke up the occupants and told them she had been thrown off a train by "a big, dark man". She was taken in and comforted. Later during the day, Hooper sent another telegram from Montréal, asking if the crazy woman had been seen. The answer being yes, he came down on September 14. He told everyone that his name was Cooper, and that he was just looking after the crazy woman. He now added that the woman had jumped off the train as it went over a river trestle, leaving behind a suicide note. The couple returned to St. Ambrose de Kildare, and Georgina was left with her family.

Hooper spent the next day trying to get his wife into an asylum but was unsuccessful. He left for Montréal on Saturday, September 16. On Sunday, he approached Dr. Charles E. Cameron, a fellow stamp collector whom he had first met through the Canadian Philatelic Association. Hooper asked Cameron for a dose of prussic acid to kill a large dog. Later that day, Hooper called on Miss Stapeley again and took her to evening church.

Monday, September 18, was the last day of Georgina's life. Having been tough enough to survive a fall off a railroad bridge into a shallow river, she was too insane to suspect further trouble from her husband. Hooper came and got her, taking her on the train back to Montréal. On the way, he gave her a drink. She took ill and was taken off the train at Terrabonne, where she died that night. The next morning Hooper took the body to Port Hope, arriving on September 21. The body was immediately buried, and Hooper left for Montréal again. For the next three days the bereaved widower comforted himself by escorting Miss Stapeley

about town. On September 25, a week after Georgina's death, he and Miss Stapeley left for Ottawa. The next day, he went with her parents to the Ottawa Central Fair.

While this was going on, the railwaymen on the Montréal line had been talking among themselves about the unusual death and of her husband's rather poor show of mourning. If Hooper was grieving for his dearly departed, he kept the grief well hidden, and displayed a callous attitude that had people gossiping. A reporter from the MONTREAL WITNESS heard rumours of what had happened, and began to investigate. What transpired was enough to justify police in issuing a warrant for Hooper's arrest on September 29. Hooper went into a state of insanity, preventing the warrant from being served immediately. The insanity lasted until October 12, three days after he had been taken into jail. His insanity cured itself suddenly when it became obvious that he was going to stand trial no matter what. Some cynical people said he was shamming, but Hooper declared it was just the worry and fatigue of the events.

A coroner's inquest began at Port Hope on October 10, and, after testimony from railroad employees, was adjourned to October 20. The evidence was circumstantial at best, but Hooper made himself look suspicious by his constant misrepresentations. He had told his relatives that Georgina had died of cancer, but the autopsy failed to disclose any disease. He had also given false names to several people along the railroad line where Mrs. Hooper met her death.

It was learned that on September 28, Hooper went to a Dr. Cousins of Ottawa, just before he had left for Port Hope. Hooper asked for an order of prussic acid, saying he used it to clean stamps in his collection. This was apparently an attempt to build up an alibi to explain why he had bought the previous amount of prussic acid in Montréal. Here again, Hooper only dug himself in deeper, since he had told Dr. Cameron in Montréal that the poison was for a dog.

[continued next page]

Before the inquest resumed, Hooper was taken into custody at Joliette, Québec, for his preliminary hearing. Meanwhile, the coroner's jury returned a verdict of "death under suspicious circumstances" on October 24, after the preliminary hearing had already begun. The trial was a sensation not only among philatelists but with the general public, who packed the courtroom. The heat in the rooms caused more than one interruption of the hearing due to someone fainting. The result of the proceedings was that Hooper was committed to stand trial for murder.

Hooper was feeling the effects of his troubles on his wallet. He was a man who owned real estate, but the legal expenses were such that he sent a letter to the periodical EASTERN PHILATELIST begging for financial assistance from the philatelic community:

"By this time probably you have seen or heard of the charge brought up against me, and I am now here preparing for my trial. I am innocent, and therefore am sure of honourable acquittal. But to prepare my defense I need funds, and I appeal to you, through your medium (the E.P.), to ask philatelists to give me assistance in order to secure a fair trial and justice to all."

The murder trial began January 3, 1894, in Joliette. The sensational case continued on for quite some time. Two of the star witnesses for the Crown Prosecutor had died since the preliminary hearing, but the barristers were quite confident on both sides. The testimony of the trainmen indicated that Hooper had given his wife something to drink immediately before she took ill and died. The evidence was ambiguous from all the witnesses and could be interpreted either way. On January 19, the jury went into seclusion. When it was announced they would give their verdict that night, bedlam erupted in the courtroom. Tables were removed from the room to make extra space, but even so, a constable was caught in the crush while attempting to hold back onlookers and was taken unconscious from the room.

Doors were torn from their hinges and windows broken from the pressure of the crowd. The jury returned a verdict of innocent, and the crowd cheered.

Unfortunately Hooper was not a free man just yet. He was not released but instead charged a second time with murder. He had been acquitted of poisoning his wife, but now faced trial for attempting to drown her. Once more a preliminary hearing, this time at Trois-Rivières on January 31. This time Hooper was unrepresented by counsel, and defended himself. He was good at it, and several times weakened the Crown's case. But it was a lost cause, and on February 9, Judge Barthe sent Hooper to trial. Bail was applied for but refused.

On June 4, the second trial began. Interest in Hooper had not declined in the least despite all the lengthy legal proceedings and delays. Two hours before the courthouse was opened, the front steps were packed with people waiting to get in. The trial was shorter this time, and on June 16 the jury declared Hooper guilty. Hooper was furious, and ranted at both judge and jury. But it was on June 21 that he arrived at the St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary. While doing his time there, he continued to publish articles in the philatelic press, both under his own name and under pseudonyms.

It may seem peculiar that he was acquitted of the actual murder, where witnesses saw him poison his wife, but was convicted of attempted murder, where no one saw him throw her off the train. It may be that the jury was reluctant to send him to the gallows but had no qualms about him doing time, where there was always the chance of a pardon.

After a series of appeals and requests for a pardon, Hooper was released in 1902. His whereabouts are not known over the next few years, but in 1906 he was in Winnipeg. He is not listed in the 1919 HENDERSON'S DIRECTORY, so he must have left that city sometime in late 1918 or early 1919. During his time in Winnipeg, he published a stamp magazine called THE HOBBYIST, and remarried circa 1913 to Lucy Charlotte, maiden name

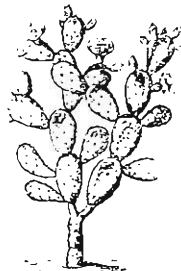
unknown. She was Secretary-Treasurer of his publishing company. He also edited or wrote for a variety of non-philatelic periodicals such as WESTERN CANADA CONTRACTOR, CANADIAN LUMBERMAN, RETAIL LUMBERMAN, and WESTERN BUILDER. His participation in charities and benefit societies continued. He is mentioned in the WINNIPEG FREE PRESS of January 1, 1912, as having received a testimonial presentation at a dinner for his part in organizing the Veteran's Brigade. The records of the Western Retail Lumbermen's Association were lost in the 1950s during the Winnipeg floods, but his time in Winnipeg is still preserved as the run of THE HOBBYIST from 1909 to 1913. Copies of this periodical appear in philatelic auctions to this very day. On the title page of THE HOBBYIST, he always listed himself as J.J. Hooper, not J.R. Hooper.

Hooper then vanished again. No one has been able to trace his activities until he re-appeared in the USA in the 1930s, calling himself Col. Hooper and now a man of wealth. Lucy is not mentioned in philatelic journals of the day; was she just ignored as wives were in those days or was Hooper a bachelor again? Because he had dropped out of sight for two decades, philatelists did not connect him with the murderer of 1894. He was now a Grand Old Man, a snowy-bearded gent who was the president of the Pioneer Philatelic Phalanx, a sort of First Fandom. There were no dues or activity; one became a member by declaring that he had collected for more than fifty years.

Hooper died in Los Angeles on May 30, 1944, at the age of 85. Does he have descendants? Where did he go in the 'lost years' and how did he make his fortune? This is of more than passing interest to Canadian philatelic historians because of Hooper's prominence as a founder of organized philately in Canada. While in Winnipeg, Hooper founded the Winnipeg Philatelic Association, which eventually evolved into today's Royal Philatelic Society of Canada. (There is today a Winnipeg Philatelic Society which is unrelated.)

It is interesting to note the evolution of philately from the wild feuding of the 1870s to the international organizations of today. I would guess that SF fandom is about the same level today as philately was back in the Great Depression. SFdom has even had its equivalent of Hooper, albeit a molester, not a murderer. Like SF fans, philatelists like to write about themselves or do histories. (Myself included; \$4 will get you a copy of my book HISTORY OF THE CALGARY PHILATELIC SOCIETY.) No one knows for sure how many philatelic periodicals and books have been published in the last 160 years but estimates range into hundreds of thousands of titles.

In the late 1800s, philately was a young man's world. Most of the movers and shakers were from their twenties to their forties. Today senior citizens dominate. If the current generation of potential SFers are busy with their computers and RPGs, will the same hold true for fandom in 2020?



THE CHILDREN OF CRONOS:
Fandom in Ottawa
(Part II)

compiled by Garth Spencer

NOTICE: a fanhistory article like this is in the nature of a draft; comments and corrections are expected and encouraged. GS

(This version dated December 6, 1996.)

The World Fantasy Convention (1984)

When *Maple Leaf Rag* began publishing in 1983, reports were slowly trickling in that the World Fantasy Convention was to be held in Ottawa.

The guests are, if memory serves correct, Tanith Lee and Jeff Jones, and the unavoidable Spider Robinson is toastmaster.

(Tara Wayne, *Maple Leaf Rag* #3, Jan. 1984)

It developed that the Ottawa fans were Not Happy because they saw little advance publicity, hence there was little chance for them to preregister. It was later claimed that WFC was advertised well in advance in the trade journals. Perhaps no outlet in Ottawa offered *SF Chronicle* or *Locus*?

I have to attribute some of the resulting alienation to a semantic confusion. Someone new to fandom, or unfamiliar with the World Fantasy Convention, can easily infer from the name that this was a convention run by and for fans. Not so, as Tara Wayne described it:

... [I]t's a fact that the sponsors of the '84 con did their best to keep the Ottawa location a secret as long as possible ...

The basic feeling among the pundits who control the World Fantasy Con is that they want it to be a respectable conference, with a heavy emphasis on academic program and business deals. The last thing in the world they want is an influx of 'fans' who would rapidly transform the World Fantasy Con to a simulacrum of the Worldcon. ... They can do this by doing things no Worldcon committee could get away with. They can limit the number of memberships sold and see to it that the select get priority. They can bore fans out of the program. They can price the membership fee and hotel out of sight. They can possibly even refuse outright to sell you admittance, if it comes down to that. And they can and will have nonmembers removed, if they're there in any number. In practise, the one World Fantasy Con I was at wasn't as bad as that. Advance bad publicity and secretiveness has generally made it unnecessary to fall on last resorts. That the World Fantasy Con can do this is because it is the property of a handful of influential people in the fantasy field ... who decide among themselves who'll get the convention every year. I can't argue their right, but I do wish they'd picked a different name for the con

World Fantasy Con suggests a democratic basis which isn't there ...

(Tara Wayne, *Maple Leaf Rag* #3, Jan. 1984)

Maplecon 5: The First Ottawa CANvention

Maplecon 5, held July 15-17, 1983 at Carleton University, was also Convention 4, the fourth host of the Canadian SF & Fantasy Award.

Convention 4 awarded the CSFFA to Judith Merrill, for lifetime contributions to the field. This year, the award took the form of a blue and silver plaque, mounted on a wooden escutcheon. Judith Merrill is not only a semiretired SF writer, who immigrated from the States; not only well known for her editing of SF collections, and for introducing "New Wave" SF to North America; but she also donated to the Metro Toronto Library some 5,000 SF titles, the core of their SF division.

A member of this committee, S.K. Walker, wrote:

I don't know who Bob Atkinson and/or John Bell first contacted in Ottawa (in 1980), who apparently claimed to speak for the Maplecon committee; but the information was not passed on to the committee. The first we heard of the very existence of the CSFFA was an announcement in *New Canadian Fandom* that Maplecon 6 was to be Convention. Confusion was added by the fact that we had had to move our con from Oct 82 to Jul 83, missing out a year; so it turned out that it was really Maplecon 5 for which we were assigned the CSFFA; so even when we finally heard about, it we thought it was to be a year later than it was.

We received our first clue to this state of affairs in a letter from Robert Runté in Jan or Feb 83 asking why we hadn't sent out nomination forms. Some correspondence with him finally acquainted us with what Convention and the CSFFA were.

A person who shall remain nameless (I shall even use the neutral pronouns ne, nem, & ner to eliminate all clues to ner identity) volunteered to handle the entire CSFFA business, then went out of communication with us. We trusted nem to carry out ner promise, but began to worry a little when there were no signs of activity on ner part; but we still were unable to get in contact. (This part was probably just bad luck: missed timing. On the other hand, ne didn't bother to come to meetings or to communicate with the committee, either.) In April, this person phoned a committee member on a different matter, and casually mentioned during the conversation that ne had decided *not* to handle the CSFFA after all! Even at this point ne did not bother to officially resign.

With only three months left, procedures had to be streamlined. We consulted with Robert Runté, who was the only person who had told us anything about Convention and whom we therefore thought represented a national committee. He decided to make up a nomination list (with room for write-ins) and to distribute the ballots, to be sent back to the subcommittee appointed by Maplecon: Jim Rea, Elizabeth Holden, and myself, Sansoucy Walker. The ballots included a section for voting on eligibility for the CSFFA, since this question was now being hotly debated among fans. The choice was "citizens only", "citizens plus residents of one year or more" or "anybody in any way connected

with Canada"; and the second option was chosen by an overwhelming majority. ...

(Sansoucy K. Walker, "CSFFA Meets Maplecon", *Cause Célèbre*, 1985, pp. 4-5)

Maplecon 6

Maplecon 6 was held July 13-15, 1984 at the Carleton University Tour and Conference Centre, featuring Larry Niven, Denny O'Neil, Frank Kelly Freas, Bjo Trimble, and Richard K. Preston as GoHs. Chairs were Pierre Quesnel and John Graham.

About 700 fans attended Maplecon 6 in Ottawa ... We enjoyed it once we found it. The con's progress report provided no directions. Had we met anyone from the con committee at 1 a.m., when we finally found Carleton, they probably would have been dead in short order.

Maplecon has had a reputation as a comics- and media-oriented con, but this year's con committee made a real effort to provide a solid SF emphasis. Larry Niven was GoH, and Donald Kingsbury, Hal Clement, Kelly Freas, Jacqueline Lichtenberg and Jean Lorrab were present. The programming was excellent; three tracks made sure that everyone, no matter what their interests, could find something to attend. For us the highlights were the panel on the Canadian space program (yes, we have one ...) put on by the National Research Council, and Freas' slide show. Niven's GoH speech was pretty light, a recitation of funny con stories and other anecdotes. ... Video and film programs were comprehensive and well-run.

Other aspects of the con weren't as well handled. ... The con suite was totally inadequate, being one standard room, and dry to boot. We found it a rather placid con compared to the NonCons and V-Cons that we've attended. Maybe there's something about Ottawa that discourages partying?

Holding the con at Carleton certainly kept costs down. The weekend rate of about \$50 included two nights' room and five meals in the Commons Cafeteria. The programming was somewhat spread out, but the facilities generally were more than adequate except for the masquerade, which was held in a room much too small and with bad sight lines. ...

On the whole, Maplecon 6 was fun, and worth the drive from Toronto. If next year's cons continue to emphasize SF, we'll certainly plan to attend.

(Keith & Amy Soltys, *Maple Leaf Rag* #8, Aug. 1984)

First of all, a good con. I am slightly biased, not because I know a lot of the people involved, but because this was the first convention I'd been to in about nine months. It was very welcome. Still, when I look back at other cons I've been to, Maplecon 6 is up there at the top of the list. One of the best cons I've ever been to, I'd say.

The first good thing to say about Maplecon is the location. The Carleton University residences weren't spotless or spanking new, but gave us a couple of nights' sleep and a place to store our luggage. That's all you really need. All residences were a few minutes' walk away from the con

facilities, and that was really handy (especially if you wanted to take in a panel, and you were *late!*)

The second thing is the price. Two nights' accommodation and five meals (each for two people runs to just over \$100, and that's a deal. A single person could possibly take in this con for around \$100, which could include travel and spending money, and that's quite a deal. This con is your best deal in Eastern Canadian fandom.

The third good thing is the programming. Variety! That's what a good convention needs, and Maplecon had programming in SF, comics, Star Trek, science, art, computers, aerospace, costuming, film, writing, filking and gaming. They also had guests to match the programming. The con flyer advertised 20 guests, and the con had more.

Maplecon seems to be different from the American hard-core SF fan conventions, in terms of attitude and attendee. There was a very small and dry con suite, but there were few complaints. The art show was entertaining, but a little small. The beautiful art within made up for it ... The dealers' room was a disappointment, but through no fault of the convention. The City of Ottawa couldn't decide how much of a vendor's fee to slap onto each dealer, and that chased a lot of business away, as well as a lot of dealers.

Films are always a strong part of Maplecons, and this year featured 24-hour films with few reruns. ... Perhaps the only really negative thing I could say about this con was the kids scrambling about the con facilities. Maplecon is only one user of the Tour

and Convention Centre at Carleton; last year, they had to share with a boys' soccer team from Scarborough, and members of the Swedish Navy. This year, it was a rambunctious group of children from Mexico, and they literally had free rein of the convention, running everywhere ... and being general pests. There were reports of these kids breaking artwork in the art show. ...

Overall, a very entertaining convention ... To the SF fan in Ontario and Quebec, who may go to the Ann Arbor, Michigan, or New York State conventions looking for a so-called trufannish con, give Maplecon a try. It may have been left off the list of cons to go to by many, because it was felt that it was nothing but a comics convention, but that is changing with more equitable shares of time for other interests.

(Lloyd Penney, *Maple Leaf Rag* #8, Aug. 1984)

World Fantasy Con: A Report

As it worked out, Mandy Slater reported it as a rather enjoyable con.

The Thursday night before the con was the pre-con party. Of all the parties held that weekend, I would say that it was one of the best. It was a great opportunity for me to meet old friends and make new ones. It had a nice feeling to it, and the people were friendly. ...

The art show was fantastic. The best I have ever seen. It was not large but the quality of the work was grand. The dealers' room concentrated on books and used, difficult-to-find books. ...

Programming during the weekend was highly literary-based. The readings were generally well-done. Spider Robinson had a very good reading ... The slide presentation by Toronto artist Dzintars Mezulis was fantastic. I'm told the other art panel was even better.

The big event Friday night was the giant autograph session. It was held in a large room sprinkled with pros ready to sign books. The longest line was for Stephen King. ...

Saturday night, the big event was a musical concert. Many Ottawa fans showed their talents, as well as numerous pros and musically-oriented fans. Sunday the World Fantasy Awards and banquet were presented; the winners included John M. Ford, Tanith Lee, Steve Gervais and Kim Stanley Robinson.

The convention had a relaxing atmosphere. It was unpressured and unhurried. People were there to enjoy themselves in an easy-going sort of way. This type of con naturally attracts more pros. The concom did a good job. Everyone attending the con loved the city of Ottawa, and the event seemed to be a big success.

(Mandy Slater, *Maple Leaf Rag* #10, Dec. 1984)

Capital Con

Mandy Slater reported in *Maple Leaf Rag* #11 that a small one-day comic book and card event, Capital Con I, was held in Ottawa with Dave Sim attending (author and publisher of *Cerebus the Aardvark*). Mandy also reported that Maplecon 7 plans (for July 19-21) were proceeding, and volunteers were requested.

Maple Leaf Rag had a report from Joe Casey in early 1985 surveying the different conventions he had seen in or around Ottawa.

I've been to five different kinds of cons: Cangames, only good if you're really into gaming, but if you are, look out. I worked on the D&D tourney at CG 1 and Monopoly at CG 3 ... Then there is Maplecon. So far I'm batting six for six and working on #7. Maplecon is a high-pressure con, and there are always three or more things going on at any one time ... Incognicon is, I guess, what is known as a relaxicon: one room plus consuite, five dealers including Maplecon & OSFS, and a very sedate pace. Ad Astra I liked as a rather sedate con but with a video room. And Capital Con I at the Tob Brown arena [was in] one room, and lots of fun.

(Joe Casey, Jan. 16, 1985)

I have no reports yet on Maplecon 7. Perhaps Ottawa readers can supply recollections for a future edition of this history.

Keith Soltys reprinted in *Maple Leaf Rag* a report that Charles de Lint won the first William L. Crawford Award in 1985 (to be awarded annually to the Best New Fantasy author by the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts).

(*Fantasy Review* #77; *Maple Leaf Rag* #15, June 1985)

Maplecon 8

I found among my papers Luc Pomerleau's report on Maplecon 8, held in 1986:

I'm afraid my Maplecon report will not be as glowing as Elisabeth [Vonarburg]'s comments on Convention. I have been going to the Ottawa convention since its second edition in 1979, even before I moved to the area, and I'm sorry to say that this was the least enjoyable of them all.

First of all, the hotel was not well suited for a convention, both because of its inadequate layout, and the size of the meeting rooms, which were too small: the main hall could hold only 200 people at most, quite inadequate for a convention that numbered around 800 in recent years. In retrospect, Carleton University seems a much better site, even if it's on the periphery of town. Perhaps because of this, the convention seemed a bit listless, without the same spark as previously. Furthermore, there were some organizational problems: for example, the first panels did not even take place and the art show was closed on Sunday during a long period when it was supposed to be open. As for the dealers' room, it should have been called the dealers' closet: only one vendor (of comics) in a small and cramped room, with a few other tables selling badges, printing stamps and occult stuff. Again, no SF/F books offered, with a sharp drop in the quantity and variety of the comics material available.

Programming suffered from a similar lack of variety, even if organizers came up with a varied array of subjects that would not repeat past discussions. The main reason for my comment is that the roster of participants was relatively small;

we kept seeing the same people over and over on different panels. Gone was the diversity of guests that made past Maplecons so interesting: except for "local" authors or those from Montréal, who are almost bound to be there (Charles de Lint, Mark Shainblum, Gordon Derry, etc.) and Hal Clement, who is a fixture of every Maplecon, there were only two "real" new guests, Phil Foglio and Stephen R. Donaldson. They were pleasant guests (yes, I *can* be positive once in a while), especially Donaldson, who had something substantial to say in his speech and during the panels, which is not always true in an SF convention. Furthermore, he put everybody at ease with his disarming simplicity.

As always, meeting new and old friends was one of the most pleasant aspects of Maplecon, although one expects more from a convention. This year's committee seemed to accentuate the partying (three dances in all) instead of trying to give the con real spirit. On top of that, the convention was clearly not as well attended as in the past and many familiar faces were not seen this year. To conclude the con report *per se*, I will simply say that the Maplecon people have given us better cons in the past and that they have a lot to make up for. One last impression was that this year's committee played down the comics content of the convention; Maplecon has had from the beginning that delicious schizophrenic quality of being dedicated both to the literary and comics incarnation of SF, although comics had seemed on the verge of taking over last year.

I will only add a little concerning English-French relations during the con: there was a panel on Québec fandom, at 9 a.m. on Saturday. I did not expect anybody to rise up this early to hear about us, but about 15 did and we had an interesting hour of discussions and exchanges. Yvonne and Lloyd Penney were there and they told us how the Toronto Convention in 1987 will have substantial French programming. We will discuss the particulars of this in weeks to come, but the prospect of a more or less bilingual con seems good. I am not sure to what extent our efforts will indeed bring a great "rapprochement" between the two solitudes of Canadian fandom, but it sure is worth a try.

(Luc Pomerleau, "Maplecon 8: A Study in Disappointment", ca. fall 1986)

The Jan. 1987 OSFS (#115) carried both Casper and CUFF nomination forms. #116 (Feb.) carried an historical article from StarWolf, and the mention that this year was the tenth anniversary of OSFS' founding.

The Feb. 1987 OSFS reported that Valleycon was cancelled. More historical notes were printed from Paul Valcour and Joe Casey, and some reprinted notes from the first newsletter. Paul Valcour had assisted with Ottawa's World Fantasy Convention in 1983, and was auditor for OSFS from about 1987 to 1991. Beulah Wadsworth was treasurer in that period.

It was in about this issue that an ongoing constitutional discussion, centring on who got honorary memberships and why.

The March 1987 *Maple Leaf Rag* reported that a new relaxicon might be hosted in Ottawa, and Marc Gérin-LaJoie was the person to ask for information. According to this MLR, Maplecon IX was scheduled for July 3-5 at the Skyline Hotel; according to Joe Casey in OSFS (#116, Feb. 1987), Maplecon was going back to Carleton this year. The writers' competition deadline was scheduled for the preceding May 25th.

The March MLR noted that Bruce Brown was publishing a writers' newsletter (*Visions*) in Ottawa. The new CM of APAPlexy was identified as Cathy Duff.

APAPlexy

During this time, I was also involved with TAPA, the Toronto Amateur Press Association. I had a lot of fun writing but eventually grew tired of the excessive right-wing BS and decided to look for something else. I talked to the person who I considered my Mentor, Starwolf, and I proposed to start a new, Ottawa based APA, which was eventually called APAPlexy. Starwolf didn't want to go through the effort of starting up an APA, but was willing to be the "Central Mailer" (CM), essentially running the APA. He didn't want to be the "Central Editor" (CE) since he didn't like what that implied. So, I did the organizational stuff, wrote up an ad to be franked in TAPA, and convinced the people to join...and to this day, APAPlexy is still running!

(Farrell McGovern, e-mail, Sept. 14, 1996)

A Failure to Communicate

The July-October *Maple Leaf Rag* (#24/25) was somewhat belated, and ran some slightly uninformed Ottawa news. Apparently, because Marc Gérin-LaJoie and OSFS were sharing a post office box at the time, the *Maple Leaf Rag* editor took it that Marc was his contact with OSFS, and sending *Maple Leaf Rags* there. Marc was not an OSFS executive at the time, but nobody told Spencer about this. When a couple of OSFS executives visited Victoria, they let Spencer know that they weren't getting *Maple Leaf Rag*. Spencer ran a rather sarcastic notice in MLR #25 that he wanted *Maple Leaf Rags* passed on to the club.

Marc rather vociferously took exception. He pointed out that he was *not* an OSFS executive, nor the OSFS editor, and only shared a post office box with the club; he was not responsible for imparting information to the editor of *Maple Leaf Rag*. And why hadn't he received his subscription copies, anyway? The editor replied that he was sending issues to Marc's street address, hadn't been informed that Marc was not editor, and indicated that he could report only what people *gave* him to know. Elsewhere, the March *Maple Leaf Rag* reported that Marc had changed his name and gafiated. Lloyd Penney and OSFS were given as sources.

So far as I know Marc gafiated several times but only threatened to change his name. He is currently on gafia; also incommunicado.

(Ann Elid, "Worm's Castings",
Ottawa SF Statement #200, Feb. 1994)

[Marc] has been vilified by Ottawa Fandom due to a APA contrib (in APAPlexy) where he flamed a number of people when he was going through a particularly hard emotional crisis. Ottawa fandom

never forgives, and ostracizes forever...that's what happened to a number of active fen here, including myself...and that is why Ottawa fandom is pretty much died off.

(Farrell McGovern, e-mail, ca. Sept. 14, 1996)

Bardic Runes

Sometimes it seems as if the fans in a city either devote their energies to fanzines, or to conventions, but not both. Since the mid-1980s I haven't been aware of many fanzines from Ottawa. One of the exceptions is *Bardic Runes*, which actually qualifies as a biannual small-press fantasy digest. The editor, Michael McKenny, writes:

As to *Bardic Runes*, this in a sense arose out of the void caused by the folding of *Maplecade* and of *Fantasy Book*. Susan Rea wrote an article for the *Statement* shortly after Mapleccon 1987, about the heady feeling concerning writers, writers' groups, and publishing that came out at that convention, and around that time ... Anyway, it was a thrilling time, and it seemed at that time that an SF magazine (later to be *On Spec*) was soon going to emerge. So, I decided to publish *Bardic Runes*, and this was announced probably in the fall of 1987, though possibly the winter of 1988, in the *Statement*. It was postponed when I decided to go back full-time to university in Sept. 1988. After that I worked on it, and brought out #1 on February 1, 1990.

(Michael McKenny, correspondence, June 13, 1994)

Where PineKone Came From

I have been told that Joe Casey and Farrell McGovern suggested PineKone. Paul Valcour was apparently inclined to jump into conrunning at the time.

In the mid-80s, Jim Botte, Mandy Slater and I started to put together a new con for the Ottawa area that would be focused on Books, something that had become virtually absent from Maplecon. We were going to call it Pinekone. Mandy designed a wonderfully silly logo for it...and then Brian Mulroney was elected and funding for Canada Council was chopped, and thus the seed money Pinekone disappeared. Shortly after this, Paul Valcour, Joe Casey, Andrew Farmer along with his girlfriend of the time, Lisa Gravelle, and Chuck Mohapel put together a convention based upon private pockets...but couldn't come up with a name. So the Pinecone group offered their name, since it looked like we would never put on our convention. And thus, Pinekone was born. I helped them out by doing the Consuite.

(Farrell McGovern, e-mail, Sept. 14, 1996)

Some of the same people worked both on Maplecon and on PineKone. Paul Valcour, chair of PineKone, worked as treasurer on Maplecon in 1989. Unfortunately, PineKone was generally perceived as being held in competition with Maplecon. A few OSFS members perceived Ottawa as too small to host more than one convention per year; this was argued in print later by an out-of-town fan. Further, there was a perception that those who actually got things done for Maplecon were not among those on the PineKone committee.

Curiously, PineKone II bid for the 1989 Convention, even before the first PineKone was held.

Joe Casey reported in October and November on Pinekone I's GoH confirmation. The December OSFS reported on the University of Ottawa SF Festival (co-chaired by Jean-Louis Trudel), and on APAPlexy.

In 1988, *MLR* 3 reported that Maplecon's ProGoH Alan Dean Foster had had to withdraw, being replaced by George R.R. Martin.

Type 40, the Dr. Who group, held an annual general meeting in January of that year; president Blair Stannard was re-elected, Michael Doran became vice-president, James Southcombe became treasurer, Louise McCormick became secretary, and Jennifer Stannard took over PR.

AP-Arition

A new gaming apa was started in Toronto, in 1987, AP-Arition, still edited by George Park. Although AP-Arition first appeared in 1988, *The New Moon Directory* (the annual APA directory) is still patiently waiting for more specifics besides George Park's name – frequency, minac, copy count, everything.

MLR 4 announced an April Fool's benefit party at Paul Valcour's for Pinekone, the new Ottawa convention.

MLR 5/6 reported Pinekone II was bidding for Convention, even before Pinekone I was held (in Oct. 88). Joe Casey, Andrew Farmer and Lisa Gravelle on the committee had discussed putting

in a bid. Valcour remarked to MLR that "We're trying to raise the profile of Pinecone.

That year, Joe Casey suggested reviving the "Ottawa Fandom Council" (as reported in *MLR* 7). OSFS reported that Michael McKenny suspended *Bardic Runes* that year, but Michael tells me that he published issue #1 in 1990.

Maplecon 10

Maplecon 10 was held July 29 to August 1, 1988 at Carleton University Conference Centre. Guests announced included George R.R. Martin, Don Maitz, Michael Wallis, John Rumita Jr., Diane Carey, Hal Clement, Charles de Lint, Donald Kingsbury, Janny Wurtz, and Guy Frechette. As it worked out this year, GoHs John Rumita (comics) and Mike Wallis couldn't make it to the con. I'm mildly puzzled that all these "guests" are listed, with no distinction between the Guests of Honour and other program participants.

As reported by Michael Skeet,

Maplecon attendance was only about 450, continuing this con's slide from the time when it was one of the major events on the north-eastern con circuit. The concom considers this four-day, 10th anniversary convention to have been a success, but everyone else I've spoken to has complained vociferously. Highest on the hate-list is the Carleton University venue. This year's novel (for Maplecon) experiment of two privately hosted parties was shut down by an over-zealous university staffer. The dead dog party was closed to all but con staff: Maplecon apparently conceives of this

traditional con-ending bash as a reward for its people only, and feels no obligation to entertain once the con is officially declared closed. The consuite was (following another inexplicable Maplecon tradition) a less-than-stimulating experience rivalled for boredom only by its parallel at this year's Worldcon.
(Michael Skeet, *MLR* 7; reprinted in OSFS #137, Nov. 1988)

A Failure to Communicate (II)

Glenn Simser and Joe Casey maintained that the Dead Dog was traditionally a *closed* party for committee and GoHs; a cloud of witnesses, many *MLR* correspondents, maintained this was nonsense. What seems to have happened here is that nobody had even noticed or commented for a long time on the difference between Maplecon's Dead Dog and standard convention practice.

The misapprehension is hard to understand; Ottawa is not relatively isolated, as Halifax is. As it worked out, there were two parties to choose from, on the Sunday evening of the Maplecon in question.

In that particular incident, it was the Treasurer who had decided that since they hold the checkbook, they can decide what happens at the convention..The dweeb's name escapes me now, but he and his wife were both on the Board of OFI, Ottawa Fandom Inc. the not-for-profit Inc. that runs Maplecon. There are 5 members of the board, and all they had to do was convince one other person on the board they were correct...and things passed. And one of the other board members was a best friend of the wife...

(Farrell McGovern, e-mail, ca. Sept. 14, 1996)