



The Historical Society of St. Catharines

P.O. Box 25017, 221 Glendale Avenue, Pen Centre, St. Catharines, Ontario L2T 4C4

Our mission and goal is to increase the knowledge and appreciation of the history of St. Catharines and area. The Society was founded in 1927. Our Society is affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society.

The Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

Website: <http://stcatharineshistory.wordpress.com> Newsletter editor: John Brenton, hssc.newsletter@gmail.com

December 2019 Newsletter

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100 YEARS AGO

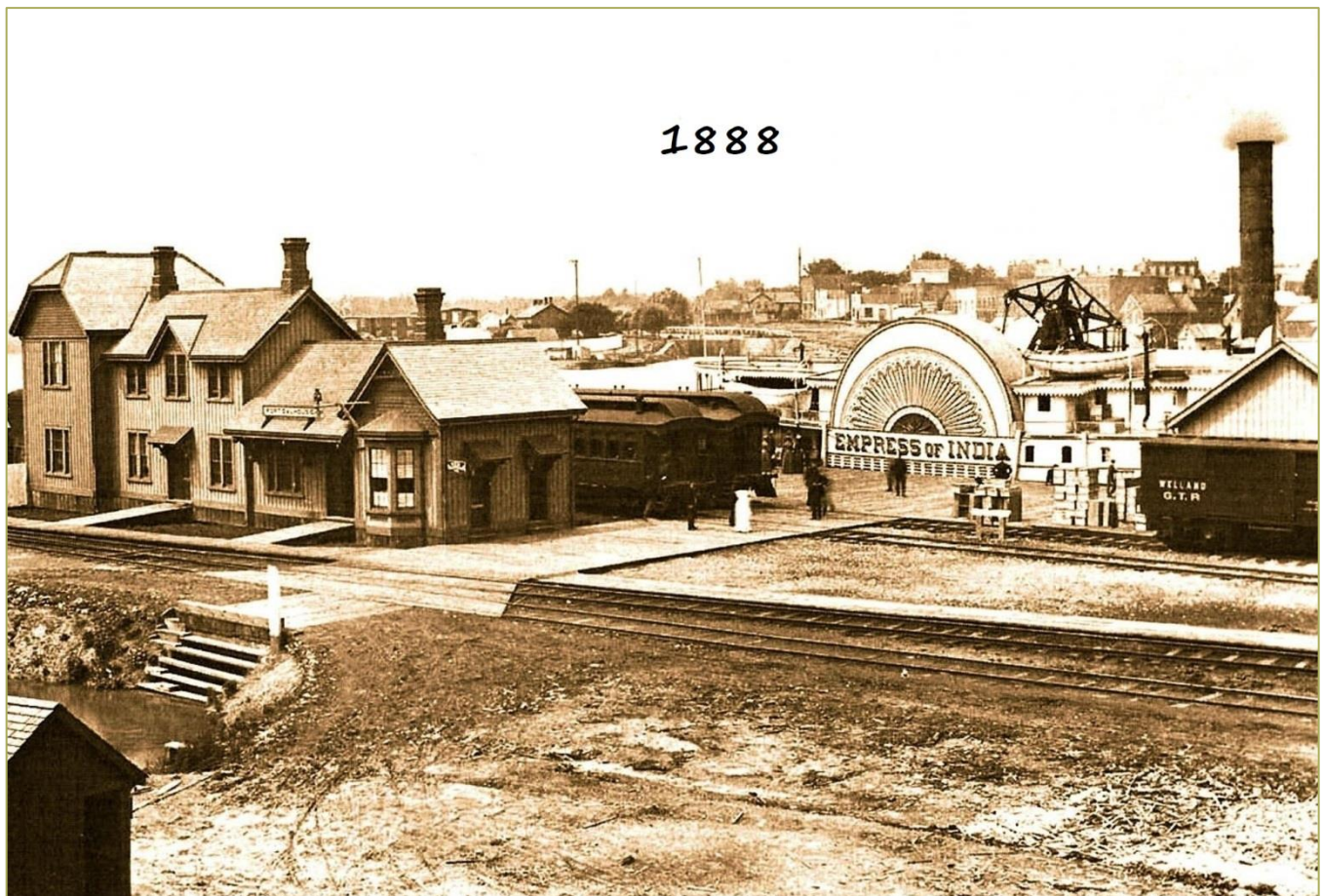
Christmas celebrations in Canada are drawn from a variety of traditions from many countries and cultures. By 1919 the holiday had begun to take on the form that we would recognize today. A natural evergreen tree decorated with lights or candles, greeting cards, a special festive meal with friends and relatives, a visit from Father Christmas bearing gifts and candy for good children (a lump of coal for the naughty ones) and of course Christmas carolers. “Home! Sweet Home!” written in 1823 had been a favourite of soldiers of the American Civil War. In 1919, the same lyrics offered peaceful respite for Canadian soldiers returning from the overseas theatre of war to their family homes. ‘Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home’ Music: H.R. Bishop; Lyrics: John Howard Payne, adapted from the opera “Clari, Maid of Milan”.

The HSSC is pleased to introduce a new series by Roger Bradshaw that describes the steamships that serviced the early Port Dalhousie passenger trade. When Port Dalhousie was the terminus of the Welland Canal, the harbour was busy with passenger and cargo ships. Passengers would regularly disembark to enjoy a day at Lakeside Park or continue their adventure by NS&T railway to Niagara Falls. The history of these steamships was gathered while conducting research for the recently published book “Postcards from Port Dalhousie” by John Burtiniak and Roger Bradshaw.

PORT DALHOUSIE PASSENGER STEAMERS

A series describing steamships servicing the early Port Dalhousie passenger trade, by Roger Bradshaw

EMPRESS OF INDIA – Built 1876 - Port Dalhousie Route 1883-1898 - Scrapped 1918



The EMPRESS OF INDIA was a wooden sidewheeler passenger steamer built in 1876 at Mills Point, (Deseronto) Ontario. She measured 170 feet in length, a 26 foot beam and 9 feet in depth. She was named in honour of Queen Victoria, who had been given that title.

Her first year was spent in the general excursion trade out of Toronto. In 1877 she ran on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays to the mouth of the Humber River (25 cents). On Wednesdays and Saturdays to Oakville (50 cents). On Thursdays to Burlington Beach and Hamilton (50 cents).

In 1878, her schedule was more ambitious and she operated westwards to Mimico Grove, Oakville, Burlington, Burlington Beach and Hamilton. Eastwards from Toronto, she served Whitby, Oshawa and Bowmanville. In

1879, she confined her travels mostly to the Lorne Park service, which then was a popular and exclusive summer resort and picnic ground located to the west of Port Credit.



The EMPRESS operated local Toronto excursions until 1883 when she was placed on the Port Dalhousie run. It would appear, in the early years that she crossed to Port Dalhousie and passed up through the first lock of the Third Welland Canal, discharging her passengers at Muir's Pond. The EMPRESS started the Port Dalhousie service, in that she was the first major vessel to operate on a permanent basis. EMPRESS was reboilered in 1884 and received further rebuilds in 1886 and 1891.

At the close of the 1898 season, the EMPRESS OF INDIA was withdrawn from service and sent to Picton for a rebuild. She was renamed ARGYLE and mainly plied Lake Ontario ports. In 1913 and part of 1914, she was renamed GRIMSBY and commenced operation between Toronto, Grimsby Beach and Jordan Harbour. In 1914, she was renamed FRONTIER. In 1915, she was sold to the Peoples Steamboat Co. of Chatham.



While lying idle in the Thames River at Chatham in 1916, she settled to the bottom, her oak planking showing its forty years of wear. She lay on the bottom of the Thames until 1918 when she was raised. The steamer was towed to Detroit where her superstructure was removed and then the hull was taken out into Lake St. Clair and laid to rest in a swamp near Windmill Point. There, far from Lake Ontario where she had spent her happiest years, her remains rotted until covered over in a subsequent landfilling operation.

DID YOU KNOW?

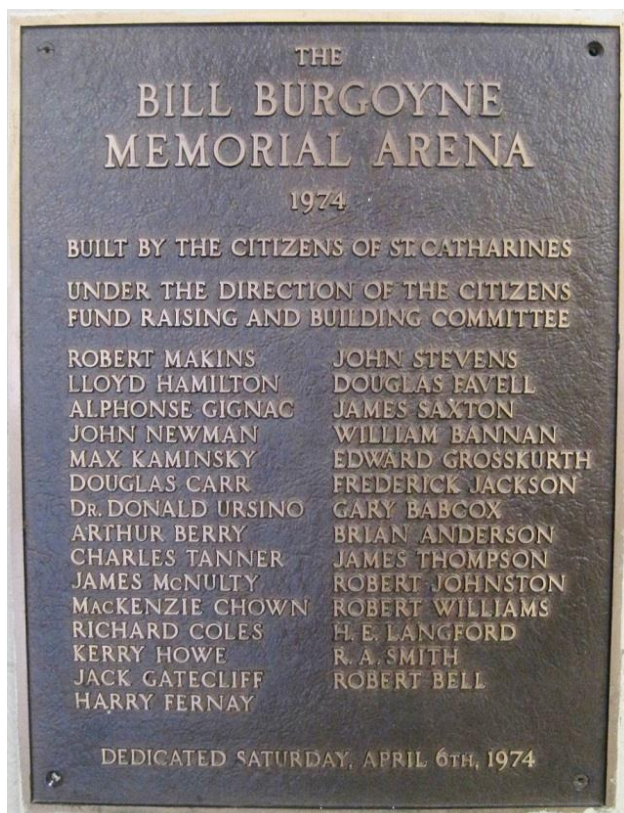
The community of Port Weller was named after John Laing Weller, the superintendent and engineer in charge of constructing the fourth (current) Welland Ship Canal. That project aligned the canal route directly to the Port harbour as the northern entrance at Lake Ontario. Educated as an engineer at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, he served over 40 years in the military. Weller had worked on other canal projects before he moved to the Niagara area and took a senior position in the planning, surveying and construction of the canal between 1906 and 1917. Weller was made consulting engineer when work resumed in 1919 after the war. He died in 1932 at the age of 70 and is buried in Woodland Cemetery in Hamilton, Ontario.

175 INTERESTING THINGS TO SEE IN ST. CATHARINES

A series describing local historical sites, by Bill Stevens

PLAQUES IN THE LOBBY OF BILL BURGOYNE MEMORIAL ARENA

As athletes carry their equipment through the Bill Burgoyne Memorial Arena lobby, they pass by three significant plaques attached to the lobby wall.



Committee Recognition Plaque

The city installed the two by three and a half feet bronze plaque shown in the accompanying photo to recognize and honour the committee members who were members of the fund raising and building committee. This committee was established in 1973 to raise approximate \$420,000 and to build an arena facility for the youth of the city to pursue their athletic activities. The city provided the land on the north side of Linwell Road between Lakeport Road and Ontario Street.

The 'Burgoyne' as it is affectionately called became the fourth enclosed arena in the city when it opened, the Garden City (1938), Rex Stimers (1966) and Merritton (1969) arenas being the others. The first ice was placed in mid January 1974 and actual use began shortly afterwards. The floor surface is 85 x 185 feet and there are six dressing rooms that are available for year round usage, mainly by minor sports groups.

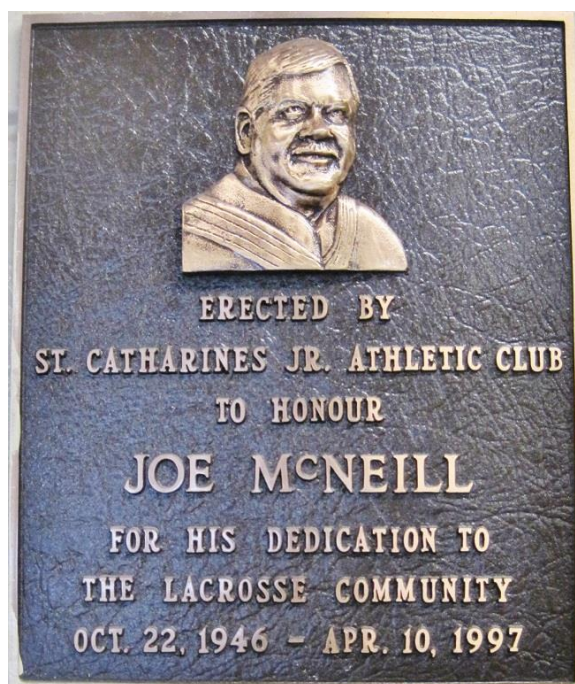
The building's grand opening was held on Saturday, April 6, 1974. The grand opening program contained a Dedication which reads: The Bill Burgoyne Memorial Arena, built through tremendous public and private support, is dedicated

to the citizens of St. Catharines for their pleasure, with the sincerest wish that the enjoyment of this facility will endure forever. Doors opened at 12:30 p.m. to music of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment Band, after the customary introductions and speeches, Mrs William Burgoyne officially open the arena, the Winter Club of St. Catharines then presented a display of figure skating before the public had a free skate starting around 3:30 p.m.

JOE McNEILL Plaque

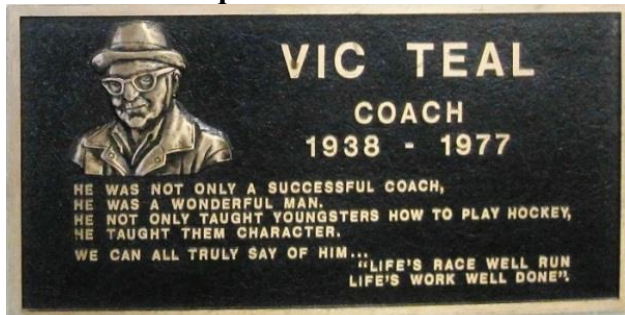
The St. Catharines Junior Athletics Lacrosse Association placed this plaque to honour Joe McNeill. The Burgoyne was for many years the home floor for the junior A team which Joe was deeply involved with.

Joe was inducted into the Ontario Lacrosse Hall of Fame (located at Lock 3, inside the St. Catharines Museum building) in 2012. The following is from the hall of fame web site: Joe McNeill (BUILDER) (deceased) of St. Catharines. Joe has



served in many capacities in the game. He has been a team executive, team Manager, league executive and an Ontario Lacrosse Association Vice President. In total he gave more than 35 years to our sport. From the time Joe moved to the Niagara region he was always known as a continuous builder and supporter of all forms of lacrosse. He always stood up for his beliefs and always encouraged others to do the same. He was a founding member of the St. Catharines Athletics and many in the community believe that there would likely never have been a Junior A" team in St Catharines if not for his hard work and dedication to bringing Junior A to the Niagara region. He was an avid fundraiser for the team be it sponsorships, working Bingo's or lotteries. He served on the Point Edward executive for several years; He was GM of Niagara Jr. B Warriors, St. Catharines Jr. A President and GM and a board member of the St. Catharines Minor Lacrosse Association. Even after assuming the duties as the O.L.A. Vice President, Joe continued to be an active member in both the Jr. A and Jr. B programs in Niagara. Joe was one of the founding members of the OLA Hall of Fame and Museum.

VIC TEAL Plaque



Vic Teal was inducted into the St. Catharines Sports Hall of Fame in 1991 as a builder. His hall of fame web site profile includes a photograph and a brief biography as follows: Vic Teal was the most successful minor hockey coach in Canadian history. He was a hockey player - a minor pro and coached 24 O.M.H.A. Championships (Bantam, Midget, Juvenile). He was O.M.H.A. Midget champs in 1939 and O.M.H.A. Juvenile champs in 1940-1954. He also coached softball (men and women's teams) and Lacrosse - 2 Sr. A.

Provincial Champs. He worked as an engineer for the Fort Erie then Garden City Arenas. He passed away in 1977 at the age of 69.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Event information and links to external websites are provided as a courtesy for members of the Historical Society of St. Catharines (HSSC). The HSSC is not responsible for the delivery of content from third parties. Event details and future schedules may be subject to change.



For those interested in the local connection with Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, the Film House presents **HARRIET**. The 2019 film, "based on the thrilling and inspirational life of an iconic American freedom fighter, Harriet tells the extraordinary tale of Harriet Tubman's escape from slavery and transformation into one of America's greatest heroes. Her courage, ingenuity, and tenacity freed hundreds of slaves and changed the course of history."

December 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17th at the Film House at the downtown St. Catharines Performing Arts Centre (PAC) 250 St. Paul Street, St. Catharines, ON, Canada, L2R 3M2

Contact the PAC Box Office for more information:

PHONE: 905-688-0722 or 905-688-5601 x3700 or toll free 1-855-515-0722

EMAIL: boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca

CORRECTION: Past President 1978-1981 - Colin E. PENKETH



Plaque with Colin E. Penketh, HSSC President, 1979

The September 2019 HSSC Newsletter photo of former Society president Colin E. Penketh was incorrectly labeled by this editor. The photo (left) of Colin at the Louis Shickluna plaque ceremony in November of 1979 now stands corrected.

The following brief biography of Mr. Penketh is provided by Mr. Bill Stevens, long time member of the Historical Society of St. Catharines, having served 20 years as a director, executive, past president and program committee member.

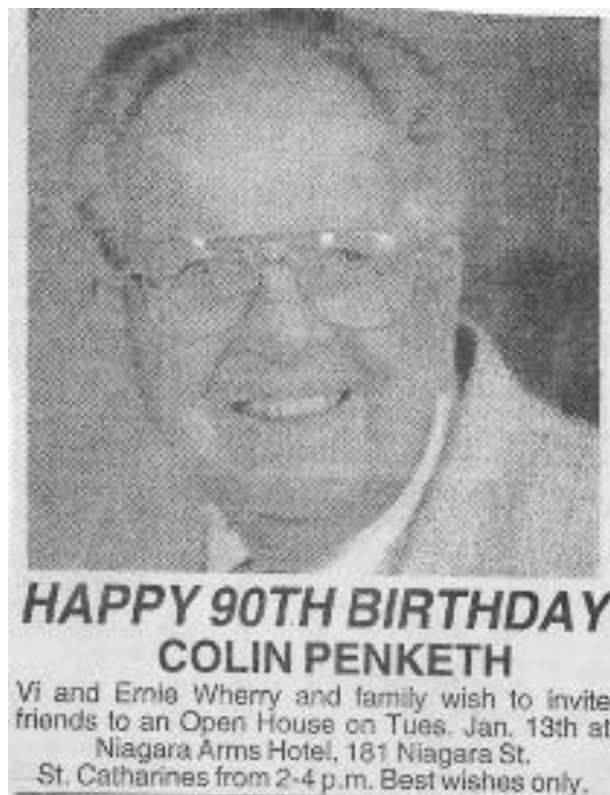
This was not the first plaque unveiling that Colin participated in. On October 1, 1978 a plaque about the Second Welland Canal was unveiled by Colin and Frank Hawley, a member of the Ontario Heritage Foundation and the museum board. Denise Taylor chaired the ceremony at Mountain Locks Park at the corner of Mountain and Bradley Street.

Colin was president of our Society from 1978 through 1981. The Society at the time was known as the St. Catharines and Lincoln Historical Society. The board for 1978 consisted of

Colin as president; Arnold Hartnett first vice-pres.; Robert Powell, second vice-pres.; Lorna Robson, corresponding secretary; Gayle Brass, recording secretary; Mary Torrington, treasurer; and councillors: Avril Brass, Steve Hinchliffe, Sheila Lewis, Arden Phair, and Sheila Wilson; Malcolm Binks, past president; Donald Robson, curator; Doris Bates, auditor; Wesley Turner, Ontario Historical Society liaison officer; Alex W. Ormston, newsletter editor.

Colin was born on January 13, 1914 in Toronto. In St. Catharines he resided on Wakelin Terrace. A veteran of World War II, he served with the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer reserve. He was employed with General Motors for 40 years retiring in 1979. He was a Vice President of the Royal Canadian Legion (HT Church) No. 24. He was a lay reader at St. George's Anglican Church.

Colin passed away on December 15, 2004 at the St. Catharines General Hospital. A memorial service was held on December 18, 2004 at St. George's Anglican Church. His wife Phoebe J. Penketh predeceased him in 1997. He was survived by daughter Violet and her family.



NOVEMBER MEETING: WES TURNER, *The Great War: Its Impacts on Canada and St. Catharines*



The HSSC welcomed retired Brock University professor Dr. Wes Turner back to the podium for a fascinating presentation on the post-WWI years and the lasting effects of the war on the lives of the people of Canada and St. Catharines.

Wes Turner was president of our Historical Society for three years 1996, 1997 and 1998. He has written many scholarly articles and books, the most recent “The Astonishing General: the life and legacy of Sir Isaac Brock”, published in 2011. For this book Wes received the Ontario Historical Society’s 2011 Donald Creighton Award.

LECTURE PROGRAM – JANUARY to JUNE 2020

Program Subject to Change

Join us at the **St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre** on the 4th Thursday of the month from September to November and January to June. Learn more about local history through our excellent lecture program featuring a wide variety of expert speakers. The program starts at 7:30pm with Museum staff presenting a historical artifact from the museum collection related to the lecture topic at each meeting.

2019

DECEMBER There is no HSSC Meeting in December. The program resumes in January.

2020

JANUARY 23 **Annual Show and Tell.** The Historical Society presents its annual evening of Show and Tell, where Society members and friends are invited to bring a local historical artifact, step forward and explain the history and meaning.

FEBRUARY 27 **History of the Regional Municipality of Niagara, by former Regional Councillor Don Alexander**

MARCH 26 **Speaker to be announced**

APRIL 23 **The Donut: A Canadian History, by Dr. Steve Penfold**

MAY 28 and JUNE 25 **Speakers to be announced**

HISTORY QUOTE

"I shall always be grateful for this curious love of history, allowing me to spend a lifetime looking back into the past, allowing me to learn from these large figures about the struggle for meaning for life."

- American biographer, historian, and political commentator **Doris Kearns Goodwin**
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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR SEPTEMBER 2019

The annual season for the Historical Society of St. Catharines starts every September and runs through to the final meeting of the season in June. The Historical Society endeavors to have something for everyone interested in local history. If your HSSC membership has lapsed, I urge you to renew it now. The Historical Society puts your membership dollars to work in our monthly lecture series and production of the HSSC newsletter. Members in good standing will receive the HSSC newsletter 4 times a year. The HSSC invests in research and support for projects that align with our mission of increasing knowledge and appreciation of St. Catharines and local area history.

Thank you for being a member and supporting the Historical Society of St. Catharines!

Membership dues can be paid at any HSSC Meeting or mail a cheque to:

The Historical Society of St. Catharines
P.O. Box 25017, 221 Glendale Avenue, Pen Centre
St. Catharines, Ontario, L2T 4C4

Make cheques payable to: The Historical Society of St. Catharines

- **Individual Membership: \$15**
- **Family Membership \$20**

Your membership information will not be shared with any other group or business. To receive your newsletter by email we ask that you provide your e-mail address on the membership form.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

- ☐ I would like to receive the Society Newsletter, meeting reminders and notices by e-mail
- ☐ I would like to receive the Society Newsletter by print