



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.

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March 2019 Newsletter

Inside this issue:

THE WINSOR CHASE HOUSE.....	1
FEBRUARY 28 MEETING: REBECCA CANN, City of St. Catharines Civic Art Collection	2
175 INTERESTING THINGS TO SEE IN ST. CATHARINES.....	3
THE “MYSTERIOUS MR. RAFFLES”	4
HISTORY QUOTE.....	8
THANK YOU FOR RENEWING YOUR HSSC MEMBERSHIP.....	9
LECTURE PROGRAM – MARCH 2019 to JUNE 2019.....	9
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ST. CATHARINES PRESENTS....	10



General and Marine Hospital

THE WINSOR CHASE HOUSE

The former St. Catharines General Hospital on Queenston Street is in its final stages of demolition. We offer a brief historic view of its origins at that site. In 1870, the St. Catharines General and Marine Hospital was established with the purchase of the grand family home of Winsor and Mary Chase. This location served local residents and was convenient to mariners passing through St. Catharines by way of the nearby 2nd Welland Canal. That first ‘cottage hospital’ provided a much needed medical care facility with

land for future growth. In 1874, the St. Catharines Training School and Nurses' Home was established there. The original building remained as the core structure of the hospital, standing until 1953 when the former Winsor Chase residence was demolished to make way for the Norris wing expansion. The old St. Catharines General Hospital was shuttered on March 24, 2013 with the opening of the new hospital at the Fourth Ave. site. Image of General and Marine Hospital with the former residence on the right, 142-144 Queenston Street, c.1910 courtesy of St. Catharines Library.

FEBRUARY 28 MEETING: REBECCA CANN, City of St. Catharines Civic Art Collection

Olivia Hope, Culture Coordinator of the City of St. Catharines, opened the presentation with a painting from the St. Catharines Civic Art Collection. “**St. Catharines, Upper Canada**” was painted by Joseph Sydney Hallam as part of a series of commissioned oil paintings inspired by works in the John Ross Robertson Collection of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library. The assignment was sponsored by the O’Keefe Brewing Company in 1945 and 1946 to encourage the purchase of Victory Bonds.

This painting was acquired into the Civic Arts collection in 2001 and was professionally treated, restored and re-framed by Thielsen Gallery in 2017 (cleaned, re-stretched, cracks filled and varnished).



The Civic Art Collection consists of approximately 215 individual pieces of public art and cultural property dating back to 1886. The pieces are located outdoors (including war memorials, murals, plaques and plinths) and indoors (including fine art and murals). As the former Cultural Services Supervisor for the City of St. Catharines, Rebecca Cann established and managed development of an inventory catalogue and maintenance program for the Civic Art Collection. She spent 17 years working with it, discovering it, learning more about its history and figuring out how to take care of it.

She led a well-paced presentation of some key outdoor installations from the Collection and provided interesting facts about the history, maintenance, and role in community life of some of the monuments, markers and tributes located throughout the city.

Ms. Cann is currently an arts consultant and instructor at the Centre for Arts & Cultural Studies, Brock University.

For an interactive map of Niagara’s outdoor art, click the link <https://www.artintheopen.ca/> and you can explore virtually hundreds of local art pieces, or plan your own journey of Art discovery.

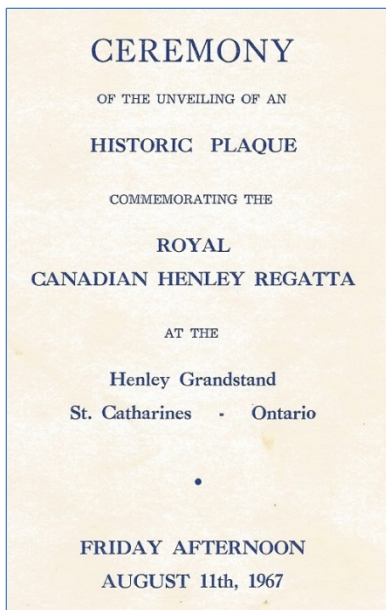
William Hamilton Merritt, by Alfred Howell, 1928, Bronze & Granite monument is located in Merritt Park.



175 INTERESTING THINGS TO SEE IN ST. CATHARINES

A series describing local historical emplacements, by Bill Stevens

THE ROYAL CANADIAN HENLEY REGATTA



The Royal Canadian Henley Regatta has been held in St. Catharines since 1903. On August 11, 1967 a ceremony was held to unveil an historic plaque at the grandstand entrance on Main Street in Port Dalhousie. The attached picture of the unveiling appeared in The St. Catharines Standard on August 12. Premier John Robarts on the right, Professor C. M. Johnston of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario, centre and Bob Welch our local M.P.P. on the left unveiled the plaque. At the time of the unveiling



Bob was Provincial Secretary and Minister of Citizenship. Robert S. K. "Bob" Welch was a past president of The Historical Society of St. Catharines in 1959, 1960 and part of 1961.

The plaque reads as follows: "The nearby waterway, part of the first Welland Canal constructed in 1824-29, is the course used for the annual Royal Canadian Henley Regatta. Competitive rowing became popular in Canada during the 1860's and 1870's, and in 1880 the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen was formed in Toronto. This body held an annual regatta for international oarsmen in various Canadian centres until, in 1903, Port Dalhousie was selected as the permanent site. This rowing event, inspired by the famous regatta held yearly at Henley-on-Thames in England, has become one of the largest in the world."

The "Henley" is indeed one of the largest regattas in the world with six full days of racing. The 2019 regatta starts Monday, August 5 with the Masters events, Tuesday evening is the Official Opening Ceremony at the grandstand, followed by five days of events ending Sunday, August 11.



"We're going to have to do something about this," exclaimed Premier Robarts, right, and help appears. Bob Welch, left, member for Lincoln, steadies the plaques while Prof. C. M. Johnston, centre, of McMaster University and

the Archeological and Historic Sites Board attempts to lift the drape which failed to slide off when Robarts pulled the cord.

—Staff photo

by Brian Narhi

A literary character and series of stories appeared in English and American magazines and books during the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods which became an overnight sensation. This character was an antihero named Arthur J. Raffles, who was described as a “gentleman thief,” an “amateur cracksman” (ie, a safe cracker and jewel thief who avoided capture and would literally rob from the rich to give to the poor.

The Raffles personality was the creation of Ernest William Hornung (1866-1921) who was the brother-in-law of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and the Raffles stories were second in popularity to Sherlock Holmes. Like Holmes, Raffles was a quick-witted master of disguise. The story of his exploits was narrated by Harry “Bunny” Manders who was the equivalent of Dr. Watson. Raffles appeared in no less than 26 short stories (printed between 1898 and 1909 in such magazines as “*Cassells*” and the “*Strand*”), two stage adaptations (1903 and 1905), and five photoplays filmed between 1905 and 1939. Actors of such stature as John Barrymore (1917), Ronald Colman (1930) and David Niven (1939) portrayed Raffles on screen, while the character actor Frank Morgan appeared as Manders. Olivia deHaviland was the romantic interest in the 1939 production. Raffles was later serialized on radio and television.

THE GRAND CHASE IS ON!

Sharp on the stroke of midnight last night, the Mysterious “Mr. Raffles” of The Standard, the perplexingly clever man in whom all St. Catharines and Vicinity is virtually interested, started on his sleuth-defying tour.

Can You Catch Him ?

You certainly can if you’ve ordinary shrewdness and brains. Study the Contest in all its features, read the account of “Raffles”’ personal experiences daily—read between the lines—comply with the simple conditions of the contest, and you will have a grand chance of being the lucky, lucky one.

‘Mr. Raffles’ Will Visit Roller Rink Tonight

Between the hours of 8 and 10 Tonight “Raffles” will visit the Roller Rink. Let every one get out and catch him in the attempt. He realizes he is up against a stiff proposition, yet stoutly maintains that he will successfully negotiate it.

AREN'T THESE PRIZES WORTH YOUR WHILE ?

STANDARD	\$50.00
R. M. BLACK (Druggist)	10.00
E. POOLE (Photographer)	20.00
J. S. SMITH (Jeweler)	15.00
DILLON & MOORE (Boots and Shoes)	15.00
A. W. MOORE (Hardware)	10.00
THE LORRAINE CANDY STORE	10.00
(For Merchants' Conditions—See Separate Ad's)	
Grand Total	\$150.00

The craze for ‘all things Raffles’ reached St. Catharines in November of 1908. In that year an ingenious contest was devised by L. Hayden O’Connor and George Felix Green in conjunction with the Burgoyne family and several downtown merchants.¹ The contest was intended not only to boost pre-Christmas sales, but to also increase subscriptions to the *St. Catharines Standard*. On November 17, 1908, the *Standard* ran a full-page advertisement announcing a \$50 reward “in gold” for the successful “capture

of the mysterious Mr. Raffles” who would roam the city streets during the ensuing week. The reward would be paid to any man, woman or child who could identify the “sleuth-defying” burglar. The suspect would begin his operations at midnight on November 23rd “when most good people are in bed.” He was described as a “smooth looking young man,” 5’10”, 154 lbs, with wavy dark brown hair and blue eyes. It was believed that he had a scar on his forehead and one chipped tooth. He would freely mingle and talk to the citizens, merchants and policemen in the downtown while attempting to conceal his identity. No makeup or facial disguises would be employed, although Raffles did have 33 different costumes. It was believed that Raffles would take the liberty of impersonating various “local personages.”

¹ Little is known of O’Connor. Green (1885-1950) appears to have been a native of England who resided in Toronto. He was described in early records as a “promoter.” He was married in December 1910 at St. Catharines to Desta A. Gibson (1895-1984.) Green later worked as a travelling salesman for the Monarch Typewriter Co., and as manager for the Canada Motor Car Co. In December 1932 he patented “U-Zit,” a mending paste and repairing substance which he manufactured and sold for a number of years. He and Desta are interred in Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

The contest rules were quite simple: if anyone thought that they had spotted Raffles they were to approach him, place their hand upon his right shoulder, and say: "You are the mysterious Mr. Raffles of the *St. Catharines Standard*."

Raffles was then obliged to acknowledge that he was indeed the culprit and to surrender himself into custody. The citizen who made the "arrest" was required to have a copy of that day's issue of the *Standard* in his possession in order to claim a \$10 prize. If the captor had previously taken out a three-month subscription then he/she would receive \$20; a six-month subscription would guarantee a \$30 prize, and a one-year subscription would pay \$50 "in gold." The sightings of Mr. Raffles would be published daily, and the fugitive himself would publish daily addresses to the readers providing clues as to where he might be seen. Raffles would turn himself in to the police if he had not been apprehended by the evening of November 28th. The notice concluded "Keep your eyes open for the smoothest looking man who ever attempted to present a smooth proposition to the people of St. Catharines." The "ladies" were especially encouraged to join in the chase "after one smooth man."

A different full-page ad was published on November 18th which announced that Raffles would "make good his escape from the vicinity of the *Standard*," and that he would avoid detection by "our local Scotland Yarders" through his "clever character impersonations." The first "letter" from Raffles to the readers was published on Nov. 19th, in which he stated that he had already been in the city since the previous Saturday in order to "make a survey of your fine little city." The letter was signed "R.C.S, the Mysterious Mr. Raffles."

As the "fever heat" over Mr. Raffles increased in the city, so, too, did the amount of the purse. The photographer, Edwin Poole, contributed an additional \$20 in gold to the prize money. His advertisement requested that patrons would stop by his studio for Christmas portraits or cabinet photos. Poole would offer his cash on a scale similar to that of the *Standard*: if at the time of the detection of Raffles the captor had with him a receipt from Poole for studio work dated during the time of the contest, then he/she would be eligible for a portion of the additional prize money in \$5 increments (ie, if Raffles was apprehended with the daily *Standard* plus a Poole receipt, the prize would be \$10 from the *Standard* and \$5 from Poole; a three month newspaper subscription would result in a \$20 prize from the *Standard* and \$10 from Poole &c.)

\$140 IN GOLD \$140

"Raffles"

Must Be Caught To-night

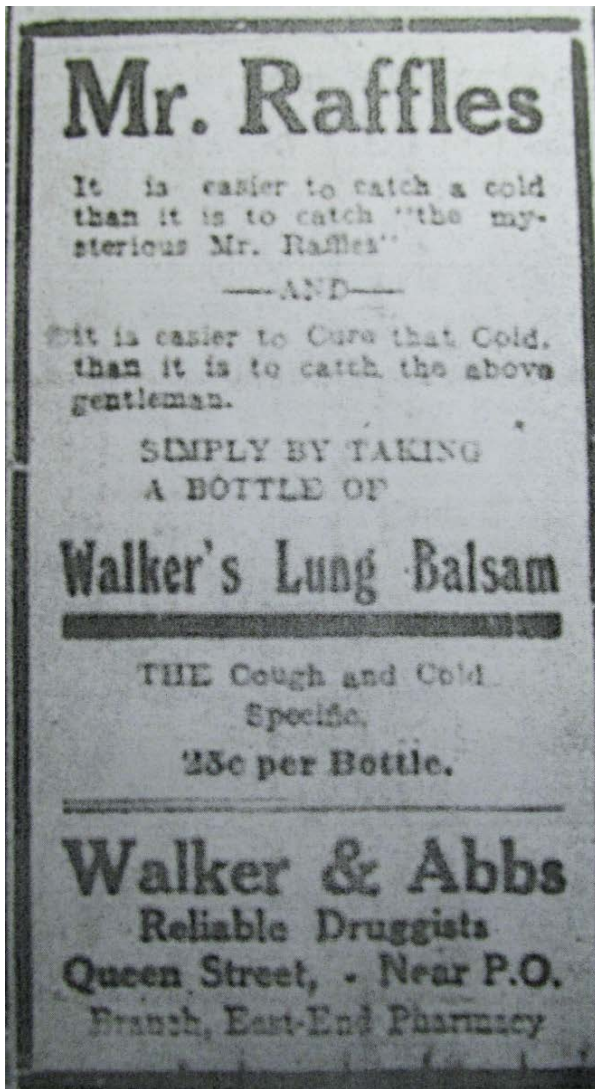
Will You Win?

VISIT ALL THE MERCHANTS AND WIN THEIR PRIZE.

STANDARD	\$50.00
R. M. BLACK (Druggist)	10.00
E. POOLE (Photographer)	20.00
J. S. SMITH (Jeweler)	15.00
DILLON & MOORE (Boots and Shoes)	15.00
A. W. MOORE (Hardware)	10.00
THE LORRAINE CANDY STORE	10.00
W. W. TYRRILL (Jeweller)	10.00
For Merchants' Conditions See Separate Ad's.	
Grand Total	\$140.00

"Raffles" will be on Exhibition at the Hippodrome Tonight.

By November 21st other merchants had joined the contest: Dillon & Moore (shoe store) offered an additional \$15 in gold if the successful captor had a receipt from their store; J.S. Smith (jeweller) offered \$15; A.W. Moore (hardware) \$10; the Lorraine Candy Store \$10; and R.M. Black (druggist) \$10. The total amount of the potential prize pool had increased to \$110 by November 21st, and to \$130 by November 23rd.



An advertisement for “lung balsam” sold by Walker and Abbs at their drug store declared that “it is easier to catch a cold than it is to catch the mysterious Mr. Raffles,” but by taking daily doses of the balsam a cough or cold would be easily cured. James D. Tait advertised clothing specials and “fine furs for Christmas giving” with the eye-catching headline “The Chase for Raffles,” but he did not offer up any prize money.

On November 24th the front page of the *Standard* published a declaration that Raffles had “made his escape at midnight” and that the contest was officially open. The declaration was witnessed by four respected businessmen: D.B. Crombie (later with the Niagara District News Bureau), R.M. Black (druggist), Henry Burgoyne (manager of the *Standard*), and A.W. Marquis (lawyer.) On that evening Raffles was expected to visit the Roller Rink at some point between 8 and 10 pm. The “mystery man” was not identified, and an additional \$10 was added to the prize money on November 25th by W.W. Tyrill (jeweller) for a grand total of \$140. The *Standard* anxiously reported that Raffles was still at large and that the “chase is getting warm.” A photograph of a man believed to be Raffles was displayed in the window of the King Edward Café on St. Paul Street, and it was believed that he would appear at the Grand Opera House on the following evening.

On November 26th Raffles was spotted on several of the downtown streets; an unsuccessful attempt was made to apprehend him but since the captor did not have a copy of the *Standard* with him at the time Raffles was set free. Moreover, the would-be captor did not use the proper salutation and touched Raffles on the wrong (left) shoulder.

At some point during the night Raffles impersonated an intoxicated individual hanging onto a lamp post, an ordinary working man on Chestnut Street, and called at various private homes in the downtown core. He spent part of the evening with one Mr. McGuire and handed him his card inscribed with the word “selffar.” McGuire unfortunately did not realize that this was name “Raffles” spelled backwards. The whereabouts of the fugitive were carefully monitored by his managers who were driving around the downtown in a Ford, and citizens were told to keep a sharp eye out for that automobile. Raffles made his escape that evening somewhere along Mary Street. He claimed, in another letter, to have twisted his ankle during a pursuit but that it would not stop him from making his rounds.

On November 27th Raffles did what any good tourist would do and visited Niagara Falls, and made stops in Thorold and Merriton on the way back to the city. The *Standard* reported that the poor fellow had had a most “strenuous day.”

On the evening of November 28th Raffles announced that he would appear on St. Paul Street in the vicinity of the Hippodrome theatre. This building was later renovated and was the location for many years of the Hoffman clothing store. The contest rules stipulated that Raffles had to be apprehended by someone before 8 pm on that night in order to claim the prize money.

The *Standard* reported with some relief that the elusive Raffles was finally caught (literally “tackled”) on St. Paul Street by a Mr. F.W. Barley. Unfortunately, Barley only had the daily edition of the *Standard* with him and he had not taken advantage of any of the other incentives offered by the downtown merchants; therefore, he was only able to claim the minimum prize of \$10.



Raffles was to be “exhibited” at the Hippodrome Theatre following his capture when he would present “a lecture on his experiences.” This special performance was offered in addition to a “big vaudeville bill.” Unfortunately, the *Standard* did not provide the exact identify of who “Raffles” was in real life. He was undoubtedly part of a touring vaudeville troupe, since the advertisement for his final appearance at the Hippodrome noted that the cost of admission to the event would be higher “on account of the enormous price asked for Mr. Raffles services.”

The contest must have created a great deal of excitement in the city and its vicinity and was a clever way to draw business into the downtown core. Due to an oversight in reporting on the part of the *Standard*, the identity of Raffles the “mystery man” (aside from his initials, R.C.S.), remains a mystery even to this day.

HISTORY QUOTE

“To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?”

— Marcus Tullius Cicero

THANK YOU FOR RENEWING YOUR HSSC MEMBERSHIP

Memberships for the current season were due in September 2018. If your HSSC membership has lapsed and you would like to renew it – now is the time! **Only \$10 per individual or \$15 for a family membership.** Mail your cheque payable to “Historical Society of St. Catharines” P.O. Box 25017, 221 Glendale Avenue, Pen Centre, St. Catharines, Ontario L2T 4C4, or see us at the monthly meetings. The Historical Society puts your membership dollars to work in our monthly lecture series and research and support for projects that align with our mission of increasing knowledge and appreciation of St. Catharines and local area history.

Paid HSSC memberships will receive the newsletter 4 times a year.

LECTURE PROGRAM – MARCH 2019 to JUNE 2019

Program Subject to Change

Join us at the **St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre** at 7:30pm 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. Museum staff often present a historical artifact from the museum collection related to the lecture topic at each meeting.

2019

MARCH 28 **Update on the ongoing 2-Year Study of the St. Catharine’s Shickluna Shipyards, by Dr. Kimberly E. Monk.**

APRIL 25 **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Postcards from Port Dalhousie, by Roger Bradshaw and John Burtniak.

The presentation represents a collaboration to produce a book on ‘Postcards from Port Dalhousie’. Utilizing John’s extensive collection, they have selected numerous vintage Port Dalhousie postcards to display and describe in book form. For selected postcards they have photographed the current scene to achieve a past and present view. Roger Bradshaw is the author of the self-published books ‘Historic Welland Canals’ and ‘Niagara’s War of 1812’ and the tour photographer on Canadian Battlefield Tours in Europe. John Burtniak is a historian, author, researcher, editor, collector and retired Librarian/Archivist at Brock University. He is active on various provincial and local historical associations.

MAY 23 **St. Paul Street Stories, by historian Nancy Cameron.** Stories of the Garden City’s most historic street. Tales of scoundrels and scandals, calamities and curiosities, murder and mystery, bootleggers, buried treasure, shipwrecks, spies, fugitives, fraudsters, and much more....”

JUNE 27 **Preservation of your Historical Treasures, by St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre Staff.** They will describe how to handle and store your valued historical objects.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ST. CATHARINES PRESENTS...

Dr. Kimberly Monk, Adjunct Professor, Brock University

“We DIG the Shickluna Shipyard: Toward Re-engaging St. Catharines’ Maritime Past”
an illustrated talk about the archaeological dig exploring the secret’s of Shickluna’s ship yard

St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre

1932 Welland Canals Pkwy.

St. Catharines

Thursday, March 28th at 7:30pm



This photo shows the barkentine *Valetta* when it was being built at Lewis Shickluna’s shipyard here in St. Catharines in 1864. Note: the workmen standing on the upper yardarm and in the rigging of the foremast! Persons interested in ships or ship building or the Welland Canal will want to come to the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre for this month’s meeting of the Historical Society of St. Catharines. Dr. Kimberly Monk of Brock University will give an illustrated talk updating us on the current archaeological investigation of the Shickluna shipyard, which was located on the west side of the Old Canal near the Burgoyne Bridge.

Doors open at 7:00 p.m., a brief Society meeting starts at 7:30 p.m.,
lecture follows immediately after that meeting. All are Welcome.

Free Admission