



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.

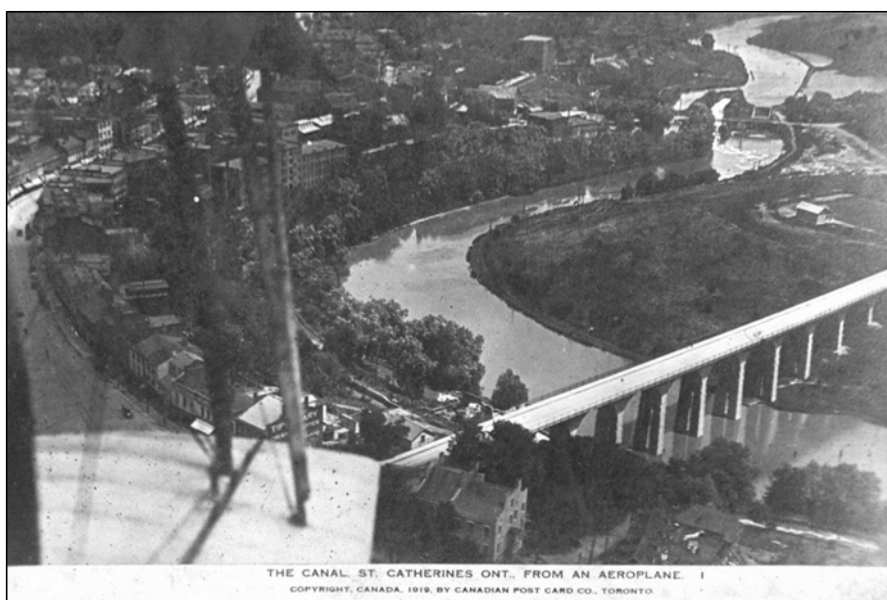
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September 2019 Newsletter

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100 YEARS AGO



This aerial photo postcard of St. Catharines circa 1919 gives us a unique perspective far above the downtown core. Looking beyond the wings of the biplane the photographer provides a view of St. Paul Street following the curve of the second Welland Canal, the original Glen Ridge bridge in the foreground and the low-level steel draw bridge at Lock 4 in the distance. The Glen Ridge bridge was demolished in 1955 and replaced in 1980 with the bridge we see today (albeit currently behind construction cones). The old Welland Canal section is now covered

up by the 406 highway, with present day Centennial Gardens located near the site of Lock 4. Despite a century of change, some downtown buildings in the photo are recognizable today, including the Canadian Hair Cloth building recently re-developed as the Brock University Marilyn Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts.

RECREATING HISTORY

Filming the Story of Madam CJ Walker in Downtown St. Catharines



For a few days in August, downtown St. Catharines was transformed to stand in as Indianapolis, Indiana, circa 1910. In the photograph above left, Kully's Original Sports Bar at 223 St. Paul Street is masquerading as a florist shop "Blooming" and on the right-hand side, beside the vacant Walter's Jewelry Store, is Hambrgr restaurant at 233 St. Paul Street now appearing as "Henderson's Pharmacy". In the photograph below, Kenzo Ramen at 200 St. Paul St has been disguised as "David and Sons Shoe Service Shop". A large telescopic boom lift slowly navigates down St. Paul to position an overhead light-diffusing screen above the filming location for a scene near the "Cablegram office" disguising the King of Trade at 216 St. Paul Street.



The contemporary storefronts along St. Paul Street between James St. and Carlisle were temporarily remodeled with old-fashioned signage and embellished with props that evoked a streetscape from a century ago. Costumed actors, horse-drawn carriages and vintage motorcars on dirt-strewn roads all added to the visual effect of the movie set. The empty lot that was the site of the Russell Hotel at the corner of James and St. Paul was re-worked as a farmer's market complete with livestock and vendor's stalls with wooden crates of fresh vegetables. The streets were closed to automobile traffic, though businesses remained open and pedestrians could move around with the actors and extras during the many breaks between filming. One gained a sense of the different era as you strolled along St. Paul Street.



This made-for-television movie is the biographical story of Madam C. J. Walker, America's first black self-made female millionaire, portrayed by the Academy award-winning actress Octavia Spencer. The series is planned to be released on Netflix next year. When filming was completed, the streets and storefronts of downtown St. Catharines were returned to their present-day appearance.



175 INTERESTING THINGS TO SEE IN ST. CATHARINES

A series describing local historical sites, by Bill Stevens

LOUIS SHICKLUNA



Louis Shickluna

As reported in the Society's *June 2019 Newsletter*, the Shickluna Shipyard is being "unearthed" in an archaeological dig. The man who owned the shipyard, Louis SHICKLUNA, is recognized with a provincial heritage plaque located on the west boulevard of Yates Street near the intersection with St. Paul Street West, overlooking the site of the shipyard on the west side of Twelve Mile Creek.

The plaque was unveiled on November 29, 1979 at a ceremony jointly sponsored by the St. Catharines Historical Museum and the St. Catharines and Lincoln Historical Society (now the Historical Society of St. Catharines). Colin E. Penketh, president (1978-1981) of the Historical Society was on hand to represent the Society. The formal unveiling was performed by another past president (1959-1960) of our Historical Society, the Hon. Robert S. K. Welch, Minister of Energy and Deputy Premier of Ontario and our local M.P.P. He was assisted by Duncan Maxwell, president of Port Weller Dry Docks. The Hon. "Bob" Welch and Mayor T. Roy Adams spoke to

the gathering that included several descendants. A reception was held at Rodman Hall Arts Centre following the unveiling.

The plaque reads as follows:

LOUIS SHICKLUNA 1808-1880

A prominent Canadian shipbuilder. Shickluna was born in Malta, where he worked before emigrating to North America. By 1835 he was engaged in ship construction at Youngstown, New York. Three years later, attracted by the traffic stimulated by the Welland Canal's completion in 1833, he purchased a shipyard on the Canal at St. Catharines. Shickluna steadily expanded his operations, which contributed significantly to the commercial prosperity of the region. Between 1838 and 1880 he directed the construction of over 140 schooners, barkentines, steamers and other vessels designed primarily for service on the Great Lakes, thereby promoting the development of inland navigation in Canada. Following Shickluna's death, his son Joseph continued to operate the St. Catharines shipyard until 1892. Erected by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, Ministry of Culture and Recreation.



Plaque with Kenneth Plenket, HSSC President, 1979

Louis SHICKLUNA was born on June 16, 1808 in Senglea, a city located in the Cottonera area in the eastern half of the Island of Malta. His parents were Joseph SCICLUNA (the original spelling of the family surname) and Terese FARRUGIA. Parish records of Senglea record his name as: Augustines Saviour Louis Michael Scicluna. Once he arrived in North America he became known as Louis Shickluna.

As a teenager he worked in the naval shipyard at Valetta where his father and grandfather were also employed. He left Malta in 1825 at the age of 17 and emigrated to New York City. He only stayed a short time in the United States before moving to work at a shipyard in Trois Rivieres, Quebec. While there he married Elizabeth Orr on November 17, 1829 at the Anglican Cathedral Holy Trinity Church. Louis then moved to Ontario, first to Oakville in 1832 and then to Niagara On-The-Lake. In 1834 he moved to Youngstown, New York where he studied drafting and marine architecture. While in Youngstown, Louis and Elizabeth had their first child, Henry born July 4, 1836. Later in 1836 the family moved to St. Catharines. In 1838 at the age of 30, Louis Shickluna leased the Russell Armington shipyard in St. Catharines from William Hamilton Merritt, purchasing it outright in 1845.

Their son Louis was born June 2, 1839, (Young Louis became a Catholic priest and was known as Brother Adrian). His wife Elizabeth died on October 6, 1839 at the age of 24 years. He married again on August 24, 1841 to Mary Ann Malone (the widow of Thomas Burke). Louis and Mary Ann had children: Joseph (1842-1918), John (1844-1849), George (c1848-1921) and Theresa (1856-1882). Second wife Mary Ann died on May 27, 1855.

Louis was a faithful member of the Roman Catholic Church . He was civic minded and was a Town of St. Catharines councillor for two one year terms, 1851 and 1852.

He sold the shipyard in 1856 to Donaldson and Andrews only to repurchase it from them in 1857. Besides new ship construction the shipyard also repaired many other ships. His ships were world class in design and quality. He also built several wharves and buildings around Niagara.

In the 1861 census for St. Thomas Ward, St. Catharines, the Shickluna household consisted of Louis and three of his children: Joseph (18), George (13) and Theresa (11). The census also shows that he had a two storey brick house, 7 horses, 1 cow, 2 carriages, 3 acres of land, \$175,000 in capital and employed 75 people.

Louis married a third time on June 19, 1856 to Mary Stephenson. Mary died in 1859. On November 30, 1862 Louis married Mary Ann DUNN (parents John DUNN and Dorothea TAYLOR) and together they had a daughter Regina Shickluna (born 1865).

The October 22, 1863 *Constitutional* newspaper contains an article regarding an accident that Shickluna suffered while returning from Niagara. He was thrown from his buggy near 10-mile Creek and suffered severe injuries but was said to be recovering.

In May 1871 he visited Malta. Before his departure the citizens of St. Catharines presented him with a testimonial scroll signed by 97 citizens along with a gold watch and chain. (A copy of the scroll is located in Special Collections at the Library).



Louis Shickluna monument behind the monument for three children of his son Joseph. photo by Bill Stevens, June 22, 2019

Louis died in St. Catharines at 3 am on Saturday, April 24, 1880 at the age of 71 years. His Ontario Death Registration (#068709) indicates that he died due to Chronic Rheumatism. The attending physician and informant was Dr. Mack. Louis was buried in Old Section C of Victoria Lawn Cemetery, St. Catharines. He was survived by his wife, 4 sons and 2 daughters. Mary Ann Shickluna died March 18, 1913 and is buried beside Louis.

An obituary attributed to the *St. Catharines Journal* appeared in *The (Toronto) Globe* on April 28, 1880 which reads as follows:

Louis Shickluna was a native of the Island of Malta, and came to St. Catharines when this place was almost an embryo. He established here the first shipbuilding establishment, and thus laid the foundation for some of the prosperity and growth of the city. His pluck, perseverance, and ability were very great, and no obstacles seemed too great for him to surmount. His fame as a shipbuilder soon spread abroad, and every inland sea soon became enlivened with vessels constructed at his shipyard. This industry, employing an army of men, added much to the material wealth of the place, which soon took first rank as a marine centre. Mr. Shickluna was ever alive to the progress and advancement of his handicraft, and kept abreast with it always

bearing in mind, that solidity and strength were of equal importance to speed and graceful model. For the past few years the commercial depression has much affected the shipping interest, and the yard has not been so busy as in times past. Mr. Shickluna was seventy- two years of age. He was a man of iron constitution, the great trouble which afflicted him being rheumatism. He battled against its insidious attacks for a long time, and finally made a voyage to Malta in order to recuperate. In this he was successful, but he had not conquered the enemy, only kept it at bay. He had attacks of more or less severity from time to time, until at length rheumatism attacked his head and took him off. Deceased was married four times, we believe, and leaves a wife, four sons, two daughters, to mourn the loss of a kind husband and father.

Louis' will dated August 2, 1878 was probated May 20, 1880. His will leaves a sizeable estate of lands and monies, mainly to his wife Mary Ann Shickluna and in trust to his daughter Regenia (sic). His son George, step-daughter Mrs. John Goslin (nee Eleanor Burke), son Joseph and daughter Teresa Sullivan also received lands or monies. Other family members living in Malta were named in the will: brothers Michael, Jean Baptiste and sister Victoria.

SHIPYARD UPDATE – DIG THIS!

The historic Shickluna Shipyard was the site of a joint initiative by faculty at Brock & McMaster Universities this summer. An archaeological field school was conducted and the public was invited to get a first-hand view of the site at an open house event in August. Over 3000 individual surface and context finds were documented.

LECTURE PROGRAM – SEPTEMBER 2019 to JUNE 2020

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 present a historical artifact from the museum collection related to the lecture topic at each meeting.

2019

SEPTEMBER 26 **The Story of a Pear: How a Heritage Fruit Lives On, by Journalist and Author Tiffany Mayer.**

OCTOBER 24 **History of the Mack Schools of Nursing, by alumni Lynda Wilson and Carol Dueck.**

NOVEMBER 28 **The Great War and Effects on St. Catharines, by historian Wes Turner.**

DECEMBER There is no HSSC Meeting in December

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 A talk on the 100th year anniversary of Edith Cavel School, by David Flack

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

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

GENEOLOGY FAIR – OCTOBER 5



The 1st Genealogy Fair at the St. Catharines Central Library at 54 Church St. is scheduled for **Saturday October 5 from 9am to 4pm**. Discover more about finding your roots with a range of related topics ranging from DNA testing to working with Land Registry records. There will be speakers, Q&A sessions with family history research volunteers from the Niagara Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society and the Mayholme Foundation. The day includes children's programs, exhibitor's tables and door prizes. Please register online in advance to attend the speaker sessions: <http://www.stcatharines.library.on.ca/index.php/local-history/genealogy-fair>

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR SEPTEMBER 2019 through AUGUST 2020

The upcoming season promises to have something for everyone interested in local history. If your HSSC membership has lapsed and you would like to renew it – now is the time! 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. HSSC members will receive the newsletter 4 times a year.

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