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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.

Our website is: http://stcatharineshistory.wordpress.com

September 2010 Newsletter

UPCOMING PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

Our monthly meetings for all members and their guests are held at the St. Catharines Museum, Lock 3. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. The museum is also open at that time so that members and guests may view current exhibits. The Society meeting starts a 7:30 sharp. Reminder: as our members are inside the Burgoyne Room and unable to monitor those entering the Museum, the Museum's door will be locked at approximately 7:45 p.m. If you are late, ring the doorbell to the right of the main doors.

Saturday October 23: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Society is participating in a Literary and Heritage Book Fair at the St. Catharines Centennial Public Library.

Monday October 25: Municipal elections. As a Canadian Citizen it is your right and responsibility to vote in all elections. As a person interested in history, you know that on some occasions one vote can make a difference as who is elected and who is not. REMEMBER -- EVERY VOTE COUNTS.

Thursday October 28: At the St. Catharines Museum, Tom Malcomson of George Brown College, a military historian, will talk about a completely unique view of how the Brock Monument was designed and has called his talk **"Duelling Columns: Horatio Nelson vs. Isaac Brock, Parallel Monuments a World Apart."** Tom is the brother of the late Bob Malcomson and they co-authored a book on the War of 1812 together. Tom is a very engaging speaker.

Thursday November 25: This is an expanded version of our popular "Show and Tell" night. The evening will be given over to anyone who wishes to display artefacts, comments and anecdotes that are not just related to Niagara, but a larger sphere. So open up those trunks, pillage that attic, dig up something of interest from your family *store* and share it with others.

The Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Ministry of Culture

80th Anniversary of the Opening of the Fourth Welland Canal November 22, 1930

by Roger Bradshaw

As work on the Fourth Canal neared completion, various sections were diverted from the Third Canal. The following is the sequence by which the Fourth Canal was brought into service:
* Control Lock 8 at Port Colborne was opened by the passage of S.S. Meaford, Charles Dick, Hastings and Northton, locked together on September 16, 1929.

* Locks 1,2 & 3 were placed into commission, for vessels drawing up to a 14 feet draught, with the passage of S.S. Georgian (250 feet long, 14 feet draught) on April 21, 1930. This section of the canal was brought into service as far as the crossing of the Third Canal, above Lock 3. Up bound vessels were then turned into the Third Canal, utilizing Locks 11 thru 24. Ships then entered the Fourth Canal through the guard gate at Thorold (south of Lock 7). The Procedure was reversed for down bound traffic. This made Port Weller the northern terminus, replacing Port Dalhousie, and cutting out the St. Catharines portion of the Third Canal from Port Dalhousie to Lock 10.
(Note: The Guard Gates and Bridge #9 (Ormond Street) were demolished and the canal widened 40 years later.)

*Locks 4,5,6 & 7 - By September 1930 work had progressed on the flight locks to allow down bound vessels passage for the first time. Up bound traffic continued to use the Third Canal Locks 11 thru 24. By **November 22, 1930** the entire ship canal was fully operational for St. Lawrence size vessels drawing up to an 18 feet draught on this date. The last vessel the S.S. ILI 102 passed through Locks 11 to 24 of the Third Canal which was thenceforth decommissioned.

* Official Opening - By the summer of 1932, the permissible draught had been increased to 21 feet. This set the stage for the largest Upper Lakes vessel, at that time, the S.S. Lemoyne (length 633 feet, draught 19 feet - 6 inches) to make history. On Saturday, August 6, 1932, the Welland Ship Canal was officially opened by his Excellency the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Bessborough, Governor-General of Canada, in the presence of many delegates to the British Empire Economic Conference which was at the time assembled in Ottawa. The opening ceremony took place at the north end of the centre wall of Lock #6. The ceremony was radio-broadcast throughout Canada and the United States. At the conclusion of the addresses, His Excellency officially opened the canal with these words: "It is a privilege to dedicate this canal to the trade of the world. I hereby declare the Welland Ship Canal open to the Commerce of the world." The upper gates were then opened and the S.S. Lemoyne, carrying 530,000 bushels of wheat, sailed into history.

We in the Niagara Peninsula are fortunate to have this marvel of engineering in our backyard.

Source: *" The Welland Ship Canal 1913-1933"* by Major P.J. Cowan. This Engineering book was published in 1935, in collaboration with officials of the Department of Railways and Canals.

In Memoriam John N. Jackson (1928 – 2010)

The Board of Directors of the Society were saddened to receive the news that John Jackson, a long-time Society member and a friend to many, had passed away on March 19th, 2010. John joined the Brock University faculty in 1965, as founding head of the Geography Department. He retired after 25 years of teaching and was honoured with the title of Professor Emeritus.

John's particular focus in his teaching, research and writing – his abiding interest – was the Niagara peninsula and, as a geographer, he recognized the way that geography, the shape of land as found and transformed by human intervention, helped determine the history of the region.

John's research and writing included in particular the study of the evolution of the City of St. Catharines and other canal-side communities, the impact of the Welland Canals on local and regional settlement and development patterns, the evolution of local government, the effect of railways and roads, issues of land use (and abuse), and various other related and inter-related aspects that have shaped and changed our Niagara.

John was a prolific writer on these various topics and during his career produced upwards of 50 various reports, studies, articles, books (several co-authored), commentaries and submissions. And every person working in these fields refers to his writing regularly, to see what John said on this or that particular subject or point of historical fact or interpretation.

John was actively involved with the annual Niagara Peninsula History Conference from its founding, as co-organizer, speaker and tour guide. His university colleagues paid him the high tribute for his research and writing by compiling a collection of essays dealing with the Niagara Peninsula, dedicated to him and published by a Canadian university press.

As well, countless times, John spoke to historical societies and other organizations about the city and region, about the canals, about local government, and about all the other subjects that interested him. John especially enjoyed leading walking and bus tours around the Niagara Peninsula.

John has left us a bounteous legacy and we are grateful. We will not soon see his like.

by John Burtniak, President, The Historical Society of St. Catharines

NEWSLETTER NOTES

The Historical Society of St. Catharines Newsletter is published up to 4 times per year. The purpose is to inform the membership of issues pertaining to the Society and items of historical interest. Comments and queries should be directed to the Society's postal address. Opinions and comments expressed in the Newsletter are of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society. Subscription to the Newsletter is by paid membership only.

Annual Membership dues to the Society are: Individuals $10.00 Family -- $15.00

(note: Membership is from September to August. Families receive only one newsletter)

This newsletter was prepared collaboratively by Gail Benjafield, John Calvert and Bill Stevens

Membership Renewal Reminder

Please renew my/our membership in the Society as: Individual _____ Family:_____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **e-mail:** _____

Annual Membership dues to the Society are: Individuals $10.00 Family -- $15.00

Enclosed please find a cheque/money order in the amount of $ _____

Please make you cheque or money order payable to:
The Historical Society of St. Catharines,
P.O. Box 25017, 221 Glendale Avenue, Pen Centre,
St. Catharines, Ontario L2T 4C4

For those who would like to receive Society email reminders of upcoming programmes or local historical events, we are preparing an 'Undisclosed Recipient' list by email. If you wish to participate, please state your e-mail address above and state YES _____ or NO _____.

The Society has decided to offer the Newsletter by 3 different methods. Starting with the December 2010 Newsletter you can receive the Newsletter by:

Regular mail only	YES _____	NO _____
E-mail only	YES _____	NO _____
Both regular mail and e-mail	YES _____	NO _____

Please clearly state your email address above

We would like to know more about you and your interests. Please answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper and return with your subscription or at the next general meeting.

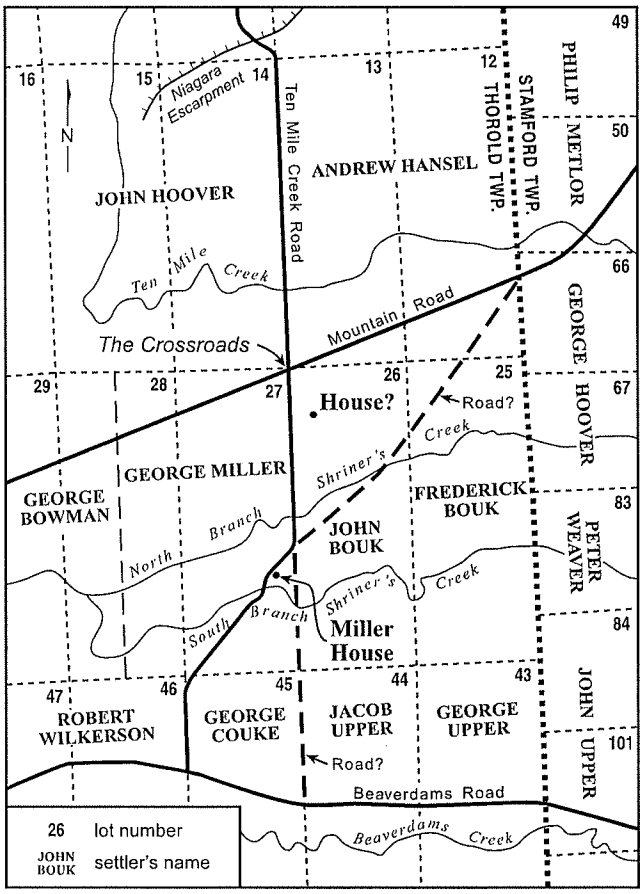
1. What do you like best about the society newsletter? Do you want longer articles, shorter articles, more information on Niagara historical events? What?

2. We welcome your suggestions for future programme ideas. Please tell us what kinds of things you would like to know more about.

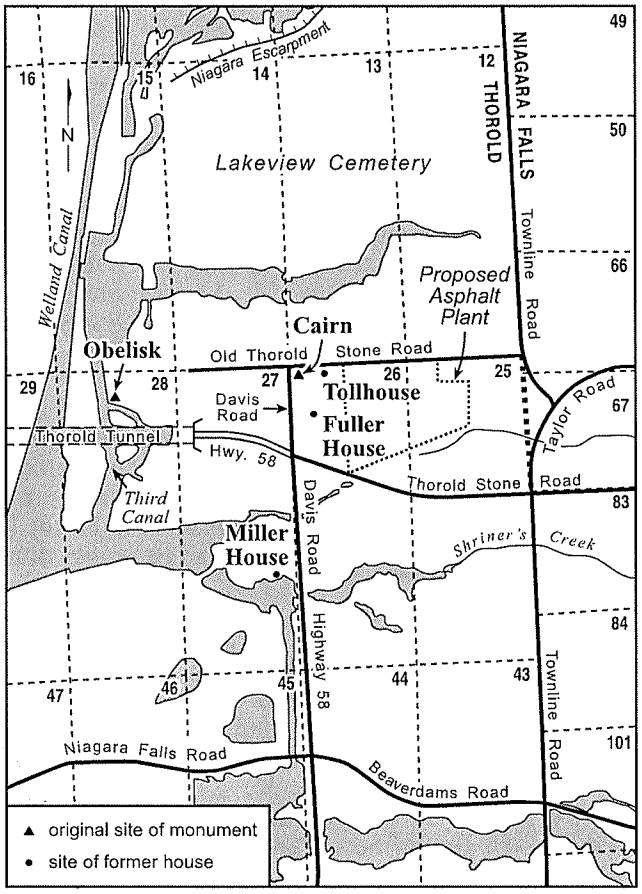
3. Do you have a special historical interest upon which you have done extensive research or have artefacts that would be of interest to other Society Members? Would you be interested in offering your services for either a short presentation (5 to 10 minutes) or a full presentation (45 minutes)? Please state what you would like to present.

Looking back... with Alun Hughes

THE AMERICAN SURRENDER AT BEAVERDAMS



The Beaverdams battlefield in 1813



The Beaverdams battlefield today

The basic facts of the Battle of Beaverdams are not in dispute. On May 27, 1813, just a year into the War of 1812, the Americans had captured Fort George and the village of Niagara, and the British fell back to the head of Lake Ontario. A week later the Americans marched west, but were defeated at Stoney Creek and retreated to Fort George. By the third week of June the British had re-entered the Niagara Peninsula and established three forward positions: at Twenty Mile Creek, Ten Mile Creek and the DeCew House in Thorold. In command at the DeCew House was Lieutenant James FitzGibbon, with about 50 men from the 49th Regiment and a band of Mohawk warriors from the Grand River. Another party of natives (Caughnawaga from Lower Canada) was with Major Peter DeHaren on the Ten Mile Creek below the Niagara Escarpment.

The Americans resolved to fight back, and on June 23 Lieutenant Colonel Charles Boerstler assembled a force of about 600 soldiers (mainly of the 14th Regiment) for an attack on the DeCew House. They left Fort George in the early evening, reaching Queenston at eleven. They remained there overnight and resumed their march at first light on the 24th. At St. Davids they were sighted by native scouts, who promptly conveyed warnings to DeHaren and FitzGibbon. (Of course, FitzGibbon had already been warned of the American plan by Laura Secord late on the 22nd, but when the enemy did not appear by morning he relaxed his guard.)

At a point beyond St. Davids the Americans ascended the Escarpment and continued along Mountain Road towards the DeCew House, only to be ambushed by a force of about 450 Mohawk and Caughnawaga warriors hiding in the beechwoods of northeastern Thorold Township, about two miles from the village of Beaverdams. There ensued a three-hour battle that ended in an American defeat. Virtually all the fighting on the British side was done by natives, with FitzGibbon and DeHaren arriving only in time accept Boerstler's surrender.

That much is certain, but the details of the battle are another matter. Of all the major encounters in the Niagara Peninsula between 1812 and 1814 the Battle of Beaverdams (also known as the Fight in the Beechwoods) is the least understood. Queenston Heights, Stoney Creek, Chippawa and Lundy's Lane have all been fully analyzed and described, whereas many questions remain about Beaverdams.

The Battlefield

Where exactly the battle began, how the fighting progressed, and — the focus of this article — where the American surrender took place are all uncertain. Part of the problem is that it was not a relatively static, European-style encounter between two armies. Rather it was a fluid affair extending over some distance, pitting a long column of American troops against native warriors fighting in guerilla fashion from the woods. There is also the problem that contemporary reports of the battle are unclear or inconsistent and mention few identifiable landmarks. Nevertheless, the consensus is that the battle took place in and around lots 14, 15, 27 and 28 in Thorold Township, as shown on the foregoing maps of the battlefield in 1813 and at the present day.

Important features depicted on the 1813 map are the 100-acre lots, numbered and marked with the settlers' names, two houses, and the original stream and road networks. The American advance was along Mountain Road, which, as it left lot 13 for lot 27, crossed Ten Mile Creek Road leading north to the village of Ten Mile Creek or Brown's (now Homer). This stretch of Mountain Road was abandoned well over a century ago (though its line is still visible on airphotos taken in the 1930s), but the crossroads itself — a key site in the Battle of Beaverdams — is approximated by the present-day junction of Old Thorold Stone Road and Davis Road.

(To avoid complications from now on, this location will simply be called the crossroads, for not only have the roads changed, but so have their names. Thus prior to 1968 Old Thorold Stone Road was plain Thorold Stone Road, and over time Davis Road has had three other names — Ten Mile Creek Road, Homer Road and Cemetery Road.)

A house may have stood in lot 26 just south-east of the crossroads. Later this was the site of the Bishop Fuller House, or Beechlands, which is known to have incorporated an older building; some claim it dated from 1809, but this is unproven. A second house that definitely did exist in 1813 was George Miller's farmhouse on Ten Mile Creek Road about a quarter of a mile south of the crossroads.

(The map shows Ten Mile Creek Road bending south-west at the Miller House, but it may also have run south along the lot line. Indeed, some sources refer to the road alongside the house as just a by-road, though evidence does exist to the contrary. There is similar uncertainty about a possible road running north-east to Mountain Road.)

Miller's house sat between two west-flowing branches of what was later called Shriner's Creek (named for Daniel Shriner, who bought lot 27 from Miller in 1826). Further north, towards today's Lakeview Cemetery, Ten Mile Creek also flowed westward before making a sudden northerly turn to descend the Niagara Escarpment through a ravine and over a 40-foot waterfall (since obliterated by the Welland Canal). For the most part, however, the 1813 landscape would have consisted of shallow valleys trending east–west, with steeper slopes only where meandering streams had undercut the valley sides.

As is clear from the present-day map, the landscape has changed drastically since then, and little of the battlefield remains unaffected. Change began in the 1820s with excavation of the First Welland Canal, which though it ran well to the west caused the flooding of Shriner's Creek as far as the Miller House. Half a century later the Third Canal sliced through the area, and was followed soon after by the Niagara Central Railway (later the NS&T) en route to Niagara Falls, though the tracks were torn up in the 1950s. The 20th century brought the Fourth Welland Canal, and with it a dock, industry, landfill and the flooding of Ten Mile Creek. The most recent development, in the 1960s, was construction of the Thorold Tunnel.

The Missing Monuments

There have been less obvious changes too, such as the loss of houses and the erection and removal of two commemorative monuments that are hugely significant in the battlefield narrative. (The second map shows the former locations of these features.)

The obelisk on the battlefield

In 1874 a limestone obelisk was erected at the spot where the bodies of 16 American soldiers killed in the conflict were found during excavation of the Third Canal. Half a century later in 1923 the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada placed a stone cairn at the crossroads, thereby designating the battlefield as a National Historic Site. The cairn stood on what was then the main route between Thorold and Niagara Falls, but the obelisk lay in an isolated and largely inaccessible spot. Concern over this was voiced as early as the 1930s, and in particular prior to 1950, when Thorold celebrated 100 and 75 years of its incorporation as a village and town. But little happened until 1965, when, with the building of the Thorold Tunnel, the obelisk was relocated to Lakeview Cemetery. Then ten years later both it and the cairn were moved to the new Battle of Beaverdams Park in downtown Thorold, in part no doubt to enhance the park but probably also because they lay on the line of a proposed (but never built) Fifth Welland Canal.

In the 19th century the Battle of Beaverdams had been the principal source of Thorold pride, especially after the formation of the Thorold and Beaverdams Historical Society in 1894 (the "Beaverdams" in the name refers to the battle, not the village). Commemorations were held from time to time at the DeCew House and the battlefield, and in 1914 the obelisk was the focus of a major centennial celebration (a year late, because ironically no-one thought to do anything in 1913). At that time the battlefield was split by the Third Welland Canal but was otherwise little changed, for government policy prohibited canal-side industrial development. There was even talk of establishing a national park, but aside from the erection of the federal cairn in 1923 nothing was done.

Since that time the Battle of Beaverdams has receded from public consciousness, partly because canal, tunnel and industrial developments have razed more and more of the battlefield, and partly because the Fourth Canal itself, with its imposing twin flight locks, has given Thoroldites something else to boast about. Relocation of the monuments, especially the federal cairn, has not helped, for the battlefield is no longer marked in any way. Granted, the monuments are highly visible in downtown Thorold, but having them in "Battle of Beaverdams Park" only adds to the confusion as to where the fighting took place.

The Asphalt Plant Debate

For a brief period in the early 1990s, however, Thorold's attention became focussed once again on the battlefield, this as a result of a proposal to build an asphalt plant on 24 acres of land just east of the Bishop Fuller House.

The Bishop Fuller House

The city planning committee endorsed the proposal (against the advice of the city planner), as did the mayor and regional councillor, but Thorold council deemed otherwise and voted it down. They were persuaded by representations from the local heritage community, which was fiercely opposed to the idea and unmoved by the asphalt company's offer to put a new roof on the Fuller House, which had been standing empty for some time, and to make it the centrepiece of a two-acre park. "Historians win latest Battle of Beaverdams" read the triumphant headline in *The Standard* on March 18, 1992.

The argument that carried the day was not just that the land was part of the battlefield, but that a key event — the American surrender — took place where the Fuller House stood. But no sooner did council reach its decision than the debate was re-ignited, this following Thorold resident Keith Dewar's insistence that the surrender took place further south — at the site of the Miller House. Dewar was writing a book about the battle, and asserted that he had conclusive proof for his claim (as of course did members of the heritage community who argued otherwise).

In the end it did not matter because the asphalt company abandoned its plans to build alongside the Fuller House, and instead sought a site on Seaway land next to the Fourth Canal. But there were objections to this also, from the heritage community since it was part of the battlefield, from the Six Nations whose "ancestors died and spilled blood on that territory," and from Thorold residents across the canal who predicted noise and odour problems. Eventually the issue was taken to the Ontario Municipal Board, which found for the company.

The proposed asphalt plant alongside the Fuller House was one change to the Beaverdams battlefield that fortunately never transpired. But it did serve to highlight an important issue — the precarious fate of historic properties like the Fuller House. (This was the home of Thomas Brock Fuller, who came to Thorold in 1840 as rector of St. Peter's Church, and later of St. John's, and in 1875 became first Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara.) For a time there was serious talk of restoring the house and having it formally designated, especially after the nearby tollhouse was destroyed by fire in October 1993. But all came to naught in April 1994 when the house itself burned down. The cause of the fires has never been established, though arson was suspected at least for the tollhouse.

Five years later Thorold city council hammered the final nail in the heritage coffin by rezoning a large piece of lots 25 and 26, including the Fuller land, from agricultural to industrial/commercial, this with the view of creating a "gateway" into Thorold — not, as many would have preferred, a distinctive entranceway showcasing the battlefield and Thorold's storied past, but most likely (development has yet to occur) a nondescript commercial strip so typical of the approaches to many cities.

The Surrender

Though the asphalt plant debate left the question of the surrender site unresolved, the basic facts of the surrender itself, like those of the battle, are not in dispute. The conflict had raged for over two hours, mainly along and to the north of Mountain Road, but also on land to the south. The Americans were getting the worst of it, and Boerstler gave orders to fall back to a site on open farmland south of the

crossroads. The natives continued to harass them as they regrouped, but were constrained by the lack of forest cover nearby. Boerstler's plan was to charge up Ten Mile Creek Road in an attempt to regain Mountain Road, and then retreat to Fort George, but before he could act James FitzGibbon suddenly came riding down the road carrying a white flag.

Earlier FitzGibbon and the 49th had remained at the DeCew House to defend against a direct attack. Hearing gunfire, FitzGibbon rode out on the road to St. Davids to reconnoitre. Seeing the Americans moving onto Mountain Road, he sent instructions back to the house to muster his troops, and he may have witnessed the native ambush from a nearby rise of land. By the time his men arrived the battle was largely over — the cause of the delay is unknown — and they "occupied in force" the Mountain Road to prevent an American retreat. But FitzGibbon's options were limited, for he had barely 50 soldiers and some natives were dispersing, so when told (wrongly) that enemy reinforcements were on their way he hatched a bold plan to force a surrender.

Midway between the crossroads and the American position FitzGibbon was met by an American officer, also carrying a white flag. In the first of several interchanges at that spot FitzGibbon asserted that the Americans were outnumbered and that he might not be able to control the native warriors expected to arrive any moment from the north-west. The Americans should surrender to avoid a wholesale slaughter. Boerstler's immediate reaction was to refuse, declaring he would never surrender to an enemy he could not see. FitzGibbon responded by offering the Americans a chance to inspect his force, subject to approval by his superior officer, DeHaren. This was a very risky ploy, for there were no natives coming, the Americans were not outnumbered and DeHaren was not even there.

Fortunately there arrived on the scene a group of dragoons headed by Captain John Hall, who agreed to impersonate DeHaren, and when Boerstler acquiesced to FitzGibbon's offer Hall denied the request as highly improper. Boerstler was left in a hopeless situation. His troops were exhausted, they were depleted by deaths, injuries and defections, and their ammunition was almost all gone. They were in no position to face an onslaught by fresh native warriors, and so Boerstler capitulated. FitzGibbon's deception had worked, though it was almost undone at the last minute by the arrival of DeHaren, who unwittingly began to negotiate a surrender of his own. However, a quiet word from FitzGibbon saved the day, and the terms of surrender already agreed upon were signed. (Boerstler's reaction on learning that he had been thoroughly duped is not known.)

The Sources

But where exactly did this surrender take place? Was it at the Fuller site, as most of those involved in the asphalt plant debate believed? Or was Dewar correct in saying it took place further south on the Miller farm? Ultimately the only way to resolve this question is to delve into the written source material, of which, as it happens, there is no shortage.

Several key documents date from 1813, the year of the battle, or from soon thereafter. They include statements by the likes of FitzGibbon, Boerstler and native leaders Dominique Ducharme and William Kerr, as well as accounts by other participants in the battle. Among these is the diary of Charles Askin, a militiaman who fought on the British side, and the journal of Isaac Roach, one of Boerstler's officers. There are also reports written by persons who did not take part but would have learned the details soon after. One such is William Hamilton Merritt, who arrived just after the surrender and escorted the American prisoners westward into captivity. Others include William Claus of the Indian Department, and John Norton, the famous Cherokee warrior. Descriptions of the battle, some quite detailed, were also carried in contemporary newspapers.

In 1815 the American military held an inquiry into Boerstler's conduct at Beaverdams, and the testimony of officers who served under him yields valuable insight. (He was, incidentally, vindicated.) From the 1820s we have the claims for war losses submitted by local settlers, losses caused both by American and British forces, some of which contain very relevant facts. Then in 1836 John Armstrong, former U.S. Secretary of War, published a statement, ostensibly by Boerstler (who by then had died), in *Notices of the War of 1812.* This elicited a lengthy rebuttal from Cyrenius Chapin, leader of the so-called Forty Thieves, who had wreaked havoc in the Peninsula before playing a somewhat controversial role in the Battle of Beaverdams.

The last two examples illustrate a major problem with these primary documents, the fact that they are often very contradictory. Some of the differences are simply due to chance, some (as with Boerstler and Chapin) are deliberate, and some are inexplicable, as with Roach's critical remarks about Boerstler in his journal compared to his positive comments at the Boerstler court of inquiry. None of this makes the battle any easier to understand. It does not help either that transcriptions of these documents, as in Ernest Cruikshank's *Documentary History of the Campaigns upon the Niagara Frontier,* are not always complete or error-free.

There is a great deal of later material relating to the battle, but it is possible to mention only a few items here. Important 19th-century works include Benson Lossing's *A Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812,* Ernest Cruikshank's *The Fight in the Beechwoods*, Mary Agnes FitzGibbon's *A Veteran of 1812,* and some local histories. There is extensive correspondence from the 1920s into the '50s about the cairn and obelisk involving the Historic Sites and

Monuments Board of Canada. Most recently, starting in 1969, we have a report on the Fuller House by restoration architect Peter Stokes, an analysis of the battlefield site by David McConnell of Parks Canada, Keith Dewar's book *The Battle of Beaverdams* and an unpublished manuscript by historian Robert Malcomson, as well as the material generated by the asphalt plant debate (including an important report by Dennis Gannon *et al.).*

The Case for the Fuller House

Some opponents of the asphalt plant placed great store in the fact that the federal cairn was located near the Fuller House. At first sight this does seem significant, but further investigation suggests otherwise. In 1921, when the Historic Sites and Monuments Board first proposed a cairn, the site it had in mind was a mile and a half to the north-east, at the intersection of Mountain and Beechwood Roads in Stamford Township. This was the recommendation of Board chair Ernest Cruikshank, who claimed it marked the centre of the battlefield. Thorold did not take kindly to the prospect of Stamford appropriating what had always been Thorold's battle, and town clerk Donald Munro proposed an alternative "centre" at the crossroads. Surprisingly, though he did not change his opinion, Cruikshank gave way, stating that the new site had "the great, and perhaps paramount, advantage of being ... on the main highway ... used by motorists and tourists." Though Cruikshank later spoke of the cairn as marking "the final phase" of the battle, the arbitrary manner in which it was located means that it says little about the surrender site.

The cairn and obelisk in Battle of Beaverdams Park

We have here another example of the confusion that exists about the battle location. That Brigadier-General Cruikshank, a renowned military historian, should place its centre in Stamford, without citing any evidence, is hard to understand. But then Cruikshank made other faulty comments about the battle, among them the incredible assertion that the spot where American bodies were found when building the Third Canal was "a considerable distance from the field of battle."

That claim is easily disproved. The spot in question was in the western half of lot 28 belonging to George Bowman, and in 1824 Bowman submitted a claim for war losses (crops trampled by the "horses of the enemy," and fences thrown down) that make it clear that the battle extended on to his land. (Askin also refers to "Bowman's field" in his diary.) Claims were also submitted by other farmers, but usually not for losses caused by the battle itself. Thus George Miller, who owned lot 27 and the eastern half of 28, claimed for items taken by British troops in September 1813 and by Americans in July 1814. Other farmers seem not to have submitted any claims at all.

There is, however, one claim that is very significant. This is John Bouk's claim for lot 26, the lot that contains the Fuller property. As Gannon has shown, this lot originally belonged to George Miller, who sold it some time prior to 1810 to David Bouk. By 1813 it was owned by David's widow, Elizabeth, who lived in Grantham, and it was apparently being farmed by her brother-in-law John Bouk. It is not certain if he lived on the land, but if he did it could have been in the dwelling that may have preceded the Fuller House. Bouk's claim, made in 1823, was for "Two horses taken from the said John Bouk the day after Col. Bustler [sic] was taken prisoner by Capt. Fitzgibbon on his farm near the Beaverdam."

It could be argued that this proves conclusively that the surrender was on John Bouk's land, and in 1992 opponents of the asphalt plant took this to mean the Fuller property. In 1994, lawyers for a new owner would have none of this, suggesting that a "self-serving" Bouk may have concocted the story about Boerstler's capture on his farm just to bolster his claim. Even though that seems very unlikely, there are still other matters that need addressing.

Firstly, there is the proximity of the Fuller property to the crossroads. If FitzGibbon's troops were on Mountain Road and Boerstler's on the Fuller site they would have been mere yards apart, which makes no sense. Indeed, there is evidence that they were much further away from each other — according to Boerstler they were a "long shot" apart, Askin states that the separation was "too great ... for musketry," and Roach says that the British did not come "within two hundred yards of us."

Secondly, since lot 26 extends 50 chains (or 1100 yards) south of the crossroads, a surrender on Bouk's farm could have occurred some distance south of the Fuller site. It should be noted also that given the closeness of the other possible surrender location, the Miller House, to lot 26, it is more than likely that any surrender on Miller's farm would have "spilled over" on to Bouk's land anyway.

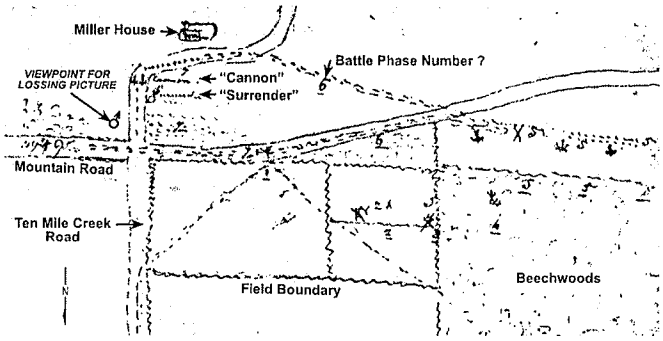
Thirdly, there is the wording of Bouk's claim. The ordering of phrases in the English sentence was quite variable in the early 19th century, and it is not always appropriate to take a piece of writing at face value. It is not unreasonable to suppose therefore that what Bouk really meant was "Two horses taken from the said John Bouk on his farm near the

Beaverdam the day after Col. Bustler was taken prisoner by Capt. Fitzgibbon." This interpretation, of course, casts quite a different light on the claim.

The Case for the Miller House

If this seems somewhat of a stretch, consider that apart from Bouk's claim there is nothing to suggest that the surrender occurred on the Fuller property. There is, on the other hand, plenty of evidence in support of the other location, the Miller House.

The most convincing evidence is found in the diary of Charles Askin, the militiaman who fought with the natives. For June 24 1813, he writes of the Americans retreating and taking "a good position for their guns nearby Mr. Miller's House," this just before the 49th under FitzGibbon arrived, and continues, "The Americans fired twice at them with their field pieces — Then FitzGibbon went to them with a flag of truce."

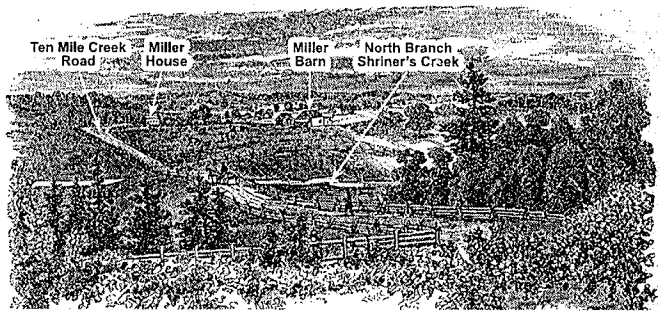


The Askin map

Accompanying Askin's diary is a sketch map of the battlefield, the only early map known to exist. Orientated with south at the top, it suffers from severe foreshortening in the north-south direction, but otherwise shows clearly Mountain Road, Ten Mile Creek Road, the Miller House, field boundaries and even beechwoods. Numbers ranging from 1 to 7 seem to represent different phases in the fighting, and significantly the 7 is at the Miller House with the words "Cannon" and "Surrender" written nearby. Admittedly the house and roads are not named, but the area shown is not in question. Indeed, Askin provides confirmation in his June 25 diary entry, where he speaks of passing "Stull's [a farm located on Ten Mile Creek Road] up to the crossroads, where the action was fought."

There are also references to the Miller site in other early documents. William Claus writes of meeting "a man by the name of Miller, to whose house [the Americans] retired," and William Hamilton Merritt has the enemy forming "in Miller's fields" prior to the surrender. Isaac Roach speaks of the Americans taking a position in a road "parallel to that in which the action commenced." Since the battle began on Mountain Road this must mean the road alongside the Miller House, for this is the only road with a similar orientation.

The Miller House is also mentioned in accounts of the battle written later in the 19th century. Normally, one might not place too much credence in secondary sources, but these are exceptions. Take for example Lossing's *Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812,* published in 1869. This contains a picture of the battlefield looking south from the roof of the Fuller House, which matches the top part of Askin's map very closely. The accompanying text reads, "On the left is seen the turn of the road where Boerstler's cannon were planted, and a little to the right of it is the stone house of Mr. Shriner, whose orchard, adjoining it, was the place where Boerstler surrendered to De Haven [sic]." (Daniel Shriner, it will be recalled, had bought the house from Miller.) Who was Lossing's source? None other than Jedediah Prendergast Merritt, eldest son of William Hamilton Merritt. Jedediah would have known from his father exactly where the surrender took place, and in his father's absence at Quebec it was he who took Lossing on a tour of the battlefield.



The Lossing picture

Late nineteenth-century local histories such as the *Jubilee History of Thorold* and *The History of the County of Welland* state the same conclusion, and Emma Currie's *The Story of Laura Secord* even provides a map showing the surrender at the Miller House. These all serve to confirm what would have been common local knowledge at the time.

Conclusion

The evidence is overwhelming that the American surrender took place at the Miller House, not on the Fuller property, though there is little doubt that the latter was part of the battlefield. What this means, of course, is that Keith Dewar was right all along (though it should be said that his reasoning did leave something to be desired). Be that as it may, the surrender site survives today alongside the entrance to the AbitibiBowater paper mill off Davis Road. The house is no longer there, but a double line of osage orange trees marks the road that ran alongside, and the flooded valley of Shriner's Creek provides an attractive backdrop to what is still a relatively unchanged and very pleasant spot.

Principal Sources: (in addition to those cited in text): Thorold Township records; Registry Office records; maps, airphotos and field observations.

Credits: maps and layout (Loris Gasparotto); editing (John Burtniak)