



The Historical Society of St. Catharines

P.O. Box 23104, 124 Welland Ave., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 7P6

Founded in 1927. Our Mission and Goal is to increase the knowledge and appreciation of the history of St. Catharines and vicinity.

Our Society is affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society.

Our NEW website is: <http://stcatharineshistory.wordpress.com/>

March 2008 Newsletter

Upcoming Speakers Program

All programs start at 7:30 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum

February 28 - Prof. Carmela Patrias and Larry Savage: "The History of the Labour Movement in St. Catharines"

March 27 – Prof. Alun Hughes: " 'Lord' Simcoe, Lady Godiva and the Naming of Niagara's Townships"

April 24 - John Burtniak: "Some Vanished Villages of Niagara"

May 22 - Pat Menon: "W. B. Allan, St. Catharines Architect"

Notice of Annual Meeting – Thursday, April 24, 2008 – 7:30 p.m.

To be held in the Burgoyne Room, St. Catharines Museum, 1932 Welland Canals Parkway, St. Catharines.

Agenda

Call to Order, President's Report, Minutes of Previous Annual Meeting (held April 26, 2007 and published in the September 2007 *Newsletter*), Financial Report, Auditor's Report, Amendments to Constitution, Nominations and Elections, Any Other Business properly brought before the membership, Close of Formal Meeting, Guest Speaker, Announcements, Reception.

Nominations and Elections

Note: Executive positions are for a two-year term. Director positions are for a one-year term. The following nominations have been received: President – John Burtniak; Past President – Bill Stevens; Vice President – Paul Lewis; Secretary – Brenda Zadoroznij; Treasurer – Chris Loat.

Director (maximum six to be elected) – Elizabeth Finnie, Maurice Gomme, Paul Hutchinson, Joe Muskat, David Sharron, Mary Leighton.

Reminder: 2008 Calendar Year Membership Renewal

The Society issues annual membership cards to paid-up members. If you have paid your dues and do not have a membership card yet, please contact Mary Leighton. If you have overlooked your renewal, the Society encourages you to renew and keep our Society strong.

Individual \$10.00 or Family \$15.00 - Make cheque payable to: The Historical Society of St. Catharines.

Board of Directors of the Historical Society of St. Catharines

President - John Burtniak - tel. 905-227-5120
Past President - Bill Stevens - e-mail bibmstev@computan.on.ca - tel. 905-934-8966
Vice President - Paul Lewis - e-mail paul_e_lewis@ridley.on.ca - tel. 905-684-9918
Secretary - Brenda Zadoroznij - e-mail bzadoroz@becon.org - tel. 905-935-3025
Treasurer - Chris Loat - e-mail chris_loat@ridley.on.ca - tel. 905-685-6939
Director - Membership - Mary Leighton - e-mail Leightonbarry@yahoo.ca - tel. 905-934-7733
Director - Paul Hutchinson - e-mail slabtown@niagara.com - tel. 905-227-2699
Director - Maurice Gomme - e-mail magomme@cogeco.ca - tel. 905-682-2329
Director - Joe Muskat - tel. 905-687-3359
Director - David Sharron - e-mail david_sharron@hotmail.com - tel. 905-684-5355
Director - Elizabeth Finnie - e-mail finnies@sympatico.ca - tel. 905-684-4416

Auditors and Nominations to the Board of Directors

The financial books close December 31 and the Auditors are handed the books in late February to prepare an audit for the Annual Meeting in April. The Board of Directors will be appointing two auditors.

At the Annual Meeting the six Directors' positions are up for election. Please give this request some serious thought, as we need to ensure that the Society continues with a strong Board. The Board is also looking for a Social/Refreshment Chair, a position that does not need to be filled by a Board Member.

A Warm Welcome To Our New Members

Elaine Singleton and Bill Maton, Gail Collins, Maria Pickard, Ross and Barbara Ransom, George Gilbert

Happenings at the Ontario Historical Society

The Ontario Historical Society (OHS) was founded in 1888 and is celebrating 120 years of collecting, researching, learning and teaching about the wealth of heritage resources we share in Ontario. On April 1, 1899 the OHS was incorporated by an Act of Provincial Parliament, with a unique mandate. The OHS is entrusted with the task of assisting other heritage organizations in forming and becoming incorporated entities in their own right. In place of Letters Patent, the more than 360 Affiliated Societies receive from the OHS the essential letters of authorization that they need to support applications for grants, insurance, public event funding and other functions. The Historical Society of St. Catharines is an Affiliated Society and pays an annual membership fee of \$50.00 and is required to file annual reports to the OHS. In 2007 the OHS reintroduced the Annual Conference, which was held at Brock University in St. Catharines. The event was very successful and the OHS has decided to continue to hold an annual conference. This year it will be held on June 13-14 in Guelph in partnership with the Guelph Historical Society. It is entitled *Nature to Ecosystem: An Historical View of Ontario Environments*. Renowned urban historian Dr. Gilbert Stetler is the keynote speaker.

The OHS has been very active in the preservation and defence of cemeteries throughout the province. The Cemetery Defence Fund is always in need of donations. All donations receive a tax receipt. Offices of the OHS are located in the historic John McKenzie House, at 34 Parkview Avenue in the Willowdale area of Toronto. The OHS web site is www.ontariohistoricalsociety.ca Membership for individuals is \$35.00; Senior/Student \$30.00; Family \$45.00. Members receive 5 issues of the *OHS Bulletin* newsletter per year.

In 2008 the OHS will be publishing the 100th Volume of Ontario's premier history journal, *Ontario History*. This biannual scholarly journal, costs \$22.00 per year in addition to your membership fee.

Congratulations to the St. Catharines Public Library!

Throughout 2008 the Library will be celebrating 120 years of service to the public. A recent event at the Library featured Society members Sheila Wilson and Alun Hughes who presented talks on "The History of the Library" and "The Naming of St. Catharines" to an audience of over 110.

November 22nd – Show and Tell and Christmas Social - Program Report

Well, it was winter! A hardy group of 31 attended a most interesting "Show and Tell" program and once again members brought in some fascinating items for the delight of the 31 avid historians present, despite a wintry day. A few of the items were:

- * a pocket watch made in St. Catharines by W.W. Tyrell with his name inscribed on the face plate, which was a gift to the Ridley College Archives. It had been presented in 1908 to J. Williams, a gymnastics instructor at Ridley. It is inscribed inside the twist-off back case.
- * a post card of the opening day of the Spanish Aero Car across the Niagara River Whirlpool on August 8, 1916. Attending was John Laing Weller, and other special guests.
- * two enlarged award-winning photographs that appeared in the *Standard* and which will appear in a new book in production featuring all 18 of the photographers that worked at the *Standard* and their 'greatest' pictures.
- * a book of the Queen's (then Princess) Canadian visit in 1951 which mentions St. Catharines.
- * a Skyway token produced by the Department of Highways (now Ministry of Transport) that was used at the toll booths at the Garden City and Burlington Skyways.
- * two books published in 1914 by the Temperance Movement that extolled the virtues of life without alcohol and the travesties that would befall those drinking alcohol.
- * the original detention register of Ridley College - reading some of the student pitfalls was very interesting!
- * four catalogues of Christmas Cards dating back to 1938.

In addition, an explanation of the National Heritage designation being sought for the Welland Canals was given by Alun Hughes and John Burtiak, who with Bruce Timms and Society members Roger Bradshaw and George Nicholson, toured the 4 canals with Marc de Caraffe of Parks Canada, Ottawa. He spent 2 days examining the four Canal routes.

Paul Lewis acted as refreshment convenor and Ivy Stevens brought a tray of baked goods.

January 24th Program Report

President John Burtiak opened the meeting at 7.35 pm. and welcomed about 45 present. John reported that the Board meets monthly and that "all is well" with the Society. John advised that the Bus Trip will be on June 7 this year, the Oille Potting on May 10 and the Merritt Day Celebration on July 3. It was noted that a book on the history of St. George's Church in St. Catharines has just been published and written by our member Walter Asbil. The speaker for the evening, Dr. Ian Ellingham, was introduced by Paul Lewis. Dr. Ellingham talked about the property he owns on Yates Street and his attempts at replacing a side gate so that it fitted with the architecture of the house (the architects were Nicholson and MacBeth). He was able to get a suitable but derelict gate from a neighbour and he talked of the decisions he had to make regarding the repairs and renovations needed. His talk was illustrated by photographs. Ian was thanked by Elizabeth Finnie. A social time with refreshments followed.

Follow-up to December 2007 Newsletter Article on Page 5

The newspaper article on the casualty that occurred on the Welland Canal gives the name Robertson, whereas subsequent research by Alex Ormston reveals that the man's name was George William Robinson, who was born in England and died on July 23, 1914 as a result of the accident.

Newsletter Notes

The Historical Society of St. Catharines *Newsletter* is published up to 4 times per year by the Society. The purpose of the *Newsletter* 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 postal address. Opinions and comments expressed in the *Newsletter* are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society.

Subscription by paid membership only.

Bill Stevens produced this issue.

Next Issue: June 2008 - Deadline for submissions for the next issue is May 10, 2008.

Highlights of 2007

January 25 - Michael Power: Lecture: "Rev. Richard William Harris: Dean of Niagara, Scholar and Travel Writer" - attendance - 35

Received Photograph Album of Pictures taken in 1938 by R. Bruce Lightbown of England and subsequently donated the album to Brock University Special Collections

February 22 – Prof. Alun Hughes: Lecture: "The Early History of Merritton" - attendance - 64

March *Newsletter* published

March 22 - Brian Nahri: Lecture: "The Court Records of Niagara" - attendance - 45

April 26 - Annual Meeting and Elections of the Board of Directors - 66 members present

April 26 – Bishop Emeritus Walter Asbil: Lecture: "St. George's Church and the Church of England in Niagara" – attendance - 66 members and 2 guests present

June *Newsletter* published

May 24 - Roger Bradshaw: "A Pictorial of the Remains of the First, Second and Third Canals Through St. Catharines and Thorold" - attendance 81

May 26 - Oille Fountain Potting Ceremony - Mayor Brian McMullen served as Chief Potter

June 16 - Annual Bus Tour - Cambridge-Galt area – attendance - 28

June 22 and 23 - Ontario Historical Society Conference held at Brock University - Society represented

July 3 - Celebration of William Hamilton Merritt's Birthday at Merritt Statue

July - Society made a major purchase of an Epson Perfection 4990 Scanner (value \$600) as a donation for the St. Catharines Museum

September *Newsletter* published

Sept 27 - Meeting cancelled due to Museum closure; Bill Stevens gave Ben Koning from Sunnyvale, California a tour around the City

October 25 - David MacKenzie: A power point presentation on the many images of General Isaac Brock - attendance - 51

November 11 - Society placed a wreath during the Remembrance Service at the Cenotaph

November 22 - "Show and Tell" and Christmas Social – attendance - 31

November - Society donated a copy of a reprint of a rare book published in St. Catharines (ca. 1850) to St. Catharines Public Library Special Collections

November - four members of the Society escort researcher from National Historic Sites and Monument Board along the routes of the Welland Ship Canals, and three Society members create a "Canals" overlay on the "YourNiagara.ca" web site air photo map of Niagara Region

December *Newsletter* published

Membership for 2007 - paid-up membership at year end was 182

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

Heritage Designation Ceremony Well Attended

Some years after the designation of the Winchester-Larkin House, circa 1845, a ceremony was finally held on Wednesday, December 12, 2007 at the house, now Dom's Pasta and Grill at 22 Academy Street. Current property owners and restaurant owner Heather Fasulo accepted the plaque from Heritage St. Catharines Chair Frank Caplan with a large audience gathered in the lounge area. The building was built by Deacon Lucius D. Winchester between 1845 and 1850. This two-and-a-half-storey Victorian-style red-brick building has an irregular-shaped plan due to brick additions at the front, side and back. The roof is trimmed with simple bargeboards and minor decorative accents. The front dormers on the second floor have pediment roofs with one having engaged columns at the sides and a shed dormer on the uppermost level. The main front door is semi-circular with pilasters and a hood. It is a double three-panel door with moulded rails with a recessed panel and leaded glass with jewelled inserts. The main windows are flat and have moulded trim and radiating voussoirs with large two-sash double-hung windows. Many of the windows are stained glass with jewelled inserts and there is decorative saw-toothed patterned brickwork on the east and west gables about the windows. The house was purchased by Captain Patrick Larkin in 1872 and he added the fancy work: the tower, the two bay windows at the side, several of the stained-glass windows, plus the fine woodwork and the imported fireplaces.

Captain Patrick Larkin

Captain Patrick Larkin was born on March 1, 1829 in County Galway, Ireland. In 1837 he came to Canada and to St. Catharines in 1853. By 1853, he had attained the title of Commander. He married Ellen Mary Maguire on January 21, 1861. At various points in his life, he was a sailor, ship commander, vessel owner, grocer, contractor for large Welland Canal contracts and builder of portions of railways across Canada. He was a founding member of Lincoln Paper Mills, a Director of the St. Catharines Electric Light Company, served several years as member of City Council and then Mayor of St. Catharines in 1882 for one year. He was Roman Catholic in faith and a Reform Party member in politics, serving as President of the Lincoln Reform Association. Larkin died on August 31, 1900 at the age of 71 at his residence and is buried in Old Section Q of Victoria Lawn Cemetery. The Larkin family lived in the house until 1942.

Web Site of Interest: Ontario Heritage Connection

MISSION

to serve as a tool for the exchange of information about Ontario's culture, history, built and natural heritage, archaeology and the environment

MANDATE

to provide a "first stop" for anyone seeking information on Ontario's heritage

to serve as a tool for the exchange of Ontario's heritage news

to build a network of links to Ontario's heritage websites

to raise public interest and awareness in Ontario's heritage

to promote Ontario's heritage research and education

to encourage partnerships for the exchange of news and information

For Heritage News visit: www.ontarioheritageconnection.org

Newsletter Editor/Chair Position

Except for one issue (May 1998) I have done the *Newsletter* since the February 1998 issue, which means that this is my 40th issue. It seems like only yesterday when Dennis Gannon handed me the portfolio! It has not been the huge burden one might suspect if you continue working on stories, get your envelopes ready and plan ahead. Each issue, on average, takes about 60 hours of time. I've done the *Newsletter* while also being a Director, the Secretary and then President. But the *Newsletter* is the Society's *Newsletter*, not mine ... so, I offer the portfolio to any other member that steps forward and is accepted by the Board of Directors. I was blessed that Alun Hughes came along, because he provides a minimum of 2 pages and I can offer a new Newsletter Editor my contribution on a regular basis as well. Consider the offer seriously, as the Society needs a newsletter and you will gain a great appreciation for our City's history in return.

32nd Annual Oille Fountain Potting Ceremony

Saturday, May 10 - 11:00 a.m.

Plan to attend this special event to be held at the Oille Fountain located at the corner of King Street and James Street in downtown St. Catharines. Descendants of the OILLE family are invited to attend. A geranium will be planted in the urn atop the fountain. In addition, The St. Catharines Heritage Committee will be designating the **Grantham Township Hall** immediately following the Potting Ceremony. Why not make a day of it, as Saturday is "Mother's Day at the Market."

13th Annual Historical Theme Bus Tour

Saturday, June 7 - departing at 8:00 a.m.

This year's tour will feature the Sharon Temple. The motor coach will depart from the Market Square, King Street at 8:00 a.m. and return either 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. Further details and cost will be provided at upcoming Society meetings and in the June Newsletter. If you wish to reserve a seat or express interest until details are known, let John Burtniak know.

William Hamilton Merritt's Birthday Commemoration

Thursday, July 3 - 7:00 p.m.

A commemoration of the July 3rd birthday of William Hamilton Merritt will take place at the Merritt Statue at the corner of St. Paul Street and McGuire Street.

Book Donations to Special Collections

The Society believes that books pertaining to the history of St. Catharines and vicinity should be available at our local library. This is consistent with our mandate to promote the history of St. Catharines. The St. Catharines Library has a tremendously valuable collection already, but is not in a position to acquire old and/or rare publications that would add to this collection. Society members who do extensive research on local topics often come across a reference to a book that is not available in the collection. These books are often not available for immediate purchase, but do occasionally come on the marketplace through the internet, at which time one must be quick to decide on the purchase or risk losing the offered book. The Society has been able to acquire a few of these books over the past years and subsequently donated them to the Special Collections area of the Library. We hope that our membership sees the value in this program.

A recent acquisition is a copy of: *The Enterprises of Robert Hamilton: A Study of Wealth and Influence in Early Upper Canada 1776-1812*. By BRUCE WILSON (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983). ii, 248 p. ISBN 88629 0090.

Building A Village Church: St. John's Port Dalhousie, 1868

This fascinating book consisting of 60 pages has just been published by author and Society member Brian Leyden. The Church was built in 1868 and remains to-day with a vibrant congregation that continues to maintain this historic structure. The book costs \$15.00 and all proceeds go towards the St. John's Building Fund. To purchase a copy call Brian at 905-934-4241.

Have You Joined the Niagara Mailing List?

RootsWeb's mailing lists can help you find information about your ancestors and connect you with people who have research interests similar to yours. Members of the list also place items of historical interest on the list. To join **NIAGARA-ONT-L**, send mail to NIAGARA-ONT-L-request@rootsweb.com with the single word *subscribe* in the message subject and body.

300th Anniversary of the Arrival of the Palatine German Refugees

The 300th anniversary of the arrival of the Palatine German refugees in America is on the horizon. John Haynes is seeking information or contact persons concerning any celebrations either in the Niagara Region or in New York State. Contact John Haynes at his home telephone 905 688-9283.

John W. Abbott and Company

The March 2004 *Newsletter* contained a short article concerning the John W. Abbott Company. This article is an update containing additional research.

John Abbott established the Abbott Company, a sewing machine manufacturing business in St. Catharines in 1865 or 1866. The company manufactured a single thread machine called Abbott's Noiseless Family Sewing Machine, which would work by hand or treadle. Production ceased when John died in St. Catharines on February 9, 1872, even though two of his sons had been involved in the business. His death announcement on page 2 of the *Evening Journal* (St. Catharines) of February 9, 1872 read as follows: "It is with feelings of sincere regret that we announce the death of J.W. Abbott, proprietor of the Abbott Sewing Machine Factory, one of our most enterprising, ingenious and popular business men. Mr. Abbott we believe was a native of the State of Vermont, and a few years ago removed from that State to Canada, locating at first in Hamilton. The superior advantages of St. Catharines as a manufacturing point subsequently induced him with a few others to remove here, where he has carried on an extensive business for the past six or seven years and where he succeeded in gaining many warm and true friends."

John William Abbott was born on July 30, 1824 in Claremont, Sullivan County, Vermont. His parents were Israel (born November 13, 1792, Charlestown, New Hampshire) and Lydia Kittredge Abbott. John married Alvira Achsah Wellman (daughter of Timothy and Achsah Wellman) on November 22, 1843 in Dunnerston, Windham County, Vermont. Alvira was born on January 31, 1824 in Brookline, Windham County, Vermont. John and Alvira had four children, all born in Dummerston, Vermont:

1. Julia Alice - born March 30, 1845; married July 19, 1872 to George Cushing
2. Henry Eugene - born September 3, 1846
3. George Arthur - born April 8, 1848
4. William Alba - born February 4, 1853

The 1871 *Census* records John's religion as being Congregationalist, of English origin and a sewing machine maker. The factory employed 12 men, and with the help of a three-horsepower steam engine, was producing 2500 machines a year. The average wage of the employees was \$41.67 per month. The machines were sold through two general agents in Toronto: G.W. Grout and Company (until 1868) and W.H. White and Company (1868-72). The Abbott machine, with a black walnut stand, in 1868 sold for \$15 to \$23. An 1871 patent (No. 831) was taken out by Abbott for improvements in the plate of sewing machines.

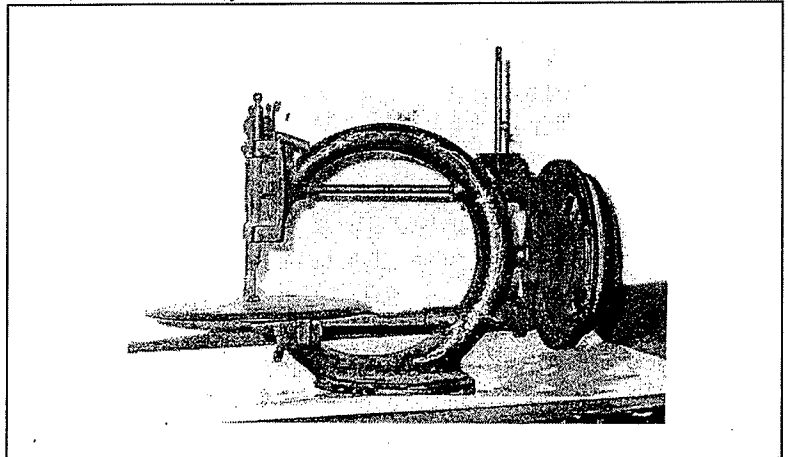
After John's death, his wife and family moved to Defiance, Ohio. The 1880 *Census* shows Alvira living with her son Henry E., who was working in a machine shop; her son Willie A., who was a bookkeeper; her daughter, Julia A. Cushing, was now a widow, with her 7-year-old son Richard E. Cushing; Julia was working as a dressmaker.

Also living in Defiance was Alvira's son, George A. Abbott and his wife Fanny H. and their family. George is listed as a machinist.

The St. Catharines Museum has an Abbott sewing machine in its collection.

The photo on the left is taken from the:
Handbook of Canadian Sewing Machines

A great colour photograph can be seen at this web address: <www.execulink.com/~jvanmep/Canadian_Machines/photos/photo_17.html>



EARLY SHIPPING AND SHIPBUILDING ON THE TWELVE

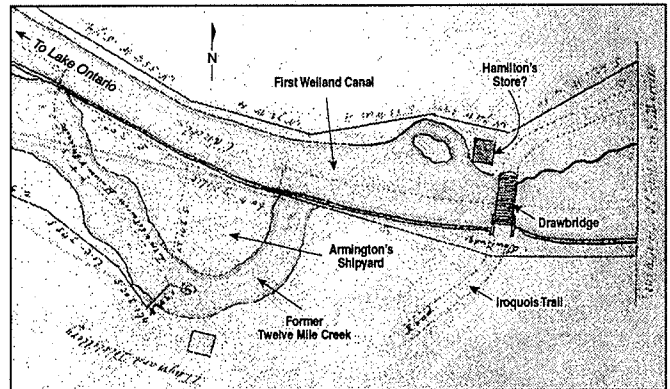
My last article described the voyage of the *Ann and Jane* and *R. H. Boughton* that marked the opening of the First Welland Canal in November 1829. These schooners are rightly celebrated as the first ships to pass through the completed canal. However, they were not the first ships to navigate the waterway. Another vessel, aptly named the *Welland Canal*, did this 18 months earlier, and unlike the other two it was built in St. Catharines itself.

No ships are known to have been built in St. Catharines before this, but vessels of some kind were no doubt able to approach the village by following Twelve Mile Creek from Lake Ontario. What sort of vessels they were, however, is uncertain, as is the distance they were able to travel up the creek.

The Twelve Mile Creek of pre-canal days was nothing like its modern counterpart, now a broad artificial channel excavated in the late 1940s to discharge water from the DeCew Power Station at Power Glen (this being the latest in a series of enlargements starting with the First Welland Canal). The original creek was meandering and narrow, and we know from the water-supply problems faced by William Hamilton Merritt at his mills near present-day Welland Vale that the flow could be very erratic. The creek may not have attained any sort of magnitude until it neared Lake Ontario.

There it opened into the Twelve Mile (now Martindale) Pond, which had formed behind a shoreline bar that constricted the exit to the lake. The original pond may have been more like a marshy, reed-filled wetland, through which the creek passed along a winding channel. Writing in 1875, J. P. Merritt says that it did not become a "lake" until a dam was built at the creek mouth (presumably the waste weir constructed for the First Welland Canal).

In the late 1780s, Queenston merchant-trader Robert Hamilton built a "trading establishment" or store on the creek, near what is now downtown St. Catharines. It was probably located where an important east-west route, the so-called Iroquois Trail (later St. Paul Street), crossed the creek — roughly at the low level bridge above Burgoyne Bridge today. A First Welland Canal plan from about 1831 shows a building at this spot alongside a drawbridge over the canal, and the accompanying surveyor's notes identify it as a storehouse. Though Hamilton died two decades earlier in 1809, it is not unreasonable to suppose that this was the site of his store. It lay in lot 18, concession 7 of Grantham Township, and Registry Office documents prove that Hamilton did own this piece of land.



Portion of map, ca. 1831, showing land purchased from William Hamilton Merritt and John Hainer by the Welland Canal Company.

The store sold items to local settlers, and may also have served as a transshipment point for goods from Hamilton's saw and grist mills three miles upstream at the Escarpment. The saw mill was on the Twelve at the base of the Escarpment (at what is now Power Glen), and the grist mill was probably on Beavercreeks Creek at the Escarpment brow (now DeCew Falls). Hamilton acquired the mills in 1786 on the death of their original owner, Duncan Murray, and in the same year won a contract to supply flour to the garrison along the Niagara River.

Since farmers no doubt patronized the store when they brought grain for milling, it may be asked why the store was not built closer to the mills. Proximity to St. Catharines is definitely not the reason, for the village did not yet exist. The store location was probably chosen because the Iroquois Trail (which ran westward from Hamilton's main store in Queenston) crossed the creek at this point, and possibly because it was the head of navigation for all but very small boats. The original crossing was likely a ford, but a bridge would have been built at an early date, thus creating even more of a barrier to navigation (though the first mention of a bridge does not come until much later, in the *Minutes* of the Grantham Township meeting for 1819).

One can picture products from the mills being brought by wagon or some other means to the store, and transferred to boats for transport to the Niagara River. These would likely have been batteaux — narrow, flat-bottomed, shallow-draft vessels, propelled along the creek using poles and oars, and possibly fitted with rudimentary masts and sails for use on the lake itself. Batteaux were commonplace on creeks in the Peninsula in early times, as witness many references to them during the War of 1812.

Some of this is of course conjecture, for conclusive evidence does not exist. It is possible that batteaux were in fact able to travel upstream beyond the Iroquois Trail, even all the way to the Escarpment. Indeed, an article in *The Anglo-American Magazine* for 1853 speaks of boats ascending to Hamilton's mills around 1800. But this is not an authoritative source, and errors in it do not inspire confidence. (Interestingly, the Grantham Navigation Company was incorporated in 1838 with a view to canalizing the creek from St. Catharines to the Escarpment, but what was achieved is unknown.)

There is also uncertainty about the navigability of the Twelve by larger boats such as schooners. Military vessels moored off the mouth of the Twelve during the War of 1812, and William Hamilton Merritt wrote later that the Twelve was "the place our boats landed, generally." More specifically, he stated in his *War Journal* that on September 20, 1813 he concluded a "passage to the 12 Mile Creek ... at the head of the Navigation, adjoining my father's farm." Since he had just sailed across Lake Ontario he must have been on a schooner or similar ship. His father Thomas Merritt owned lots 20 and 21 in concession 4 of Grantham Township (between Carlton and Scott Streets today), which would place the head of navigation for schooners near the southern or upper end of the Twelve Mile Pond.

After the war the younger Merritt acquired and rebuilt a pair of grist and saw mills at Welland Vale, added a potashery and established a salt works further upstream. In 1816 he recorded in his journal that he "loaded 50 barrels of salt on schooner *Industry*, for Port Hope," and in 1817 he conveyed lumber by raft to Niagara and flour and ashes by schooner to Kingston. These and other examples suggest that schooners were able to continue beyond the pond. It is not known, however, where the loading of Merritt's goods took place, whether on site or downstream at the head of the pond. Nor is it known how the boats were propelled if they headed up the creek proper, since there was no towpath and it would have been very difficult to navigate a winding channel under sail.

Clues are also provided by the engineers that the Welland Canal Company engaged in the early 1820s to survey possible canal routes. For example, Samuel and James Clowes wrote in 1824, "in regard to the harbor ... there is a natural bason [sic] capable of holding 500 sail of Vessels, drawing 7 feet of water and ... they can proceed 3 miles into the interior without incurring one shilling additional expense to the four foot canal." They seem to be saying that the creek was navigable beyond the pond, but unfortunately their meaning is not entirely clear.

Any doubts about the navigability of the Twelve were removed with construction of the First Canal, which began in November 1824. Though the project as a whole was plagued by delays and took much

longer than expected — the canal did not open until November 1829 — the section along the Twelve Mile Creek between St. Catharines and Lake Ontario was completed much earlier. On November 7, 1827 *The Farmers' Journal* reported that "The two locks between St. Catharines and the Harbour, are now completed, and the canal is filled ... The lock at the harbour will be in readiness in a few days, when all vessels on Lake Ontario drawing not over 8 feet water, may ascend and return to and from this village with the greatest facility."

A week later, it was reported that on November 6 the President and several Directors of the Canal Company had "passed down the canal, thro' the locks, from this place [St. Catharines] to the Harbour, and returned ... highly gratified with the appearance and probable usefulness of that part of this great work which is now completed." What boat they used is not stated, which is unfortunate since this was the first known voyage on the canal — a full six months before the *Welland Canal* and two years before the *Ann and Jane* and *R. H. Boughton*.

One possibility is that the vessel in question was the packet boat *Experiment*, which had been brought to St. Catharines late in 1826 "by a number of our spirited countrymen, for the accommodation of pleasure parties on the canal between the Harbour and St. Catharines." The *Experiment* came from the Erie Canal in New York State, and was transported over land from Chippawa (a practice not uncommon during the War of 1812). There is no record of it being used for its intended purpose — and hopes of getting it on the canal at an early date were in vain — but there is some evidence to suggest that it spurred a move to build "a much larger and handsomer boat" in St. Catharines itself. This was the start of St. Catharines' shipbuilding industry.

The first steps were taken in January 1827, with meetings of "Friends of the Welland Canal" at the Merchants' Exchange tavern. On the 22nd it was resolved "to build a Canal Boat of suitable dimensions for the conveyance of passengers and freight, from Port Dalhousie to the River Welland." The boat, named the *Saint Catharines*, was to be 80 feet long, 17 feet across the beam, and draw 3½ feet of water. A committee was struck to receive subscriptions for stock, which were taken up "with the greatest cheerfulness and avidity."

What happened to the *Saint Catharines* is not clear, for it is not mentioned again — at least not under that name. But eleven months later at year's end, H. N. Monson, a merchant and canal contractor, announced that "a vessel of 100 tons burthen" was under construction, to be completed in the spring. Then on April 23, 1828 *The Farmers' Journal* reported the launch of a schooner named the *Welland Canal of St. Catharines*. Whether it was a redesign of the *Saint Catharines* (it was certainly bigger) or a new boat altogether is unknown.

The owners of the *Welland Canal* were Monson, William Hamilton Merritt and William Chase. It was built by Russell Armington, "a master builder" who ran a shipyard in Troy, New York, before coming to St. Catharines. Evidence from First Welland Canal surveys and plans shows that his yard was just north of today's Burgoyne Bridge, a site later occupied by the well-known Shickluna shipyard. As the map reproduced above shows, it was actually on an island created when a meander of the Twelve Mile Creek was truncated by the channel of the canal.

The *Welland Canal's* captain (and supervisor of construction) was Job Northrup, who by all accounts was quite the character. He came from Connecticut around 1821, and bought Thomas Merritt's land near the head of the Twelve Mile Pond, where he became a prosperous farmer. Rumour was that he had amassed a fortune in mysterious circumstances in South America, and J. P. Merritt said it all when he wrote, "Privateer, buccaneer or commodore, his role among us was to spend money. His turn-outs were the best, his dinners the finest, and his social qualities unbounded."

With Commodore (as he was styled) Northrup at the helm, the *Welland Canal* took its maiden voyage from St. Catharines to Port Dalhousie on May 10, 1828, described by *The Farmers' Journal* as "the free and uninterrupted passage of the first loaded vessel that ever floated on the waters of the Welland canal." If the voyage of the *Ann and Jane* and *R. H. Boughton* a year and a half later was somewhat of an anticlimax (recall from my last article that the planned celebrations had to be cancelled), the *Welland Canal* took to the water with full ceremony.

Guests on board included the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, Sir Peregrine Maitland, as well as the Receiver General, Attorney General and Solicitor General. The passengers were treated to "a cold collation and other refreshments" in the "elegantly finished and furnished cabin, which had been bountifully provided by the Captain." Enthusiastic spectators lined the banks, cheering and firing off muskets as "the vessel moved ... majestically upon this channel ... artificially formed by human power, with her stately masts towering above the trees of the forest on either bank, through a tract of country which scarcely two score years ago was a howling wilderness."

On arrival at Port Dalhousie toasts were raised to the King and his representative, to the Constitution, the Company and its engineers, the schooner and the canal itself, and after "3 times 3 more hearty cheers ... the company retired, many of them with their bosoms swelling ... if not overflowing with gratitude to the great and all wise Disposer of events, for having benignantly [sic] smiled upon ... the laudable designs of the projector of this great national work." The "projector" was of course

William Hamilton Merritt, who was on a fund-raising visit to England and missed the whole affair.

A few days later, having loaded up with additional cargo (now totalling over 1000 barrels), the *Welland Canal* sailed on to Lake Ontario. The destination was Prescott on the St. Lawrence, at that time an important transshipment point for goods moving from the Great Lakes eastwards towards Montreal, Quebec and the Atlantic Ocean. By the end of the month the schooner was back in St. Catharines, loading up for a second trip to Prescott.

Russell Armington continued to build ships in St. Catharines. In April 1829 he launched the "elegant schooner" *Peacock*, and in May announced his intention of establishing his shipyard permanently on the Twelve. He next built two smaller, flat-bottomed canal boats, then in May 1831 launched another schooner, the *Erie and Ontario*. The *William H. Merritt* followed in 1832. By the mid-1830s, however, Armington was suffering considerable ill health, and he passed away in 1837.

The shipyard site had been leased from William Hamilton Merritt, and in 1838 the lease was assumed by Louis Shickluna. By coincidence, his first job was to do repair work on the *Welland Canal*, which seems to have fallen on hard times since its triumphal launch in 1828. By 1833 Job Northrup was advertising the boat for sale, and his advertisement read tellingly, "After a few more Locks on the Welland Canal will have been widened ... this schooner will be able to make the trip of both Lakes for which she was originally intended." Northrup died soon after, and the following year R. E. Burns was advertising the schooner, which was "intended for the canal but owing to some mistake cannot pass the locks above St. Catharines."

Some mistake, indeed! Not all the locks on the First Welland Canal were the same size. The first three locks were made larger than the rest (130 x 32 feet, as opposed to 110 x 22 feet) to allow steamships to reach St. Catharines, and the *Welland Canal* passed through them with ease. But it was too big for the remainder and could not travel beyond the village, which greatly lessened its usefulness. Of course, by 1845 the Second Canal with its much larger locks had been completed, and one likes to think that this gave the *Welland Canal* a new lease of life, but we do not know its ultimate fate.

Sources (in addition to those cited in the text): Cruikshank, *Documentary History of War of 1812*; Duquemin, *Historic Welland Canals*; Guillet, *Early Life in Upper Canada*; Jackson, *St. Catharines*; Merritt, *Merritt Biography*; Wilson, *Enterprises of Robert Hamilton*; *Merritt Papers*; First Welland Canal plans and documents; Welland Canal Company Minutes, *Correspondence and Directors' Reports*; *Third Report* (of committee of inquiry into management of Welland Canal); *Farmers' Journal* and other contemporary newspapers; *Records of Niagara*.

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