

The Historical Society of St. Catharines

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

Web Site: <http://www.niagara.com/~dmdorey/hssc/hssc.html>

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.

September 2006 Newsletter

Fall Program and Other Local Events of Interest

Note: program subject to change without notice.

Sunday, September 10 - 2:00 p.m. - a Museum program at the St. Catharines Museum – “HERE LIE WITHIN THE SILENT GRAVES: An Historical Overview of Victoria Lawn Cemetery” - an illustrated lecture by Brian Narhi. This lecture is in conjunction with the opening of the exhibit "RIP: Death and Dying in the Garden City" which runs till October 31st.

Thursday, September 28 - 7:30 p.m. – at the St. Catharines Museum - a short Society meeting followed by a program featuring “Treasures from the Vaults of the St. Catharines Museum” - David Sloan (Chair) and Arden Phair (Curator of Collections) will present various “treasures” from the vaults of the Museum. Members may know something about them, or may wish to research an item and possibly provide a short explanation at a future Society meeting.

Friday, October 13 - 1:30 p.m. - Ceremony at the base of Brock’s Monument, Queenston Heights Park, to formally add the name GENERAL BROCK PARKWAY to the designation of Highway 405. This date coincides with the 194th Anniversary of the Battle of Queenston Heights and the death in action of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, KB.

Saturday, October 14 and Sunday, October 15 - Doors Open Niagara - many members will be found visiting or assisting at the various sites, including at the St. Catharines Museum.

Thursday, October 26 - 7:30 p.m. - at the St. Catharines Museum - a short Society meeting followed by a lecture at the St. Catharines Museum by Gregory Bodoogh-Darte on the history of the funeral homes of St. Catharines and past funeral customs. Note: the Museum will be open at 7:00 p.m. for members to view the exhibit "RIP: Death and Dying in the Garden City".

November 3-12 – Remembrance Week – display “FOR VALOUR: The Victoria Cross and St. Catharines” – at the St. Catharines Museum and events to commemorate St. Catharines’ two Victoria Cross recipients.

* **Sunday, November 5** - 2:00 p.m. - a Museum program at the St. Catharines Museum – “Fred Fisher” a lecture in conjunction with the Victoria Cross Commemoration. Speaker to be announced.

* **Wednesday, November 8** - 7:30 p.m. - Special Presentation by the St. Catharines Museum and the Society - "Graham Thompson Lyall V.C.", an illustrated lecture by Geoff Hayes.

Saturday, November 11 - the Society will place a wreath during the Remembrance Day Service at the Downtown Cenotaph.

Thursday, November 23 - 7:30 p.m. - a Society program at the St. Catharines Museum - Show and Tell and Christmas Social. This is always an interesting and fun wrap up to our yearly program. So, bring along an item if you wish and share your story!

Society Notes

In Memoriam

John Collard U.E. passed away on May 28, 2006. "Jack" was an avid volunteer at the St. Catharines Museum. His favourite program was the Society's Show and Tell when he could bring along an interesting item. We extend to his wife Muriel and family our deepest sympathy.

Doris Bates passed away on June 22, 2006. Doris was a long time member and served the Society as Secretary for many years. The Society extends our deepest sympathy to the family.

New Members

Welcome to your Society: Joan Baird, Fred Walker, Diane Marshall, Pat and Hedy McGarrell

Congratulations

The Society congratulates long time member Lou Cahill who was honoured for his lifetime of service to the public relations profession during the Canadian Public Relations Society's national conference held in Niagara Falls on Tuesday June 13, 2006. The Society would also like to thank Lou for the donation of books to the Society, for the betterment of the Society and the promotion of our area's history.

Society History

from *The Standard*, November 24, 1967 -- "Historical Society" "Tells Surveying Story"
Surveying, past and present was the topic of discussion at last night's meeting of the St. Catharines and Lincoln Historical Society. Robert Ure, a mining engineer who came back to this area to work as a surveyor in his family business, was guest speaker. Mr. Ure represents the third generation of engineers in his family; and he compared his own methods of surveying with those used in the past. He illustrated methods used to lay out several townships in Lincoln county and explained the significance of the surveyor in the eventual settlement of the county. Members at the meeting were told that the paid-up membership of the Society now stands at 53, though there are 80 names on the list. Sales of the society's centennial project, a book called "St. Catharines: A to Z," were described as satisfactory.

Board of Directors of the Historical Society of St. Catharines

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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: December 2006 - Deadline for submission of articles or notices is October 15, 2006.

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

Past Program Highlights

Michael Peterman was our guest speaker on May 25 - Approximately 40 attended to hear about the life and times of James McCarroll, a poet and writer of works that appeared in early Ontario magazines and proprietor of two journals.

The 30th Annual Oille Fountain Potting Ceremony took place on June 10. The Society was pleased to have Mayor Tim Rigby and several members of the Oille family attend. Mayor Rigby placed the geranium in the urn atop the fountain.

The Victoria Lawn Cemetery Walking Tour on June 10 was part of the 150th anniversary program of the Cemetery. It was a beautiful Saturday and a large turn out of about 75 people were led on a walk featuring the gravesites of 21 past mayors of St. Catharines along with several other sites of notables in between.

The Annual Bus Tour on June 17 was enjoyed by 35 people. It was such a hot day, but all reported having a wonderful time. Our drive to Campbellville was along the Guelph Line which was very scenic and our coffee stop allowed for enough time to visit the new Global Genealogy Store. The trolleys were running on time at the Halton County Radial Railway Museum and most members got in 2 trips, if not 3, on different cars. The Streetcar and Electric Railway Museum is operated by the Ontario Electric Railway Historical Association Inc., which is a volunteer non-profit educational organization. The group preserves, restores and operates electric railway equipment for the education and pleasure of the visitors to the site. The station was the original Rockwood Station that has been relocated to the site. After a picnic lunch at Crawford Lake Conservation Area we viewed a video explaining the uniqueness of the area and then our tour guide took us over to the long house in the 15th century Iroquoian Village where we enjoyed learning about their customs. A few members took the opportunity to hike the trails while we were at the Long house. Crawford lake Conservation Area was established in 1969 and is a World Biosphere Reserve as part of the Niagara Escarpment. There is a rare meromictic lake contained within the 468 acre site as well as part of the Nassagaweya Canyon.

On July 4th we celebrated William Hamilton Merritt's Birthday by the placing of wreaths at the base of the monument at the corner of Yates and St. Paul streets. Mayor Tim Rigby laid a wreath on behalf of the citizens of St. Catharines. Tom Whitelaw, president of the Canadian Canals Society placed a wreath on behalf of the Society. John Burtiak recalled some of the many achievements of Mr. Merritt and spoke of the great contribution he made to many areas of our citizens well being.

Historical Walking Tour - following the Merritt ceremony, John Burtiak led a group of 14 on an absolutely fascinating tour of the original road route that went down to and crossed the Twelve Mile Creek, before the Burgoyne Bridge was constructed. The route went down McGuire Street, across the 406 highway and to the edge of Twelve Mile Creek and across the bridge and over to the Renown Road area. It was a fascinating tour and for most of us, the first time we had seen this "historic" area.

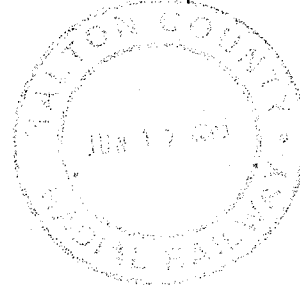


HALTON COUNTY RADIAL RAILWAY

Admission Ticket

Stop No.	Departure Point
* 47	Meadowvale Station East Loop
49	Toronto Suburban Railway Shed
* 50	Car House #1
52	Ice Cream Shoppe
68	HCRR Way Shed
79	Deer Run
* 90	Rockwood Station, (visit Carhouse #3)
92	Store, Snack Bar, Washrooms (visit the yard of Carhouse #2)
103	West Loop

Ticket good for unlimited trips
for date stamped



Issued subject to conditions on reverse side

Pictures from Our Past Programs



1901 City Directory

By Gail Benjafield, Historical Society member

It's interesting the excitement that can be caused by what appears to most as a mundane find. This year the 1901 St. Catharines City Directory (of which no copy exists anywhere, as far as we know) was found and donated to the Special Collections Room of St. Catharines Public Library. Those of us who value such finds were thrilled.

How was it uncovered? In the most unlikely of ways, as you will see. Can we trace its steps? I've tried, but the information is quite unreliable. What I have done is simply trace the street address where it was discovered and taken that back to 1900. While it may seem an easy thing to do, this proved otherwise, as streets in St. Catharines have a nasty habit of not only changing addresses, but names, and their start and end point may or may not be one and the same over time. Beech Street in mid-St. Catharines is the street in question.

My family uses Total Home Maintenance to help us with landscaping, snow removal, home repairs, just about anything one needs to have done with an older home (and an older couple living in that home!) Kelly Morris of Port Dalhousie and his family are all part of Total Home Maintenance. When my friend Christel Haeck, and husband Dennis Gannon needed just such work, I recommended THM. Kelly became aware that Dennis was the St. Catharines Columnist for the Yesterday and Today columns, and a member of this society and Christel, of course, as a former Special Collections Librarian herself, knew just where this directory belonged.

Here's how the directory was found: Kelly Morris's daughter was helping an older woman move from her 65 Beech Street home in the summer of 2004. The woman's daughter, from Toronto, gave The Morris's the 1901 directory. Whether or not it was originally from Beech St., no one knows, certainly not me. The elder woman's name was Nasmith, and city directory searches indicated that D. Nasmith lived there.

Mrs. Nasmith was Dorothy, the widow of John Douglas Nasmith, called Douglas, according to earlier searches. They moved into the Beech St. home in the mid 70's, after living in an apartment complex on Bunting. This indicates to this sleuth that the directory was in the Beech Street home, as Bunting apartment addresses were simply too new for this to be there. But who knows?

This name appears in place back some 30 years, wherein in 1975 M. Crawford lived at that address. Back another 15 years, a Mrs. M Crawford resided at 65 Beech. Further yearly searches showed the street became a little wonky. In 1960, Beech Street first appears in the city directory. "Formerly Merritt, to be renumbered, from 244 Ontario to Catherine" states that directory. The Golden Pheasant restaurant at the Ontario intersection of Merritt still stands. (Now there's a visual locator for old-timers!)

Library staff member Elizabeth Finnie says that she lived on Beech earlier and it had "lots of bends in it." In 1960 the aforementioned Mrs. M Crawford lived at what was 65 Merritt. Tracing that address back to 1950 I found Chas. T. S. Tait, (a 'painter' in one directory) lived there well back to the mid 19-teens. Then the Merritt street address takes all sorts of meanders through numbers and sides of the street. The numbering changes made it 20 Merritt, not 65!

In the 1914-15 Directory, only one house, 20 Merritt is on one side, inhabited by Chas. Tait. On the other side is 3 – Stephen P Court, 5 – Dewey P Gilmore, 9 – Davis (sic) Fraser, 15 – Geo. W. Couchman, 17 – Alfred long, and 27 is vacant. In 1912 the directory lists all of the above, but includes Tait as being listed as number 20 (on the same side as the odd numbers.) Odd that.

At this point, the directory notes that Merritt starts at 83 York (rather than Ontario Street). Essentially the next few directories repeat that information, with the exception of changing Davis Fraser's name to David. In 1911, Thos. Day lived at number 17.

In 1910 the directory stated that "Merritt St. 14-D, SW from York, St. Patricks Ward", the only time a ward is mentioned. Back through directories to 1904 – 1906 we have "Merritt St. from York" and the following: 3 – Bella Bell, 9 John Roberts, 17 – Thomas Day.

Finally, in the treasured 1901 directory, we find this stated. "Merritt St. from W side of York to city limits. N side vacant lots, S side private grounds, Mrs Bella Bell, vacant buildings, Patey, vacant lots, Geo. Cox (fish dealer). No addresses were noted and the whole area was ripe for development.

Whether any of these names and addresses are of interest to readers, I don't know. What is of interest is that someone along that long and winding road kept the directory and it has found its rightful home.

WHO WAS JUNIUS? (Part One)

All who are familiar with the 19th-century history of St. Catharines know of Junius. He was the anonymous author of *A Walk Around Town*, a series of essays that appeared in the *St. Catharines Journal* between May 15, 1856 and February 26, 1857. These essays, labelled A, B, C and so on through the alphabet, are an indispensable source of information about the people, places, institutions and events of mid-century St. Catharines.

In 1967 the essays were reprinted in book form by the St. Catharines and Lincoln Historical Society under the title *St. Catharines A to Z*. This contains 28 essays in all, for Junius split the longest Walks, P and W, into two parts. There was also another essay that was not included in the Society's publication. This Junius called Walk &, presumably because the ampersand used to follow Z in children's alphabet rhymes of old. Here he dedicates the entire series to boyhood friend Jedediah Prendergast Merritt, son and biographer of William Hamilton Merritt.

The *Journal* was published every Thursday, and Walks A to X appeared on a weekly basis. (Walk Y was delayed four weeks, and Walks Z and & eight more.) It is clear from references to current events that Junius did not prepare his essays in advance, but wrote to a weekly deadline. Given their length — most exceed 4000 words and the longest approach 8000 — this must have been a huge undertaking.

The essays are crammed with detail; the fact that roughly 800 people are named in Junius' march through the alphabet is a measure of how much. His coverage of St. Catharines leaves out nothing. He discusses churches, graveyards, schools, industries, trades, merchants, doctors, lawyers and more, pays special attention to topics like the Welland Canal, newspapers and Temperance, provides a wealth of information about the early years of the town, and includes mini-biographies of a number of individuals, prominent and otherwise.

Junius is always generous in what he says about others, typically ending his biographies with a declaration such as "Success ever attend him and his." Never does he succumb to the temptation of making malicious comments under the cloak of anonymity, as did many other writers of that era. As he says in Walk T, this was quite deliberate:

...we designed to write or publish nothing that would give offence to any one ... Our chief intention has been to please and amuse, as well as to enlighten and instruct as far as we were able. We know full well we

have written a great deal of nonsense, and we hope some sense too; but to wound the feelings of any, we would not if we could.

If Junius did write any nonsense it was not the factual material about St. Catharines, which is generally considered to be quite reliable. However his Walks contain a lot more — musings about religion and life, discourses on ancient and modern history, rantings about the evils of drink and circuses (with their "baneful influences and wanton immorality"), poetic rhapsodies on the delights of midsummer, and even advice to the unmarried — which no doubt caused more than a few readers to roll their eyes.

The same reaction may have been elicited by Junius' often florid writing style, with its long sentences, complex constructions, outrageous wordplay, and his habit of stringing together lengthy sequences of fanciful phrases for effect. After a while this borders on the tiresome. The opening lines of Walk A are typical:

In our various peregrinations *in and around Town*, we design giving an Alphabetical number of, a *hop, skip and jump* sketch, a promiscuous and random version, and an off-hand Sam-Slick, Punch and Junius-like relation, of *Facts and Folks, Men and Things, Incidents and Affairs, Business and Professions, Sense and Nonsense* of St. Catharines, as it *was, is, and ought to be* hereafter; and we will endeavor to *pen* what pops into our mind, what we can think of, what we can pick up, and what may be worthy of remembrance in this Polyglott Town, and among this fast people.

The Junius that emerges from his essays in the *Journal* is intelligent, knowledgeable and quick-witted. He has considerable writing skill (though often gets carried away by his own cleverness). He is opinionated (thus "fashionable" church music is "unholy goosey trash") and altogether full of himself, but also cares deeply about the underdog, whether the hard-working poor, American slaves or underpaid seamstresses. He is also a futurist, who glories in progress and anticipates things that we now take for granted, like air travel and instant communication. He even predicts the expansion of his "infant lovely St. Catharines" to include all the neighbouring municipalities as far south as Welland!

But who was this Junius, and why did he choose that *nom de plume*? The first question is easily answered; the answer to the second is less obvious.

Junius was Oliver Seymour Phelps, son of Oliver Phelps, the principal contractor in the building of the First Welland Canal. Born on January 12, 1816 in Ludlowville, New York, Seymour, as he was known, accompanied his family to Canada in 1826, settling first in Centreville (later Merritton) and moving to St. Catharines in 1829. Though he never admitted to being Junius until later in life (at least not in print), his identity was no secret — it was obvious from his writing style (which had been honed in previous letters to the press) and from personal references in his Walks. His identity could never have remained secret anyway in a town of just 6000 people.



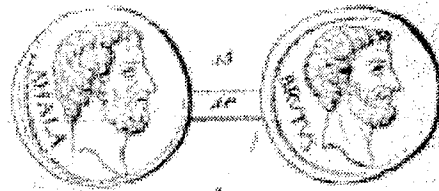
Oliver Seymour Phelps — our Junius

Junius was not the only pseudonym used by Phelps. Many of his letters to the press are signed Cid, and he claims other “cognomens” such as A Teetotaller, Anti-Rumsucker, Anti-Railway Mania, Anti-Sectarian Cemetery and Agricola. One that he does not admit to is Z, who was the anonymous author of *Our Town Wheelbarrow*, a local news and gossip column that accompanied Junius’ Walks from Walk O onward. The author is obviously Phelps, however, because the writing style is very similar, and it is Z, not Junius, who responds to comments made about the Walks in the *Journal* and other newspapers.

As for the origin of the nom de plume Junius, this was a Roman clan name, the second of the *tria nomina* by which most Romans were known. There were two prominent Juniuses in ancient Rome — Lucius Junius Brutus, who founded the Roman Republic in 509 BC, and Marcus Junius Brutus, who killed Julius Caesar in an attempt to save the

Republic in 44 BC. However, it is unlikely that Phelps named himself for either of these Juniuses, at least not directly.

Instead, the name almost certainly derives from 18th-century England, from another Junius who wrote an anonymous series of letters to the London *Public Advertiser* between January 21, 1769 and January 21, 1772. This Junius may have named himself after Lucius Junius Brutus, for like the latter he saw himself as a champion of personal freedom, and he had already called himself Lucius (and possibly Brutus) in previous letters.



Lucius Junius Brutus — the original Junius?

The English Junius had extraordinary writing skills, but in contrast to our Junius used them in a wholly negative fashion to attack the government of the day, and in particular George III’s prime minister, the Duke of Grafton. He has been called “the most perfect wielder of slanderous polemic that [has] ever arisen in English political controversy,” and his withering assaults on Grafton and others soon made him the talk of the town. Indeed, Junius was in no small part responsible for Grafton’s resignation after barely a year in office, though corruption, incompetence and a messy private life played a role also.



Philip Francis — the English Junius?

Throughout all this Junius' true identity remained unknown, and despite the best efforts of many investigators the uncertainty remains. (For those who like whodunits, Alvar Ellegård's book *Who Was Junius?* is a must-read.) The number of persons supposed to have been Junius exceeds 40, but a combination of evidence — content, handwriting, phraseology, word usage and opportunity — suggests one person in particular. This is Philip (later Sir Philip) Francis, who held the important position of Chief Clerk in the War Office, where he was privy to all manner of information about politics and the goings-on at Court.

Whatever the identity of the English Junius, can we be sure that our Junius took his name from him? Did he even know about the earlier Junius? The answer is almost certainly yes. When George Brown founded *The Globe* newspaper in 1844 he chose as its motto this Junian quote — "The subject who is truly loyal to the Chief Magistrate will neither advise nor submit to arbitrary measures." Seymour Phelps, who knew Brown, must have seen this (and it is still to be seen on the editorial page to this day).

But there is stronger evidence, for the 1855 holdings of the St. Catharines Mechanics' Institute Library included a copy of *Woodfall's Junius*, a collection of the original letters in the *Public Advertiser* reprinted by the son of its proprietor H.S. Woodfall. (This was but one of numerous versions of Junius that were published in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.) Seymour Phelps was extremely well read, and as a patron of the library would have been quite familiar with his notorious

predecessor. And though he in no way shared the "venemous hate and scorn" that the English Junius displayed towards his subjects, it is not surprising that Phelps adopted the same name for his own anonymous persona. Indeed, knowing him he probably got a real kick out of it.

There remains one curious fact to consider: just north of Seneca Lake in New York State there are two adjacent townships called Phelps and Junius. Could their juxtaposition have prompted Seymour to choose the name Junius? His birthplace, Ludlowville, lay just 50 miles to the south, and Phelps Township was even named for a relative, albeit a very distant one (land speculator Oliver Phelps, who is chiefly known for the Phelps and Gorham Purchase of 1788, involving some 6 million acres of land in western New York State). Since Seymour Phelps was only 16 when he left the area, it seems rather unlikely that he would have been influenced by this geographical coincidence. But we have no way of knowing for sure, so the possibility remains an intriguing one.

Principal Sources (apart from those cited in text) Cushing, *Initials and Pseudonyms: a Dictionary of Literary Disguises*; Phelps & Servin, *The Phelps Family of America*; Ward & Waller (eds), *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*; *St. Catharines Journal*, 1856-57 issues; *Wikipedia*, entries for Junius and Francis.

Postscript: There is much more to our Junius than his Walks around Town, and all will be revealed in Part Two of this article. It turns out that Oliver Seymour Phelps was an extraordinary character, so be prepared for some surprises!

New Book on Wonders Family Available

Geordies, Yankees, and Canucks: The Wonders in England, The United States, and Canada is the name of a new book by William C. Wonders. Published by Trafford Publishing, Suite 6E, 2333 Government Street, Victoria, British Columbia, V8T 4P4. Also available on-line at www.trafford.com/05-2479. Price is \$35.00 Can. soft cover, 375 pages, 58 maps and figures and 91 photos, ISBN 1-4120-7584-X. In Part Nine: Canada there are details of the Wonders family in St. Catharines. In 1928 Samuel J. Wonders, his wife Frances, and their second son, Fenwick moved from Toronto to a two storey brick building on a 27 acre farm on the south side of Lakeshore Road about a mile and a quarter south-east of Port Dalhousie. Sam worked the farm and Fenwick was employed as an electrician on the Welland Canal locks, mainly near Port Weller. The major source of farm income was the fruit crop, most of which was taken to the Canadian Cannery cannery on the main road in the SE sector of Port Dalhousie. The book speaks of life in the area, the travels between Toronto and the farm by steamship and the activities of the area, particularly Lakeside Park. Sam and Frances Wonders eventually moved back to Toronto in the late 1930's. Their son Fenwick stayed with the Canadian Department of Transport as an electrician and moved to Peterborough to work on the Trent Canal. This is a well researched and written book and it will be available in the Special Collections area of the St. Catharines Public Library.

Willowbank Heritage Estate

On May 25, 2006, the historic home in Queenston, known as "Willowbank" received national designation by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. The original homestead of Alexander Hamilton is an elegant example of great rural estates of early 19th century Upper Canada. It is now the site of the School of Restoration Arts which opens this fall, offering a three-year, six semester program that encompasses all aspects of heritage restoration. The School is dedicated to the Teaching of all Arts Related to the Conservation and Restoration of our Built Heritage. The three key ingredients are Classical Education, Collaborative Community and Industry Contact.

Heritage Remembered: The May-Clark-Seiler House

An old house located at the end of Sparkes Street was scheduled to be demolished, but a group of heritage enthusiasts convinced the owners that the house should be saved. Thus in January of 1981, Heritage St. Catharines was formed to investigate the feasibility of preserving and restoring the historic May-Clark-Seiler House. The group set about fund raising and seeking support for the preservation, even Pierre Berton, then Chairman of Heritage Canada became an Honourary Patron. In order to create an awareness of the project, the home's history was researched and it quickly became apparent that it could be the oldest home in St. Catharines and perhaps one of the oldest in the province. William May, of German descent, a member of the Indian Department, a private in Butler's Rangers and a United Empire Loyalist emigrated to Upper Canada from New York State in 1783. He petitioned for and was granted (by Crown patent) a 700 acre tract of land in the wilderness of Grantham Township. Here, about 1790, he built a home for his family. William May died in 1827, but the family remained there until 1838, when his grandson William May Junior sold the house to Colonel John Clark, a former officer of the Lincoln Militia and a member of the House of Assembly at York, who was then Collector of Customs at Port Dalhousie. Col. Clark renamed the house and farm Walnut Dale Farm. He died in 1862 at the age of 79 years and is buried in Victoria lawn Cemetery. The house had a number of owners over the next 100 years, when in 1961, Herman and Inge Seiler bought it. In 1979, the Seilers built a new house on the south side of the old home and decided to remove it. However, they understood that the home was old and when approached by the group of heritage enthusiasts, gave them permission to come up with a plan to preserve it. As Heritage St. Catharines set about the task, even to the point of having an historical plaque made, fire struck on October 30, 1984 and the dreams of preserving this unique piece of our heritage was destroyed. The community and especially the members of Heritage St. Catharines were devastated by this unfortunate turn of events. Time passed, the plaque that was to be placed at the restored home was forgotten in the home of a committee member, only to resurface 21 years later, having been moved once and then placed in the hands of a local man very interested in family history. He realized what it was and contacted Arden Phair at the museum, who picked it up and took it to the museum. Arden advised several former members of the Heritage St. Catharines group that he indeed had the long forgotten plaque. It was decided that even though the home was gone, the site, the history of the home and the efforts of the group that had almost reached their goal needed to be remembered and thus almost 22 years after the fire, the plaque unveiling and historical commemoration took place on Friday, August 18, 2006. A very large crowd attended the presentation by the City of St. Catharines Heritage Committee, including descendants of the families that had lived there. The plaque unveiling was done by John Beverley Clark, Johan May, Vanessa Peters and Lynn Corbey. Following the programme at #3 Sparkes Street, there was a tour of the small May Family Cemetery located south and across the ravine from the house location, hidden behind cedar trees at 18 and 22 Ziraldo Road. A reception followed at another former May home, which is now the Mayholme Foundation Family Research Centre located at 525 Ontario Street. Here, descendants of the May and Clark families were able to look at their family trees, while guests mingled about and enjoyed a peach and cake dessert. A marvellous day and a tribute not only to our past but to those who made the effort to try and preserve our heritage.

Dates in History

- * 1882 - 2007 - 125th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta
- * September 1896- September 2006 - 110th Anniversary of the establishment by Thomas "Carbide" Willson of the Willson Carbide and Acetylene Works at Merritton.
- * May 23-24, 1906 - May 2006 - 100th Anniversary of the Official Opening of the Armoury on Lake Street.

The Canadian Rowing Museum and Hall of Fame

Plans call for the opening of The Canadian Rowing Museum and Hall of Fame to take place in 2010. The local committee is meeting regularly and setting up committees for: collections, location, design, fund raising, business plan development, administration, treasury, public relations and communications, marketing and volunteer development. If you would like to help, make a donation or contribute to the collection call 905-687-9020. A web site is also about to be launched.

Lest We Forget - Lance Corporal Fred Fisher

On April 23, 1915 Lance Corporal Fred Fisher was killed in action in the area of St. Julien. Fred went forward with the machine gun, of which he was in charge, under heavy fire, and most gallantly assisted in covering the retreat of a battery, losing four men of his gun team. Later, after obtaining four more men, he went forward again to the firing line and was himself killed while bringing his machine gun into action under very heavy fire, in order to cover the advance of support. For his bravery, he was the first Canadian born male to be awarded the Victoria Cross while serving in the Canadian Army. He was born on August 3, 1895 in St. Catharines to Mr. and Mrs. William Henry Fisher. The family moved to Westmount, Quebec where he attended Westmount Academy and then McGill University. He enlisted on August 6, 1914 at the young age of eighteen years. He went overseas with the 13th Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada) in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He was promoted to the rank of Lance-Corporal on December 22, 1914. His grave in the trench where he was originally buried by his comrades was lost. His name is inscribed on panel 24-26-28-30 of the Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial in Belgium.

Lest We Forget - Private William Brown

Each Remembrance Day veterans and citizens gather in front of the cenotaph at the corner of Ann and Main streets in Port Dalhousie to pay their respects to those brave souls who made the supreme sacrifice. Their names are inscribed on the cenotaph so that we may never forget them. William Brown's name appears under those who lost their lives in World War One. William was born on March 25, 1896 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Sometime prior to the outset of the war, his family moved to a house on Main Street in Port Dalhousie. William worked as a shoemaker. He signed up for service in Niagara on August 4, 1915 and was assigned the service number of 141631. He was sent overseas and served with the Canadian Infantry, Central Ontario Regiment, 58th Battalion.

At 10:30 p.m. on October 8, 1916 Private William Brown was on his way into the front line just north of Courcellette. As he marched forward, a line of tired soldiers were heading back from the front through the muddy terrain. Unbelievably, his older brother Charles was one of those soldiers and he and William paused briefly to greet each other, Charles wishing his brother well at the front. They had not seen each other since the start of the war and it would also be the last time they were to see each other, as by midnight William would be killed in action. William was 20 years old.

William left behind his family, including his mother, Mrs. Charlotte Brown, who had moved to Toronto, an aunt, Mrs. Mary McKey of Merriton, and his brother Charles. His belongings were sent home and the Silver Cross was sent to his mother in 1920, but the family was never able to find out where his remains had been buried. Twenty years later a group of researchers doing excavation near the battlefield in Courcellette found a single grave containing badges, buttons and the identification disc along with the remains of Private William Brown. The Department of National Defence in Canada informed his family here in Canada and William's remains were removed and reburied in Grave 2.A.12 of the London Cemetery Extension, High Road, Longueval, about two miles south east of Courcellette. Because the location of his remains had not previously been known, William's name had already been inscribed in the Vimy Memorial, but a suitably inscribed headstone was placed on the grave. The family finally was to receive his remaining belongings, his identification disc, eighteen years after the war ended.

When William's brother Charles returned to Canada after the war, he settled in Toronto and started a family. He named his eldest child in memory of his brother. Charles' son William knew about his namesake. He had a newspaper clipping from 1936 describing how his uncle's remains were found. He knew that his uncle's name is inscribed on the cenotaph in Port Dalhousie and also on page 60 in the Book of Remembrance displayed in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill each year on February 16th. Although his children have never been to Port Dalhousie, they now have photos of the cenotaph and William's inscription through the kindness of a stranger. Private William Brown has not been forgotten.