



## **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 website is: <http://stcatharineshistory.wordpress.com/>

# ***September 2009 Newsletter***

## ***Upcoming Programs***

**September 10** – Thursday at 6:30 p.m. – A 70-minute “**Walk-About**” of **Historic St. John’s Cemetery** in Port Dalhousie (corner Main Street and Cole Farm Boulevard).

Presented in conjunction with the St. John’s Cemetery Board. Please wear appropriate footwear.

Rain date: Tuesday, September 15.

**September 24** - Wes Turner, Society Past President – Lecture: “**Forts and Families in Upper Canada**” - Who lived in the forts in Upper Canada in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and what was their life like. 7:30 p.m. at St. Catharines Museum, doors open at 7:00 p.m.

**October 22** - Walter Lewis – Lecture: “**A Brief Introduction to the History of Passenger Travel on the Great Lakes and Upper Saint Lawrence ... with some sightings of the River Palace**” - A brief introduction to the history of passenger travel on the Great Lakes and upper Saint Lawrence. From the earliest days of settlement in New France to the opening of the Seaway, explorers, settlers, immigrants, travellers and vacationers have passed up and down the Saint Lawrence and the Great Lakes. In a heavily illustrated, fast paced presentation, we'll explore the experience of travel through this magnificent waterway. Mr. Lewis is a Maritime Historian, diver and co-author with Rick Neilson of *The River Palace* (Dundurn Press) and maintains a website for Great Lakes research at [MaritimeHistoryOfTheGreatLakes.ca](http://MaritimeHistoryOfTheGreatLakes.ca). This year Save Ontario Shipwrecks awarded Walter and Rick the Marine Heritage Award for their work in the field. - 7:30 p.m. at St. Catharines Museum.

**November 26 - Show and Tell and Christmas Social** - 7:30 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum – Doors open at 7:00 p.m. - The Programme Planning Committee would like to hear about ideas from members for the popular Show and Tell. That is, we would like to know if you plan to participate and how much time you would need to “Show and Tell” your item! Please contact the Committee members directly: ([egailb@sympatico.ca](mailto:egailb@sympatico.ca) or [finnies@sympatico.ca](mailto:finnies@sympatico.ca)) Thanks.

As this will also be a Social, a contribution to the dessert table is always welcome, just bring it along!

### **Upcoming Exhibit at the St. Catharines Museum**

**October 10, 2009 through January 3, 2010**

An exhibit from the Canada Science and Technology Museum, Ottawa that celebrates the achievements of the members of the Canadian Science and Engineering Hall of Fame.

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

### **Membership Notes:**

\* **In Memoriam** - the Society was saddened by the passing of member Harry James on June 12, 2009 in St. Catharines. Harry was a longtime Society member and had celebrated his one hundredth birthday last February. Harry attended many of our meetings and always preferred to take a back-row seat.



#### **Annual Oille Fountain Planting**

Saturday, May 23 saw the best weather in many a year and the turnout was larger than usual. Mayor McMullen and Councillor Foss represented the City and Doris Ward was the Official Potter, assisted by Oille family relations.

\* **Volunteer Awards** - the Society nominated two Members for the Provincial Volunteer Service Award. Paul Lewis for 5 years and Bill Stevens for 15 years of service to the Society. (at left: Bill Stevens with award)

\* **New Members** - A Warm Welcome To Our New Members Michael Johnson and Robin Macpherson.

\* **Membership** - has reached a record 182 members. Let's encourage others to join!

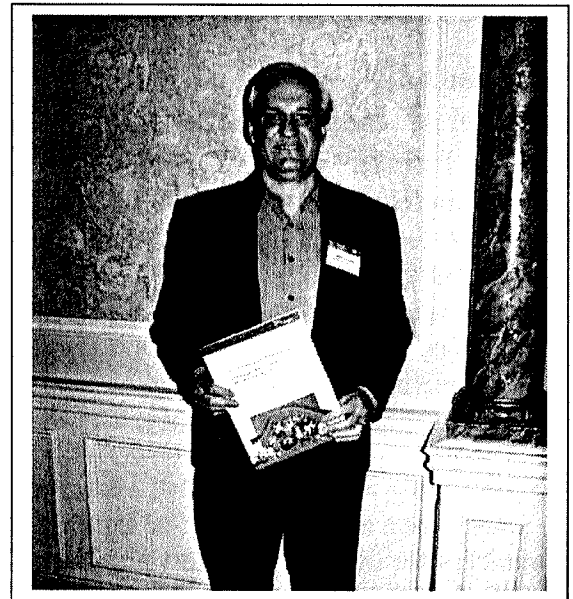
### **Microfilm Donations to Special Collections**

**Continues** – The Society believes that material 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. A few years ago, the Society, using Memorial donations, added several reels of microfilm to the Library's holdings of the Upper Canada Sundries (PAC RG 5 A1 1792-1841). Each year since, the Society has matched the Library's additional purchases and this year is no exception. A total of 7 reels have thus been added in 2009 comprising 11 whole volumes of papers. This brings the dated documents up to the end of 1826, as well as providing the undated miscellaneous items for the entire Upper Canadian era. The "Sundries" are recognized as not only an important source for family history, but also for local, political and social history. Although not yet indexed as such, the collection has as a finding aid a complete typescript Calendar (on film at the Library) identifying each individual item of the originals and supplying every name mentioned. Your Executive and Board Members hope our membership sees the value of this extended programme and will continue to support it over the years



#### **Annual Merritt Birthday Commemoration**

For July 3 the weather was a bit windy and cool, but a good group of 16 paid respect to William H. Merritt. After some words and a laying of wreaths John Burtiak conducted a very interesting walking tour across the Burgoyne Bridge.



## Minutes of the Annual Meeting

Held Thursday, April 23, 2009, Burgoyne Room, St. Catharines Museum, Welland Canals Parkway.

President John Burtنيak opened the meeting at 7:35 p.m. A quorum of 36 was present and the meeting had been advertised to the membership. John welcomed everyone to the meeting.

John introduced Arden Phair for another instalment of "Show and Tell". Arden then gave a brief presentation on some ancient Port Dalhousie glass negatives which revealed a number of buildings never having been known to have been photographed previously.

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of April 24 were presented. It was noted that the Minutes were published in the March 2009 *Newsletter*. It was moved by David Sharron and seconded by Maurice Gomme that the minutes of the 2008 Annual General meeting be accepted as printed. There were no errors or omissions noted. Carried.

Auditor's Report and Financial Report: Tom Whitelaw and Carol Gaspari reviewed the 2008 Financial Report and the related transaction register, expense claims and bank statements for the Fiscal Year 2008. Their report indicated that in their opinion the Society Accounts have been fairly reported. Printed copies of the Financial Statement for the 2008 Fiscal Year were distributed. (note: the complete statement is attached to and will constitute part of these Minutes) Moved by Joe Muskat, seconded by David Sharron that the 2008 Financial and Audit Reports be approved as presented. Carried

Membership Report: Mary Leighton gave the Membership Report showing a total of 170 members at present for 2009.

President's Report: John Burtنيak thanked the Society's members who have contributed to the wellbeing of the Society for their various contributions.

Constitutional Amendment: Moved by Mary Leighton, seconded by Bill Stevens that Article 4.0 Membership 4.2 be amended to read: "The Membership Year is September 1 to August 31". After some questions and explanation as to the purpose of the change, the motion was Carried.

Nominations and Elections: John Burtنيak turned the meeting over to Bill Stevens to conduct the nominations and elections. Bill thanked John for all he has done for the Society over the past two-year term. Bill explained that the Executive positions were for a two-year term and that Director positions were for a one-year term. A slate of candidates had been published in the March *Newsletter*. Bill opened the nominations for President by nominating John Burtنيak from the slate. No other nominations were made and it was moved by Maurice Gomme and seconded by Joe Muskat that nominations be closed and that John Burtنيak be declared President. Carried. The election of John as President means that the position of Past-President remains with Bill Stevens.

Bill then called for nominations for the position of Vice-President. Paul Lewis was nominated from the slate. No further nominations were received and it was moved by David Sharron and seconded by Maurice Gomme that nominations for Vice President be closed and that Paul Lewis be declared Vice-President. Carried.

Bill then called for nominations for the position of Secretary. Elizabeth Finnie was nominated from the slate. No further nominations were received and it was moved by David Sharron and seconded by Paul Lewis that nominations for Secretary be closed and that Elizabeth Finnie be declared Secretary. Carried.

Bill then called for nominations for the position of Treasurer. Chris Loat was nominated from the slate. No further nominations were received and it was moved by Maurice Gomme and seconded David Sharron that Chris Loat be declared Treasurer. Carried.

Bill then noted that up to six Directors can be elected and that only five were being nominated. Bill asked if anyone not on the slate wished to be nominated. Having no further nominations, it was moved by Bill Steinman and seconded by Paul Lewis that David Sharron, Joe Muskat, John Calvert, Gail Benjafield and Mary Leighton be elected as Directors. Carried. Bill turned the meeting back over to President John Burtنيak.

Other Business: John announced the May meeting program and invited everyone for refreshments after the meeting.

Closure of Annual Meeting: Moved by Bill Stevens and seconded by Paul Lewis that the Annual General Meeting be closed.

Minutes as recorded by Paul E. Lewis, Secretary (pro tem)

## May 28th Meeting Report

The meeting was titled "Air Commodore Len Birchall" and was attended by 51 people. The program was presented by Jim Lawrason, Sharon Chandler and Ellis Landale. Maurice Gomme introduced the program and Jim Lawrason. Jim in turn introduced the other presenters and talked about the committee that was formed to honour Len Birchall, which culminated in the ceremony last year at Connaught Public School, where Len had been a student.

Jim presented a video which highlighted Len's military career and the time spent in the Japanese POW camp, showing his leadership there under the most trying of circumstances. A second video was an interview with Birchall reminiscing of that time. Sharon Chandler, Len's daughter, told family stories and provided pictures. She spoke of the impact that his military career had on the family, and gave some anecdotal experiences. Sharon was presented with a book of drawings done by the Grade 2 students that had been on display at Connaught by the school principal. Ellis Landale, Birchall's nephew, presented the principal with a donation of monies left over from the Ceremony Committee which will assist in the maintenance of the school Memorial.

Ellis, a military forces member, completed the presentation by listing some of the recognitions that Len has received: a street named after him in Kingston, a bust at the Royal Military College and a field house named after him. Replicas of the many medals and honours Birchall received were displayed and Ellis explained each one: the Order of Canada, Order of the British Empire, Distinguished Flying Cross, Order of Ontario, (1950, appointed an) Officer of Legion of America, and medals from several theatres of war. Len is the only Canadian to have received a Five-Bar Military Service Medal for his 62 years of service to our country.

The presentation left little doubt in anyone's mind that Air Commodore Len Birchall, a native of St. Catharines, is a true Canadian Hero.

Following a question and answer period, Gail Benjafield thanked the presenters on behalf of the Society.

## St. John's Cemetery Heritage Designation

On Sunday June 21 the City of St. Catharines Heritage Committee unveiled a Commemorative Plaque to officially designate St. John's Cemetery in Port Dalhousie a Heritage Site. Shown here following the plaque unveiling is Reverend Canon Rob Fead, Rector of the Parish of St. George, Robert Garrard, Right Reverend Michael Bird, Bishop of the Diocese of Niagara, Lorraine Leyden, Reverend Canon Gord Kinkley, Rector of the Parish of St. John's.



## Robertson School Reunion

W. J. Robertson School, one of Ontario's oldest schools, will be holding a "Blast from the Past" on the weekend of July 9 to 11, 2010. You may contact the committee by email at [wjrobertsonschoolreunion@gmail.com](mailto:wjrobertsonschoolreunion@gmail.com) ; by mail to W J Robertson Alumni Reunion, Midtown Plaza Postal Outlet, Box 23074, St. Catharines, ON, L2R 7P6. If you know of someone who attended the school, you may wish to inform them of this reunion. The committee has established a page on Facebook; W.J. Robertson School Reunion. The committee is also attempting to acquire more photos and memorabilia.

## 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 2009** - Deadline for submissions for the next issue is November 1, 2009.

## THE PRINCE OF WALES AT NIAGARA

In 1813 Laura Secord walked from her home at Queenston to the DeCew House in Thorold to warn James FitzGibbon of an impending American attack. But official recognition for her heroic deed did not come until almost half a century later, and then from a most unlikely quarter. Not for her a medal from the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, or a pension from the Legislature. Instead it was £100 sent from England by Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1861.

This followed a three-month tour of British North America and the United States by the Prince in the summer and fall of 1860. The visit came as the role of the monarchy was undergoing radical change, with active political involvement giving way to arms-length neutrality, and it took place in the full glare of publicity, thereby setting the tone for royal tours for years to come. Included was almost a week in the Niagara area, the focus of this essay.



*Official portrait of the Prince of Wales, 1859*

### Prelude to Niagara

Albert Edward, Queen Victoria's eldest son and the future King Edward VII, was only 18 when he embarked for Newfoundland on the 91-gun HMS *Hero* on July 10, 1860. Until then his main interests seem to have been women and clothes, and the tour was viewed as a chance not only to solidify imperial links but also to instill some worldliness and maturity in the heir apparent. To ensure that this happened, his entourage was led by the Colonial Secretary, the formidable Henry Pelham-Clinton, the 5th Duke of Newcastle and 12th Earl of Lincoln.

The visit resulted from an invitation to the monarch by the Province of Canada, then a British colony comprising Canada West (now Ontario) and Canada East (Quebec). Newcastle conducted the early negotiations and prompted the other colonies — Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland — to submit invitations of their own, and the United States followed suit. Sir Edmund Head, Governor-General of British North

America, had a major role in planning the tour, but the local details were left largely to the places visited.

The *Hero* reached St. John's on July 23 after a fairly uneventful voyage (if one discounts some bad weather, a near total eclipse of the sun and the suicide of the gun-room steward who "in a fit of temporary insanity" jumped into the ocean). Upon landing the Prince had his first taste of what was to become routine fare: addresses of welcome, parades through lavishly decorated streets, sightseeing, attending levees, and dancing at balls until the small hours, all reported in detail by the newspapermen accompanying the royal party. According to the *London Times*, 380 addresses in all were delivered. The Prince responded in person to over a hundred, and the rest were acknowledged in follow-up letters.

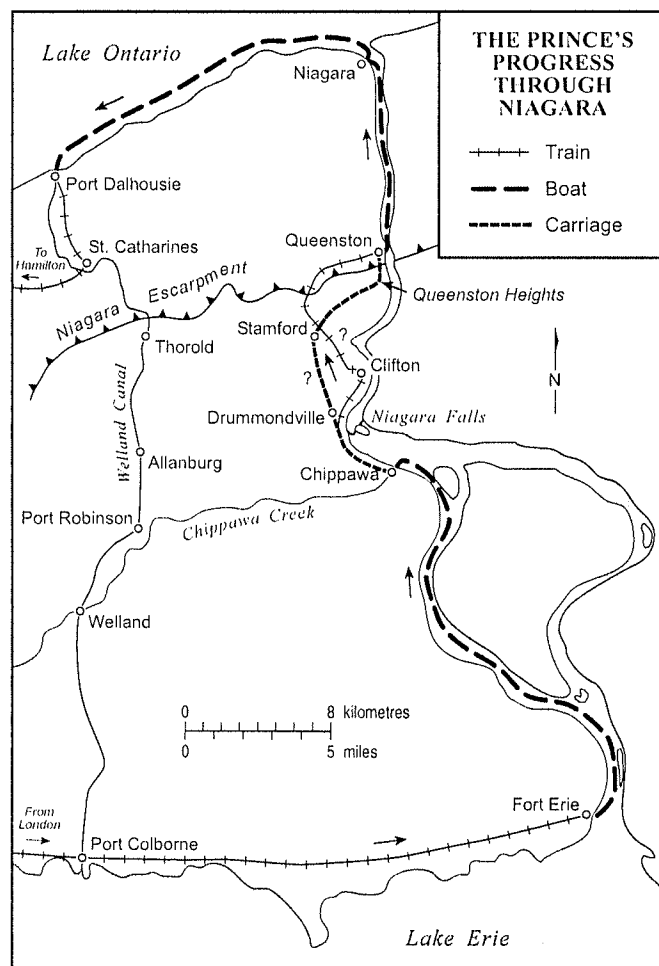
After visiting the Atlantic colonies, the royal party sailed up the St. Lawrence into the Province of Canada, reaching Quebec on August 18. In Montreal the Prince opened the Victoria Bridge (the "eighth wonder of the world," designed by Thomas Keefer of Thorold and partly built of Thorold hydraulic cement), in Ottawa he laid the cornerstone of the parliament building, and in Toronto he placed the foundation stone for a statue of his mother. For the most part, the tour was a resounding success, but it was seriously derailed at Kingston, where local Orangemen, upset at the deference shown the Roman Catholic Church in Canada East, demanded their right to march in the parade. Newcastle would have none of this, and Kingston had to be bypassed. The same happened in Belleville, and a similar debacle was narrowly averted in Toronto.

### Journey to the Falls

Passions had cooled by Friday, September 14, when the royal party left London by train for Niagara Falls. A brief stop at Ingersoll was followed by a longer one at Woodstock, and at Paris they transferred from the magnificent state car specially built by the Great Western Railway to an even more opulent one constructed by the Buffalo and Lake Huron Railway. At Brantford, where lunch was provided, the *Toronto Globe* spoke of an "array of handsome ladies" tossing bouquets at the Prince's feet, and an escort of firemen and Mohawk Indians, the latter "dressed in their picturesque habiliments, painted and armed," who presented him with "clubs, tomahawks, arrows and other weapons."

At Dunnville the Prince was greeted by Captain Amsden's Company of Rifles and a crowd variously estimated at 75, 750, over 1000, or 5000, depending on the source. (Early observers were not always reliable when reporting the "facts.") Then ensued a frantic dash to Fort Erie with a replacement engine

to make up time after the original engine's flue pipe melted. (There is no mention of a stop at Port Colborne.) Arriving at 4:30, the party proceeded directly to the old Fort, where some 5000 people, chiefly Americans from Buffalo, were waiting. But the Prince barely had time to catch a glimpse of Lake Erie before he was hustled to the Niagara River, where, to the echoes of a 21-gun salute fired by an American battery, he boarded the steamer *Clifton* for an hour's run to Chippawa. This gave him a welcome respite from noisy and dusty trains and carriages, and he spent the time reading letters from home and smoking cigars in the ship's bow. It was dusk when he disembarked at Macklem's Wharf, and huge bonfires on either side of the Chippawa Creek gave a "rosy tinge" to the spray from Niagara Falls two miles downstream. (Note that all references to the Falls are to the cataract; there was no town of that name in 1860, only small communities like Drummondville, Stamford and Clifton.)



The Prince was greeted by Major Bates' Volunteer Cavalry from St. Catharines and assorted County councillors and magistrates, and was then taken by carriage along Portage Road towards the Falls, with firemen "and many ladies also" carrying lit torches as they ran alongside. Their destination was the Pavilion Hotel overlooking the Horseshoe Falls (near today's Konica Minolta Tower), where a platform, described by one observer as a "temple,"

had been erected for a formal ceremony. Extra illumination was provided by four Bengal lights (a type of long-burning flare or firework), one at each corner of the platform, but they gave off so much smoke that the Prince came close to suffocating. The lights were quickly thrown to the ground, only to set the platform itself ablaze. Fortunately the fire was quickly doused, and the Prince was said to be "much amused" at his "warm reception." But that was not the only calamity. A temporary stand holding Sunday School children collapsed just as they were about to sing the national anthem, "and the little singers all rolled ingloriously in a heap."

With order restored, Welland County Warden James Cummings read an address of welcome, and the Prince responded. Because of the late hour formalities were kept short, and the Prince departed via Drummondville for what was to be his home for the next four nights, the Zimmerman House, located on a 52-acre estate directly opposite the American Falls (in today's Queen Victoria Park). The estate had belonged to businessman Samuel Zimmerman, who was killed in the Desjardins Canal train disaster in 1857. The Prince's immediate retinue stayed in the house also, but the others lodged at the Clifton House hotel (site of today's Oakes Garden Theatre).

Later that evening the Prince went out to Table Rock, where, in the words of Nathaniel Woods, correspondent for the *London Times*, he saw the Falls "as no man has ever seen them before, and as they will probably never be seen again — he saw the Falls of Niagara illuminated!" The illumination was supplied by some 200 Bengal lights placed in three locations at the bottom of the gorge: below Clifton House, beneath Table Rock, and — if Woods is to be believed — behind the Horseshoe Falls. They were the work of Thomas Blackwell, Managing Director of the Grand Trunk Railway. The effect was "grand, magical, brilliant," especially when the colour changed from blue-white to red, transforming the Falls from "molten silver" to a "seething, roaring, hellish fire." Not until the visit of the Marquis of Lorne, the Governor-General, in 1879 were the Falls lit up again, this time by electricity.

## Niagara Falls

Though the Prince was to spend three full days at the Falls, he had only one official engagement, which gave him free rein to play tourist. Early on Saturday afternoon, the 15th, he clambered down a stairway into the gorge and ventured behind the Horseshoe Falls. According to the *St. Catharines Constitutional*, "the Prince ... seemed strangely metamorphosed, and did not appear to like the situation much." Gardner Engleheart, the Duke of Newcastle's private secretary, added that the Prince was "thoroughly drenched" and "saw nothing," but "this was a necessary sacrifice to make to the custom of tourists." Having dried off, the Prince walked upriver to Street's (now Dufferin) Islands. There he lunched with Thomas Clark Street, and

then no doubt viewed the rapids from Street's newly-built pagoda on nearby Swayze (later Cedar) Island.

Later that afternoon the Prince witnessed high drama — a two-hour performance by Jean François Gravelet, the celebrated French funambulist or tightrope walker, better known as Blondin. Blondin's rope was strung across the gorge at the head of the Whirlpool Rapids just below the Niagara Suspension Bridge, and his stunt-filled acts had attracted huge crowds since he began them in 1859. He made three crossings for the Prince: the first (from the United States to Canada) featured somersaults, headstands and rotations; the second saw his manager, Harry Colcord, perched on his back; and the third was done on three-foot stilts. At the conclusion, Kinahan Cornwallis of the *New York Herald* watched Blondin walk home "with his balance-pole and stilts across his shoulder ... in his skin-fitting merino undervest and drawers, with a wreath of feathers on his head" — and £100 richer, thanks to a cheque from an appreciative Prince.

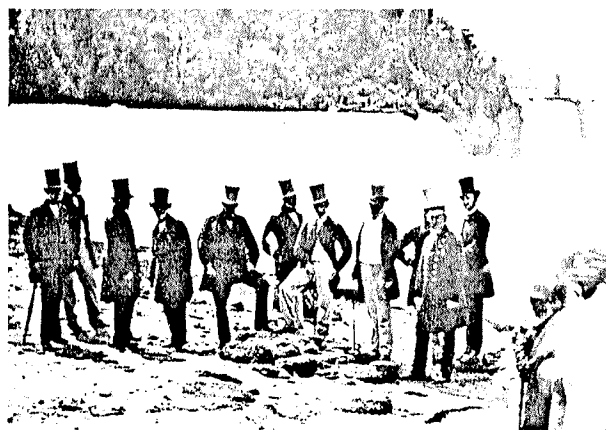
Blondin was not the only funambulist at the Falls in 1860. Another was Farini (real name William Hunt, from Port Hope) who had watched Blondin perform the previous year, and was convinced he could do better. He installed his own rope upstream from Blondin's where the gorge was wider, and the two of them competed head-to-head in the weeks prior to the Prince's visit. They both sought to perform for the Prince, but it was Blondin who won out, even though the program proposed by Farini included such unprecedented feats as crossing without a pole and dropping into the river below.

Blondin had made a formal approach to the Prince on August 22. Writing to the Duke of Newcastle, he stated it was "important that the Prince of Wales' entrance to the United States should produce a sensation worthy of the country and of himself," and proposed "to take the heir apparent to the British throne across the Falls in a wheelbarrow, on a high rope, free of expense." The crossing would be "diversified" by "fireworks and various gymnastic feats." Blondin said he would also take the Duke across if desired, and then made the extraordinary pledge that "If any accident should happen by which his Highness or any members of his party should be precipitated into the gulf below (of which I assure you there is little or no danger) the money taken from the spectators shall be promptly and conscientiously refunded."

Whether or not Blondin's audacity gave him the edge over Farini is unknown (though the *St. Catharines Journal*, tongue no doubt firmly in cheek, viewed the sentence quoted above as a deal-clincher). But the Prince did see Farini in action anyway, albeit briefly and literally in passing. On his way downstream to watch Blondin the Prince had to ride past Farini, who was already performing on his rope, but though the Prince "uttered an exclamation of wonder," he did not stop to watch.

The day ended with a trip on the *Maid of the Mist* ("we got very wet again & did not see very much," said the Prince in a letter to his mother) and a lengthy session in the bowling alley at the Clifton House, where the Prince's team easily beat the Duke of Newcastle's. Despite the win, he was highly miffed at missing a dance held in the ballroom upstairs, having found out about it too late. After dark the Falls were again lit up by Bengal lights.

Sunday the 16th was wet and windy, and the Prince's only recorded activity was attending church at Holy Trinity in Chippawa, the Rev. William Leeming officiating. Originally he was to have worshipped in Drummondville, but then going to Chippawa did provide another opportunity to view the rapids.



*The Prince (with foot on rock at right) at the American Falls*

Monday, September 17 was the Prince's last day at the Falls, and in the morning he made an impromptu trip across the river by rowboat ferry, ascending the cliff on the other side by an inclined railway. Since no-one knew he was coming (least of all the American authorities) he was able to explore Goat Island undisturbed by crowds of spectators, though a photographer was on hand to take his picture at the American Falls. He climbed the Terrapin Tower, and stood on a rock near the Cave of the Winds to watch a huge log loosened by his guides tumble over the cataract. Returning by the same ferry, he engaged a "common hackman" to convey him back to the Zimmerman House.

Monday afternoon saw the only official event of the Prince's stay at the Falls. This took place on the Suspension Bridge at Clifton, the very first bridge to be built over the Niagara Gorge. Opened in 1848, it was rebuilt in 1855 with two decks (like its present-day successor, the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge), the upper deck for trains and the lower one for carriages and pedestrians. William Hamilton Merritt, as President of the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company, delivered an address, and the Great Western Railway state car took the Prince across the River, pausing midway to enjoy the view. He then transferred to a carriage for a ride to the Whirlpool, returning to the Canadian side by the same means.

Merritt had already met the Prince in Montreal, and no doubt would have mentioned the Welland Canal, which, like the Suspension Bridge, was his initiative. It is no coincidence then that on Monday evening the Prince rode on horseback to Thorold Township to view the locks of the Second Canal. He was no doubt accompanied by others who knew the way, and there is a suggestion that he stopped for refreshment at the house of Thomas Brock Fuller, Rector of St. John's, Thorold (the house, just east of the Thorold Tunnel, burned in 1994). This implies that he came into the Village of Thorold, and would have viewed Lock 25, still visible in Battle of Beaverdams Park. At any rate, he was most impressed by the scenery, and commented on his "very pleasant ride in the country, wh[ic]h is very pretty" in a letter home to Queen Victoria.

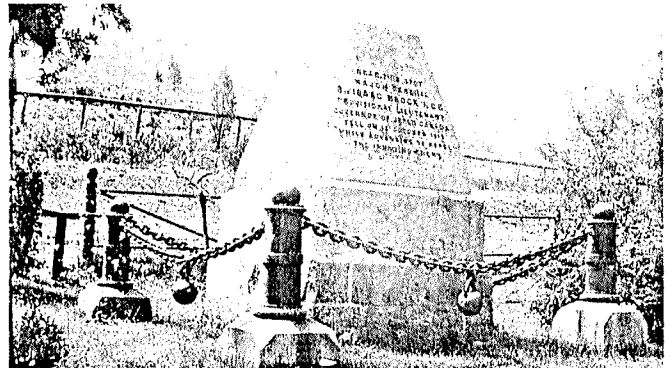
### Queenston Heights

The Prince's holiday at the Falls came to an end on Tuesday, September 18, a day packed with travel and official engagements. First stop was Queenston Heights for a ceremony honouring veterans of the War of 1812 and in particular Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, who had been killed at the Battle of Queenston Heights in October 1812. How the Prince journeyed to the Heights is not clear, as the reports are inconclusive. He may have simply taken a carriage through Stamford along Portage Road, but it seems more likely that he rode the Erie and Ontario Railroad from the Falls to Queenston, and then climbed the Escarpment by carriage.

A large platform covered with crimson cloth had been erected in front of the new Brock monument, completed only the previous year after the original monument had been blown up by an unknown malcontent in 1840. Tiers of seats for the ladies flanked three sides of the platform, while the fourth faced the carriageway, which was lined by Colonel Clarke's Volunteer Rifle Company of St. Catharines and the Highland and No. 3 Rifle Companies from Toronto. In between stood the veterans, "all old men, dressed for the most part in a blue uniform, with steel epaulettes and glazed caps."

When the Prince arrived The Royal Canadian Rifles formed a guard of honour (as they had throughout the tour). The veterans saluted with their swords, the Prince of Wales standard was raised, and Captain Mittleberger's Independent Artillery fired a volley. Chief Justice Sir John Beverley Robinson, "the oldest and most venerable of the survivors," read an address of welcome on behalf of the veterans, and the Prince replied. After three "vigorously given" cheers, he climbed to the top of the monument, raised a flag to mark its completion and savoured the splendid view. Following a brief altercation over lighting conditions with the "daguerrean artist" who took the Prince's picture as he exited the monument, they all made their way down the slope towards the village of Queenston for the dedication of a stone obelisk erected near the

spot where Brock was killed. Using a silver trowel handed him by William Thomas, the architect for both the obelisk and the monument, the Prince spread a layer of mortar on the base, and the upper stone of the obelisk was lowered into place.



*Obelisk to Sir Isaac Brock at Queenston*

The formalities may have gone off well enough, but the ceremonies at Queenston could hardly be considered a success. In fact, they were generally regarded as a great disappointment. In the first place, the attendance fell far short of the 10,000 that had been talked about in advance, in large measure because of festivities planned in other places. Few people came from St. Catharines, which the Prince was visiting in the afternoon, for fear that they would not get back from Queenston in time for the celebrations in town, and the only firemen to turn up were from the Protection Fire Company of Thorold, which, incidentally, was not on the tour route. The number of veterans was quite small also. Of the 1193 who signed the address of welcome, only about 150 were at Queenston Heights, though of course by 1860 the survivors were quite old and many were unable to travel any distance.

Furthermore, there was a general impression of lack of organization, causing "A Looker On" in a letter to the *Globe* to call the event "a most higgledy-piggledy affair." The criticism may have been a little unfair, for the Prince did arrive half an hour early while the participants and spectators were still assembling. Robert Cellem, author of one of the many "instant books" about the Prince's tour published in 1860 and 1861, wrote that the Marshal, Col. R. L. Denison, was "laboring to produce order out of the chaotic mass of human beings gathered together" when the Prince "immediately ascended the platform." Many who had arrived at Queenston from Toronto by the steamer *Peerless* were still trudging up the slope in blazing heat, and according to the *St. Catharines Constitutional*, "thousands of people who were coming in buggies, farmers' wagons and conveyances of all kinds — forming processions miles in length — came to the spot too late." Even worse, the ceremony at the obelisk was marred by what Engleheart called "more than the orthodox amount of crowding, which quite shut out the heroes of the day; the 'survivors'."

There was also what the London *Times* described as the "rather meagre ceremony" and the haste with which it was conducted. No sooner had the Prince mounted the platform at the Heights than he was atop the monument — or so it seemed — and then he was leaving after laying the stone at the obelisk. The reason was obvious — the Prince had to get to Hamilton, with stops *en route* — but the veterans felt understandably slighted. As "A Looker On" added, "it was expected that something more would have been done, than a march up the hill, and a march down again," at the very least perhaps a lunch, attended by the Prince. Instead they "returned to their homes dissatisfied ... and disgusted."

Be that as it may, the Prince had to keep moving, and at Queenston dock he boarded the steamer *Zimmerman* for the voyage down the Niagara River. But this too was a problem, for the skipper of the *Peerless* was expecting the Prince to board his vessel, and had even advertised the fact in the *Globe*. Her owners later sought \$600 in compensation from the government, claiming that they had been engaged by William Hamilton Merritt and even had lunch ready on board. What happened is not clear. It could have been just an unfortunate case of double-booking, though the fact that the *Peerless* had taken a cargo of cattle from Toronto to Hamilton the day before may have had something to do with it.

The *Zimmerman*'s ultimate destination was Port Dalhousie, but she first stopped at the Town of Niagara for an official reception, at which the Prince was presented with choice local fruit by the ladies. But after leaving and rounding Mississauga Point the *Zimmerman* had to return to pick up the tour's head chef, one I. M. Sanderson, who had travelled separately by train from the Falls and had been delayed by an accident. According to the *Globe*, the Prince espied "Sanderson stuck up in the rigging of the *Peerless* making frantic gesticulations with his coat tails." The *Zimmerman* had no choice but to go back because Sanderson had the food with him. Of course, the fact that lunch was indeed on the *Peerless* only raises more questions about the booking mix-up.

## St. Catharines

After a short welcoming ceremony at Port Dalhousie the Prince boarded the Welland Railway to St. Catharines. His arrival at 2:30 p.m. must have caused many in the "City of Saints" to heave a deep sigh of relief, because for a long time it looked as though the visit would never occur. Governor-General Head was against it (for reasons unknown), and though the Town Council discussed inviting the Prince as early as April, it was many weeks before anything was done. The *St. Catharines Journal* wondered if the delay was due to the "narrow and bigoted political feeling that distinguishes too many of our public men," and felt it necessary to remind them, if nothing else, of "the pecuniary advantages that would accrue to our hotel-keepers, merchants and others by such a visit."

It did not help that arrangements for the Prince's time at Niagara were unclear until the last minute. Only at the end of August was it confirmed that he would visit St. Catharines, but no date was set. Not until Thursday, September 13, the day before he travelled to the Niagara Peninsula, did the people of St. Catharines learn that he would be in town the following Monday. But three days later, on Sunday, this was changed to Tuesday! Head apparently remained opposed until the very end, which may explain the indecision and confusion.

Obviously the townspeople could not wait for final confirmation to start planning, and a public meeting was held on August 22. But this was only after a petition signed by 104 of the "wealthiest and most influential taxpayers in the Corporation" was presented to a dilatory Mayor and Council. At the meeting, "one of the largest and most united ever held in our Town Hall," various key decisions were made. A reception committee was formed, a sum not to exceed \$500 was placed at its disposal (not to be spent until it was certain the Prince would come), the day of the visit was declared a public holiday, and a three-man committee was set up "to communicate with the advisers of his Royal Highness, to ascertain whether he will visit St. Catharines or not." Progress was being made, but still not fast enough for the *Journal*, which printed an article pointedly headed "What will we do with Him?" as late as August 30.

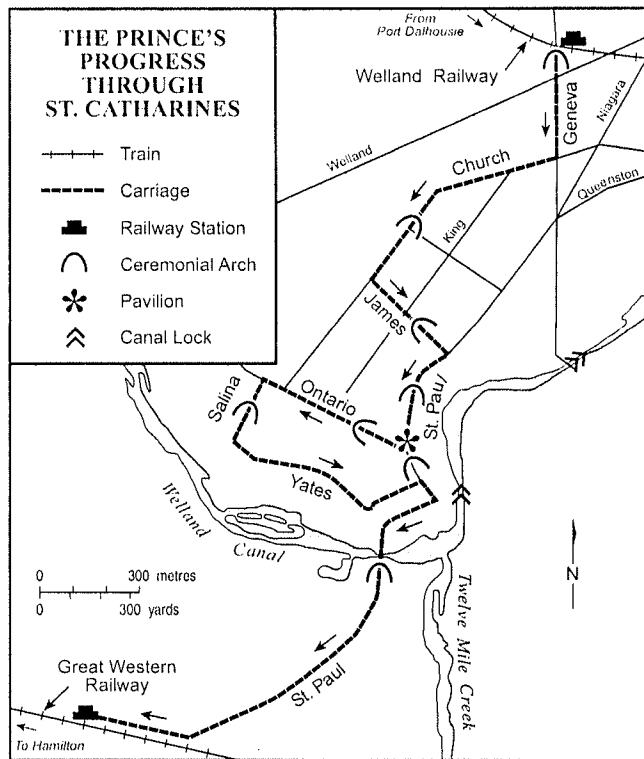


Commemorative medal struck for the Prince's tour

It must have been a huge rush, but when the Prince alighted at the train station at Welland Avenue and Geneva Street, St. Catharines was ready. Captain Mittleberger's Artillery fired a salute as he stepped on to the "tastefully decorated" platform. Together with Head, Newcastle and the Earl of St. Germans he entered a carriage flanked by cavalry and drawn by 150 firemen "clothed in red and blue uniforms, intermingled for that occasion." Leading the procession was Major Bate's Cavalry, followed by the Grand Marshal (Elias Adams), "Loyal Colored Inhabitants," the town band, Colonel Clarke's Rifle Company, and officers of the 5th Battalion Lincoln Militia. Then came the Prince, and after him the rest of the royal party, the Mayor, Town Council, County Magistrates, Clergy and "Inhabitants generally."

On leaving the station the procession passed beneath the first of eight ceremonial arches specially constructed for the visit. Arches ranging from the rustic to the majestic greeted the Prince everywhere he went, and St. Catharines did not disappoint. Three were especially noteworthy: an arch built entirely of flour barrels on St. Paul Street at Ontario Street, a

huge arch with a nautical theme near Shickluna's shipyard, and a firemen's arch on James Street, built of ladders raised at a steep angle and linked at the top, with a Union Jack above and a crown suspended below. Fire hoses were entwined around the ladders, and the whole was ornamented by evergreens, flags and shields. Fire engines sat on raised platforms on each side, and on one of them stood two boys in full firemen's uniform and two girls "dressed in white and carrying chaplets of flowers."



The buildings along the parade route were extravagantly decorated with flags, shields, slogans, evergreens and a variety of illuminations. The latter were of two kinds: transparencies (paintings on glass lit from behind), and devices composed entirely of gaslight. Since it was mid-afternoon the Prince did not see St. Catharines lit up, but the place shone after dark. The Canal Company office was typical, with "a circle of gas over the front door, containing 'Long live our Queen and Prince,' underneath this a crown, and on the North side a large Prince's feather, all in gas," plus three windows with transparencies depicting commerce, the backwoods, and a farmhouse and barnyard.

More than 15,000 people cheered wildly as the procession made its way to a pavilion in the gore at St. Paul and Ontario Streets. Directly in front was "a large amphitheatre ... crowded with ladies and gentlemen who had purchased the privilege at 25¢ a seat," and slightly further off was another tier of seats from which 500 children sang "God Save the Queen." After Merritt introduced the dignitaries, addresses were read by St. Catharines Mayor James Currie and Lincoln County Warden J. C. Rykert, to which the Prince responded. Then it was back to the carriages for what was to be a "very fatiguing run" to the Great Western Railway station, for instead of

taking the shortest route, the parade made a detour along Ontario, Salina and Yates Streets, Head, his patience sorely tried just by being in St. Catharines, did not appreciate this one bit, especially given the searing heat, and on arrival at the station gave Merritt "a good scolding" for causing needless delay (all of 10 minutes in a visit lasting less than an hour). Professing innocence, Merritt blamed the firemen for taking the detour against his orders. Whatever the truth, several in the Prince's party felt that St. Catharines had put on an excellent display, and "in eulogistic terms," pronounced the visit to be "second to none this side of Montreal."

The train stopped at Grimsby, where the Loyal Canadian Society presented an address, and reached Hamilton at 5 p.m. After the usual welcome and parade the Prince went to an orchestral concert. The next day he visited the Central School, hosted a levee, toured the agricultural exhibition, inaugurated the water works (designed by Thorold's Thomas Keefer), and attended a ball at which he danced the quadrille with Miss Mary Benson of St. Catharines, retiring to bed at 3 a.m. The following afternoon he left via Windsor for the United States, which he toured as Baron Renfrew (one of his many other titles), since it was not an official royal visit. He finally sailed for Britain on October 18, arriving home after a very difficult voyage on November 15.

### Laura's Reward

At some point during his stay in Niagara the Prince learned about Laura Secord. She was one of the veterans who signed the address of welcome read at Queenston Heights (the Clerk of Peace demurred, but she insisted), and she also prepared a petition asking the Prince to present her case to Queen Victoria. If she met him it would probably have been at church on the Sunday, for she was living in Chippawa at the time. Interestingly, Laura Secord was not the only woman to receive money from the Prince. He also sent £100 to Charlotte Hatt, daughter of Charles de Salaberry, a French-Canadian Anglophile and British officer. Charlotte is not known to have done anything special, but her father and brothers had served well in the army, and the Queen's father, Edward, Duke of Kent, was a lifelong friend of the family. According to the *Quebec Morning Chronicle*, Charlotte and Laura were given £100 "as a mark of sympathy ... in their straitened [sic] circumstances." Both were poor, and Victoria's sympathy was genuine. She was a very compassionate and humane person, and this was not the first time she sent money to individuals in distress.

**Principal Sources:** Morden, *Historic Niagara Falls*, 1932; Radforth, *Royal Spectacle*, 2004; Seibel, *Ontario's Niagara Parks*, 1985; Seibel, *The Niagara Portage Road*, 1990; *Niagara Falls Canada, a History*, 1967; books on the royal tour by Cellem, Chauveau et al., Cornwallis, Engleheart, Morgan, "The Boy Jones" and Woods, 1860-61; *Globe, Morning Chronicle, New York Herald, Niagara Mail, St. Catharines Constitutional, St. Catharines Journal, Times*, 1860-61.

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