

The Historical Society of St. Catharines

NEWSLETTER

September 2000

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

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

Our Mission and Goal is to increase the knowledge and appreciation of the history of St. Catharines and Vicinity. Affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society.

Membership is based upon the calendar year and dues are individual \$10 or family \$15.00.

Please join or renew now for the new 2000 membership year.

Our Upcoming Programs

Unless otherwise noted, the Society will now be meeting on the 4th Thursday of the month in the Burgoyne Room of the St. Catharines Museum, 1932 Welland Canals Parkway (formerly Government Road), St. Catharines.

Thursday, September 28 - Speaker: Colin Duquemin - "A Lady Waiting"

"A young woman risks entering a man's world, and tweaks the nose of the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada" Based upon his new book concerning the Rebellion of 1837, and two men Wait and Chandler who were transported to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania).

Program begins at 7:30 p.m. Society members may tour the museum exhibits free beginning at 7:00 p.m. courtesy of the Museum. (*note: you must show your membership card*) The featured exhibit will be "Vintage Niagara" the story of the Grape and Wine industry

Thursday, October 26 - Speaker: John Roberts - "History of the Metis".

John Roberts, U.E., Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Canadian Metis Council.

Program begins at 7:30 p.m. at the museum.

Thursday, November 23 - 2nd Annual Members' SHOW and TELL

The first Show and Tell was very popular and we hope that you will come and bring an item to share with us. This will be our last meeting before Christmas and we invite you to join in a little longer social following the program, which begins at 7:30 p.m. at the museum.

Watch for the December newsletter & mark your calendar for the 2001 Society program:

Thursday, January 25, 2001 - Speaker: John Burtiak -topic related to postcards

Thursday, February 22 - Speaker (topic related to Black History Month)

Thursday, March 22 - Speaker - suggestions are always welcome!

Thursday, April 27 - Annual Meeting and Speaker

Saturday, May 12 -11:00 a.m. - 25th Annual Oille Fountain Planting celebration

Thursday, May 25 - Speaker

Saturday, June 16 or 23 - the Society's 6th Annual Historical Theme Bus Tour.

Editorial (Or My Rant!)

Our Society recently received a new member in the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, U.S.A. The Library also purchased a copy of our Spa Book, and have requested that we send them ALL back issues of our newsletter, which they want to bind together and place within their collections. If you have copies of newsletters prior to 1995, please contact me so that I can copy them, and we shall also be keeping a set for ourselves. The Allen County Public Library has developed a world renowned genealogy and history collection which attracts people from all over North America who are searching for their ancestors. It has become a destination! It was recently pictured and mentioned in the May/June 2000 issue of the Family Chronicle Magazine.

In 1993 the St. Catharines Public Library won the Award of Merit from the Ontario Genealogical Society for the Special Collections area of the library. However, instead of capitalizing upon this award, and moving forward and creating an even greater collection and attracting even more people into Special Collections, the library facing budget restraints actually ended up downgrading this area. Thus, St. Catharines is not promoting this tremendous asset, and we are missing out on what the Allen County Public Library is obtaining ... a wonderful reputation and genealogical destination of first choice.

When one considers the summer hours of our library and the many tourists that travel at this time of year, I can only imagine the lost revenues and economic impact that the great number of people pursuing the hobby of genealogy would leave behind in our City. Over the years a lot of money has been spent downtown to attract people and yet more plans are underway. I believe our library could be a bigger attraction simply by spending a bit more money on Special Collections - so I ask - Why not put our tax money into our Library, a proven people attraction?

Ed. (Bill Stevens)

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Secondary School History Award Recipients

Members of the Society handed out an historical calendar and a \$50.00 award to a student of each public and separate secondary school in the City of St. Catharines that offers an OAC history course. The award goes to the best student in an OAC history course for the 1999-2000 school year as determined by the principal in conjunction with the history department of each school. We congratulate the following recipients and wish them well in their studies:

West Park - Robyn NEVILLE - presented by Bill Stevens

Lakeport - Lauren BROOKS - presented by Joyce DeForest

Laura Secord - Jill KAVANAUGH - presented by Brenda Zadoroznij

Saint Francis Xavier - Karen ARDEN

Holy Cross - Lana GRACIE - presented by John Bacher

St. Catharines Collegiate - Emma GAYLER - presented by Joyce DeForest

Governor Simcoe - Amy KLASSEN - presented by Wes Turner

Dennis Morris - Jordan DIACUR - presented by Joyce DeForest

Sir Winston Churchill - will be presented in October

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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 historical items of interests. 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 is by paid membership only. This issue was produced by Bill Stevens.

The Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture & Recreation.

Next Issue December 2000

Membership Report

We welcome new members: Stuart BURNS, Cindy CHUDYK, Allen County Public Library, Roseanna PARTINGTON, Joel STEIGER, Portia FRATTINI-STEIGER

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PAST EVENTS.....

Masonic History and Tour

On Thursday, May 4 Mr. H. Stewart Greavette spoke about Masonic History, particularly in Niagara and St. Catharines. The meeting was held at the Masonic Temple on Centre Street (note the spelling in the last newsletter was incorrect) This was a unique opportunity for the 37 members who attended, to tour the Temple and learn more about the Masons. We thank Stewart for his hospitality and his kind gift to the Society of a book on Masonic History.

24th Annual Oille Fountain Geranium Planting

Saturday, May 13 saw our ceremony held under rain threatening clouds at the corner of King and James Streets, downtown. Several members of the Oille / Oill family attended along with mayor Tim Rigby. Society member Doris Pettifer assisted potter Barbara Mural.



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Other Historical Events in St. Catharines & Area

May 1- October 31 - at the Mackenzie Heritage Printery, Queenston - feature exhibit - Johann Gutenberg - The Man of the Millennium - celebrating the invention of Movable Type and the beginning of the Information Age.

Thursday, September 14 - Regular meeting and speaker of the Ontario Genealogical Society Niagara Peninsula Branch - 7:30 p.m. at the Thorold Public Library Chestnut Hall. Speaker will be David Owen and the topic is "The Fenian Invasion of the Niagara Peninsula and the Battle of Ridgeway in 1866". The O.G.S. N.P.B. meets monthly on the 2nd Thursday.

September 16-17 - 22nd Annual Niagara Peninsula History Conference at Brock University This year's theme: "Niagara's Vanishing Landscapes" will feature Society members John Burtiak, Dennis Gannon, Colin Duquemin, and Alun Hughes among the 7 speakers.

John and Charles RIORDON of St. Catharines

Physician Dr. Jeremiah and Amelia (AMES) RIORDON brought their family of six children from Ireland to Weston, Ontario c1849/50. This article pertains to two of the children, sons John (born c1834 in Limerick, Ireland) and Charles (born November 28, 1847 in County Kerry, Ireland).

Subsequently the family, except for John moved to Rochester, New York. John moved to Brantford and became a dry goods dealer and in 1857 owned a general store there. He apparently dabbled in papermaking in Brantford before packing up and moving to St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A. in about 1858 to open a store there. The outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 saw John move back to Canada by February of 1862 when he came to Hamilton. By 1863 the St. Catharines City Directory shows him living on Yates Street near Salina St. and occupation as paper manufacturer. He had constructed a papermaking factory in Centreville (now Merritton area of St. Catharines) on the East Side of the Welland Canal on the former site of the Whitman and Barnes Knife Works. He leased the site below Lock 6 from Thomas R. Merritt for about \$400 a year and this included some water rights. Production was underway on 31 July 1863. With his business underway, he sent word to his younger brother, 15 year old Charles in Rochester, New York to come to Niagara to work at the paper mill. Charles had settled in Rochester with other RIORDON family members. Charles heeded his brother's call and became the factory manager, leaving John to sell the products. Charles also took up residence on Yates Street at the corner of Cherry Alley. In 1866, Charles went to England to purchase new modern equipment for a mill in Merritton, which soon began producing paper from rags and straw. By 1868 the mill was using wood pulp. Continuous modernization kept the Riordon Mills profitable and a leader in mass production of newsprint. The mill by 1869 was the main supplier to Toronto Globe and had begun selling newsprint to many newspapers in eastern Canada. In 1870 the original mill was sold to Collinson and Burch and became what is known as the Knife Works. A new mill had been constructed on lands likely purchased by RIORDON. The 1871 census gives John's age of 37 years, born in Ireland, religion as Church of England (Anglican) and an occupation of manufacturer of paper. On June 1, 1874 John made his brother Charles a partner. The 1874 Directory shows John living at 17 Geneva Street (today the site of the Garden City Arena) and Charles now living at 108 Church Street. On the 3rd of June 1876 Charles and his wife Edith Susan (ELLIS) had a son Carl born in St. Catharines. In 1877 The Toronto Mail could not pay the Merritton Paper Mill about \$26,000 it owed. As the main creditor, John RIORDON took over the Mail newspaper in lieu of the debt and became the publisher. He also purchased shares in the Hamilton Spectator. In 1879 John Riordon, a Conservative Party supporter, sought a Senate seat but was refused by Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald. In 1882 life would change very quickly for John, when an accident with his horse resulted in a serious head injury. By the autumn of 1882 John had retired from business and transferred control of the mills and newspapers to his brother Charles. John, his wife and son John left St. Catharines to travel the Near East and Europe. In May of 1883, while in Venice, Italy, John took a turn for the worse and the family moved to St. Leonard's, East Sussex, England, where John died Sunday, 21 September 1884 at the age of 51 years. He was a self-made millionaire. The following is an article which appeared in the November 14, 1884 edition of the *Thorold Post* newspaper titled "A Millionaire's Estate - the last will and testament of the late Mr. John RIORDON" and reads as follows: " Mr. Riordon's estate both real and personal is valued at not less than a million. The personality has been sworn under \$469,000. The residence in St. Catharines with all the household furniture, &c. is devised to Mrs. Riordon, the testator's widow, and an annuity of \$12,000 a year is bequeathed to her for her life. The testator has bequeathed considerable legacies to each of his sisters, Mrs. W.J. Douglas and Mrs. J. Carlisle. And also to Mrs. Misener, of Buffalo, a sister of Mrs. Riordon. His old servant, John Green, who was in his service 20 years, receives \$2000. One half of all the mill property at Merritton is given to Mr. Charles RIORDON, brother of the testator; and the remainder of the estate to Mr. John RIORDON, the only child of the deceased, who comes into full enjoyment of his inheritance when he attains the age of 25 years. In the meantime he

will receive an annuity of \$4000 per annum. Mrs. Riordon and Mr. Charles Riordon are appointed executors."

Charles RIORDON meanwhile, had been appointed in 1882 as a director of the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Co. His son Carl was attending Upper Canada College between 1887 and 1890. In 1889, Charles helped to found Bishop Ridley College in St. Catharines and Carl returned home to attend classes there from 1890 to 1892. After John's accident, improvements continued at the paper mill and in 1890 digesters had been installed to produce sulphite pulp. In 1895 Charles bought the Toronto newspaper The Empire and merged it with The Mail to form the Mail and Empire. In 1896 Charles' son Carl joined the business after graduating from the University of Toronto. The 1898 City Directory shows 4 Riordon members (C.Edith, Carl, Elsie and Kathleen) living at "Woodlawn" on Geneva Street. Carl married Amy Louise Paterson (daughter of Rev. Charles W. Paterson of Port Hope) in St. Catharines on 23 June 1900. Carl became managing director in 1905.

Carl and Amy had a son John Eric Benson RIORDON born in St. Catharines in 1906 and the family moved to Montreal in 1908. Business expansion between 1909 and 1920 saw the acquisition of several businesses in Ontario and Quebec. The older Mill in Merritton was shut down in the fall of 1920. A depression in 1921 resulted in a decline in sales and a sell off of assets. Charles RIORDON moved to Montreal, Quebec where he died on August 17, 1931 aged 81 years. At a Service on 18 September his ashes, along with the ashes of his wife, who had pre-deceased him 3 years earlier, were placed into a family vault in Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Toronto. The service was officiated by Dr. J.O. Miller, former head of Ridley College and attended by his son Carl RIORDON and Messrs. H.S.HOWARD and W. DOUGLAS and George and Sidney BUNTING.

Carl's son John studied the arts in Montreal and went to Paris in 1932 to train at the Grande Chaumiere and Academie Julian, then traveled and painted extensively in Europe. He returned to Montreal and visited the family cottage in the Laurentians north of Mont Tremblant at LacLache. In 1940 he joined the R.C.N.V.R. and became a Lieutenant. At the end of the war he held the rank of lieutenant-commander in the Naval Reserve. His art features many naval and landscape paintings and he had several shows of his works. He died in 1948 leaving his wife Mollie and two sons Eric and Michael, his parents, and two brothers Hal and Peter and two sisters Mrs. Peter Bennett and Mrs. Gordon Forbes and other more distant relatives.

Some miscellaneous information found:

Augustus RIORDON brother of Charles RIORDON of St. Catharines died in San Diego California on July 10, 1915 at the age of 68 years. The funeral was in Toronto.

Some questions:

When and whom did John marry? And what happened to their son John? Did they stay in Sussex and where are they buried? John left money to his 2 sisters ... why not to his other brothers?

by Bill Stevens

Note: The Riordon family article is a compiled history based upon information contained in several sources, most found in Special Collections of the St. Catharines Library. Article.

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The Niagara Mailing List

This is an Internet site devoted to genealogy and history in Niagara. You can post short e-mail messages, place a query, answer a query from someone else, read about some current news, etc. To subscribe you simply e-mail the List:

NIAGARA-ONT-L-request@rootsweb.com

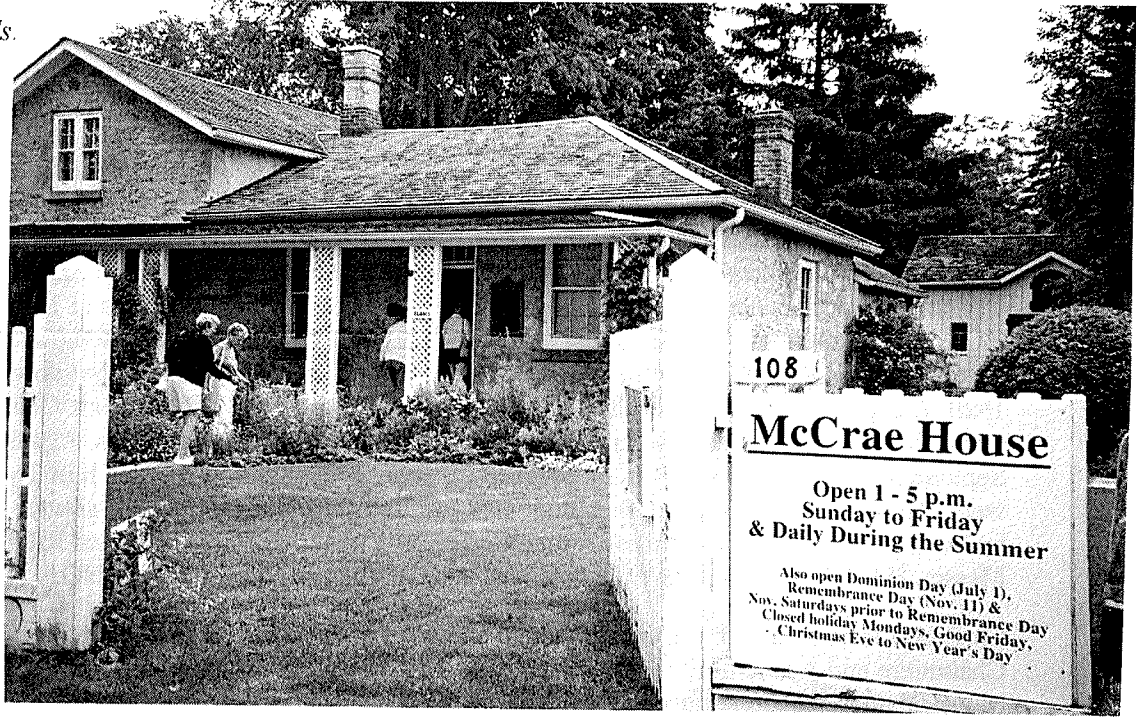
And in the body of your message, simply write ... subscribe. You will be notified that you have joined and provided with instructions on posting and to unsubscribe.

Our 5th Annual Heritage Bus Tour (Saturday, June 17)

The modern highway bus left Fairview Mall at 8:30 a.m. and by 9:45 we were having a coffee in Guelph. Our first stop was at the birthplace of Col. John McCrae, famous doctor, military officer and author of

In Flanders Fields.

The stone cottage style home was built in 1858 and is now a National Historic Site. Tour guides explained about the exhibits and the plants in the lovely garden. Exhibits include a hand written copy of the famous poem, McCrae's war medals, uniforms and family artifacts.



A View of the front of the McCrae Home

Next, we traveled through Fergus to scenic Elora, where we spent a couple of hours to eat lunch, tour and shop in the historic area by the mill. The water flow over the famous Gorge made for an awesome site!

In the afternoon we headed back to Guelph and toured the Guelph Civic Museum. The museum is a Georgian style building, built in 1847 of Guelph limestone. The exhibit we had hoped to see, had been removed early to accommodate renovations, however, there was an interesting exhibit

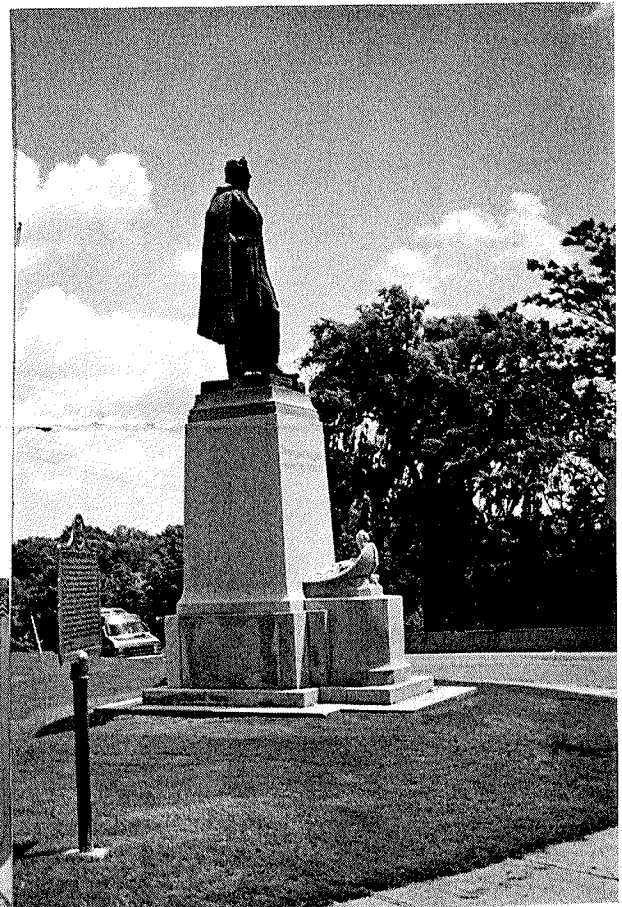


some time to have fun at the inter-active table

titled *Destinazione Guelph – The Italians in Guelph, 1900-2000*. In addition there were several regular museum exhibits. For more information on the McCrae Home and the Guelph Museum, visit their web site at < www.museum.guelph.on.ca >

Photos from the Merritt's Birthday Celebration held on July 1st

The Society celebrated the birthday (which is actually July 3rd) of William Hamilton Merritt by laying a wreath at the Merritt Statue. John Burtniak conducted the program.

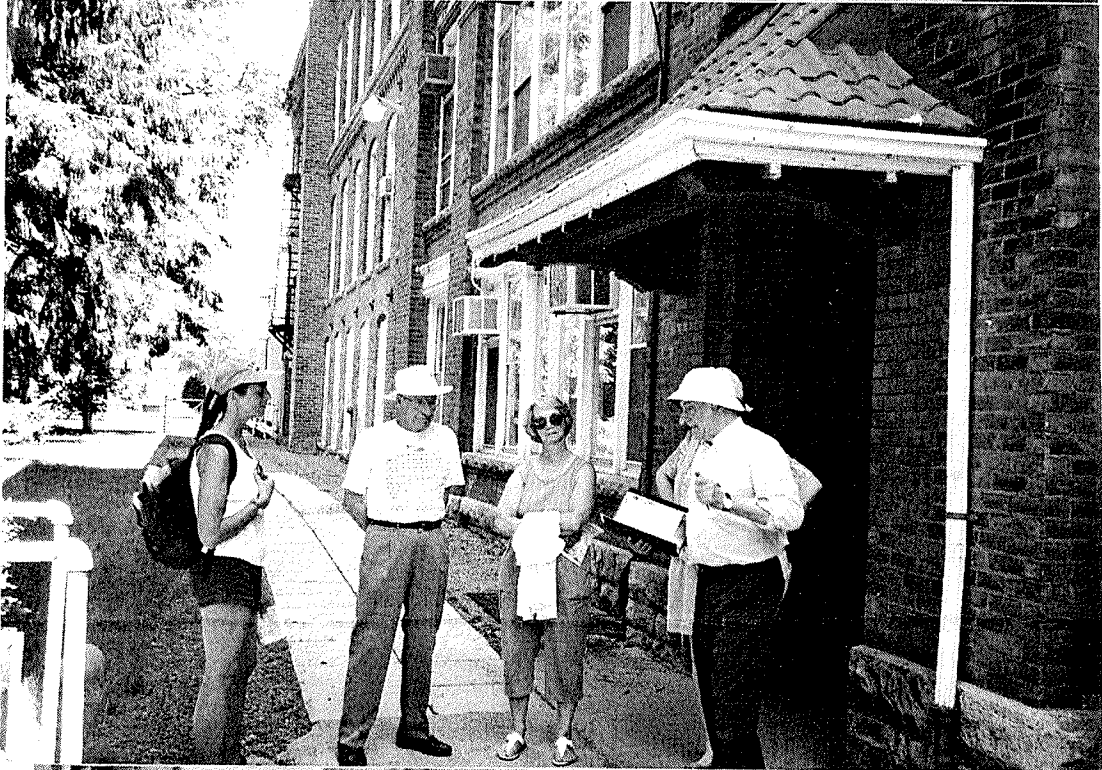


John Burtiniak Conducts Our July 1st Walking Tour Of St. Paul Street

A Few
Words
From
John
Before
We
Start



In Front
Of The
Canada
Hair
Cloth
Building
(behind
St. Paul
Street)



Nothing
Like A
Cool
Refreshment
After
A Good
Walk

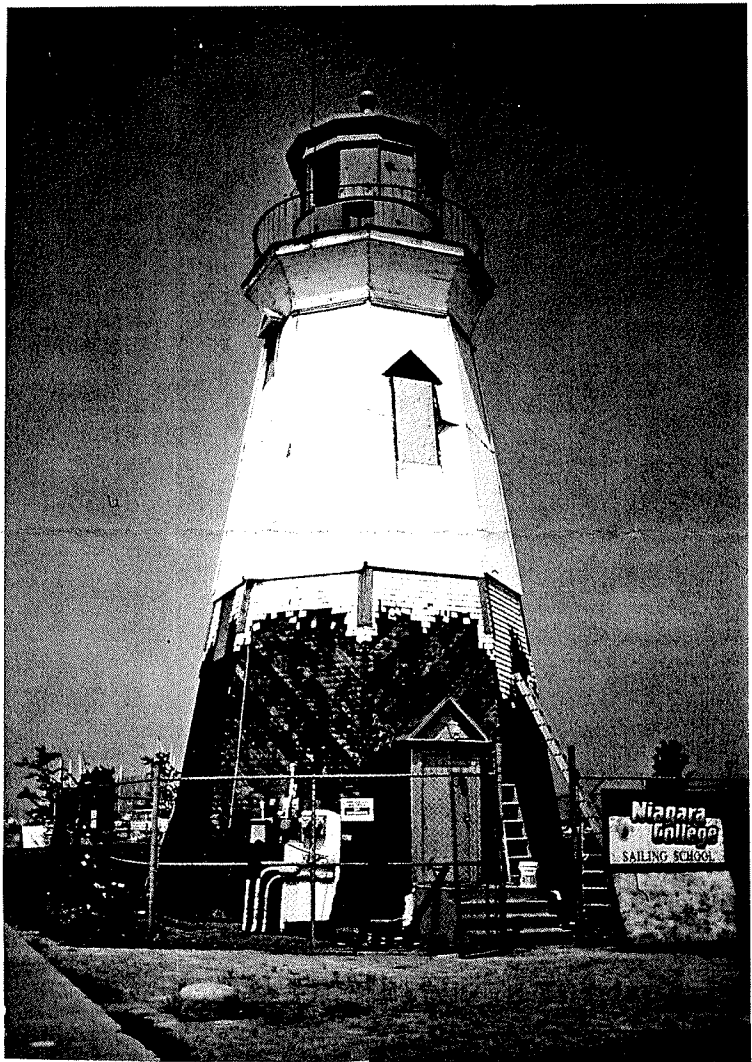


THE LIGHTHOUSE

JULY 26, 2000

By Ed S. S. S.

Despite living in Port Dalhousie for most of my life, I have never had the occasion to see the inside of the inner range lighthouse. That is until July 26 when I met Bruce Colbey and his crew from Wayside House busily working on the restoration. The picture shows their progress as of July 26. I have taken the liberty to reprint the adjoining article from the St. Catharines Heritage Committee's newsletter *The Scribe* which outlines the project. I was able to climb the 49 risers to the top and experience the views of the harbour from an entirely new vantage point. The Friends of the Lighthouse are seeking ideas for the eventual use of the lighthouse's 4 floors that would be both practical and generate some funds to maintain it. Contributions to the restoration fund are still being sought!



THE SCRIBE Vol. 5 Issue 1 **June 2000**

Port Dalhousie Lighthouse

In 1999 the Friends of the Lighthouse spearheaded a proposal to restore and reuse the Inner Range Lighthouse in Port Dalhousie. The project has received Millennium Funding from the federal

government. As well, a number of community partners have committed money, supplies and/or services-in-kind for the project.

The purpose of the project is to restore the building to its former glory and to integrate it into the harbour walkway. The Niagara College sailing school will continue to use the building

over the summer months. Funding is now in place to allow the project to begin and the restoration analysis undertaken by Niagara College students has been completed. Renovations are set to commence in the near future under the auspices of the John Howard Society. The goal is to have the project completed this summer.

Heritage Hour and a Half on CFBU - FM 103.7 - Brock U. Radio

Join host Tony Whelan each Sunday between 7:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. and listen to Niagara Heritage Hour. The show is 1 1/2 hours and features coming events, news & guests from the local heritage community. Be sure to listen in!

Lest We Forget!

The St. Catharines Cenotaph is located on the west-side of St. Paul St. between the Burgoyne Bridge and Ontario St.

The inscriptions on it read as follows:

(front face) "The men were very good unto us and we were not hurt they were a wall unto us both by night and day"

"In Memoriam / Requiescant In Pace"

"1939-World War II-1945"

"1914-World War I-1918"

"1950-Korea-1953" (north side face)

PASSCHENDAELE - AMIENS -

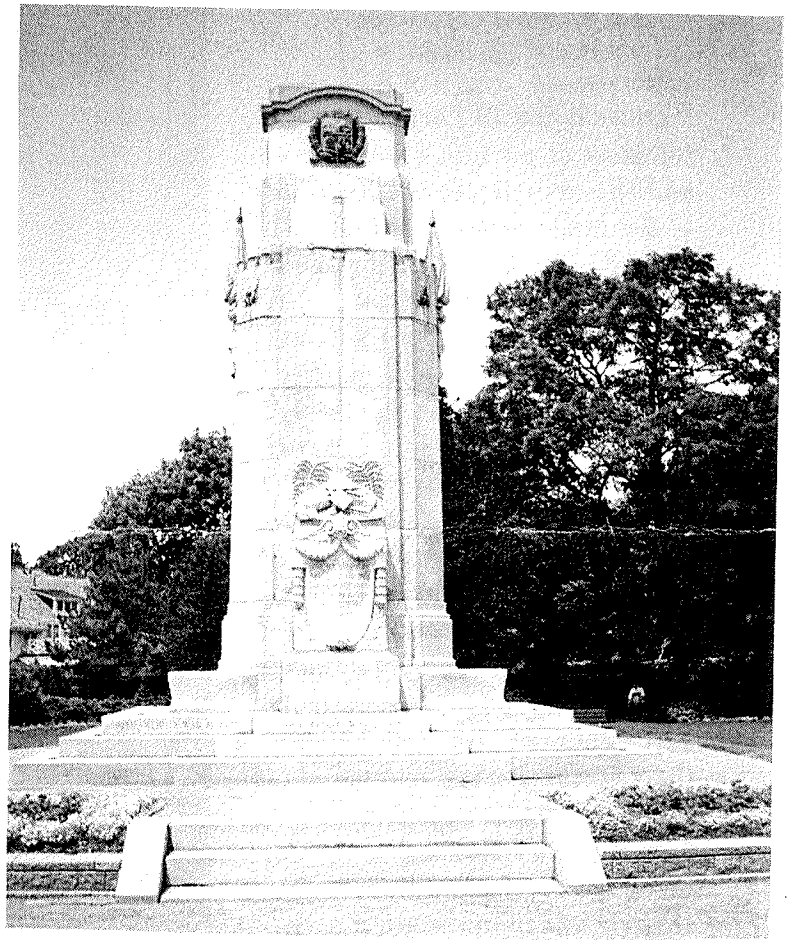
ARRAS - SOMME - VIMY - 1914-1918

(south side face) St. JULIAN -

2nd Battle of YPRES - FESTHUBERT

- CAMBRAI - MONS - 1914-1918

(back face) This cenotaph was dedicated on August 7th AD 1927 and the first wreath placed hereon by His Royal Highness Edward Prince Of Wales after the cenotaph had been unveiled by Brigadier General W.B.M. King. C.M.G.D.S.O.



Port Dalhousie Cenotaph

