

Next
Meeting

**Tuesday,
September 19,
1995**

*Auditorium of the
Quinte Living Centre,
370 Front Street,
Belleville*

7:30 Coffee

8:00 Meeting

Guest Speakers

**Mary
Haggerty**

and

**Marion
Casson**

Topic

*Spinning and Weaving
in Upper Canada from
the 19th century to the
present*

This will be a joint presentation and will include samples of material from the 19th century and modern day. Spinning wheels and other equipment as well as coverlets and garments will be on view both before and after the meeting.



ISSUE 128

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Outlook

The Hastings County Historical Society

"... I should have shot you."

World War II from another perspective

by Jean Williams

In keeping with the 50th anniversary of VE Day, the guest speaker at the May 16, 1995, meeting of the Hastings County Historical Society was Rey Langstaff. A World War II veteran, Rey was a member of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment (Hasty P's), joining in 1939. With the Hasty P's he landed in Sicily, went on to Italy and finally was taken prisoner. During the next 18 months he escaped seven times. When asked why he joined the Hasty P's Rey said it was "25 per cent patriotism, 25 per cent spirit of adventure and 50 per cent plain dang foolishness!"

While fighting on Sicily the regiment spent four days at the foot of Mount Etna with all its internal rumblings. After the regiment moved on to Italy, Rey was involved with a German "Moaning Minnie," a 40- to 45-inch shell with fins that whistled. He hit the dirt as it landed 15 feet beyond him. Somehow he got left behind and was captured. From then on he moved from camp to camp, making seven escape attempts. While in a camp in Austria he developed desert sores and was taken to an

herbalist for a salve to cure his sores. While waiting outside, no guard was watching so he simply walked away through the snow and boarded a slow-moving train and eventually landed in Czechoslovakia. There he was hidden by a family but later left, afraid he would bring trouble to them. By and by the Germans captured him and after a time he was shipped to Stalag 2D with other Canadians. He was put on a work party, but as he was trained not to co-operate with the enemy he persisted

in engaging in sabotage. This resulted in being shipped from one job to the next until he was finally told by a German "When I took you prisoner I should have shot you."

There were many more stories of prison life and escapes as Rey worked as a cabinet maker, escaped from a train after setting his coat afire, stole a boat, was turned over to the Gestapo, and almost died after a severe attack of malaria. But Rey Langstaff survived, and gave us a very different picture of life fighting in World War II.

The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario Quinte Region Branch Calendar

Sunday, September 17 -

Brockville/Maitland bus tour

Sunday, October 15 - Mine Sites

Sunday, November 19 -

Belleville West Hill

The Hastings County Historical Society, P.O. Box 1418, Belleville, Ontario K8N 5J1

From the editor's bookshelf

by Lewis Zandbergen

Fergus: A Scottish Town By Birthright

written by Pat Mattaini Mestern
127 pages, photographs, notes,
indexed

When the village or town in which you live has brought out its own book about the municipality's history which numbers some 555 pages and includes hundreds of pictures, it's hard to get too excited about a thin volume on a town to which you've never been. However, book reviewers must put aside such preconceived notions and the volume in question must be looked at without prejudice. In the case of *Fergus: A Scottish Town By Birthright*, that was easy to do.

Ms. Mestern has filled her 127-page booklet with facts, fancies, and a few tidbits about the locals. She's also included an account of the depths of animosity which existed for quite some time between Fergus and its rival village Elora which the author asserts began with the Lord's Creation of the Gorge; its bank on the Elora side is a little higher than on the Fergus side.

In reality the friction began with an election in the 1840s which split loyalties. The "feud" continued well into the 1960s when a ceremonial burying of the hatchet was held; the author qualifyingly says relations are much better now.

Perhaps the most touching story, however, is the one of Richard (Captain Dick) Pierpoint. Pierpoint, a black man, was granted property in the area just east of Fergus for his loyalty to the crown during the American Revolutionary War.

When he was just 16 years old, Pierpoint was captured in Africa, brought to America and eventually sold to a British officer. He served with Butler's Rangers during the war and raised a "troop of colour" during the War of 1812. Following the war he petitioned the government for funds to enable him to return to his homeland in Africa but these were denied him. He and his friends built a settlement in West Garafraxa Township which eventually became part of the town of Fergus although not officially annexed. Pierpoint was a leader

of his people in the area and died in 1838 at the age of 88.

Of course, no book about Fergus would be complete without mention of the Highland Games held there. The author justifiably devotes several pages to telling of how these games came about and how the tradition continues.

Throughout the book there is a noticeable pride in the au-

thor's long association with the town. The style is never cloying, however, and the subject town's minor closet skeletons are trotted out with as much dignity as are the town's great achievements.

The author has the enviable privilege of knowing her town inside out; she was born there so that makes sense but her view is not through the rose-coloured

lenses so often favoured by historians intimate with their town and therefore prone to suggestion that their little space on earth is perfect.

It is also a definite delight to read a book which contains maps, and an index. For those who are interested, further research can also be undertaken by making use of the copious endnotes.

The Opeongo: Dreams, Despair and Deliverance

written by S. Bernard Shaw
104 pages, maps, photographs,
line drawings, bibliography,
indexed, \$14.95

published by General Store
Publishing House Inc.

Mention trails and most people think of the Chisholm Trail, the Trail of Tears or the Oregon Trail. They share a common theme—they're all American. In Canada the Cariboo Road, built in the 1860s, would provide a route to the gold fields. However, none of these, Canadian or American, was built with the express intention of giving prospective settlers a direct line into the heart of the country to set up villages and civilize the new land, although that did happen.

In the 1850s and 1860s several colonization roads leading to the interior of Hastings County were planned. These roads were to be a lifeline for the immigrants who were expected to flock into the northern reaches of Hastings County to begin farms and settlements. Because of the extremely poor soil conditions and the often impassable terrain, these plans for the most part evaporated; settlers who had pinned their hopes on the systems abandoned their meagre holdings in droves.

The southern terminus of the Hastings Road was Madoc; from there the road stretched northward, finally joining another colonization road—the Opeongo—just west of Barry's Bay. The Opeongo Road, which had been surveyed during 1851 and 1852, was to eventually provide a link between Farrell's Landing, on the shore of the

Ottawa River, and Georgian Bay. It would cross the Canadian Shield, a barren, rocky terrain, with poor soil but large stands of virgin forest and countless numbers of lakes; it had virtually no land fit for agricultural uses. However, in 1853 the appointment for its opening was given and in 1854 the government announced it would promote the area as a potential destination for large numbers of immigrants. But by 1861 only 299 lots had been taken up by settlers and only 1,874 acres had been cleared. By the end of that year, because of government changes in the methods of settlement, homesteading along the Opeongo had virtually ceased. The next year it was estimated a total of just over 300 families had settled. Of the 23 immigrants that year, only 11 were believed to have settled to farm—the rest came only to cut the timber. Fifteen of those settlers later abandoned or forfeited their allotments. In 1864, 182 Polish immigrants arrived and of all the nationalities to have settled along the Opeongo, they were the most tenacious; many names in that area today reflect a Polish heritage. Formal construction on the route halted in 1867. In 1896 the railway, built by lumberman J.R. Booth, was pushed through the wilderness from the Ottawa River all the way to Georgian Bay. It brought what little travel there had been on the Opeongo to a standstill. Several disastrous fires which destroyed most of the bridges along the Opeongo in 1873, and changing eco-

nomic climates rendered further settlement impractical. By 1953 even the railroad had been abandoned. The Opeongo—the dream of settlement was finished. The road itself reached about 15 kilometres west of Barry's Bay only about halfway across the province to Georgian Bay. As the author says, "... about 120 miles on today's highways. It did not die at a specific location but faded away, in much the same way as did many settlers along its length."

In the first half of the book, S. Bernard Shaw has woven a factual and well documented story rich with the characters who planned, built and settled the trail. In the second half he takes us on an expedition picking up the trail here and there and visiting hamlets with exotic sounding names like Balaclava and with names like Ferguslea and Combermere, names which remind us of the lands these early settlers left behind for dreams which were more often than not shattered. Along the way we stop in villages like Brudenell named for the man who ordered the Charge of the Light Brigade. Even though the Opeongo's "glory" days lasted only about fifty years, a large number of churches, log barns and homes stand as a reminder of the immigrants' dreams.

Those pioneers have, perhaps totally by accident, left a legacy far richer and more meaningful than the surveyors' plans of more than a century ago.

This book is highly recommended for anyone who revels in Ontario's past.

County News

by Gerry Boyce

Four months have passed since the last column—eventful months with much heritage news to report. But first, to mark “Back to School” time and test your creative thinking, try this riddle from *Families*, the excellent quarterly of the Ontario Genealogical Society: “A man was married four times, divorced once and never widowed. How is this possible?” (Answer at end)

Congratulations authors:

1. Connie Brummel Crook, native of the Belleville area now resident in Peterborough, for *Meyers Creek*, a 300-page historical novel with strong local ties. Described as “a compelling story of the true experiences of a United Empire Loyalist family,” it continues the Meyers family saga that began with the author’s first novel, *Flight*. The central character, 19-year-old Mary Meyers (daughter of Captain John W. Meyers and an ancestor of the author) must come to terms with danger, the survival of her family, and love. It’s a Gemini paperback published by Stoddart for \$6.99.

2. Roy and Priscilla Cadwell for a well-illustrated, 115-large-page, 25-year history of the Peace Park near Actinolite. The price is \$14.95, but a discount is available until September 15. Call the Cadwells at 478-6337 for details. Longtime Hastings County Historical Society members will recall our pleasant tour of the site 30

years ago.

3. John Zikoupoulos for *Small Town Ahepa*, a nicely-illustrated, 56-page history of the Mike Constantinou Chapter of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association. The head of Modern Languages at Centennial Secondary School, John records the history of the Greek community in the Belleville area.

4. Rob Walker, Curator of the North Hastings Heritage Museum for his “Museum Corner” in *The Bancroft Times*. Of special interest was an article (August 15) on “Calathumpians in Bancroft.” It traced the origins of calathumpianism as “a type of fundamentalist religion originating in the southern United States, which was noted for its parades of exuberant celebration of their faith, thereby producing much noise, joyful or otherwise, unto the Lord.” Rob included a photo of an 1867 Bancroft Calathumpian Parade, but felt it was not a religious parade (given the participants’ costumes) but rather made enough noise to be like a Calathumpian parade.

5. Evan Morton for his detailed and fascinating *Tweed News*’ columns, especially the article on Hungerford Station (August 16).

6. Nicole Horvath and Cathi Jones for *Marmora Herald* stories on behalf of the Marmora His-

torical Foundation. Cathi gathered “old pictures, tall fish tales, stories passed down through the years and generations, memories of a long-ago summer love.”

7. The *Marmora Herald* for its excellent series on houses featured in the Marmora Historical Homes and Garden Tour.

8. Sarah Macwhirter, researcher/writer for the “Remember When...” section of each Monday’s *Intelligencer*. She’s an able successor to Bill Hunt.

9. Aimee Dopking Pianosi for her *Napanee Beaver* series of “Living Pictures” focusing on life in Lennox and Addington. An excellent picture (August 23) prompted this writer and his wife to visit the spectacular rock cut at Kingsford on the border road between Tyendinaga and Richmond Townships, just north of Highway 401. The road drops 100 feet through a rock cut with vertical sides. Another picture (August 15) showed the red terra cotta (cooked clay) tiles in a beautiful design on the Sherwood Bed and Breakfast on Dundas Street West, Napanee. The tiles were manufactured at Rathbun Enterprises in Deseronto circa 1890.

10. Barry Ellsworth of *The Trentonian* for instituting a “Glancing Back” series of heritage photographs.

11. *The Community Press* for its coverage of heritage events and reviews of heritage books.

Happy Summer Memories include:

1. The tremendous publicity surrounding the opening of the new Bata Shoe Museum at Bloor and St. George Streets in Toronto.

2. The Trent Port Historical Society’s tour of the former Johnstown Church in Sidney Township, renovated by Roy Bonisteel.

3 The impressive arrival on Canada (Dominion) Day of the Great North American Race at the Quinte Mall

4. The Canada Day celebrations sponsored by the Stirling Historical Society.

5. The Kente Portage Festival at Carrying Place

6. The development of a Historical Garden at Madoc

7. The erection of a cupola at the Four Corners in Madoc, with the assistance of the Madoc Historical Foundation.

Next Column: News of research on Bay of Quinte fisheries (1870 - 1920) and a November 1935 disturbance at RCAF Station Trenton.

“Between Cow Bells at night and gramophones in the day time, life in Bancroft is becoming somewhat of a burden.” (*Bancroft Times*, 1904).

Emotions will run high on Friday, October 7, when the Hasty P’s parade through downtown Belleville, re-enacting their memorable return from the European Theatre of War 50 years ago.

Answer to riddle: He was married in a civil wedding, which alarmed his parents when they heard. His parents made him have another wedding in a Roman Catholic church. He and his wife were later divorced. He married again in a civil ceremony to a non-Catholic. Two decades later it was possible to marry in the church, so they did.



Your County Museum



257 Bridge Street East, Belleville, Ontario, K8N 1P4 (613) 962-2329

Coming Events

September

Toby Jug Display in Breakfast Room

Paul Lamp Display - The Invention of Artificial Light

September 1 - Winter hours begin, Tuesday to Sunday 1:00 to 4:30

September 11 - Volunteer Recruitment Coffee Party 9:30

October

In-house exhibit "From Washboards to Washing Machines" opens

October 4 - 6

*Book sale at Bay View Mall
Fund raiser by the Hastings County Museum Auxiliary*

Book and Bake Sale on October 5

APPLAUSE

We would like to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of time and effort of those individuals who staff the reception desk each week - Mary-Lou Lyons, Winsome Lewis, Muriel Edwards, Joan DeSalis, Bobbie Geneja, and Lillian Holowick. These people are also involved in contributing to special events, education programmes and special tours.

All of the education volunteers work hard to make the museum's programmes a success, and their work is gratefully acknowledged. Two individuals made exceptional contributions to the Northern Owls programme and Garden Games. Ann Cuddihy instructed 13 classes during this time and June Dafoe instructed nine. Thank you ladies!

RESTORATION PROJECT

In 1992 research on the restoration of the Museum grounds and house exterior was initiated. Now, the final draft of the Landscape Restoration Study is complete. This summer a 45-foot section of the gutter system was repaired as a test for further work. Major fund-raising efforts will be implemented in order to complete this project.

If you have any questions please see Rona.

Outlook is published monthly for the Friends and Members of the Hastings County Historical Society

THANK YOU

We wish to thank Sharron Fairgrieve, Jean James and Katharine Mills for picking and donating strawberries for the Strawberry Social. And to all of those involved in this event. Thank You

Kathie Kompass went to several schools last spring to teach Ukrainian Easter Egg techniques. Kathie donated the proceeds to the Museum. Thanks Kathie, this was greatly appreciated.

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