



# Outlook

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## Around the Roads of Hastings – on the Screen

One of our big projects last year was the shooting of video clips to show you placements of historical plaques around Hastings County. You can see them on YourTV (Cogeco Cable) and on YouTube. Our intention was to give our members and others in the public an opportunity to explore the back roads of rural Hastings and discover historical plaques around the County.

Our thinking was this: with international and long-distance domestic travel curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we would provide a guide to interesting day trips to explore Hastings County. You could get into your car and explore the back roads of history.



**Richard Hughes doing a video reading at Chisholm's Mill**

Our work was impeded by the lockdown restrictions in 2020, but by using three cars and travelling separately, our production crew was able to reach most of our filming sites. The crew consisted of president

Richard Hughes and myself providing the on-camera commentary. The other member was J.-P. Lemieux of YourTV (Cogeco Cable) who did the filming and editing.

COVID-19 has turned out to be more tenacious than we anticipated. In 2021 the stay-home restrictions are more severe than last year. Of course, we can't recommend you explore around Hastings when the provincial government is pleading with you to stay home. However, you can always explore these road trips at [hastingshistoricalplaques.ca](http://hastingshistoricalplaques.ca). Plan your trips for NEXT year. If we're lucky, maybe even by this fall when the leaves are in full colour.

The Historical Society has been affected by the pandemic in a number of other ways. We have several plaques ready to raise in public ceremonies, but they will stay packed away until the pandemic restrictions are lifted. We are also learning the benefits of meeting by the popular ZOOM programming for our board and committee meetings. We even held our annual meeting on-line.

We have begun a series of on-line presentations. The first one, a few weeks ago, was about the migration of Dutch immigrants to Canada after the Second World War. A wave of Dutch immigrants moved into the Quinte area. We drew about 80 viewers for the program. The next was a film on the Lost Villages of the St. Lawrence, the drowning of village sites with the building of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Others will be coming.

The Society is also building up a substantial library of local history films. You can find them on YouTube at <http://bit.ly/2MoVYDp> or on the Society's web site.

Our next big project is to create directions for a his-

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torical walk along the Belleville riverfront from Meyers Pier to Highway 401. This new walk, researched by John Lowry, will guide you on a 2½ km perambulation to explore historic and heritage sites along the Moira River. Of course, that depends on how quickly you perambulate from ice cream kiosks to coffee shops.

Once upon a time you would come out to see the Historical Society at its monthly presentations. We hope to get back to that as soon as we can; in the meantime, we are exploring all kinds of opportunities to make electronic connections with you on-line, through Cogeco and YouTube. Look for us. We're coming to your living room or computer.

– *Orland French, past-president, Hastings County Historical Society*



## **Warm Memories of Cool Natural Ice Arenas**

*By Alexander D. McNaught*

It doesn't seem so long ago that playing hockey in a real arena on artificial ice was an awesome experience. For those who grew up on pond hockey, even natural ice arenas such as the ones at Frankford, Stirling and the towns back north, were a big step up. These facilities seemed like the Maple Leaf Gardens to aspiring country boys.

The natural ice arenas that I remember best were in Frankford and Stirling. They were wood frame structures with NHL-size ice surfaces. The viewing area was limited to standing room only along the boards about two deep with no overhead electric heating units. A heavy gauge wire mesh was stretched from corner to corner behind the net to a height of eight feet. Because the pucks were never frozen to – 4°C as they are today, players would deliberately shoot the puck into the wire mesh above the goalie so it would rebound onto the ice in front of that player—much to the chagrin of the goalie!

The ice makers were very proud of their ice—laying down accurate lines and shaving the surface next to the boards so the puck didn't slide up and over the boards and out of play. The ice was shovelled off at the end of each period by local rink rats. The Zamboni of the day was a barrel of warm water placed on

a cart and hauled by hand. The ice surface was given a thin coating of warm water from the barrel through holed piping that flipped out to each side. Gentle streams of warm water flowed into cloth bags, evenly distributing a thin coating to the ice surface. The new smooth ice surface was appreciated by those used to rough pond ice. We also appreciated the fact that we didn't have to shovel the snow off the ponds. Of course, we had to pay for the privilege of playing in a maintained natural ice arena.

What I particularly enjoyed were the dressing rooms. They were cozy warm, heated by wood-burning stoves that gave off a welcome, cheery ambience of smell and the sound of the crackling of burning wood. Unfortunately, those little stoves were the cause of some natural ice arenas accidentally burning down.

Natural ice had some limitations. The hockey season was occasionally shortened, or abruptly stopped, due to warm weather. I recall one such occasion when we were playing in Stirling in early March. The previous day had been unseasonably warm, and the ice was soft but deemed playable, so the game started. However, midway through the first period, meltwater from the uphill side of the arena began seeping under the boards and onto the ice surface. It quickly became a flowing stream, and the game had to be called.

Yes, natural ice arena stories abound. Another tale involved the natural ice arena at CFB Trenton; it had its own unique features. This structure was a metal Quonset hut with overhead arching steel and iron girders that supported the roof. Since the roof was not insulated, the girders became cold which in turn caused condensation. Water droplets would form and fall to the ice surface and create little mounds. These unwanted hummocks, as you can imagine, caused a few skating mishaps and forced one to make careful passes. At the end of each period, the bumps would be shaved off before the surface was flooded—but they soon returned.

Yes, 70 years ago, artificial ice did exist at the Belleville Memorial Arena as well as at nearby Picton, Napanee and Trenton which we periodically patronized late in the evening when the rental costs were lower. These buildings with their better amenities were nice, but they lacked the ambience and idiosyncrasies of the old natural ice arenas. Which would I prefer? You don't have to ask!



## School's Out—The Old Ormsby Schoolhouse Tea Room Closes

*By Gary Pattison*

After almost 18 years, The Old Ormsby Schoolhouse Tea Room has served its final meal and closed its doors forever. With the business unable to operate during this past pandemic year, owner Ernest Pattison made the decision that now was the time to move on.

Since the Tea Room opened in 2003, they have served a popular variety of meals and desserts, served with a side of history and heritage. The menu included turkey and roast beef dinners, soups, traditional teas, scones, carrot cake and 'three's company' apple, strawberry and rhubarb pie. They achieved a five-star rating on Tripadvisor, as well as a commendation of "one of the best places for a spot of tea" on daysoutontario.com.

The one-room schoolhouse was built in 1921 and replaced Ormsby's original 1880s schoolhouse, lost to fire the year before. It was constructed in the convention of the day for school buildings, with a row of windows on the southwest side to take advantage of the warmth and light of the sun through the winter, with no windows on the north side.

When Ernie and his wife Debbie bought the building, they originally restored it for their wedding reception. This included the refurbishment of the tin walls and ceiling, the addition of wall-mounted oil lamps and a vintage 1920s wood-burning parlour stove, and even the return of an old school bell, which Ernie dragged up to the empty bell tower. When they decided to open a tearoom to complement the establishment of The Old Hastings Mercantile & Gallery across the road, they added a kitchen and washrooms at the back of the building.

The tiny hamlet of Ormsby in northern Hastings, with a population of about 20 people, has five century buildings still standing and in use. It is one of a handful of settlements along the northern section of The Old Hastings Road, and the only one with sound heritage buildings remaining. Along with the schoolhouse (Tea Room) and the general store (Mercantile & Gallery), there are three churches: St. Bernadette's Catholic Church,

The Old Ormsby Heritage Church (est. Presbyterian 1904), and St. Mary's Anglican Church, now a private residence.

Many special events were held at the Old Ormsby Schoolhouse, including wedding receptions, music concerts, book signings, and the yearly and much anticipated "Dickens & Dinner by Lamplight." Bus tours would just about triple the population of this tiny community. There were several visits from the Hastings County Historical Society, which included lunch at the Tea Room, shopping at The Mercantile, and a stop at the restored Heritage Church. Though the Old Ormsby Schoolhouse has ceased operations, The Old Hastings Mercantile & Gallery remains open, still serving a combination of handcrafted goods, nostalgia and a link to the roots and traditions of the area.

With the Tea Room closed, gone now are the reminders of that past: the authentic school desks, blackboards, vintage schoolbooks, and heritage school photographs. What will always remain are the memories of a storied chapter in the life of this building. There has been an outpouring of thanks and best wishes to Ernie, and all who worked at the Old Ormsby Schoolhouse through the years, for the food, the conversations, and the connections to this area's history and heritage.

*Gary Pattison is brother of Ernie and owner of The Mercantile.*



**Hastings County Historical Society bus tour in the Old Schoolhouse Tea Room on May 27, 2017**

## It's Reading Time Again

By Michelle Hutchison

The showers of spring are bringing the flowers and greening the grass. The birds are back and are treating us to a chorus of song. As you enjoy the bright sun and the warmer temperatures, tempt yourself with a good book to read.

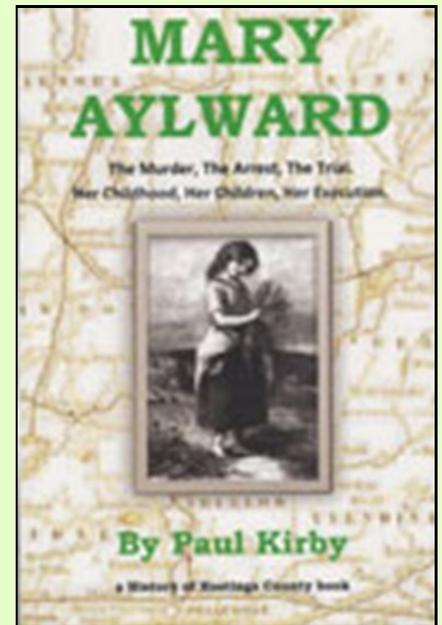


Slates and chalk to computers. One schoolroom with all grades to one school with many rooms, each with a single grade. The twentieth century saw many years of change in education. What was it like to be a teacher amidst all of that? Millie Morton relates the story of *Grace*. Grace Morton knew at an early age that she wanted to be a teacher. That was a somewhat daunting goal for a girl, raised on a farm in an era when higher education for females wasn't always valued. Grace—a woman of humour, strength and determination, a woman of innovation and a thirst for learning, a woman who had lifelong and far-reaching influence on the people in her world. Grace was a teacher, yes, but she was also a tireless volunteer, a dedicated wife and mother and a good friend to many. Her dignity and zest for life was remembered by all who knew her.

244 pages    \$25

It was all because of a hen. It is reported that thousands came to watch when Richard and Mary Aylward were hanged. Convicted of murder, they were the first couple in Canada to be hanged side by side; theirs was the last public hanging in Belleville. Paul Kirby chronicles the life of *Mary Aylward* from her birthplace in Ireland to the home on Hastings Road where the murder is reported to have taken place. The evidence is there; a man was killed. The jury returned a verdict of guilty but asked for mercy in sentencing. You can decide: did they deserve to die? It was all because of a hen.

122 pages    \$18



Pick up your copy of these two fine books at the Community Archives in the Library/Archives building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

## Trenton's Covered Bridge

By Gary Nicoll

For many of us, the most common image of Trenton's covered bridge is the postcard that is entitled *The Old Bridge, Trenton, Ont.* The bridge looks a little tired, with some horizontal siding boards missing and some sag showing from pier to pier. However, it is best to think about this bridge when it was

new. The quality of the planning and building of the bridge is shown by the fact that the bridge eventually became "The Old Bridge." The bridge construction began in 1833 and was completed in 1835. It was replaced by a new bridge in 1916, so the wooden covered bridge had endured for some 80 years.

The design and site location were primarily the work of Nicol Hugh Baird, a civil engineer who emigrated from Scotland to Canada in 1828 to work on the

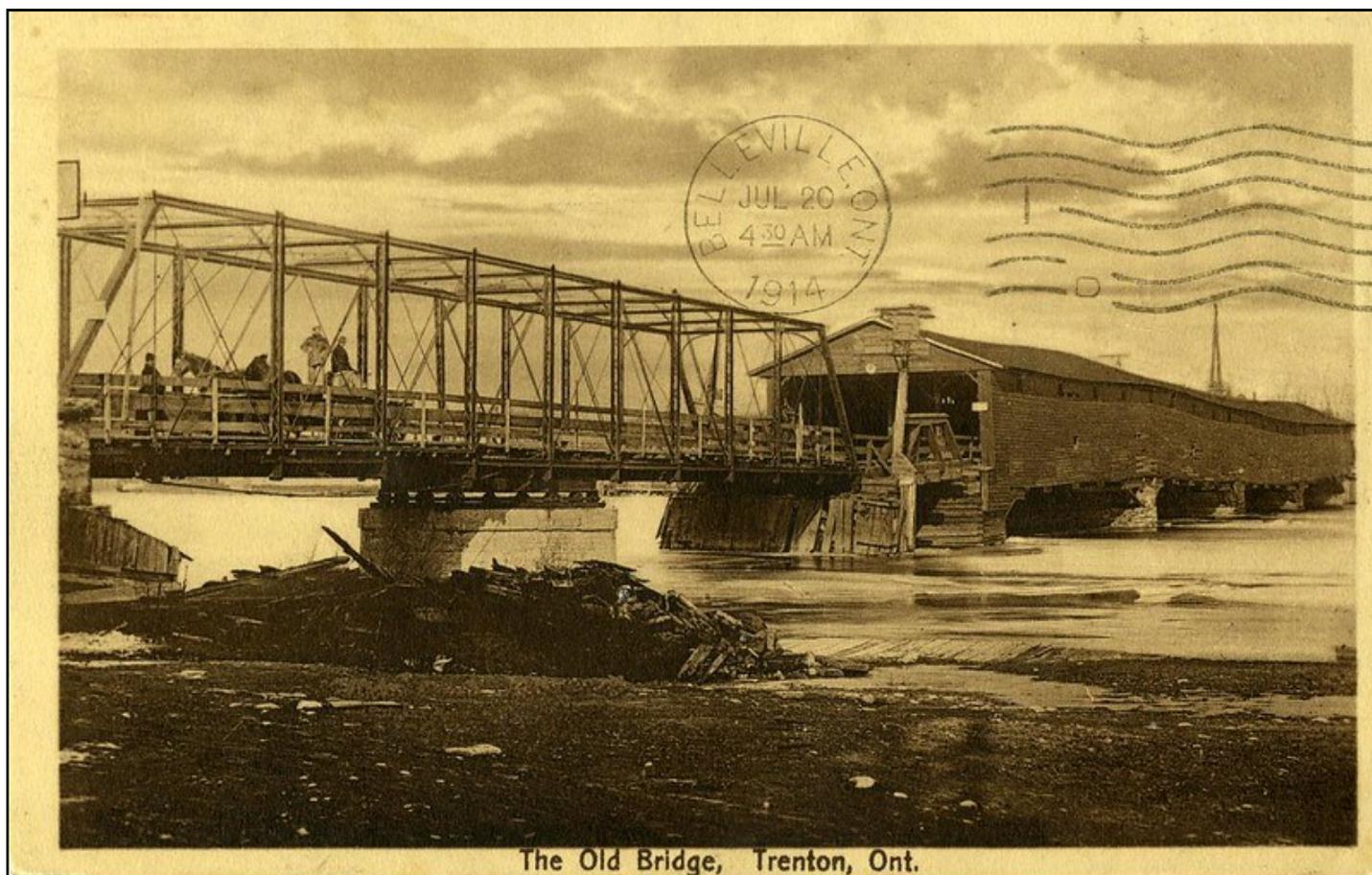
Rideau Canal. He became interested in the Trent River and the harbour at Trent Port. Baird had been working on bridge designs that would work on sites like the one at the mouth of the Trent River. Stone arched bridge design was not feasible because of the length of the spans required and the limitations of the budget available for a bridge over the Trent River. Wrought or cast iron was also rejected. That left timber as the only viable material to use. He worked out a design that he referred to as a Suspension Wooden Bridge. The final plan accepted and approved for the bridge had 5 piers that were 44 feet by 14 feet at the base and narrowed to 32 feet by 10 feet at the top. The suspended portions ran about 100 feet in length and were 32 feet wide. The piers were constructed of 12 inch square timbers of oak and pine dovetailed and pinned together, then filled with large round stones and finally capped with dry masonry work. The suspenders from pier to pier were elm or red pine as Baird thought these woods had greater flexibility than other choices. Planking was originally 3 inches thick. The interior consisted of a path 10 feet wide on each outer wall for carriage and sled traffic and a central walkway that was 4 feet wide. The outer walls were 2 feet wide as were the interior walls,

safely separating carriage traffic from foot traffic and from carriage traffic moving in the opposite direction.

There was always a drawbridge section of the bridge but it never really seems to have satisfied users and was upgraded a number of times, finally being changed to a swing bridge section to facilitate boat traffic.

Although there were small windows high up on the side walls, the bridge was lit by coal oil lamps. The decking required regular cleaning as the weather would not wash it as happens on an uncovered bridge, and horses leave deposits that need to be dealt with. In winter, snow actually had to be dragged into the bridge and spread to ease the sliding of horse-drawn sleds.

The life of a wooden bridge in an Ontario setting was only about 10 to 20 years if not covered and about 80 years if covered. But in both cases, constant repair was required. Some major work seems to have been done in Trenton every 20 or so years, sometimes resulting from fire or other damage to a portion of the



The Old Bridge, Trenton, Ont.



A postcard image of the New Bridge in Trenton, Ontario taken from the east side of the Trent River looking northwest

*CABHC HC03276*

bridge. In its last 35 years of existence, minimal maintenance was done as the town was expecting the bridge to be replaced sooner than it actually was. The completion of the Trent-Severn waterway and the opening of the canal from Rice Lake to Trenton in 1918 acted as the stimulus to replace the old covered wooden bridge in 1916.

Baird had moved on to other projects, including a survey of the feasibility of completing a Trent canal system before the bridge was really started. The bridge was constructed by Ezra Church and Dean Howard, and the project was supervised by a board of three commissioners. The House of Assembly approved a resolution in 1833 providing 4,000 pounds for the project. For perhaps a decade, it was a toll bridge. In the decades to follow, local councils and the legislature provided money for maintenance and repairs.

When completed, the 750 ft. long bridge was the finest wooden bridge in Upper Canada. The thoughtful choice of its site and of the building material was confirmed by the lack of spring ice and runoff dam-

age over the decades. In its lifetime, a pier had to be replaced, fires damaged sections and therefore they had to be replaced, but mostly it required only the wood replacement typical of outdoor structures. Constant, expensive, but expected.

The ferry service that had operated for some 40 years had to close, but in general, the bridge installation was an economic and life-enhancing boon to Trenton.

The bridge linked up Trent Port with a settlement called Annwood that had been started on the east side of the river in 1829 on town lots laid out by John Strachan of Toronto. He later became Toronto's first Anglican bishop and was influential in the political system prior to the introduction of representative government to Canada in the 1840s. It is thought his influence was instrumental in obtaining the financing for the bridge.

The wooden covered bridge improved the road transportation between Toronto and Kingston, removing

the need to slowly ferry passengers and goods across the wide river. It helped the town to develop as one town rather than as independent settlements on each side of the river. As with all new infrastructure, there were side effects. The ferry service that had operated for some 40 years went out of business immediately. Neighbouring towns were upset not to receive as much central government assistance for their bridges. However, the improved crossing stimulated growth of the town and its industries.

Source: *The Covered Bridge at Trenton* by Gerry Boyce, published by Trenton Historical Society, 1980



## Earliest Marriages in Quinte

By Richard Hughes

If you enjoy reading tales of the life and times of our earliest pioneers in Quinte, there is no source more authentic and enjoyable than *The Settlement of Upper Canada* by William Canniff, M.D., written in 1869. Canniff recalls stories told to him by the old-timers of the region, so they go back to the very earliest settlement from the time of the arrival of the Loyalists.

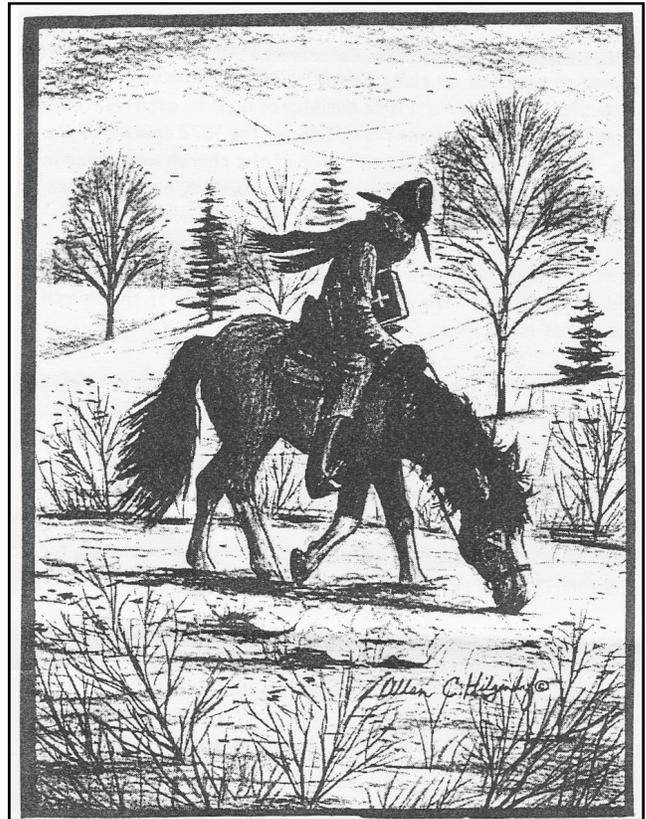
One chapter tells the tales of marriage at a time when there were only scattered settlements, widely separated in the wilderness, with very few clergymen or magistrates, and the young people had to wait for their rare visits. But, Canniff considered it “a matter of wonder, that great and frequent violation of God’s law, with regard to marriage did not take place.”

When the families agreed to a marriage, Canniff observed that the bride could bring to the union “a yoke of steers, a cow, three or four sheep, with a bed, table, two dozen chairs.” And if the groom was heir to 50 or 100 acres of land, with a little cleared, “he was thought to have the worldly “gear” to constitute a first-rate match.” Payment to the minister was often paid in kind, some handmade item, such as a woven basket or a wheat fan.

Dressing the bride for the occasion, some families had brought finer clothing when they left the United States at the time of the revolution. This clothing was used repeatedly until it was totally worn out. Then simpler outfits were made from calico prints bought from a pedlar or from “woolen druggert” (coarse fabric used for floor or table covering) or a “linsey-woolsey petticoat,” also a very rough fabric used for blankets.

For the more affluent among the settlers, the wedding itself was a major event. Couples arrived by horseback, riding double, following the path along the river through the forests. The guests arrived in the morning, the ceremony was held and then the feast was set. The banquet featured a great chicken pie, roast goose, then pies and cakes in abundance. The rest of the day was filled with dancing, unless their religion frowned upon this in which case, “the afternoon and evening were filled with joyous mirth and jovial plays” conducted with purity of thought and innocence of soul, according to Canniff. For those of more humble means, being farm workers rather than owners, the bride and groom were called together directly from their worksites, the girl in the kitchen and the boy from the fields. The ceremony was held and then back to work.

Canniff continues the tale of the more affluent, with the party continuing the next morning by the river bank. Then mounting horses in pairs, the couple and their friends headed down the river trail in a “picturesque cavalcade” to Meyers Creek for further celebrations, dancing to the fiddle. Thus ended the marriage ceremonies.



**Circuit Riding Preacher**

Illustration by Allen C. Hilgendorf



## Our Memories Project Needs YOU!

Earlier this year the Society launched a major activity which we called The Memory Project. We thought it would be an excellent anti-COVID medicine. The prescription is simple. You sit back in a comfortable chair and think about those days so many years ago when life was so very different from today. After enjoying the memories, you then write down the story or stories and send them along to the Historical Society.

The stories can be one page or so, typed, hand-written or by computer. Send them by email attachment to [info@hastingshistory.ca](mailto:info@hastingshistory.ca) or put them in the mail to the Hastings County Historical Society, 254 Pinnacle Street, Belleville ON, K8N 3B1.

There are hundreds of topics like your first car or first television, school days, life on the farm or in town, laundry days, games we played, etc., etc.

Equally, memories from young people are most welcome. Life at home and in school. Let's capture this time in history for people in the distant future to read about and understand what it was like.

It is so important for us today and for future generations to have these long-ago stories put on paper and kept for the next hundred years in the Community Archives. Also, some will be printed in *Outlook*, with the author's permission.



So, we recommend this excellent prescription to remove COVID from our minds for a while; have a good long “think” and write a story. Guaranteed, you will feel so much better!

### Medicine Bottle ca. 1901

Photo courtesy of Glanmore  
National Historic site of Canada

[glanmore.ca](http://glanmore.ca)

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