

The Sport of Kings

by Richard Hughes

Horse racing has long been dubbed The Sport of Kings, but it has also been a very popular sport with the local folks, primarily in the form of trotting. It would come as no surprise to learn that horse racing was also popular in the 1800s, when trusty old dobbie was the daily means of transportation for everyone, and horses, usually hitched to a wagon or carriage, filled the streets of every community.

But what might amaze the modern reader is that a form of racing that was very popular was trotting races on ice. Yes, on the frozen bays and lakes of our region. In Peterborough, two days of racing were set in January 1894 with prize money of \$500 (over \$1600 in 2022). In Port Hope, where they claimed to have the only kite-shaped track in Canada, total prize money was \$450 (over \$1400 in 2022). And, in Tweed, the newspaper reported that the severe snowstorms had abated and clear weather was foreseen for their races. Over 700 spectators came out to witness the races on Stoco Lake.

In announcing the race program in Belleville, the newspaper lamented that ice racing had not been held for over 30 years because “dishonest men got hold of the management; rascality was openly and unblushingly perpetrated and trotting races on ice and on the track came to an ignominious end. . . . The rogues killed the golden goose and there were no more golden eggs for them.”

But then, in 1897, it was reported, “the sport has been revived by honest and capable men.” Horse racing in the dead of winter was certainly a testimony to the hardiness of our forebearers, as between 1500 and 2000 people braved a driving snowstorm for four hours on January 23, 1897, to witness the races.

The one-mile course was set out in the shape of a kite and as the snow was so heavy, the judges could not see the whole track and had to send out patrols to watch the turns and make sure all drivers followed the rules. There were six horses in the first race, and they ran six heats to arrive at a winner by the name of Carver, described as a handsome black mare from Colborne. In the second race, with three heats, a big pacer from Brighton, named Demand, won all three. In the third race, three “old rivals who trotted at Foxboro” ran what must have been a light-hearted race, as it was described as “provocative of plenty of laughter, if nothing else.”

So, clearly, the residents of Belleville and area did not hibernate in the winter, but enjoyed outdoor activities. We know large crowds attended the hockey games and used the several skating rinks in the city, all being open air, unheated facilities, and they came out in great crowds to watch the spectacle of horse racing on ice. Sturdy people, our forebearers!

Source: Daily Intelligencer Jan. 27, 1897 from Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County local newspaper collection online.



Follow the activities of the Hastings County Historical Society online



Facebook: @HastingsHistory



Twitter: @CountyHastings



Instagram: @HastingsHistory

Website: HastingsHistory.ca

William Lott's City Woollen Mills, Belleville

by Gary Nicoll

This painting by Manly MacDonald of the mills along the east side of the Moira River in Belleville shows a house at 74 Mill (Station) Street, and what in the early-twentieth-century were the stone Burrell Axe Mill, the City Woollen Mills, a wood cutting mill, a grist mill, and the Burrell Rock Drill Co. In 1975 the Moira River Conservation Authority bought all these lands, and everything was removed except the old stone mill. The last successful owner of many of these buildings was William Lott who took a small woollen mill over in the 1870s and expanded its operation to include several of these buildings as well as taking over a cutting mill for wood and a grist mill.



Mill on the Moira by Manly MacDonald. Photo courtesy of Watershed Magazine

William Lott was born in Sidney Township on December 19, 1849. His ancestors were Loyalists who had come to Prince Edward County from upper New York State after the American Revolution. About four generations back, the family came from one of the German Duchies. As a boy he lived in the village of Frankford and attended school there. He learned the woollen trade working in Campbellford at the Marfield

Woollen Mills. He moved to Belleville in 1868, working at the woollen mills on Mill Street. The Hastings County Directory of 1877 lists him as the proprietor of both the Woollen Mill and an adjacent grist mill. He and his wife, Josephine, lived with their children at 86 Mill Street. The Woollen Mill was located at number 52.

The photograph below is of William Lott in his 38th year in 1887 when he was serving as an Alderman in the City of Belleville. He was first elected in 1886, serving until 1889, then re-elected in 1893 and in 1897. He served for a number of years as Chairman of Public Works. He was an active and vocal Alderman, noted by the newspapers as a wit and in possession of a sharp mind.



William Lott, 1887

HC04311 CABHC

In The Hastings County Directory of 1879, there is a listing for the Lott & Eaton Woollen Mill. The directories refer to it as a carding and fulling mill. In 1880, a stone mill was built on the edge of the Moira River by Ellis Burrell to be used for packing axes from his adjacent axe factory. In 1884 Lott advertised that his mill was on the second floor of the Burrell Axe Factory. By 1891 the ads say that the mill was adjacent to the Axe Factory. Eventually, William Lott took over the stone building that is still standing today on Station Street, and he used it for storage of wool.

In the 1901-1902 Union Directory of the City of Belleville, William Lott is listed as a proprietor of the Woollen Mill, the grist mill and a grocery. His daughter Bertha was the bookkeeper at the mills, and his son Harry was a clerk at the Woollen Mill. In the 1905 Directory of the Textile

Establishments in the United States and Canada, City Woollen Mills is listed with William Lott as proprietor and buyer. The directory says that the Woollen Mill produces "Heavy Canadian Tweeds, full cloths, flannels and yarns." It reports the mill had 2 sets, 5 looms operating on both steam and water power. The mill carried out dyeing and finishing and sold directly to the public and stores. In that same year of 1905, the City of Belleville produced a publication highlighting the principal industries and businesses in the city. It reported on City Woollen Mills and its proprietor, William Lott, stating that the mill had handled 40,000 lbs. of wool the previous year.



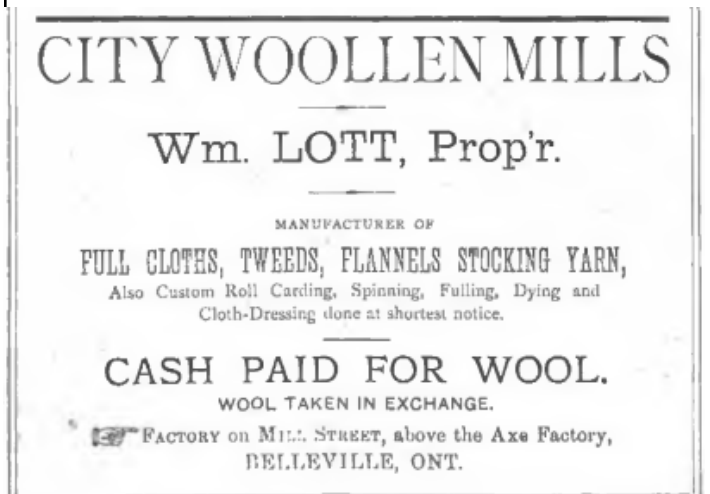
City Woollen Mills, ca. 1960s

The photo above is a picture of the offices of City Woollen Mills at 56 Mill Street in the 1960s. Abraham Safe had purchased the mill from the Lott family in 1917. It became a scrap yard and storage area until, as noted above, the Moira River Conservation Authority purchased the land and building in 1975. For almost 50 years William Lott had worked in the woollen mills, functioning as owner/manufacturer for over 40 years. During this time the woollen industry in small cities was gradually declining because of competition from

larger milling operations as well as from foreign imports of woollen products. Skillfully, Lott was able to maintain the operation and prosper. He was able to purchase all these buildings, a number of lots with their buildings on nearby Great St. James Street and a few other properties on the East Hill of Belleville.

William Lott continued to run the woollen mills through to the time of his death, April 16, 1916. His son Aubrey worked with him at the mills. The family sold the woollen and grist mills to Abraham Safe in 1917. He is listed in 1918 as a junk dealer (in the old woollen mill) and as a manufacturer operating the chopping mills. The *Intelligencer* in June of 1917 announced that the grist mill formerly owned by William Lott would be operated by Walsh and Safe. But in reality, the City Woollen Mills were purchased for the land and buildings. The actual production very quickly came to an end, the woollen mill operating for less than a year.

William Lott had a long and outstanding business career in Belleville and was active in the city's politics for decades. His enterprising example was emulated by his nephew, James Blake Ives, and his daughter, Bertha, first cousins, who married on August 21, 1901. There is an article in two parts about Ives' interesting career in this working-class area of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Belleville in the September and October 2022 issues of *Outlook*.



Hastings County Historical Society

Invites You to a Public Presentation

Gold, Greed and Power: The Trials of Madoc's A. F. Wood

With Madoc Historian/Author
Gordon Pitts



The year 1866 should have been a triumphant one for A.F. Wood, Madoc Township Reeve, Hastings County Warden and rising star in Confederation-era Tory politics. His general store was raking in cash from the Eldorado gold rush; he was laying down his own bet on a gold venture. But Wood suddenly found himself in a personal scandal that threatened to derail a promising career.



Gordon Pitts is a journalist with 40 years of experience in Canadian daily newspapers, and a prize-winning author of eight books focusing on the Canadian economy and the business landscape of this country. Having retired from the Globe and Mail a decade ago, he has written six books chronicling the history of his home town of Madoc and of Hastings County. His latest books are "Who Killed Charlie St. Charles?" and "The O'Haras, Lives and Legacies of a Pioneer Family".



Date: Tuesday, February 21, 2023
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Maranatha Church
100 College Street West, Belleville

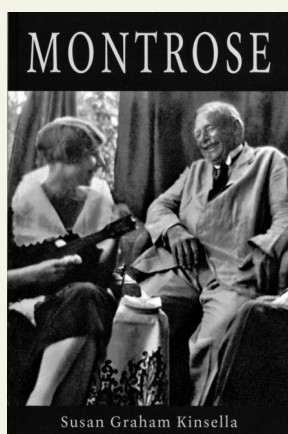
Enter by main front doors. The presentation is in the main auditorium, which allows for plenty of spacing between seats.

It's Reading Time Again

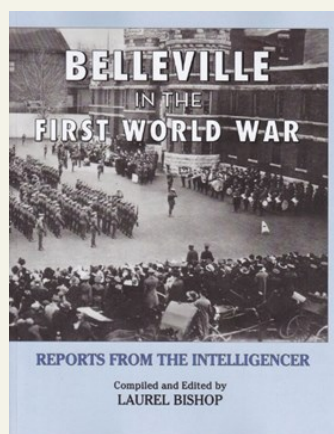
by Michelle Hutchison

It's a celebration and Hastings County has much to celebrate! Did you know that Hastings County had its very own goldrush? Did you know that Belleville was home to Canada's fifth Prime Minister? Heritage Week begins on February 20. Why not join in the excitement by reading a book penned by one of our very own? The books of many fine local authors and historians highlight the life and times of settlers in Hastings County. The Hastings County Historical Society is eager to share this rich history with you.

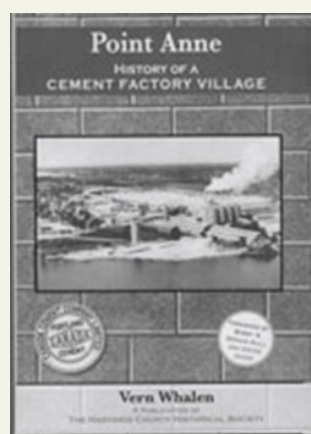
Do you know that we have a bookstore that offers over 35 books for sale? Those who wish to peruse the titles by shopping in person may do so at the bookstore, found in the Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County on the second floor of the Belleville Public Library. If you attend our monthly Public Presentations at Maranatha Church, you will find some of our more popular publications offered for purchase. Some books can also be found for sale at select local bookstores. If you are unable to take advantage of one of these options, or if you prefer the online shopping experience, you may visit the bookstore section of the Hastings County Historical Society website (hastingshistory.ca). All of our available books are listed there. Once you have made your selection, arrangements can be made for payment and delivery. Our five top picks:



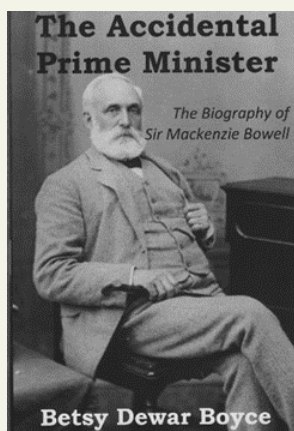
Montrose



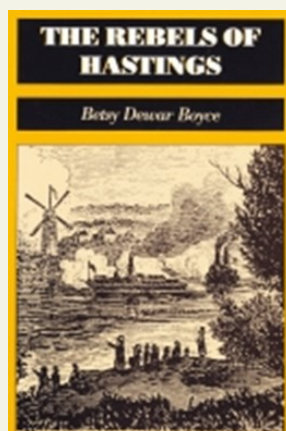
Belleville in the First World War



Point Anne: History of a Cement Factory Village



The Accidental Prime Minister



The Rebels of Hastings



The Dance Halls on Front Street

by Connie Carson

The dance halls on Front Street were the perfect diversion for off-duty men in uniform to unwind during the Second World War from 1939 to 1945. Military personnel stationed in Trenton, Picton, Mountain View, Ontario School for the Deaf and Deseronto trained in our area in preparation for joining the war in Europe.

The weekly dances were a welcome event that our city looked forward to. They allowed a brief window of time to forget their troubles, dress up and go out on the town. There was no formal dress code, but the young ladies loved cocktail-style dresses or fancy street clothes, and the men sported suits or jackets and always wore a tie. Stylish gents would stop at the corner shoeshine stand at Bridge and Front before heading to the dance.

Lineups, three blocks long, formed on Front Street, all ready to party on the weekends. The alcohol-free concession stand sold pop and cigarettes only. Nonetheless, the rambunctious crowd was known to bring their own booze to the club and stash it under the table.

The Jitterbug was all the rave, commanding the city's dance floors all over town. Iconic local bands, including Kay Martin and the Commodores Orchestra, took to the stage on the weekends. The crowd bebopped to jazz favourites, 'Chattanooga Choo Choo,' 'Twelfth Street Rag,' and 'C Jam Blues.' When the tempo slowed, they waltzed their ladies around to the famous 'Charmaine' and 'Lover Man.' Ballroom dancing to the music's infectious beat fuelled the crowds' excitement and energy.

CLUB VANITY FAIR

The year was 1940, and at 9 o'clock sharp, the band struck up the first notes of the evening's entertainment. Within minutes the dance floor at Club Vanity Fair was jam-packed! The boisterous

and energetic patrons climbed three flights of wooden stairs before reaching the top floor of the club which Sam Pappas owned above Pappas Billiards at 227 Front Street. Hordes of service men frequented Vanity Fair, and fisticuffs occasionally broke out. The army guys from Picton and air force personnel from Trenton and Mountain View didn't always play well together after a few drinks.

Bruce Parsons, a well-known Belleville resident, played trumpet for the Commodores for \$3 a night. He often performed on the stage at Vanity Fair and told me many, sometimes true stories of the 'flyboys' and the 'pigeons.' "There was always this rivalry, with the army calling the air force 'pigeons' and of course, a fight would break out. Sometimes, the guys who did the fighting walked out together to find someplace to have a beer. In those days, it was probably a bootlegger."

On several occasions, pandemonium reigned supreme! Bruce recalled one incident in which a fight came too close to the bandstand for saxophonist John Higgins to tolerate. The usually reserved Higgins grabbed a nearby Coke bottle and knocked a guy over the head with it. "The guy was out for 30 or 40 seconds, and when he got up, he didn't know what hit him. Higgins just kept on playing and hardly missed a beat."

The Greek-Canadian Club organized fundraisers during the Battle of Crete to help out their friends and neighbours. A specific fundraiser at Vanity Fair stuck out in Bruce's mind more than any other. He recounted that Sam Pappas chipped in by waiving the club fee, and the Commodores Orchestra played for free. There was no charge for admittance if you brought a donation of canned goods or clothing. The club was packed to the rafters, and an astounding sum of money was raised!

When the party ended, John Kikes, owner of the London Lunch Restaurant at 174 Front Street, treated the performers to a fantastic steak dinner. It was a night full of goodwill, good food, good music and treasured memories for the whole community. Sadly, in the late 1940s, the top floor of the building was destroyed by a

disastrous fire, and Club Vanity Fair went down in flames.

TRIANON BALLROOM

Just a block away, another favourite dance hall called the Trianon Ballroom was located on the third floor of the old Royal Bank of Canada building. It sat on the corner of Front and Campbell Street at 241 Front Street. In 1938 the ballroom owners were Harold Carruthers, Syd Samuels and Ted Maraskas. The barebones decor contained a circle of chairs around the room's perimeter, and it was not as fancy as Club Vanity Fair. Still, there was no shortage of young military guys dancing, drinking and girl-watching at the Trianon Ballroom.

Long-time band leader of the Commodores Orchestra and music legend Stan Wiggins played at the ballroom for several years and remarked, "In the cold months, the dance hall was so steamed up by the end of the night that moisture literally ran down the walls and windows." The grand old building was sold to new owners, and the doors were closed forever. It was torn down

and replaced with the current bank building around 1947.

THE DEMISE OF THE DOWNTOWN DANCE HALLS

In 1942 a catastrophic fire at the popular Coconut Grove dance hall in Boston claimed 492 lives. The same year a fire at the military barracks in Newfoundland killed 99 people and injured 107 others. The military temporarily banned dance facilities, and their personnel could no longer enter the dance halls, thus ending the popular club dances on Front Street.

Take a stroll along the Downtown District and listen for the echo of the 10-piece big band orchestras emanating from the rooftops. Pause for a brief moment and picture the young men and women that danced before us.

Note: These stories are excerpts from the books, *Memories of Belleville* and *More Memories of Belleville* by Connie Carson. Available at the Chamber of Commerce Log Cabin, 5 Moira St. West and at

<http://memoriesofbelleville.squarespace.com/>



Commodores Orchestra, 1948 Front Row: Max Caldwell, Jim Rose, Jim Cathcart, Jim Belair, John Mitchell, Larry Brown, Reg Scriven, Phil Huddleston Back Row: Frank Howard Sr., Jim Elliott, Stan Wiggins, Art Hilliard

Moses Hudgin Log House

The National Trust for Canada operates a competition entitled "Canada's Next Great Save" and the winner will receive \$50,000 for a heritage project. The Moses Hudgin Log House in Prince Edward County is among the ten finalists for this prize and they need your votes to become number one. This 157-year-old log home is on Prince Edward County's south shore (191 Ostrander Point Road) and the South Shore Joint Initiative is raising \$150,000 to save the structure and develop it as a site for cultural, educational and natural heritage studies. This building, made from white cedar logs, has received both municipal and provincial heritage designation.

Voting is easy! Voting runs up to February 22 and details are provided online at

<https://nationaltrustcanada.ca/what-you-can-do/nextgreatsave>

Let's all get together to help our neighbours save this heritage building and create a cultural centre for everyone.



January Public Presentation

Marine historian and author, Marc Seguin, presented a fascinating, illustrated story on commercial shipping on the Bay of Quinte and around Prince Edward County and the numerous lighthouses that protected these shipping lanes. He told of the great sailing ships which carried local products to markets on the often dangerous waters. Today ships and lighthouses are largely gone, with only beacons and buoys remaining to guide recreational boaters.



Speaker Marc Seguin



Note to Authors—By submitting material to be printed in the *Outlook*, the author confirms that he/she holds both legal and moral rights to the material, and grants permission to the Hastings County Historical Society to use this material in print and/or electronically. The opinions expressed in articles submitted to the *Outlook* are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Hastings County Historical Society, its Board or its members.



HASTINGS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DIRECTORS & OFFICERS

Officers

President	Richard Hughes
Vice-President	Gerry Fraiberg
Treasurer	Dan Atkinson
Secretary	Gary Nicoll

Directors

Jim Kennelly	Steve Young
Gerry Fraiberg	Gary Nicoll
Ted Bradford	Connie Carson

Ex-officio:

Orland French (Past-President)
Amanda Hill (Archivist)

Sub-committees

Banquet	Richard Hughes
Book Sales at Public Presentations	John Lowry
Bus Tours	TBA
Education	TBA
Exhibits/Events	Stanley Jones
Historic Plaque Website	Orland French
Membership	Elizabeth Mitchell
Outlook Production	Donna Fano (Layout)
	Laurel Bishop (Editor)
Outlook Distribution	Elizabeth Mitchell
Publications for Sale	Michelle Hutchison
Publicity (Print Media)	Gerry Fraiberg
Relations with Other Heritage Orgs.	Gary Nicoll
Social Media	Gerry Fraiberg and Ted Bradford
Website	Heidi Rooke
Website address:	www.hastingshistory.ca
Community Archives	613-967-3304
HCHS Email	president@hastingshistory.ca

Hastings County Historical Society has its offices in the Library/Archives building at 254 Pinnacle Street, Second Floor, Postal Code K8N 3B1. *Outlook* is published nine months of the year for members and friends of the Society. Submissions can be sent to:

outlook.hastingshistory@gmail.com