



Outlook

Volume 21 Number 2

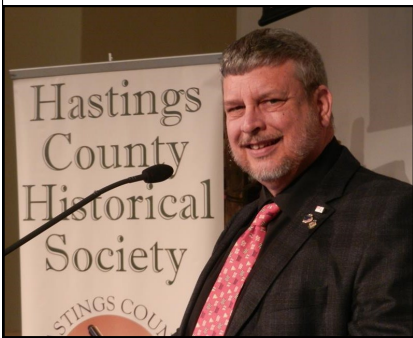
www.hastingshistory.ca

Issue 304 February 2016

Wartime Shipbuilding in Trenton

By Vern Whalen

One of the fantastic aspects about the monthly presentations sponsored by the Hastings County Historical Society is the opportunity to learn. Prior to our event of January 19, 2016, who would have guessed that during World War II warships were built in Trenton? Known for his storytelling ability, naval historian and author Roger Litwiller provided this amazing history.



Guest Speaker was Roger Litwiller at the January Presenta-

Trenton was one of Canada's key centres for shipbuilding during World War II as over 170 ships were built at two companies. Aero-Marine Crafts Ltd. was contracted to assemble six hospital motor launches for the RAF. Central Bridge Company had been in the business of steel bridge fix-

tures. Because of its expertise in welding steel, it was, like many Canadian industries, contracted for the war effort.

Central Bridge, which ironically was not near the waters of the Bay of Quinte, was contracted to construct water barges, ammunition lighters and TANAC-V fire boats for the Royal Canadian Navy and TANAC tugboats and TANAC-V tugboats for the British Ministry of War.

Aero-Marine Crafts Ltd. was in an old lumber mill on the west side of the Trent River at the current conservation area below the CPR bridge. Its contract with the RAF was awarded in August 1940. At a cost of \$100,000 each, the six ships were completed by May 1941.

The TANAC tugboats constituted the majority of ships manufactured by Central Bridge. Over a four-year period, approximately 156 were built for the British Ministry of War. The design of the ships lent itself to the use of unskilled labour. Indeed, about half the total workforce of 300 had less than one year's service. As with many war-

time industries, women joined an environment of usually male labour.



Central Bridge Company with boats in construction

Source: Trent Port Historical Society

A well-organized work flow enabled various sections and parts to be built separately, then brought together on the outside rail line. From the location of Central Bridge, the finished ships travelled by rail lines to the water's edge for launch in the spring. The trip normally lasted thirty minutes. At times in the winter, the line ran out onto the ice of the Bay of Quinte. When the ice melted in the spring, the ships delicately hit the water. Test runs for the new ships were conducted on the Murray Canal and the Bay of Quinte. Indeed, a gentleman in attendance at the Litwiller presentation recalled seeing the war boats cruising up and down the bay.

Litwiller concluded his presentation with an important fact about the ships manufactured in Trenton. These ships played an integral part in the victory of the North Atlantic by the Allied Forces. That victory opened up the North Atlantic passage for arms and soldiers travelling to Europe.

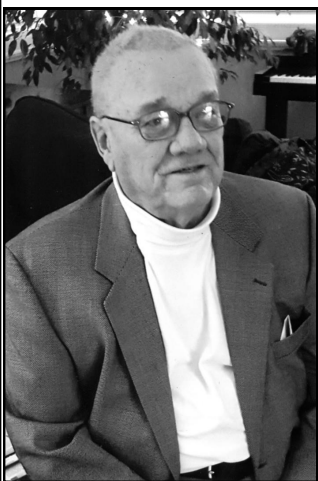
After the war, Aero-Marine Crafts ceased to exist. Central Bridge returned to its original purpose of steel bridge manufacturing. It still exists as Crawford Metal Corporation in the same location, and is one of Trenton's oldest industries.

Bishop Seeds Ltd.

Part 2: Into the 20th Century, an Explosion of Growth

By Bruce Bishop & Richard Hughes

In Part 1 of our history of Bishop Seeds Ltd., we followed Charles Bishop from his early years in England, becoming a seedsman, his travels through Texas cattle country and his ultimate arrival in Belleville around 1887. Once settled here, Charles founded the company in 1890, married and raised a family. Entering the 20th century, Charles guided the company to steady growth both in product range and in territory as it extended across Eastern Ontario. The second generation, under Charles F. Bishop, brought new energy to the company from the mid-1930s on.



Bruce Bishop

Source: Bruce Bishop

Part 1 ended with the arrival of the third generation, Bill and Bruce Bishop, after World War II. In 1947, the name of the company was changed to Bishop Seeds Ltd., with annual sales concentrated in red clover seed reaching levels of one million pounds, or twenty-five trailer loads of this one product. At that point, Bishop's was operating from three sites in Belleville: the old store at 172 Front Street, a large seed-cleaning plant at 81 Station Street and a warehouse at the

CP station on South Church Street. For the next thirty years, the business grew across Eastern Ontario and up the Ottawa Valley, establishing itself as the recognized expert on seed varieties while building a sound reputation with farmers for dependability of both product and delivery.

Success requires innovation, and Bishop Seeds was always developing new systems to gain and hold their farming clients. Through the 1950s, the company reached out across Quebec and the Maritime Provinces through a mail-order business based on their extensive catalogue. The mailing list reached 25,000 copies of the catalogue including 18,000 copies to regular customers—all of this maintained through a handwritten card index, mailing addresses and sales records.

By the 1960s, to keep up with changing times, it was necessary to shift from the mail-order system to direct-to-farmer sales through a complex network of commission salesmen. Bruce Bishop took on this task, setting up fifty salesmen across all of Eastern Canada. This direct

relationship with the farmers proved so successful that Bishop's moved from rail delivery of products to delivery using their own trucks right to the customers' farms. A rather novel system was devised whereby their driver would go to the Maritimes with a first load of 20,000 pounds, and a few days later, a larger truck would carry a further 40,000 pounds to the East Coast and simply drop the trailer. Bishop's driver would finish his first load and then pick up the new load and continue delivering. Every few days, another 40,000 pounds would be sent eastward in this fashion during the heart of the planting season. Sales reached mountainous levels of one million pounds of forage seeds, one million pounds of turf grass and 10,000 bags of hybrid corn. For several years Bishop's was the exclusive supplier of grass seed to the National Capital Commission in Ottawa. Charles would have been proud of his descendants.

By 1970, the fourth generation had entered the family business in the person of Mark Bishop. He introduced computer technology to the record-keeping systems and simplified the customer records. Through the 1980s, with constant innovation both in product development and sales systems, the high-volume business moved forward successfully in many directions, and the future appeared to be bright.



Since 1890

1994



OAC Minto Alfalfa

Over A Million Pounds Sold!

This rapid growth in high-volume shipments was complemented by the establishment of a retail garden centre business on Station Street in 1978. Most Belleville and area family flower and vegetable gardens were planted with Bishop's boxed plants. At its prime, tens of thousands of flats of plants, over one hundred tons of fertilizer and truck-

loads of peat moss moved through the company's doors. However, after about ten years, the newly established box stores muscled into this business and rapidly dominated it. All energies then shifted back to the high-volume wholesale business, and Bishop's built a large new facility near Highway 401 at Wallbridge-Loyalist Road.

In the 1980s, the world of seed production and marketing was being turned on its head. Just as Bishop's sales of its newer varieties of hybrid corn were booming—up

to 10,000 bags of seed per year—a new breed of competitor exploded onto the market in the form of the multinational chemical companies. They created new varieties of hybrid corn modified by the introduction of special genes. These new seed types improved corn stalk strength and, most importantly, increased resistance to insects and weed killers. These new seeds were patented. Sometimes the gene was referred to as the terminator gene as seeds from these plants could not be sown in the following year; rather, new seeds had to be purchased every year from the large chemical companies. This revolutionized the seed business and sidelined the traditional seed suppliers. The new claim was, “Plant our seed, spray our chemicals, and you get greater yields and total weed control, but you can use only our products.”

The huge multinationals with their patented, genetically modified seeds also brought about an extensive rationalization of the new structure of the family farm. Farms became huge tracts of land devoted to corn and soybeans; fields were expanded to accommodate giant machines. In fact, seed production and marketing became a global activity under these large chemical companies.

The small traditional seedsmen, like Bishop's, were either being bought up by the big companies or were going out of business. In spite of determined efforts to adjust and carry on, Bishop's found the walls were closing in from every direction. The banks reduced their support of agriculture businesses, and the options for the remaining small suppliers to come together to face the competition dried up. Charles Bishop had opened the doors of his seed business in 1890; it had grown under the determined management of the next three generations to encompass all of Eastern Canada; but in its fourth generation, the seed business was forced to finally close its doors in 1990. However, the pioneering efforts of Charles Bishop were not lost; rather, his legacy through three more generations spread the solid reputation of this Belleville company across Eastern Canada and imprinted the Bishop name on thousands of farm families. It established Bishop Seeds as an important chapter in Belleville's history.



History on Ice:

Did Victorians Skate at the Atheneum?

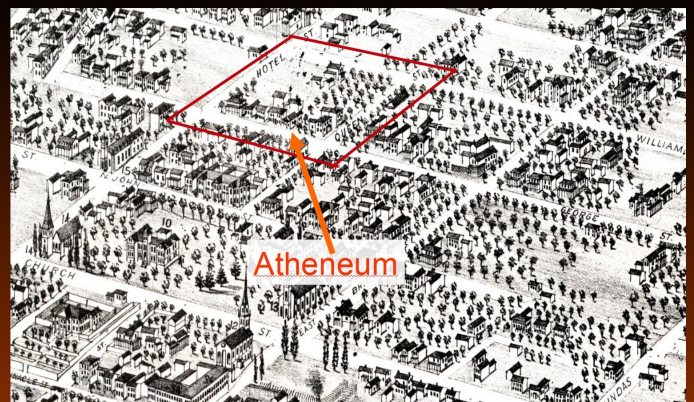
A Trick Question

By Lindi Pierce

Hastings County is a winter paradise; its rivers, lakes and bay shore resonate with histories of the men and women who worked—and played—on ice. Recent exploration of

early newspapers by the Archives' relentless researcher Lois Foster has uncovered stories of a number of outdoor and indoor rinks from our past.

One of the most interesting of Belleville's famous skating rinks started life without ice, as the Atheneum, a community hall opened in 1859 by Mr. George W. Lester on the east side of George Street between Queen and Hotel (now Victoria) Streets. No doubt he was inspired by its namesake, the exclusive arts and letters club of London, England, when he envisaged a large comfortable event venue where "a popular singer or lecturer could be heard to advantage." The building's great size and good acoustics were a source of pride. A January 9, 1861 *Hastings Chronicle* account of the St. Andrews' Church Soiree included this praise: "We observe that it possesses, that notwithstanding its great size, a speaker can make himself distinctly heard in every part of it. The eloquent D'Arcy McGee, when he lectured here some months ago, remarked that he had never spoken with greater comfort in any room before; and similar testimony was borne to its suitability on the occasion of the public dinner given to the Hon. John A. Macdonald." (In December, 1860.)



Section of Bird's Eye Map -1874

It seems that the town enthusiastically embraced the hall, and a wide range of performers and events was offered to "most numerous and respectable . . . fashionable and intelligent" audiences. Newspaper announcements give a sense of the 1860 season: a concert by the Band of Hope, with Mr. Orme, Superintendent and his Juvenile choristers; Holman's Parlour Operas; "the noted comic singer Sam Cowell"; and a charity ball "in aid of the town poor." The Atheneum served as exhibition hall for the South Hastings Agricultural Society fall fair, with the adjacent open terrain of Taylor's Hill accommodating displays of livestock and agricultural equipment. Fans of Glanmore might be intrigued to know that at the 1859 fair, "among the fine arts, a portrait of George Benjamin Esq. by W. Sawyer, had attracted particular attention." This painting is on permanent display at Glanmore, part of the important Sawyer

collection.

In a *Hastings Chronicle* account of the January 1861 St. Andrews Tea meeting at the Atheneum, Mr. George Lester responded to the general vote of thanks, giving some insight into the thinking behind his venture. In his "modest speech," he referred to "the well-known fact that until the Atheneum was erected, serious inconvenience had been often experienced from there being no room in the town in which a popular singer or lecturer could be heard to advantage. He stated that the building was erected for general purposes, and not expressly for theatrical performances."

The year 1861 offered even more diversions for the citizens of Belleville. In May, the *Hastings Chronicle* announced the arrival of Professor Anderson "the ONLY English Magician whom her majesty the Queen has at any time commanded to perform before her." That summer, in a move which presaged Belleville's Opera House days of the 1880s, when the city became an important stop on the Toronto-Montreal circuit, Christy's Minstrels appeared twice, on their travels to and from those major entertainment centres, and Holman's Comic Parlour Opera and Lyric comedians returned.

By September 1866, the Atheneum was no more. Purchased by a Mr. LaSerre of Kingston, offered to shareholders, and extensively remodelled, the structure emerged as the new Victoria Skating Rink and Gymnasium. A reservoir holding 200,000 gallons of water promised ice as soon as the temperature dropped, and a floor suited to "the largest class of circus" provided for the off-season. It appears that George Lester continued as proprietor. The October 10 *Hastings Chronicle* outlined the plans for the "commodious and extensive skating rink" with the usual enthusiasm: "We do not think there is a skating rink in Canada that will compare with it. The south side and east side of the building have been taken out and the roof is to be extended over the whole lot, making a skating area of 96 feet by 66 feet. The roof is to be supported by a large arch, so as to leave no posts to interfere with the skating. There is also to be a spectator's gallery across the north side of the building capable of seating between 500 and 600 people . . . in which, when comfortably heated as it is intended to be, the spectators at Carnivals can enjoy the fun without danger of taking cold."

By December 21, "a good sheet of ice had been obtained and a large number of ticket holders took advantage of the occasion to display their agility on ice. The galleries were filled with spectators and the Moira Band contributed greatly to the enjoyment." Ladies could skate the entire season for \$2.00, gentlemen's season's pass cost \$3.00, doubles cost \$4.50 and a family admission was \$6.00. Imagine properly chaperoned young ladies in ice-skimming skating dresses, hats, veils, muffs and strap-on skates,

chivalrous young men cutting graceful figures, ready to take the arm of a wobbly pretty novice, matrons bundled in skating chairs pushed by solicitous gentlemen, and mischievous boys darting among them.

VICTORIA SKATING RINK.

TICKETS for the ensuing season can now be purchased at Messrs. Lazier and Lazier's Office. Prices as follows:

Ladies' Single Ticket,.....	\$2 00
Gentleman's "	3 00
Double Ticket,.....	4 50
Family Ticket, admitting three...	6 00
For every additional member.....	1 00
Spectator's Season Ticket,.....	1 00

S. S. LAZIER, Sec. & Treas.
December, 1866, 44

THE RINK IS
NOW OPEN !

The *Intelligencer* of December 21, 1861, announced a Masked Carnival on New Year's night, a curious added bonus being "several monstrosities" to be provided by the Board of Management. The February 6, 1867 *Hastings Chronicle* was typically effusive in its praise, describing the Victorian Skating Rink as "beyond question the most



Carnival! Carnival!!

A MASKED CARNIVAL will be held in the VICTORIA SKATING RINK on
NEW YEAR'S NIGHT.
Several monstrosities will be provided by the Board of Management, of which due notice will be given by hand-bills.

Skater's Tickets.....	25cts.
Spectators, Admission.....	25c s.

S. S. LAZIER,
Sec. & Treas.
Belleville, 19th Dec., 1866. 442w.

commodious rink in Canada" in its advertisement for a Grand Masked Carnival, bringing "Mr. G.W. Lester from Ottawa with his assortment of beautiful costumes and grotesque representations on ice." Artistic skating was gaining a toehold; in February the Meagher Brothers of Kingston "the most artistic skaters in the world" were featured.

The next newspaper reference, in the *Daily Intelligencer* of December 16, 1871, sounds a different note. "Skating as an amusement for the general public seems to have gone entirely out of favour here. No rink this season, and no probability of one being opened." Despite the tone, a fickle public was not to blame, but the exigencies of finding accommodation for the pupils of School No. 4, which had recently been destroyed by fire. In 1874, the school

moved into the main floor of the new Union School, with a High School on the second floor, built on the future site of BCI, itself now committed to history.

After this time, the Victoria Skating Rink disappears from newspaper accounts. Two pieces of factual information leave us with more questions than answers as to its fate. The Building Operations column in the December 6, 1875 *Daily Intelligencer* reports that "Captain Paul has built on the site of the curling rink, a plastered tenement, about 28 by 32, two storeys high." This building stood on Lot 20, east side of George Street, which was the location of the Atheneum/Victoria Skating Rink. Could this have been an early condo conversion? The tenement building appears on the 1877 Evans & Bolger map of Belleville; at the back of the lot is a building which appears to be a curling rink. Could the Atheneum have finished its days as a curling rink?

Next time: **History on Ice: The Migrating Arnott Arena**

[Sincere thanks to Lois Foster for the use of her research notes, and for her assistance with this article.]



ON THE HOME FRONT

Excerpts from *The Intelligencer*

By Laurel Bishop

January 13, 1916: "No less than seven nurses will leave Belleville within a short time for Cairo Egypt, to take their part in hospital work in that part of the British Empire. They are, Misses M.H. Crosier, W. Smith, M. Caldwell, T. Howard, H. Marten, S. Jenkins and G. Waters. They will be designated as Lieuts. and will be under the supervision of Mrs. Robertson, who is designated as Captain. It is confidently expected that they will leave the Canadian shore in company with many more nurses who have volunteered for overseas service."

January 19, 1916: "A concert will be held by the 80th Battalion, Sunday afternoon and evening at the Griffin's Front St. Theatre. A fine war film 'Fighting for the Colors' has been secured and will be shown here for the first time. The 80th orchestra will play at both concerts. ... Hockey and Basketball Leagues are being organized in the 80th Battalion. A series of matches are being made between civilian and military teams. The work is in charge of Lieut. Phelan who expects to form a good hockey team that will clean up all the local aggregations."

February 2, 1916: "Under the auspices of the Khaki Club of Belleville, a dance was held last night in Prof. Johnstone's Academy, Front street, which was largely attended. The affair proved to be one of the most enjoyable that

has taken place in the city for some time. Upwards of 75 couples were present, and indulged in dancing until one o'clock this morning. The orchestra of the 80th Battalion provided an excellent program and the spacious dance hall was most appropriately decorated for the occasion, whilst numerous lighted candles added to the scene. ... The costumes worn by many of the ladies present, were gorgeous."

February 3, 1916: "The Belleville Young Men's Christian Association have authorized Mr. Sharpe the Military Secretary here to extend to the battalions in town the free use of the bathing and swimming privileges in the mornings. ... While probably no other organization in the country has suffered more through the war than the Y.M.C.A. on account of more than fifty per cent of its total membership enlisting, it has felt its equipment was just the 'bit' it could do to bring pleasure and profit to the men's lives."

February 7, 1916: "Recruiting among Belleville residents has dropped back the last six weeks and the Executive of the Speakers' Patriotic League and the officers of the 155th decided last Saturday night to put on a campaign for 300 recruits out of Belleville for the 155th. Preliminary to the campaign it was decided to ask the churches of the city to assist by reference to the movement at the services on Sunday next after which dates will be fixed for the actual work. It was also decided to hold a meeting in the Opera House Sunday afternoon. Badges will be issued to the school children. A splendid line of posters have been procured and various devices will be introduced to assist."

February 14, 1916: "A large crowd was present at the Patriotic Meeting held at the Griffin's Opera House, the building being filled to capacity; a large part of the audience consisting of ladies. ... Lt.-Col. Adams in his address stated that when he first came to Belleville as a member of the 80th Battalion, he was very little known, but now, owing to the friendly attitude of the local people, he felt that when the 155th Battalion leaves, every one will be ready to help the boys when they are overseas. About 600 men have enlisted in the Battalion, and 75 per cent of them are Canadians, bred and born in Hastings County and Prince Edward County. (Applause.) He urged that every man who can, ought to don the khaki."

February 15, 1916: "The ladies in connection with St. Thomas' Anglican Church last evening at the Parish Hall, Bridge street, were at home to the officers, non-commissioned officers and members of the 80th and 155th Battalions. Many who are members of these battalions were present and everything possible was done to make the brave defenders of our Empire feel at home. ... During the evening refreshments consisting of coffee, sandwiches and cake, were served in the dining hall in the basement. The hall had been most appropriately decorated

for the occasion, red hearts being the chief decorations in commemoration of St. Valentine's Day."

February 17, 1916: "Upwards of two hundred bound books have been furnished the Military Y.M.C.A. for use at the Barracks by the Corby Library. While most of the books are much worn, they are all complete and their evidences of much use suggests that they are amongst the most popular that have been on the book shelves."

February 28, 1916: "Services at Bridge Street Methodist church in this city, on Sunday morning were of especial interest, owing to the fact that the officers and the members of the 80th Battalion and 155th Battalion of the Canadian Overseas Contingents, were present in a body. It was a service that will long be remembered by all who attended. ... The two battalions met at the church and were conducted to seats in the centre of the auditorium. The attendance of officers and men were such as to virtually fill the body of the sacred edifice. Members of the 80th Bugle Band and members of the 155th Band occupied seats in the choir loft. The 80th Battalion Band were ushered to the front and occupied seats about the altar railing. A feature of the service was that the playing of the organ was dispensed with, the music for the hymns being furnished by the 80th Band. ... During the taking of the offertory the band played 'Nearer My God To Thee.' ... It was in every sense a Christian military service and the discourse by the pastor was in keeping with it. ... After leaving the church the two battalions marched to their respective headquarters. On the route to and from the church the marching of the brave soldier boys was witnessed by hundreds of citizens and many a complimentary remark as to their appearance was heard."

Annual Bus Tour

Tales from the Hastings Woods...

Exploring Centre Hastings

Discover all the wacky and wonderful tales from pioneer life in 19th and early 20th century Centre Hastings (Thomasburg, Tweed, Actinolite, Queensboro, Hazzard's Corners, Madoc, Eldorado, Bannockburn, Malone and Deloro) as only historian Bill Hunt can relate them!

Sat., May 28 & June 4, 2016

Bus departs at 8:30 am from northeast parking area of Bayview Mall, off Bridge Street East.

Cost \$70. Includes lunch and tours

Tickets: Call Mary-Lynne Morgan 613-961-7091

Last year we sold out two buses by mid February so don't delay - get your tickets early!



News from the Archives

By Amanda Hill

Work has been proceeding apace on the new location for the Community Archives, and the site is nearly complete.



New Shelving, Jan 15, 2016

All Photos by Amanda Hill

The mobile shelving in the second-floor vaults is all installed:



Reading room

While the new public and volunteer space looks positively cavernous without any furniture in it:

Meanwhile, back in Cannifton we are busy preparing our archives for the move to the library building. This has involved creating a spreadsheet inventory of all the boxes and volumes in the Cannifton building. In total there are 2,800 items that will be moved to the new building and the dimensions of all these have been measured so that we know how much space they will take up. The next task is to allocate shelves in the new storage areas to each of these items. For several of our collections, this will give us an opportunity to group items together which have had

to be kept in separate locations in our current building.

Many of our materials need to be wrapped in preparation for the move, to offer them protection while they are in transit. Archives volunteers Adele Dibben, Mary Jane Throop and Laurel Bishop have been busy wrapping the most fragile City of Belleville records.



Wrapped volumes

Meanwhile, Diane Sule, Annis Ross and Jeanne Delaney have been working on packing up the most fragile newspapers. (This move would be impossible without the help of the volunteers!) These papers were received from the *Intelligencer* offices in 2011. They were loosely bound by month of publication and are very fragile, as this photograph shows:



Fragile newspapers

Just before Christmas, 200 archival boxes arrived in Canifiton, ready to take the twentieth-century *Intelligencer* newspapers.

The newspapers will be less liable to damage in these boxes, and much easier to handle. We did not have time or space to shelve the newspapers in date order when they arrived in 2011, so our move will be an opportunity to put the *Intelligencers* on their new shelves according to date instead of in the rather random order they are in at the

moment.

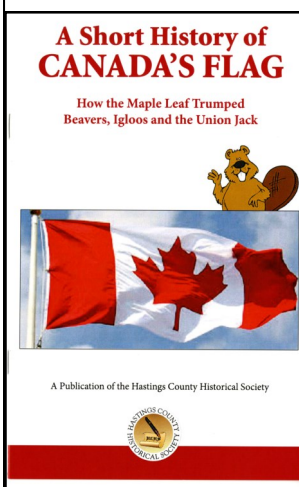
We hope to open in our new location in April and look forward to welcoming patrons there.



Another Successful Project

One of the key goals of the Historical Society is to gather important historical information and to present it to the people of our region. In 2015, one of our projects, a proposal by Director Bill Kennedy, was to mark the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Canadian Maple Leaf Flag by producing a booklet telling the story of how the flag was developed, the political arguments and the many, sometimes strange, proposals that were considered. Since the flag was first flown over two generations ago, there is every possibility that our younger citizens would not be aware of the story behind the flag we are now so proud of. This project was successfully completed, and each of the over 80 schools in Hastings & Prince Edward Counties

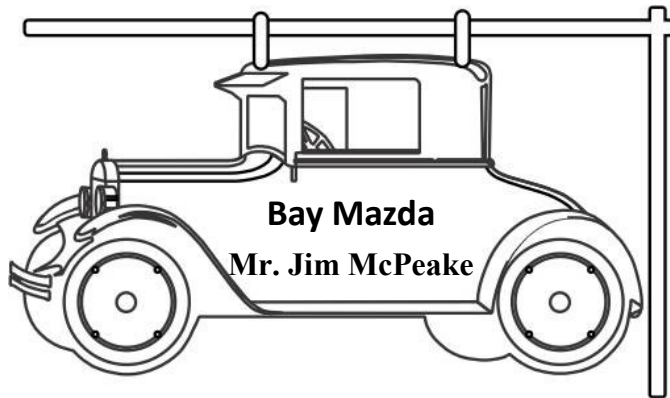
received five copies of the booklet through the school boards. One class wrote to the Historical Society, saying "Thank you very much for the booklet on the history of the Canadian Flag, we are very excited to learn about it." Mission accomplished! On Tuesday, February 16, 2016 Researcher & Society Director, Bill Kennedy will present **The History of Canada's Red Maple Leaf Flag** at Maranatha Church.



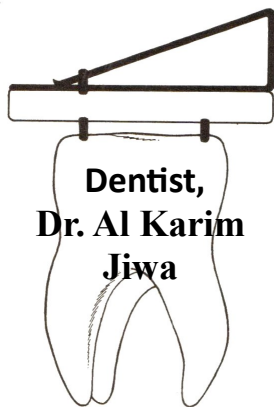
Outlook Coming in Electronic Form

Members were asked on their annual membership renewal form if they would like to receive their *Outlook* newsletter electronically rather than on paper, and many have indicated that they would prefer this system. One of the benefits is that all colour photography comes out in bright colours while the paper edition is always black and white. It also represents a considerable financial savings on postal charges. We now have set up the systems, and beginning in March, we will start sending the *Outlook* to those who have requested it in this manner. Members are free, at any point, to change their minds in either direction, that is to change from paper to electronic form or vice versa. Simply email president@hastingshistory.ca

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177 Church St,
Belleville, ON
K8N 3C2
Phone: 613-962-4966



Hastings County Historical Society Presentation

The History of Canada's Red Maple Leaf Flag Speaker: Bill Kennedy

Hear the colourful story of the development of the Maple Leaf Flag, or how the maple leaf trumped beavers, igloos and the Union Jack! The political battles, the public opposition, the amazing proposals for a new flag and the complex selection process.

Date: Tuesday, February 16, 2016
Time: 7:30 p.m.

Location: Maranatha
100 College Street West, Belleville
(Please use rear parking lot and back entrance and go to Meeting Room)

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outlook.hastingshistory@gmail.com

Member Designation