

The Earliest Known Belleville Potteries 1868–1876

by Gary Nicoll

The earliest records of the pottery works associated with Belleville are in the 1860s. In all probability a pottery operating on land associated with 107 Mill Street was there for several decades prior to the records that we have. It is referenced in a sale document “as part of Lot 5 in the first concession Township Thurlow, agreeable to a map of Michael Teal, dated 20th day of May, A.D. 1829, known as the Pottery Works.” Early potteries in small towns were usually one of two person craft pottery operations and made earthenware from local clay deposits. Redware (earthenware from clay) is very fragile so most of the redware produced in southern Ontario in the early decades of the 19th century has not survived. It is also largely unmarked and not easily identified as being locally made. In the 1850s potteries started to produce stoneware, glazed yellowware and Rockingham ware and they were run more as industries with mechanical equipment and increased specialization of the employees’ workload. The new products were much stronger and many have survived. Some are purely utilitarian and others show the design and artistic flare of the individual potters or throwers.

Sometime in the 1860s a company called

Belleville Stone Ware Works was established. It is listed in an 1869 Hastings County Directory. It was managed by L.J. White. By 1870 it was reorganized as the Belleville Stone Ware Company owned by John Lake who lived and worked there. The land itself was owned by James S. McCuaig of Picton, a business man with diverse interests and at one time the MPP for Prince Edward as well as later a Conservative MP. We know of a couple of potters who worked at the Belleville Stone Ware Works. Mr. Stodotze worked at the pottery in 1868. His accidental death by drowning in the bay is reported in the *Intelligencer* in July of that year. In 1869, an English Potter, Thomas Wheeler, from the Lambeth area of London immigrated with his family to Belleville. In 1870 the census lists Thomas Wheeler as a Potter. Married 49, living with his wife Ellen 47 and daughters Amy and Elizabeth, 13 and 1, Living at 162 Mill Street. Lambeth was a centre for the English pottery industry, home to Doulton Pottery. He is listed in both the English 1851 and 1861 censuses as a potter living in Lambeth. In Belleville, Thomas worked for the pottery under at least three different owners, from 1869 to about 1876.

By 1871 J.S. McCuaig is the owner of the pottery, and he in turn sells it to John Montgomery Scott. In 1871, in an advertisement, J. M. Scott identifies himself as the new owner of the Belleville Stoneware Company, and as a potter who “having extensive experience in the business, has perfected the facilities of the establishment and is now turning out work second to none in

Follow the activities of the Hastings County Historical Society online

 Facebook: @HastingsHistory  Instagram: @HastingsHistory

Website: HastingsHistory.ca

Canada or the United States.... Made from the best imported clays, and by first class workmen.”

There is an article in the *Intelligencer* about the Pottery Works during J. M. Scott’s ownership. It directs people to visit the pottery and see the wide selection of pottery available for purchase. It is interesting that they employed seven people at the pottery and did 7 burns of the kilns every month. This would produce a great volume of pottery. However, later news articles indicate that the business did not go well for Mr. Scott. By 1872/73 he was an insolvent and Mr. McCuaig had announced that the “land and premises, situated in the Town of Belleville, containing by admeasurement half an acre, more or less. ... agreeable to a map of Michael Teal dated 20th day of May 1829, known as the Pottery Works.” was being sold.

In the October 1874 issue of the *Intelligencer*, an article about the Fall Agricultural Fair mentions that the Belleville Potters had an assortment of Jugs, Jars, Vases and Flower Pots on display.

In 1876 there was a report on a civil court case between MacDonald and Reed about non-payment on a lease and locking out of the building site the non-paying party. Implication is that two additional operators of the pottery, a Mr. MacDonald and a Mr. Reed ran the pottery at some level in the 1875-76 period. It was then closed until Hart Brothers and Lazier took over the lease and began its Belleville Works.

Thomas Wheeler moved from Belleville to Picton and went to work for George I. Lazier at the Hart Brothers and Lazier Pottery in Hallowell (Picton). He moved back to Belleville in 1879-80 when Hart Brothers and Lazier took over the “Pottery Works” on Mill Street. He had just turned 60 at that time. He continued to work there until 1895 when he died at the age of 75. He became close to another family of potters when he moved to Picton, and that relationship carried on in Belleville. His daughter Amy married William James Handley, one of the

Handley potters from Picton.

In Picton, Samuel Skinner and William Hart trained George Lazier and George later trained William J. Handley, Henry Handley and Newlove or Newton Handley. These brothers were all born in Ontario and went to work as laborers at the pottery but soon were trained as potters and worked from the 1870s to the 1920s. In Belleville they lived across the road from the Pottery, at 100 Mill Street and 104 Mill Street and also at 369 Charles Street North, the 2nd house north of the GTR line on Great St. James Street. The homes at 104 Mill Street and 369 Charles Street North are still standing, at 104 Station Street and 369 Stokes Street. It was common that men working at a local industry would live in the area immediately surrounding the factory they worked at. This was the case with the potters that worked at the Belleville Pottery Company and its predecessors. They lived across the road from the pottery works. In this same manner, many homes on Mill Street and Great St. James Street were the residences of employees of the Grand Trunk Railway.

The nature of the work done at the pottery called for running the kiln to bake thousands of pieces of pottery at a time. Fires would be built up and maintained for two to four days for 24 hours a day, so the fires had to be maintained, and carefully watched for temperature control. Stories from the families of these potters tell of their fathers getting up at 4:00 AM to check on the kilns. These potters were highly skilled in a specialized trade. In the early decades of the 20th century the need for many of their products gradually disappeared with the greater use of glass jars and metal containers and cans. Some potteries specialized and adjusted their product lines, some produced chinaware for hotels and restaurants, some specialized in white vitrified plumbing pottery, sinks, toilets and bathroom accessories, some changed to drain tiles and pipes for buildings and municipal sewers. Most just closed up by the end of the 1920s-30s. The potters died off, their sons found other employment, their products found other uses and

many survived until they were once again appreciated in the 1960s and on.

List of Potters in Belleville

The years listed are the known years they started and stopped working as potters. The Belleville Stone Works Company had seven employees as did Hart and Lazier when they opened their Belleville works in 1879-80, so there were potters or workers at the pottery that we do not have names for. In the census, the actual potters would spell out their trade but those that were workers at the pottery would simply list themselves as laborers.

1868 Mr Stodotze: worked at the pottery (died in a drowning accident that year)

1871 John Montgomery Scott: owner and potter at Belleville Stone Ware Works

1871 Thomas Wheeler: Census shows him as a potter in Belleville, Age 49 living at 162 Mill St.

1881 Census lists Nicolas Ireland as a potter, living with W. J. Handley's family on Mill St.

1892 Charles Haycock

1879/80 to 1926 The Handley brothers, Henry, William J. and Newton were born in Canada and worked at George Lazier Pottery.

William J. Handley worked until he died in 1910.

Henry Handley worked until 1920 and then again in 1926.

Newton or Newlove Handley worked until 1915.

1911 Joseph Clarke: Potter, lived on south side of Mill St. between Burrell St. and Brown St.

1911 Ernest Lettle: operated the Lime Kiln at pottery. Lived at 107 Mill St. in an apartment above the warehouse and offices at the pottery.

1879-1925 Charles Addison Hart: owner and potter, Hart Brothers and Lazier and Belleville Pottery Company.

There are no photos available in the records of the Belleville Pottery works. This building complex was located where the Brewer's Retail building was erected in the 1950s. Perhaps one day, a descendant of one of these families will find a photograph of the factory or its employees and donate it to the archives.

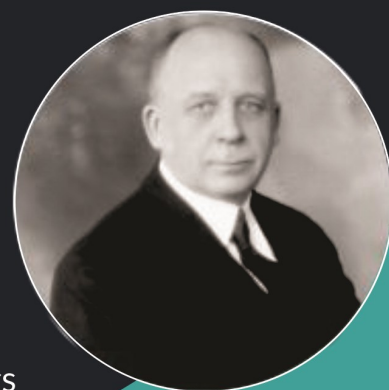


FREE PUBLIC PRESENTATION

The Life and Times of Dr. Albert Faulkner

BY HISTORIAN
TREVOR PARSONS

An exploration of the life and times of Dr. Albert Faulkner, physician turned politician, and a medical history of Hastings County in the first half of the 20th century.



Tuesday,
February 20, 2024
7:00 p.m.

Maranatha Church Auditorium
100 College Street West, Belleville
Enter by main front doors

January Public Presentation

by Jim Kennelly



Speakers were Richard Hughes who represented Henry Corby, Patti Spice as Ellen Bilbrough, and Jim Kennelly as William Canniff

Photo by Isidore Champagne, Loyalist College

For January, the Historical Society's Public Presentation at Maranatha Series featured stories of three local residents who made a major contribution to the community and to Canada in the 1800s. These entertaining and engaging presentations, in full period costume, brought to life Henry Corby, Sr. and Jr., Ellen Bilbrough of Marchmont Home and Dr. William Canniff.

Dr. William Canniff

Dr. William Canniff was born to Jonas Canniff and Letta Flagler in 1830 in Thurlow. His dad was a farmer and an entrepreneur who built and operated a sawmill and a flour mill where Cannifton is today.

William received his early education here and then at the Toronto School of Medicine. After he furthered his education at the University of N.Y. in 1854 as an M.D., he was admitted to the Royal College of Surgeons in England in 1855. His career led him back to Belleville where he began to practise medicine. When his skills were appropriately recognized, he was hired as a professor of general pathology and surgery at

Victoria College in Toronto. He helped organize the Canadian Medical Association in 1867 and later served as the national president of that great organization.

A short sojourn with the Army of the Potomac during the American Civil War helped him realize what a wonderful country Canada was. His Loyalist ancestry was very much appreciated and he became an ardent Canadian patriot. Confederation cemented for him the wonderful gift of this country.

Consequently, Canniff joined the Canada First movement in 1870 and then was president of the North-West Emigration Aid Society. He thought it was extremely important that the nation promote the settlement of our great Prairie region by English-speaking people. Some would say that his Canadianism was strident, that he was suspicious of the motives of the US, and that his views of the greatness of Anglo-Saxon were overdone. But his passionate awareness of his Loyalist ancestry and traditions led him to indulge in one of his great achievements ... the writing of the book, *The Settlement of Upper Canada*. He interviewed countless people about their family's early history in Canada. Because of him, countless stories and masses of material were preserved for posterity in this 666-page tome. It could have been lost forever. Many people began to take a great interest in their families, in their Loyalist roots, because of his great work. He helped to foster Loyalist sentiment in the late 1800s and was a key organizer for the great Loyalist Centennial celebration in Toronto and in Adolphustown.

William Canniff was the first Medical Officer of Health in Toronto from 1883 to 1891 where he began a great campaign to have people understand that cleanliness and good health had to exist together. He wrote two other books, one a *Manual of the Principles of Surgery* and a historical narrative on the *Medical Profession in Upper Canada*.

His purposeful and interesting life ended in 1910 and now he rests here on the shores of his beloved Bay of Quinte!

Ellen Bilbrough

Ellen was born in Leeds, England in 1841. From her parents she received a strong belief in education and firm religious foundation; her love of the Lord provided the base for her actions and success in the world. This was a time during the Industrial Revolution when thousands of impoverished and destitute children were in the streets with little prospect for a future. Ellen was teaching in Whitechapel District in London where she came to realize that basic education alone would not change the prospects for her students. She became acquainted with Miss Annie McPherson and her mission work at her Home of Industry where children were taught some trades. For a time, she worked at the Home as an assistant. They came to the conclusion that it would be better for these children to be taken to Canada where the possibilities of a successful life were so much brighter.

In 1870, the first 100 boys were given basic training, outfitted and sailed for Canada. On arriving in Quebec, they found a letter waiting for them asking that some boys be left in Belleville where homes were waiting for them. They did so and this led to a Home being offered in Belleville. Billa Flint and Mrs. Elizabeth Esson were key supporters in the opening of Marchmont Distributing Home.

Some misfortunes challenged Marchmont. There was a fire in 1872 during a terrible winter storm. The tragic loss of home and possessions was added to by the heartbreaking loss of the youngest boy who died in the fire trying to save himself from the cold winter storm. Funds and sympathy poured in so they were able to establish a second home. Again, a fire in 1875 caused by a defective flue ravaged their community. They managed to save most furniture and the valuable history books. With the assistance of community leaders and the people of Belleville, a solid, brick home was built with steam heat and avoided the use of open fireplaces. This brick building, now converted into apartments, is at 159 Yeomans Street today.

In total over 10,000 boys and girls came to

Marchmont and were placed on farms and in homes across the region. Many of these children found their new homes superior to the impoverished and hopeless conditions in Britain and there were many success stories as children went on to become farmers, teachers, nurses, doctors, tradesmen, politicians, among others.

However, the efforts to help young boys and girls from the workhouses and streets was not without critics. Rumours of ill-treatment of the children by employers were abundant. In 1874, a representative from the London Board of Governors came to visit the homes and the children to see how they were doing. He praised the women and staff, especially MacPherson, saying they were inspired by the highest motives. But his report criticized the grouping of workhouse and street children together. It also was critical of the checks made on the children who were placed with settlers.

Over time and with experience gained, changes were made. Governments passed laws to look after the interests of children. Marchmont home closed in 1925 after 55 years and the placement of 10,000 children.

Henry Corby

Henry Corby was born in England in 1806; apprenticed as a baker and immigrated to Belleville in 1832. He operated a general store and bakery and during the 1837 Rebellion, obtained a profitable contract to provision the troops. His bakery and store flourished.

In 1838, tragedy struck when his wife and three children drowned when their sleigh went through the ice on the Bay of Quinte. Soon after, he sold his bakery and bought a lake steamer, buying, selling and transporting grain. In 1842, he sold this business and engaged in a grain marketing business in Belleville. He married his second wife that year (she was the sister of his first wife and they went on to have 11 children). In 1855, he went into the grain milling business and bought a mill in what is now known as Corbyville. A few years later he added a distilling business. Along with his mercantile expertise,

he developed a political interest to his life. He served on the Police Board (village council) of the newly incorporated village of Belleville in 1837, and was a councillor several times over the next 12 years. He was elected Mayor of Belleville in 1867 and 1868. In 1867, Corby was also elected to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. During that time, he was instrumental in locating the School for the Deaf in Belleville in 1870.

Due to failing health, he returned to private life and to the running of his businesses. In 1881, he retired and sold his mills, distillery and wine importing business to his son, Henry Jr., for \$10,000. He died in 1881.

Henry (Harry) Corby Jr.

Born in 1851, Harry grew up in his father's business. In 1881, at the age of 30, he bought the operation from his father. Under his leadership, the company began to bottle their own brand of whiskey and sell it under the Corby name. Harry grew the distillery and by 1895 he had 35 copper and 44 wooden tanks which could hold 800 000 proof gallons of spirits. He had one of the largest distilleries in the world. At the same time, he had a massive farming operation with 400 head of

cattle, 100 hogs, many horses and 100 acres of hops for the production of beer.

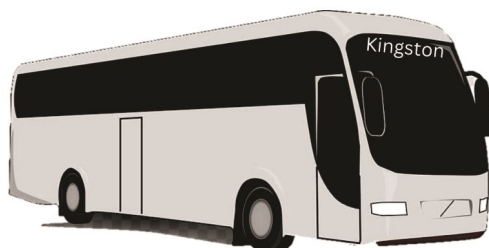
Harry took an active hand in the affairs of Belleville. He became assistant chief of the volunteer fire department, was an organizer and investor in the first bridge across the Bay of Quinte in 1889, and was a participant in the building of Hotel Quinte and in the second Hotel Quinte. As well he built the Massassauga Park Hotel across the Bay of Quinte which was one of the finest resorts in Ontario. He was an active supporter of many sporting organizations and events, gave land to and funded the Public Library, and helped to establish Corby Park, the current Corby Rose Garden.

Harry was elected to the House of Commons four times as a Conservative, until 1901, then returned to businesses. Harry Corby was appointed to the Senate in 1912. After the First World War, Corby sold his distillery to Canadian Industrial Alcohols which purchased J.P. Wiser Distillery in Prescott and moved it to Corbyville. Harry died in April of 1917 in Hawaii. His body was returned to Belleville and now rests in the Belleville Cemetery.



Bus Tour

Save the Date!



Take a trip with us to historic Kingston on Saturday, May 4th, 2024 for a chance to visit the Murney Tower Museum and the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes

Cost: \$80.00

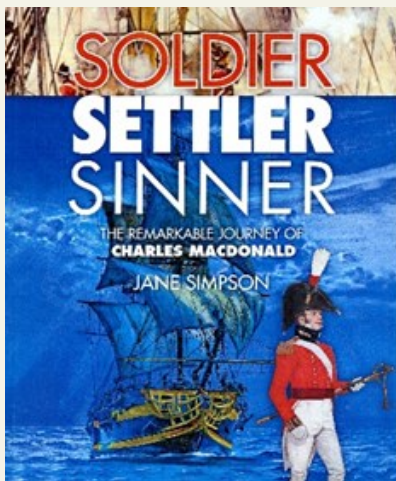
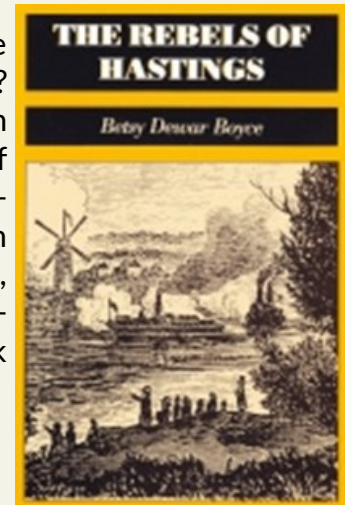
It's Reading Time Again

by Michelle Hutchison

The coldest weather of the winter is upon us. The pesky cold and snow and maybe a little rain thrown in for good measure are persistent. If we are hunkering down and staying warm and dry, what better time to find a good book and wrap up in a blanket to read? We offer these selections for your pleasure.

Did you hear about the unrest in Hastings County? Whose side are you on anyway? Are you a Loyalist or could you be called a rebel? Do you fear annexation by the United States? Common enough questions for residents of Upper Canada during the Rebellion of 1837-1838. The rebel aim was to make the young Canada independent of Britain. Betsy Dewar Boyce leads the reader through this tale of life and the times which fuelled the fervor of the rebels, causing fear and panic throughout Upper Canada and, indeed, Hastings County. It was a colourful period in Hastings County. Sneak attacks, pirates, arrests, hangings; *The Rebels of Hastings* has it all!

223 pages \$10



Captain Charles MacDonald was somewhat of a rogue. His many escapades, beginning with the Royal Marines during the Napoleonic Wars, led him from Northumberland County in England to the Caribbean and finally, to Point Anne on the shores of the Bay of Quinte. Through all of his exploits, Charles always managed to land on his feet. Jane Simpson, author of *Soldier Settler Sinner* takes us on a captivating journey, often tinged with a hint of scandal, as she recounts the saga of her ancestor, his legendary travels and his many adventures. Along the way, readers are treated to a glimpse of life, its customs and its culture as would have been experienced by Captain MacDonald. Come along; join in for a unique excursion into history.

143 pages \$30

You may find these two fine books, along with many others, at the Hastings County Historical Society bookstore at the Community Archives on the second floor of the Belleville Public Library. Check out our on-line bookstore at hastingshistory.ca



A Movie Premiere

You are invited by Heritage Belleville to
a special event to mark
Heritage Week.

A Movie Premiere of a documentary film by
YourTV Quinte,
Belleville City Hall – Journey to Icon,
telling the story of the history and development
of Belleville City Hall on
its 150th Anniversary.

Location: Quinte Sports and Wellness Centre,
2nd Floor Minor Sports Meeting Room

Date: Thursday, February 22nd at 6:00 p.m.

To-morrow Will Be St. Valentine's Day

"To-morrow will be St. Valentine's day," ...and signs go to show that those that handle His Majesty's mails in this city will have a busy time of it. In the various stores where valentines are sold, a rushing business has been done lately, and it would really appear that, in this city, at least, St. Valentine has been restored to popular favor. It is learned with pleasure that the alleged "comic" valentine is dying out, though it will still be used, probably, by those with a deformed sense of humor, or by cowardly folk who delight in anonymously insulting their "friends." The fashion, this year, is the dainty artistic little thing which appeals to the recipients' sense of beauty and gladdens his or her heart by the kindly sentiments expressed. This is so much better than the old brutal and fiendish concoctions which were ugly enough to set the baby crying or drive the cat out of doors. The post card valentine appears to make quite a hit. They are of neat appearance, and contain a verse. Some of them are really humorous. Then, there are the valentines which are very costly, just as the more expensive Christmas cards. There is a fair demand for these.
Daily Intelligencer, February 13, 1908



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	Gary Nicoll
Vice-President	TBA
Treasurer	Dan Atkinson
Secretary	Dick Hughes

Directors

Ted Bradford	Connie Carson
Michelle Hutchison	Stanley Jones
Jim Kennelly	Steve Young

Ex-officio:

Dick Hughes (Past-President)
Amanda Hill (Archivist)

Sub-committees

Bus Tour Committee	Dan Atkinson, Dick Hughes, Michelle Hutchison, Gary Nicoll
Exhibits	Stanley Jones
Gerry Boyce Award:	Dan Atkinson Jim Kennelly Gary Nicoll
Membership	Amanda Hill, Lori Brown
Outlook Newsletter	Editor Laurel Bishop Editor Donna Fano
Outlook Distribution	Dick Hughes Michelle Hutchison
Plaque Projects:	Dick Hughes
Programs/Speakers	Jim Kennelly
Publications for Sale	Michelle Hutchison
Publicity (Print Media)	TBA
Social Media	Ted Bradford
Relations with Other Heritage Orgs.	Gary Nicoll
Website Content and Maintenance	Amanda Hill
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