



Next Meeting

Please note the special time and place for the April general meeting to be held

Tuesday, April 15 1997

at the Regent Theatre in Picton

7:00 p.m. a short tour of the Regent

7:30 Meeting

Guest Speaker Ron Brown

Ron Brown is the author of numerous books on the ghost towns and railways of Ontario.

This special meeting is a combined effort of the Hastings County Historical Society, the Trent Port Historical Society and the Prince Edward County Historical Society.

After the meeting there will be a showing of the award-winning movie *The English Patient* at regular theatre prices.

Outlook

Volume 2 Number 4 Issue number 143 April 1997

Agricultural practices grandpa would remember

Farming then and now

The scheduled guest speaker for the March 18 meeting of the Hastings County Historical Society, Keith Matthie, had to cancel his plans to attend but sent an able replacement in his stead. McCrae Danford is a cash crop farmer in the Consecon area of Prince Edward County and shared his memories of farming and the changes he has seen in the last 50 years with a small but appreciative audience.

Mr. Danford's overview began with the season we are now enjoying—spring—and the first crop of the new year.

In the past the making of maple syrup was labour-intensive. A sleigh laden with sap buckets would be hauled out to the sugar bush by a pair of strong horses. A brace with a half-inch bit was used to drill a hole in the side of a maple and buckets were hung from the spiles to catch the sweet sap. Roughly 350 buckets were distributed throughout the bush said Mr. Danford and some of the larger trees would have as many as three buckets. Gathering tubs were usually 30-gallon milk cans which those trusty horses would then haul to the sugar shanty. There the liquid would be transferred to a boiling pan which measured about three feet by ten feet by ten inches deep. It sat on a stone hearth and the fire was constantly tended. The long process of boiling down the sap would begin.

Springtime collection of sap has now been relegated to a system of pipes and the boiling down process occurs after much of the water in the sap is removed

through reverse osmosis. Preheaters cut down on the amount of fuel used to boil the sap and sensors automatically trigger a draining system to remove the syrup from the pan when it has reached its optimum "syrupiness." The romance is gone and another time-honoured tradition gives way to technology and increased profit.

Following the syrup season, spring crops are planted. Peas, oats and barley are sown in the soil which has been prepared through ploughing the previous fall. Fifty years ago, one three-furrow plough might have been used. Today, ploughs can till up to 12 furrows with ease.

The haying season would soon be upon the increasingly busy farmer. A five-foot swath was cut by a horse-drawn cutter. The dry hay was taken to a barn to be stored; pitched into the mow by hand, it would be used during the winter. By the late 1800s the use of slings and a "car" which ran on a rail inside the peak of the barn roof made the loading of hay mows much easier. Former one-storey barns were converted with the addition of a storey to increase storage capacity.

Haying and threshing seasons were busy as farmers helped each other bring in the bounty of the land. Threshing was another labour-intensive occupation as the thresher moved from farm to farm. Men were kept busy from dawn to dusk and their respective spouses

helped out by cooking up huge meals to feed the hungry men for the four or five days at each farm. Feeding up to 16 hungry men two or three meals a day took its toll and many farm wives were happy to see the end of the threshing season.

Mr. Danford's recollections included the harvesting of peas, turnips, tomatoes and corn; old methods were compared with modern, old machinery with new. He recalled the days of cutting lake and river ice for the next summer. Blocks 20 by 30 inches square and between 14 and 30 inches thick would be hauled out and packed in sawdust; in this way ice could be kept until the summer months.

Technology has transformed farming. Genetic engineering has bred better animals; yield per acre of crops in some cases has doubled in just 35 years; and no-till farming is being used by environmentally conscientious farmers. Fewer acres are now needed to produce increasing yields; much of the land our pioneer forebears laboriously cleared for crop production has been allowed to revert to its natural state, a fact borne out in aerial surveys done over the past years. Bookkeeping, crop projections and breeding records have become computerized and many farmers now devote their time to filling "niche" markets such as soy beans and specialty livestock.

Mr. Danford closed with this appropriate thought: "The farming industry is one you must have if you wish to eat."

The death of James McNabb

by Lois Foster

The only Belleville casualty of the 1837 Rebellion

The casualty was reported in the *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette* on December 20, 1837: "We regret to hear that J. McNabb, Esquire, of Belleville, has suddenly met his death in the most heartrending manner. An alarm of fire being given, Mr. McNabb was hurrying through the dark passage of an inn, where a number of the armed militia were quartered, when he ran upon the fixed bayonet of one of the men, which pierced his abdomen. He died within twenty-four hours."

This report hardly touches the surface of the agony this sad event caused. Captain James McNabb of the First Hastings Militia was a young man, aged 33 years, with a promising future. He had purchased 20 acres of land on the west side of the mouth of the Moira River which had once belonged to his father, had it surveyed for building lots and named the area "Town of Moira"; he chose the most beautiful of the lots for his home, a two-storey stone dwelling on the south side of the hill on West Bridge Street, which was still in the finishing stages when he died; in the previous year he had won the election to represent Hastings County in the Assembly; more personally he and his wife had just become parents of baby daughter, Harriet, in September and her baptism was planned for December 24.

It was an accident bound to happen to someone sooner or later. Although the militia included most able-bodied males

and these men were eager to fight for their country, they were actually an untrained mass of ordinary citizens. Most of the regiments were only required to meet for drill once a year so that officers and men never became experienced. McNabb, himself, had been guilty of seldom calling a meeting of his company.

During the unrest of 1837 rumours and alarms had everyone jittery and trigger happy, expecting the rebels to attack at every corner. In fact, only a few days before, a similar accident happened in Shannonville, according to the Kingston newspaper. William Church and another militiaman had escorted the mail through the Indian woods and stopping at the tavern, the com-

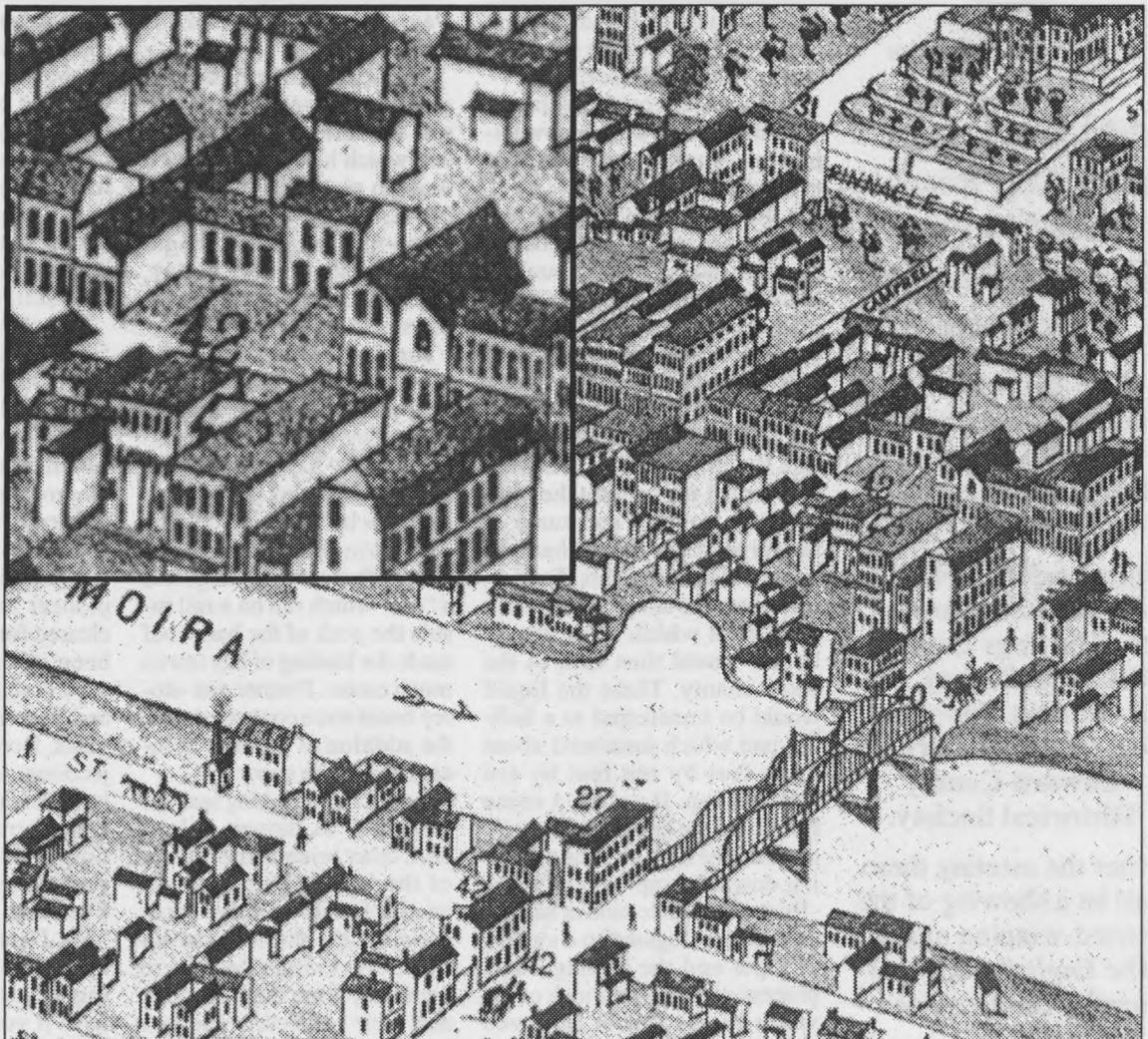
rade, in loosening his cloak, let his pistol fall, which coming in contact with the stove, discharged. Mr. Church received the contents just as he was stooping to sit down, and died instantly.

The scene of the McNabb tragedy was the Mansion House where Daniel Young was the proprietor. It was situated on the east side of Front Street north of Bridge Street (The address is now 225 Front Street and the building now on the site is Century Antiques, the old Hotel having burned in 1875.) It was a two-storey frame building picturesquely set back from the street with a walkway leading to the front entrance.

When McNabb entered to

rouse his men, the rooms were in darkness with only the smouldering embers of the fireplace in the bar for light. A young militiaman named Hopkins came running with his bayonet fixed at the charge expecting to attack a rebel. It became a scene of horror when the men realized that their captain had been stabbed and was mortally wounded.

James McNabb died on December 16 and was buried on December 20 in the churchyard of St. Thomas Anglican Church, in a prominent spot in front of the church near the stone wall along Church Street. His tall marble monument stood over his grave for over 150 years.



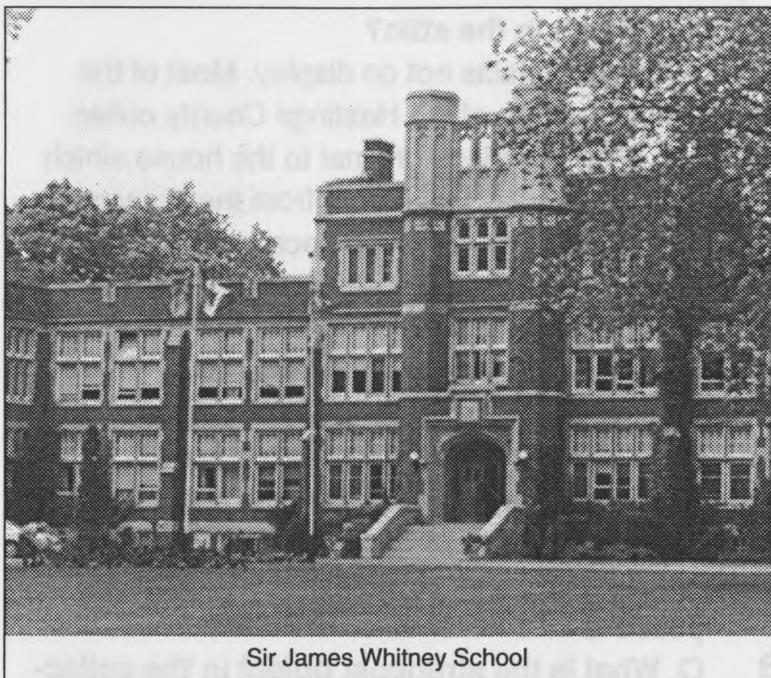
This is a portion of the 1874 Bird's Eye View of Belleville. Easily recognized are the Court House terraces in the upper right and the Lower Bridge. The Mansion House (about halfway between the Court House and the bridge) appears on the map as number 42 (inset), under the classification "Other Hotels."

County News

by Gerry Boyce

Updated - J. W. (Jack) Hodgson has performed a valuable service for future generations. He has written "1941 Re-Lived" and "The Transition" to update the "Wartime Years" chapter in the 1979 history of the School for the Deaf (now known as Sir James Whitney School). Jack paints a detailed, fascinating account of the years

ing over of properties, which required families to move out. In the case of the Mouck House (site of Sons of Jacob Synagogue), where ten families lived in small apartments, this was not easy. At the school large numbers of tradesmen were required. The residence staffs of course had bedding ready packed, but in the school, the classroom



Sir James Whitney School

when the RCAF took over the campus and students were moved into a dozen buildings in Belleville's older East Hill area. Consider these extracts dealing with events after the students left in June 1941 to return to their homes for the summer:

"The school had barely closed when out of the blue sky, came the announcement that the property was to be taken over by the Airforce to be used as an Initial Training Base ... Work spread rapidly ... and there was much speculation that it would be closing "forever."

Things began to happen in a hurry with so little time to get out. Real estate agents had to make arrangements for the tak-

books and other supplies had to be boxed up. The kitchen and dining room staffs had to divide up the dishes, cutlery and kitchen utensils into lots to set up three kitchens. The bursar had to organize his office so as to be able to carry on immediately. The Superintendent's office had an additional problem. Since the mid-1870s the school had saved all the correspondence between it and the parents of the pupils. This was packed in cardboard boxes in a basement storage room and there was no authority to destroy it. Workmen went to work removing many squares of blackboard, to be used in the city. Dozens of beds in all of the residences had to be taken apart for reuse. In the Junior Residence, not only the small beds

had to go, but plumbers came in to remove the small bath tubs and small toilets."

You will be intrigued by Jack's detailed account of how the staff and students adapted to schooling in a dozen scattered buildings and how the original campus changed (a barricade and sentry restricting access to the campus and a "clink" for wrongdoers in the basement of the main building, etc.).

Thanks for your labour of love, Jack.

Expansion - The Trent Port Historical Society has expanded its bulletin. The March newsletter told of fund-raising

efforts for the Old Market Building and the search for a name for the proposed municipality of Quinte West. Earl Taft suggested "Trent-on-Quinte" and asked members for suggestions. Editor Marilyn Hopkins included several one-liners, such as "Death and taxes may be unavoidable, but at least death doesn't come every year."

No milk today - "Foster's Dairy - the end of an era" was the heading in *The Tweed News* and reporter Jennifer Heffernan presented an illustrated article on the history of the Tweed dairy that closed in

March. An institution for over 70 years, Fosters was "known far and wide for its great milkshakes, gigantic ice cream cones and of course the Foster family." It will be missed.

Donation - Thanks to John West of "Titles" in Belleville for presenting the society with a copy of *Some Bay of Quinte Reminiscences*, an address to the U.E.L. Association at Toronto in 1922 by Belleville lawyer and historian W.C. Mikel. Mikel predicted a city of between 300,000 and 400,000 on the north shore of the Bay of Quinte.

Congratulations to:

1. The Marmora Historical Foundation for raising more than \$1,000 for the new addition to the Marmora Library by

selling space in a time capsule.

2) The Belleville and District Boy Scout Council (especially project chairman Scouter David Bentley, volunteers, and donors) for adding a 1,000-volume library to the Scout-Guide Museum/Library on the Sir James Whitney School campus; the library is named in honour of the late Mary McArdle, a local Scouter for 25 years.

3) The new North Hastings Genealogy Club, which meets in the Bancroft Public Library on the last Thursday of each month.

Looking back - "The Day the Inspector Came" was a fascinating article in a "Reflection" column in *The Bancroft Times* on March 11. Tom Hodgson, who taught at the one-room school in St. Ola in 1956-1957 recalled the visit of Inspector Bates of Bancroft on November 21, 1956, Hodgson's Black Wednesday: "The first crisis came before classes. Ronnie, one of my grade one students became ill and made a horrible mess on the floor. Luckily his older sister, Sandra, volunteered to clean it up. The morning was hectic. I just couldn't keep my grade ones busy or interested. They squirmed, they fussed, they talked and followed me around while I tried to teach the older students. The three grade eight students were struggling with an arithmetic problem which none of us could solve and so they became irritable and unco-operative. The incessant rain meant everyone stayed inside for recesses and lunch ... The high winds disrupted the power supply which made the room dark. Then a chimney fire broke out and the grade ones panicked. ... At recess I had an attach of diarrhoea and retreated to the washroom. Mr. Bates followed me in and I, thinking it was a student, shouted for whomever it was to get out."

Despite the problems, Hodgson survived and was recommended by Inspector Bates to the principal of North Hastings High School, where he taught (1957-1980).

"The lesson? He who can survive in a one-room school can teach anywhere and so I did for thirty-four years."



Your County Museum

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

Many thanks to Springtime In Quinte's Gardening Show and Outdoors Expo for sponsoring the Royal Ontario Museum travelling exhibit "Seeds in Disguise." The exhibit is at the museum until April 20. School programming around this exhibit is open until April 11.

Volunteers help make it happen

April 14 to 18 is Volunteer Week.

We gratefully acknowledge the enormous contributions our volunteers make to museum operations.

From all members of the staff: Happy Volunteer Week!

Space Adventure will open
May 2 at Century Place,
Belleville.

School and public tours are
available.

Please call 962-2329 for more information.

New folks on the job

It is with great pleasure that we welcome Jean Williams to the position of volunteer librarian. We always look forward to working with her and are pleased to see our reference library continue to take shape.

Welcome to Lee Waterhouse and Steve Laforest who have joined Christine Zaporzan on our site restoration fund raiser, Space Adventure. Lee and Steve's positions are funded through a Human Resources Development Canada Job Creation grant. We are grateful to Human Resources Development Canada for this funding.

Museum fast facts

Tours of the artifact storage area during March Break raised questions of general interest.

Q. What is in the attic?

A. All the artifacts not on display. Most of the pieces are part of the Hastings County collection. The only piece original to the house which is not on display is a carpet from the drawing room which was removed because of its condition. Other original pieces in storage include mouldings and pieces of shutter needed as reference material for future restoration.

Q. Why do the members of the staff wear gloves when handling most artifacts?

A. The oils present on our fingers contains salt, water and oil. These chemicals can erode everything from paper to metal if an object is exposed to these over time.

Q. What is the strangest object in the collection?

A. Most of the staff members think of the "mermaid" as the strangest artifact. The mermaid is about 150 years old and is made from fish and animal parts. It may be a copy of P.T. Barnum's "Fiji Mermaid" which was exhibited as part of a circus side show.

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

It is edited and produced by Lewis Zandbergen.

Anyone wishing to submit articles or information can contact the editor at 613-395-3022, Fax 613-395-4695, or E-mail lewzan@connect.reach.net

Thomas Boyce
173 Bridge Street
Belleville Ontario
K8N 1N3

1996 (Z/B)