

It's Membership Time!

One of the great strengths of your Historical Society, and one that keeps us working for our community is the support of our membership. We are very proud that we have one of the most active and successful historical societies in Ontario and this is largely due to the support, both financial and moral of our roughly 300 members.

There are several benefits to being a member of the Historical Society – a tangible one is the 8-page newsletter, *Outlook*, with its local historical stories, reports on activities and coming events. Issued nine times a year in either paper or electronic form, as members prefer. The membership fee, which we have kept low for several years, assists us in bringing programs to you and to the whole community. As an example, our free Public Presentations at Maranatha, which have been very successful in bringing some great speakers to our community, cost more than \$2,000 annually.

We invite you to consider renewing or taking out a new 2024 membership. It is quick and easy – just go to the Society's website hastingshistory.ca and in the upper right corner of the homepage, click on "membership" and fill out the form.

Alternatively, the tried-and-true method of sending the form with a cheque to the Hastings County Historical Society, 254 Pinnacle Street, Belleville, ON, K8N 3B1. Also, it can be done

by e-transfer addressed to
treasurer@hastingshistory.ca

Your team of volunteer Directors and helpers are looking forward to a very active and interesting year in 2024 and we would love to have you with us through a membership.



The Year Ahead for Our Historical Society

by Gary Nicoll, President

In Canada, January 1st marks the beginning of the new year. Different cultures and faiths mark different days of the year as the start of the new year. Interestingly, the Plymouth Colony in the 1630s marked March 25 as the start of the new year. In Canada, this is a secular occasion rather than a religious holiday. We all seem to mark off time according to annual cycles, so for many, the start of school in September is in effect the start of their new year. Most Canadian corporations mark their fiscal year starting with January 1st. Organizations such as ours have an annual meeting when elections are held and often changes are made and in many ways that becomes the start of our new year. Our annual meetings have been in March, tied in with our Public Presentation that month, interestingly close to the old celebration of March 25th as the first day of the new year.

Follow the activities of the Hastings County Historical Society online



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As an organization we had a few notable events in this past year. After 12 years as President of the Hastings County Historical Society, Dick Hughes stepped back from this service. He continues to work in a number of our Society's important jobs, serving as Secretary for the Board of Directors and looks after the distribution of the *Outlook* newsletter. As a group we owe him gratitude and thanks for all his past and continuing work.

We launched a new website on August 1st. It is a great improvement over our older one. It allows easier access to information about our Society, easier access to our Book Store, to renewing or beginning membership to the Society. The Historical Plaques website that Orland French had laboriously created was successfully transferred to the new site.

At the same time, the Society changed its logo and graphic designs for signage and flyers as well as the website. We have a few printed items with the old logo that we will replace this coming year.

We have just completed our first full year of Public Presentations since the beginning of COVID restrictions in 2020. We are planning to run our first Bus Tour since 2019. A committee is meeting to work on details of the new bus tour. We have a strong Board of Directors and a faithful group of volunteers. We need more volunteers and researchers and writers for articles for the *Outlook* and for stories for the website. The books and articles that have been produced over the Historical Society's long history are the result of individual interest and effort. The Society is the beneficiary of this work rather than the instigator or inspiration for these writings. Perhaps our new year's resolution might be to begin work on researching some aspect of our local history. Research leads to writing. We might resolve to provide our Society with access to some of our skills and time. We only improve our organization by the willingness of our members to work within our group. If you

have time or interest, we will help you find an interesting way to assist the Historical Society.

We are looking forward to interesting Public Presentations, a new bus tour, perhaps a new cemetery reenactment tour and other new endeavours. May we all continue to enjoy each other's company at our gatherings and continue to share our abiding interest in our local history of Hastings County.



Voices from the Past

by Jim Kennelly

Hastings County Historical Society's November Public Presentation featured four interesting persons who now reside permanently in the Belleville Cemetery. They were portrayed by present-day Bellevillians who gave our audience an interesting and lively take on their lives.

Our first person, Charlotte Sills, was dramatically portrayed by Debra Tosh. Charlotte Emma Martin was born in 1873 in Belleville to John and Elizabeth Martin. She helped her family run their grocery store at 75 Dundas Street East. In 1898, Charlotte married William Clarence Sills, a descendant of the UEL Sills family of Sillsville. He had lived in Lonsdale and was an active member of Bridge Street Methodist Church. She moved with him first to Montreal, then to Newton, New York and on to Boston. William acquired the lucrative General Motors sales franchise for all of New England. He and Lottie enjoyed a prosperous married life. When he died in 1935, he was worth over a million dollars. With this fortune, Lottie turned it into even more money. She returned to Belleville and often stayed at Hotel Quinte with her small staff. On Charlotte's death in 1961, her legacy had grown to 8.5 million dollars. Her only child had died in infancy, so her fortune was left to extended family and others. Part of her fortune was left to the Bridge Street United Church Foundation and also to the Belleville General Hospital. The hospital created the beautiful

Charlotte Sills Wing with this valuable asset. The Bridge Street United Church Foundation was and is instrumental in outreach to Asia and Africa, to health care, to educational endeavours, assistance to needy individuals and causes, and to taking care of the physical welfare of Bridge Street United. Her legacy is ongoing and enduring!

Our second appearance featured Colonel Samuel Shaw Lazier as thoughtfully portrayed by Gary Nicoll. Samuel was born in 1840 near Milltown in Tyendinaga Township. He was a member of an enterprising family of mill owners and lawyers. Samuel moved to Belleville in 1858 where he was called to the bar in 1864. He married Margaret Robertson, the daughter of a mill owner in Belleville and sister of Mayor Robertson of Belleville. Samuel became Master of Chancery in 1874 in Belleville and Napanee. He was a successful lawyer and judge. In 1879, he built a beautiful 13 000 sq.-ft. home, Kirk lawn, at John and Victoria Streets. His house style was copied by others in the community including Glanmore House. While Samuel was involved in law, he also became an active member of the militia in 1858. In 1876 he was promoted to Colonel. There was a problem with the Grand Trunk Railroad in 1876 when a strike occurred. The militia was ordered to take action against the strike, a decision that did not sit well with the local militia. Samuel was charged with improving the image of the militia in the community.

Samuel was also active in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, in the Masonic Lodge and in athletic endeavours in the community. He was privileged to have travelled the world, had been presented to Queen Victoria, and had maintained his prosperity into retired life. He died in 1928 at the good age of 88. Kirk lawn, his home, was for a time in the 1940s the residence for deaf children. The residence has now been replaced by an apartment building.

Billa Flint, our next prominent Hastings County resident, made his appearance with the sensitive portrayal by Bill Kennedy. Born in Brockville in

1805, he arrived in the small community of Belleville in 1829. He had been raised by a difficult father and worked for him in his store. When Billa came to Belleville, he opened his own store. He quickly became a driving force in the community and in Hastings County. Billa's business interests over the rest of his life were to include merchant, lumberman, land speculator, industrialist, religious leader, temperance advocate, philanthropist, and politician. He established Belleville's first Temperance Society which had 1400 members at one time and was one of the larger chapters at the time. He had strong Methodist tendencies and was a powerful influence on education and religion in the county. He was instrumental in education of the deaf, workhouses for the poor and in the Marchmont home. His lumbering interests were extensive. He built wharves and docks at the mouth of the Moira, his milling interests produced 100 000 ft. of lumber per day, and he was active in the development of northern Hastings County.

Billa was the Reeve of Elzevir Township, became Warden of the County, had been Mayor of Belleville and had been elected to the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council for United Canada. He was a strong proponent of responsible government. Because of that, he was opposed to a non-elected Senate. Eventually, he became a Senator. Much of Billa's political interests reflected his business interests. Billa had a tendency to be a loose fish, a political chameleon who saw himself as an independent. His biographer, Armand LaBarge, would call Billa "The King of Hastings County." Billa died in 1894 at the age of 89.

The final presentation, Sir Mackenzie Bowell, was brought to life by Richard Hughes. Richard brought an interesting perspective to a person we have heard much about at Society presentations. Bowell was born in 1823 in England, 200 years ago. At ten years of age, he was apprenticed to George Benjamin of the *Intelligencer*. There he learned the trade of printing and became foreman of the printing shop. Bowell became an active member of the Orange Lodge and of the

Conservative party. At the time, the *Intel* was the voice of Conservative politics. In the 1860s, the Fenians had become active and were threatening from the U.S. Bowell went to Prescott with the militia to address the Fenian problem. He came back to Belleville as a hero.

In 1864, he bought the *Intelligencer*, became a senior official with the Orange Lodge and ran unsuccessfully in an election. However, in 1867, in the first election of the new country of Canada, he was the new M.P. for Macdonald's party.

Bowell was one of the main forces in demanding Louis Riel face the consequences of his actions. He had been a successful minister in Macdonald's government, having served as Minister of Customs, Minister of Militia, and Minister of Trade and Commerce. When Prime Minister Thompson died, the Governor General chose Bowell to be Prime Minister because of his lengthy tenure and long experience in governing. However, the Manitoba School Question arrived on Bowell's doorstep. The thorny issue was a lose-lose situation for Bowell. Bowell chose to protect the rights of the minority over political realities. There

was collusion, back-stabbing, conspiracy and seven ministers resigned. Bowell was forced to resign after 16 months in power. He spent 20 years in the Senate. But when he died in 1917 at the age of 93, no person of power in Ottawa came to the funeral.

Our four enactors ably presented a sensitive, thoughtful and refreshing look at four people who have shaped and enabled our community in a myriad of ways.



Enactors Richard Hughes, Bill Kennedy, Debra Tosh and Gary Nicoll
Photo by Doug Knutson



FREE PUBLIC PRESENTATION

By Historical Figures

Voices from the Past

We invite you to hear from some of Hastings County's most famous deceased residents. Find out about their impact on our region and the wider world.

HENRY CORBY
ELLEN BILBROUGH
WILLIAM CANNIFF



Tuesday,
January 16, 2024
7:00 p.m.

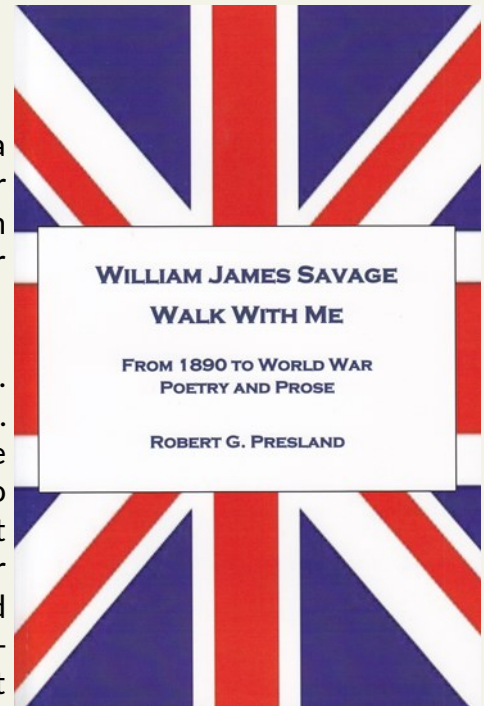
Maranatha Church Auditorium
100 College Street West, Belleville
Enter by main front doors

It's Reading Time Again

by Michelle Hutchison

What do I see as I peer out of my window? Could it be a snowflake ... or many snowflakes? If the thought brings fear and trepidation to your heart, why not seek a reprieve from the cold with a blanket and a book? A suggestion, new to our bookstore:

His writing was a chronicle of the times in which he lived. William James Savage was born in Norwich, England in 1879. Leaving school at the tender age of ten to earn a living, he mused about life and its vagaries. His writings could be said to be history as it was lived. Most often in poetic form, but occasionally in prose, Savage scribbled his record whenever and wherever he could. Sometimes with wonder and sometimes with derision, his notes provide a "boots-on-the-ground" view. Life could be tough and life could be cruel, but life also had moments of awe. All aspects, the good and the bad, are found here.



Fortunately, the family of William Savage recognized the historical value of these handwritten notes. The originals are preserved in the Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County. Long after Savage's death in 1964, great-grandson and author, Robert G. Presland, working from photocopies, deciphered the crabbed handwriting. His goal was to share this extraordinary treasure-trove with a modern audience. The result is *William James Savage, Walk with Me*, and it is sure to bring a smile to your face and, perhaps, a tear to your eye. Read and be prepared to experience history.

161 pages

\$15



On behalf of the Directors and Members of the Hastings County Historical Society, past-president Richard Hughes laid a wreath at the cenotaph Remembrance Day ceremonies in Belleville.

Belleville Pottery Company 1901–1939 Part 2

by Gary Nicoll

The Belleville Pottery Company was formed in 1901 when Charles Addison Hart purchased the shares of Hart Brothers and Lazier Pottery from his sister Alcena Lazier (nee Hart) and his brother Edwin E. Hart. For the first few years of its existence, many of the pottery pieces made by this new company had the logo Belleville Pottery Company Successor to Hart Brothers and Lazier imprinted on or stamped into the clay. Later, the imprints simply read Belleville Pottery Company or had a graphic of a heart with BPC imprinted within the heart. The Hart family had a very successful pottery in Oswego, Fulton County, New York, that passed from Samuel Hart to his two sons Charles A. Hart and Edwin E. Hart. In 1870 they were both listed in the New York State census as potters in Oswego. By 1875, only Charles was listed as a potter. Although both Charles and Edwin moved to Picton to work at the Lazier Pottery owned by their father and sister, only Charles stayed in Canada. Edwin returned to Oswego and worked in management at an ice and coal dealership the family owned. Although he was still a potter in 1880 in Oswego according to the New York census, Charles came to Belleville in 1879 to open and run the dealership there and later the pottery located on Mill Street through the later 1880s to 1901 when he became sole owner of the pottery. He and Edwin became owners of the Hart Pottery in Oswego as their father aged, and they owned and managed the company after his death. This firm produced many products that the Belleville Pottery Company sold through their Canadian dealerships.

The pottery continued to occupy the site at 107 Mill Street. The 1909 publication "Belleville and Her Industries" mentioned that from small beginnings in 1879 they now had a vast operation occupying an acre of land on Mill Street bounded by Brown Street and Charles Street. It had their moulding rooms, kilns and

storage rooms. The 1911 census lists four actual potters living on Mill Street and also Robert Hart, Charles Hart's nephew who was the bookkeeper for the pottery. There would be many assistants and shippers working to send their manufactured goods across Ontario.



Charles Hart lists his immigration date as 1879 and he became a citizen of Canada in 1889. After his naturalization he got involved with local politics and served as an alderman and then for many years as the Chairman of the Board of Health. His interest in the Board of Health tied in with his business interests. Many potteries produced items related to water waste and drinking water purification.

The Belleville Pottery Company supplied vitrified clay sewer pipes for municipal systems, red clay sewer pipes for homes, clay tiles for septic systems and imported Hart Pottery water purifiers for use in homes prior to the installation of the waterworks in cities and for farm and rural homes for many decades. This began in the 1880s and carried on until the closing of the pottery in 1939.

The photo from the 1913 Belleville Fall Fair on page 7 shows the Belleville Pottery wagon that was part of a large Fair parade through the city. You can see their sign: "Try Hart's Filters for Pure Water." These were imported from the Oswego Hart Pottery and their sign for Belleville Pottery as makers of stoneware and clay products. The butter churn, and small brown crocks lining the

side of the cart would have been made in Belleville. The gentleman driver is possibly Robert Hart, the bookkeeper/management at the pottery.

We found 1911 records in the City Directory of five potters that worked at Belleville Pottery Company on Mill Street: Henry or Hy Handley, Newlove Handley, Ernest Lettle, Joseph Clarke and Charles Hart, and the bookkeeper, Robert Hart. By 1913 only Henry Handley and Charles Hart are listed as potters, while Newlove Handley is a laborer possibly at the Pottery. There are reports from Henry Handley's children that the pottery stopped production in 1913-1914 and other reports from visiting Hart relatives from New York that the pottery was in operation in 1920. Both are likely to be accurate. In 1913-1914 the staff of potters was reduced as was production of stoneware. The company increased its importation of stoneware, yellowware, and Rockingham pottery from its plant in Oswego, New York. Redware production of drain tiles, sewer pipes and flower pots continued in Belleville. This was a major adjustment to the company and reflects the changing demand for their products. By 1920, Henry Handley was no longer listed as a potter.

Charles Hart was 52 years old when he became the sole proprietor of Belleville Pottery Company. He had about 30 years of experience in being a potter and some 22 years in running a pottery business. He continued to operate the business until he was

76 years old. It is apparent from the number of properties he owned in Belleville that he had been a successful businessman who reinvested his money in real estate.

His financial success was notable because he was in a business that was shrinking. With the growth of canning and bottling, the need for clay or stoneware drink and food containers was lessening from year to year. The need for "industrial" type or "building" products was growing as houses and buildings were connected to city or town sewers. His company had always been forward looking and had moved away from artisan type stoneware and yellowware products to products marked with merchant names. Many groceries, distilleries, and producers of industrial liquids used the wares from the pottery with their business name imprinted in the clay as a means of advertising before paper labels became common. The Hart potteries moved to producing water filtration products when there was a strong need and desire to ensure clean drinking water. They also always carried redware planting items, planters of all sizes. In 1924, the land and the buildings of "The Pottery" were advertised for sale, and J.B. Ives, a Belleville businessman, wound up purchasing the Belleville Pottery Company in 1925. He also purchased the land which was part of lot 15 from Ella Bogart.



In 1925 and 1926 ads appeared in the *Belleville Intelligencer* and *Daily Ontario*: Belleville Pottery Company, J. B. Ives proprietor successor to Charles A. Hart, selling stoneware, drain tile, flower pots and sewer pipes. Interestingly, Henry Handley, after five years of not being listed as a potter, is listed as such in 1926. He was probably hired by Blake Ives during the transition of ownership from Charles Hart to himself.

James Blake Ives continued to operate the Belleville Pottery Company from 1925 to 1939-40 when he retired. The company consistently won annual contracts with the City of Belleville to supply vitrified sewer pipes. The Archives has an invoice from Belleville Pottery to Corby Distilleries for sewer tiles dated 1939. Ives bought the company as he was familiar with its products, having owned a Building Supply Company based a few blocks away on Great St. James Street that sold both sewer tiles and pipes and lime through the years 1915 to 1925. He wanted the land that the pottery was located on for other reasons, and as mentioned earlier, he bought it in 1925 separately from the pottery business. The land was a source for spring water. J.B. Ives had built up a bottling business "Belleville Bottling Company" at the site of another freshwater spring and sold it in 1922 to Coca Cola. In 1928 he built a new modern factory on the eastern part of the pottery land and installed brand new bottling equipment. This new business opened as J.B. Ives Bottling. It was quite successful and when he retired, it was purchased by William Ott and later rebranded as Quinte Dry Beverages.

The stoneware, Rockingham ware, yellowware production at Belleville Pottery was reduced considerably in 1914. As long as Henry Handley continued as a potter, it would have carried on. When his employment ended, this production ended. But the easier, less skilled work on making redware drain tiles and sewer tiles carried on through the next two decades. This transition occurred in a number of pottery production centres including Hamilton/Dundas in Ontario and St. John's Quebec.



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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