



Outlook

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The rise and fall of shipbuilding in Prince Edward County

Four to five hundred years ago Prince Edward County was essentially unpopulated. The French explorers coming into the St. Lawrence River were stopped by huge rapids and only discovered Lake Ontario after going up the Ottawa River, across to Georgian Bay and back down via the Trent River to what is now the Bay of Quinte.

Since they hadn't found China and spices, they got into the fur trading business instead. All of their transport was by canoe. These became quite large but eventually were not enough. At this point, heavier, wooden boats called bateaux were developed. They had about five tons capacity. Eventually sailing vessels were built which were too large to portage so there had to be at least one on each lake or group of lakes not separated by rapids. In 1678, LaSalle built the *Griffon* on Lake Erie and it served the upper lakes.

Later, by act of Parliament, the Crown got a monopoly on all larger vessels. "Provincial Marine" was a government monopoly on Lake Ontario until October of 1812. With more immigration, emphasis on the fur trade declined. The arrival of the

Loyalists created more demand for goods and therefore more shipping capacity. Larger vessels were developed. In the late 18th century, the *Prince Edward* was built at Glenora. The increase of shipping was still slow until the War of 1812 in which the Americans sacked the library at York and the Canadians burned what would become the White House. In 1814, the warship HMS *St. Lawrence* was built at Kingston. It was 160 feet on deck; about the size of the *Victory* and was designed for 110 guns although it carried 104. Along with HMS *Psyche*, it was one of the last wooden warships built on the Great Lakes.

There were many other types of ships. First were the square rigged brigs. Then came the topsail schooners with much better windward capabilities because of their mostly fore and aft sails. These were 60 to 80 feet on deck and about 100 or more tons. Eventually paddle wheel, steam powered ships began replacing sail where schedules and reliability were more important than cost. At this time, the forests were being cut and the wood used for shipbuilding and export. Most of the wood, however, was probably burned in ships' boilers.

Ships were built all around Prince Edward County, starting in the Black Creek area after some dredging. Paul said his research indicates that many, probably most, of the schooners in the area were owned by farming families who used them to move their own grain and produce. These were lake vessels of about 6,000 bushels capacity. The area produced a very high quality of barley which was exported, mostly to the brewing industry.

Larger schooners, about 20,000 bushels, were also being built. One was the *John Tate* from about 1870. Three masts became common since more masts allowed smaller sails. Centreboards were also common. They made it possible to come close to

shore and also navigate the locks. Many small family schooners from the 1830s on were scow types which were ideal for the canals. Most of these ships were planked outside and inside. They rotted rather quickly and life expectancy was low. The schooner *Highland Beauty* was built at Oakville in 1876. It was owned in Prince Edward County. One of the most successful large schooners was the *W. R. Taylor* which was built in Milford. Belleville Harbour was dredged in 1874 and regularly thereafter.

From 1868 to 1900 sail tonnage declined and steam increased rapidly. The schooners were mostly gone by 1900 but some continued into the 1930s. In 1860, the screw propeller began replacing the paddle wheels. Paddle wheelers continued as social vessels for "outing." An example was the *Alexandria*, Picton's "Love Boat." Paul noted that there were no ships' engines built in this area.

Paul told the members that he has the original incorporation papers of the Ontario and Quebec Steamship Navigation Co., founded in 1874, which originated in the County and became part of the Canada Steamship Lines. Paul invited all members to visit the "Archives and Collections Society" at Gladstone Avenue in Picton.

Appreciation was expressed by Hazel Shaw. Hazel provided more information about Paul's famous yacht *Stormy Weather*. She also noted that he operates websites and provides information for sailors.

The Hastings County Historical Society's sympathy is extended to the family and friends of the late Lenna Mae Phillips, a long-time member of the Society, who passed away November 26, 2001.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, January 22,
2002

Guest Speaker
Jim Ross

Topic

50th Anniversary of the
Belleville Theatre Guild

Refreshments at 7:30 p.m.

Meeting begins at 8 p.m.

The Hastings County Historical Society, General Delivery, Cannifton, Ontario K0K 1K0



GLANMORE

National Historic Site

257 Bridge Street East,
Belleville, Ontario K8N 1P4

(613) 962-2329

Special Exhibit Passages to Freedom: Secrets of the Underground Railroad

Glanmore National Historic Site presents *Passages to Freedom: Secrets of the Underground Railroad* from February 22 to April 21, 2001.

This special travelling exhibit comes to Belleville from the Welland Historical Museum with funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Travel back to the 1800s to learn about slavery, the escape route called the Underground Railroad and the challenges freedom seekers faced if they finally reached the "Promised Land" of Canada. In the 1850s approximately 40,000 black refugees entered Canada from the United States, helped by such famous "conductors" as Harriet Tubman, who operated, for a time, from a base in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Passages to Freedom: Secrets

of the Underground Railroad features stories of capture and life as a slave, illustrations and reproductions of some of the more curious methods of escape (including the box used by Henry "Box" Brown to mail himself to freedom), success stories of former slaves who found both freedom and prosperity and stories of those who escaped slavery only to encounter discrimination.

A fascinating school program for designed especially for Grades 4 to 8 is also available for *Passages to Freedom: Secrets of the Underground Railroad*. Please call Melissa Wakeling, Education Coordinator for more information at (613) 962-2329.

Household Technology School Program

From January 15 to February 15 Glanmore will be offering a very special school program for students in Grades 2 to 4. Household Technology: Simple Machines from the Past will integrate both the Social Studies and Science and Technology curriculums. Students will tour Glanmore to see gears, pulleys and other simple machines at work. Hands-on exploration with Victorian household tools and equipment will enable students to understand how and why simple machines work! Don't miss out this school program is available for a limited time only. Call Melissa at (613) 962-2329 to book your class in!

Outlook is published 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 may contact the editor at 613-395-3022, or E-mail lewzan@reach.net

Thank you to *The Community Press* for its assistance.

PLEASE NOTE!

The Deadline for the February 2002 Issue is January 23, 2001

Education Volunteers Needed

Are you a retired teacher who misses seeing the kids?

Glanmore National Historic Site needs Education Volunteers to assist with the delivery of school programs. Glanmore receives visits from several thousand school children each year and we just can't do it without your help! Just a few hours per month is all that is needed to help bring a quality educational experience alive. Contact Glanmore for more information (613) 962-2329.

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