

Belleville's Newest Museum Opens

by Donna Fano, SJW Teacher (retired) and
Museum Director (volunteer)

A unique museum at the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf opened on May 10, 2023, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and invited guests. Sir James Whitney School, sporting 153 years of school history, is located at 350 Dundas St. W., Belleville. The plans for the museum began in 2018 for the school's 150th anniversary in 2020, but were postponed for two years due to COVID. Finally, the five-year project was completed a day before May 10 this year.

Previously the school had an archives in the Superintendent's house begun by David Bentley in the 1980s, and later it moved to the former Girls' Residence in 1995. In 1998, it moved to a larger room in the Vocational building where both the archives and museum were set up and remained until 2005 under the late Keith Dorschner and his wife, Christina. In 2010, the archives reopened in a new location in the Main School with fully equipped room and vault. However, there was no room for a museum.

In 2017, permission was given to use the alcove area in the dining room and two unused visiting team change rooms in the sports centre as space for a school museum. The change rooms had been used as storage for the school's artifacts and antique furniture. Fundraising began with bottle

drives to collect money for the museum project. In early 2018, museum plans were drawn up and the cost of materials listed. Initially, the sum of \$5000 was required, but no money was available from the school for this project. An application for a grant through the Belleville Community Arts & Culture Fund (BCACF) run by the City of Belleville was made in May 2019. The fund included heritage projects for which our school qualified. Much to our relief, approval was granted in August.



A view of the museum in the alcove of the dining room in the Main School
Photo by Donna Fano

Thanks to the government's policy over the years, no items or furniture were to be sold or given away. The school's possessions accumulated and were put in storage, thus preserving its artifacts and vintage furniture collection. They were sorted, researched, cleaned up and put out on

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display. From 2018 to 2023, my four volunteers, Danny Pigeau, '84, Jackie Flewell, '73, Jennifer Wainwright, '94, Deborah Snyder, '71, and I worked on setting up the exhibits. Jobs included construction, drilling, painting, cutting the craft foam boards and applying velcro strips for hanging. I researched and wrote all the information panels, after which they were edited by Laurel Bishop, who edits articles for *Outlook*. Clifton Carbin, '66, a remote volunteer, assisted with research work for the museum, and Steve Bradshaw, '70, scanned all *The Canadian* issues, school's newspaper from 1892 to 1991, to go online at archive.org/details/cabhc. I also had help from Construction Technology, Green Industries classes under teacher Norbert Irion and from volunteer students earning community hours for their diplomas who came at lunchtime to help.

The alcove museum features exhibits in Main School history, Gibson Hospital, dining room, uniforms, education, fire safety, RCAF Takeover, historical milestones, superintendents and their legacies, postcard collection, assistive devices from 1900 to the present and changes in communication methods.

The museum in the two gym change rooms features school's rich vocational history, Christmas Nativity displays from the pageants that ran from 1938 to 1991, a superintendent's office, religion, sports and residence history.



A view of some of the vocational exhibits in the conjoined gym museum rooms
Photo by Donna Fano

The informal opening of the gym rooms took place on the school's 152nd anniversary on October 20, 2022. We invited Nancy Saunders, director for Provincial and Demonstration Schools Branch, to come. All the students and staff had an opportunity to view the rooms and celebrate with a cake afterwards. The alcove museum was not complete, so visitors could not view it at that time.

From November 2022 to May 2023, we worked feverishly to complete the alcove museum in time for the formal opening on May 10, 2023. We invited classes and staff, former superintendents, the current director, sponsors, previous principals and community organizations. They gave speeches and thanked the volunteers for their work and a ribbon cutting took place. The visitors toured all the rooms and had lunch. All the classes visited the museum rooms in the next few days and some even returned three times to see it.



Ribbon-cutting ceremony with (left to right) Deborah Snyder, Danny Pigeau, Steve Bradshaw, Jennifer Wainwright, Jackie Flewell, Donna Fano

We are grateful for the donations from the following sponsors who helped us in the completion of the museum: Provincial and Demonstration Schools Branch (PDSB), Norm and Sue Clark (grandson of James Tate Jr and Muriel Allen who attended the school in the early 1900s), Belleville Association of the Deaf, Provincial and Demonstration Schools Branch (PDSB) Interpreters, OSD-SJW Alumni Association of Deaf and Student Lodging. Other donations came from people seeking genealogical information or just visiting the museum as we do not charge admission. We

continue to accept donations to pursue the heritage projects in the archives and museum.

Much credit is given to staff at Glanmore National Historic Site for their helpful advice in setting up a museum and assisting us in identifying many unknown artifacts. Their suggestions for mounting the information on panels and making mannequins to display the costumes were very helpful.

The museum is open by appointment to visitors on weekdays during the school year from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. We are also open on weekdays in the summer from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. To make an appointment, contact Donna Fano at osdsjwarchives@gmail.com at least two days in advance. SJW welcomes you to view the long, fascinating history of the school. Come visit us!



May Public Presentation

At the May Public Presentation at Maranatha historical researcher, Sheila Reesor, brought the story of Richard and Mary Aylward, pioneer farmers north of Bancroft, where a dispute between neighbours became deadly leading to charges of murder, a sometimes questionable trial and a tragic double hanging in Belleville in 1862.



Speaker Sheila Reesor

Photo by Doug Knutson, Windswept Productions

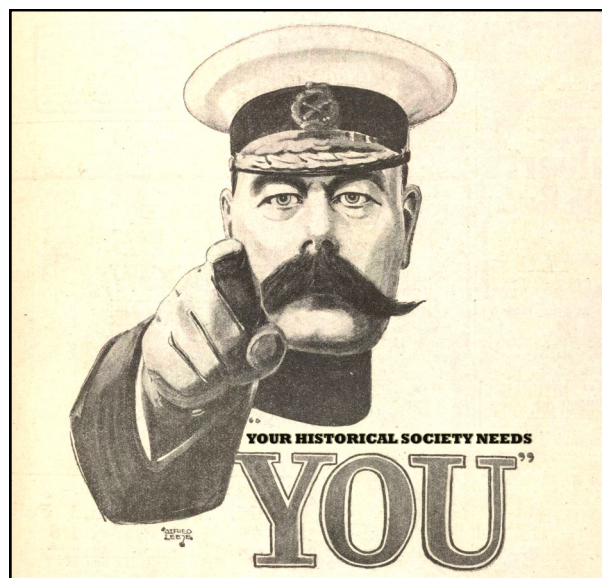
We want to hear from you!

The Hastings County Historical Society is conducting a membership survey. The survey form is being distributed with this edition of the *Outlook* newsletter and is also available to be filled in online at:

<https://tinyurl.com/May2023membershipsurvey>

Paper copies can be handed in at the Public Presentation event on June 20th, mailed to the Historical Society, or dropped off at the Community Archives on the second floor of the Belleville Public Library.

This short survey will help the Society's Board of Directors find out more about our members' interests and will inform our plans for future activities. Please let us know what you think!



Adaptation of poster by Alfred Leete (1882-1933) of Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, published on the cover of *London Opinion* magazine, 5 September 1914

The Distinctive Nature of Quinte West

Excerpted from Gerry Boyce's *Historic Hastings Volume Two*

This year Quinte West is celebrating 25 years of existence after the municipality was established in 1998. Here's how Gerry Boyce describes the birth of the city, in his book *Historic Hastings Volume Two*.

One of the difficulties the City of Quinte West has faced is establishing itself as a distinct entity. Some people still refer to it as Trenton, which is understandable since its large adjoining airbase is known as Canadian Forces Base Trenton (CFB Trenton). Earlier, some citizens of Sidney Township had suggested that the base should be called CFB Sidney as it was within that township's boundaries. And where is Quinte East? At one time there were discussions about amalgamating Belleville with surrounding township lands to form a Quinte East, but this has not come about.

For more than a decade Canada Post refused to acknowledge the existence of Quinte West. It continued to use the postal addresses within the former participant municipalities.

With the new city came a new crest, flag and badge. Quinte West Mayor Jack Arthur raised the official flag for the first time 25 years ago, on Canada Day 1998. The flag features ripples representing local waterways, the Trent River and the Bay of Quinte, and a crest representing the four municipalities coming together. Then, in 2000, an energetic committee arranged a Millennium History Week to focus on the unity of the new community. There were historical displays in the Batawa Community Centre and guided tours to 66 points of interest throughout the various wards.

The government of the new municipality made history in 2004 when it completed the new city

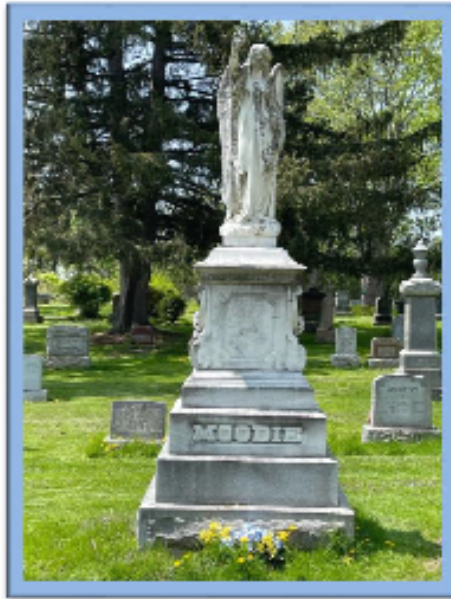
hall and library on a tranquil and scenic site overlooking the mouth of the Trent River. The new building replaced separate facilities that had become inadequate. The last major change in the former Trenton Memorial Library, then 19 years old, had occurred in 1973 when a new \$40,000 reference room opened. A newspaper account quoted head librarian Dorothy Davies as indicating that a new piece of equipment would prevent books from being defaced. It would also supply clients with inexpensive copies of pages from reference books. The new piece of equipment? A photocopier!

The Quinte West library system also expanded elsewhere. According to Ernst Kuglin, writing in *The Trentonian* on August 18, 2011, "Bookworms in Frankford can smile, but not until 2012 at the earliest." In August, city council approved the next stage of the process to refit the aging building. Council agreed to include funding in the 2012 capital budget for a "dramatic \$600,000-plus reconstruction." The library board could now prepare final design work and gear up for a fundraising campaign for interior fittings and furniture.

Historic Hastings Volume Two has been published on-line as part of the collection of the Community Archives of Belleville and the County of Hastings. It can be found at <https://www.cabhc.ca>.



**Quinte West City Hall and the
Trent Port Marina**
Photo courtesy of City of Quinte West



**BELLEVILLE CEMETERY CELEBRATES 150 YEARS
SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 11:00 AM**

JOIN US AT THE CEMETERY FOR:

- **GUIDED WALKING TOURS INCLUDING GRAVESITES OF 12 OF BELLEVILLE'S MORE NOTABLE CITIZENS**
- **REMARKS FROM LOCAL DIGNITARIES**
- **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

Enjoy a walk in the peaceful, bucolic setting of one of Belleville's most beautiful green spaces and get a history lesson as an added bonus.

The event will be held rain or shine.

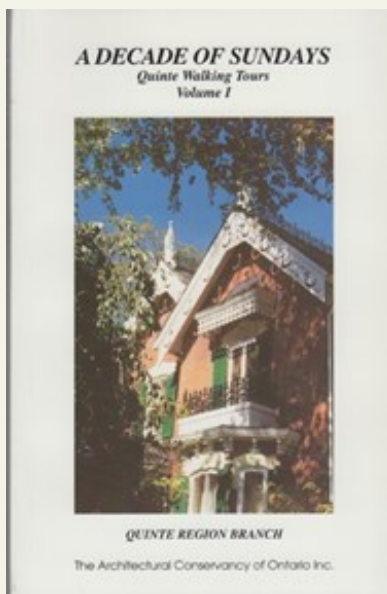
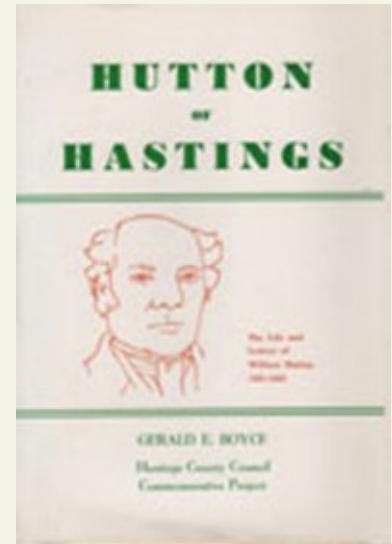
It's Reading Time Again

by Michelle Hutchison

Here we are, in the “merry month of June”! We’re enjoying early summer weather and spending more time in the great out-of-doors. May we suggest some reading for your leisure time?

William Hutton was a man of influence. He was also a prolific letter-writer. Beginning when he came to Upper Canada in 1834, his letters provide record to his opinion on many issues. His most frequent correspondence was with his mother, still in Ireland. Hutton’s letters give a brief look at topics ranging from the mundane to the tragic. He talks about the weather, agriculture, the upheaval in the politics of the day and everything in between. Gerald Boyce ably provides details surrounding events as related by Hutton. *Hutton of Hastings* offers a delightful peek into life in 19th century Hastings County and the fledgling country of Canada.

245 pages \$5



At a loose end? Got the itch to ramble? In for a road trip? ... and maybe a walk? Then, this is the book for you! Edited by Dan Atkinson, you will find many suggestions to help you while away your time and view some spectacular historic local architecture. You need only have *A Decade of Sundays* to travel the highways and byways of the Quinte area and visit the towns and villages that are so important to our past and our present. So, give into your yearnings, grab this book and start the tour!

213 pages \$5

Find both of these books, at bargain prices, in the Hastings County Historical Society bookstore at the Community Archives on the second floor of the Belleville Public Library. Pay a visit and see what else is on offer.



EST. 1957
HASTINGS COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

By film-maker and historian

SEAN SCALLY



Photo credit: Quinte Arts Council

**The Iron Masters of Upper
Canada (Film screening)**

The story of an impossible industrial dream, set in the wilds of a sparsely settled colony with hardy pioneers determined to extract the wealth of iron from the unforgiving rock of central Hastings County. Film-maker Sean Scally introduces his colourful documentary, made for Marmora's 200th anniversary.



**Tuesday,
June 20, 2023
7:30 p.m.**

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

A Pioneer's View of Belleville

by Richard Hughes

On July 1, 1878, the good citizens of Belleville were awakened at 3 a.m. by the booming of a cannon. As the day dawned, the streets came alive, people started to arrive from the country on horseback, in buggies, on lumber wagons and on foot. The crowd was in a jubilant mood as, on that day, massive celebrations were planned to mark the incorporation of Belleville as a city. The highlight of the day was a giant parade with bands and fireworks; leading politicians made optimistic speeches about the bright future of both the new city and the country. The keynote speaker was the Hon. Billa Flint and he chose to look back to what he found when he first arrived in the settlement in 1822.

He began, "My first trip to Belleville was in May, 1822, with a lot of lumber waggon to sell, time from Brockville two days and one night. I found a striking contrast between the two places, Belleville being a dirty dilapidated looking place sparsely settled, and after a rain storm mud half knee deep. . . . There was one small church, St. Thomas. I heard of no other. I think the Methodists worshipped in a large room at the time. I was here again in the Fall of 1822, not much improvement to be seen from Spring, there were two grist mills with rock stone, two saw mills with one upright saw each, one carding and fulling mill . . . several small stores and public house. . . . Very little paint was to be seen on the buildings at that time.

"In 1829, I came to Belleville and rented a place to commence business, there were sixteen stores when I came. There was no market at that time, no ditches or drains for carrying off the water from the streets, no improvements made to

either grist or sawmill one dilapidated school house sitting in a mud hole in rainy weather, fit more for a pigpen than a place to teach children in, one brick and two wooden churches, all small, one carding and fulling machine and several public houses and 700 inhabitants....

"In 1836 the Board of Police was elected comprising five members. . . . That year we built stone sidewalks on Front street to the wharves, as also as near as practicable to the various churches. The stone sidewalks have since given place to plank walks. . . . In 1837 the Rebellion broke out and the Town was soon filled with volunteers on duty, giving the Town a military appearance until spring. . . . In 1850, the Board of Police was changed to a Town Council, consisting of 12 members . . . population 2,840. . . In 1859 the Mayor was first elected by popular vote.

"Belleville has grown slowly but surely, and today bids fair to go on and prosper. . . . improvements in buildings and otherwise, our County Buildings, High School and Common Schools, numerous Churches, Factories, Mills, splendid Merchants' Shops and palatial private residences all speak for themselves while the increase in our steamers and sailing vessels have been large and our exports and imports show the volume of our trade. Forty-nine years ago the imports were principally of American salt fifty cents per barrel. Our exports were small, in fact none."

The Hon. Billa Flint concluded his address predicting a brilliant future for the City of Belleville.

Note: Billa Flint was a lumber baron, Member of the Legislative Assembly before Confederation, Senator after Confederation, Mayor of Belleville, Warden of Hastings County and community leader.

Source: This speech, with some editing to reduce the length while retaining the salient features, is drawn from "Historic Belleville" by Nick and Helma Mika, 1977.



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