



# Outlook

Volume 27 Number 5

[www.hastingshistory.ca](http://www.hastingshistory.ca)

Issue 361 May 2022

## Early Days in Belleville Part 1 of 2

by Richard Hughes



**Portrait of John J.B. Flint**  
Photo by Thompson of Belleville,  
circa 1900

community. He wrote this story for the *Daily Intelligencer* in December 1915:

“In the early days of Belleville, the only communication with Prince Edward County was by means of a horse boat. The boat had a tread mill, worked by two horses. Ten or twelve persons could be carried. There was a large island called Quilly Island midway between the two shores which at high

So many of us, when we reach a certain age, love to reminisce, to recall those days long ago when times were so different. That is what John J.B. Flint did when he was 77 years of age in 1915. Born in 1838, John J.B. Flint was the adopted son of lumber baron Billa Flint and was mayor of Belleville in 1872 and a community leader. He was in a position to recall Belleville in its very earliest days, when it was a settlement growing into a vibrant

water was submerged. One could, in the summer time, walk dry shod to Zwick's Island which was a great resort of school boys on Saturdays when we had a holiday and spent it bathing, fishing and playing games.

“East of Zwick's Island was Busby Island, entirely covered with hazel bushes. In the centre was a little pond of spring water. The hazel nuts grew in abundance. At the western extremity of Zwick's Island may be seen an excavation in which was found skeletons of Indians, flint arrow heads and other articles used by Indians.

“The horse boat was succeeded by a steamer run by Captain John Redner. This was followed by a boat run by A.L. Bogart, who was followed by Captain John Jellett. The bones of the “Mary Ethel,” the last ferry boat, may be seen at Anderson's Wharf near Rednersville.

“The City of Belleville paid a large sum towards the Bay Bridge, Ameliasburgh a lesser sum, individuals also contributed liberally. [The first Bay Bridge was completed in 1891 and was a toll bridge for 30 years. In 1920 it was purchased by the province, City of Belleville and Prince Edward County and became a provincial highway.] The bridge was mortgaged to Alexander Sutherland of Cannifton for some \$40,000. This gentleman offered the bridge for sale under the mortgage and purchase for his claim. Why such a valuable property should have been allowed to be taken in this way seems passing strange, when the small amount for which it was mortgaged could have been easily loaned from any loan company.

“Well do I remember seeing the bridge across the Moira at Bridge Street carried away by a flood. I was looking out of a window of the brick house north of

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the Brass Works. Vast quantities of ice had lodged above it and suddenly the whole structure was lifted from the piers and broke in two in the centre, and sailed majestically down the river. The flood inundated the flats. People had to be taken out of their houses in boats. Vast pieces of ice remained upon the flats up to the foot of Murney Hill all through the spring months. The blocks of ice had to be chopped so as to allow vehicles to pass through. The merchants on Front Street sustained heavy losses.”

Next month the second half of John Flint’s memories – his father’s sawmill and the lumber days in Belleville.



## Excitement on Front Street

by *Richard Hughes*

These days Front Street in Belleville is an interesting place to visit, with new shops and appealing cafes and restaurants to discover. But the street itself is fairly quiet with both pedestrian and automobile traffic moving along in a very orderly manner. That was not always the case. If you were on Front Street in March 1914, you would have witnessed wild

scenes of runaway horses and wagons.

Here is a report on one instance: “Yesterday afternoon a lively runaway occurred on Front Street which fortunately did not result in any person being injured. A team of horses, the property of Mr. James Bunnett of Thurlow Township, became frightened on Front Street and up they started at a rapid gait. In their wild career the animals collided with a horse and sleigh in front of Mr. H. E. Fairfield's store and did considerable damage to the vehicle and threw the horse to the ground. The runaway team then ran down into the yard in the rear of Hastings House where they were captured. At the time there were many vehicles upon the street and it is surprising that the accident occurred.”

A few days later we read, “On Sunday afternoon, Mr. Claude Belnap was driving down Front Street accompanied by a friend when his horse became unmanageable and ran away. The animal turned on McAnnany Street and in doing so upset the cutter throwing the occupants out, but fortunately they were not injured. The vehicle was damaged to some extent. At this place the animal was stopped.”

At that time, it appears speeding was also a problem. The newspaper reports, “Trotting On The Bridges.



A flooded Front Street in Belleville, 1918

Five drivers of vehicles were to have appeared in court this morning charged with driving rapidly over the bridges but all had already acknowledged the infraction of the bylaw and paid fines and costs amounting to \$2 each.”

While Front Street was a racetrack for runaway horses in the winter of 1914, some citizens were very busy at the harbour harvesting the ice for the coming summer. The newspaper reported, “Local ice harvesters have practically completed the annual cut for the season of 1914. Nearly all of the ice houses have been filled to capacity, and many private coolers are now being stocked. The Bay of Quinte this year produced a fine quality of ice nearly two feet in thickness, and as little snow fell after the cold weather, the cakes taken from the water were clear as crystal.” Another story reports, “A large quantity of ice is being shipped from here to Kingston for use by the Grand Trunk Railway.”

Some of us will remember when the iceman delivered the blocks of ice to our iceboxes. They were usually kept on the back porch as they dripped incessantly, and the pan intended to catch the melting ice often ran over. While the iceman was occupied with the delivery, we kids tried to grab a piece from the back of the truck as a cool treat. Nothing like sucking on a piece of Bay of Quinte ice. Another favourite activity was to go into the icehouses on a hot summer day as they were always pleasantly cool and the thick layers of sawdust so very damp. Such a shame today's kids can't experience these simple pleasures!



## Vignettes from the *Intelligencer* 1915

by *Richard Hughes*

What were the burghers of Belleville talking about over the dinner table in 1915? Maybe some of these items from the *Daily Intelligencer*?

“Ten Firemen, including three drivers [wanted] by the Corporation of the City of Belleville, rates of pay \$480 per year, payable semi-monthly, uniforms free.”

“Yesterday two men, who are neighbors of each other in Ameliasburg Township, visited the city together, driving a horse attached to a buggy. The horse belonged to one of the men, whilst the harness and

buggy was the property of the other man. During the afternoon a disagreement took place between the men, with the result that the man owning the horse, unhitched it from the buggy and led it home, a distance of about six miles. The second man was compelled to procure a horse to take him home.”

“A foreigner named Michael M. was this morning by Magistrate Masson fined \$2 without costs for obstructing the sidewalk. The accused is a candy and peanut vendor and was wheeling his car on the sidewalk, after being warned not to do so, hence the charge.”

“John M. who is a stranger in the city, last evening was in a place of entertainment here when he accosted three soldiers and solicited alms. He was not only refused but was escorted to the police station by the soldiers in company of another party who interfered. Mr. M. was locked up on a charge of vagrancy, whilst the party who interfered was allowed his liberty. This morning the magistrate allowed Mr. M. his freedom as he promised to leave the city and not return.” [This was frequently the ruling of the magistrate in cases of vagrancy.]



*The Daily Intelligencer, August, 1915, p. 2*

“In order that the premises of the Canning factory, in this city, situated on Church Street, may be prepared for the reception of troops for the Third Contingent, it is necessary that 25,000 cases of canned goods be shipped away. The shipping of same has been left in the hands of Mr. T. H. Coppin, the genial and efficient GTR station agent, who is doing all in his

power to have this large shipment taken away as rapidly as possible. The goods will be shipped westward under the supervision of Mr. Coppin, who is in every way capable of superintending same. It will require at least 25 cars to take the shipment away.” [At this time, early in the First World War, every aspect of local life was devoted to the war effort. The full story of life in Belleville during the war can be found in the recent book, *Belleville in the First World War*, written by Laurel Bishop and available at the Community Archives.]



## What Every New Housewife Needs

If you were a young bride in 1915, setting up your household, you would certainly have rushed out to take advantage of this advice in a newspaper advertisement from the *Daily Intelligencer* singing the praise of the latest model of washboard:

MRS. NEWLYWED says: “I find it so hard to economise, but I must do so for a while.”

MRS. WISENEIGHBOUR says: “Why not do your own washing? It isn't hard if an Eddy Washboard is part of your equipment. I have a 'Household Globe.' It is a wonder-worker – loosens the dirt so easily, and I never tear the clothes.

ECONOMISE! Do your washing at home with the aid of an Eddy 'Household Globe' washboard.



## Springtime and Hope Springs Eternal

With the arrival of April, the grass is starting to shed its winter brown for springtime green and the daffodils are pushing through the cold earth to bring us their joyful colour. And, very importantly, our public health people are indicating that the COVID-19 pandemic is receding, though far from being eradicated. Many places are now opening and resuming activity. We at the Historical Society can assure you, nobody is more anxious to bring our community projects down from the dusty shelf and present them to you! However, out of respect for you and in an abundance of caution, we will not be leading the march to full opening. If the current trends continue and the sixth wave of COVID-19 does not overcome us, here are some of the projects we see for the rest of 2022:

We are restarting the planning for the installation and unveiling ceremonies for three historical plaques in Quinte West. These will recognize the Gilmour Lumber Company and its role in the growth of Trenton; Bleecker's Ferry carrying pioneer settlers across the Trent River in the early 1800s; and the Central Bridge Boat Launch site where small ships made at Central Bridge were sent off to the Royal Navy in 1942.

In Belleville we plan to erect a historical plaque at Albert College to honour Mr. John Macoun, an amazing, self-taught botanist who collected about 100,000 specimens across Canada. We hope that these historical plaques can be unveiled at public events during the summer.

The Board of Directors is also discussing the relaunch of our very popular historical bus tours and, very importantly, our annual Celebration of Local History banquet.

Our Monthly Public Presentations at Maranatha, which have been so popular for years will also be restarted. Since these are indoor events, we are waiting until September, to be very sure that we can all gather and enjoy the evening with friends in full safety.

And as the weather warms and the outdoors beckons, we would recommend you take a look at the 25 videos in the series, *Road Trips in Hastings County*, which tell stories of the interesting villages and

historical sites in our County and invite you to make the short road trips to enjoy our own “backyard.” You will find these at YourTV Quinte YouTube. Click on “playlists” and then scroll down until you see the title “Road Trips in Hastings County.”

As we begin our 2022 projects, we would remind you

that we always welcome your comments and ideas and even criticisms. You can email us at [president@hastingshistory.ca](mailto:president@hastingshistory.ca)

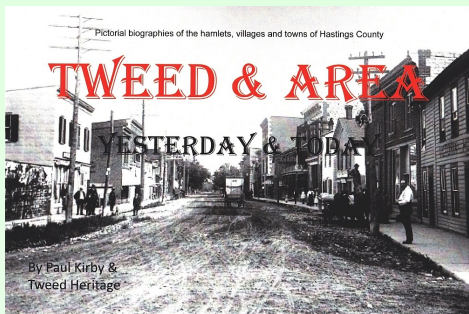
Richard Hughes, President



## It's Reading Time Again

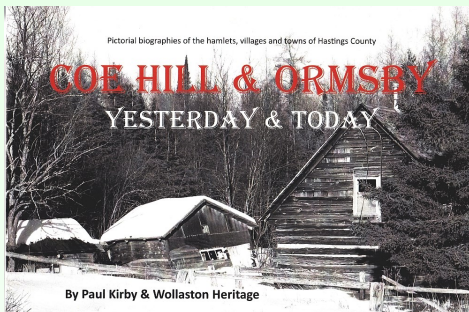
by Michelle Hutchison

The April showers have brought May flowers. As you take time from your busy life to relax for a while, may we suggest these fine books to help revive your spirit ...



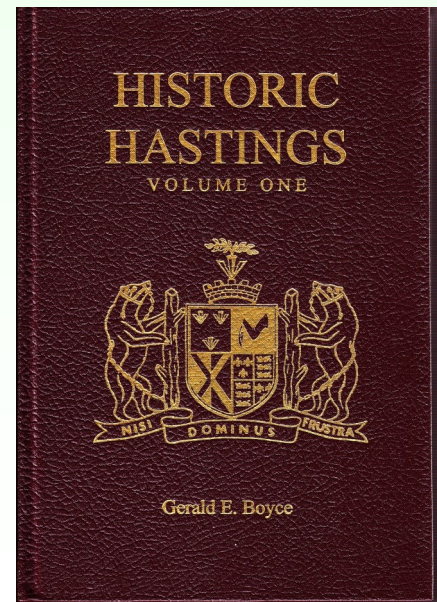
These days, “progress” seems to happen at breakneck speed. Sometimes, scenery changes so quickly that we barely recognize the place we once knew so well. Do you ever wonder what the area looked like one hundred years ago, or more? They say that a picture is worth a thousand words and Paul Kirby, along with Tweed and Wollaston Heritage have provided the story. Part of a series of “Pictorial biographies of the hamlets, villages and towns of Hastings County,” *Tweed and Area, Yesterday and Today* and *Coe Hill and Ormsby, Yesterday and Today* take us on a retrospective tour of these villages using photographs. Villages with a tale to tell. Yes, you really can “read the pictures” this time!

**114 pages \$20 each**



Hastings County has a rich and storied history. Lore about the settling of this County abounds. The trouble is, many of those tales were retained by the member municipalities, not easily available to the curious. How to have all of the information close at hand? Problem solved. Answering a call for historical information, villages, towns and townships provided the raw material. Fuelled by inspiration, author and historian Gerald E. Boyce put it all together, complete with a multitude of photographs. Suddenly, history is at our fingertips, ready to be enjoyed in our living rooms and dens. First published in 1967, in time for Centennial Celebrations, *Historic Hastings Volume One* was updated in 2013, providing even more extensive information about Hastings County including a comprehensive names index. A most important historical publication.

**375 pages \$65**



The Hastings County Historical Society bookstore has many fascinating books that tell of our history as a County. Some are in limited supply, so hurry in to find the book that you've always wanted to read!

## Stephen Leacock's Look at Seagram's Canada, Part 1

by Orland French

I got lucky at a yard sale recently. I came across a volume of a Stephen Leacock work, hanging out beneath a pile of hardbacks on a table in a church basement. I've always admired Leacock's humour and have never been able to draw myself away from his droll commentary on the leisurely life of about a hundred years ago. I could not resist this tome.



**Stephen Leacock**

[www.britannica.com/biography/Stephen-Leacock](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Stephen-Leacock)

Mariposa, his fictional home town best known to everyone else as Orillia, was near my home. It was the focus of his popular work *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. Perhaps the world's best-known humourist between 1915 and 1925, he was Canada's Mark Twain, and indeed won the Mark Twain Medal for Humour. He lived in a magnificent house on Old Brewery Bay at Orillia which has since become a museum. I never got to know him, of course, because he died on March 28, 1944, seven days after I was born in nearby Midland, Ontario.

His stories have become legendary. One of the best is *The Sinking of the Mariposa Belle*, a steam-paddler out on a holiday excursion when it began to sink. A black drama builds and builds until it seems everyone on board must surely die, until the *Mariposa Belle* settles to the bottom in a foot or two of water in the shallow lake and everyone wades ashore. Warm and

friendly too is the afternoon of conversation between two old pals out fishing in the sunshine. As daylight fades, they return home, neither catching a fish, and revealing that both of them knew all along there were no fish in the pond. Just great conversation.

Leacock's story of attempting to open his first bank account bears warnings for us today. This involved, as it did in those days, a real live face-to-face encounter with a stern bank teller behind an imposing brass wicket. He got so rattled by the process that he opened an account, deposited an amount of cash, withdrew the entire cash deposit, and closed down the account, all in one transaction. It would seem funny at the time, but I've had similar encounters with ATMs. Those confounded machines are apparently upgraded by their masters every few weeks to keep the technically challenged of us from gaining access to our money.

However, the book I discovered at the yard sale didn't promise a barrel of Leacockian belly laughs. It drew upon the serious side of him. Humour was actually a profitable sideline for Leacock, for he was trained as an economist, historian and political scientist, working from his professorial home at McGill University in Montreal. This book was sombrelly titled *Canada: The Foundations of Its Future*, bound in a classy grey-blue hardcover bearing the Canadian crest.

Leacock would not likely have attempted to write a history of Canada were it not for Samuel Bronfman, the wealthy founder of Distiller's Corporation, of which Seagram's is one of the most familiar trade names. In 1940, just as Canada entered the Second World War, Bronfman commissioned Leacock to write a history of Canada from the perspective of entrepreneurial settlement and industrial growth and development. It was a history book of a different type, not the serious ventures written later by historians such as J.M.S. Careless, Donald Creighton, A.R.M. Lower and W.L. Morton. A review by Carl Spadoni, the former director of the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collection at McMaster University Library, says, "The book should be read as a popular account of the nation's history, written with enthusiasm by a man who loved his country dearly and who saw its existence threatened by outside forces."

Indeed, here are a few prophetic words from Samuel Bronfman's introduction (perhaps penned by Leacock): "It is the vision of a free Canada, a united

Canada, a mighty Dominion. Today as we come to grips with the barbarian foe (i.e., Adolf Hitler), not only of the Empire, but of all mankind, we shall find in these pages of our history the signposts which shall serve us, not only during the struggle, but also after the inevitable victory.” Today we might substitute the name Vladimir Putin and take heart from the same message.

On the title page are printed the words, “Privately printed in Montreal, Canada MCMXLI.” Although Seagram's sponsored the project and eventually distributed about 165,000 copies (a phenomenal run for a Canadian book), there is nothing in the book about Seagram's role other than the introductory section by Samuel Bronfman and a sketch of the House of Seagram at the end. For years a story has circulated that the book was banned from schools in Ontario because it had been published by a liquor company. Not true, says Spadoni. More books were distributed in Ontario than in any other province, and the book was recommended as a textbook by the Ministry of Education. Spadoni's essay “The Book That Booze Bought” tells a much more complete story: (<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/bsc/article/download/17661/14595/0>).

According to Spadoni, Bronfman and Leacock met only once. Initially there were to be only two printings of the book, including a special deluxe luxurious red calf-covered volume for special friends. The book is printed in two colours, the second colour used for marginal notes. It is illustrated throughout by colourful paintings by Canadian artists, some of the pages being signed by the artists themselves. It was a Montreal production through and through. An endnote points out that “The printing and production of this important book by the Gazette Printing Company (Limited) was not inconsistent with the historic nature of its theme, the Gazette itself being founded by Montreal's first printer, Fleury Mesplet, in the year 1778.”

Anyone reading the book today should be aware that it is a product of its time. Leacock's observations about Indigenous people, women and ethnic populations would not pass a political sniff test today. Don't take offence, but learn from it. Also remember, it was written before the atomic bomb, atomic energy, jet aircraft, television, the Pill, satellites, internet, globalization, global warming and global hockey. Our world has moved along. In Leacock's day, the British Empire was still the Empire and Russia was on our side.

You can still find copies of *Canada* on web sites through sellers of used books for anything from \$10

to \$500, depending on quality. I paid three bucks at the yard sale but mine was scribbled on.

There. I've run out of space. Next month, I'll take a look at some of Leacock's observations in the book itself.



## A Makin' Bacon Story

by Alexander McNaught

This story is drawn from the book, *Memories of a Farm Boy* by Alexander McNaught, a collection of over 30 short stories drawn from his childhood memories in the Wallbridge area.

The life of a boy raised on a farm 60 years ago was not always blessed with rosy sunrises, the sweet smell of clover and fresh cut hay, the sounds of songbirds and brilliant sunsets. It had seasonal patterns with a variety of work experiences, some pleasant and some not so pleasant.

One necessary but not altogether pleasant event occurred each fall once the temperatures began to drop. At that time of year my father would start making preparations for our meat needs for the winter. It was a time on most farms when some of the livestock was butchered for home use and some for sale. While the chickens would survive until needed, several pigs and young cattle would be sold at the livestock auction barns at Belleville and Hoards Station for needed cash, and a few would be butchered on the farm and the meat not needed for ourselves would be sold from our stand at the Belleville Market Square.

Today, we don't think about how bacon came to be on the shelf at the grocery stores. The process is considered gross and unthinkable for our modern sensitivities. For the past half century or so, the butchering of farm animals for meat products has been rigorously regulated by government standards and only licensed abattoirs are permitted to prepare meat for sale to the public.

However, over sixty years ago, farmers were the source for pork and beef and chicken. The butchering process at our farm would begin with clearing one end of the drive-shed in which we stored the farm equipment such as the hay mower and binder and then setting up a large sturdy table. Ropes and pulleys were attached to overhead rafters, and a large barrel for hot water placed at one end of the table. Outside, a fire pit would be set up with a large metal barrel to heat water to a boil.

Once the pig was dispatched the carcass would be hoisted by a pulley system and dipped in the barrel of hot water at the end of the table to soften the bristles which would be scraped from the hide. Evisceration would be done to remove the innards and the cavity washed. The carcass would then be cut into halves and quarters and wrapped in cheese cloth and hung to cool. Yes, it sounds gruesome but it was the way of life at that time and an accepted practice.

The produce for our home use would be cut into hams, roasts, chops, spare ribs and bacon, and the less desirable cuts ground up and made into sausages. Each cut would be wrapped in butcher paper and labelled. Until we owned a deep freezer, we rented a locker from a cold storage plant in Belleville. It was always a treat to go to the cold storage plant to get the meat since the owner would give us kids a wiener to eat from his showcase.

The butchering by farmers for personal use and for sale was stopped in the mid-1950s by the provincial government for understandable health reasons. These regulations required the farmer to take his livestock to a licensed abattoir for butchering and processing. Live animals were also sold at an auction barn or sold directly to a licensed meat wholesaler. Today we are content to know that the food sold in our grocery stores is well controlled and safely prepared and not a threat to our health. During my childhood I never heard of anyone getting ill from eating meat carefully processed on the farm. Thus ends my story of makin' bacon in years gone by. Enjoy your bacon crisp!



## Help Wanted

It takes many hands to put together this monthly *Outlook* newsletter and get it into your hands – often seven or eight people. To keep the process moving smoothly, we now need two more sets of hands to help with the final mailing tasks. We are looking for two persons who would volunteer to fold about 50 *Outlook* newsletters, place them in prepared envelopes and put them in a mailbox. The newsletters and the envelopes can be delivered to your home and the job takes about half an hour. There are nine issues each year, none in July, August and December.

If you would be interested in being a part of the team, please let me know – email [president@hastingshistory.ca](mailto:president@hastingshistory.ca) or phone 613-961-7772.

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