



The Historical Society of St. Catharines

P.O. Box 25017, 221 Glendale Avenue, Pen Centre,
St. Catharines, Ontario L2T 4C4

Our mission and goal: to increase the knowledge and appreciation of the history of St. Catharines and area. The Society was founded in 1927.
Our Society is affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society.

Our website is: <http://stcatharineshistory.wordpress.com>

June/September 2015 (Double Issue) Newsletter

Lecture Program – September 24, 2015 through November 26, 2015

Program Subject to Change

Thursday, September 24, 2015:

Presentation by **David Webb** - retired staff member of Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake. David will give a talk entitled "Every Picture Tells a Story," a World War One family photo study. Audience members are invited to bring in family photographs relating to World War One. David will analyze the photos, trying to draw out more information about the wartime experiences of those family members.

Thursday, October 22, 2015:

Presentation by **David Willer**, a Director (and also the Newsletter Editor) of the Historical Society of St. Catharines. David will give a talk entitled "St. Catharines Standard's Coverage of the Great War". It will focus on the coverage of World War One in the *St. Catharines Standard* during some important events in each year from 1914 to 1918, with a focus on the declaration of war in 1914, the battle of Second Ypres in 1915, the Battle of the Somme in 1916, the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917 and the Armistice in 1918.

Thursday, November 26, 2015:

Presentation by **Corlene Taylor** of the Mayholme Foundation. Corlene will talk about the experiences of her mother, who served as a nurse on the front lines in Europe during World War One. She will accompany her talk by showing drawings done by her mother during her wartime service. Copies of a book that Corlene has written about her mother's experiences will be available for purchase after the presentation.

SOCIETY NEWS

The Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

Society Notes

Membership Dues Reminder ... Your Society membership will need to be renewed on September 1, 2015. Our membership form for the 2015-2016 is enclosed on the last page of this newsletter. If you wish to receive a membership card, notify John Calvert at: jcalvert57@hotmail.com. We are also now sending the Newsletter to members by e-mail, so we ask that you provide your e-mail address on the membership form.

NEWSLETTER NOTES

The Historical Society of St. Catharines Newsletter is published up to four times per year. The purpose is to inform the membership of issues pertaining to the Society and items of historical interest. Comments and queries should be directed to the Society's postal address. Opinions and comments expressed in the Newsletter are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society. Subscription to the Newsletter is by paid membership only. This issue is edited by Dave Willer.

Minutes of the Last Annual General Meeting held in the Burgoyne Room of the St. Catharines Museum April 23rd, 2015

President John Burtniak opened the meeting shortly after 7:30 p.m. and welcomed those present (approximately 90). There were many newcomers, and there was a quorum of members.

Announcements were made of future meetings.

Kathleen Powell of the Museum made a brief presentation showing the model of the St. Catharines Airport, made by Fred Pattison in the 1930s for his sons and now part of the Museum's collection.

President's Report: John Burtniak thanked the Board for work done this year and commented on the programmes held. He also thanked the Museum for their assistance and presentations at our meetings.

The Minutes from the April 2014 AGM were published in the June 2014 newsletter. The minutes were accepted as printed with no corrections noted.

There were no Constitutional Amendments.

In the absence of the treasurer, Chris Loat, auditor Tom Whitelaw presented the Financial Report for 2014 showing a Total Operating Income of \$2,724.37. Total Operating Expenses were \$1,709.33, and the Total Assets were \$13,822.59. The report reflected that our operating expenses were down in 2014 mostly because of newsletter costs being reduced (many newsletters now being emailed to members, resulting in less postage, printing and paper costs.) Auditors Tom Whitelaw and Carol Gaspari attached a statement that they had reviewed the Financial Report, the Cash Flow Report and related transaction register,

expense claims and bank statements for the year 2014, and were of the opinion that the Financial Report of 2014 fairly represents the financial position of the Historical Society as of December 31, 2014. Full reports are on file with the Minutes. It was moved by Tom Whitelaw that the reports be accepted. Accepted.

Past President Elizabeth Finnie was called upon to make the Nominating Committee's report and to conduct the Election of Officers. There were no new nominees to the Executive, which consists of:

President: John Burtiak
Vice-President: Brian Narhi
Treasurer: Chris Loat
Secretary: Elizabeth Finnie
Past President: Elizabeth Finnie

The Executive positions are for a two-year period, however President John Burtiak has agreed to keep his position again for one year, as no one else had come forward to stand as President. Elizabeth Finnie then announced that director Ross Tucker has retired from the Board. His contributions will be missed at meetings. She then read the list of directors who will be staying on:

Dennis Gannon (programmes and publicity)
Dave Willer (newsletter editor)
John Calvert (memberships)
Mike Conley
Joe O'Brien

Nancy Cameron has agreed to join the board as a Director. This means we now have our quota of six directors. Elizabeth called for further nominations for this one-year term, but hearing none, it was moved by Alex Ormston and seconded by Craig Tallman that the slate of Executive and Directors be elected. Carried.

There was a brief report from our Membership Director, John Calvert, who announced that the membership currently stands at 172. He encouraged newcomers to join and those who have not renewed yet, to do so. Our membership year is from September 1 to August 31.

There was no formal report from our newsletter editor, Dave Willer, but the President thanked him for producing a fine set of newsletters.

Our speaker for the evening was Paul Pattison, introduced by Elizabeth Finnie. Paul is the youngest son of Fred Pattison, who wrote a 600- page memoir of his life in the early days of the automobile business in St. Catharines and who was one of the pioneers of the St. Catharines Airport, the Flying Club and the Elementary Flying Training School. Paul shared many interesting photos and stories of those times. This presentation was greatly enjoyed by our audience. Paul was thanked by Dave Willer.

After a few more announcements the meeting was adjourned just after 9:00 p.m., to be followed by the book draw and refreshments provided as usual by Bill and Lorraine Steinman.

Reports of From May and June Meetings

May 28, 2015

At least 90 members and guests (and seven past presidents, according to Bill Stevens) turned out for this general meeting, held at the St. Catharines Museum. Our speakers were Carla Mackie, Historical Services Coordinator for the City of St. Catharines, and Alan Veale, former Director of Planning at the Niagara Region and volunteer at the Morningstar Mill. Their presentation was a unique look at Morningstar Mill's water supply and the history of Beaver Dams Creek, featuring many before- and- after maps and photographs of the area. There was much interest in this topic and we hear that our speakers have been asked to repeat their presentation at least twice since.

June 25, 2015

Our last meeting before the summer break was a combined Merritt Day/ general meeting, held at Rodman Hall. Over seventy members and guests arrived early to take advantage of tours of the house and galleries provided by staff and students of Rodman Hall. By all accounts these tours were well worthwhile. Curator Stuart Reid then welcomed the Society. We in turn presented him with a donation cheque of \$500 indicating our support of Rodman Hall as a local historic institution.

The speaker for the evening was Elizabeth Finnie, secretary and past president of HSSC. In keeping with Merritt Day her topic was "The Other Merritts". Elizabeth chose to present short illustrated biographies of the three sons of William Hamilton Merritt and three of his grandchildren. Dennis Gannon provided many of the photographs and maps.

St. Catharines in 1876

By John Burtniak

The September 2014 issue of our Newsletter contained a description of St. Catharines as appeared in Page's Atlas of 1876. The publisher also prepared additional information about the new City of St. Catharines inspired no doubt by the City's incorporation that year (1876). We will be publishing this material in its entirety over the course of three Newsletters. In the December Newsletter, we published the first installment. The second installment was published in the March 2015 newsletter. The following is the third and final installment.

CITY OF ST. CATHARINES

Supplementary History to what has Already been Written

Financially the City is in a highly favorable condition, considering the magnitude of its improvements, completed and in progress. The Municipal Loan Fund Debt mainly incurred for the Welland Railway has been reduced to \$160,000, and it is expected that better terms still may be obtained, as there is a wide-

spread feeling that in proportion to the reductions made to other places similarly situated, the debt should not have exceeded \$100,000. The Assets are City Hall and grounds \$63,000, Cemetery \$15,000, Land \$5,000, Fire Department \$27,726, Public Schools \$49,750, Stocks in Gas Co., & c. 57,878, Collectors Roll \$37,000, in all \$225,354.00. The Liabilities are M.L. Debt and interest \$172,28.66, Debentures mainly in England \$139,473.33, and other small items amounting in all to \$330,785.90. The assessed value of St. Catharines in 1872 was \$2,589,650, or but little over half our personal assessment. The indebtedness in 1861, was \$55 per head or 7 1/3 per cent, and in 1875, the debt was only \$6 80 per head or two per cent. The population in 1861, was 6,284, in 1871, 7,864.00, in 1875, 11,075, in 1876, 12,870. In 1862, the excess of liabilities was \$347,442.25, in 1875 it was \$75,431.90.

The assessed value of Real Property, is as follows: - St. Thomas' Ward, \$997,530; St. Andrews, \$788,700; St. George's, \$663,950; St. James, \$259,175; Total, \$3,613,455. Personal Property in all the Wards, \$630,900. Income \$165,000. Total Assessment Roll \$4,409,355. This is nearly a half a million dollars in advance of last year, and double that of three years.

From whatever point of view the City is approached the spectator holds a scene of grandeur and beauty, fully sustaining its reputation to the title of Saratoga of Canada, the handsomest City in the Dominion. From the Great Western Depot, as the traveler alights, he can gain but an imperfect idea of the size and importance of the City; for as the eye passes over the dwellings scattered over Hainer's Hill it is carried to the opposite bank of the Canal, and the busy scene in the deep ravine, formerly the valley of the Twelve, in which runs the Welland Canal with its masts of stately ships, the topmasts of which are just visible, is hid from view. There is the great shipyard and docks of that veteran shipbuilder, Louis Shickluna, whence many a staunch craft has issued to brave the blasts on the great lakes. There is the Wheelworks, the most extensive in the Dominion, the brewery at Taylor & Bate, and further down at Lock 2, the celebrated Welland Vale Edge Tool Works, giving employment to over a hundred men. Looking the up the canal one finds Norris' Merchant Mills Wharf and Warehouses; then comes the White Mill, followed in rapid succession by Mills' Pump Factory, Beckett & King's Grist Mills and McCordick's Tannery. Higher up the bank are Oille's foundry, celebrated for its marine engines and machinery, and Smith splendid new Saw Factory, a solid stone structure. Still further up the canal comes the great Phoenix Mill, the Gas Works, Allen's Planing Mills, Simpson's Shipyard, Gillespie & McLean's, and Phelps & Co., Saw Mills and lumber yards, Collinson's & Burtch mowing knife factory, King & Dolson cotton mills, the great Lybster Cotton Mills, Alderman Haight woolen mills, and Riorden's St. Catharines Paper Mills, the most extensive in the Dominion. Near Oille's foundry are the Dolphin Paint Works, the only place in Canada where they manufacture their own fine colors. This establishment has such a reputation that they have difficulty in keeping up to the demand. Near the Dolphin Works are the buildings of the St. Catharines Warehousing Co. who have an ingenious method of elevating goods by tramway.

Passing up the canal above St. Paul St. Swing Bridge, the route is circuitous, and the scene is a busy one at every turn, manufactures of various sorts present themselves, and the hum of the steam engine, is mingled with the constant din of hammers, the whirr of spindles, and the sound of falling waters. Across the canal to one standing at the G.W.R. Depot, a number of elegant structures appear towering above the City: first the three leading hotels, to the North the stately form of Springbank, with its Norman tower for its celebrated Turkish Baths, with other forms of using our celebrated Mineral Waters, under Dr. Theophilus Mack have been famous throughout America. Next appear the lordly Stephenson House another fashionable place of summer resort for health and pleasure, and further on a slightly raising ground towers the Welland House, still farther south appears the domes of the Masonic Temple, and Odd Fellows' Hall. Immediately opposite each other are the picturesque mansions of Messrs. J.P. and T.R. Merritt, sons of the late W.H. Merritt, who did more to build up St. Catharines than any other man, and whose connection with the Welland Canal alone is sufficient to immortalize his name, as a benefactor of his country.

Besides a number of very fine residences and stores, which we have not space to enumerate, are the Convent, the Central School and the Collegiate Institute. When the new Canal is open, a variety of new industries will spring up, the old manufactories will be enlarged, and an immense impetus will be given to ship building of larger tonnage. While the canal, the largest public work of the Dominion, costing nearly fifteen million dollars, is in progress, the spending of so vast a sum of money in the vicinity is making the city prosperous, and on its completion the rise and extension of manufacturing and shipbuilding will cause that prosperity to be permanent and increasing. By means of the canal the traveler can go or come by steamer in any direction, and the Great Western Railway is a leading thoroughfare either east or west. The Welland Railway running north and south parallel to the canal, from lake to lake, connects with the main line of the G.W.R., Canada Southern Air Line of G.W.R., and Grand Trunk. Situated as the city is on the great highway of the world's commerce at a sufficient distance from other competing points, it cannot fail to receive great benefit from the commercial marine traffic; and being the chief city of the Niagara Peninsula, which already approaches a population of one hundred thousand, it will absorb the local traffic and continue the wholesale mart of the district. The fertility of the soil in this peninsula, the Garden of Canada, with the growing of grain and the rearing of cattle, the production of fruits of all sorts, for which this city, with its teeming thousands and its multitude of tourists in pursuit of health and pleasure, affords a ready market. The salubrity of the climate, the beauty of the scenery, the enterprise and hospitality of its inhabitants, and the central situation of St. Catharines will continue to make it one of the leading cities of Canada last month among the cities of the Dominion, it is a young giant, which bids fair to outstrip its older rivals.

In Memoriam: Dr. Roberta Styran

(July 2015)

By Elizabeth Finnie

The history and university communities were saddened to hear of the passing of Dr. Roberta Styran in July, 2015.

Roberta, or 'Bobbie', started out in Fredericton N. B., intending to pursue a career in scientific research. She then changed direction, coming to Ontario where she earned her B.A. and M.A. from McMaster University in 1962 and 1964, and a Ph.D. in Medieval Studies from the University of Toronto in 1971. She taught Medieval History at Brock University from 1967 to 1978. During that time she began her long collaboration with fellow Brock history professor Dr. Rob Taylor. As young professors she and Rob became interested in providing visual images for their students. Both being concerned with the architectural, or "built history" aspects of their respective subjects, they turned to the study of the Welland Canal and other historic canals. Over the years they co-authored many books including The Great Swivel Link (Champlain Society, 2001), This Great National Object (McGill – Queens University Press, 2012), The Welland Canals Corridor Then and Now (Looking Back Press, 2004), and Mr. Merritt's Ditch (Boston Mills, 1992).

She helped found the Welland Canals Preservation Association and was a director of the American Canal Society. She was also on the governing council of Inland Waterways International, organizing the Canal Society's tour of English canal sites in 1996.

In 2004 as president of the Canadian Canal Society Roberta Styran chaired the World Canals Conference in St. Catharines. She was the recipient of many grants, scholarships and awards, including

the 2009 W. Gordon Plewes Award for her contributions to the study of the history of civil engineering in Canada.

As she wished, Roberta will be remembered as “an accessible and effective teacher” and for “contributing to public awareness of the importance of the Welland Canals in the history of Canada.”

In Memoriam - Sheila Wilson, 1921 – 2015: an appreciation

By Elizabeth Finnic

With sadness members of the library community, the historical community and the Royal Niagara Military Institute learned of the passing of Sheila Wilson on August 25, 2015.

Sheila Moraig Chapman was born in January 1921 in Dumfermline, Scotland. She moved to Toronto in 1926 with her parents, then back to Scotland in 1932 to live with her grandparents. She joined the Women's Royal Naval Service (the “Wrens”) in May of 1940. After training in Scotland she was stationed in Liverpool and Grimsby, England, then on to Algiers and Naples. She served as a Lieutenant-Commander with the Wrens until September 1946.

After the war she came to Port Dalhousie to rejoin her mother, and began studying nursing at McMaster University. She then completed a library degree at the University of Toronto and began working as a librarian at Hamilton Public Library. In 1952 she met and married Mackay (Mac) Wilson and moved with him to Niagara Falls, NY, Cleveland, the Philippines, Williamsburg VA, and Chicago.

In 1959 they returned to St. Catharines and Sheila began her long career as a librarian at the St. Catharines Public Library. She was instrumental in building up the Reference department in the old Carnegie library and then the Special Collections department in the new library from the time it opened in 1977 until her retirement in 1985.

Meanwhile Sheila was involved with the Historical Society of St. Catharines, serving as president from 1983 to 1985 and from 1988 to 1989. She also served as president of the Canadian Canal Society from 1992 to 1993.

Sheila was the author of two books: *St. Catharines: Canada's canal city* (with John N. Jackson), published in 1992, and *Taking the Waters: a history of the spas of St. Catharines*, published in 1999.

After her retirement she was able to continue her world travels and always retained her interest in local history as well as world affairs. Sheila was indomitable. She will be missed.

The Historical Society of St. Catharines

Membership Renewal

For membership year **September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2016**

Membership Dues: **Individual \$10.00; Family \$15.00**

Make cheques payable to: The Historical Society of St. Catharines

Mail to: The Historical Society of St. Catharines
P.O. Box 25017, 221 Glendale Avenue, Pen Centre
St. Catharines, Ontario, L2T 4C4

Your membership information will not be shared with any other group or business.

Note: As this is a general mailing, if you have already renewed your membership, please disregard this notice.

For your record: Renewed on: _____, 2015 - Cheque in the amount of: \$ _____

Remove the form below and return with your remittance

The Historical Society of St. Catharines

Membership Renewal

For membership year **September 1, 2015 thorough August 31, 2016**

I wish to renew my/our membership: **Individual:** _____ - **Family:** _____

Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

postal code/zip code: _____

My/Our telephone number: _____

I/we would like to receive Society meeting reminders and notices by e-mail: _____

I/we would like to receive Society Newsletter by print: _____

My/Our e-mail < _____ >

Comment: _____