



## **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>**

### ***December 2014 Newsletter***

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#### **Lecture Program – January 22, 2015 through June 25, 2015**

*Program Subject to Change*

##### **Thursday, January 22, 2015**

Presentation by David Hemmings – **Topic: Prisoners of War during the War of 1812**

David Hemmings will talk about the American handling of British/Canadian prisoners of war during the War of 1812. The prisoners were held in a series of camps scattered throughout the north-eastern United States, the treatment of the POWs differed greatly depending on whether the prisoner was an officer or an enlisted man, and something known as a "parole" was an important element in the whole prisoner of war process. David Hemmings will explain it all at our January 22nd meeting!

##### **Thursday, February 26, 2015**

Presentation by David Webb – **Topic: The Farmerettes during World War One**

Former Parks Canada employee, and World War One expert, David Webb will talk about the institution of the Farmerettes during World War One -- a way of utilizing women to take up the slack in agricultural work at a time when tens of thousands of peacetime agricultural workers were called away into the military. The Farmerettes proved to be so successful that they were utilized again during World War Two. Come to our February 26th meeting and hear the details.

##### **Thursday, March 26, 2015**

Presentation by Brian Narhi – **Topic: To be announced**

Brian Narhi, co-chairman of the St. Catharines Heritage Committee and local history researcher par excellence, will be speaking once again on a topic to be announced shortly.

##### **Thursday, April 23, 2015:**

Presentation by Paul Pattison – **Topic: The St. Catharines Flying Club, the Niagara District Airport, and the Elementary Flying Training School during World War II**

Paul Pattison will talk about the experiences of his father, Fred Pattison, in the early days of aviation in this city.

**Thursday, May 28, 2015:**

Presentation by Carla Mackie – **Topic: Morningstar Mill and the Miller’s House at Decew Falls**

**Thursday, June 25, 2015, 6:30pm for house tour, 7:30pm for illustrated talk:**

Presentation by Elizabeth Finnie – **Topic: “The Other Merritts” -- the distinguished descendants of William Hamilton Merritt** (in a meeting to be held at Rodman Hall).

**SOCIETY NEWS**

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

**Society Notes**

**Membership Dues Reminder** ... Your Society membership needed to be renewed on September 1, 2014. Our membership form for the 2014-2015 is enclosed on the last page of this newsletter. If you wish to receive a membership card, notify John Calvert at: [jcalvert57@hotmail.com](mailto: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.

***Submission Deadline for the March 2015 Newsletter is February 15, 2015.***

**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). This takes up two full long pages, and as promised last issue, it will be reprinted (slightly edited) in two more upcoming newsletters, as space permits in our Newsletter.

CITY OF ST. CATHARINES  
Supplementary History to what has Already been Written

In addition to what has been written upon St. Catharines, it has been thought proper to give a more extended notice, and to bring down the history to the latest moment before publication. The history was written nearly a year ago and since that time events of momentous importance to St. Catharines have transpired. The chief of these are the extension of the city limits, incorporation as a City, and consequent separation from the County, and the inauguration of a system of Waterworks. The closing months of 1875 will always be memorable as the period that marks the transition of the town into the dignity and importance of a city. The extension of the limits increased the size of the town already 1,800 acres by 1,100 acres, and is directed to all points of the compass, but chiefly towards the North and East. This change was authorized by special proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor, on the unanimous request of the Town Council, and necessitated the erection of a new ward to the North-east of the town, christened St. James Ward in honor of the mayor, Mr. James Douglas. This ward is nearly all new with the exception of part of St. Patrick's ward, formerly lying to the North of the Welland Railway. The six wards of the city, commencing at the West-end, are St. Thomas, St. Andrews, St. George's, St. Paul's all lying in a direct line towards the East. North of Welland Avenue lie the whole of St. Patrick's and the larger portion of St. James' Wards. In order to obtain incorporation as a city a special Act was applied for, after a special census of the town, which resulted in showing a population of ten thousand in the old limits, and about one thousand in the annexed territory; although by a census taken a year afterwards by Assessors Dolson and Sullivan, the population was found to be 12,870, which places this city but twelve below the old city of Kingston. The population by wards on May 1, 1876, the day when the town was formally created, is as follows:

St. Thomas'	.....2,403
St. Andrews'	.....1,810
St. George's	.....2,530
St. Paul's	.....2,816
St. Patrick's	.....2,169
St. James'	.....1,142

On the first day of May, 1876, the day of civic incorporation, a holiday was proclaimed, and the day was spent in festivity and rejoicing. On the same day the first nominations for the municipal elections took place, and on Monday following the election came off with the following result, which is published as embalming the names of those who held the first civic honors:

- Mayor, -- Calvin Brown, who portrait is in this Atlas as an ex-warden of the County.
- Aldermen for St. Thomas' Ward, -- T.C. Dawson, John R. Monro, and Dr. E. Goodman.
- St. Andrews Ward, -- J.B. McIntyre, Dr. L.S. Oille, and Henry Carlisle.
- St. George's Ward, -- Joseph Grobb, John W. Kiug, and Timothy Healey.
- St. Paul's Ward, -- Nelson Haight, C.C. Nelson, and D.W. Corbin.
- St. Patrick's Ward, -- P. McCarthy, John Riley and Wm. Hallett.
- St. James' Ward, -- Dr. T.J. Jones, J.E. Cuff and John H. Howse.

The arbitrator on behalf of the County of Lincoln to arrange the terms of separation is Abishai Morse, Esq., and Richard Miller, Esq. Q.C., the Nestor of St. Catharines Bar, on behalf of the city.

The other officials are John Rollison, City Clerk, W.A. Mittleberger, City of Treasurer. Board of Police Commissioners, the Mayor, C. Brown; the County Judge, John M. Lawder, Esq.; and the Police

Magistrate, Thomas Burns, Esq. Chief of Police, John Cumming, with P. O'Keefe as 1<sup>st</sup> sergeant, and a force of ten men.

The question of separation from the County, extension of the limits, and incorporation as a city, were chiefly engineered by Mr. Calvin Brown, ably assisted by Mr. Henry Carlisle, one of our merchant princes.

To the energy of Dr. L.S. Oille is universally conceded the successful issue of the movement for Waterworks, which took place in the last half of 1875. The Water Commissioners are:

St. Thomas Ward,	-	Dr. Mack
St. Andrew's Ward,	-	Dr. Oille
St. George's Ward,	-	Capt. P. Larkin
St. Paul's Ward,	-	H.H. Collier
St. Patrick's Ward,	-	S.D. Woodruff
St. James' Ward,	-	D.W. Beadle

The Water Commissioners' office is in the Broadway Block, corner of St. Paul and Academy streets, and the Chairman of the Board is H.H. Collier, Esq., ex-Mayor of the town. The Water Works are well under way, the contract for the iron pipes being given to a local firm, Yale & Co., who are in consequence greatly enlarging their works; Messrs. Ferguson, Mitchell & Co, have obtained the contract for erecting the reservoir. The reservoir is to be on the Beaver Dam Creek above Decew Falls, about four miles distant. The Water Works will speedily be followed by a system of sewerage, rendering this city one of the most salubrious in the Dominion.

In consequence of the passage of an Act at the last session of the Legislature, to regulate the sale of intoxicating liquors, the office of County Inspector was created and conferred upon Mr. James S. Wiley. Three License Commissioners were also appointed, viz : Dr. Comfort, H.H. Collier and B. King.

At this time of writing there is going on the enormous and extensive work of enlarging the Welland Canal down its course from Port Colborne to Thorold on the brow of the mountain ridge running parallel to Lakes Erie and Ontario, and forming the watershed of these two immense inland seas. The descent from Thorold by the old canal is effected by 28 locks of 10 feet each, showing a total descent of about 300 feet at the level of Lake Ontario. At Thorold the new canal diverges to the east of the former line, passing Homer, and shortening the route to Port Dalhousie by about a mile, debouches at the same place. Besides this saving in distance there will be fewer locks owing to the fall at each lock being greater. The new locks are being made to accommodate vessels of much greater tonnage than formerly, and provisions will be made for 14 feet of water on the mitre sills of the locks, in case that 12 feet is too little. The dimensions of the locks are 240 feet long, 45 feet wide, with at least 12 feet of water on the mitre sill. The new canal is expected to be finished in 1878, and will be used for the larger vessels, while smaller craft will find their way down the old canal. At each lock of the old canal is a noble water privilege, which is still further utilized by means of races, giving rise to a great deal of manufacturing, and which will in time make this city the Manchester of the Dominion.

The present Superintendent of the Canal is E.V. Bodwell, Esq., ex.-M.P.P. for South Oxford, S.D. Woodruff, Esq., being for many year superintendent, following by W.F. Biggar, Esq.

The present member of the Commons for the County is James Norris, Esq., an ex-Mayor of the town, and proprietor of extensive mills, propellers, steam barges, schooners, etc. The member for the Local

Legislature is J.C. Rykert, Esq. Barrister, for many years Reeve of the town, and member for the County in the old Parliament of Canada, and in the Local Legislature. The Senator for the District is the Hon. James Benson.

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**Welland Canal Facts  
By Des Corran**

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the MV Steelton first brushing the Homer bridge, and then smashing the Port Robinson bridge into the canal.

A current list of ships which claim St. Catharines as its home port:

C.S.L. Assiniboine, Niagara, Laurentian, and the Rt. Hon Paul J Martin.

Algoma: Canada, Equinox, Harvester, Guardian, Nova, Sar, Spirit, Peter R Creswell and Tim S Dool.

**The King's Speech: An Account of a (Very Brief) Royal Visit to St. Catharines**  
**By Dave Willer**

There is always excitement generated when a world famous figure makes a visit to Canada. It creates a sense of importance and relevance for Canadians to see and hear a respected international leader actually step on Canadian soil and speak highly of our country, our people and our values. Visits from legendary historical figures such as Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela or Pope John Paul II come to mind. In the early twentieth century, the announcement of a visit from the Duke of York, the first-in-line to the British Crown, and his wife the Duchess of York, created a similar buzz around Canada, including the City of St. Catharines.

The year 1901 was an important year in Canada's relationship with the British Crown. This was the year that Queen Victoria died after ruling for nearly 64 years. The Queen's death and the ascension to the throne by her son, King Edward VII, had a profound effect on Canadians and it dominated news coverage in the days and weeks to follow.

Canadians were also engaged in their first overseas conflict fighting alongside the British in the Boer War. The British had been fighting against the Boers (a term used to denote Afrikaans speaking persons) in Southern Africa for the last two years in order to preserve and annex land in what is mostly now the country of South Africa. By the war's end in 1902, roughly 7,400 Canadian soldiers served in South Africa, of whom 89 were killed in action.

There seemed to be a real patriotic fervour in Canada. And in 1901, patriotism in English speaking Canada was often synonymous with support of, and reverence for, the British Empire and Crown. Therefore, when it was announced that the Duke and Duchess of York would be visiting Canada in the summer and fall of 1901, primarily to recognize Canada's contribution to the ongoing Boer War, one cannot help but imagine the excitement that this would generate. Canada was at that time a young Dominion with a fragile and uncertain sense of identity that is characteristic of a small nation (at least in terms of population) that is part of a larger Empire. There must have been the thought that having a visit from someone as important as the Duke of York would make Canada and Canadians feel more important and relevant within the Empire, and even the world.

So who exactly were the Duke and Duchess of York? Today, the Duke of York is remembered more by his later titles: the Prince of Wales, and then, in his most famous title, King George V (in this article, he will be referred to as the Duke of York, one of his official titles for his 1901 visit to Canada). He was actually the second son of Edward VII and so he never expected to become King. This changed when the eldest son of Edward VII, Albert Victor<sup>1</sup>, died after a short illness in 1892. Suddenly, the Duke of York, aged 25, was propelled into the role of being the successor to the throne after his aging grandmother, Queen Victoria, and his father. The Duchess of York, meanwhile, is better remembered as Queen Mary. She was born into the royal family of Wurttemberg, a Kingdom which would join the nascent German Empire a few years after her birth. Curiously, she was engaged to marry Albert Victor at the time of his death and she married his brother, the Duke of York, a little over a year later in 1893. By most accounts, they had a happy marriage.

Now, in 1901, the Duke of York was going to visit the Dominion of Canada. When the itinerary for the Duke and Duchesses's visit was prepared, it was decided that they would be visiting several provinces. Within the Province of Ontario, the Duke's train was scheduled to make some stops in the Niagara Peninsula, and more particularly, Grimsby, Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake. To residents of St. Catharines, something appeared to be missing here; namely, why was the train not stopping in St. Catharines? One can imagine the initial excitement caused by the Duke's visit degenerating into disappointment once it became known that the Duke would be visiting and stopping over in other areas of the Niagara Peninsula, but not in St. Catharines. What could possibly be done about this?

This is where the *St. Catharines Standard* emerges in the narrative. The following is an excerpt from front page of the *St. Catharines Standard* dated October 12, 1901:

It is a remarkable fact that no effort has been made in this City by the proper authorities to secure a stop of the royal train on the tour to Niagara Falls. The train passes through the City twice and even though no time can be found for a formal visit and reception here, there is the feeling that if it is possible the duke would be pleased to stop for a few moments in order that the citizens who assemble there may see his face at least.

With the knowledge that smaller places than St. Catharines are to be honored [sic] in such a way, the manager of the *Standard* this morning took the initiative and in conference with several business men it was the unanimous feeling that an effort should be made and a petition was hurried.

If a royal visit to a city demonstrated its importance, then the above passage shows that this slight is seen as damaging to the reputation of St. Catharines. The *Standard* believes certain local politicians and business leaders were negligent in not securing a royal visit, and now the *Standard*, portraying itself as the white knight out to save the day, has stepped in to correct this mistake.

The first petition spearheaded by the *Standard* was not successful. Those in charge of the Duke of York's scheduling said there was simply no time for a stopover in St. Catharines. However, the *Standard* remained vigilant and a follow-up request later that day simply stated: "*People greatly disappointed. Cannot exception be made in favour of St. Catharines? W.B. Burgoyne, Editor Daily Standard*". This time, for reasons not stated, the reply said: "*Their Royal Highnesses have been graciously pleased to direct that the Royal train shall stop for two minutes tomorrow.*"

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<sup>1</sup> An entire book could be devoted to the quirky and strange behaviour of Albert Victor. He was even rumoured for a time to have been the notorious serial killer, Jack the Ripper; though we know now, for a variety of reasons beyond the scope of this article, that this is highly unlikely.

While a two minute visit might not seem like such a victory, the *Standard*, in what can best be described as self-serving tribute to its civic virtue, wrote the following:

St. Catharines is not side-tracked. The duke will be seen by his people today...The people of this fair city had counted on being unable to get even a glimpse of the royal party outfit until the move was made by the Standard on Saturday morning, when the way seemed open to having the city put on the same footing as others which have been fortunate in being favored with a visit.

The actual visit by the Duke of York in St. Catharines appeared to have been quite a success, albeit a brief one. According to a history of the royal tour in Canada written by Joseph Pope<sup>2</sup> in 1903, when the royal train arrived in St. Catharines, a total of 8,000 people were there to get a glimpse of royalty and listen to a brief speech from the Duke of York. A group of local politicians (the mayor, Member of Parliament, etc.) was there to officially greet the Duke and Duchess, and the great-grand-daughter of William Hamilton Merritt presented them with a bouquet of flowers before they stepped back on the train to visit Hamilton. The stopover in St. Catharines is described in just four sentences in Joseph Pope's history of the royal tour.

The royal tour of 1901 provides some subtle insights into the identity of St. Catharines at that time. While we can assume that the writers in the *Standard*, and the people of St. Catharines, were probably genuinely interested in seeing the Duke and Duchess of York, one gets the sense that the real outrage here was that the City was not being taken seriously when it was left off the itinerary. A visit by the Duke and Duchess of York was inextricably linked with the City's reputation and status, and it was embarrassing that rival and smaller municipalities in the Niagara Peninsula were granted the privilege of a royal visit, but not St. Catharines. The last minute scrambling by the *Standard* to secure a stopover, who was assisted by many local politicians and business leaders, seems like a giant self-esteem building exercise for the City. Additionally, it shows how politicians and journalists can cynically use celebrities and patriotism to enhance their own status and popularity – something which is just as common today as it was in 1901.



The Duke of York as George V

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Pope. The Tour of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York through the Dominion of Canada in the year 1901, King's Printer, 1903.