

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 2013 Newsletter

Lecture Program – June 27, 2013 through January 23, 2014

Program Subject to Change

Thursday, June 27, 2013 – Lecture by Brian Narhi on “The Burgoyne and Glenridge Bridges”. At the St. Catharines Museum. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Brief Society meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. with lecture to follow. We will also celebrate William Hamilton Merritt’s Birthday with cake and refreshments.

Thursday, September 26, 2013 – Lecture by Paul Chapman on “The Electric Street Rail System in St. Catharines”. At the St. Catharines Museum. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Brief Society meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. with lecture to follow. Refreshments after lecture.

Thursday, October 24, 2013 – Lecture by John Hewitt on “The Garden City Arena” – the arena opened 75 years ago this December 2013. John will tell us about the background, the opening and some of the events that have taken place there. At the St. Catharines Museum. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Brief Society meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. with lecture to follow. Refreshments after lecture.

Thursday, November 28, 2013 – Show and Tell and Christmas Social. Members will bring their artifacts, old photos and collectibles and spend up to 5 minutes telling us about them. At the St. Catharines Museum. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Brief Society meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. with lecture to follow. Refreshments after lecture.

Christmas Break

Thursday, January 23, 2014 – Lecture by Richard Green to recognize Two Hundred Years of the Masonic Lodge in St. Catharines. One of the oldest lodges in Ontario, the lodge will be two hundred years old in 2014. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. with tour of the Lodge to precede the lecture. The Lodge is located on Court Street at the corner of Centre Street.

SOCIETY NEWS

Society Member Turns 100!

Members of our Society extend our best wishes to Esther Summers on the occasion of her 100th Birthday on June 3, 2013. Esther has been a long time member of our Society. She has been a devoted lifetime historian and has been the Official Historian for the City of Thorold for many years. Esther now resides at Linhaven Home on Ontario Street, just up the road from The Mayholme Family History Research Centre, where her vast collection of genealogical material has been deposited.

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

Society Notes

Condolences ... The Society extends condolences to member Ann Nakagawa on the passing of her husband and Society member Harry this past March.

Lost trails ... We are seeking the new address for Joyce MacRae. Please contact a member of the board if you can assist in locating Joyce.

Membership Dues Reminder ... Your Society membership comes due on September 1, 2013. So, we remind you to send in your dues! If you wish to receive a membership card, contact Joe O'Brien at <jobrienhdsboard@gmail.com>. We will also start sending the newsletter to members by e-mail, so we ask that you provide your e-mail address on the membership form.

Friendly Reminder Regarding Scent Policy ... In order to make our meetings a safe and welcoming environment for everyone who attend, we ask that you refrain from wearing strong fragrances or other scented products which may interfere with the well being of others.

Annual General Meeting held in the Burgoyne Room of the St. Catharines Museum

April 25th 2013

President Elizabeth Finnie opened the meeting at 7:35 pm and welcomed those present (approximately 82).

Minutes from the April 2012 AGM were published in the September 2012 newsletter. It was moved by Bill Stevens and seconded by John Calvert that they be accepted. Carried

A Financial Report 2012 was presented by Tom Whitelaw (Treasurer was absent) showing Total Operating Income of \$3,079.81, Total Operating Expenses of \$2,453.76 and Total Assets of \$11,204.85. (Full report on file with Minutes)

Tom Whitelaw and Carol Gaspari prepared an 'Auditor's Report' and their 'Observations on the Financial Report 2012' (on file with Minutes).

After questions it was moved by Tom Whitelaw and seconded by Mary Ann Hull that the report be accepted. Carried.

There were no Constitutional amendments.

Membership stands at 192.

The President gave her report listing the various events and activities of the Society during the past year. She also noted that a donation was made to the library and a grant was received from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. She thanked the board members for their support with a special thank you to outgoing Director Bill Stevens for all his years of service and to the Steinmans for taking care of refreshments at every meeting.

In the absence of John Burtniak the election process was directed by Bill Stevens. He announced that there was a quorum (20% of the membership).

The slate for the Executive (as announced in the last newsletter) is for a 2 year term and was as follows:

President: John Burtniak
Vice President: Brian Narhi
Past President: Elizabeth Finnie
Secretary: Brenda Zadoroznij
Treasurer: Chris Loat

After calling for nominations from the floor and hearing none, it was moved by James Black and seconded by Craig Tallman that the slate, as presented, be closed. Carried

The slate for Directors (with some changes from the list published in the last newsletter) is for a 1 year term and was as follows:

John Calvert
Joe O'Brien
Ross Tucker
Dave Willer
Dennis Gannon
Mike Conley

After calling for nominations from the floor and hearing none, it was moved by Ross Tucker and seconded by Alex Ormston that the slate, as presented, be closed. Carried

It was then moved by James Black and seconded by Maurice Gomme that the nominated slates be elected to the Board of the Historical Society. Carried

Bill Stevens thanked outgoing President Elizabeth Finnie for all her work on behalf of the Society over the past two years.

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.

Submission Deadline for September 2013 Newsletter is August 31, 2013

The Fergie Jenkins Foundation and Museum

The Fergie Jenkins Museum is located at 67 Commerce Place, Suite 3 in west St. Catharines. The Fergie Jenkins Foundation was founded in 1997 and in 2011 it received an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant to help establish The Fergie Jenkins Museum. This museum showcases the life and career of Ferguson Arthur Jenkins Junior, focusing on his Major League Baseball contributions and his humanitarian efforts. The museum features memorabilia of friends and teammates of Fergie's, throughout his sports career and his personal life. The two-floor museum exhibits a signed Mickey Mantle baseball, cards of many baseball legends, as well as a Canadian Baseball League exhibit, a custom-designed Cy Young exhibition, Fergie Jenkins Hall of Fame Induction Memorabilia, trophies Fergie earned during his career, baseball bat and ball collections, newspaper clippings and much more. The museum also features an exhibit on the contributions of other Black Canadians. You can find out more about this brand new museum which opens to the public in June by visiting the web site: www.fergiejenkins.ca.

Korean War Honour Roll

Affixed to the front façade of the St. Catharines City Hall on Church Street is a plaque which reads:

Honour Roll / Erected to the Glory of God / and in Affectionate Memory of / the Men of St. Catharines / Who Made the Supreme Sacrifice / Korea / 1950 – 1953 / EHLER, Albert cpl. / GILL, John cpl. / GAGNIER, Joseph pte. / LEACH, Roger pte. / SHEA, James pfc. / ROACH, Lloyd pte. / Their Name Liveth for Evermore

Who were these Six Soldiers from our City who lost their lives as a result of the Korean War?

Corporal Albert R. EHLER

Corporal Albert R. EHLER – Service # SF.45561 – Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. (R.C.A.S.C.)-son of Walter Henry and Annie Lavinia (née George) EHLER – Died 27 February 1952 – Buried in Christ Church Anglican Cemetery in Queensport, Guysborough County, Nova Scotia, where his parents and several other EHLERs are buried. He was survived by his parents, then living in St. Catharines, and three

sisters and a brother. His sister Mildred Opal Eliza EHLER first married John Peter VOTH and then Bartley SLATER. Opal died on Sunday, November 24, 2002 at the Miramichi Regional Hospital and her obituary provides the following information on the family at that time: she is survived by two sisters Vera (VOROSHUK) of St. Catharines and Melba (MURPHY) of Dartmouth, NS; and one brother, Frank EHLER of Queensport, NS.

Corporal John Francis GILL

Corporal John Francis GILL – Service # SB.158933 – member of the First Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment – Enlisted on January 4, 1948 in London, Ontario - died while on patrol duty on New Year's Day, January 1, 1953 at the age of 26 years. He is buried in the UN Memorial Cemetery located in Tanggok, a suburb of Busan, South Korea – grave location 30-10-9, grave 1377 (his cemetery plaque indicates that he was a Lance Corporal). He had been in Korea for about a year. John was born on December 19, 1926 in Hamilton, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Victor and Gladys GILL of 38 Dufferin Street, Merritton and husband of Jean Elizabeth Capes GILL of Brockville and father of one son Wayne Douglas GILL. He also had three brothers: Richard, Sidney and Ronald. Born in Hamilton in 1926, the family came to Merritton when he was 10 years old. He was an employee of the Provincial Paper Company before joining the Canadian Army in January of 1945, serving as a Rifleman with Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment and C.I.C. January 10th 1945 to February 22, 1946, remaining in the military service until his death. A photo of Cpl. John GILL can be found on the front page of *The St. Catharines Standard* issue of Saturday, January 3, 1953.

Commemorated on the Merritton Cenotaph and on Page 26 of the *Korean War Book of Remembrance*.

Private Joseph Leonard Raymond GAGNIER

Private Joseph Leonard Raymond GAGNIER – Service # SB7286 – member of the Royal Canadian Regiment, Second Division - Enlisted on January 10, 1951 in Toronto - died September 30, 1953 at the age of 23 years at the St. Catharines General Hospital. After a 11:00 a.m. Solemn High Mass of Requiem in St. Catherine of Alexandria Church on October 3, 1953, he was buried in Section A, Division N.C.2, Veteran's Plot, Grave 5, 17 in Victoria Lawn Cemetery, St. Catharines. He was survived by his widow Patricia Ann (née Brunt) Donaghue GAGNIER, his parents Leonard and May GAGNIER of St. Catharines, and three sisters Gloria, Donelia and Alma all in St. Catharines, and a brother Roland in Genoa, New York. Joseph was born on September 12, 1930 in Alexandria, Ontario. He was an employee in the stock room of McKinnon Industries. During the Korean War he was seriously wounded in action of June 22, 1951, he was invalided home in early 1953. He was a member of St. Catherine of Alexandria Church, Royal Canadian Legion and the United Autoworkers Local 199. Commemorated on Page 25 of the *Korean War Book of Remembrance*.

Private Roger Conway LEACH

Private Roger Conway LEACH – Service # SB.41474 - member of 'C' Company, 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry - killed in action in South Korea on December 9, 1952 at the age of 30 years – son of Letia LEACH of 48 Chaplin Street, St. Catharines and the late Frank LEACH – survived by one sister Mrs. Robert SMITH of Toronto. He had enlisted on April 16, 1941 at the Niagara Barracks. Born September 12, 1923 in St. Catharines - he had attended Memorial School and was a graduate of St. Catharines Collegiate – had worked for the Public Utilities Commission – previously served as an infantryman in World War Two in Canada, the United Kingdom and North West Europe. His death was placed on the front page of *The St. Catharines Standard* of December 10, 1952 – Buried in the UN Memorial Cemetery located in Tanggok, a suburb of Busan, South Korea – grave location plot 21, row 10, grave 1372 (his cemetery plaque indicates that he was a Lance Corporal). Commemorated on Page 39 of the *Korean War Book of Remembrance*.

Private First Class James W. SHEA

Private First Class James SHEA – Service # RA12351815 (US Army- service #19260000) – served in the United States Military – 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division during the Korean War and killed in action in North Korea on November 18, 1950 at the age of 24, just shy of his 25th birthday. He enlisted in Erie County, New York. He was a veteran of World War Two, having served with the United States Navy. Born December 6, 1926, the son of Mr. and Mrs. James SHEA, who in 1950 were living at 10 Cosby Avenue, St. Catharines. He was awarded the Purple Heart and Cluster. Interment took place in Arlington National Cemetery (Section 34, Grave 309) on April 28, 1955. He had been previously seriously wounded on August 12, 1950 and returned to duty on August 23, 1950. He was seriously wounded a second time on September 15, 1950 and returned to duty on October 2, 1950. After serving in World War Two, he worked for Anthes Imperial Company in St. Catharines and was working there when he enlisted in the U.S. Army and serve in Korea. An announcement of his death along with a photograph of him appears on page 15 of *The St. Catharines Standard* issue of Monday, December 11, 1950.

The following is from a news story on page 10 of *The Niagara Falls (New York) Gazette* issue of Saturday, September 9, 1950: Koreans Wound St. Kitts Man - Pfc. James W. SHEA Jr., 24 has been slightly wounded in action with the U.S. Army in Korea according to word received by his parents Mr. & Mrs. James SHEA, 10 Cosby Avenue. He himself described the action in a letter he wrote home Aug. 17, "I wasn't going to tell you that I got a bullet in my right arm Aug. 12, but it's going to be alright in a couple of weeks. It didn't hurt the bone at all. We were sent out – three squads, there's 27 men – with one tank and two weapons carriers to destroy three enemy machine guns on a road block. Instead of only three guns there were two regiments of Communist soldiers on each side. As we started through it was like the end of the world. A couple of guys and myself were the only ones to get through with just slight wounds."

Private Lloyd Stanley ROACH

Private Lloyd Stanley ROACH – Service # SB.13831 - member of the Royal Canadian Regiment – died May 3, 1953 in South Korea at the age of 24 years – buried in the UN Memorial Cemetery located in Tanggok, a suburb of Busan, South Korea – grave location 37-2-10, grave 3190. He enlisted on July 28, 1952 in Toronto. Lloyd was born on June 7, 1928 in Pictou, Nova Scotia, the son of George Hocken and Sadie ROACH. He was survived by brothers Victor and Harold and sisters Margaret, Lorraine and Hazel. A brief story appeared on front page of *The St. Catharines Standard* issue of May 6, 1953 declaring "St. Catharines Soldier Missing" and stating that he was the son of Mrs. George ROACH of 6 George Street, Pictou, Nova Scotia. There is a digital collection relating to Lloyd, which includes a portrait of him, on the Canadian Virtual War Memorial web site.

Commemorated on *Page 63* of the *Korean War Book of Remembrance*.

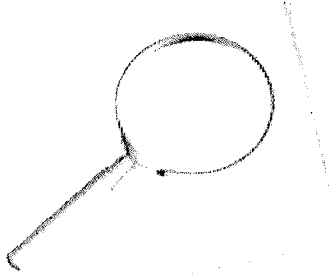
Researched and submitted by: William J. Stevens

Alun Hughes

We are greatly saddened to announce that Alun Hughes, Society Member and respected local historian, passed away in early May. An account of his life and achievements will appear in the September newsletter.

Following Howard Engel's Footsteps, by Elizabeth Finnie

The other day, while poking around the Library, I was happy to come upon a Howard Engel book that I had not yet read. That gave me an idea, and an excuse to bring home and re-read a small armful of old 'Benny Cooperman' mysteries. Howard Engel is a piece of our local history, a St. Catharines native who writes endearingly in both fiction and non-fiction of his early life in our town.



Howard Engel was born in Toronto in 1931 to parents Jack and Florence 'Lollie' Engel. In 1930 Jack purchased Edwards Women's Wear, at 200 St. Paul St., St. Catharines, and made a comfortable enough living to keep its doors open for the next thirty years. During the Depression Jack, Lollie, young Howard and his younger brother David lived in a modest brick bungalow, 40 Monck St., backing on the CNR tracks.

Howard has many happy memories of growing up in Western Hill and attending Edith Cavell School. Howard loved reading and later acting. As youngsters he and his brother put on marionette plays at the old YMCA on Queen St. He was extremely fond of our Carnegie Library. He also took drawing lessons from locally famous artist Prynce Nesbitt.

In the nineteen-fifties Howard signed on as an extra in the Marilyn Monroe movie 'Niagara'. After graduating from McMaster he worked for CBC radio for twenty years, later freelancing in Europe.

In 1980 he published his first 'Benny Cooperman' mystery novel '*The Suicide Murders*'. Despite its title, this book, like his later mysteries, is an entertaining read. Its hero, local detective Benny Cooperman, is humble, humorous and somewhat hapless. Part of the fun is in spotting Engel's many, thinly-veiled references to St. Catharines, or 'Grantham' as he calls it. Benny's dingy office is two floors up on 'St. Andrew St'. His lunch is generally a chopped egg sandwich on white bread at either the United Cigar or Diana Sweets. He even mentions the Di's 'gumwood booths'. 'Montecello Park', 'Secord University', and best of all, 'Eleven Mile Creek' figure in his stories. Many of his fictional characters have St. Catharines names: Yates, Cahill, Dittrick, Phelan....A couple of hair-raising scenes take place on Bellevue Terrace and in the old 'Rutledge Textiles' factory behind 'St. Andrew St.'

One little "in-joke": in his second Benny Cooperman mystery, '*The Ransom Game*' (c. 1983), Cooperman arranges to meet up with his client, a gorgeous Marilyn Monroe look-alike, in the Special Collections department of the new library. His favourite librarian 'Ella Beames' is not there, and neither is his client, so he busies himself by flipping through the pages of "an old black atlas of the area... It had been printed in 1878." (ring any bells, you local historians?!) He describes its illustrations in perfect detail.

After a few novels, Benny moved past 'Grantham' to Toronto and beyond. Two of Engel's original novels became TV movies starring Saul Rubinek and shot partly on location here in St. Catharines.

In the summer of 2001, after two marriages (one to author Marian Engel) and three children, Engel was living quietly in Toronto with his 12-year-old son. He awoke one morning feeling perfectly fine except that he could no longer read a single word. He describes picking up the morning paper and thinking it must have been a joke: someone had printed it in 'Serbo-Croatian'. But it was no joke. He had suffered an

unusual stroke and was left with a condition called 'alexia'. Ironically for this author he could still write, but reading was impossible. After much therapy he slowly learned to read again but it was a struggle. He did, however, manage to write at least three books afterwards, and they are fascinating looks into his life at that time. Two of his latest Benny Cooperman mysteries feature our hero still working as a detective despite his problem. Engel attracted the attention of the renowned neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks who has written about his unusual condition and Engel's amazing ability to compensate for it.

Over the years I have been lucky enough to meet Howard Engel a few times. He is a polite, unassuming man who seems genuinely delighted to meet someone who remembers St. Catharines, and especially our library, from the "old days". He is now in his eighties. I hope he is still writing. His books are such a pleasure.

The Historical Society of St. Catharines

Membership Renewal

For membership year **September 1, 2013 through August 31, 2014**

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: _____, 2013 - 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, 2013 thorough August 31, 2014**

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 e-mail: _____

My/Our e-mail < _____ >

Comment: _____