

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 2014 Newsletter

Lecture Program –June 26, 2014 through September 25, 2014

Program Subject to Change

Thursday, June 26, 2014:

Presentation by Sheridan Alder -- Topic: **The Ability to Support Herself: British Army Wives and Families on the Brink of 1812.** At the St. Catharines Museum.

Thursday, September 25, 2014:

Presentation by Ian Brindle – Topic: **September Salute to Brock University**

The September meeting of the Historical Society will feature Brock Professor Ian Brindle talking about the early years in the history of Brock University. This presentation is the Historical Society's salute to the university, one of the most important institutions in this region. This year the university is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its opening, which occurred in September 1964.

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, 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. 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.

Minutes of the Last Annual General Meeting
held in the Burgoyne Room of the St. Catharines Museum
April 24th 2014

The following is an extract of Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Historical Society of St. Catharines held on April 24, 2014 as prepared by Brenda Zadoroznij, Secretary:

“President John Burtniak opened the meeting at 7:30 pm and welcomed those present (approximately 42). Minutes from the April 2013 AGM were published in the June 2013 newsletter. It was moved by Alex Ormston and seconded by Bill Steinman that they be accepted. Accepted as printed.

The Treasurer was absent. A Financial Report 2013 was presented by Tom Whitelaw showing Total Operating Income of \$4627.14. Total Operating Expenses of \$3,619.64 and Total Assets of \$12,659.42. (Full report on file with Minutes).

Tom Whitelaw and Carol Gaspari prepared an ‘Auditor’s Report’ and their ‘Observations on the Financial Report 2013’ (on file with Minutes).

After questions it was moved by Bill Steinman and seconded by Mike Conley that the reports be accepted. Accepted.

The President announced that the Society had had a good year with a large membership and good programmes and thanked the Programme Committee for their work.

He also thanked Newsletter Editor Dave Willer, retiring Secretary Brenda Zadoroznij, refreshment coordinators, Bill and Lorraine Steinman and the board in general for their work during the past year.

Thanks also to the Museum for presenting an artifact relevant to the programme at each meeting.

In the absence of Elizabeth Finnie the election process was directed by Bill Stevens. He announced that there was a quorum.

The Executive is for a 2-year term; however, Brian Narhi will not be able to take over the Presidency so John Burtniak has agreed to stay for another year if needed.

There were no nominations from the floor for the position of President for a one-year term. It was moved by Maurice Gomme and seconded by Mike Conley to close the nomination. Accepted.

Brenda Zadoroznij is retiring. The slate presented for the Executive is as follows:

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

After calling for nominations from the floor and hearing none, it was moved by Bill Steinman and seconded by Joe O'Brien that the slate as presented be closed. Accepted.

It was then moved by Lorraine Steinman and seconded by Brenda Zadoroznij that the slate as presented be accepted. Accepted.

The slate for Directors (one year term) was presented.

- 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 Bill Steinman and seconded by Tom Whitelaw that the slate as presented be accepted. Accepted."

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 edited by Dave Willer.

Submission Deadline for the September 2014 Newsletter is August 31, 2014

History of Welcome Signs in St. Catharines

We hope people have noted the many welcoming signs dotted around our city. Some say Welcome to St. Catharines; others say Welcome to a specific neighbourhood. They are all similar, with dark backgrounds and golden brown lettering. The city Parks and Recreation department created them and they can be seen at various locations ---- just after you cross into the city over the Homer bridge at Victoria Lawn Cemetery, or entering the city from the Port Weller bridge at Malcolmson Park. The most recent one is placed on St. Paul Street West and Louth Street. It welcomes visitors to the Niagara 'wine route'. Neighbourhood welcome signs are in Merritton at the Keg restaurant area, at St Paul Street West and St. Paul Crescent for Western Hill, and at the corner of Westchester Avenue and Glenridge Avenue. The latter three all designate specific Neighbourhoods: Merritton, Western Hill and Old Glenridge.

A little history is needed. The first one to be installed was the last mentioned. The sign actually states "Welcome to Old Glen Ridge: a St. Catharines Neighbourhood." The spelling is that of the originally designated suburb of Old Glen Ridge, established in 1913. The entire city south of that now busy corner was once only farmland.

In 2003, Brock University wanted to put a sign at the corner of Westchester Avenue and Glenridge Avenues saying 'welcome to Brock University'. That motivated neighbours, two of whom served on the city's Green Committee, to call upon activist neighbours to instead install a sign welcoming people to an established traditional residential neighbourhood. Working with city staff and an interested ward councillor, 6 neighbours collected door to door to meet the costs of putting up this first sign. Parks and Recreation staff would maintain the plants surrounding the sign. Originally, neighbours wanted a heritage stone lying in Centennial Gardens placed among the shrubbery with a plaque with the names of resident donors who had given over \$100 towards the sign. However, this appeared too burdensome or expensive for city staff, so the names of those donors appear on the back of the sign.

City council approved the installation of the sign on May 13, 2004 and the Minutes of that meeting state "the proposed sign has been designed as a template to be used as the standard for similar uses on municipal property. The welcome sign can be used to recognize neighbourhoods that exhibit a distinct identity or history through the city. The design, size, colour and graphics will be consistent through the entire parks system." While the template was approved, the exact colour and graphics was not carried. So while four of the signs are dark Green with golden brown colouring, the Merritton one is distinctively black. Shortly after the Old Glenridge sign was in place, the one at Victoria Lawn and at Malcolmson Park area followed. A final difference may be that the city may have put those two up at their own expense, while we know that local businesses and individuals were asked to raise funds for the last two (Merritton, Western Hill) before installation in 2011. But in the first case, it was simply residents of Old Glenridge that collected money for their welcoming sign.

Gail Benjafield is a long-time member of the Historical Society of St. Catharines

St. Catharines Industrialist Lachlan Ebenezer McKINNON

By Bill Stevens

Lachlan Ebenezer McKinnon was one of the most influential men in the annals of St. Catharines' industrial history. He was born on September 19, 1854 in Owen Sound, Ontario to John and Elizabeth McKinnon. John was of Scotch background and a Presbyterian minister and died when Lachlan was about 10 years old. His mother Elizabeth raised the family in Owen Sound where Lachlan received his high school education. As a young teenager of 14 years of age, he began a job which lasted four years, in a hardware store in Owen Sound owned by William Kough. Between 1871 and 1872 Lachlan left Owen Sound and came to St. Catharines.

He found employment here as a clerk with Andrew Jeffrey and Company, a hardware store located at 24 Ontario Street according to the 1874 city directory. The 1874 directory also shows Lachlan as a boarder at 30 William Street. About 1875 Lachlan entered into a partnership with Andrew Jeffrey under the firm name of McKinnon and Company which encompassed the carriage hardware portion of Mr. Jeffrey's business. In 1878, at the age of only 23 years, Lachlan purchased Mr. Jeffrey's interests in the business for \$2000. By 1882 he had entered into a new partnership with James F. Mitchell and together they ran the McKinnon and Mitchell Hardware Company, located at 63 St. Paul Street. The business focused on saddle and wagon hardware and they had a four-man shop located behind the store to manufacture wagon gears and a patented adjustable dash. In 1887 McKinnon created a subsidiary in Buffalo called McKinnon Dash Company. The company expanded into other products including suspender buckles, bicycles and chains. In 1888 the partnership with Mitchell dissolved and McKinnon took possession of the manufacturing portion and renamed it McKinnon Dash & Hardware Company.

On February 5, 1878 Lachlan married Emma Esther ARMSTRONG, a St. Catharines-born lady (born January 21, 1853). They had 6 children - 3 sons: James, Roy and John and 3 daughters: Flora Isobel, Ella Cecilia and Emma Mae. By 1900 the family had moved from 171 Church Street in St. Catharines and were living in Buffalo.

In 1901 McKinnon purchased lands out in the northwest end of St. Catharines on Ontario Street at the intersection of Carlton Street and moved his manufacturing business there. He also purchased the Niagara Falls Metal Works and moved that business into the Ontario Street plant. The business grew to become the McKinnon Dash and Metal Works Company and by 1907 there were plants in St. Catharines, Buffalo, Tonawanda and Columbus.

In 1909 he formed McKinnon Chain Company. This company used the electric welding process to produce coil, ladder and "sugar" chain, donkey and horse trace chain, lorry and plough trace chain, as well as tire chain for the first car and truck tires produced.

The First World War would bring major changes and work to the industries Lachlan ran here in St. Catharines. In 1916 a large 3-storey building was constructed to produce artillery shells and fuses.

In 1917 McKinnon Chain merged with the Columbus Chain Company and the new business was now known as Columbus McKinnon in America and McKinnon Columbus Chain in Canada. Lachlan's younger brother Archibald became plant manager, a position he held until he retired in 1956 when he became chairman of the board until he died in December 1963. However, in 1922 McKinnon sold off his interest in the chain business.

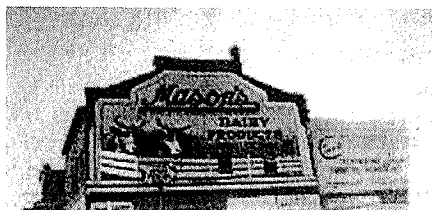
With the war over and the automobile quickly replacing the horse and buggy, the company's focus shifted to manufacturing automotive products, mainly radiators and differential gears, and by 1922 rear axles had been added to the list.

With production flourishing here, the family moved back to St. Catharines from Buffalo. Unfortunately, shortly after returning, his wife Emma died on July 22, 1922 in her 70th year and then just months later on January 11, 1923 Lachlan himself died in his 69th year. He had been in less than full health for about two years. *The St. Catharines Standard* heading read "L.E. McKINNON, Local Captain of Industry, Answered Death Summons This Morning". Lachlan's funeral was held on January 14, 1923 and his remains were taken from his residence to Victoria Lawn Cemetery where burial took place in a family plot in New Section 'A' on the north side of Queenston Street.

At the time of his death McKinnon Industries had become the largest manufacturing plant in St. Catharines. But Lachlan's estate was only valued at \$180,000 which was divided up among his six children. The family residence known as "Strath Linn" at 8 Hillcrest Avenue, along with the furniture and his autos went to his two daughters Flora and Ella who were still living at home. The balance of the estate was split among the four other children: John William who had joined the firm as a purchasing agent and lived in St. Catharines; Roy who was living in New York; James who was living in Cleveland; and to Emma Mae who had married John Russell Heath.

REMEMBER WHEN...

The following images are from the Special Collections Room at the St. Catharines Public Library in a binder entitled "Dairying in the Niagara Peninsula":



The Historical Society of St. Catharines

Membership Renewal

For membership year **September 1, 2014 through August 31, 2015**

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: _____, 2014 - Cheque in the amount of: \$ _____

Remove the form below and return with your remittance
