

# The Historical Society of St. Catharines

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

Our Mission and Goal is to increase the knowledge and appreciation of the history of St. Catharines and vicinity.

Founded in 1927. Our Society is affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society.

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

## March 2010 Newsletter

2010 is the Year of the British Home Child in Canada

### UPCOMING PROGRAMMES

Our monthly Membership meetings are held at the St. Catharines Museum. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. and the Museum is open also at 7:00 p.m. so that members may view current exhibits. The Society meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. sharp. Reminder: as our members are inside the Burgoyne Room and unable to monitor those entering the Museum, the Museum's door will be locked at approximately 7:45 p.m. on meeting nights. Members are reminded to be on time but if they are late, ring the doorbell to the right of the main doors.

**Thursday, March 25** - Society member Brian Leyden invites you to join him in a "fire-side style presentation" on the history of St. John's Anglican Church in Port Dalhousie, its congregation and some of the interesting connections between the church and the community.

**Thursday, April 22** - Notice of 2010 Annual Meeting - See Information and Agenda on page 2. Our guest speaker for the evening is Peter Martin from Fort George. Peter will tell us about the "Brock Monument Restoration Project."

**Thursday, May 27** - Nina Stahlschmidt - her topic will be local mills, their forms of packaging from wooden barrel to cloth bag to paper. She has many bags and quilts to show (she calls it a lecture/trunk show). She has made probably hundreds of quilts and has authored a book on the subject of 'feedbag quilts' titled: *Canadian feed bags - Recycled then & now: their stories and their quilts.*

**Saturday, May 8 - 11:00 a.m.**

#### 34th Annual Oille Fountain Potting Ceremony

Plan to attend this special event to be held at the Oille Fountain located at the corner of King and James Streets in downtown St. Catharines. Descendants of the OILLE family are invited to attend. A geranium will be planted in the urn atop the Fountain. Why not make a day of it, as Saturday is "Mother's Day at the Market."

*The Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Ministry of Culture*

## **Notice of Annual Meeting – Thursday, April 22, 2010 – 7:30 p.m.**

To be held in the Burgoyne Room, St. Catharines Museum, 1932 Welland Canals Parkway, St. Catharines.

### **Agenda**

Call to Order, President's Report, Minutes of Previous Annual Meeting (held April 23, 2009 and published in the September 2009 *Newsletter*), Financial Report, Auditor's Report, Amendments to Constitution, Nominations and Elections, Any Other Business properly brought before the membership, Close of Formal Meeting, Guest Speaker, Announcements, Reception.

### **Auditors and Nominations to the Board of Directors**

#### **Auditors**

The financial books close December 31 and the Board of Directors has appointed Tom Whitelaw and Carol Gaspari as Auditors of the books to prepare an audit for the Annual Meeting in April.

#### **Nominations and Elections**

Executive positions are for a two-year term and one year remains in these terms, so the following are your executives for this coming year: President – John Burtniak; Past President – Bill Stevens; Vice President – Paul Lewis; Treasurer – Chris Loat; Secretary – Elizabeth Finnie.

Director (maximum six to be elected) positions will be for a one-year term and the following nominations have been received to date: Gail Benjafield, John Calvert, Joe Muskat, David Sharron, This leaves two vacancies and the Society needs a Newsletter Editor and Membership Chair. Please give thought about giving some time to the Society, as we need to ensure that the Society continues with a strong Board. Please contact any Executive member if you would be willing to be nominated for a Director position.

### **Constitution Amendment**

There are no amendments to the Society Constitution being put forward.

### **Heritage Grant**

The Society is very pleased to receive a Provincial Heritage Development Grant of \$593.00 and we thank the Ontario Ministry of Culture for this assistance with our programs.

### **Membership Notes:**

\* **Welcome to our newest members:** Norman Conquer, Dennis Goring, John Stevens, John Benjafield, Bruce Timms

\* **Lost Contact** - The Society has lost contact with member Nicole Beaulieu ... please advise if you have contact information.

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## ***Reminder: Membership Renewal begins May 27, 2010***

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### **Membership year is from September 1 to August 31.**

Individual \$10.00 or Family \$15.00 - Make cheque payable to: The Historical Society of St. Catharines. Please mail renewals to the Society address at the top of the first page or attend the meeting on May 27!

### **Newsletter Notes**

The Historical Society of St. Catharines *Newsletter* is published up to 4 times per year by the Society.

The purpose of the *Newsletter* 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 postal address. Opinions and comments expressed in the *Newsletter* are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society.

Subscription is by paid membership only. This issue was produced by Bill Stevens. *Note: John Calvert will be producing the June issue, so please forward any submissions by e-mail to John at: [icalvert57@hotmail.com](mailto:icalvert57@hotmail.com)*

**Next Issue: June 2010 - Deadline** for submissions for the next issue is **May 1**

## Report on "Show & Tell" held November 26

John Burtniak called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. with 30 people in attendance.

Announcements were made by Bill Stevens, Mary Leighton and John Burtniak.

John acted as moderator for the evening and the presenters were as follows:

Anthony Percival – 3 artifacts from the Museum's science and technology exhibit

Alex Ormston – cash book from the Welland Canal Loan Company 1852

Paul Lewis – Memorial plaque from World War I

Joe Muskat (for Paul Mooradian) - Hayes Hell Cats basketball team memorabilia

Bob Dunn - Robert E. Mills oil painting of 3 mums (flowers) from the early 19th century

Gail Benjafield – a Marion Nelson Hooker painting

Roger Bradshaw – his recently published pictorial volume on the Welland Canal

David Laurason UEL – a Titus Simons painting

Bob Sears – video and booklet on the Robert H. Saunders hydro-electric power authority (complimentary copies were made available)

John Calvert – painting from the 1780s of an Upper ancestor

Leslie Taylor – several English stereographs

David Outram – photographs of several views of St. Catharines

Bill Stevens – proof copies of the upcoming War of 1812 maps to be printed

Anthony Gasbarini - Welland Canal lantern

Ed Gilbert – grandfather's watch

John Burtniak – two Welland Canal watercolours (done in 1968 by artist John Blanchard) of the first sod-turning at Allanburg

The meeting concluded with refreshments and an opportunity to look at the items on display.

## The Hayes Hell Cats and the Hayes Hell Kittens

In July 2009 the Society received a very interesting e-mail from Paul Mooradian: "I recently cleaned out my basement and found some large brown envelopes containing crests, programs, large photography, official score books and other items from Senior and Junior Basketball teams from St. Catharines named the Hayes Hell Cats and the Hayes Hell Kittens. Upon closer inspection, it was revealed that this collection was from the trips and games these teams played in Vancouver, British Columbia to compete for the Canadian Men's Senior Basketball Championship which they won two years in a row, in 1944 and 1945! The Hayes Hell Kittens won the National Juvenile title in 1945." He continues: "This collection should be part of St. Catharines history and I would like to donate it to the appropriate group." Casper Mooradian, Paul's father, managed the Hayes Hell Cats from 1943 to 1946 and had kept these items. Subsequently the Society has accepted this collection in order to keep it in the City. The eventual recipient is yet to be determined, but the Society saw the value of saving such a collection for future generations to explore. By this I mean, preserving the details of the remarkable accomplishment of a few men and women of St. Catharines that were able to bring together a team of gifted athletes.

One of the star players on the senior team was Salvatore Anthony Maglie, who was born in Niagara Falls, New York on April 26, 1917. Sal died on December 28, 1992. He played for Hayes, at a time when he was banned from playing baseball in the US, due to his decision to play in the Mexican League for 2 years. Sal eventually played in the Major Baseball Leagues as a pitcher. He was one of the only players to play for all three New York teams – the Yankees, the Giants and the Dodgers. He was the Dodgers' pitcher opposing Don Larsen of the Yankees in the latter's famous perfect game in the 1956 World Series. Maglie's career game record was 119 wins and 62 losses, with an earned run average of 3.15. Maglie had a good comeback season for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1956 (who won the NL pennant by one game over Milwaukee and two games over Cincinnati), going 13-5 with 2.89 ERA. He finished second to Don Newcombe in the first balloting for the Cy Young Award, and was also second to Newcombe in MVP balloting.

## Highlights of 2009

January 22 - Jim Macfarlane: lecture: "Canada Hair Cloth and the McSloy Family" - attendance 61

February 26 - Alun Hughes: lecture: "The Myth of Laura Secord: Seeking the Truth Beneath the Chocolate Coating" - attendance 67

March *Newsletter* published

March 26 - lecture: Mary Friesen: "The Ransom Goring Journals" - attendance 41

April 23 - Annual Meeting and Elections of the Board of Directors - attendance 36

April 23 - lecture: Graham Phair: "The Home Front" - attendance 37

June *Newsletter* published

May 23 - Oille Fountain Potting Ceremony - Mayor Brian McMullan and Councillor Heather Foss attended

May 28 - lecture: Sharon Chandler and Jim Lawrason: "Air Commodore Len Birchall" - attendance 51

July 3 - Celebration of William Hamilton Merritt's Birthday at Merritt Statue, followed by a walking tour across Burgoyne Bridge - attendance 16

July - the Society donated 3 rolls of microfilm pertaining to the Upper Canada Sundries to the St. Catharines Public Library

September *Newsletter* published

September 10 - Bill Stevens conducted a Walk-About of Historic St. John's Cemetery, Port Dalhousie - attendance 37

September 24 - lecture: Wesley Turner: "Forts and Families in Upper Canada" - attendance 49

October 22 - lecture: Walter Lewis: "A Brief Introduction to the History of Passenger Travel on the Great Lakes and Upper Saint Lawrence... with Some Sightings of the *River Palace*" - attendance 52

November 11 - Society placed a wreath at the Cenotaph during the Remembrance Service

November - the Society made a \$200 donation towards the Garden Project on the BME Church grounds

November 26 - Show and Tell and Christmas Social - attendance 39

December *Newsletter* published

Membership for 2009 - paid up membership at year-end was 195

### Special Recognition to Brock University

The Historical Society congratulates Brock University for preserving and restoring the Theal House and adapting it for offices.

### Welland Canals Centre and St. Catharines Museum

Exhibit: "Love'em Hate'em: Canadians and Their Politicians" will open in mid April. This exhibit gives a very different perspective of how the public views its elected political leaders. It shows how a public opinion is often shaped and expressed by the images of public personalities and by the styles of political leaders. While visiting the Museum, why not do a bit of shopping at Merritt's Mercantile Gift Shop!

### Report on the General Meeting Held January 23, 2010

The Meeting was held at the St. Catharines Historical Museum, Lock 3 and called to order at 7:30 p.m. President John Burtiak welcomed all members and newcomers. There were 38 people in attendance on this very cold January evening.

Anthony Percival, Museum staff, displayed a number of medical supplies from the collection of Dr. J. Arthur Wilson who was a physician in St. Catharines from 1942 to 1982. He pointed out the differences between medical equipment then and now, such as the use of glass, the Fahrenheit scale, the use of mercury and so on. One item in particular, was a package marked "Binders" which was a pharmacy located on St. Paul Street West several decades ago.

Member David Outram brought two photos of Foster Wheeler, one pre-1929, and one in 1955. The earlier photo showed the Third Welland Canal.

Upcoming programs for February (Alun Hughes) and March (Brian Leyden) were announced (see page 1). An announcement was made that Doors Open Hamilton will be held on May 1, 2010.

Gail Benjafield introduced the speaker for the evening, Our Society Secretary Elizabeth Finnie.

Elizabeth gave a presentation entitled "Cholera Reaches Niagara, 1832" describing the events leading up to the epidemic's arrival and what happened when it came. John Burtiak thanked the speaker.

The meeting adjourned shortly before 9:00 p.m. for refreshments.

### Canadian Canal Society Annual Meeting

The Canadian Canal Society will hold its annual meeting on Sunday April 18 at 2:00 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum. As well as the regular annual meeting business, there will be a guest speaker. Anyone interested in canals are more than welcome.

For more information, visit the web site <http://www.canadiancanalsociety.org/>

### War of 1812 and Grantham Township

"John Mann having applied for leave to take care of the Stock and grain on the farm abandoned by Ebenezer Kelly in the township of Grantham by virtue of the power vested in us by General de Rottenburg we hereby agree that John Mann should take possession of the Grain & stock on the said farm, and as soon as possible render unto us an account of the same - witness our hands at Stamford 28th August 1813. Thomas Dickson J.P., Thomas Clark J.P."

Source: *Records of Niagara: A Collection of Contemporary Letters and Documents, January to July 1813*. Collected and Edited by Brig.-General E.A.Cruikshank (Niagara Historical Society, Publication No.44 (1939)), p.77.

### Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday Niagara Region!

On January 1, 1970 The Regional Municipality of Niagara came into being by way of Bill 174 of the Province of Ontario. The headquarters for Regional Government operations were established in St. Catharines at 150 Berryman Avenue. The building occupied was purchased by the City of St. Catharines for the specific use of Regional Niagara from Anthes Limited who had used it as their main office in conjunction with their plant operations located here. As 150 Berryman Avenue had been unoccupied for a period of years, it required a great deal of renovations and improvements; a sum of \$60,411 was expended to make them useable and presentable. This included remodelling the east wing of the third floor from office space into a council chamber for Regional Council meetings.

A major task at the beginning of the year was to set up the administration of the Region and bring all the staff of both Lincoln and Welland Counties into one organization. Another major task was to prepare a budget for the 1970 year. A finalized and approved budget resulted and for example, showed that the Public Works budget had a total expenditure to be \$9,960,757.

As the year progressed it was necessary to expand facilities and the Public Works Projects Division moved to 71 King Street in St. Catharines, which was formerly occupied under a five year lease by Lincoln County.

## DeCew Falls Water Treatment Plant

The rich history of the DeCew Falls Water Treatment Plant can be traced all the way back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and a United Empire Loyalist named John DeCew, a founder of the small Thorold community bearing his name. DeCew Falls was a centre of military activity throughout the War of 1812. DeCew House was used as a headquarters by Lieutenant FitzGibbon and it was to here that Laura Secord made her famous 32 km trek up the Niagara escarpment to warn the British army of a looming American attack.

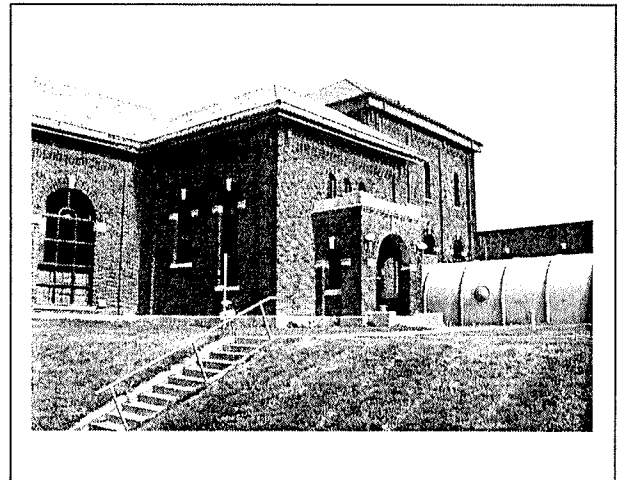
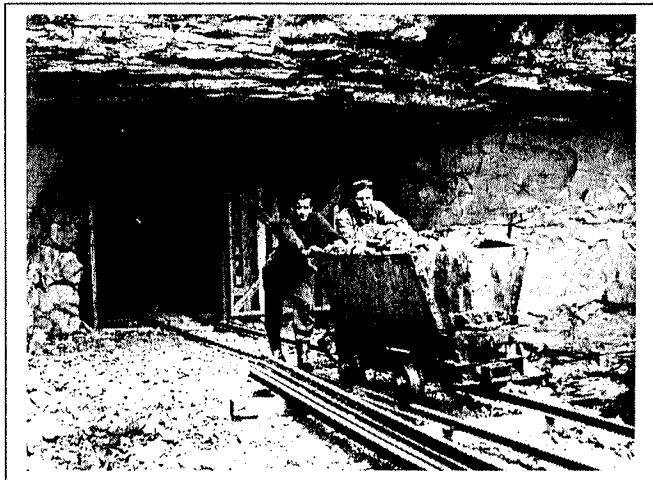
In 1875, the St. Catharines Water Works Commission purchased property at DeCew Falls to build two reservoirs to provide water for the Town of St. Catharines. In 1878 the Commission began construction of a valve house to control the flow of water by gravity from the reservoirs at DeCew Falls.

To the first Commissioners, protecting the purity of the water supply was just as important as the maintenance of a “park-like atmosphere” at DeCew Falls. The Commission’s duty was not merely “to furnish the inhabitants of St. Catharines with an abundance of good wholesome water,” but also to “beautify and adorn the grounds.” Aesthetics were an important consideration in the construction of the original treatment plant in 1925.

The original treatment plant was built with a maximum output of 45 million litres per day. In 1927 the new St. Catharines Filtration Plant was opened and the Commission took over the fields surrounding its main reservoir and constructed homes for plant employees. As population and industry increased, so did the demand for water and further expansions took place in 1954 and again in 1975 after the Regional Municipality of Niagara assumed ownership and operations. The plant’s current maximum output is 227 million litres per day.

The DeCew plant takes water from Lake Erie via the Welland Canal, through a supply canal at Allanburg and converts it to potable water for approximately 250,000 residents in St. Catharines, Thorold, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Lincoln. DeCew is a “conventional surface water treatment plant” which incorporates zebra mussel control, traveling screens, coagulation, flocculation, sedimentation, filtration and disinfection in its treatment process. The average daily usage of water for this service area is approximately 63 million litres per day.

Though DeCew Falls Water Treatment Plant has changed significantly from its early 19<sup>th</sup> century condition, the natural scenery remains just as beautiful. Certainly the original Water Works Commissioners would be proud of the heritage and scenery. The site is a destination for historians, hikers, and curious residents.



“The beginning of construction at DeCew Falls circa 1925.” - DeCew Falls Water Treatment Plant today

Reprinted with permission from Niagara Region Water & Wastewater Services Division, DeCew Water Treatment Plant

*The following is a summary of the lecture presented by Elizabeth Finnie on January 28, 2010.*

## **'Cholera Reaches Niagara, 1832'**

By Elizabeth Finnie

In the summer of 1832 the dreaded cholera came to Niagara. Its arrival was inevitable. The Second Great Cholera Epidemic had started in the early 1800s in the Ganges River area of India and spread across Asia and Europe. Medical knowledge was so primitive that no one was able to stop it. In 1832 emigration to North America rose to over 50,000, mostly desperate British emigrants seeking a better life across the Atlantic. Ship owners were often corrupt, packing their ships with this human cargo but with no regard for any illnesses they might be carrying.

The quarantine island Grosse Ile, on the St. Lawrence River, was meant to screen and 'purify' incoming passengers, but it was overwhelmed. Ships bearing cholera victims got through, and in June of 1832 several arrived on our doorstep, the wharf of Niagara. Sir John Colborne, lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, had hastily created some local boards of health to deal with the invasion. This was the first instance of organized public health in Upper Canada, which had almost no hospitals at the time except for a few military ones such as Butler's Barracks at Niagara. There were some scuffles with local 'mobs' attempting to stop vessels from landing.

Hardest hit by the disease were the Irish canal labourers who were the poorest and lived in the worst conditions, many in shanties. When cholera struck they frequently fled. Burials of the dead were hasty and many went unnamed in paupers' graves. William Hamilton Merritt in a July 1832 letter to his wife provided a graphic description of his attempts to look after his workers.

The St. Catharines Board of Health records for 1832-33 are a good illustration of events. We see Nathan Pawling and Jonathan Woodhull attempting to be reimbursed for provisions to the temporary Port Dalhousie hospital; Dr. Chace's list of medical supplies - laudanum, Peruvian bark, coffin boards and nails...and much more.

St. Catharines was spared many deaths. Although millions died across the world, and thousands in Lower Canada, the disease was limited mostly to the ports, rivers and canals. By late autumn, 1832, it ebbed away.

### **Information Being Sought**

Request by: Greg Stott - E-mail: [stottgk@yahoo.ca](mailto:stottgk@yahoo.ca)

I am writing a history of the Lutman family of London, Ontario and would love to hear from anyone who has memories of Margaret E. Lutman (1888-1969) who taught English and History at St. Catharines Collegiate and Vocational Institute from 1923 to 1953. She lived at the Avalon Apartments on William Street and then from 1934 to 1953 at the Melrose Apartments at 3 Church Street with her housekeeper, Laura Bell. I would like to include these stories and reminiscences in my published history.

Request by: Dan Sundy - E-mail: [drsundy@vaxxine.com](mailto:drsundy@vaxxine.com)

Dalhousie Yacht Club will be having its 75th anniversary in 2012. The recently formed history committee would be interested in any images, text or stories concerning the club.

### **New Publication on the First, Second and Third Canals**

At the November Show and Tell, Society member Roger Bradshaw showed us his new publication on the canals. It contains over 100 original colour photographs of the remains, along with pictures of plaques and other interesting items found along the full length of the first three canals. Roger is now offering to reproduce it on demand. If you would like to buy a copy, contact Roger at: 905-935-1006.

### **[www.1812history.com](http://www.1812history.com)**

Visit this new web site to view digital images of over seven hundred items related to the War of 1812 time period. This site gives the public an opportunity to view items that would seldom be on display at the museum. The items come from the collections held by several area Museums and Brock University.

## WILLIAM HAMILTON MERRITT AND PELL'S CANAL

It is not entirely clear when William Hamilton Merritt first had the idea of building a canal between Lakes Erie and Ontario. According to his son and biographer Jedediah, it was while he was patrolling the Niagara River during the War of 1812, but Merritt himself recalled late in life that the idea came to him after the war when water-supply problems plagued his milling operations on the Twelve Mile Creek. The solution he envisaged — a supply channel to carry water from the Welland River (or Chippawa Creek) into the headwaters of the Twelve — soon evolved into a canal to carry barge traffic. In 1817 Merritt presented the case for a canal as part of Grantham Township's response to Robert Gourlay for this *Statistical Account of Upper Canada*, and in September 1818, with the help of others, he used a borrowed water level to survey the rise of land between the two creeks to assess the idea's feasibility.

The results showed that a canal was practicable, and a month later Merritt delivered a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada, requesting a proper survey by "some scientific men" from the Welland River to Lake Ontario. The timing was opportune, for a joint commission of the two Canadas had just reported on the urgent need for improved water communications in light of the start of work on the American Erie Canal. But though some initiatives were pursued at the provincial level, nothing happened locally until February 1823, when Merritt resolved to press forward with his own scheme — this after a visit to Chautauqua, New York.

### The Chautauqua Connection

Early in 1823 Merritt's wife and son were staying with her parents in Mayville, on the shore of Chautauqua Lake. Jedediah, then only a toddler, had broken his leg, and Merritt went down to be with them. Returning to Upper Canada on February 22, he crossed the Niagara River from Black Rock just below Buffalo and rode north towards the Falls. As he passed Bridgewater, a former mill site located at the upstream entrance to today's Dufferin Islands, he was reminded that his canal project had lain dormant for over four years. We know this from an entry in his *Journal*, in which he reflects ruefully on the 1818 canal survey and petition, both of which cost money and caused "much trouble for no benefit." What had brought them to mind was "thinking of Pells Canal as I passed Bridgewater ... on my return last from Chatauque." He then adds the prophetic comment, "it is my determination at present to pursue the object steadily."

Who was Pell, and what was Pell's Canal? The answer is of more than casual interest, because the reminder clearly spurred Merritt to action. In early

March he wrote to his wife that "The waters of Chippawa Creek will be down the 12 in two years from this time as certain as fate." Later that month he held a preliminary meeting at Shipman's Tavern, and in April a subscription was opened to pay for a professional survey of the canal route, which took place in May. In June a public meeting was held at Beaverdams, and in July Merritt and eight others announced their intention to apply to the Legislature for incorporation of what became the Welland Canal Company. The required act was passed in January 1824, and construction began that November.

One authority suggests that the answer to the mystery of Pell's Canal lies in Chautauqua, in a proposal made around 1800 to replace the ancient portage road between Lake Erie and Chautauqua Lake by a canal of that name. If this is true, then Merritt could have learned of Pell's Canal from his in-laws in about 1815 when he got married, and this might even have been the "eureka moment" that gave him the idea for the Welland Canal. However, though suggestions were made to link the lakes by canal, none was ever built, no plans for a Pell's Canal are known to exist, and historically the name Pell is unheard-of in the area. It is reasonable to assume therefore, that Pell's Canal was in Upper Canada, somewhere near the Niagara River. But the origin of the Pell name itself lies elsewhere.

### The Pells of Pelham Manor



*Pell Coat of Arms granted in 1594*

If the name Pell is unfamiliar in Chautauqua County in western New York, the opposite holds true on the eastern seaboard in Westchester County, for here the Pells were a leading family of Colonial times. They claimed descent from Roger de Pelle, who supposedly came to England from the "grim mountain fastness" of Peille in south-eastern France with William the Conqueror, and settled in Water Willoughby, Lincolnshire. The first Pell to emigrate to America was Thomas, former Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Charles I, who came in about 1635 while in his early twenties. (Interestingly, his branch of the family may be descended from an earlier Thomas Pell who married the daughter of Sir



William Thorold of Marston, Lincolnshire, which if true means that many North American Pells have Thorold blood in their veins.)

Thomas Pell eventually settled in Fairfield, Connecticut, where he became a prominent member of the community. In 1654 he purchased, for £500, over 9000 acres of land from the Siwanoy Indians in the contested territory between Connecticut and the Dutch province of New Amsterdam (later New York City). The exact boundaries are uncertain, but they included an expanse of what is now the Bronx and southern Westchester County. It is said that the purchase was encouraged by Connecticut as a means of promoting English interests over the Dutch, for the land was part of New Netherland, the fur trading domain of the Dutch West India Company. In 1664 England seized New Netherland, and two years later Pell's purchase was confirmed by royal patent from Richard Nicolls, Governor of New York. With it came a significant measure of local autonomy.

When Thomas died childless in 1669 his estate was inherited by his nephew John Pell, son of his brother, the Rev. John Pell. The latter is regarded as possibly the most prominent Pell in the entire history of the family. Graduating in mathematics from Cambridge University at age 18, he went on to do major work in the field (despite an "almost neurotic inability to publish"), and is credited with introducing [=], the sign for division. He taught mathematics at Amsterdam and Breda, and during the Commonwealth period played a vital diplomatic role as Cromwell's ambassador to the Swiss Cantons. In 1661, after the Restoration, he accepted church ordination, though less from religious conviction than from financial need, and two years later was elected one of the first Fellows of the Royal Society. (Possibly only Claiborne Pell, who died in 2009 after a distinguished 36-year career in the U.S. Senate, approaches this John Pell in significance.)

The younger John was living in England when his uncle died, and he moved to America in 1670 to claim his inheritance. In 1687 his estate was elevated to the status of a manor, when New York Governor Thomas Dongan issued "a more full and firme grant" for "the lordshipp and manner of Pelham." With manorial status came additional rights, including the authority to hold "one court leete and one court baronn" (responsible for criminal and civil matters respectively) and the power of advowson (selecting ministers of religion), though it is doubtful that these rights were ever exercised. Other manors were created in the Hudson Valley around the same time, all modelled to a degree on the patroonships established earlier by the Dutch.

The term manor, of course, comes from Medieval England, where the "lord of the manor" exerted strict feudal control over his "subjects." Though no such manors had been created since 1290, this did not stop the proprietors of the New

York manors from seeking to emulate their predecessors, if only in style. Technically they had a right to the title Lord of the Manor, but John Pell also went by Lord Pell and Sir John Pell, honorifics that had no basis in law. And though he was indeed First Lord of Pelham Manor, that title was later bestowed posthumously on his uncle Thomas, so John is usually referred to as the Second Lord.

In 1689 John Pell sold over 6000 acres of land for the new Huguenot settlement of New Rochelle, and in recognition was promised "one fatted calf on every fourth and twentieth day of June, yearly, and every year, forever, if demanded." He died in about 1700, and his son Thomas, the Third Lord, divided what remained of the estate among his sons. It was a much reduced tract that was inherited in 1752 by his grandson Joseph, the Fourth Lord, and with his death in 1776 the dynasty came to an end.

### **The Pells of Humberstone and Stamford**

By then the Revolutionary War was in its second year, and this caused a major split in the family, with some supporting the rebels and others the British, and occasionally even fighting against each other. Noteworthy among the Loyalist Pells was one Joshua Pell, grandson of the Third Lord, who eventually found his way to Niagara. When war broke out he was an officer with the Militia of Pelham and New Rochelle, but he refused to oppose the Crown. Instead he supplied intelligence to the British in New York City, and commanded a company of the loyal City Militia. When the British evacuated New York in 1783, he and his family went to Nova Scotia.

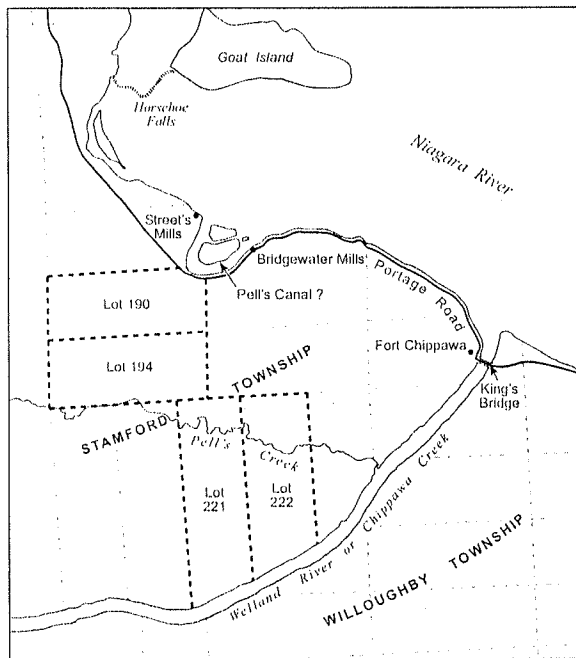
Joshua Pell's 146-acre farm in Pelham was confiscated by the Commissioners of Forfeitures for New York State, and in 1784 was sold. A year later he filed a claim for compensation with the Loyalist Commissioners appointed by the British Parliament. Proclaiming his "honesty & unshaken Loyalty & ... sufferings in the Cause," he reported numerous losses, including a "200-acre" farm in Pelham and "20 lots in the suburbs of New York." But compensation was slow in coming, and in 1788 he had to travel to Britain to expedite matters.

At least two of Joshua Pell's three sons also fought for the Crown, and the exploits of one of them, Joshua Jr., are recorded in detail in his war diary. He was on the losing side in the Saratoga campaign of 1777, where he fought, probably unknowingly, against his cousin Samuel. (Ironically, Samuel had been engaged to Joshua's sister Abigail, but the outbreak of war put an end to that romance.)

The return of peace in 1783 saw Joshua Sr. and his family in Nova Scotia, but life there was not to their liking, and ten years later they moved to Niagara (though without Joshua Jr., who eventually returned to Pelham, New York). The move was no doubt prompted by Governor Simcoe's offer of free

land grants in Upper Canada to worthy settlers. In 1794 Joshua petitioned for land in Willoughby Township in the vicinity of Lyon's Creek, and was given the maximum amount of 1200 acres — but his grant was in the 2nd and 3rd concessions of Humberstone Township rather than Willoughby. His sons Jonathan and Joseph received 600 acres each in the same concessions, which made the Pells by far the largest landowners in Humberstone.

It was not good land, however, and it is perhaps no surprise that in 1799 Joshua and his son Joseph each purchased 200 acres in Stamford, Joseph acquiring lots 221 and 222 on the Welland River, and Joshua lots 190 and 194 to the rear. Though Joshua, by now in his 60s, transferred these lots to Joseph the following year (together with all his land in Humberstone), his home thereafter was in Stamford, possibly even in the village of Chippawa.



*The Pell lands in Stamford Township in the early 19th century*

The Pells are barely mentioned in local histories of Niagara — just one reference to their land grants in a book on Humberstone. This is strange, for they were evidently a significant local family at the turn of the 18th century. In 1794 Joshua may have operated stables in Chippawa, and by 1795 he is known to have been dealing in flour. He might have been manufacturing iron also, had his petition to build a “forge and furnace” on the Niagara River below Chippawa been successful. (His aim was probably to process limonite or “bog-ore” from a deposit on the Welland River, but since all minerals and mines were Crown property he was turned down.) He was appointed a magistrate in 1796, and in 1800 he was the principal signatory of a petition by almost 70 Stamford residents opposing a plan put forward in 1799 by Robert Hamilton and others to upgrade communications between Fort Erie and Queenston. Meanwhile in 1794, Joshua’s son Jonathan

had the important role of special emissary carrying correspondence between Simcoe and George Hammond, British Minister to the United States, who was based in New York City.

One reason for the Pells’ anonymity may be the fact that they did not remain in Niagara. The first to go was Joseph, who left for Pelham in 1811, transferring his land to his father. In 1818 Joshua followed suit, and in 1820, one year before he died, he returned the land to Joseph by quit claim. Then Joseph and Jonathan died, and it was left to Jonathan’s son Joshua L. Pell, of Saratoga, New York, to dispose of the family lands in Niagara, selling them to Samuel Street in 1825 and 1828.

### The Mystery Explained

Thus there were no Pells in the area when William Hamilton Merritt rode past Bridgewater in 1823 and thought of Pell’s Canal. What then was this canal? It was certainly not a canal in the normal sense. Indeed Joshua Pell’s only involvement with canals was a negative one, when he opposed Hamilton’s plan of 1799, which included a short canal at Fort Erie to bypass the rapids on the Niagara River. It is equally unlikely that Pell’s Canal was really Pell’s Creek, which still flows into the Welland River from today’s Marineland, for it ran nowhere near Bridgewater. A more plausible explanation is that the “canal” was a channel or raceway conveying water to and from a mill. Raceways serviced the Bridgewater Mills and Street’s Mills located just upstream and downstream of the Dufferin Islands embayment, but even though they may have been referred to as canals they never belonged to Pell. And though Pell dealt in flour, there is no evidence that he had a grist mill, certainly not one anywhere near Bridgewater.

The most likely explanation is that Pell’s Canal was the torrent of water that used to flow through the embayment before the area was “tamed” to create the trickling creeks and tranquil ponds of today. As the map shows, one corner of Lot 190 in Stamford, which Joshua Pell bought in 1799, extended over this torrent, and though the overlap was small it may have been enough for the watercourse to become known informally as Pell’s Canal. After all, Pell was an important person, the torrent was quite dramatic, and his land overlooking the embayment occupied a very prominent location. If this argument seems far-fetched, consider the case of Dick’s Creek in St. Catharines, which is almost certainly named for Richard Pierpoint, one of the area’s earliest black settlers, even though the creek barely touched one corner of Pierpoint’s land.

**Principal Sources:** These are far too numerous and varied to list here, but are available on request.

**Credits:** map and layout (Loris Gasparotto); editing (John Burtiak); Pell lineage (Craig and Mary Hanyan); Chautauqua history (Michelle Henry and Devon Taylor).

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