

# The Historical Society of St. Catharines

# **NEWSLETTER**

## May 2000

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P.O. Box 23104, 124 Welland Ave., St. Catharines, ON, L2R 7P6

Web Site - <http://www.niagara.com/~dmdorey/hssc/hssc.html>

Our Mission and Goal is to increase the knowledge and appreciation of the history of St. Catharines and Vicinity. Affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society.

Membership is based upon the calendar year and dues are individual \$10 or family \$15.00.

Please join or renew now for the new 2000 membership year.

### *Our Upcoming Programs*

#### **Thursday, May 4 - H. Stewart Greavette will talk about Masonic History**

The meeting will be held at the Masonic Temple on Center Street (off Court). This is the final speaker in the Society's 1999-2000 program and is a unique opportunity for our members to tour the Temple and learn more about the Masons. Starts at 7:30 p.m.

#### **Saturday, May 13 - Our 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Oille Fountain Geranium Planting**

11:00 a.m. at the corner of King and James Streets, downtown.

#### **Saturday, June 17 - Our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Heritage Bus Tour**

A full day tour of the Fergus, Elora and Guelph Areas. See Details inside the newsletter.

#### **Saturday, July 1 - Merritt's Birthday Celebration and Walking Tour**

The Society will celebrate the birthday (which is actually July 3) of William Hamilton Merritt by joining several other groups in a wreath laying ceremony at the Merritt Statue on St. Paul Street at the foot of Yates Street. The program will begin at 1:00 p.m. and a Walking Tour of a downtown area, conducted by John Burtiak will follow at approximately 1:15.

#### **Thursday, September 28 - Colin Duquemin will be the Speaker.**

At 7:30 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum on the Welland Canals Parkway. (Note: The Society will now be meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month at the St. Catharines Museum.) Our speaker will tell us about his new book on the Rebellion of 1837 and the subsequent transportation of Chandler and Waite to VanDiemens Land (Tasmania).

#### **Thursday, October 26 - Speaker: John Roberts - "History of the Metis".**

John Roberts, U.E., Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Canadian Metis Council.

At 7:30 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum.

#### **Thursday, November 23 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Members' SHOW and TELL**

At 7:30 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum. Time to share your historic item!

**Thursday, January 25, 2001 - John Burtniak will be the guest speaker.**

At 7:30 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum. The topic will relate to postcards.

***Other Historical Events in St. Catharines & Area***

**May 1- October 31** - at the Mackenzie Heritage Printery, Queenston - feature exhibit - Johann Gutenberg - The Man of the Millenium - celebrating the invention of Movable Type and the beginning of the Information Age.

**May through July** - at Rodman Hall - Millenium Project Site

**Thursday, May 11** - Regular meeting and speaker of the Ontario Genealogical Society Niagara Peninsula Branch - 7:30 p.m. at the Thorold Public Library Chestnut Hall. The O.G.S. branch meets on the second Thursday of every month, usually at Chestnut Hall

**Saturday, May 27** - the Grimsby Historical Society will be holding a House Tour between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Tickets are \$12 and available by calling 945-9518 . A luncheon and tea will also be held at the Grimsby Museum.

**Saturday, May 27** - between 2:00 p.m. and 4 p.m. - the opening of the Military Museum in the Butlers Barracks in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

**May 27 to August 7 - At the St. Catharines Museum - 'Sights of History'**

A travelling exhibit from the Canadian Center for Contemporary Photography, Ottawa - follow the story of Canada through photography. Each exhibit a personal viewpoint of history both in pictures and in accompanying notes and remembrances.

**Saturday, August 19** - Bartholomew Tide 5<sup>th</sup> annual Book Arts Fair at the Mackenzie Heritage Printery between 10 a.m. & 4 p.m. is a show and sale by Private Press, Hand Bookbinders, Paper Makers and Wood Engravers. Come see the making of a book!

***Past Programs Prove Popular***

**March 2** - Alison Judd presented a slide show and speech highlighting the upcoming season at the Mackenzie Heritage Printery Museum. This facility is located in the former home of William Lyon Mackenzie in the village of Queenston. The museum's collection of heritage printing equipment lets you explore the five hundred-year history of letterpress printing technology. The rarest piece in the collection is Canada's oldest press known as the "Louis Roy" in honour of Upper Canada's First King's Printer. The English Common Press built in the 1760's printed Upper Canada's first newspaper, the 'Upper Canada Gazette' in 1793, in nearby Niagara-on-the-Lake. Hours of operation: May 1-June 16 - Daily 10-4 -closed Mondays (except holiday Monday when it is open); June 17-September 4 - Daily 10 a.m. -5 p.m.  
- - - Admission - Adult \$2.00, Children \$1.25.

**April 6** - Ron Williamson spoke on last years Butler Homestead Archaeological dig. Using slides, he carefully explained the site location and the evidence and artifacts found. You may recall that Past Pres. Wes Turner wrote an article for the Nov.'99 newsletter on his experience working 'The Dig'. Col. John Butler and the Butler's Rangers settled in the Niagara area after the American Revolution. Land grants to his troops were spread through Grantham Twp. as part of this settlement. This is perhaps one of the most

important finds in Canadian history, and attempts are being made to raise funds to buy the lands which are now part of a subdivision plan. The Society hopes that by having Ron speak, you will be encouraged to support efforts to preserve a very important Canadian hero's homestead site. Of special note, we were pleased to have Society member Barbara Gosen, a direct descendant of Col. Butler among the 63 people in attendance.

***Editorial (Or My Rant!)***

Our Society is relatively small in number, and from this small number we are usually able to get about 10 people to serve on the executive and board. These people volunteer and spend their valuable time in producing programs, a calendar, presenting the history awards, recording minutes, looking after the monies, etc. There are times when one questions why they would want to do this. However, the desire to promote history and see the group survive eventually outweighs the thought of not participating. To those who volunteer to run the Society, I congratulate you.

I would encourage members to continue their support of history in St. Catharines. Perhaps you have writing ability? If so why not research a person, item, story and write it up for the newsletter (it would make my job a lot easier). Why not find a topic and write a speech? Why not jot down a topic or speaker that you feel would be of interest to the members and send it to us. When was the last time you recruited a new member? We need members to present the history award at 9 high schools. We could use another active director or even a recording secretary. Come out to the meetings, listen to the speakers, share in the socials, participate in the events, offer suggestions, enjoy the newsletter or simply continue your membership.

Your membership is a show of support for the efforts of the Society. Your level of involvement is up to you, but I certainly hope that there is enough offered that you do value your membership.

*Ed. (Bill Stevens)*

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***Society News In Brief***

**Membership** - We welcome new members: June GREEN, Vaughan DOUGLAS, Del HILDEBRAND, Craig SMITH, Tom DENNISON. As of April 22, the Society has 96 paid up members and 30 non-renewals. **In Memoriam** - We are sad to announce the Society lost a long time member when Judith BAGG passed away on Tuesday, January 18, 2000.

**Donation to Museum**- the Society is pleased to have made a \$250.00 donation to the St. Catharines Museum Development Fund.

**Meeting Night and Location** - beginning in September, the Society will be meeting on the fourth Thursday of the month at the St. Catharines Museum located on the Welland Canals Parkway (formerly Government Road) at Lock 3. These changes were thoroughly discussed by the Board of Directors. Reasons for the change was meeting costs, conflicts with other group's nights, complaints received about parking and the meeting room. It was felt that the museum location should not be a deterrent for anyone to come out and hear a speaker. The roadway has a good surface, street lighting has been added and the parking is ample, free and well lit. The Burgoyne room is new, a bit bigger and less expensive. The Historical Society was instrumental in the founding of the museum and the connection to the museum has been lost over the years, and it is hoped that the move will benefit both the museum and the Society. Like any change, some will not agree and the directorship can not possibly please everyone with a change such as this, however until we have experienced the change, we can only be positive in our decision.

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**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 historical items of interests. 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.

The Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture & Recreation.

*Next Issue August 2000*

### *Minutes of the Annual General Meeting - Thursday, April 6, 2000*

The meeting was held in the Mills Room of the Centennial Branch of the St. Catharines Public Library, Church Street, St. Catharines.

**Call to Order:** Vice President John Burtniak called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. with a quorum present (25% required) of the paid up membership of 90.

**President's Report:** John welcomed everyone for coming out for the annual meeting and the interest shown in local history. John explained that the President, Joyce DeForest was unable to attend and that he would be conducting the meeting in her absence.

**Minutes of the Previous Annual General Meeting:** Secretary Bill Stevens advised that copies of the minutes were available, and that the minutes of the Annual Meeting were published in the May 1999 newsletter. It was then - Moved by Bill Stevens, 2nd by Tom Jenkyns that the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held Thursday, April 1, 1999 be approved. Carried.

**Financial Report:** Treasurer Tom Jenkyns presented the 1999 Year end Financial Report, dated December 31, 1999. Copies were distributed. A signed copy is attached to the minutes.

The following is a brief summary:

Total Assets at January 1, 2000 = \$8211.76

Total Receipts in 1999 = \$6448.33

Total Disbursements in 1999 = \$9891.10

Total Assets at December 31, 1999 = **\$4768.99**

The Assets breakdown is as follows:

Bank Balance = \$2371.71 cash, less 1 outstanding cheque in the amount of \$102.72, for a net bank balance of **\$2268.99** cash and **\$2500.00** invested in Guaranteed Investment Certificates for a total of \$4768.99.

Moved by Alex Ormston, 2nd by Avril Brass that the Annual Financial Statement dated December 31, 1999 be approved. Carried.

**Membership Report:** John reported membership stood at 90.

**Society Coming Events:** John reported on upcoming events:

- May 4th meeting will be held at the Masonic Temple and Stewart Greavette will be the host and speaker.
- Oille Fountain Geranium Planting - will be the 24th annual planting.
- Bus Trip will be to Fergus, Elora and Guelph.
- William Hamilton Merritt's birthday will be celebrated at 1 p.m. on July 1st, followed by a

downtown walking tour.

**Meeting Location Change:** John raised the issue of moving the meetings to the St. Catharines Museum. John explained the Board's reasons for the change and invited comments from the floor. There was a brief discussion and there appeared to be no major objection to the move.

*Minutes of Annual Meeting continue ...  
... Minutes of Annual Meeting continue*

**Meeting Night Change:** John then advised that the 4th Thursday of the month had been chosen as the new meeting night, which would be in most months, one week earlier. The next meeting will be September 28.

***Nominations and Elections:***

John turned the meeting over to Wes Turner, chair of the nominating committee.

Wes explained that the executive positions were two-year terms and that the second year was still to be served. Wes then advised that the Treasurer was stepping down and an election for that position would be held. Wes then advised that the Directors were elected for a one-year term and that 2 to 6 directors could be elected.

Wes presented the nomination slate for Directors: Dennis Gannon, Paul Hutchinson, Jim Purdie and Brenda Zadoroznij. Wes then called for nominations for the Treasurers position and for two additional directors. New member Delmer (Del) Hildebrand offered his name for the position of treasurer. No further nominations were received.

Moved by Wes Turner, seconded by Brenda Zadoroznij that the nominations be closed and that the slate of candidates for the Board of Directors consisting of Dennis Gannon, Paul Hutchinson, Jim Purdie and Brenda Zadoroznij be elected and that Del Hildebrand be elected as treasurer.  
Carried

The meeting was turned over to John Burtniak.

John thanked Tom Jenkyns for his work for the Society as Treasurer; Avril Brass for her many years of faithful service to the Board, as treasurer and membership chair, and to Wendy Robson for filling in on membership for the past several months.

***Further Business:*** no further business was brought forward.

The formal meeting portion was closed at 7:34 p.m.  
62 people were in attendance at this time.

***Guest Speaker:*** John Burtniak introduced Ron Williamson. Ron is an archaeologist and his topic was the Butler Homestead Site in Niagara-On-The-Lake. He showed a series of slides of the articles found and explained the significance of the site to Ontario's history. The presentation lasted one hour and questions followed. Wes Turner thanked Ron.

***Social and Refreshments:*** the meeting ended at 9:00 p.m. following a social and refreshments.

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***The Niagara Mailing List***

This is an Internet site devoted to genealogy and history in Niagara. You can post short e-mail messages, place a query, answer a query from someone else, read about some current news, etc. To subscribe you simply e-mail the List:

[NIAGARA-ONT-L-request@rootsweb.com](mailto:NIAGARA-ONT-L-request@rootsweb.com)

And in the body of your message, simply write ... subscribe. You will be notified that you have joined and provided with instructions on posting and to unsubscribe.

### *Spindle City Historic Society*

Located in Cohoes, New York, the Spindle City Historic Society, like ours produces a newsletter for its members. Two members of their Society became members of our St. Catharines society last summer: June and Walter Cherniak. In their Winter 1999/2000 - Vol.2 Issue 4 Newsletter the following article appeared: " ST. CATHARINES HISTORIC CANADIAN SPA CITY" - a picture of the SPRINGBANK HOTEL - " A few members of the Spindle City Historic Society visited Ontario, Canada early this July. While in the city of St. Catharines, we happened upon a group from the St. Catharines Historical Society, just beginning a morning walking tour to former spa hotel sites. We were warmly welcomed by the Canadians, and were invited to come along for the tour.

St. Catharines, on the shores of Lake Ontario, was once home to several spas popular during the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. People visited for the supposed salubrious effects of the waters from nearby springs, much as others journeyed to our local spa sites Saratoga Springs, Sharon Springs, or Ballston Spa. We visited the sites of four former spa hotels, including the Stephenson House, the first spa hotel in St. Catharines, opened in 1855, the Springbank Hotel, the Welland House, and the St. Catharines House. Unfortunately, only the Welland House, now used by a school, remains standing. The other great spa hotels have been lost to fire or demolition (a problem, alas, clearly not confined to Cohoes). A history of the heyday of the city's spas, titled Taking the Waters: A history of the Spas of St. Catharines, has been written by Sheila Wilson, and provided a nice complement to the tour. We also visited several other historic sites in the city during the morning's walk.

We found the tour quite interesting and appreciated the welcome we received from members of a fellow historical society. We joined the St. Catharines Historical society and now regularly receive the group's newsletter and send them copies of our own. We hope that they enjoy reading it as much as we enjoy their publication!"

Cohoes, New York is located just north east of Albany, on the west side of the Hudson River and south of the Mohawk River, at the junction of the two rivers.

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### ***"Taking the Waters: a History of the Spas of St. Catharines"***

ISBN 0-9685082

The Society is very pleased to offer this publication for sale to members at \$13.00 at Society meetings or \$15.00 by post. The book can also be purchased at regular price (\$15.00) from the following bookstores: Chapters, Hannelore Headley's, and the St. Catharines Museum gift shop. We thank these stores for their support in stocking this book

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### ***1999 and 2000 Calendars are Still Available***

The annual calendar project began with the 1994 calendar and it has been a success each year by selling out... except for the year 1999, when a larger print run was made. Over time, we have had requests for calendars from past years and have not been able to provide them. We do however have 17 - 1999 calendars still available and will mail them out for \$4.00. There are 3- 2000 Calendars left and these are available at \$5.00 by post.

### ***2001 Calendar Project***

Do you have any old pictures of St. Catharines we can use for the 2001 calendar?

### ***The Children's Discovery Centre of Niagara***

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> a Media Conference and Reception was held at the St. Catharines Museum to launch the Children's Discovery Centre of Niagara (CDCN). The Centre will be a not-for-profit charitable corporation located in the former Buchanan House at 360 Niagara Street. It will house exhibits, programs, and feature a dinosaur discovery. There will be outdoor programs as well, and an arboretum. This unique site in a park like setting has ample parking and will certainly be a great facility for school children and residents of our area.

The organizers of this project have set out to raise \$1,000,000 to renovate the buildings, construct galleries, and equip the facility. This is a daunting task, and you can help them make their fund raising target .... donations are now being accepted payable to CDCN .... Mailing address: Children's Discovery Centre of Niagara, Suite 358, 111 Fourth Ave., St. Catharines, L2S 3P5.

### ***Simcoe Day***

Monday, August 7 is a Civic Holiday in St. Catharines. In Toronto and several other municipalities it is known as Simcoe Day in honour of John Graves SIMCOE, 1752-1806, Canada's first lieutenant governor. Simcoe is buried with his wife and five of their nine children on his former estate of Wolford in Devon, England. When Simcoe died, his estate passed into hands of relatives, and the chapel fell into disrepair. In 1926, Sir Leicester Harmsworth purchased the estate and restored the chapel. In 1966 Sir Geoffrey Harmsworth, his son, presented the chapel and a small piece of surrounding land to the Province of Ontario. A neighbour, Mr. Le Marchant, granted a right-of-way over a laneway and this is marked with a sign on the Dunkeswell road about 6 km from Honiton, Devon. The small stone chapel has an Ontario historic site marker proclaiming the site. A piece of Canada's history preserved by an Englishman.

The Historical Society of St. Catharines is on record as supporting the renaming of Civic Holiday to Simcoe Day. No lands need to be donated, no plaque needs to be erected and only a few dollars for some ads is required for our City politicians to recognize Simcoe here.

### ***Port Dalhousie - Where the Canals Began! - Items from Port***

***Reunion*** - "Blast From The Past 2" - Henley Island - June 24, 2000 - the organizers are looking for persons aged 35 to 135 years old who resided in Port Dalhousie from 1965 or before. It is anticipated that 1500 people will be attending. Time: 3:00 p.m. until ????. Dress is casual. Cost: \$15.00 per person. There is a web site to check out all the current information and to find out how to register: [www.portdalhousie.net](http://www.portdalhousie.net)

**Heritage District** - The City of St. Catharines has retained a consultant to begin documenting Port Dalhousie's heritage streetscape. The firm Archeological Services will also have to recommend the boundaries of the heritage district. If the area is designated, it would become one of the largest heritage districts in the province.

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### ***Heritage Hour Expands on CFBU - FM 103.7 - Brock U. Radio***

Join host Tony Whelan each Sunday between 7:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. and listen to Niagara Heritage Hour. The show has expanded to 1 1/2 hours and features coming events, news & guests from the local heritage community. Be sure to listen in!

### ***The St. John Family***

The following is an outline of the lineage of Samuel Leonard St. John, a merchant in St. Catharines during the mid- and late 19th century. Joe Eddleman, a St. John descendant who lives in South Carolina, obtained this information. Persons seeking or offering further information about the St. John family may reach Mr. Eddleman at <joeedleman@charleston.net>

**Samuel St. John** b. 06/15/1753, Sharon, Conn., (son of Mark St. John and Anne Gay) m. 01/06/1774, in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Lois Hamilton, b. 05/10/1756, Kent, Conn., (daughter of John Hamilton and Susanna Slosson) d. 05/30/1849, St. Catharines, Canada, buried: St. Catharines, Canada. Samuel died 10/06/1785, Amenia, New York, buried: Amenia burying ground. In Rev. War pension files it says that Samuel served with his wife's brother, Eliakim Hamilton who made affidavit in Tioga, NY 3/22/1843 at age 85. A Seth Hamilton was at their wedding. Widow applied 11/2/1842 at Niagara, NY age 86 in May of 1842. Lois: She joined the church in Stockbridge, Mass. in 1803.

Among his sons was. **Samuel St. John** (1.Samuel1) b. 02/27/1778, Stockbridge, Massachusetts, m. in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Lydia Potter, b. 07/10/1777, Westport, Massachusetts, (daughter of Oliver Potter and Elizabeth Claghorn) d. 08/26/1849, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Samuel died 05/19/1866, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, buried: St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.

Children:

- i **Samuel Oliver St. John** b. 09/18/1808, d. cir.1811.
- ii **Mary Ann St. John** b. 10/22/1809.
- iii **Samuel Leonard St. John** b. 07/28/1820.

The last of those three children was **Samuel Leonard St. John** (3.Samuel2, 1.Samuel1) b. 07/28/1820, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, occupation Banker/retail store, m. 10/12/1848, Martha Ann Seaman, b. 04/21/1828, Hempstead, Long Island, New York, (daughter of Benjamin Seaman and Jane Rhinehart) d. 03/25/1902, Chicago, Illinois, buried: 03/27/1902, Victoria Lawn Cemetery. Samuel died 05/02/1881, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, buried: 05/04/1881, Victoria Lawn Cemetery. Martha: Group photo of Martha Ann St. John, Uncle Fred and William Downey (on back).

Samuel Leonard St. John had nine children:

- i **Lydia St. John** b. 09/15/1849.
- ii **Frederick St. John** b. 04/05/1851, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, occupation lawyer, d. 1922. Frederick St. John died unmarried. He was born at 5:00am. Dr. Mack in attendance.
- iii **Leonard St. John** b. 09/28/1852, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, occupation doctor, m. 10/11/1877, Anna Betsy Balch, (daughter of Ebenezer Harmon Balch and Sarah Wood) d. 02/11/1891. Leonard died 1920. Leonard St. John had no issue.
- iv **Mary St. John** b. 06/19/1855.
- v **Martha St. John** b. 10/12/1857.
- vi **Jennie St. John** b. 06/13/1860.
- vii **Agnes St. John** b. 06/06/1862, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, d. 12/20/1926, Paris, France.



Agnes St. John died unmarried. Born a few minutes past 12 in the morning at the Rykert house corner of Chestnut and St. Paul St. Dr. Cross, Mrs. Alpheus St. John, Mrs. Winchester and Nurse Mrs. Dale present.

viii **Richard Collier St. John** b. 12/05/1865, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, m. (1) 01/29/1889, in Princeton, New Jersey, Trinity Church, Julia Romana Stockton, b. 05/27/1861, Rome, Italy, (daughter of John Potter Stockton and Sarah Marks) d. 11/08/1905, m. (2) Dorothy Kitching. Richard died 1925. Julia: Julia Stockton was the daughter of the Attorney General of New Jersey, the granddaughter of Commodore Stockton and the great granddaughter of Richard Stockton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Allegedly no issue

ix **Arthur St. John** b. 06/18/1869, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, d. 02/06/1873, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Believed to have drowned, according to family tradition.

### ***New Book - A Stolen Life: Searching For Richard Pierpoint.***

A book review as published in OHS BULLETIN issue 124 - April 2000

By David Meyler and Peter Meyler. Natural Heritage Books. 141 Pages. Illustrations. \$19.95. softbound. Only few specifics are known about Richard Pierpoint born in Bundu (now part of Senegal), captured and enslaved in 1760, brought to America and sold to a British officer, owned in New York State, served as a Loyalist with Butler's Rangers, emigrated to Canada and (at age over 70) in military service again with the Coloured Corps of the War of 1812, eventually granted land in Garafraxa, and died in 1837. The authors have combined their knowledge of military history and their research into African culture and the slave trade to flesh out a full and fascinating story.

*Bill's note:* I purchased and read this book and found it quite interesting how the authors pieced together events in history to form a possible biography of this individual. The book is available locally at Chapters Book Store.

### ***Petition By Pierpoint, 21 July 1821***

Source: Guelph Museums: Black History Exhibit

Now of the Town of Niagara a Man of Color, a native of Africa and an inhabitant of this Province Most humbly Sheweth, That your Excellency 's Petitioner is a native of Bondou in Africa; that at the age of sixteen years he was made a Prisoner and Sold as a Slave; that he was conveyed to America about the year 1760, and sold to a British officer; that he served His Majesty during the American Revolutionary War in the Corps called Butler's Rangers; and again during the late American War in a Corps of Color raised on the Niagara Frontier. That your Excellency 's Petitioner is now old and without property that he finds it difficult to obtain a livelihood by his labor; that he is above all things desirous to return to his native country; that His Majesty's Government be graciously pleased to grant him any relief; he wishes it may be affording him the means to proceed to England and from hence to a Settlement near the Gambia or Sengal Rivers, from whence he could return to Bondou.

Your Excellency's Petitioner therefore humbly prays that Your Excellency will be graciously pleased to take his case into your favorable consideration and order such steps to be taken to have him sent as to Your Excellency may seem \_\_\_\_\_; or to afford him relief in any manner Your Excellency may be graciously pleased to order.

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***Your Membership in the Society***

As a member of the Historical Society, you help to promote the goals and mission of the Society: which is to promote the awareness of the history of St.Catharines and Vicinity  
Dues are: Individual - \$10.00; Family - \$15.00 - membership is for the calendar year.

Make cheques payable to: The Historical Society of St.Catharines. the Society is seeking your membership renewal for 2000. Please mail your dues to the Society Postal Box shown on the newsletter front page.

Please mail your membership to:

The Historical Society of St. Catharines  
P.O. Box 23104, 124 Welland Avenue  
St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 7P6

### ***The Osage Orange Tree***

The Osage Orange tree is quite rare in the Carolinian forest area of Southern Ontario. I only know of two locations in Niagara and both stands exist in the vicinity of Brock University. There is a very visible row that lines the south side of the road into Brock, which is the extension of St. David's Road. The tree is not native to Canada; a few early pioneer settlers brought it into Canada. The tree only grows to 30 feet here, although slightly higher in the Southern USA. It is thought that the tree was first found in Oklahoma and Texas and named after the Osage Indians of that area. The Indians used the branches for bows, as the wood is very elastic and does not easily rot.

The trunk of the tree has lots of low branches, which have sharp inch long thorns at the base of the leaves. It is this feature that prompted the pioneers to grow these trees in rows in order to keep their animals confined to their fields. The branches being low and the thick bark prevented cows from destroying the trees by rubbing their backs on the trunk as with several other tree varieties. Planting a hedgerow of Osage Orange trees was very easy for settlers, as they grew quickly and shoots grow from the fallen fruit on their own.

There are male and female trees and this is needed to produce the fruit. The fruit look like deformed oranges or scrambled brains and is a greenish orange in colour. The fruit is not edible. The fruit is quite hard until rotten, and smells like orange peel. It contains citronella a natural insect repellent and settlers used them for that purpose. They were tucked into bedding areas to repel insects and they were used as moth repellent as well. They were gathered and dried to a hard 2 inch ball and used until the next crop in late fall.

As I mentioned only a handful of these trees remain in Southern Ontario and the few that remain are a forgotten reminder of early nineteenth century farm life.

### ***The Riordon Family***

If you have any information on the Riordon Family, I am preparing an article for a coming newsletter. Please let me know... Bill Stevens [bibmstev@computan.on.ca](mailto:bibmstev@computan.on.ca)

### ***A Note From Our Web Site Guest Book***

Record 39 - Name: Janice - From: Victoria - Comments: A wonderful site, I was surfing round for information on my great aunts, all with the last name of Ansley who lived in St. Catharines and ran a home for the mentally challenged on Niagara Parkway. They have all since

past on and I believe are buried somewhere in the area. Some of the family attended St. Catherine's High School and I was wondering if the school was still around from what would have been the early 1900's. I remember a wonderful summer in both areas in the 1960's. Keep up the good work!

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***Our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Bus Tour - Saturday, June 17***

The modern highway bus will leave Fairview Mall at **8:30 a.m.** (from the parking area behind Food Basics) and return about 4:30 p.m. We will be touring the Col. John McCrae Home, a National Historic Site in Guelph, then travel through Fergus to Elora. You will have a couple of hours to sight see in Elora and have lunch on your own at one of the many eateries there. We will then head back to Guelph and tour the Guelph Civic Museum. Along the way we will provide historical commentary.

Cost: Members \$28.00 - Non-members \$35.00 -- For reservations call: Joyce at 685-4728.