

HERITAGE HAPPENINGS



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Please note that we did not publish a Summer newsletter this year.

WEFHS Board 2020-2021

The position of Treasurer remains open. Please contact us if you are interested—or know of someone who is.

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September

Over the summer your Board of Directors continued to meet (while staying safe!) to discuss how we can keep our Society viable and visible during these uncertain times. The Archives is what most people focus on and we would like to explain why it is not open to the public, even though it is housed within a library that is open.

It is not really possible to social distance in our Archives. When people use the library, there is very little interaction with the staff, there is self check-out, and the reading material has been quarantined for 72 hours. There is enough space for people to move around and stay two metres apart.

Our Archives is located within a small space and with one staff person on duty, there would only be room for one other person. Due to the nature of archival research, the patron interacts with the archivist, materials change hands, and often there is a need to explain the material and get closer than two metres. Original documents cannot be cleaned or sanitized.

As per City of Hamilton requirements, we would need to provide hand sanitizer, masks, and gloves, and clean all surfaces after each visit. The average age of our volunteers is over 70; most are over 75, and they are not comfortable with personal visits at the moment. Some members of their families have compromised immune systems, which increases risk.

We also cannot install plexiglass barriers as has been done in the rest of the building, as we don't have a budget for that. While we adhere to City of Hamilton and Hamilton Library Board rules and regulations, we are fiscally and physically responsible for the activity that takes place within our space.

Most Archives have opted to remain closed to in-person visits until further notice, so we are not alone in making this decision.

Archives volunteers are happy to respond to email, telephone, and social media queries.

And on that note, be sure to check us out online. We have increased and enhanced our social media presence. We are active on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Our website has also been tweaked and more content is being added every day!

Snake Road

HERITAGE PAPER #290

Long known as one of the most scenic roads in the Hamilton area, Snake Road today climbs the Niagara Escarpment between Plains Road and Waterdown in a series of twists and turns over a length of road that is one of the oldest in the province. So called, not because of the presence of snakes which were frequently the dread of early settlers, but because of the winding route the road is forced to take to make the ascent of the steep face of the escarpment.

Long before European settlers arrived at the Head-of-the-Lake, this route way was a well-worn trail used by the First Nations people in the journey between their established camps in the northern part of the township, including the Lake Medad area, and their hunting and summer fishing grounds below the escarpment and along the shoreline of Burlington Bay.

During the last decade of the 18th century, as Provincial Land Surveyors completed their work and Loyalists and European settlers finally began to spread out from Niagara and move along the shoreline of the lake to take up their land grants, few ventured as far as the Township of East Flamborough. Not only was the distance from Niagara a great hardship, but the problem of ascending the escarpment was even greater. Entry via Valley Road and later along Dundas Street when the eastern branch of the road through Nelson Township was opened in 1805, eventually assisted settlers in reaching their assigned properties.

While the old Indian route was still in existence, it was nothing more than a trail and completely unsuited to horse and wagon transportation.

As the Village of Waterdown began to develop during the 1830s and 1840s along Dundas Street and along the banks of Grindstone Creek, products shipped from the mills and out through Alexander Brown's small wharf on Burlington Bay were transported by teamsters using the gentler grade of Waterdown Road.

In fact, the Snake Road trail remained virtually unused by early Waterdown residents until 1853, when James Kent Griffin, son of Waterdown entrepreneur Ebenezer Culver Griffin, funded and constructed a toll road to provide a link between Hamilton, Waterdown, and eventually Carlisle and Milton.



Snake Road c. 1905

As the 1850s dawned, James Kent Griffin initiated a number of radical changes along the five-mile stretch of road that originated at the south end of the village of Waterdown and descended down the escarpment to the western end of Burlington Bay. Known to the villagers but rarely used due to its precarious sections that were only suitable for foot travel, Griffin came to view it as the answer to connecting Waterdown with Hamilton.

Built entirely at his own expense, the road was extremely difficult to construct and equally difficult to maintain, owing to the numerous washouts and slides that frequently occurred after heavy rains.

Unlike other roads constructed at the time, Griffin used gravel for the surface, almost certainly obtained from his deceased father's Waterdown quarries. Although the more refined plank road was popular with road builders and turnpike companies of the time, the use of these materials in the reconstruction of the steep and twisting Snake Road was both impractical and unsuitable.

While Griffin initially paid for the road project, he certainly came to benefit from it. Following the official opening in 1853, it became a toll road, ensuring that its construction and all future costs involved with its upkeep were paid by the users.

And pay they did. Now the stretch of road allowed all forms of traffic, especially farm wagons from as far away as Kilbride, Freelton, and Carlisle, to transport their produce to the Hamilton Market.

To collect the tariffs, Griffin established a tollgate at the Valley Inn and various fees were charged for use of the road. Sheep, pigs, ducks, and goats cost 1 cent each, a saddle horse and its rider paid 4 cents and a loaded vehicle drawn by two horses or "other beasts of draught" was charged 10 cents. Possibly Griffin's strict Methodist upbringing prompted the ruling that no tolls were to be charged for people accompanying a funeral, going to church, or attending a prayer meeting.

Extending through the Waterdown in 1854, the section was originally known as the Griffin or Gravel Road. The extension crossed Dundas Street and continued northwards to link with Centre Road, just north of the 4th Concession (Parkside Drive today).

One development resulting from Griffin's new road was that all housing built after 1854 faced onto what is now Main Street North; prior to this, the few village houses that had been built north of Dundas Street had driveways linking them directly to Dundas Street.

Stage coaches travelled Snake Road and Centre Road between Milton and Hamilton and multiple hotels were built along the way. But as time went on, many of the historic buildings and landmarks along the Snake Road disappeared or changed in appearance so that their original importance to travelers has now been forgotten. The narrow width, numerous bends, and steep ascent made it unsuitable for heavy vehicular use.

With the coming of the railway in 1912, the construction of bridges on Highway #2 at the Rock Gardens and Wolfe Island in 1926 and 1927, and the opening of Highway #6 North through the Clappison Cut in 1921-23, Snake Road became little more than a local route providing a picturesque drive for motorists and cyclists.



Bad Turn on Snake Road Before Improvement 1928

By Sylvia Wray.
Originally published in 'From the Vault', Flamborough Review. 2007.

Treasures from the Archives

As we work to add information to our Flamborough Business Inventory, we often come across names of businesses that we have not heard before. This week we found some in 1990s issues of the Flamborough Review.

Main Street, 307 Dundas Street — This seems to have been a clothing store but there is no real information in the ad.

Phase 1 Restaurant, Hwy. 5 — We know that it had a fire on December 22, 1994 and it was next door to the Door Dudes.

The Holly & the Ivy, 323 Dundas St. E. — This was a gift store that carried items such as chocolates, teas, jewellery, perfume, etc.

If anyone can provide any information on these businesses — owners, years they were open, etc. — it would be appreciated.

**The Home of
The Personality Hair Cuts
Is
OPENING**

At their new place of business in the
LANGFORD BUILDING
4 Main Street North
Thursday, August 9th

Our old lease has expired after ten years. In our New location I hope to give you good service for the next 50 years. I may be a little shaky by that time, but will make no extra charge for the shake. We are looking forward to the pleasure of serving you.

NO CHANGE IN PRICES OR HOURS
We invite you to come more often

BERT L. CLUTE
This is a Union Shop

Flamborough Review ad—August 9, 1956

FLAMBOROUGH NEWS—30 YEARS AGO IN SEPTEMBER

- ◆ The Freelon Lions Club received the go-ahead from the Wentworth County School Board to apply to the Town of Flamborough for a zoning change on the Beechgrove School property. The Lions hoped to build a 20-30 unit seniors' geared-to-income housing project.
- ◆ Flamborough Councillors wanted the Hamilton-Wentworth police to open a detachment in Flamborough as crime was on the increase. There had been 76 illegal entries into houses and apartments in Flamborough so far in 1990.
- ◆ H & R Enterprises Wood Stoves and Satellites said that Canadians were 'cocooning', spending more time at home with family. They were buying 'new air-tight woodstoves which combined the heating efficiency of today's technology with the romance of a traditional wood-burning stove.' Along with staying home by the fire, they were also buying top-of-the-line large satellite dishes with a decoder to watch television programs beamed by over 200 channels. Installation was just under \$4,000.



Waterdown Village Built Heritage Inventory

[Link to City of Hamilton web page](#)

The Waterdown Inventory is an initiative to update the City of Hamilton's database of information on heritage buildings in the village. The goal is to evaluate each property to determine if it has cultural heritage value or interest that should be recognized by adding it to the Municipal Heritage Register or further evaluated for potential designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.

The Waterdown inventory is being conducted in parallel with the [Waterdown Community Node Secondary Plan](#) and will help form the Plan policies and the development of urban design guidelines that will guide future change and development in the village.

Understanding the History of the Village

To understand the origin, evolution, and historic patterns that define Waterdown, research has been done to identify key milestones and themes that helped shape its settlement and village development. Seven major eras in the village's history have been identified:

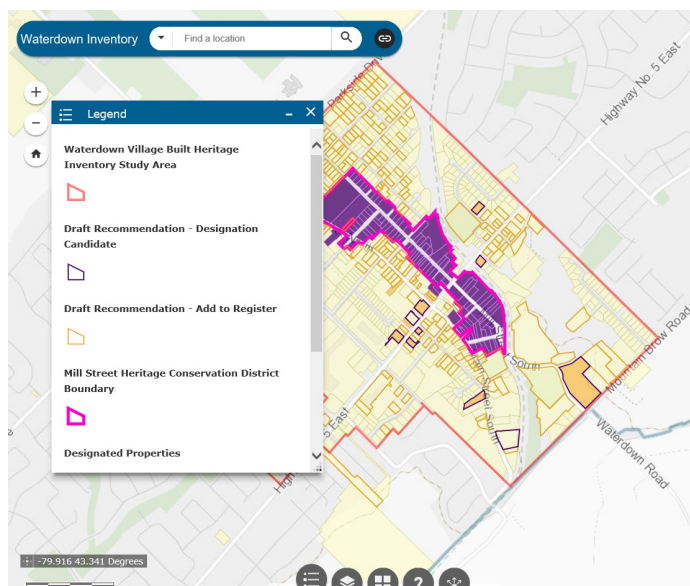
- ◆ 7,500 BCE—1600s : Indigenous Presence
- ◆ 1660s—1810s: Military Influence and Euro-Canadian Settlement
- ◆ 1820s—1860s: Mill development and Village Establishment
- ◆ 1870s—1900s: Village Incorporation and Stability
- ◆ 1910s—1940s: A Time of Unrest and Great Change
- ◆ 1950s—1960s: Residential Intensification
- ◆ 1970s—2010s: Development, Amalgamation and Identity

View a story map outlining the [history of the Village of Waterdown](#)

Preliminary Evaluations

Each property in the study area has been assigned according to its contribution to the historic context of the village. The classification identifies properties that are historical, aesthetic or cultural landmarks of considerable heritage value (Significant Built Resources), as well as those whose heritage value lies primarily in the contribution they make to their historic context (Character-Defining Resources and Character-Supporting Resources).

The City web page features an interactive map that shows the draft recommendations based on the preliminary property evaluations and classifications.



THREADS THROUGH THE PAST

By Lyn Lunsted

Woodhill

On the afternoon of July 10, 2020 a vacant house went up in flames. It was arson. The fire destroyed a piece of history that can never be recovered and we are poorer because of it.

'Woodhill' is an estate located on the brow of the Niagara Escarpment facing south overlooking Burlington Bay and Hamilton. On February 7, 1834 Scottish lawyer and agriculturalist Adam Fergusson purchased 122 acres in Lot 4, Concession 2 in the Township of East Flamborough for £ 256.5, naming it after his birthplace in Perthshire, Scotland. Ten years later he bought just over 10 acres in Lot 3.

Adam Fergusson was a man of great vision. Initially coming to Canada in 1831 to assess local farming techniques for the Highland Society of Scotland, he returned in 1833 with his wife and six of his seven sons to settle here. He became deeply involved in efforts to improve agriculture in Canada. He was the first president of the Agricultural Association of Upper Canada in 1846 (the forerunner of the Canadian National Exhibition) and helped establish the Upper Canada Veterinary School, which later became the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph.

With James Webster, he purchased 7,000 acres in the Township of Nichol and founded the town of Fergus, Ontario in 1834, building grist- and sawmills and then turning over management duties to his son George. He commanded a militia unit during the Upper Canada Rebellion in 1837. These, along with his involvement with the Gore Bank of Hamilton and the Canada Life Assurance Company, and serving as the Chair of Agriculture at the University of Toronto, ensured that his influence was long-lasting.

His wife died in 1856 and Adam Fergusson died in 1862. Along with his son Adam Johnston Fergusson-Blair they are buried in The Fergusson Plot in St. Luke's Cemetery in Burlington, Ontario.

The lower part of the Township of East Flamborough became part of the City of Burlington in 1958. The Burlington Historical Society became concerned about the future of the property given its proximity to the Waterdown South development plan which is scheduled to have 3,500 residential units, a four-lane arterial road, collector roads, churches, schools and a commercial area. In 2008 the house was designated by the City of Burlington under the Ontario Heritage Act as a Grade A heritage property.



'Woodhill' c. 1930

The house and outbuildings were built of local stone and the house was covered in stucco. It was large, about 5,000 square feet, had walls at least 16 inches thick and baseboards that were 12-16 inches high. It is thought that Woodhill was built in three phases progressing from the southernmost part of the building northward. A new gable end was added after 1946. Almost every room had a fireplace and there was a well in the basement. It was built in the Regency style—unpretentious, well proportioned, detailed, symmetry of floor plan, low hip roof, long lines of French windows and situated for splendid views.

The property was a working farm. There was an ice house and a drive-shed, a woodlot and grazing

land for sheep and cattle. The barn was lost in 2006. The vegetation on the lot has been carefully preserved as a natural habitat. The land south of the house lies within the Sassafras-Waterdown Woods Area of Natural and Scientific Interest, a Provincial designation. The land north of the house lies within the Waterdown Escarpment Woods Environmentally Significant Area, which is a municipal designation.

The house had been vacant but an “urban explorer” posted a video of the property — both interior and exterior — in February 2020. Much of the original interior still existed and the bones of the house were clear.

The author of the Heritage Evaluation Study done in 2008, D.R. Chalykoff, included the following in the recommendations:

“Discussions should be opened between the University of Guelph and the Federal Government to enter into joint maintenance of this property as a property of national interest to Canada and of particular interest to both Burlington and the University.”

This did not happen, and a part of our history has been lost.

A Heritage Designation protects a building from substantial changes and/or demolition without prior consultation. If an owner allows a building to fall into disrepair and become uninhabitable, the designation is meaningless.

With files from Flamborough Archives and Burlington Historical Society.



‘Woodhill’ 1997. Photo by Maurice Green for The Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society ©

**The Flamborough
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The Flamborough Heritage Society



NEWS FROM THE SOCIETY

September is always the beginning of our Heritage Society season, but this September message is definitely not a usual one.

The Society wants to ensure the safety of our volunteers and the community and be as cautious as possible, so we have opted to cancel our regular public meetings until at least the new year. This means that we have also had to cancel this year's Book Fair, our biggest fundraiser of the year.

For the time being, we have also opted to close the Archives for in-person visits in order to keep our volunteers safe and to protect the Society's collections.

The board has been brainstorming other ways of sharing our local history, so keep an eye on our website and social media accounts as we publish more information on our updated website. All of our handles and links are listed at the left side of this page.

Make sure you stop by online and share your comments on our posts.

Please renew your membership. Especially during these times—every dollar counts.

Chris Rivait
President

AREA SOCIETY WEBSITES

The **Ancaster Township Historical Society** -

www.ancasterhistory.ca

The **Burlington Historical Society** -

www.burlingtonhistorical.ca

The **Dundas Valley Historical Society** -

www.dundashistory.ca

The **Grimsby Historical Society** -

[Grimsby Historical Society](http://GrimsbyHistoricalSociety)

The **Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society**-

www.hamiltonheritage.ca

The **Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society** -

[Head of the Lake Historical Society](http://HeadoftheLakeHistoricalSociety)

The **United Empire Loyalists' Association of
Canada, Hamilton Branch** - www.uel.com

The **West Lincoln Historical Society** - www.wlhs.info