

Heritage Happenings

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<i>Rockton's 'Poet of the People': The Life of Robert Kirkland Kernighan</i>	<i>Current projects and more!</i>	<i>Both online and in person</i>	<i>Memories</i>	<i>Plus other local society websites & our contact info</i>



April's Monthly Meeting

The Flamborough Heritage Society will feature a presentation on Auchmar House Manor by Diane Dent, Apr. 26th at 8:00PM, in person at the Waterdown Legion.

The Annual General Meeting of the Flamborough Heritage Society will be followed by a presentation on Auchmar House Manor.

Diane Dent is the president of The Friends of Auchmar House. The group is committed to the history, preservation, conservation, rehabilitation and continued use of Auchmar Manor House. Diane will be joining us to share the history of the Manor, starting with the purchase of the land in 1854 by Isaac Buchanan. She will also tell us about the work that went into restoring the building back to its original form.

Heritage Paper #311

Sixth in the series of "Conspiracy, Controversy, and Celebrity: A Rich History of Flamborough". Discover the 'Khan' with 'Rockton's 'Poet of the People': The Life of Robert Kirkland Kernighan.'

Found in the Fonds

Some pretty amazing stuff is unearthed in the Archives during research projects or when cataloguing items.

What's in the spotlight this month?

Stone Boats - the pickup truck of yesterday

We love to highlight the treasures we find in the Archives. This month, we're inspired by a photo discovered in a scrapbook. What caught our eye?

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HERITAGE PAPER

Rockton's 'Poet of the People': The Life of Robert Kernighan Khan

Tess Moffat, Archives Summer Student

Over the next several issues we will be publishing papers under the theme "Conspiracy, Controversy, and Celebrity: A Rich History of Flamborough"

When one hears the Khan resided in Rockton, they most likely would not picture an eccentric man with a penchant for red silk ties. Robert Kirkland Kernighan, who used the Khan as his pseudonym, was a poet and agricultural philosopher. He was born in 1855 and died in 1926, and he resided in Rockton throughout his life. Kernighan's work, while unknown today, was extremely popular in his time. Outside of his local and national renown for his writing abilities, Kernighan was an influential figure in national and local circles, endearing himself to a large audience.

Kernighan was born and raised on his family's farm Rushdale and received his education from Rockton Grammar School. In 1874, he began working at the Hamilton Spectator and wrote editorials, stories, and poems. As well, he acted as the Beverly correspondent, commenting about local news within the township and



The stone schoolhouse at Rockton; which The Khan often referred to or had in mind in his writings. Toronto Star Archives.

Rockton. Kernighan was well-known for his eccentricity, especially concerning his work; he would write on anything he could find, such as wallpaper and calendars, and submit his poems to publishers as so. In 1875, he wrote his "Sketch of the History of Wentworth County", earning him wide recognition as a writer from the very beginning

of his career. This was a part of a larger post-Confederation project instituted by the government, which involved gathering historical information and drawings of each of Canada's counties and placing them in atlases. The Khan of Rockton had made a name for himself in the literary world, but his stardom would only continue to grow. At a par-

ty, a French-Canadian woman struggled to pronounce his name and called him “Monsieur Khan.” This exchange was overheard by Kernighan’s editor, leading to the pseudonym sticking with the author throughout his career. Every great artist needs his studio and Kernighan found it quite close to home. Kernighan’s workshop was on his family’s estate and consisted of his grandfather’s or great-grandfather’s log cabin, which he dubbed “Wigwam”. The log cabin had vines crawling up the side, which were dangerously close to the door. As someone who loved nature, if he found birds nesting in the vines above the door, Kernighan would climb through the window as opposed to disturbing the creatures. Kernighan’s muse commonly was nature and when he felt inspired by the world outside his workshop, he would retreat into his “Wigwam” and stay in there for as long as it took to craft his prose. Throughout the end of the 1800s, his career continued to accelerate. He wrote daily columns, entitled Khan’s Corner, for thirty years for the Toronto Globe, Toronto World, Hamilton Herald, and Toronto Telegram. As well, he briefly worked for the Winnipeg Sun. In 1896, The Hamilton Spectator published his first book ti-

tled *The Khan’s Chronicles*. He was dubbed the ‘Poet of the People’ and ‘the Robert Burns of Canada’ by the Ancaster writer Alma Dick-Lauder. Outside of the Hamilton area, the book also received high praise from readers throughout Canada and the United States. According to reviewers of his book, his renown stemmed from his ability to examine and sketch rural Ontario life passionately and sympathetically. In 1925, *The Khan’s Book of Verse* was published, which described the universal ideals he learned from his rural settings. The Khan based most of his poems on his local environment and municipal and national events, capturing the spirits of nationalism, rural Canada, and Flamborough in his verses.

Outside of Flamborough, Kernighan had enormous influence within Canadian society. In 1891, Sir John A. MacDonald asked Kernighan why he had yet to write a poem about Canada as opposed to his usual work concerning rural life or Flamborough. In response, Kernighan drafted “The Men of the Northern Zone”, one of the most well-known patriotic poems of that time. The poem paints a picture of a rugged Canadian landscape and claims the men of the north would never bend a knee for any southerners, most likely al-

luding to the events of 1812 and Canada’s general animosity towards Americans. MacDonald was apparently of the opinion that if Canada ever went to war, this poem is what the soldiers would sing while marching. This would not be Kernighan’s first nor his last poem concerning patriotism. During the First World War, Kernighan wrote a poem for the 129th Wentworth Battalion, which was composed of men from Flamborough. Kernighan loathed Kaiser Wilhelm II and his work represented his distaste for the political leader; in the poem, he explained the beating the Flamborough boys would give both the Kaiser and his supporters. Outside of the poem he dedicated to the 129th Wentworth Battalion, the Khan had written several poems about the war, publishing a collection of them in 1916. Kernighan, while primarily infatuated with the mysticism of nature and the happenings of his township, successfully used his writing abilities to focus on nationalism, capturing elements of Canadian pride and identity as well as reflecting on contemporary events and beliefs. His popularity also gained him access to exclusive circles and opportunities. Kernighan was a frequent guest at Canadian Club dinners and had several invitations to balls and

parties due to his stardom and unconventional, yet charming, personality. The Khan's popularity also gave him a large fan club that came from all walks of life. On October 20th, 1885, Kernighan gave a lecture at old Albert Hall in Toronto, which was completely packed with the only available space being standing room. Kernighan's lecture focused on the happenings of small-town life, beginning with his description and poems concerning the Corner Grocery Store and the colourful people who visit there. Through his vivid descriptions, he brought the audience with him through the backwoods of rural country life in Ontario. According to Toronto's Daily Amusement Record, the fact the hall was filled with many having to stand was a testament to Kernighan's work and popularity as the people of Toronto were not just in the habit of throwing their money away for fun. Kernighan's lecture also brought in some of Toronto's 'Fourth Estate', including Alexander Pirie, Ned Farrar, W.F. Maclean, Christopher William Bunting, and many more. The reviewer from the Amusement Record described the event as a masterpiece with the only negative being it was too short. Kernighan was not simply a local figure that was a minor blip on

Canada's radar; he was an incredibly popular man who gained the attention of the Prime Minister, addressed greater themes of Canadian Identity and nationalism within his work, and was beloved by all members of society.

While Kernighan was an extremely well-liked individual on a national scale, he was also extremely influential within his local community due to his family, stardom, and activeness within Rockton life. The Kernighan family had always had an active role in Rockton and Flamborough and was thought of highly within the community. The Khan's mother, Jane Kernighan, would host "Lilac Time" on Rushdale Farm, which involved an invitation to picnic, for the Rockton Women's Institute every June. Jane Kernighan had also named the St. Alban's Church in Rockton, which was not the only time the Kernighans assisted with naming an important Rockton landmark. According to the Flamborough Review, Andrew Kernighan, the Khan's father, invited several journalists and editors over to the farm and during their merriment, it was Mrs. Kernighan who came up with the title "Rockton World's Fair" since the entire world always comes to the event. This event, which is over 150 years old, was



Robert Kernighan next to an early automobile. Alamy photo.

not only influenced by the senior Kernighans. The Khan wrote a poem about the fair, as well as other local events in Flamborough, encouraging greater tourism to the area. As well, he had considerable sway over the fair and those who ran it. His views on the necessity for a new race-track in 1921 led to the purchase of more land and the improvement of the track. Outside of the fair, he also contributed to the atmosphere of Rockton in other ways. On May 23rd, 1922, he, as well as several prominent members of the community, gave patriotic speeches at the Rockton School for Empire Day, which celebrated the British Empire. As well, Kernighan was the vestry clerk for St. Alban's Anglican Church for several years before his death in 1926. His family

connections and his stardom certainly played a part in his popularity within Rockton, but he remained an active member of the community, making him an influential person within early Rockton.

His legacy after his death indicates his importance to the community. In November 1926, Kernighan never recovered from surgery, leading to his passing. The service was held at St. Albans in Rockton and many from the Toronto and Hamilton literary world attended. T.D.J Farmer, a former Hamilton barrister, and others attempted to preserve Kernighan's cabin and workshop, but it was vandalized a few weeks after the poet's death. Today, only the foundations remain. In 1927, an oil portrait of the esteemed author was hung in the old Court House. As

well, plaques in commemoration of the Kernighan family are within St. Alban's. Kernighan's legacy within the community continued to live on, even becoming the namesake of a poetry competition associated with the Beverly Heritage Society in the late 1900s. Even a neighbourhood in Hamilton was named after him. In the graveyard of St. Alban's Church, a cairn constructed from Rushdale farm stones stands to commemorate the great Khan and how he conquered the literary world of his time. After his death, Kernighan's memory would continue to be honoured within Flam- borough communities.

Robert Kirkland Kernighan was a poet and philosopher that influenced his community as well as Canadian culture. Kernighan is not well-known today; while

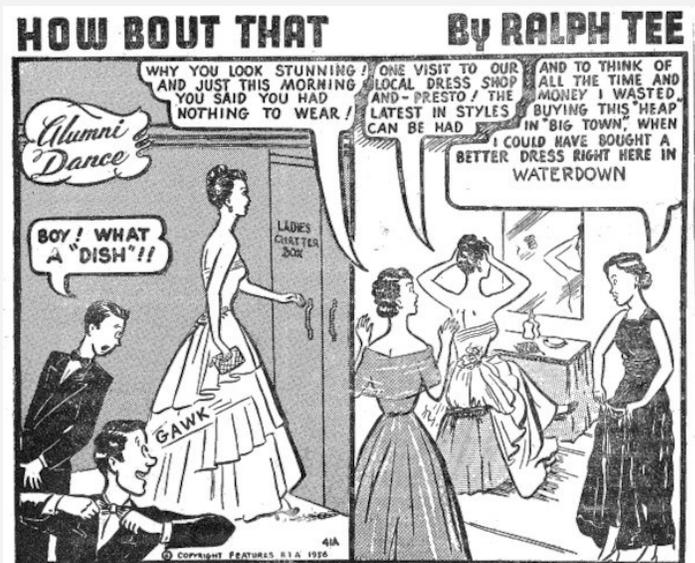
he made ripples in the literary world, he has fallen into obscurity. From a historian's perspective, it is important to note why he was so popular at the time. His work embodied the Canadian experience for some and provided a look into rural life for others. Kernighan's poems had a little bit of everything: advice, love, loss, nationalism, local pride, and nature. His commentary was constructed through a simple and approachable philosophy that made his work more appealing to a wider audience and embodied the feeling of pride in this new nation. Kernighan's work can be used to better understand early nationalism within Canadian history through the perspective of an eccentric and patriotic poet and rural philosopher.

FOUND IN THE FONDS

We've been looking at a lot of newspapers lately, and this marketing gem was found in a 1950s paper.

Not much can be found about Ralph Tee himself, but the "How Bout That" cartoon was printed throughout North American newspapers in various formats encour-

aging readers to shop local. Space would be left for the newspaper to add the name of their town or village. Trades that were highlighted included lumber, feed mills, service stations, butchers, and even dress shops as shown in the example we found.



Current Projects

All of our work is accomplished through our volunteers. You may wonder what exactly volunteers are doing - we're glad you asked!

We've been a part of this community for 50 years now, and our volunteers enable us to remain active and relevant in a changing world.

If you love Flamborough, history or research, there are always volunteer opportunities with the society. Build on an existing personal passion or discover a new one.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Our volunteers' love of local history, time spent and dedication to helping the Society is always appreciated. Here we highlight just a small sampling of their work.



So many of our volunteers do work that ensures those that wish to visit or research are able to with ease.

Duplicate newspapers continue to be clipped for items of interest by Sylvia, and she is keeping the obituary clippings books up to date.

Bob Thomas continues to work on the files of WWI veterans, and they are close to being completed.

Sue is continuing to catalogue previously donated material using our accession manager system. The system has recently been updated to add a spot for a small photo for cataloguing artifacts and ephemera.

Our latest publication project is coming along slowly but surely. As part of our newspaper clipping process, reminiscences published over the years are being collected to be used in the book, Sam Hounsome is typing these as

they come in.

Our archivist Lyn has been busy in the archives and elsewhere. We've purchased a voice recorder as we've had visitors coming in and sharing their stories in conversation as well as letting us borrow images to add to our catalogue. Lyn also is busy with meetings as part of the Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee and the amendments to Bill 23 and changes to heritage planning. Many thanks to all of our volunteers!



"It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference."

— Tom Brokaw

CONTRIBUTING TO OUR CAUSE

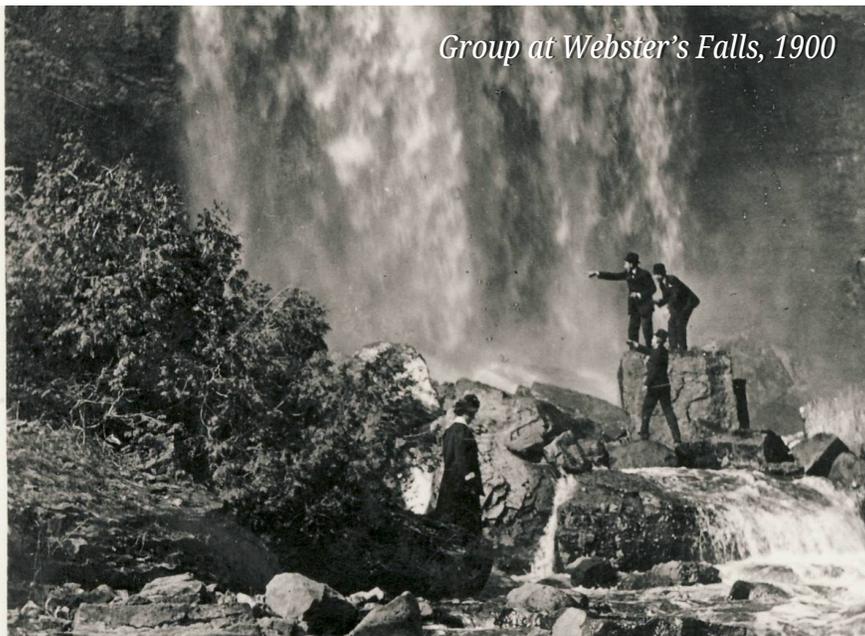
MEMBERSHIP

It takes a lot to preserve history, and your membership is a big part of that. Thanks to all our members!

Thanks to everyone who renewed their membership with us. Membership runs from September to August annually, and helps support us by funding our operating costs. Members receive this newsletter as well as priority at our monthly meetings, back live in person after being held by Zoom for the last few years.

We think society membership is pretty amazing - we encourage all our current members to recruit more people, whether you gift a membership to someone special or just let your friends, family, and colleagues know about us.

- 1 Members have priority, being sent the latest news first
- 2 Your membership helps support Heritage Society projects
- 3 Be part of one of the most active Heritage Societies in Ontario



Group at Webster's Falls, 1900

DONATIONS

We receive a lot of donations of heritage documents, photographs, and items throughout the year. If you have something you think we may like, please let us know! You don't have to permanently donate an item - pieces can be on loan to the Archives for as long as you feel comfortable or copied and returned to you.

We're still raising funds for our shelf system update - space is currently at a premium in the Archives. While memberships, book sales and grants help us with our day-to-day

expenditures, donations from both members like you as well as non-members greatly support our mission.

We've recently updated our website to make it even easier to donate and see what we're raising funds for. We're also exploring other platforms to make donation fast, easy and accessible.

Please help us preserve our local history by donating today. Tax receipts are issued for donations \$25 and up. Thank you so much for your support.

OUR PRESENCE ONLINE

We encourage all of our members to follow, subscribe, share and overall enjoy our online activities. See you all online!

OUR FOLLOWERS



3,664



579



66



26

We're constantly posting new content - tap follow and drop a comment to say hi!



Our most popular blog posts included stories of murder in East Flamborough Township.

E-Commerce

We continue to sell our latest republications related to West Flamborough and Strabane. Tell your friends, family and neighbours about our selection of books - there's something for everyone!

Once again, and as always:

Thanks to all for your support!

Our online presence during 21st century are always welcome. March included a lot of A view looking west of Hamilton shares encouraging Street North reached a lot of folks, engagement. We had submitted shocking to some new to the information about Joe Sams for the community. Also popular was a Famous Hamiltonian contest. With postcard from Westfield Heritage help from social sharing and a Village of Misener's farmhouse. feature on our website, he won! As always, our scheduled blog We've also been actively sharing posts bring in views from around for our upcoming trivia night. the world. Be sure to check out the Images from the latter part of the latest series!

Trivia Night

SATURDAY APRIL 29 | AT THE WATERDOWN LEGION

DOORS OPEN AT : 7PM
TRIVIA STARTS AT : 7:30PM

MORE INFO:
www.flamboroughhistory.com

Vote for
JOE SAMS PARK

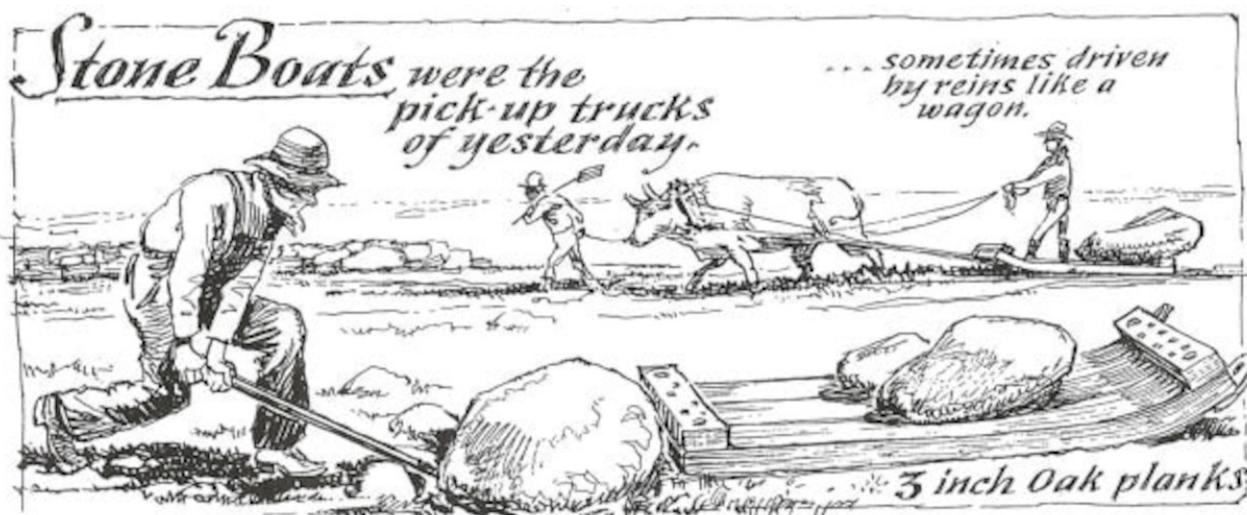
in the Famous Hamiltonian Contest

VOTE RIGHT NOW!

www.flamboroughhistory.com



Treasures from the Archives



Art from "A Museum of Early American Tools," Eric Sloane, 1973, drawn by Michael Scherck.

Thumbing through scrapbooks in our collection, there are so many captivating images that capture a moment in time. The image below of Mrs. John Harbottle on a stone boat at her farm in Valens was the spark to this edition's 'Treasures from the Archives'.

As land was cleared for crops and settlement, stones and boulders needed to be removed to prevent damage to farming implements and allow for the best yield from the land. Stone boats were used to haul stones out of the field, anything larger than a fist.

The stoneboat was a home made contraption used for hauling stones - a crude and cheap sled that could be pulled around the fields so the operator could toss in stones which would then be hauled off the field and piled

up. Often the stones were used to build stone cellar walls, stone house or barn foundations, or stone fences.

Crafting a stoneboat was relatively easy – all you needed was some wood and a few metal parts that could be hammered out on an anvil. The runners for a stoneboat were made out of logs, preferably logs with an upcurve at one end. They were chopped to shape with an axe.

The principle was that they were low to the ground so that the operator didn't have to lift stones up onto a high wagon. Stoneboats were useful for other things as well. They could be used to haul hay out into the fields to feed livestock in winter or for moving heavy objects that were difficult to lift up onto a regular wagon.



ARCHIVES ACTIVITY - MARCH

	VISITORS	33
	CALLS	7
	E-MESSAGES	40
	ITEMS CATALOGUED	104
	ACQUISITIONS	20
	VOLUNTEER HOURS	258

THREADS THROUGH THE PAST

Memories

Lyn Lunsted, Archivist

One of the projects that our Heritage Society is doing this year is collecting reminiscences and stories from long time residents of Flamborough. We are hoping to get enough material to publish a book later in the fall. These memories can be from 75 years ago—or five. They will all be memories to be looked back on, in the future.

We are hoping that people will send us stories about all kinds of topics—you never know when something is going to trigger a memory of something else that a person experienced. In the Archives we have a small booklet called ‘Canadian Townships : the Nation’s Food Basket by Walter Madden. Walter was a long time East Flamborough resident, living here from 1930 to 1985. His booklet is primarily about food and his observations are fun to read.

‘The Apple’ There have been many changes over the years as new varieties came out and old ones faded away. The old trees



which take up a lot of space and about 15 or 20 years to get a good crop are being replaced by dwarf trees tied on wire and semi-dwarf each with their early-bearing qualities. In the early part of the century, an apple orchard was a must on a lot of farms or perhaps a few trees of different varieties besides different kinds of plums that seem to flourish in those times, also a couple each of sweet and sour cherries. At first the trees needed no spray and were shipped overseas in barrels. A top was put on the barrel then a vice-like screw tightened the lid down so the apple would not roll around in shipping.

Many Ontario Spy trees were sold but the apples did not keep well after Christmas. A large purplish-coloured apple like our Delicious were nice and mellow like a banana. As we only had oranges at Christmas, the apples were nice to eat in the evening.

In every farm kitchen, and a lot of other houses in the country, there were 4 hooks over the cook stove, about 3 feet apart by one way and 5 feet the other way.

This was to hang a screen on to make the dried apples. Apples were peeled and cut in slices then placed on the screen to be turned over occasionally to dry from the heat of the stove. When the glut of apples came, they were dried this way to be used the next spring and summer before the next crop came in. You could also buy them in stores this way.



Walter worked at many different jobs during his life and these are his memories of working in market gardens in Aldershot.

'Celery'

My first job after leaving school was on a market garden that specialized in celery. I believe celery was more popular then than it is now.

Some of this land was black muck, as it was called, but I called it black gold because it yielded several crops a year with its irrigation and being close to Lake Ontario which kept the late frosts away in the



Melon picking in Aldershot spring. It had a clay subsoil that held the moisture and that was what celery liked—a cool soil for growing. Other vegetables were grown, especially transplanted beets in the early spring to reach the first demand. One spring the beets in the area of Cooksville,

Oakville and those growing places near Toronto were hit by frost. The truckers beat a path to Burlington for bunched beets with orders of 75 and 100 dozen bunches coming in faster than we could fill them.

Celery back then was boarded up with boards or tarpaper strips to blanch it, making a lot of work. This went on for many years until it was found out that the green in vegetables was better for you. The gardeners had a long day if they went to Market. You'd have to get up at 3:00 a.m. as the wholesale started at 4:00 a.m. and then you would retail until night.

Honey

Beekeeping is not for everyone as I found out while working for a bee keeper. He was working with the smoker on a hive of bees. I stood quite a few paces away, out of range I hoped, but three bees stung me in three minutes so I did not linger. This beekeeper told me if he was working in a field that was between the hives and a clover field, when they were returning loaded with honey (pollen) they were flying low and would land on the horses and sting them, so he

had to watch them. Another thing was if his wife hung her clothes on the line the day the bees came out of the hive after being confined all winter, they would spot her clean clothes up as bees to not expel anything from their bowels all winter. Then she would give him heck.



Master Beekeeper John Van Alten and the original hives, tending to his bees in 1981 on Dutchman's Gold's first property in Carlisle, Ontario
<https://dutchmansgold.com/pages/our-story>

Sights, sound, smells—all of these can evoke a memory from our past. The written word is powerful and a single word or sentence can send your brain winging into the past.

We hope that people will share their stories, photos and other memories and contribute to our book so that future generations will be able to experience the past as we knew it, even if it takes imagination to do it.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

We're looking forward to our last public meeting before the summer break, a presentation on Auchmar House by Diane Dent. Should you have any suggestions for speakers of interest for the upcoming programme season, please don't hesitate to let us know.



Congratulations to our Vice President Meghan Martin who was awarded a Hamilton-Wentworth Volunteer Recognition Certificate by the Hamilton-Wentworth Heritage Association. Her work with our website, displays, newsletter, and all of our social media pages is truly phenomenal and appreciated by all of us.

Our first Trivia Night, spearheaded by Kim Hirst, is set to be held April 29th at the Waterdown Legion. Be sure to pick up tickets for a table or individual seats if you haven't already. All the information is available on our website. Every sale helps support the society, and the night promises to be a lot of fun.

Looking forward to seeing our members and volunteers at community events as the weather changes.

Chris Rivait, President

AREA HERITAGE 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.

The Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society- www.hamiltonheritage.ca

The Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society -

Head of the Lake Historical Society

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

The West Lincoln Historical Society - www.wlhs.info

Waterdown Mill Street Heritage -

www.waterdownmillstreetheritage.ca

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YouTube: Flamborough Archives
& Heritage Society

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