



FLAMBOROUGH HERITAGE SOCIETY



November 2023

# Heritage Happenings

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## November's Monthly Meeting

*The Flamborough Heritage Society will feature a presentation on the History of The Hamilton Spectator by Jeff Mahoney, Thursday Nov. 30th at 8:00PM, in person at Grace Anglican Church.*

Jeff Mahoney has been a reporter and columnist with the Spectator for 30 years. During this time he has been writing about culture and lifestyle stories, commentary and humour. He now focuses on human interest stories including local history.

The Hamilton Spectator was first published in 1846 as "The Hamilton Spectator and Journal of Commerce". It was founded as a semi-weekly newspaper by Robert Smiley. Jeff will tell us about how the paper started and some of the stories that have been covered over the years.

### Heritage Paper #315

Second in the series of "Milestones and Memories: Anniversaries in Flamborough". The history of an essential service with 'The Only Thing Certain in Life Outside Taxes: Kitching, Steepe & Ludwig Commemorate a Milestone'.

**EXPLORE FROM PAGE 2 >>**

### 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?

**SEE IT NOW ON PAGE 5 >>**

### A Piece of Carlisle's Past

Stratford Perth Museum donated an item to our collection from a business that left Carlisle over 30 years ago.

What was it that was donated?

**DISCOVER ON PAGE 9 >>**

# HERITAGE PAPER

## The Only Thing Certain in Life Outside Taxes: Kitching, Steepe & Ludwig Commemorate a Milestone

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*Tess Moffat, Archives Summer Student*

*Second in the series under the theme “Milestones and Memories: Anniversaries in Flamborough”*

In a town, there is always a business or an organization to solve every need of the population, even posthumously. A funeral is something one might not be dying to have, but death tends to happen regardless of the desires of the individual. The funeral business can take many forms, such as the funeral home, an establishment that assists with planning and hosting services and providing support for the bereaved. The funeral home has a long history, as demonstrated by the Kitching, Steepe and Ludwig Funeral Home Ltd. of Waterdown, a family-run business that began in 1915 and moved to 146 Mill Street North in 1923. Today, the company is celebrating its 100th year at its Mill Street location. While the Kitching, Steepe and Ludwig Funeral Home Ltd. have changed over the last century, it remains a prime example of care, support, and excellent service from a family-run business.



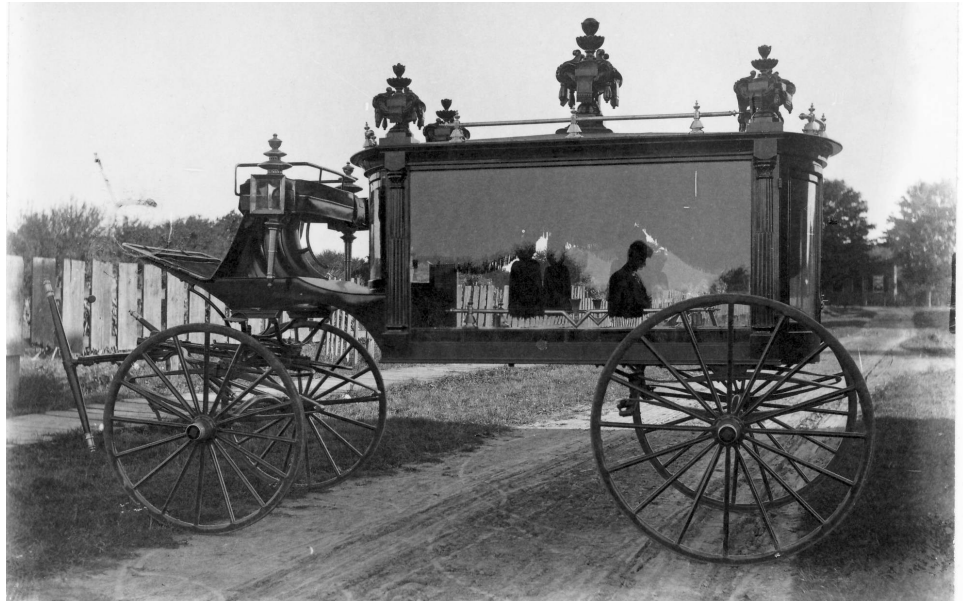
*“Death is not the opposite of life, but a part of it” - H. Murakami*

*Photo by P. Autipol, Unsplash*

Funerals were much different than what would be seen today; bodies were typically embalmed on site, wakes were in the parlour of the family's home, and the casket was transported to the burial site via horse-drawn hearse. Ferdinand Slater, a carpenter and an undertaker, operated out of a planning mill on the northwest corner of the block at Queen and Mill. At the south end of the mill, there was an 'undertaking room' that could be used if needed, and there was a 'coffin house' for storing unoccupied caskets. The hearse was stored in a separate building on the south side of the mill, and the horses were kept at a stable on Queen Street. Ferdinand was also a talented engraver and set up a shop near the corner where he crafted plates

for coffins. The Slater family had multiple businesses, but their most well-known venture was their lumber mill on Grindstone Creek, which was one of the last surviving mills to be powered by the creek. In 1890, his sons, Albert and Frank, took over the business, with Frank making the engraving plates for the coffins, as he had won several diplomas for his art. In 1900, the company continued to expand when John Slater partnered with John F. 'Jack' Vance, a tinsmith who operated at the present site of Memorial Hall. The funeral business shifted into the tinsmith shop, which also specialized in commercial goods like eaves-troughs outside funerary accessories. However, the operation hit a snag when John Slater was accidentally killed at the nearby basket factory in 1909. Henry Slater, his brother, took over the funeral business, but he was more invested in the mill. In 1915, John Kitching purchased the entire operation.

The Kitching business was solely focused on funerals, and the tin smithing business continued to involve the production of commercial goods. Mervyn Kitching, the son of John, remembered whenever there was a fire, he and his father placed tin pails outside for men on their way to the fire to pick up. Em-



*Hearse used by Vance & Slater was pulled by a team of black horses in funeral harness. A similar hearse cost \$2,000 in 1910.*

**- W. Reid Collection**

balming continued to be conducted onsite, but there was a startling change to the business: the motor hearse. Three horses were used for buggies, a hearse, and a double-decked casket wagon, but the motor hearse, purchased in 1918, led to the gradual retirement of the horses. While the animals were still used occasionally, the horses had to go at a much higher gait than normal to keep up with the cars. In 1920, John Kitching moved the business to Main Street North after the purchase of the building by the Women's Institute, a project which would lead to the construction of Memorial Hall.

In 1923, the Kitching family constructed their home at 146 Mill Street North. Shortly after,

they began receiving requests to host services in their parlour. This change was a part of a more significant trend within Canada as bodies were being transported out of the home for preparation, and undertakers had a larger role in the logistics of a funeral. This was the birth of the funeral home in Waterdown.

John Kitching's son, Mervyn, left Flamborough and became a funeral homeowner in Toronto with his wife and several children. While the business continued to prosper, tragedy struck in the late 1930s. The coal furnace in the Kitching residence became backed up, filling the home with carbon monoxide and killing the patriarch of the family. Fortunately, Ada Kitching, John's wife, was rescued in





*Kitching, Steepe and Ludwig Funeral Home Ltd. as it is today.*

***[www.kitchingsteepeandludwig.com](http://www.kitchingsteepeandludwig.com)***

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the nick of time due to Charles Burns, a telephone agent at the Bell Telephone, who could not connect a call to the Kitching residence and had asked someone to investigate the issue. As a result of his father's passing, Mervyn Kitching returned to Waterdown with his family to take over the business in 1938.

Like any business in a small, yet expanding, town, Kitching, Steepe and Ludwig Funeral Home Ltd. needed to evolve. To accommodate the growing number of visiting periods and funeral services conducted at the home, the business underwent a severe facelift in the 1940s. The front was brought closer to Mill Street and extended further to Queen Street, effectively expanding the upstairs living quarters,

main floor parlour, and basement, which was used for an office and display area. The building had fully transformed into a funeral home by the end of construction. The business also expanded; the funeral home provided a livery service, which involved the supply of staff and vehicles for individual funeral events at other funeral homes, a program they still run today.

Tragedy struck the Kitching family yet again in 1955. Gordon Kitching, Mervyn's son, was the Superintendent of the Lines for the Waterdown Hydro System while also working part-time at the funeral home. On October 14th, 1955, despite the farmers' market closing for the season the previous weekend and the power being disconnected,

several vendors with merchandise arrived at the market. Gordon Kitching was sent out to reconnect the power supply in the driving rain; unfortunately, when he reached the top of the 20-foot pole, his right arm accidentally touched a live wire, causing him to die of electric shock before plummeting to the ground. He was survived by his wife, Marion McNiven, who was pregnant with their son, Gordon Jr. Despite his career in electricity, Gordon was a licensed funeral director and would have carried on the family business. Mervyn Kitching's daughters, Eleanor and Bernice, continued to help at the funeral home, such as Eleanor being the organist for the funeral home. However, they

never became fully licensed funeral directors.

Kitching, Steepe and Ludwig Funeral Home Ltd. would go through another change in 1964. The business was purchased by Ronald Steepe, a funeral director that had been with the company since 1961. Mervyn Kitching and his daughter, Bernice, stayed to help, and Keith Waller, a funeral director, was brought on. This was not the only change for the funeral home as it continued to be pulled into modernity. In 1963, the business purchased new vehicles, including a 1962 Cadillac sedan and a funeral coach. The building also continued to be modernized and updated throughout the 1970s, receiving a large parking lot and a four-bay garage. The funeral home would continue to be

updated and altered during the Steepe property ownership.

The funeral home changed once more in 2004 with Rick and Denise Ludwig's purchase of the funeral home. While the owners changed, some of the staff continued to stay on, including the daughter of Mervyn Kitching, Eleanor Best, long-time employee Keith Waller, and Ron Steepe himself. The building continued to undergo modernization and expansion, especially in 2017 and 2018, with the addition of the reception area to accommodate larger groups in colder months. The services provided at Kitching, Steepe and Ludwig Funeral Home Ltd. have also changed since the beginning of the company; they assist with the full planning of a funeral and provide resources and

support for grieving families, especially counselling.

Kitching, Steepe and Ludwig Funeral Home Ltd. has had to change and adapt to new technologies and social practices, the demands of their customers, and personal tragedy. However, the company continues to live on, progressing with Waterdown. The funeral home and its staff have provided excellent personal services to grieving families for four generations, making its mark on the community. While there are typically two sure things in life, this author is optimistic that Kitching, Steepe and Ludwig Funeral Home Ltd. will continue to be a vital part of Flamborough and hopefully come to celebrate another milestone in their Mill Street residence.

## *FOUND IN THE FONDS*

While snow isn't on the ground yet, we know it's an inevitability. This photo of an unladen horse drawn sleigh was found in a box of uncatalogued items, some yet to be identified. Scrawled on the back was "Dundas Street, Waterdown," but the editor feels the scene a bit too residential to be Dundas Street. After a few hours of comparison in person and via Google Street View, she's still stumped.

If any of our readers know where on Dundas Street this may have been photographed, or what other street it may be, we welcome your input.





## 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. You'd be surprised with how a commitment of a small part of your time can help our society in a big way.

We are always applying for grants for our projects, but not all of the applications are successful. The application process is also a large investment of time and effort. Should you have ideas for fundraising or a way to help, we'd love to hear from you.



We have some exciting news for those that didn't attend our October meeting. Thanks to an anonymous donor we now have the funding for a new shelving unit to be added to our existing system. Thanks to all those that donated towards it over the years.

Our volunteers are still busy working at the archives or remotely. Sue is putting together a

## 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.*

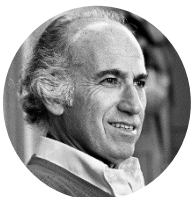


scrapbook from clippings related to the Rotary Club. Our co-op student Naomi and MaryAnn Slagter have been copying microfilms on loan from Local History & Archives, Hamilton. So far we've copied 10 years (1990-1999). MaryAnn is also photocopying a scrapbook on loan from former Flamborough Mayor Don Granger. Our former archivist Sylvia is continuing to clip and catalogue duplicate newspapers.

We've had a couple

visits from Councilor Ted McMeekin, who is working on getting the Flamborough municipal records back from offices in Hamilton.

In an unfortunate turn of events, the Archives computer was out of commission for almost three weeks. What started as a monitor issue evolved into a more involved service call for IT. Thankfully we've been able to get it back in working order, and will be caught up with emails and queries soon.



*"I feel the greatest reward for doing is the opportunity to do more."*

—Jonas Salk

## 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 enjoying our monthly meetings on numerous different subjects.

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



*Christmas Parade, Dundas Street.*

## 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.

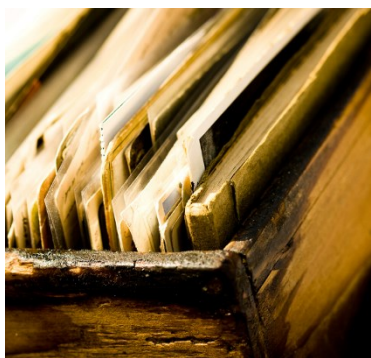
We are always in need of funds. While memberships, book sales and grants help us with our day-to-day expenditures, donations from both members like you as well as non-

members greatly support our mission.

We've 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



**3,729**



**609**



**63**



**30**

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



**Our blog posts** have covered how major religious groups had an impact on the community.

## E-Commerce

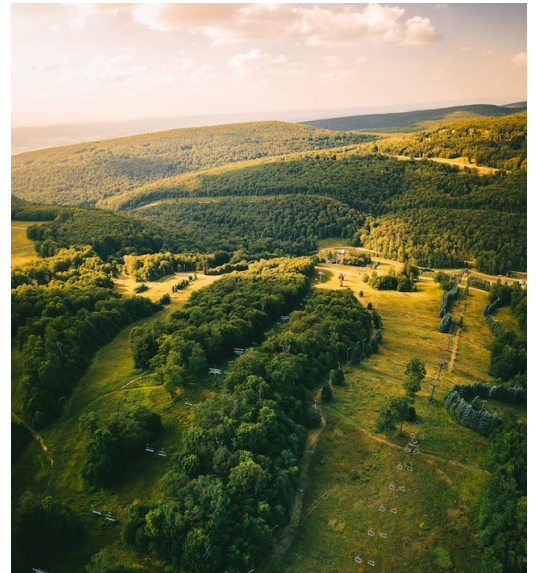
We continue to sell our latest republications related to West Flamborough and Strabane. Tell your friends, family and neighbours about our selection of books - there's something for everyone!

Once again, and as always:

*Thanks to all for your support!*

Last month was a busy one for same standard with all future us on the web and behind the meetings, and that more will join online scenes. While most content us virtually. If you missed it, the was scheduled, we did have some October meeting is now uploaded shares on our socials as well. to our YouTube channel.

Our October meeting was a success Popular blog posts last month - especially as it now seems our covered not only religious groups Zoom setup is smoother and easier of the area, but also some history for those joining us from a of the Morden family. distance to participate in our Be sure to share with us or our meetings. We hope to deliver the content wherever we are online.





# Treasures from the Archives



*Gerard Brender à Brandis on the left holding burin and block on a sandbag, sourced from his website.*

*On the right is a cropped example of his work 'West Montrose Bridge,' sourced from Carnegie Gallery.*

**Stratford Perth Museum donated an embossing company seal** from Brandstead Press in Carlisle, via a contact of ours at the Dundas Museum. Gerard Brender à Brandis is an Ontario artist particularly known for his wood engravings, but is also a painter, poet, and overall a very interesting person. He was born in Holland, and came to Canada with his family when he was five in 1947, living first in Terrace, British Columbia. Gerard's teacher during third and fourth grades taught his students very basic bookbinding in order to have his students repair textbooks, overused in the Great Depression and World War II.



Gerard took a B. A. in Fine Arts History at the University of British Columbia. Introduced to wood engraving by his professor George Wallace in 1964, Gerard knew after completing his first block that he would become a wood engraver.

In 1967, Gerard founded the Brandstead Press in Carlisle and has produced a great number of attractive books. He added other book arts to his repertory: typesetting, printing on a hand press, spinning and weaving flax into linen book covers, and papermaking. He moved to Stratford in 1991 where he opened his house and studio to the public for six months of the year. The "shop in the house" was closed in 2019, but Gerard continues his wood engraving and book arts in his heritage house in Stratford.



*The embossing company seal of Brandstead Press*

## ARCHIVES ACTIVITY - OCTOBER

	<b>VISITORS</b>	<b>48</b>
	<b>CALLS</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>E-MESSAGES</b>	<b>206</b>
	<b>ITEMS CATALOGUED</b>	<b>57</b>
	<b>ACQUISITIONS</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>VOLUNTEER HOURS</b>	<b>340</b>

# THREADS THROUGH THE PAST

## Waterdown Fire Department —the very early years

Lyn Lunsted, Archivist

In this article we would like to delve into the early history of firefighting in Waterdown.

The Flamborough Archives and Heritage Society currently has a display in the Waterdown Library focused on the history of the five fire halls in Flamborough— Freelon, Greenville, Lynden, Rockton and Waterdown. Thanks to the drive, interest and contacts of two retired firefighters Shawn Gaffney and Steve Baynton, they were able to contact many retired firefighters and their families, who donated a wealth of scrapbooks, photographs, personal items such as uniform pieces and badges. Other administrative items were unearthed from storage spaces and donated to the Archives.

All of the fire halls also lent us various pieces of equipment such as gas masks, plectrons, old fire extinguishers and plaques which were in their collections at the fire halls.

The display will run until the end of December, 2023.

The Village of Waterdown has the oldest history of firefighting in Flamborough.



The growth of the village and the number of mills along Grindstone Creek almost guaranteed that fire would break out. The earliest records we have document fires at the Griffin Woollen mill in 1850,



the Howland flour mill in 1860, (the first of 3 fires) the Episcopal Methodist Church in 1872, the New Connexion Methodist Church in 1874 and the Baker and Brown Rake and Cradle mill in 1881. All of these were put out by the villagers but heavy losses were

incurred.

In April 1883 fire broke out in a small stone bake-shop owned by James Rogers. The fire bell which was now installed in the Bell House, was rung, but the fire soon spread to the back of Eagers' general store. Newspaper articles reported "*Men, women and children worked hard with pumps and pails. When people thought that the fire had been brought under control the blaze burst from the roof of the grocery store. At that time a great many people gave up the*





*village as lost, and there is little doubt that if there had been a wind blowing at the time the village of Waterdown would have been reduced to ashes. The flames were finally extinguished by the heroic exertions of several citizens. It is thought by the Waterdown people that a small fire-engine or hook and ladder company would have saved the main building, and a move will immediately be made to secure for the village more adequate fire appliances than buckets and pumps."*

The village did invest in a small hand engine and hose in 1884 but it proved to be woefully inadequate. In February 1885, the flour mill belonging to Howland, Robson & Co. caught fire. At the time the mill was the largest in the province and the machinery was all new. The fire originated in the engine room—a lean-to attached to one of the main buildings. An exhaust pipe was frozen and one of the employees tried to thaw it out by covering it with petroleum and setting it on fire. The flames spread to the floor above. *"It was nearly a quarter of an hour after the building caught fire before the hand-engine appeared on the scene. After some time, the engine was allowed to stand for*

*a few moments and the water in the pipes froze."*

In March 1889, the Hamilton Spectator reported that *'the Village is to be supplied with water for fire by portable and stationery water tanks."*

The first reference to a Fire Hall is in an article in the Dundas Star of February 1897 which stated that "The Canadian Order of Foresters held their meetings in the fire hall, the second flat of Mr. Crooker's store". Mr. Crooker also stored fire equipment in his barn behind the store.



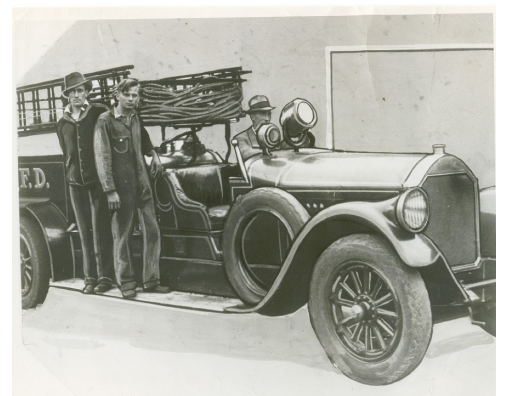
In 1909 a 40 gallon chemical tank on wheels was obtained, and in 1917 a second engine was obtained along with 2 dozen galvanized water pails for Fire Protection.

The most devastating fire happen in May 1922 when fire engulfed most of the village core. The entire village fought it with pails of water and the two hand pumps. Fire fighters also came from Hamilton to help out. Water from the creek running behind the Kirk House

(now the Royal Coachman) was a key factor in helping quench the flames.



Early volunteer firefighters were mostly business owners, anxious to protect their own premises. Once a waterworks system was installed in the village in 1925, the issue of better equipment and a formal volunteer fire department arose. The hand-drawn equipment was too slow and usually inadequate. In 1932, with donations by the villagers of \$159, Chief Bill Carson found a used Pierce-Arrow car and it was modified to become the first motorized fire engine in Waterdown.



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

November - the month we spend preparing for colder months ahead, as well as ushering in the festive season with Santa Claus parades, festive parties, and Holiday Bazaars.

We are very thankful to the anonymous donor that allowed us to reach the monetary goal needed to add a new unit to the shelving system in our archives. While it will be a significant amount of work to install and organize our collection on the new unit, we're excited to have the extra space. We'll update you online with upcoming closures in the new year related to the shelving installation and organization.

This year was another busy one for the Society, its members, and its volunteers. Some of us were faced with family emergencies and other struggles, and we hope that their new year is less stressful.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy holiday season and some well-deserved rest and relaxation. Looking forward to seeing what exciting adventures await us next year.

Chris Rivait, President



### AREA HERITAGE WEBSITES

The Ancaster Township Historical Society - [www.ancasterhistory.ca](http://www.ancasterhistory.ca)

The Burlington Historical Society - [www.burlingtonhistorical.ca](http://www.burlingtonhistorical.ca).

The Dundas Valley Historical Society - [www.dundashistory.ca](http://www.dundashistory.ca)

The Grimsby Historical Society - [Grimsby Historical Society](http://GrimsbyHistoricalSociety).

The Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society- [www.hamiltonheritage.ca](http://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](http://www.uel.com)

The West Lincoln Historical Society - [www.wlhs.info](http://www.wlhs.info)

Waterdown Mill Street Heritage -

[www.waterdownmillstreetheritage.ca](http://www.waterdownmillstreetheritage.ca)

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Facebook: @flamboroughhistory

Instagram: @flamborougharchives

Twitter: @FlamboroHistory

YouTube: Flamborough Archives  
& Heritage Society

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