



Heritage Happenings

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| <i>Growth and Changing with the Seasons: Cannon's is 117 Years Old</i> | <i>Current projects and more!</i> | <i>Both online and in person</i> | <i>Early Transportation: Getting from Here to There</i> | <i>Plus other local society websites & our contact info</i> |

February's Monthly Meeting

The Flamborough Heritage Society will feature a presentation on the HMCS Haida by Gabriel Camozzi, Feb. 29th at 8 PM, hosted via Zoom.

Gabriel Camozzi is a visitor experience team leader for Parks Canada. The HMCS Haida is a Tribal class destroyer that served in the Royal Canadian Navy from 1943 to 1963. She served in World War II, the Korean Conflict and the Cold War. She is the last surviving Tribal class destroyer in the world and now rest at Pier 9 in Hamilton and is open to the public. Gabriel will tell us about the HMCS Haida's rich history and service. The Zoom link will be made available on our website closer to the event.



Heritage Paper #317

Fourth in the series of "Milestones and Memories: Anniversaries in Flamborough". The year 2023 marks 117 years of Cannon Nurseries being a part of the community. Discover their history and how they adapted to change.

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 >>

McQueen Diary

A diary from the late 19th century has made the journey from the prairies to the desk of our archivist. Delicate handwriting on small thin pages makes reading it difficult, but not impossible.

DISCOVER ON PAGE 9 >>

HERITAGE PAPER

Growth and Changing with the Seasons: Connon Nurseries is 117 Years Old

Tess Moffat, Archives Summer Student

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

Connon Nurseries, located at 656 Robson Rd. in Waterdown, is a must for any commercial landscaper or residential gardener. The company began in 1906 and has long been associated with an excellent selection of plants and knowledgeable staff. As of 2023, Connons is turning 117 years old, continuing its legacy within the community. Connon Nurseries has transformed from a small family-run business to a massive multigenerational family-run company, demonstrating that a business can take root, grow, and prosper within a community if given enough time, money, and energy.

In 1895, twenty-three-year-old John Connon, a seed seller, immigrated from Aberdeen, Scotland, to Hamilton, Ontario, after responding to a job ad in a trade magazine for the Robert Evans Seed Co. As a part of his job, he would travel through the Maritimes by horse and cutter, a type



An early delivery truck from John Connon Nurseries Limited.

Photo sourced from Connon Nurseries website.

of sleigh, in the winter to sell seeds. During one ill-fated journey, Connon's cutter became upset, and he broke his leg, giving him time to think about life. Connon realized that the farmers he talked to wanted more than just the seeds he was selling and expressed a desire for trees and bushes, specifically those that bear fruit. Connon worked his way up the corpo-

rate ladder, becoming manager at Robert Evans Seed Co. in 1903 and manager at another Hamilton seed distributor, Steele, Briggs & Co., in 1905. While Connon was doing well, he desired to create his own business.

This would be a challenging feat. In October 1906, the Hamilton-based Connon Floral Co. Ltd. was incorporated. The greenhouses were located on Went-

worth Street North, and the sales office and flower shop were at 41 King Street West. By 1908 or 1909, the flower shop was moved to 69 King Street East. In 1912, the business' name was changed to John Connon Floral Co. Ltd. In the same year, Connon married Laurie Campbell of Quebec. The company had its first 'interruption' with the First World War; as a member of the militia, he went into active service, starting as a Lieutenant on guard duty at the pumping station and later being sent overseas in 1916. While abroad, Connon was promoted to major but returned home after falling ill in 1917. For the winter of 1918, Connon had been sent to California with the hopes that his tuberculosis would be cured. In the early 1900s, TB patients were instructed to get plenty of bed rest and fresh air, preferably in a warm, dry climate. According to advertisements, California, specifically the powers of its sun, was supposed to be a land of healing and good health. As a result, California received thousands of TB patients, overwhelming the hospitals and skewing the mortality rates of the state. Fortunately, Connon was cured of tuberculosis and returned home, resuming his business.

In the 1920s, Connon Nurse-



Major John Connon, 1946

*Photo sourced from
Landscape Ontario*

ries continued to grow. The shop carried a comprehensive catalogue, supplying residential and agricultural customers. The business moved to different offices and nurseries throughout Hamilton and Stoney Creek. There were also personal developments and achievements for the Connon family. In 1922, they moved to their home in Waterdown on Dundas Street East by First Street. In the same year, Connon helped organize the Nurserymen's Association of Eastern Canada, an organization that just celebrated its 100th anniversary last year under a new name: the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association. Connon was also heavily invested in Waterdown; he was chairman of the Board of Education that built the original high school on Highway #5 in 1928. Later in the

1950s, he joined the Rotary Club of Waterdown. While there was a lot of change for both the business and the Connon family, they were beginning to take root in their new settings and roles, bringing in a new era for the company. Connon Nurseries would soon make the leap towards Waterdown; however, the circumstances would not be favourable.

In the 1930s, the Great Depression plagued the world, bogging down the economy and causing strain on the country and local communities. Connon's floral business was affected by this significant event, causing him to file for bankruptcy in 1931. The shop was permanently closed, and the Stoney Creek nurseries were quit-claimed to the Huron and Erie Mortgage Corp. With the business in shambles, continuing on would have been challenging. However, the Connon family was not dissuaded by their circumstances. Their property in Waterdown, which had previously been used to grow peonies and barberries, was transformed into the new base of operation. Since the property was in Laurie's name, the home did not need to be handed over to the bank. The land was extremely tough to work, especially with the drought. While he had assis-



The original garden centre in Waterdown was damaged by fire in the late 1970s - sourced from Landscape Ontario

tance from time to time from local men, this was a Connon family operation; Connon took care of the physical work, and his wife was the mail and delivery clerk, travelling all over Hamilton, Burlington, Aldershot, and Waterdown in her automobile. The Second World War was another 'interruption' for the business; however, this did not trigger another decline for the company, which had found its bearings in Waterdown and was beginning to grow yet again, leading to the business moving out of the family home and a pivotal hire in the 1950s.

In 1952, Cornelius Vanderkruk immigrated to Canada with his family from the Netherlands, setting up residence on Robson Road in Waterdown. Cornelius worked at Connon's, where he was well-acquainted with the

owner. John Connon recognized the knowledge and experience of Cornelius, who was a gardener with a successful landscape company. As a result, Cornelius was promoted to general manager. In 1956, Cornelius purchased shares in the company; in 1958, he owned Connon Nurseries. After the purchase of his business, John Connon remained at the company until his death in 1961. This was a major change for Connon Nurseries; however, the business would continue to grow and prosper under the Vanderkruks.

After successfully expanding the company through new growing techniques, investment in a plant container production factory, and purchasing new land, Cornelius retired in 1974, leaving the business to his three sons: Cor, Art, and Neil. The four

Vanderkruk men had taken care of different aspects of Connon Nurseries; Neil handled sales and purchasing, Art handled plant production, Cor oversaw retail and supply, and Cornelius was in charge of bookkeeping. The fourth son, William, had started his own company, Hortico Nurseries Inc., on Concession 5 in the early 70s. Despite his retirement, Cornelius continued to have an active interest in the company. Connon Nurseries continued its expansion, opening a house plant division and about 220 acres for growing in 1975. The official Connon Nurseries logo came out in 1980. The business continued to be on an upward trajectory but would undergo another fundamental change in 1986.

In 1986, the company, which had reached about 510 acres,



Cornelius Vanderkruk, 1946
Photo sourced from Landscape Ontario



The Connon Nurseries Studebaker - from Connon's website

was split amongst the three brothers, leading to the creation of A.V.K. Nursery Holdings, C.B. Vanderkruk Holdings, and Neil Vanderkruk Holdings. Connon Nurseries fell under the management of C.B. Vanderkruk Holdings. Despite the division, Con-

nons continued to grow; it became a multi-faceted business through constant expansion, including its two additional sales facilities in Newmarket and Trenton and its multiple production farms. In 2006, the business, including A.V.K. Nursery Hold-

ings and Neil Vanderkruk Holdings, celebrated its 100th anniversary, and Cor retired, giving the company to the next generation: his sons Rob, Terry, and Kevin. In 2017, the business, keeping with the precedent set by John Connon, moved to its current address at Robson Road.

Connon Nurseries continues to be a goliath within the nursery industry in Ontario, earning itself a strong reputation. However, it is always important to remember that every company has its meagre start and will constantly have its ups and downs. Connon Nurseries and its owners were able to take root in the local community, leading to a strong foundation that has been able to withstand the changing seasons.

FOUND IN THE FONDS

Flamborough has a long history, although maybe not quite as long as its namesake in Yorkshire, first settled in the early part of the medieval period. Our Flamborough in current day Ontario was first surveyed in 1797 and the first European settlers arrived in that year. Prior to becoming part of the City of Hamilton, the Town of Flamborough was formed in 1974 with the amalgamation of East Flamborough, West Flamborough and Beverly townships.

We received a donation this January of a large cedar of The Corporation of the Township of Flamborough crest, 1974, as well as seals from the West Flamborough & Beverly School Board and the West Flamborough Municipal Council. They came from the estate of Jim Smith, who was a member of municipal council.

Seals are a pervasive part of historical record and since early times have provided a method of demonstrating authenticity and



making documents “official”. One of the earliest designed to emboss a seal on paper rather than wax is dated 1782.

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.



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.



The Archives may be closed for the rest of February and most of March, but that doesn't mean that our volunteers have slowed down.

The Flamborough Firefighters display was taken down at the end of January - it was a huge success! Folks are still coming in to look for it. Our display committee has researched and developed our new exhibit on

Flamborough Women's Groups. Our WDHS Co-Op student, Naomi Gibson, has finished her term. She was a tremendous help, scanning several years of Flamborough Review microfilm, scanning and cataloguing thousands of photos and negatives from the Peter Vance collection and helping out with day to day work.

Lyn, our archivist, continues to be busy. January was host to much more complex research questions than

usual, taking up a significant portion of her time.

Some of our volunteers, working in our Archives or remotely, continue with their current projects. Newspapers and obituaries continue to be clipped and filed by Sylvia Wray. Bob Thomas and Bob Lalonde are still finding more veterans to add to our files.

Whether working on special projects or keeping things running, we're always grateful for our volunteers.



"A candle loses nothing of its light when lighting another."

— Khalil Gibran

CONTRIBUTING TO OUR CAUSE

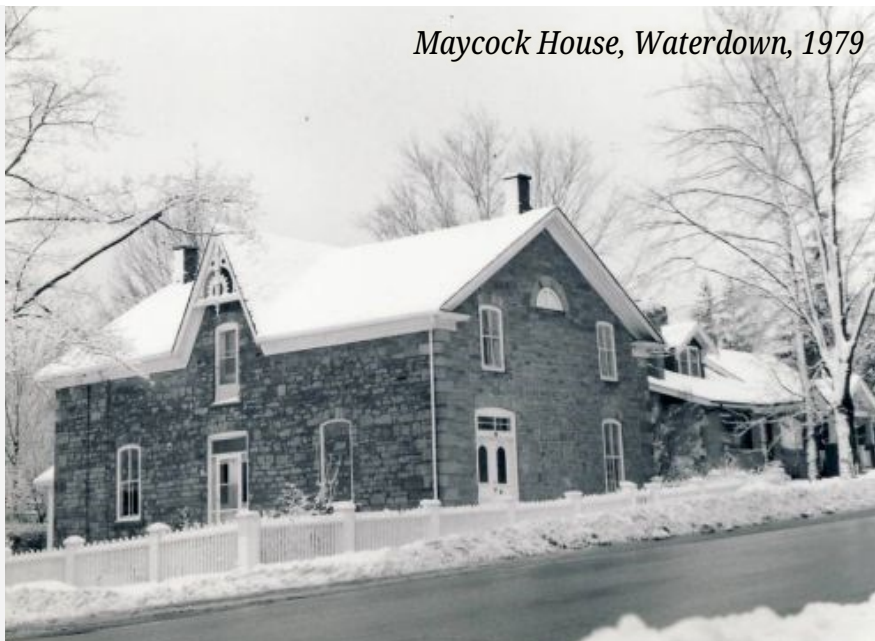
MEMBERSHIP

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



Maycock House, Waterdown, 1979

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



3,775



619

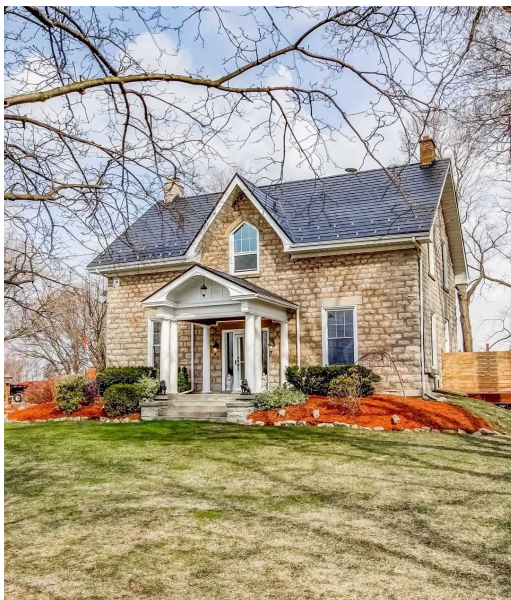


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33

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



Our blog posts featured houses and other structures in West Flamborough of historical importance.

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:

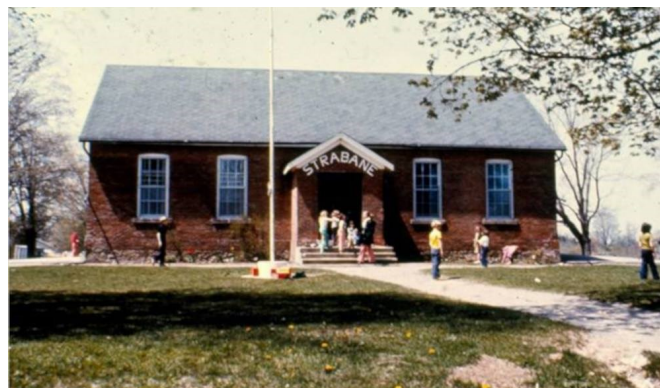
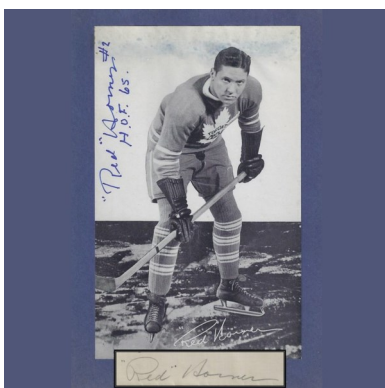
Thanks to all for your support!

We've gotten back into the swing of things on our socials - we hope you've been enjoying our recent posts.

One of the challenges of sharing online content is ensuring our work and photos are properly sourced. In the excitement of sharing something newly discovered, oftentimes users screenshot or copy and paste our

work without proper attribution. Volunteers active on socials try to educate users and link our pages properly, but it's a never-ending task.

Have a photo or an interesting story you wish to share with our readership? Please let us know either through email, social media or stop by the Archives once we reopen at the end of March.



Treasures from the Archives



Robert McQueen's diary includes examples of cross writing, a personal ledger, and more.

One of our latest acquisitions has made quite the journey to our shelves. It began in Alberta, and with a little electronic correspondence between enquiring and interested parties arrived at the desk of our archivist.

From the outside, this diary is quite unassuming. A plain cover for what began as a standard Canadian Pocket Diary for 1871 has on its pages the handwritten day to day accounts of Robert McQueen of Kirkwall.

Robert was born in 1836 at the

McQueen homestead in Kirkwall. He spent his life there, becoming a church elder at age 21 - a position he held until his death in 1923. He married Elizabeth Riddle in 1863.

For over 30 years he was Superintendent of both Kirkwall and Valens Sunday Schools. He was also teacher of Kirkwall Public School for 32 years. Robert was so intimately connected with the community with his work that he was affectionately termed "The Master."

Sitting and flicking through the

diary reveals standard accounts of the weather and a personal ledger. It also has a long analysis of the 16th century English Reformation, as well as many examples of cross writing. This technique of writing on a page and turning it 90 degrees to write the opposite way was done to save paper.

We're very grateful to have Robert's diary, and hope other misplaced historical gems return to our shelves.



Diary entries include the weather and visits to neighbours.

ARCHIVES ACTIVITY - JANUARY

| | | |
|---|-------------------------|------------|
|  | VISITORS | 44 |
|  | CALLS | 11 |
|  | E-MESSAGES | 152 |
|  | ITEMS CATALOGUED | 109 |
|  | ACQUISITIONS | 7 |
|  | VOLUNTEER HOURS | 315 |

THREADS THROUGH THE PAST

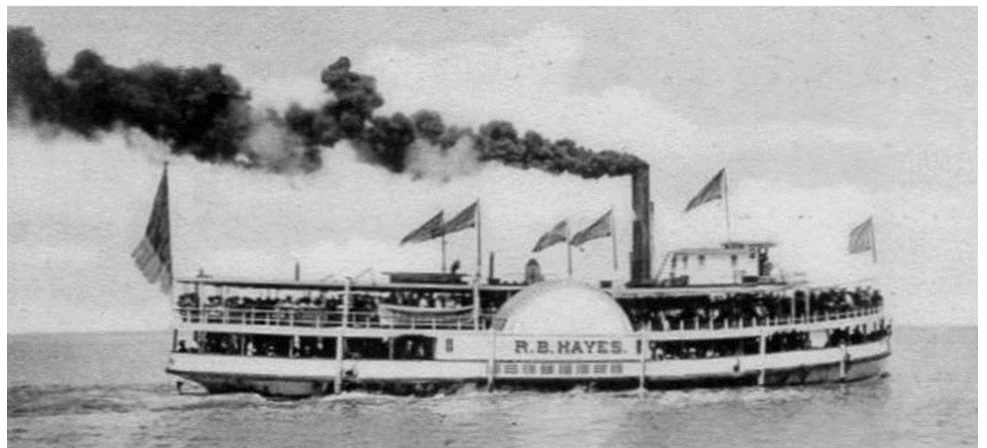
Early Transportation: Getting from Here to There

Lyn Lunsted, Archivist

Given the state of transportation routes, it is sometimes surprising to read about the journeys taken by people in the 1800s – where they went and how long it took them. In our collection we have several letters and diaries which describe trips taken to visit relatives, or for work. Once such letter is from Ramsey Crooks to William McNaughton in New York in 1855.

Ramsay Crooks was the brother of James Crooks of Crooks Hollow. Ramsay came to Canada in 1803 with his widowed mother and some of his siblings, his brother James having emigrated some years previous. In 1825 he married Marianne Pratte and they had five sons and four daughters.

Ramsay spent many years in the American mid-west learning the fur trade. In 1810 he was one of the founding members, along with John Jacob Astor, of the Pacific Fur Company. Over the years he was given more responsibility by Mr. Astor, eventually becoming president of the American Fur Company. He operated a clearing house for furs in New York City until his



Steamer R.B. Hayes en route to Cedar Point, Ohio 1905

death on June 6, 1859.

He was plagued with ill health and cherished his family although he was often separated from them for long periods of time.

This letter was written from West Flamborough on 26 November 1855 and describes his latest journey.

Dear Sir

At the moment I was leaving Toledo I was favored with your brief but very welcome letter of the 19th instant, covering one for my better half, for which she tells me to thank you.

According to the programme of my journey, I should have gone from Toledo to Detroit, but the steam boats that used to run daily between these two cities were laid up, and there being no continuous Railroad to Detroit, and my wife not well enough to stand 'stage riding' on a bad road, I was

forced to return by the Lake Shore Railroad to Buffalo – Friday last we staid (sic) at Niagara Falls with William and his bride, who left on Saturday for his station at "Jordan", and we arrived here the same evening.

My intention was to leave my wife here with by brothers family, and go to Detroit, but the heavy cold I had when I left New York, has become so inveterate, that I feel unable to undertake the journey, as the weather is rainy, snowy, and altogether such that I deem it imprudent to encounter. I regret my inability to pay Mr. Phelps a visit but I must makeup by correspondence, and will today answer his letter of 15th instant a copy of which came with yours of the 17th.

The rest of the letter deals with the payment of several accounts and the sponsoring of a friend into an unnamed Society.

Why did he travel the route he did? What were his options?

Early transportation in Upper and Lower Canada was mainly by road and water. Both were heavily seasonal modes with roads being very rough, but in the 1850s the railroad began to fill a void for fast, year-round transportation. Initially railroads in Canada developed slowly due to lack of capital and population. Many canals were also under construction and people were loath to invest in competitive railway systems. However over a ten year period, from 1851 to 1861, the miles of track in Canada expanded from 159 miles to 2,146 miles (3,455 km).

Roads and Railways

During the 19th century, building and maintaining roads was a municipal responsibility which meant that most were quite crude. With the coming of the railway, long haul routes were at a disadvantage and so most roads were local, with them ending at railway stations or ports since they were the route to transporting goods for sale. Locally, Brock Road, Centre Road and Snake Road were built to allow places such as Galt and Guelph to get their goods to ports at Hamilton and Aldershot. As railways expanded, they encouraged municipalities to keep their roads in good condition as this

meant they did not have to construct expensive branch lines. Farmers were willing to haul produce and goods for about 8 – 10 miles so railway stations were placed at about 8 mile intervals.

In the late 1800s dozens of railway lines snaked their way across Southern Ontario, all owned by individual entities, all looking for lake access to allow for easy transportation of goods. This map of the immediate area shows at least a dozen different ownerships of rail lines.



These lines represent rail lines, not roads. The South Ontario Pacific line is indicated in red.

“The South Ontario Pacific was originally incorporated in 1887 to build from Woodstock to the Niagara River: with branches to Cooksville and Toronto, and to Lake Huron. Plans for this construction were dropped when the Canadian Pacific purchased part of the Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo line. Another company, the Hamilton & Guelph Jct. Railway was incorporated in 1906 to connect Guelph Jct. on the

Canadian Pacific, with the TH&B (Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo) at Hamilton. The South Ontario Pacific in 1910 received permission to build the line between Guelph Jct. and Hamilton, via Waterdown. In 1911, the railway was leased to the CPR for 999 years. The line opened in 1912, giving Hamilton its first direct connection to Lake Huron, and Guelph its long-desired link to Lake Ontario.” (Upper Canada Railway Society (UCRS) Newsletter, July 1990.)

Steamers

The first steamboats on the Great Lakes went into service in 1817. In 1852 the Erie Railroad Company chartered several side-wheel steamers for routes on the Great Lakes. These were only used for a short time as they weren't very practical. Screw steamers and propeller ships were better suited. These steamers, up to 1869, were used in the traffic of the Erie Railroad Company upon Lake Erie only, and constituted lines to Cleveland, Toledo and Detroit. (Source: August 1914 issue of *Erie Railroad Magazine*) It is likely that these are the ‘steam boats’ that Ramsay refers to in his letter.



Partial map of the railroad routes between Toledo and New York City. 1850. From U.S. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

While it may feel like spring with February in Ontario starting off on a historically warm note, we have a little bit of winter weather to get through before spring finally arrives. No matter the weather, we hope our members are enjoying time outdoors when they're able.



February's monthly meeting's topic is the HMCS Haida. While the original speaker booked for the event is unable to present, we look forward to what Gabriel has to share with us via Zoom at the end of the month.

Our Archives is closed for a significant amount of time - we hope Lyn is enjoying her well deserved time off. Our volunteers continue to contribute however possible in the interim, and as current projects reach completion we're always planning for the future.

We're a few weeks away from our long-awaited new shelving unit arriving for installation. As mentioned last month it will take some work, as well as getting used to a newly organized space, but we'll adapt to the new normal and are excited to make the archives more accessible.

Looking forward to 'seeing' everyone at our next meeting,

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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