



# Heritage Happenings

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<i>Fleeing the Famine: Irish Immigration to Flamborough</i>	<i>Current projects and more!</i>	<i>Both online and in person</i>	<i>Charles Stewart</i>	<i>Plus other local society websites &amp; our contact info</i>



Original members of Stoney Creek WI - source - The WI

## March Meeting

*The Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society will feature a presentation on the Women's Institute of Canada by Linda Zelem, Public Relations Co-Ordinator for the Federal Women's Institute of Canada, **Thursday Mar. 27 2025, 8:00 pm Grace Anglican Church, Waterdown***

The first Women's Institute was founded in 1897 in Stoney Creek by Erland and Janet Lee. They invited a group of women to hear Adelaide Hoodless speak about the importance of women engaging in formal domestic education to the success of family and the nation.

Linda will tell us about the

women's work towards agricultural improvement, lobbying for women's and children's rights, and their work during WWI as well as their work today.

We will try to hold this as a hybrid meeting, the Zoom link will be added closer to the event.

### Heritage Paper #325

This year we explore the various origins of Flamborough inhabitants. This month's Heritage Paper explores *Fleeing the Famine: Irish Immigration to Flamborough*.

### 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?

### Treasures from the Archives

We deal mostly with paper products, but there are small artifacts that are a part of our collection that add to the story of our community.

What wee items are on our shelves?

# HERITAGE PAPER

## Fleeing the Famine: Irish Immigration to Flamborough

Tess Moffat, Archives Summer Student

*Fourth in the series under the theme “Ethnic backgrounds of Flamborough.”*

Throughout Canada’s colonial history, there have been multiple waves of immigration; movements influenced by poor economic conditions, war, political turmoil, famine, religious persecution, and so much more. For those fleeing Ireland, there was rarely one correct answer; however, one of the largest waves of migration out of Ireland occurred around the 1840s as a direct result of the Irish Great Famine, better known as the Potato Famine. The famine caused about 1.5 to 2 million to flee Ireland with hundreds of thousands making their way into British North America.

Prior to the 1840s, there had been considerable shortages of the potato crop that caused financial and nutritional stress on the impoverished farmers of Ireland. For those who were struggling to feed themselves, not to mention still meet their quotas to supply the British market, this was only the beginning. While these shortages were mainly caused by the sporadic Irish weather, the failure of the potato crop in the 1840s was the re-



*“Famine,” a memorial in Dublin, Ireland. The memorial, which stands on Customs House Quay, is in remembrance of the Great Famine (1845-1849). Artist Rowan Gillespie, 2007 - image sourced from Reddit.*

sult of the fungal disease *phytophthora infestans*. Nowhere else in Europe did the population so heavily rely on the potato; almost half of the population depended on the crop, especially as they were considered calorie-dense and nutritious when mixed with milk. So, when half the population no longer has their main dietary staple, one can easily guess as to what will occur. Not only were the masses

starving but those who depended on the potato crop for their livelihood were significantly in over their heads as well. Many could no longer afford to pay rent and were pushed from their homes, culminating in countless farmers moving around Ireland and Britain desperate for work.

Close to one million died as a direct result of the famine, and those who managed to survive



*An example of a 19th century advertisement. [Ocanadablog.com](http://Ocanadablog.com)*

were struggling to keep their heads above the water. For many, fleeing Ireland was the best choice for themselves as well as their families. In the colonies, not only was land relatively cheap but the advertisements for immigration thoroughly described the excellent growing conditions and natural splendor of the country, something that would have been immensely appealing to Irish immigrants in the mid-1800s. Initially settling in the Maritimes, as this was as far as their finances could take them, the Irish then migrated further inland, seeking out opportunity, cheap land, and community. For some, they were able to find security within the far reaches of Flamborough.

After enduring catastrophe and the stress of leaving behind all they knew, what many immigrants, regardless of country of

origin, desired more than anything were the comforts of home. This ache often led to specific places being given European names, such as Flamborough Head in Yorkshire, England being the namesake of Flamborough due to their similarities. However, when people were already coming to a populated area, they often sought out another important element: community. This could take many forms, but it often involved immigrants settling in locations that had an established culture similar to their own. This trend was prevalent during the 1840s.

Even with the potato shortages prior to the Great Famine, many Irish immigrants had already made their way into Flamborough in the 1830s, settling along the 11th Concession East, Brock Road, and 6th Concession West. Not only was this an excellent rural area for farmers but

the location, especially the Brock Road, was appealing for business owners, especially as it was one of the main routes to reach Guelph, Waterloo, or simply move throughout Flamborough. For this reason, Brock Road became dominated by crossroad settlements built around taverns.

Many saw the potential in the area. Patrick Freel, an Irish immigrant and graduate of Trinity College, arrived in Canada around 1835 and opened the Central Hotel on Brock Road. Freel recognized the significance of the road, especially as it connected the Head-of-the-Lake to Guelph and where three townships met up. In 1852, Freel purchased Lots 7 and 8 of the 9th Concession and surveyed the land into village lots, an action that would culminate in the formation of Freelton by 1856.



*Patrick Freel's headstone*

[Findagrave.com](http://Findagrave.com)



*O'Connor Farm - Freelon, 1910*

**Ancestry.com**

Prior to the Great Famine, many had come to the area, recognizing the potential of the land; this would, of course, affect the next wave.

More and more settlers were attracted to these established communities. While many came to Flamborough by their own means, others were sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church in Hamilton, meaning they were often placed in areas that had a dominant Catholic and/or Irish culture. Irish settlements, such as Stoney Battery on the 11th Concession, began to sprout up and grow rapidly in the mid-1800s as a direct result of this influx of settlers. Considering the majority of the families occupying spots like the 6th Concession West were of Irish descent, the area was dubbed 'Little Ireland' or the 'Irish Settlement' by locals.

The Irish immigrants fleeing the Great Famine were able to find security and comfort in where they chose to settle; however, they forged a sense of community and identity themselves. As a result of this predominately Roman Catholic influx of settlers, concerns over education

were thoroughly discussed, and as early as 1855, a Catholic Academy was opened in the 11th Concession that took in students from all over Flamborough, especially from 'Little Ireland.' In 1865, the land for West Flamborough's first Catholic Church, Our Lady Mount Carmel, was purchased in Freelon. The land was altered and shaped to suit the needs of these new settlers, leading to the transplantation of their culture.

Identity and community was not merely 'moved' into the countryside; they were also forged after years of occupation. At 6th Concession West and Brock Road, this particular Irish settlement sprouted up around 1854, fleeing the final years of the Great Famine. As the years passed and this section of 'Little Ireland' became more and more built-up, there was a clear sense of community and identity.



***Bogle Family Farm - Safari Road, c. 1902***

*Joseph Bogle (1835-1912) immigrated to Canada with his family from County Tyrone in Northern Ireland in 1845.*

**Ancestry.com**

Around 1870, a separate school was built in the vicinity, which consisted of one-room with an alcove and altar for Mass. Outside of the built landscape, community events also point towards an established sense of identity. For example, Michael Brown's tavern on the southeast corner of Brock Road and 6th

Concession had a large room over the stables that was the location of many dances until it was closed in 1910. At the same corner, summer picnics in the Sanderson Bush were always a highlight, managing to attract visitors from as far as Hamilton and Toronto.

Despite initially fleeing from

catastrophe and giving up all that they knew, the Irish immigrants of the mid-1800s endured. Within 'Little Ireland,' they forged a new path deep into Flamborough's countryside where they planted their identity and grew their community.



## FOUND IN THE FONDS

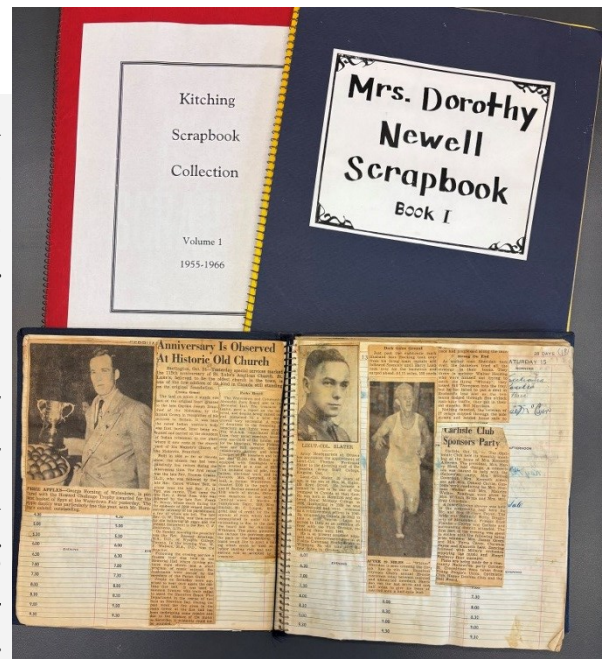
We have dozens of scrapbooks which consist mostly of newspaper clippings lovingly pasted into books, ranging from proper scrapbooks to reused ledgers. The Kitching Scrapbook collection is 30 volumes, there are 8 Dr. Vance scrapbooks with the clippings pasted in old appointment books, and 3 oversized ledgers with clippings from all over Flamborough and Dundas. Others are a single volume and profile clippings from people such as Joe Sams and David B. Johnston, former local politicians. Most of these clippings are birth/death/marriage notices but also include local events, political news etc., depending on the donor's interests. Almost all of these have

been indexed and in some cases contain the only reference we have to a particular person or event.

One particularly satisfying instance happened when a lady from the UK wrote us asking if we had any information regarding her uncle who she knew lived in the Waterdown area and had been killed in a car accident. One of Dr. Vance's scrapbooks contained a small article on the accident and we were then able to search out further details, including a recent obituary of the man's wife which included details of her life, interests and her children. The UK lady was totally unaware of the family and she discovered cousins she

never knew about.

Other times the scrapbooks are not quite so helpful. We have three original ledgers of East Flamborough Assessments from 1905, 1915 and 1916. These would be very valuable sources of information if it weren't for the fact that many of the pages have been covered up with pages from the Ladies Home Journal very nicely glued in the middle of many pages.



## 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 over 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.



While our photography exhibit has been open to the public for a few weeks now, we look forward to an upcoming display featuring Dundas Street. MaryAnn Slagter is currently researching businesses on Dundas and we look forward to her display.

We've been using Microsoft Publisher to create and publish our news-

## 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.*

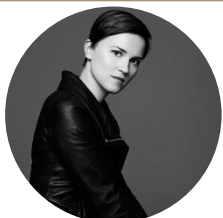


letter through the years, however within the last month we've discovered Microsoft will no longer support the software. We hope to keep the current look of the newsletter as close as possible, but are exploring options of either software or online applications for next year.

Archivist Lyn continues to be busy researching inquiries, writing articles for Flamborough Today and our newsletter, coordinating

projects and volunteers, attending heritage meetings, and ensuring the Archives is running regularly. We're very grateful for Lyn but would appreciate some extra help if you can spare some time!

One of our computers was on the fritz and IT visited the archives three times for a total of nine hours. Thankfully we were able to save our files but it's another concern we have to keep in mind.



*"It's when you're acting selflessly that you are at your bravest."*

**- Veronica Roth**

## 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

*Strabane gathering, from our collection (BW155)*



## 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 wish 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 expendi-

tures, 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



**3,913**



**629**



**64**



**41**

We're always online - tap follow and drop a comment to say hi!



Our biweekly blog posts continue with articles "From the Vault".

## E-Commerce

Check out our wares online —we've got something for everyone. Be it a book or a membership, purchasing from our online store supports us as a society and ensures we can preserve local history.

Once again, and as always:

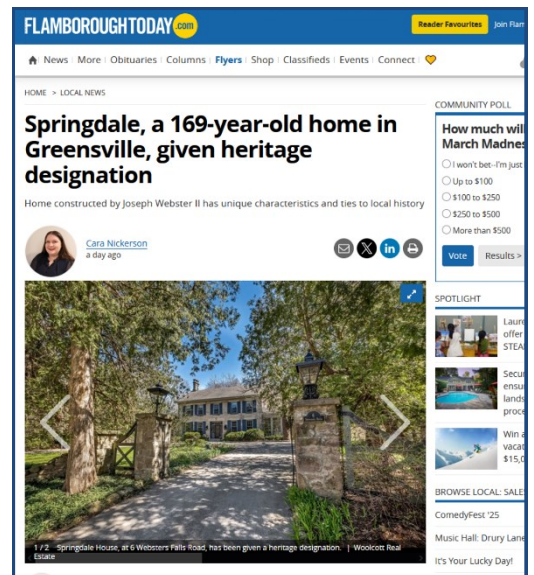
*Thanks to all for your support!*

We continue to post regularly on our socials. Our YouTube channel has had to be put on the back burner as we deal with other projects and necessary distractions.

One frustrating thing about social media was the loss of the ability to share news articles. There's a lot of great articles featuring heritage, including those written by our very own Lyn Lunsted. In

order to bypass this we decided to screenshot the articles - our followers can see the featured image of heritage news and should they be interested, they can head over to the source site.

March 18th was the 50th anniversary of the Waterdown UFO as photographed by Pat McCarthy. Have something of your own to share? Contact us via email or messaging - we'd love to see!



# Treasures from the Archives



Although we mostly collect paper items, we do have a number of small artifacts which contribute to the overall story of our community. These range from milk bottles to small fleet license plates to pins and buttons. We have six hockey cards featuring Todd Harvey, an NHL player from Shef-



field. We have a tie tack and cufflinks with the Waterdown High School crest, buttons from various political campaigns, the Waterdown Centennial, and the campaign to raise money to save the Cobblestone Bridge at Webster's Falls. Another small collection consists of Waterdown Lions Club pins from various anniversaries, and a Waterdown Lanes Volunteer pin. We have pins from the City of Hamilton, various Canadian Legion pins and from Flamborough. Do you have any you could donate?



## ARCHIVES ACTIVITY - FEBRUARY

	<b>VISITORS</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>CALLS</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>E-MESSAGES</b>	<b>144</b>
	<b>ITEMS CATALOGUED</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>ACQUISITIONS</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>VOLUNTEER HOURS</b>	<b>186</b>

# THREADS THROUGH THE PAST

Charles Stewart

Lyn Lunsted, Archivist

When famous or influential people grow up and stay within their community, it is easy to find out information about them, to recognize their contribution and just generally know they were important. But what about those who were born in a community and later moved away? How often do we follow their life story – and claim them as one of our own? Often they are forgotten by the community although they were famous elsewhere.

Such is the case for the Hon. Charles Stewart.

Charles Stewart was born on August 26, 1868 in Strabane, Ontario, the son of Charles Stewart and Catherine Finlay. His father, a native of Dundee Scotland,



*Stewart as Premier of Alberta.*



*Strabane School, 1910. From our Collection.*

was a stonemason and farmer. His maternal grandparents, Alexander Finlay and Ellen Ferrier were among the first communicants in 1847 at Nairn Presbyterian Church, now Freelon-Strabane United Church.

Educated in Strabane, Charles was 16 when his family moved to a farm in Vespra Township, near Barrie. In 1891 he married Jane Russell Sneath and they eventually had eight children. His father died in 1892, leaving him the farm but he moved west to Killam, Alberta after a tornado destroyed the farm in 1905.

An unsuccessful farmer, he returned to his stonemason roots, helping to build founda-

tions for the Canadian Pacific Railway and the High Level Bridge in Edmonton. Active in the community, he entered politics when he was elected by acclamation as a Liberal in the new riding of Sedgwick, in 1909.

Stewart remained as the MLA for Sedgwick from March 22, 1909 – February 28, 1922. However he had an extraordinary run both in Provincial and Federal politics for over 25 years.

Serving in Alberta, he was appointed as the first Minister of Municipal Affairs in 1912, moved to Minister of Public Works from 1913 – 1917, Provincial Secretary from 1917 – 1918 and Minister of Railways and Telephones from 1917 – 1921.



*Stewart's Farmhouse in Killam.*

Arthur Sifton resigned as Premier to become the Alberta representative in Robert Borden's Union Government, after the conscription crisis, and Charles Stewart was asked to replace him as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Premier of Alberta in 1917.

The United Farmers of Alberta swept the election of 1921 and Stewart offered to resign as Premier as soon as someone replaced him, which UFA member Herbert Greenfield did.

The Liberal Government of William Lyon Mackenzie King had not won any seats in Alberta, and Stewart was invited to join the cabinet as Minister of the Interior and Mines, which also included responsibility for Indian Affairs. He was also Acting Minister of Immigration and Colonization from 1921 – 1923.



*Stewart (behind the plow) at a sod-turning event in St. Albert, soon after becoming premier.*

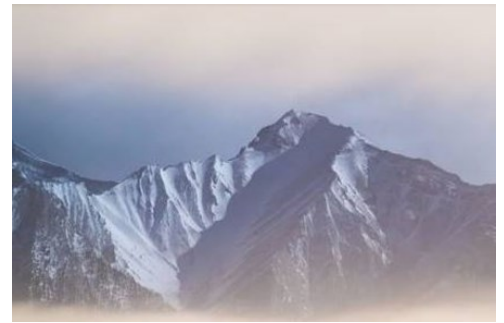
He won a by-election in Argenteuil Quebec in 1922, and then a seat in Edmonton West in 1925, a position he retained until 1935.

Stewart was influential in marketing coal both domestically and internationally. He was very interested in water power, advising the government on jurisdictional issues regarding the Niagara, St. Mary and Milk Rivers. In 1927 he was Canada's representative at the League of Nations, the forerunner to the United Nations.

In 1927 he oversaw the creation of Prince Albert National Park in Saskatchewan, the only national park in that Province until 1981, when it was joined by Grassy Meadows N.P.

In 1928, a mountain in the Bow River valley in Jasper National Park was named after him – Mount Charles Stewart.

After he left politics, he was appointed by King George V to chair the Canadian section of the International Joint Commission, the US-Canada joint commission overseeing issues and



*Mount Charles Stewart.*

the use of water and waterways along the joint boundary, in which he was considered to be an expert. He held this position until his death.

In 1938 he was appointed chair of the Canadian section of the British Columbia – Yukon-Alaska Highway Commission.

He died in Ottawa, December 6, 1946 from cancer, his wife having predeceased him in 1944. He is buried in Beechwood Cemetery, Ottawa. In his eulogy, Mackenzie King said "in more respects than one, Mr. Stewart's career mirrored the development of Canada itself".

Quite the legacy for a boy from Strabane.

*Sources: File links, research material and genealogical documentation courtesy of Dr. Ray Cummins. Other material from Wikipedia, Find a Grave.*



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT...

Spring is definitely in the air - although the weather has its ups and downs in temperature the snow has made an exit and we're looking forward to warmer weather.

A reminder as we're heading into spring, should you be doing some spring cleaning and come across heritage material - get in contact with us. We'd hate to see important documents, pictures, ephemera and more head to the dump. It's surprising the important history we find in what otherwise would have been discarded.

We're steadily approaching our annual meeting, and our board members haven't changed much in a long time. We're looking for fresh talent - make sure to let us know about folks that would be interested in sitting on the board. We'd love a fresh perspective and hope that new members to the board would give us some new ideas.

This month's meeting is appropriate for Women's History Month in March. We look forward to hosting Linda Zelem who will speak on the Women's Institute of Canada. We realize folks may prefer to attend via Zoom, but come on down to Grace Anglican and see everyone in person - we love to keep the community spirit alive.

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://Grimsby Historical Society).

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://Head of the Lake Historical Society)

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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Website: [FlamboroughHistory.com](http://FlamboroughHistory.com)



Facebook: @flamboroughhistory

Instagram: @flamborougharchives

Twitter: @FlamboroHistory

YouTube: Flamborough Archives  
& Heritage Society

### OFFICERS 2024-2025

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Vice President: Meghan Martin

Secretary: Sue McNally

Treasurer: Lyn Lunsted

Past President: Nathan Tidridge

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Keri Raphael

Lyn Lunsted, Archivist

