

Remember the Corman House

# Stoney Creek Historical Society

PO Box 66637, Stoney Creek, ON. L8G 5E6

# NEWSLETTER

June 2016 Edition # 67

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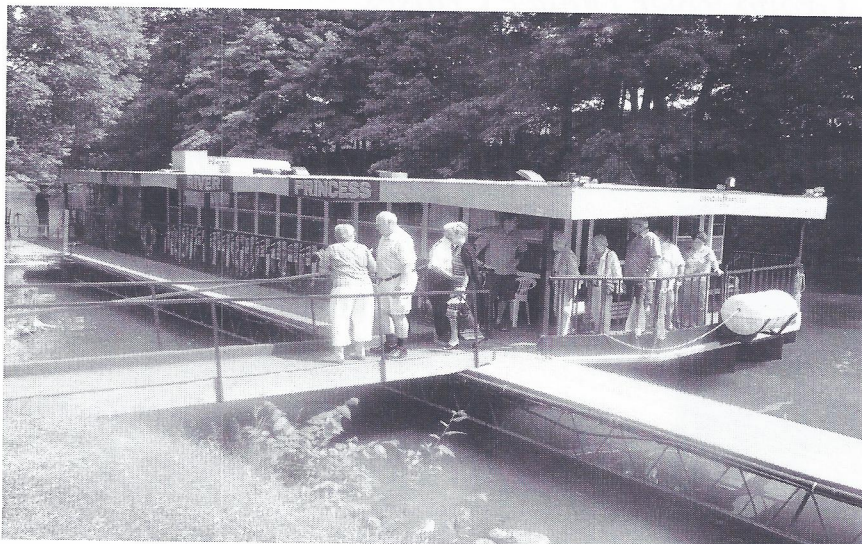
***“CRUISING DOWN THE RIVER ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON”  
but in our case it was Saturday afternoon July 10<sup>th</sup> 2015***

## ***GRAND RIVER DINNER CRUISES***

Members and friends of the Stoney Creek Historical Society enjoy a trip on the grand river.



The Cruise company has 3 boats as shown. Inside is where they serve a delicious roast beef dinner, and on nice days like this one, there is outdoor seating to enjoy the trip. Before boarding the boat there was an indoor show called the “Flaming Fiddles”, which the writer found pleasantly entertaining.



### *Grand River Dinner Cruises*

36 Brant County Road 22,  
Caledonia, ON N3W 2G9

Phone: (905) 765-4107

<http://grandrivercruises.ca>

## A little History about Grand River Dinner Cruises

In 1971, John Albin and wife Luella built a home along the banks of the Grand outside Caledonia. The property ran along a creek and had a century old barn that had been a prosperous cattle farm but had been vacant for many years. John and Luella both grew up in farming families and had plans in turning the property back into a prosperous farm. However in 1976 John had built a houseboat for the family and there evolved the idea of introducing riverboat cruises on the Grand River.

From the knowledge John gained from constructing his own houseboat, he designed a larger boat that would seat 35 people. In 1978 Big Creek Boat Farm opened with the Grand River Belle being the first boat. The first few years, John and Luella were trying to target a market for the cruises. The century old barn was named "Old MacDonald's Farm" and school groups would come to pet animals and then take a nature boat ride up the Big Creek to the "Lost Forest". Bus groups would come and take a lunch cruise on the "Grand River Belle".

More demand was from bus groups looking for day trips, so in 1982 John converted the century old barn into a Music Theatre, Bake Shop and Craft Shop. Luella produced and accompanied the music show as well as working in the office. John looked after the boats and the day to day operation. This package, an ideal day trip for groups became very popular. By 1987, John had built two more boats, the "Grand River Queen" and the "Grand River Princess" and evening dinner cruises were also added to the schedule. The name "Grand River Dinner Cruises" was introduced in the mid-90's as this was the direction the business took.

In 2000, a new building named "The Landing" was constructed housing the auditorium, office and craftshop. Grand River Dinner Cruises still specializes in the day trips with the Lunch Cruise & Show Package being the most popular. Sunset Dinner Cruises, Sunday Brunch and Private Cruises are also offered. The name "Boat Farm" is still used by longstanding customers and staff.

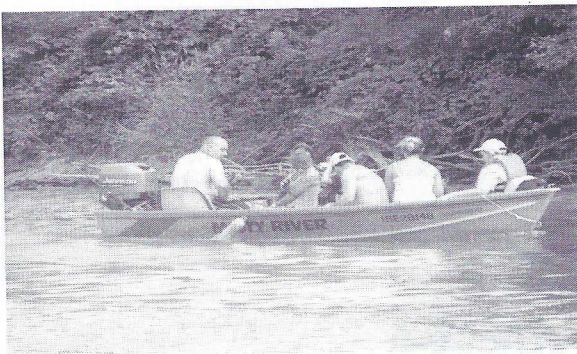
John and Luella's son, Blain, and daughter, Dana Johnson, have been managing the business since 1998. The century old barn is still standing and is now a farm specializing in goat meat operated by Blain. Luella is retired from the every day business but still maintains an advisory position. John passed away in 2006 leaving a thriving, entrepreneurial enterprise for future generations.

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An alternative but riskier means of touring the grand river.

## President's Corner June 2016

The Stoney Creek Historical Society (SCHS) has now completed the 2015-2016 season. It has been an exceptional season with many fine guest speakers, increased membership, and new acquisitions in our Reference Library and Archive. SCHS meets the first Wednesday of the month, with our next meeting scheduled for September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 7:00 p.m at the Municipal Centre, 777 #8 Hwy, Stoney Creek.

**SCHS participated in a Jane's (Jane Jacobs) Walk, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016.** Jane Jacobs was in the forefront of City Planning, and was well respected. Forty countries took part. Ms Jacobs would have been 100 on May 7<sup>th</sup>. From all accounts, this walking tour of old town Stoney Creek, was most successful. The 50 participants found it to be both enjoyable, and informative, and requested that more tours take place. Several attendees became members of SCHS. As a result of this level of support and interest, allow me to commit to more such tours. I welcome any suggestions on tour routes and /or specific areas of interest, as well as your own knowledge of the history of the old town. Such input allows us to be as prepared as possible for next time, as well as document this history for current and future generations. That's why SCHS exists.

SCHS values it's many corporate sponsors. We are members of the Chamber of Commerce. **We support the Stoney Creek BIA by participating in Saturday in the Creek, the second Saturday of the month.** You may have noticed us in May or June just west of the Augustus Jones fountain. We'll be there in July as well.

Many have visited our display of old photos, and are eager to share their knowledge of what they can recall. **We always appreciate new members. My thanks to the following for joining SCHS: S.W. Plumbing, Roslynne & Tom Crawford, Larry Kaulback & Elizabeth Taylor.** Some individuals may have challenges that prevent them from actively participating. What ever your circumstance, know that there are various ways to share your historical documents, photos and knowledge of Stoney Creek. **We respect the materials that you share. We will copy them and return the originals to you if requested.** As an aside, may I remind everyone to write details about the photos that you have. You may currently know who the individuals are, but as time goes quickly by, you may not always be able to recall and record for future generations. **Come visit our Reference Library and Archive at 605 #8 hwy. Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1-4 p.m. Our web site is [www.stoneycreekhistorical.ca](http://www.stoneycreekhistorical.ca)**

On Friday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016, 35 members of SCHS enjoyed a **Fish Fry at the Stoney Creek Legion.** It was scheduled for a specific time, 6:00 p.m. Everyone in attendance had a great meal and enjoyed the many shared stories and episodes that socializing with friends provides. Our thanks to the Legion for treating us royally.

**My ongoing appreciation to our many fine volunteers** who are the life blood of our Society. In closing my report, I extend to you, your family and friends, our wishes for a healthy and happy summer season. See you at Saturday in the Creek, and/or at our September meeting.

Greg Armstrong  
President-SCHS.

## Upcoming Speakers

**Wednesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 pm**      **Speaker:** Scott Youngblut  
Topic: The Franklin Expedition-Found

**Wednesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 pm**      **Speaker:** Thanh Campbell  
Topic: Orphan 32

**Wednesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 7:00 pm**      **Speaker:** Arden Phair  
Topic: Welland Canal Fallen Workers Story

**The Stoney Creek Historical Society's** Archives and Reference Library is located at 605 Highway 8. We are generally open on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 1pm - 4pm. Visitors and researchers are always welcome. Please come and join us.

## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Giles and Betty Beaudoin, Roslyne and Tom Crawford, Connie Behie, Brian Le Grow, Ann Herman, Larry Kaulback, Elizabeth Taylor, S.W. Plumbing

Please contact *Doug Green* by telephone at ( 905 ) ( 662-4065 ) or by email at [newsletter@stoneycreekhistorical.ca](mailto:newsletter@stoneycreekhistorical.ca) or [dgreen136@cogeco.ca](mailto:dgreen136@cogeco.ca)

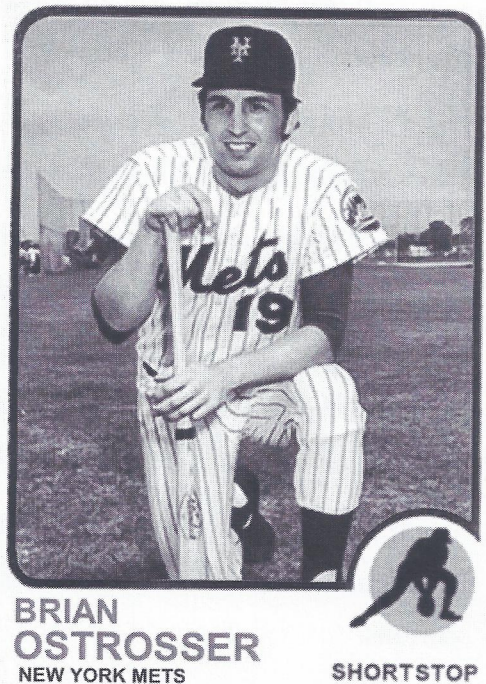
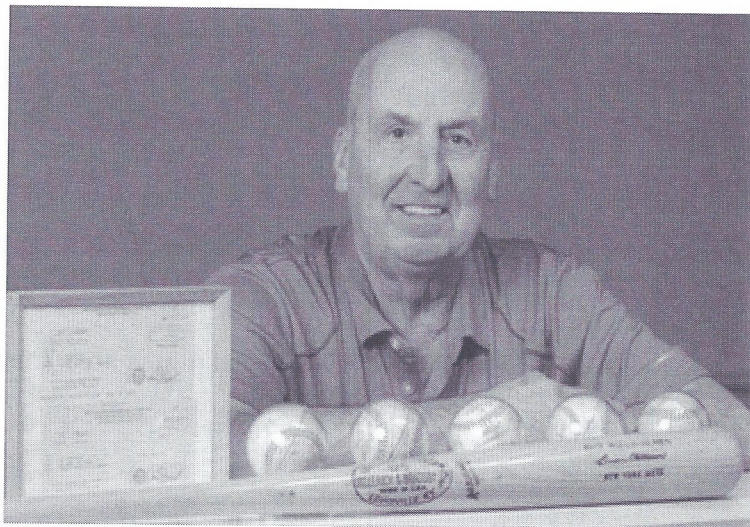
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**This newsletter issue is sponsored by courtesy of Councillor Maria Pearson**



In Stoney Creek, 1961 .... the Little League baseball club came within one game of moving on to the Little League World Series. Despite the loss, they were honoured after returning home from Montreal. Here Mayor Watson, congratulates team captain **Brian Ostrosser**, along with manager Jim Miller and coach Bert Carrigan. (HS)



*The following story based on an article in the Hamilton Spectator May 2014 by and with the permission of Scott Radley*

### Ossie and 'The Say Hey Kid'

Forty three years ago, the lives of the last born-and-bred Hamiltonian ( Stoney Creeker ) in the Major Leagues and baseball legend Willie Mays intersected in a New York Mets uniform

The story goes that Willie Mays became 'The Say Hey Kid' because he could never remember the names of all his teammates. So he got into the habit of greeting them with a simple, 'Hey.' By the summer of 1973, however, the nickname had become a little outdated. Mays was no longer a kid. The

24-time all-star was a broken-down, 42-year-old, part-time centrefielder whose career was running on fumes. He'd been traded from the San Francisco Giants to the New York Mets where he'd bat a sad .211 and hit just six homers.

But he was still Willie Mays. So as Brian Ostrosser walked through the doors of the Mets' clubhouse to prepare for his first big league game, and was led by the trainer to the extra stall next to where Mays was sitting — one filled floor to ceiling with the legend's fan mail — baseball's rawest rookie found himself more than a little wide-eyed.

The young shortstop looked around the room and saw Tug McGraw, Rusty Staub and manager Yogi Berra. Tom Seaver came over and said hello. He glanced up above the locker and saw his name printed on a nameplate. He saw his fresh-pressed uniform hanging there.

It was all great. But all overshadowed by the man sitting two feet away. The greatest player of his generation. Maybe the best ever.

More than four decades later, the last born-and-bred Hamiltonian to make it to "The Show" takes no time recalling how Mays broke the ice.

"He said something like, 'How do you say *that* name?'" Ostrosser laughs. Apparently saying 'hey' was a guideline rather than a rule.

In the rookie's eyes, Mays had been around forever. The star had hit 34 homers and driven in 104 runs way back in the year the kid played his first organized game as a 10-year-old in Stoney Creek. The San Francisco Giants' centrefielder was about as famous as anyone in sports at that time.

But the newcomer wasn't exactly unknown. At least around here, he wasn't. Folks in this area knew all about the Ostrossers. Which is pronounced Oh-strosser in case Willie's reading this and still curious.

In 1965, brother Darrell would become famous as part of the 1965 Stoney Creek team that made it to the final of the Little League World Series, still the only Canadian team to make it that far. And Brian was so obviously talented that on a spring day in 1969, a Mets' area scout picked him out of the crowd of guys playing on a ballpark near Ivor Wynne Stadium.

"He said, 'I'd like to run you through some motions and have a look at you.'"

The next day the shortstop showed up at Mahoney Park to play an exhibition game with some other kids the scout had pulled together. Ostrosser went 3-4 and played flawless defence. A day later, the scout showed up at his house with a contract. The 19-year-old would get \$1,000 to turn pro.

It took him about a second to say yes. "All I knew was I was getting a plane ticket for minor league spring training in St. Petersburg," he says. "I'd never been on a plane before."

Over the next few years, he slowly climbed his way through the Mets' minor-league system, winning MVP awards at each stop. By the start of the '73 season, he'd graduated to AAA and had signed a contract that would pay him \$15,000 if he made the big club. By the middle of the season, he was rolling.

Then, as if on cue, Mets' shortstop Bud Harrelson got hurt.

Between the time he got called into the manager's office to tell him he was going up and the moment he left for New York, Ostrosser tried to contact his parents to tell them the incredible news. Except they were at a wedding. So on Aug. 5, 1973, he became a big leaguer without anyone back home knowing it.

He watched the first game of a doubleheader against the St. Louis Cardinals with Lou Brock, Bob Gibson, Tim McCarver and Joe Torre from the dugout.

He was still sitting when Berra told him to go in as a defensive replacement in the top of the sixth inning of the second game.

Until that day, he'd never even seen a Major League ballpark in person. Now he was standing on the infield at Shea Stadium in front of 40,280 people. Catching a pop-up from the very first batter. A guy named Mike Tyson.

"Not *thee* Mike Tyson," he laughs.

That was big. Leading off the bottom of the inning was bigger. So much so that even 41 years later, Ostrosser still sounds miffed about striking out.

"I was pissed off," he says. "I just couldn't believe I saw the ball so well and didn't hit it."

He didn't play much over the next few days as the Mets headed out on a west coast swing. Neither did Mays. They'd sit next to each other in the clubhouse and chat, but rarely left the bench. That continued even when they got to San Francisco for Mays' first visit back to the city where his legend had been built. He wasn't in the lineup during the first game against the Giants. Or during the second. Ostrosser was. He'd grounded out his first time up, but his second chance of the day was going to be the one that got him his first hit. As he loosened up in the on deck circle, he was feeling ready to do something big.

Suddenly he heard a surge of noise rising in the crowd. Turning toward the dugout, he saw Berra waving him back for a pinch-hitter.

"Number 24 comes out," Ostrosser says, speaking of Mays. "Pretty good applause, I'll tell you that."

A moment later, the two-time MVP stroked a double into left-centre field. It turned out to be the hall of famer's last hit in San Francisco. And made the Hamiltonian a footnote to history.

Within a few days Ostrosser had been into two more games, bringing his total to four. His fielding had been perfect, but his batting average remained at a frustrating .000 after five tries. A couple days after that, he was sent back to the minor leagues.

That same afternoon, Mays hit his 660th and final home run. He retired as soon as the season ended. Ostrosser, meanwhile, started having his own issues. Early the next spring, he fouled a ball off his leg. It should've been a simple recovery, but it just wouldn't heal. Surgery finally fixed it, except when he was finally able to get back on the field he couldn't run.

With no chance of cracking a big-league roster, he returned home. For the next few years he played high-level fastball including a stint on the national team, before retiring at 40 to a career at Stelco.

Now 64, retired from that career and living in a modest Stoney Creek home, Ostrosser finds it hard to believe he's the last guy who cut his baseball teeth in this city to have made it to the Major Leagues. Surely more than four decades after the summer of Secretariat and the Watergate Hearings, *someone* else would've come along.

Matt Maysey was born here, but played a lot of his baseball in Buffalo. John Axford lives in Ancaster, but played his childhood games in Port Dover and Simcoe.

"I'm really, really shocked and surprised," Ostrosser says. "We have a lot of good athletes in this area."

He still gets the odd piece of fan mail asking for an autograph. Three or four a year usually, often with a dollar bill inside for payment. He always obliges. He's got a few autographed baseballs around the house, a bat or two and some newspaper clippings as mementos. He's even got his first Major League paycheque framed and hanging on a wall. For the first two days' service with the Mets he got \$198.24.

"I never cashed it," he laughs.

He'd give it away in a second if he could trade it for a chance to go back and do the one thing he never did, though. Even now he sometimes catches himself thinking about how much he wishes he'd been able to get a hit.

He pulled his head off the ball he says. He was so eager to find green that he did what he knew he shouldn't do. He struck out twice, flied out twice and grounded out once. It doesn't make him feel any better that the only hit Mays got during their time together was during that at bat in San Francisco that should've been his.

He so wishes it could've happened. Just once.

"I do," he says. "I really do."



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### Committee Chairs / Co-ordinators

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Sue Heatherley [archives@stoneycreekhistorical.ca](mailto:archives@stoneycreekhistorical.ca)

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### Member Business Directory

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S.W. Plumbing		49 Upper Lake Ave	( 905 ) 741-2552
Swiss Chalet # 1105	Zeb Ponte	735 Queenston Rd	(905) 561-1414

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DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE HISTORY OF STONEY CREEK

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