



Remember the Corman House

Stoney Creek Historical Society

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

NEWSLETTER

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THE NIAGARA ESCARPMENT – A JEWEL STONEY CREEK SHARES WITH THE WORLD



The importance of the Niagara escarpment to Stoney Creek and the greater city of Hamilton is unquestioned.

An article in the Spring 1998 SCHS Newsletter states, “the escarpment is not only our dominant geological feature; it is the reason for almost everything around here. Actually if the escarpment was not where it is Battlefield House and an important part of our history would not exist. That grand home would, if it still existed would be known as the Old Gage Place and a crucial battle in our history would have been fought at Burlington Heights with most likely a different result.”

A feature article on the Escarpment published in 2007 asks an interesting question – What does the foundation of our house have in common with Queens Park, the Devil’s Punchbowl, the CN Tower, Niagara Falls, and 700 year old cedars? Of course, we all know the answer – our Mountain – the Escarpment. This article also goes on to say:

“The escarpment -has a greater hold on this city than any other feature. In fact, the escarpment, possibly even more than Lake Ontario and our harbour, has helped define this city. We are a city of heavy industry because of the escarpment. We are a city of magnificent forests and waterfalls (more than any city in North America) because of the escarpment. Even our weather (and smog) is influenced by the escarpment. The writer does lament that “it seems at times, that the only greater urge than our desire to protect the escarpment is our longing to exploit it. Examples of this are cited:

Alternately stripping slopes of trees (occasionally replanting)

Gouging holes into it – note the cement for your homes and highways

The Red Hill Creek Parkway carved into the Escarpment

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT QUICK FACTS

- **The Escarpment is an ancient geological landform beginning 450 million years ago as the bed of a tropical sea. This scenic landform stretches 725 km from Queenston to Tobermory through some of the most populous areas of Ontario.**
- **The Niagara Escarpment was designated a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve in 1990.**
- **The Niagara Escarpment is a protected area under the Province of Ontario’s Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act and the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP)**
- **The Bruce Trail, Canada’s longest walking/hiking runs along the Escarpment.**
- **Escarpment is home to a diverse assortment of flora and fauna:**
- **36 species of reptiles and amphibians**
- **53 species of mammals 90 species of fish 350 species of birds**

Are you personally committed to protecting the Escarpment?

Unfortunately, perhaps because we live so close, we tend to take this natural beauty for granted and may not realize that we have a collective responsibility to preserve the legacy of the past, so that it will survive for the benefit of future generations. Although governments have put in place very important legislation in order to protect the escarpment, all must remain vigilant as competing interests still attempt to influence public policy.

Locally, here in Stoney Creek, we might consider the general appearance of public approaches to the Escarpment. A quick tour from lower Stoney Creek up the Escarpment and along Ridge Road produces some unsettling images. – Ill-kept observation areas, and graffiti marring the natural beauty.

RIDGE ROAD OBSERVATION AREAS NEED ATTENTION



The Ridge Road observation areas presently contain large potholes. During the summer, views from these same areas are often compromised. Strategic tree trimming would help here.

Graffiti is an ongoing problem. Notice in the above photo, the unsightly graffiti that has appeared at one of the observation lookouts. Graffiti is unfortunately also plainly visible on the rock immediately above the waterfall at the Devil's Punchbowl.

Can we help?

The answer is **YES**. The City of Hamilton recommends the following as part of its graffiti control program:

Clean graffiti off your property promptly. (ed. note – *Hopefully the city will enforce this regulation for public property*)

Call Police (911) if you see graffiti in progress.

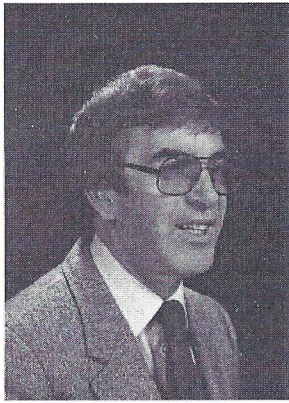
Contact the City to report existing graffiti at 905-546-CITY (2489) or on-line using the Graffiti Form.

Provide tips to Police and/or Crime Stoppers.

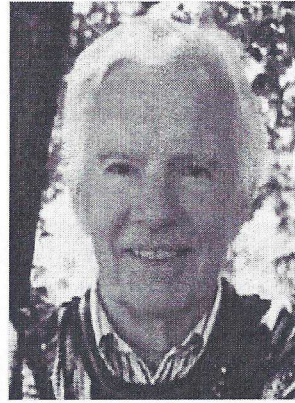
Make an anonymous tip by calling Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).

Volunteer: get involved in neighbourhood associations or activities that help prevent and clean up graffiti.

Reference - *The City of Hamilton's website*



Bill O'Reilly



George Lewis

IN MEMORIAM

Sadly, we have lost two of our most dedicated Historical Society members – George Lewis passed away in August and our Past President, Bill O'Reilly, in the latter part of September. On behalf of the Society, I would like to offer sincere condolences to George's wife Mary, Bill's wife Bernice, and to their families.

As a past Director, George had responsibility for publicity and was the first chairman of Stoney Creek's Local Architectural Conservation Committee (L.A.C.A.C). George's tireless efforts to recognize and plaque many historical buildings in Stoney Creek were successful in getting the attention of other preservation organizations as well as generating support from the wider community. As a result, present and future generations can now appreciate and admire a part of Stoney Creek history that might otherwise have been lost.

Bill O'Reilly served the Stoney Creek Historical Society for many years as Director and Vice-President before assuming the position of President after Ron Place's untimely death in 2008. Bill's knowledge and keen interest in the preservation of Stoney Creek history were evident as he took on executive duties for both the Society and The Friends of Battlefield. Bill continued to be an active Director after retiring as President. Right up to the time of his sudden illness, Bill had been pleased to assist in the setting up of our new Archive Library.

Donations to charities endorsed by George and Bill's respective families have been made on behalf of all members of the Stoney Creek Historical Society.

Bill Mitchell

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

We now have a new sound system for the meeting room at the Nash-Jackson House. This system is state of the art, and was made possible by a generous donation from the Nash-Jackson House Fundraising Committee. I can personally guarantee that you will be able to hear each speaker clearly, no matter where you sit in the hall.

Your Archive Library is now open every Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and we have already had members and guests using our library to research family histories. We still need volunteers to staff the facility on Thursdays. If you are able to help out, please contact either Jennie Foley or Judy Green, and they will be pleased to place you on the schedule. There is still much information to be catalogued, and if you enjoy learning about local history, the reference material is fascinating.

At our first general meeting for this season, it was agreed that we would have a Christmas party again this year; more information to follow at our general meetings, as well as from our phone callers.

Mike and Betty Petis, our social conveners for the past several years, have been doing a wonderful job providing refreshments at our meetings. However, they would be very pleased at this time, to have others take on the task. Please let myself or any Director know if you are willing to help in this regard.

Since this will be your last Newsletter until after the Holiday Season, I would like to wish you all a very happy and healthy Christmas. May nothing but good news and wonderful happenings come your way in 2011.

Bill Mitchell

A Warm Welcome To Our Newest Members!

Frederick Allen Pat Creamer
Gerrie Loveys David Quinn
Angie Black

Upcoming Special Events at Battlefield House Museum

Submitted by Marnie Maslin

We hope that you and your family can join us for the following fall and holiday special events at Battlefield House Museum.

CHRISTMAS IN THE PIONEER SPIRIT

Join us for an early 19th century family Christmas; where a crackling fire warms you, evergreen boughs bedeck the mantles and enticing smells fill the air.

Date: Saturday, November 20, 2010 to Sunday, January 2, 2011 (Closed Mondays)

Time: 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Cost: Regular admission rates apply to the museum.

“AUSTEN”-TACIOUS: A REGENCY ROMP

Experience the elegance and grace of the regency period as we celebrate the writings of author Jane Austen. Costumes, music, dancing, readings and refreshments bring the charm of the early 19th century to life.

Date: Saturday, November 27, 2010

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Cost: \$15.00 per person

GINGERBREAD HOUSE WORKSHOP

Children will decorate their own pre-made, homemade gingerbread house to take home. The workshop includes a visit with St. Nicholas.

Date: Saturday, December 11, 2010

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Ages: 2 to 12 years.

Cost: \$25.00 per person. Pre-registration required.

THE SIMPLE JOYS OF CHRISTMAS

Gather your family together, take a break from holiday shopping and step back in time to experience the warmth and welcome of an early 19th century Christmas. Join us for music, children's activities and hearth-baked treats. Visit with St. Nicholas and browse for unique holiday gifts.

Date: Saturday, December 18, 2010

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Cost: Regular admission rates apply to the museum.

Erland Lee Museum News and Events

Submitted By Meghan Fitzgibbon

Once again autumn is upon us! This is a busy time of year for the Lee. On October 18th we were very pleased to host 84 women from various Women's Institute branches across England for a tour of the birthplace of the organization. They were very pleased with their visit to Stoney Creek!

We invite you to enjoy the colourful scenery atop the escarpment at the Erland Lee Museum and at the same time visit our **18th Annual Local Art Show**. The Art Show is on now until **December 5th** during the Museum's **regular hours**.

Every autumn, the Museum invites local artists from Hamilton, Dundas, Ancaster, Stoney Creek, and beyond to participate. Over 30 artists submit a variety of work in various sizes and styles, which are exhibited in the Museum's Carriage House. The art work varies, from unframed watercolours, to elaborate framed oils, to prints. The Art Show is designed to highlight the talent of local artists and offer reasonably priced works for sale.

During December, take a step back in time and see how one of Saltfleet's founding families, the Lee family, celebrated the holiday season. The Erland Lee Museum's **Victorian Country Christmas** will run from **November 27th to December 19th**. The Museum is decorated in a traditional Victorian style, including home-made Christmas tree ornaments, paper stars, painted glass, and natural foliage. Also, discover the origins of many of today's traditions from Christmas trees to kissing under the mistletoe. We hope that you will join us on **Saturday December 18th from 5pm to 8pm**, for **Carolling at the Lee**- a free family event. Come and enjoy carolling around a fire and hot apple cider. Please bring a non-perishable food item to donate.

The Erland Lee Museum is located at 552 Ridge Road (at Dewitt Rd) in (upper) Stoney Creek. The Erland Lee Museum is open Wednesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Visit www.erlandlee.com for more information or call 905-662-2691.

SCHS Monthly Meetings – Upcoming Presentations

December 14 – Christmas Party

January 11 – Dr. Mary Anderson – Tragedy & Triumph: Ruby & Thomas McQuesten

February – TBA

March – Mac Swackhammer – Hamilton Workers' Heritage

The Peter Van Wagner Diaries

Transcribed from microfilm by Doug Green

From October 2006 until May 2008, six excerpts from the Van Wagner diaries were published as transcribed courtesy of Tristan Kerr and Michael Gemmell. SCHS member Doug Green has kindly agreed to transcribe further excerpts from this important primary source of Stoney Creek History.

Peter Spohn Van Wagner

Peter was the eldest son of Henry Van Wagner and Edith Spohn his wife. He was born in 1818 in Stoney Creek and was educated there and at Hamilton. He had two brothers and several sisters, two of whom married and went to the Western States during the Great Exodus from misgoverned Upper Canada about 1840. He learned the trade of millwright and carriage builder from his father and brother-in-law, but did not work them in later life. He bought the Augustus Jones' property where his father had first landed when on his early

investigating trip to Upper Canada, and farmed it all the rest of his active life. But the engineering instinct would not be submerged and he invented and patented many useful mechanical devices. For fifty years, he was a Justice of the Peace and District Magistrate and took a leading part in putting a stop to sheep stealing. A great writer of short articles on early history and pioneer reminiscences he used the pen name Hans. He died at Stoney Creek on December 2, 1906.

BILLY GREEN'S FUNERAL – March 18, 1877 as described by Peter Van Wagner

Ed. Note – Recent writing has questioned the legitimacy of the heroic role Billy Green played in the crucial Battle of Stoney Creek. The following excerpt from the Van Wagner diary dated Sunday March 18, 1877, while describing the Green funeral also lends credence to stories that are so much a part of Stoney Creek's history - stories that have been handed down by word of mouth.

Just as cold as ever. March playing the part February should have played. Cold, cold, cold About 10 am Mr Epp called and returned the poles. He told us Mr Green (Billy Green) would be buried today. I hurried off, But the 'pigeon house' or English Church was so crowded I could not get in. Many were standing outside. Mr Green was an old man and one of the old settlers. Probably born here and was perhaps eighty years old. He was an eccentric character. [83 years old] Green served as a Flanker during the war and was an adept at beating the drum, a task which never left him. He lived on the mountain above Stoney Creek and on fine summer evenings he made it a practice to come the edge of the mountain and beat his drum a couple of hours. This he has kept up for more than half a century.

All within reach of the sound knew very well "Bill Greens" drum. Last Summer brought out the last tap of his drum.

Green was present at several engagements & notably at the Battle of Stoney Creek where an incidence took place which troubled him to the last of his days, In a charge on a picquet he run a man through who had an empty gun without a bayonet. This was related to me by Dr Brown as he attended Green in dangerous illness where he told the doctor he was very sorry for what he had done, for he knew the U S soldier was defenceless for he had seen him discharge his piece.

He was as long as I had any knowledge of him a kind & harmless person, much given to playing jokes on people. With him another of the old lights has gone out. "vade in pace" [go in peace]

**Visitors & New Members
Welcome!**

Meetings are held at the Nash-Jackson House on the **2nd Tuesday of each month.**

Beginning at 7:30 p.m. September to May. Coffee and Refreshments follow.

Newsletter by E-mail

For those members who would prefer to receive their copy of the Newsletter by e-mail in PDF format please send your email address to:

jfraser17@cogeco.ca

Sponsor a Newsletter

Would you like to sponsor an edition of the Newsletter? A \$30.00 donation helps with the expense of printing and mailing the Stoney Creek Historical Society Newsletter. A tax receipt for this donation will be issued. Please contact our Treasurer Judy Green at (905) 662-4065.

**Historical Society Research
Queries**

Genealogy queries:

(written only – 50 words max.)

Members: 2 free per year

Non-Members: \$5.00/query

For further information please contact:

Dorothy Reid - (905) 664-6355

Other research queries: Please contact:

Jennie Foley – (905) 662-2984

Stoney Creek Historical Society Board of Directors

President	Bill Mitchell	(905) 664-4576
1 st Vice President	Greg Armstrong	(905) 662-6269
2 nd Vice President	Wendy Klassen	(905) 662-1524
Treasurer (Membership)	Judy Green	(905) 662-4065
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Correspondence Secretary	Dorothy Reid	(905) 664-6355
Director	Mary Lewis	(905) 643-3665
Director	Kathy Wakeman	
Director	Jennie Foley	(905) 662-2984

Committee Chairs/Co-ordinators

Archives:

Cheryl Gemmell (Archivist)

Jennie Foley (Archives Co-ordinator)

Genealogy: Dorothy Reid

Membership: Judy Green

Newsletter: John Fraser

Programming: Kathy Wakeman

Social: Betty and Mike Petis

Telephone: June Guzar

Membership Application/Renewal/Donations

YES! I would like to acquire/renew membership in the Stoney Creek Historical Society.

Name(s) _____ Receive newsletter by e-mail? Y/N

Address: _____ Please send to: Stoney Creek Historical Society

P.O. Box 66637

Phone Number _____ Stoney Creek, ON

L8G 5E6

E-mail: _____ Please check one: New membership Renewal

Please indicate your preferred membership option: Individual: \$10.00 Family: \$18.00 Business: \$25.00

**Please accept my additional tax-deductible donation of \$_____ to assist the work of the Society.

[Space reserved for address label]

Member Business Directory

Britannia Cleaners	Ed Strecker	17 King Street East	(905) 662-4971
Chamber of Commerce	Dave Cage	21 Mountain Avenue South	(905) 664-4000
Connection Key Travel	John and Mary Fraser	889 Barton St., Unit 2	(905) 643-7444
Dr. Keith Millar		304-15 Mountain Ave S.	(905) 662-2312
Donald V. Brown Funeral Home	Julie Brown-Webber	36 Lake Ave. Dr.	(905) 662-2948
Erland Lee Museum	Meaghan FitzGibbon	552 Ridge Road	(905) 662-2691
Flowers by Dianne	Dianne Black	9 King Street West	(905) 664-6621
Queenston Stationery	Mario Figueroa	38 King Street East	(905) 664-3360
Royal Canadian Legion	Branch 622	12 King Street East	(905) 662-4171
Simpson & Watson LLP Barristers and Solicitors		950 King St. W. Hamilton	(905) 527-1174
Smith's Funeral Home (Stoney Creek) Limited		454 Highway 8	(905) 664-4222
Winona Gardens	Jeff Beattie	1381 Highway #8	(905) 643-2161

This newsletter issue has been sponsored courtesy of Mary Dean.