

MERRITTON MATTERS

FALL 2024 • Volume 20, Issue 4 • <https://merrittonmatters.niagara.net>

GRAPHIC BY SUSAN FLUELLON

CORPORATION *of* MERRITTON

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Merritton Matters magazine was established to highlight the people, places, organizations and events that contribute to our community. Each edition provides articles about the past, the present and the future of Merritton.

OUR 23RD YEAR OF PUBLISHING MERRITTON MATTERS

MERRITTON MATTERS TEAM

Editor/Writer Lorraine Giroux
Advertising Sheila and Tony Morra
Photographer Susan Fluellon
Graphic Designer Lana Pesant
Assistant Editor Alex Gava

Contributors to this issue include Tom Barwell, Kim Epple, Francine McGlynn and Syl Roach.

THIS ISSUE

You might have noticed that we have switched to using smaller-sized paper. The cost of printing keeps increasing and, by using an 8.5" x 11" format, we can avoid passing along any additional costs to advertisers.

A more subtle change is that we will no longer refer to this publication as a newsletter but as Merritton Matters magazine. What is the difference between being a newsletter and a magazine? To explain why, here is a "listicle" (a catchy name for a quick-read article written in list format with additional text related to each item).

LENGTH AND COMPLEXITY:

- Merritton Matters Magazine has evolved over the years beyond the typical brevity of newsletters. The longer format allows for various lengths of articles from brief to more in-depth content.

LAYOUT AND DESIGN:

- The effort we put into formatting and design sets Merritton Matters apart from a typical newsletter style. We use high-quality paper, colour printing, professional photos and visuals to enhance the reading experience.

ADVERTISING:

- Magazines often rely on advertisements to cover costs, and Merritton Matters relies on advertising to supplement printing expenses.

Plus, we think the alliteration in the name adds a delightful touch!

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

Merritton Matters depends on its advertisers! All ads are available in colour and can be forwarded in PDF format to: morra@cogeco.ca. Payment is required in full before publication. Should assistance be required, our graphic designer can help develop your artwork at no additional cost. We can be reached by email or at 905-227-8988 if you have any questions.

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FRONT COVER

The artwork displayed on the front cover commemorates Merritton's 150th anniversary in 2024. This graphic features a depiction of a horse-drawn boat, acknowledging the vital work that facilitated the movement of early vessels through the historic Welland Canals. The ghosted images pay tribute to the first roof of City Hall and the historic mills that once lined the canal route.

LIONS RAFFLE TICKET WINNERS

It was truly a Merritton Christmas for these lucky winners whose tickets were drawn on Labour Day Weekend.

John Henderson (Ticket #05703) - First Prize of \$5,000
Matthew Harbinson (Ticket #05733) - Second Prize of \$2,000
Bill English (Ticket #06129) - Third Prize of \$1,000
Betty White (Ticket #00366) - Fourth Prize of Sobeys \$250 Gift Card
Crystal Mooney (Ticket #03661) - Fifth Prize of Food Basics \$250 Gift Card
Graham & Tori (Ticket #00151) - Sixth Prize of a Molson Bar Fridge
Heather Churchill (Ticket #0209) - 50/50 of \$1580

MERRITTON LIONS CLUB NEEDS YOU!

Are you looking for a way to give back to your community, meet amazing people and have a wonderful time while doing it? The Merritton Lions are actively welcoming new members, and we would love for you to be part of our team.

Join the Merritton Lions today and start creating positive change in our community. For more information on how to become a Merritton Lion, check out Mario Lucciola on the Merritton Matters Facebook page. Where there is a need, there is a Lion!

MERRITTON AS THE HOME OF A NEW HOCKEY TEAM?

An OHA Senior AAA hockey franchise, also known as Allan Cup Hockey (ACH), is being considered for the Merritton Arena. The league is governed by the Ontario Hockey Association and Hockey Canada. Southern Ontario teams, including Wentworth, Stoney Creek and Dundas, compete against each other, with the opportunity to face teams from other provinces. The league is actively encouraging this expansion. The prospective team would incorporate "Merritton" into its name, reflecting the community's spirit and would count on the community's support.

For a successful startup, business support and community attendance at games are vital. High-profile players, including former professionals, minor professionals, juniors, or university athletes, would attract fans. Themed events, such as Family Day, could also help draw crowds, along with the involvement of local schools and organizations like the Legion and the Lions.

We look forward to hearing more about this.

Keith Whitwell

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RELEASE DATE FOR LORI LITTLETON'S NOVEL

We are excitedly anticipating the release of a new novel by Lori Littleton, a talented author from Merritton, which will be available at all major book retailers on October 22nd. This enthralling story delves into themes of love, loss, and self-discovery. In Repair follows the journey of Caitlin, a married mother of two, whose life takes a significant turn when she loses her job as a graphic designer, a role that has defined her for over a decade. In her search for new opportunities, Caitlin finds herself in a challenging position at a shoe store, where she works under a toxic and controlling manager. Complicating matters further, her first love, Stuart, unexpectedly reappears after having vanished from her life. His return not only reopens old wounds but also presents Caitlin with a tempting vision of a different future. Will she opt to pursue the future she desires, or will she hold on to the familiarity of her current life? Be sure to look for our interview with Lori Littleton in the upcoming issue of Merritton Matters.



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HARVEST FESTIVAL

By Syl Roach



A beautiful Saturday in October helped make the Queenston Neighbours' Community Harvest Festival a success. St. Barnabas' Church welcomed neighbours to join in the activities, with lots of local vendors offering crafts, fresh produce, baked goods and more. Community organizations such as Positive Living, Start Me Up Niagara, Quest Health Centre and the Churches of Queenston Street held information booths on Housing & Eviction Prevention, Speak English Café and a weekly Produce Market. Bike Me Up Niagara raffled off three beautiful bicycles! There was also lots for families to enjoy including food, inflatable games, cornhole, face painting and a visit from our St. Catharines' firefighters with their fire truck. Niagara Free Store was also on hand to assist our neighbours-in-need with clothing and household items, and Northend Church served up a free lunch for all to enjoy.

Queenston Roundtable is led by a group of people who work, play, or live in the Queenston Street area. We meet the first Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. Bring a neighbour, all are welcome. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram: @queenstonneighbours or www.queenstonneighbours.com.



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WELLAND CANAL BICENTENNIAL TRAVELLING LECTURE SERIES

Presentations are planned for October and November to honor a significant event: the signing of the charter that established the Welland Canal Company in November 1824. The construction of the First Welland Canal profoundly impacted the geography, economy and overall progress of our region.

On Thursday, October 24, 2024, Kimberly Monk, an Adjunct Professor in History, will kick off the series with a guest lecture celebrating the 200th anniversary at 6:30 p.m. at Brock University. Dr. Monk is well-known for her archaeological investigations at the 19th-century Shickluna Shipyard. For more information, visit experiencebu.brocku.ca/event/271683.

On Saturday, November 30, 2024, Adrian Petry will conclude the series with "Financing the First Welland Canal" at 1 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre. Adrian, the Public Historian and Visitor Services Coordinator at the Museum, will lead a discussion about the financial and construction challenges faced by the Welland Canal Company in completing the Welland Canal. Please call 905-984-8880 for more information.

Three additional Saturday lectures will provide more insight into the historic beginnings of the First Welland Canal. On November 9, 2024, at 1 p.m., the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum will host Archivist Michelle Vosburgh, who will discuss the debates regarding locations and routes for the canal south of Port Robinson and the Welland River. On November 16, 2024, at 1 p.m., local historian Terry Hughes will present a lecture at the Welland Museum about the role of the Welland River in the Welland Canal. On November 23, 2024, at 1 p.m., the Thorold Museum will host a presentation on a Historic Welland Canals topic, with the lecturer and topic to be announced.

For more information on all these presentations, visit the St. Catharines Museum website or search for the Welland Canal Bicentennial Travelling Lecture Series. Many other celebrations will take place as we move closer to the 1829 anniversary of the first season of ships transiting a part of the First Welland Canal and the 1833 full opening of the First Welland Canal to Gravelly Bay.

2029 HISTORIC WELAND CANALS INTERPRETIVE PLAN

The draft 2029 Historic Welland Canals Task Force Interpretive Plan was presented to the St. Catharines City Council on September 23, 2024, by Rene Ressler, Task Force Chair, and Kathleen Powell, Supervisor of Historical Services and Curator at the St. Catharines Museum. The Task Force was responsible for developing an interpretive plan that commemorates the history of the historic Welland Canals and recognizes significant milestones in the construction and operation of the historic First, Second, and Third Welland Canals. This plan will serve as a roadmap for better showcasing the remains of these historic canals.

This roadmap for future city planning has two main priorities. The Interpretive Plan suggests ways to preserve and improve the existing trail system and canal remnants. Additionally, it will serve as a framework for considering special events and activities that promote and celebrate the 200th anniversary, both leading up to and in 2029.

The members of the task force were Colleen Beard, Lorraine Giroux, Olivia Hope, Denise Horne, Professors Daniel Malleck and Daniel Samson (Brock University), Brian Narhi and Rene Ressler. City Councillors included Carlos Garcia and Bruce Williamson. St. Catharines Museum Liaison Staff were Carla Mackie, Adrian Petry and Kathleen Powell.

At the City Council meeting, the Task Force's draft Interpretive Plan was approved in principle, and staff will now report back with an implementation and resourcing plan.

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NYNS AND THE JKR MEMORIAL LACROSSE TOURNAMENT

Did you catch the coverage of the Fourth Annual JKR Charity Lacrosse Tournament on CHCH News? The tournament took place on the Welland Canals Parkway by Lock 3 from September 13 to September 15. It was a fantastic event featuring music, food, and, of course, lacrosse, all aimed at raising funds for youth athletes through the work of Niagara Youth Need Sports (NYNS).

NYNS is a local organization dedicated to providing young people and their families access to organized sports. Their mission is to connect Niagara's youth with sports during times of financial uncertainty. Last year's tournament raised over \$35,000 to sponsor youth participation, covering costs such as equipment, registration fees and mentorship. The proceeds from that event allowed them to assist over 50 young people in Niagara. NYNS acknowledges the effort and commitment demonstrated by the teams, sponsors

and guests that made this possible. Notably, 100% of contributions go directly to supporting young athletes.

This year's lacrosse tournament provided another opportunity to highlight the positive impact that sports and teamwork can have on a community. Congratulations to everyone involved for surpassing the fundraising goal, raising a total of \$53,760, which will directly benefit Niagara's youth.

At this point, you may be wondering about the significance of "JKR." The tournament is named in honor of Jim, Ken and Rob Liddiard. The Liddiard family, long-time Merrittonians, have had a standing commitment to supporting youth in Niagara for over 30 years. This tournament recognizes their efforts to give back to the community in various ways, including coaching, providing equipment for kids in need, refereeing and organizing a charity ball hockey tournament in memory of their father.

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MERRITTON'S MEMORIAL TROPHIES AND PLAQUES

It has been 25 years since Merritton High School ceased operations as a District School Board of Niagara secondary school. At the time of its closure, various athletic and academic trophies and plaques were moved to the Community Centre on Park Avenue and placed in display cases built and installed using funds from the Merritton Last Blast celebration. Looking through the ones stored there, one category of trophies and plaques stood out due to the circumstances surrounding their establishment.

Two awards commemorated adults from the Merritton community who had passed away during the school's operational period. Leonard "Trapper" Leo was well-known for his many contributions to the town and his years on the town council. A park on Hazel Street continues to bear his name. Those who consider themselves original Merritton kids will never forget being at the Labour Day parade and hearing Trapper Leo and his booming shotgun leading the procession into downtown. Len Leo died in 1982. The final recipients of the trophy were Mark Hardwick (1996), Julie Moreau (1997), Cuyler Morra (1998), and both Timothy Scott and Norman Sonnenberg (1999). Another award was the Olive Cody Trophy, named in memory of Olive, who passed away in 1988 at age 53. This trophy was given each year to volunteers active at MHS, such as Rod Mawhood (1999), Alan Dunn (1998),



Bill Wiley (1997) and Sheila Morra (1996).

Memorial trophies were created in honor of students Mark Jordan and Ricardo Vieira, who sadly passed away during the school's existence. Ricardo drowned in June of 1976 at the age of 17, and a plaque was established in his name. Mark died in a car accident in August of 1973. A trophy was created in Mark's name to recognize senior students who demonstrated "tenacity and hard work in improving their skills." While the recipients needed not to be athletes themselves, these students had the ability to organize, manage, and assist the coaches and athletes. Some of the recipients of the Mark Jordan Trophy include Bryce Decker (1974), Tracy Barnfield (1979) and Dawn Plumadore (1986/87).



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MERRITTON'S EARLY YEARS

Merritton turned 150 years old in 2024. Let's commemorate this momentous anniversary by reflecting on the community's early history. However, as historian Robert R. Taylor reminds us, Merritton's early businessmen were profit-oriented capitalists, not archivists. This has resulted in varying historical accounts of the area.

In 1874, Merritton was incorporated as a village and the first Reeve was W.W. Waite who served until 1879. The first recorded population of 1,000 was in 1869. It became a town on July 1, 1918. By 1921, the town recorded a population of 2,544.

According to Horwitz's Directory of 1874, the mills and factories that emerged along the First and Second Welland Canals were considered "some of the largest and best Mills and Factories in the Province," and attracted "men of capital and enterprise." A year later, Fisher and Taylor's Directory stated that Merritton was a community that "bids fair to rise in importance." A period of growth and prosperity had come to the village by the time of incorporation and continued for years after.

The first settlers arriving in the area were United Empire Loyalists who settled at the base and to the north of the Niagara Escarpment. The names of the early landowners who received plots of land in the area after the American Revolution can be found in Land Board certificates and township maps from the 1790s. Some of these names are familiar simply because of local street names like the Balls (Jacob, Peter and George), John Hainer, Philip Shaver, John Newkirk, Jacob Dittrick and Robert Bessey, the latter who sold his 200 acres to George Hartzell in 1797.

It was thought that most of the area was sparsely populated until the canal venture, except for the area immediately north of the escarpment. During this time, it was known by different names including Welland City, Centreville and Slabtown. This latter name arose from the material used to construct the dwellings that canal labourers lived in along the banks of our canal area.

Despite the promise of the First Welland Canal, industrial development was slow in the area through the building period from 1824 to 1829. Oliver Phelps built a sawmill at Lock 7 of the First Canal in the late 1820s and there may have been a grist mill at Lock 9.

The building of the Second Welland Canal started in 1841 and had more of an effect on our area in terms of

construction, employment and creating a social centre. The locks were reliable stone rather than the original wood. The route took generally the same path as the First Canal, winding its way through the future Merritton area, capitalizing on some of the previous canal systems and strengthening the systems needed for industry. For instance, mills in the area were provided with water from a Second Canal control weir on Merritt Street that included the channel from the First Canal. The area benefited from this more reliable water raceway, the energy provided and the dependable route.

In the years leading up to 1845, the region experienced an increase in both the number of mills and the local population. The industrial development of Merritton was significantly driven by the water available in the raceways.



Photo 1990-24-15, Courtesy of the St. Catharines Museum: Riordon Mill. The demand for newsprint was growing when John Riordon founded his first mill in Merritton on the east side of the Welland Canal, beginning operation around 1863 at Lock 6 and then, after 1867, moved to a large pink sandstone structure at Lock 17. Riordon was known as the "Father of Newsprint" and a Canadian pioneer as he, along with his brother Charles, was one of the first to use wood as raw material instead of rags. The cheap power from the canal's water, the purchase of the latest machinery and the idea of using wood made the mill highly successful.

The Winter issue of Merritton Matters will include much more about the early industries that existed along our portion of the various Welland Canals and explore which ones still exist in one form or another.

Flour and lumber mills, along with facilities for processing wood products, were at the forefront of this growth. Flour mills were constructed, and a distillery using local grain was established along the water raceway near Clifford's Creek. W.W. Waite who later became the Reeve, founded the Beaver Cotton Mills in 1857 which was the first factory of its kind in Canada. By 1879, the factory, which was subsequently renamed Merritton Cotton Mills, had become one of the largest employers in the village.

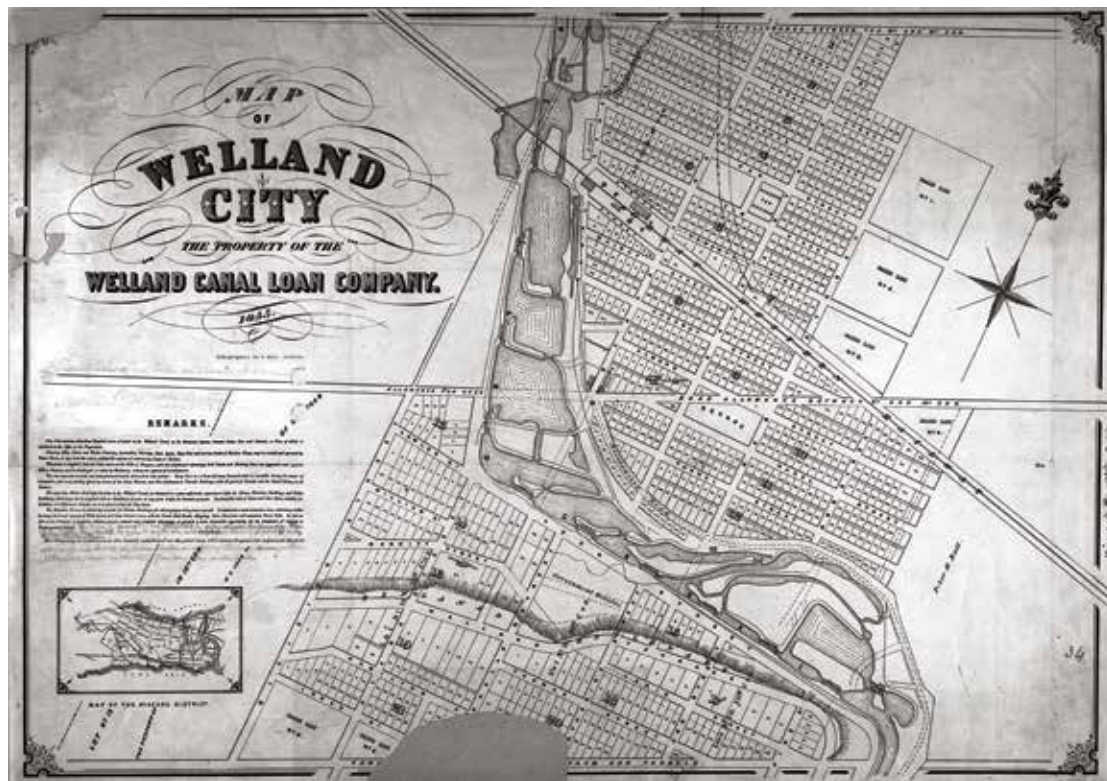
The building of the Third Welland Canal began in 1872, and this canal would turn out to be less of a growth factor for industry in Merritton than the previous canals. The decisions made during construction seemed to leave the area at a disadvantage. This canal took a different, more northern route. Merritton was hurt by the lack of ability for ships to stop or turn on the route. In 1881, Sir Charles Tupper, the Minister of Railways and Canals, was asked a question in parliament about why the canal had no turning basins. He stated that the focus was on trade and that there would be no mills, factories or other places where vessels would be likely to unload or receive cargo on the new line.

Besides the Welland Canal, railways were a key factor in Merritton's development as it assisted in both bringing raw material to the area and sending final products farther. The Great Western passed across the canal near Lock 12 in 1853 and the station was on the eastern side of the channel. This development attracted businessmen from Toronto and the United States to the area. In 1861, Gordon and McKay

built a cotton mill south of the Great Western line; in 1880, Americans Whitman and Barns took over the Knife Works.

In 1870, Merritton ranked 24th on the list of the top 45 Ontario Urban Centres based on workforce. The data showed the village as having 10 industrial establishments with a total of 429 workers.

Robert R. Taylor saw the most important general factor behind Merritton's birth as the great economic and technological expansion of 1850–1880 in the modernizing West. The most important local factor would be the building



HNMC-22875, Courtesy of Map, Data & GIS Library, Brock University. Historical map with geographic coverage of Merritton, 1855

of the first two Welland Canals with their unlimited supply of waterpower for turning machinery. As well as being used for steam engine boilers, it was available for firefighting. This resulted in lower insurance costs and the water supply was also used for washing raw material by cotton millers and in early paper mills. The arrival of the railway lines into Merritton was also an important local factor. In what may seem like an oversimplification, Merritton developed because the canals and railways brought the mills to the area—along with the people who worked at them and their families. These industries and people needed numerous services, which spawned other businesses and churches. Merritton remained relatively small into the 20th century with a community that was located close to the canal and the railway yard.

BEFORE THE SETTLERS ARRIVED

There was an Indigenous village in the early 17th Century on the Niagara Escarpment where the Barbican Heights subdivision now exists. It was a location of the Neutral Confederacy, who were Iroquoian-speaking people. They built their longhouses on high ground, moving on to other locations after 10–20 years, searching for spots with better soil and hunting.

Archaeologists, led by Professor William Noble of McMaster University, excavated the site in 1979 before the building of Barbican Heights, referring to it as the Thorold site. We know it as part of the Merritton Ward. Artifacts had been discovered there as early as 1895. Excavation in the 20th century found a 10-acre settlement with five longhouses on the site that was likely home to 1,500 people. The size of the site suggests there were over 25 longhouses originally, each housing several families. The Neutrals left the site around 1630, possibly moving to St. Davids.



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THE END OF AN ERA

By Tom Barwell

***Editor's Note:** Tom Barwell told us about the shenanigans of the El Rebels gang in the Winter and Summer 2024 issues of Merritton Matters. (You'll find these issues online.) This was not a gang that created havoc but rather stayed behind the scenes, and if there was help needed by the citizens, they were there. In this final chapter, he recounts the crowning achievement.*



The gang was disappointed. There was little left for them to do as a dedicated mysterious group whose aim was to safeguard Merritton from all evils. The stoplights were the final nail in the coffin. Their membership cards had been destroyed and they would remain best friends forever—not to mention their pact as blood brothers.

There were other attractions as well. High school was coming up and Merritton had some extremely charming girls. It used to be all little giggles and smirks but this all changed when the guys noticed hair on their chests. Maturity was on the horizon.

But there was one more task to take care of: a raid on Ricci's Tavern, situated on Merritt Street, southwest of the railway bridge. Wherever this idea came from is anyone's guess. The boys sometimes invented some crazy schemes, but this topped the list. It would involve tossing rotten eggs through the north side entrance door, being careful not to hit anyone while also creating a very nauseating odour. But first, they had to do a little scouting, plus a dry run or two.

Excitement filled the air. Eggs were not a problem; they had half a dozen rotting away in an old garage they used for a meeting venue. Sometimes these eggs came in handy for other adventures. It would take seven guys to pull it off: one at each corner as warning scouts, one to open the door and two to fire the eggs inside. It would happen on a TGIF afternoon when Ricci's was busy and filled with multiple targets. Two gunners with two eggs each, four total. Their hats would be pulled down low to prevent recognition. The gunners would run from Merritt Street down the sidewalk. Just as they got to the door, another boy would yank it open, and the gunners

would throw the eggs into the tavern.

It went off without a hitch, which was amazing as it was pulled off in broad daylight. The eggs were aimed to splatter only on pant legs and the floor. Ricci's bar area was packed. After the prank, everyone scattered and met at the old garage. There was no yelling. High fives have not yet been invented. The boys kept quiet as they expected that the police would appear on the scene. Peeking out, there was some disappointment: no sirens, no nothing. The boys were deflated.

Then it happened. There was a small blurb in the next day's paper describing the splatter of eggs thrown through the north side door and causing a horrible stench. It was a success! So ended the reign of the feared El Rebel gang few people knew about. Only vague memories exist now.

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GARY SAUNDERS AT MERRITTVILLE

Merrittville Speedway has been entertaining stock car racing fans since 1952 and drivers who hail from Merritton have been part of the action for much of that time.

A few weeks ago, I had the chance to sit down with Gary Saunders and his son Mike as they reminisced about their driving adventures at Merrittville. After years of competing there, you can imagine how many memories they had to share. I am not exaggerating when I say we could have spent days talking and going through their pictures!

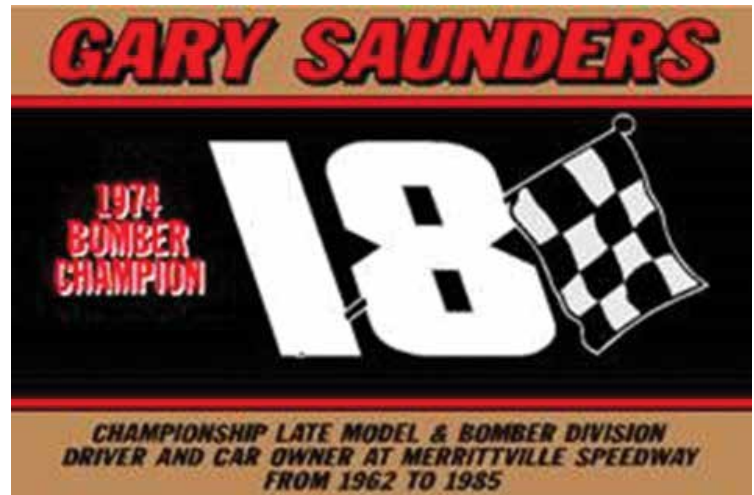
Gary saw his first race in 1958 from the grandstands and he decided from that moment on that he wanted to be one of those drivers in a vehicle on the track. In a familiar process, he started as part of a pit crew then got his chance to drive a car when that driver had other plans. Finally, with an investment of \$100, he started driving his own car in 1962. He ended up finishing third in the Late Model Class.



Next came a 1955 Studebaker in 1964. In 1966, he started with high hopes, as his car would be the host of a new engine built by him in his basement on Park Avenue. But bringing it up the stairs almost ended that dream, as it was too heavy to carry.

One thing that is clear when listening to Gary's experiences is that he is creative and resourceful when solving problems. The engine ended up in his stock car where it belonged through the use of a ramp and chains he rigged up. That same motor blew up—not uncommon with the stress put on stock cars. Thankfully, Kitchingman Auto Wreckers became his race sponsor and supplied him with another one.

He raced that year as a team with Bill Spiece, Walt Staley and George Sider—he formed the fourth “S” of



the team. The year got slightly better as he set a new track record in his second race and of course, he won. But then he flipped the car and that was the end of that season. You get familiar with the stories of “another year, another car”, or variations thereof, when you know a stock car driver.

Gary raced with many drivers over the years, including father and son combinations, all with names familiar to fans. There was Bob and Danny Hatt, Don and Glen Shirton and many more. Gary's son Mike joined his father in a late model team in the '70s. After winning back-to-back championships in the Bomber Division at Merritton and the track in Ransomville New York, Gary's son Carl took over the car. But it was too tempting, so Gary soon came back to race with Carl.

Throughout his career, Gary was never far away from stock cars—whether it was a focus on driving, mechanics, supplying parts and cars, inventing ways to improve (like new ways to transport the cars to the track), or simply helping other drivers. Gary Saunders wanted to help others to improve the way their car was handled, and it wasn't just altruistic; he knew it would help save him from being wrecked by the other drivers as they spun out. It was not only his family that he helped, but well-known local drivers as well. Wayne Tucker, Doug Binning, Kevin Baker and Wayne Howard all got their start with help from Gary. He has been credited by many as being a mentor to young drivers starting out and has been added to Merrittville's Wall of Fame.

In the next issue we'll feature **Merritton Area Drivers Over the Years.**

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FALL IS HERE!

Happy fall, everyone! As the leaves start to change and the cozy weather rolls in, I wanted to take a moment to shout out to the residents and businesses who make Merritton a great place. This is such a fun time to enjoy local events, support our shops and restaurants, and connect with each other. Let's make the most of this beautiful season together!

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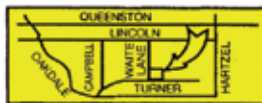
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ACROSS FROM THE FLEA MARKET

COMING SOON - SIGHT AWARENESS BOWL-A-THON

Hurry up and register for the Bowl-a-Thon happening at the Lions Community Centre on Park Avenue on Saturday, November 2, from 9 a.m. to noon. Every participating bowler will experience simulated blindness through special glasses that replicate glaucoma or by wearing a blindfold. Contact Merritton Lion Lesley Seaborne by email at lseaborne@cogeco.ca with the name of your team(s) or as an individual, and we will be happy to help you build a team. We know that Lion Lesley has big shoes to fill as she takes over this fundraising event created and run in the past by former Merritton Lion member Bill Sowrey, who is legally blind, and his wife, Linda. The Lions Club of Merritton has donated over \$90,000 to the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides in the past 11 years to support local residents in the acquisition of dogs that assist with specific areas of disability. Dogs may be provided to assist children and adults experiencing a range of challenges, including sight, hearing, autism, type 1 diabetes, and intractable epilepsy.



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HOW THE MUSEUM CAME TO MERRITTON AND NEVER LEFT

By Francine McGlynn

The email from Lorraine Giroux, editor of Merritton Matters, was clear. “Francie,” she wrote, “Corlene Taylor is one of the most active genealogists in the area. I need you to find her Merritton connection.”

“I’m on it!” I wrote back.

A week later I was sitting in Corlene’s beautiful sunroom in her Lakeshore property. “Corlene,” I said, looking at my 96-year-old friend, “I can’t believe I’ve known you all these years, and I’ve never asked you what your Merritton connection is.”

She brushed some imaginary lint from her rose-coloured dress and adjusted her white sweater. “There isn’t one,” she said.

“Oh, come on,” I said. “We’re talking Merritton. Everybody has a connection to Merritton.”

She thought a bit. “Well, I did go out with Knobby O’Brian for a while. He was a Merritton boy. He had a horse and kept it in our pasture.”

My spidey senses were tingling. What’s this? I thought. A tragic Merritton lost love? I leaned forward. “So, what happened to Knobby? Tell me everything!”

“Nothing happened,” she said. “That’s the whole story.” She smiled at the disappointed look on my face. “Oh, and there is one more small connection to Merritton—I was on the Lincoln Historical Society Committee that pushed to have Merritton’s abandoned Town Hall become the site of the new Museum.”

She went on to tell me that the Historical Society had been collecting local artifacts for some time by the 1960s. At first, they were stored in the old Fire Hall on Lake Street in St. Catharines and in peoples’ houses. Eventually, everything was moved to Rodman Hall. The day came when they realized they had enough for a museum.

Corlene went to St. Catharines City Council with Gordon Merritt, Chairman of the Lincoln Historical Society and a gentleman from one of the local service clubs to broach the idea of a St. Catharines Museum. She remembers they were taken to a room for questioning about the project.

The late Laura Sabia was one of the dignitaries who was present. Laura was a force to be reckoned with, and as an early feminist, she completely ignored the men. She grilled Corlene about the project. Corlene was very shy and quiet in those days and not the head of the delegation that went to City Hall, but she said she managed to answer every question Laura asked. None of the men dared interrupt because, well, you interrupted Laura Sabia at your own peril.

Laura Sabia must have been impressed with her answers because Corlene and several committee members were given a list of buildings to investigate as potential sites for the Museum. It may be of some interest to know that the old Merritton Carnegie Library was also on the list. However, Corlene said when they saw Merritton Town Hall, “it was just perfect.” And so, the first St. Catharines Museum opened in Merritton as a Centennial project on June 3, 1967.

By the 1980s, Merritton’s Town Hall was just not big enough. On May 18, 1991, the new Museum was opened at its present Merritton location at Lock 3. Once she had seen the Museum safely ensconced in Merritton’s Town Hall, Corlene’s interest grew from history to family history. She established the Mayholme Foundation, the basis of which is the Thorold Historian Esther Summers Collection.

Mayholme is located in the 1856 farmhouse on Ontario Street where Corlene was born and grew up. Contact Mayholme for family tree information. They can be found on Facebook or by email at mayholm@mayholme.ca.

As for Knobby O’Brian and his horse—well, that is a story for another day.



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SECORD WOODS NEIGHBOURHOOD PANTRY

By Kim Epple

The Secord Woods Neighbourhood Pantry, located at 126 St. Augustine Drive, was established by Bobbie Schwarz in April 2022 during the Covid pandemic. The pantry has since been upgraded through generous donations, evolving from a simple shelf to a table and now to a large, sturdy plastic pantry with doors. The pantry's donations vary widely, including food, personal items, pet food, baby supplies and clothing. All items are welcome. Like the Food Bank, there are simple rules: no open, expired, or dirty items and no premade food. When items such as frozen food or medications like Children's Tylenol (which was hard to find during Covid) become available, Bobbie posts the information on the Secord Woods Facebook page and keeps the item inside until the person can pick it up. Items that are always in demand include quick snacks for kids, bulk items like rice and peanut butter and easy meal options such as Hamburger Helper.

Maintaining the pantry requires significant time and effort. Bobbie monitors supplies and cleans the cupboard regularly. For bulk items, such as a 12-pack of Kraft Dinner, she appreciates it being left on the front step. She then divides the bulk items into smaller portions so that more people can benefit.

Bobbie welcomes everyone to use the pantry but asks that people be respectful. Her mantra is, "Take what you need. Leave what you can." For example, if you purchase a 2-for-1 item (like a bag of potatoes) but only need one, consider donating the extra to the pantry.

For any questions, Bobbie Schwarz can be reached on Facebook and through FB's Secord Woods Neighbourhood Watch.

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VOLUNTEERS MARNI AND QUINNIE

A recent Hospice Niagara Volunteer newsletter featured a heartwarming article by Marni Dubiel, the daughter of writer Tom Barwell and his wife, Micki, all of whom are Merriton people. Marni and her dog, Quinnie, have been volunteers with Therapeutic Paws of Canada since 2019.



Together, they have visited students at Brock University, participants in the Niagara Health System, athletes from the Canada Summer Games, and attendees of the Walk for Alzheimer's. Currently, most of their visits take place at Hospice Niagara, where they engage with staff, volunteers and patients. It seems Quinnie wants everyone at Hospice to feel her comforting presence.

In her article, Marni shares details about the training she and Quinnie underwent, along with delightful anecdotes about Quinnie, who loves to snuggle with residents whenever possible, often right on their beds. Marni describes these visits as filled with love, smiles, and kindness. She feels honored to contribute and believes that volunteering for Hospice Niagara is one of the most rewarding experiences of her life. The opportunity to volunteer alongside Quinnie makes it even more special.



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A Letter From The Pastor

Tucked away in a quiet Merritton neighbourhood, on first glance, Elm Street United Church would seem unassuming. But step inside, and you'll find a vibrant and welcoming community with a rich history and a lot of heart. For 165 years, we've been right here, offering a place where faith, service and community come together.

Many a passerby will be delighted by the aromas coming from our church this fall, as our United Church Women's group prepare for our annual Bazaar on November 9th. Baked goods, sweets and our famous Meat Pies will all be on offer, along with handmade crafts, books, jewelry and Christmas treasures of all kinds.

Our music program is truly something special, featuring our 18-voice choir led by the gifted Linda Tamburri. Their incredible talents enhance our services with life and spirit, and this year's Celtic Christmas Cantata on December 22nd is sure to

captivate and inspire. We're bringing the true joy of the season to all, with enchanting Celtic sounds and favourite carols. You won't want to miss it!

Elm Street UC is a hub for the community, hosting groups like Scouts and AA, and providing a fully accessible space for support, fellowship, and growth. We're also your neighbours, dedicated to caring for our community and sharing God's love in meaningful ways. To name a few, our exercise program for mature women offers a place to strengthen in body, community and spirit. At a time when grocery costs and loneliness are on the rise, our "Toonie Toonie Lunches" of soups, sandwiches and desserts provide affordable meals and a comforting space for the whole community.

Feel welcome to join us any Sunday at 11:00 a.m. to see what makes Elm Street United Church the beating heart of Merritton —we can't wait to welcome you!

Grace and Peace,
Kassandra Matthews
Student Minister

