

# MERRITTON MATTERS

SUMMER 2024 • Volume 20, Issue 3 • <https://merrittonmatters.niagara.net>

PHOTO BY SUSAN FLUELLON



The original section of Merritton High School, built in 1935, exemplifies the Art Deco architectural style and is associated with the designs of Lionel Ashton Hesson. The west-facing portion, together with the north-facing wall constructed in 1955, holds heritage significance. There is currently a proposed development for 76 units within the existing building.



## COMING SOON

We're excited to share some of the stories behind Merritton stock car drivers, including the adventures of Merrittville Speedway Wall of Fame driver Gary Saunders and his two sons. Watch for this in the Fall issue.

Check out the past issues of MM recently added to our website, courtesy of Steve Fulton, <https://merrittonmatters.niagara.net/>

**OUR 23<sup>RD</sup> YEAR OF PUBLISHING MERRITTON MATTERS**

Merritton Matters magazine was established to highlight the people, places, organizations and events that contribute to the community. Each edition provides articles that delve into three key aspects: the past, the present and the future of Merritton.

## **MERRITTON MATTERS TEAM**

This publication is made possible by a small group of volunteers that includes Lorraine Giroux (editor/writer of articles without a byline), Sheila and Tony Morra (advertising coordinators), Susan Fluellon (photographer), Lana Pesant (graphic designer) and Alex Gava (assistant editor).

Merritton Matters began in 2001 as the first project of the Merritton Community Group. Now we are proud to be part of the Merritton Lions Club. Thanks to Lions Dawn Bell and Keith Brown for assisting with the delivery of the previous issue.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

Articles in this publication have been received with much appreciation from Isabel Bachmann, Tom Barwell, Kim Epple, Linda Gonschoir, Jane LaVacca, Lori Littleton, Rene Ressler, Chris Richard and Tom Richardson.

## **ADVERTISING**

We are very appreciative of all our current advertisers! These fine people contribute to the cost of printing this magazine which would not be possible without them.

If you are interested in placing an ad in Merritton Matters, the ad should be print-ready and forwarded in PDF format to [morra@cogeco.ca](mailto:morra@cogeco.ca). Payment is required in full before publication. For more information, and to arrange to place an ad, please call Sheila at (905) 227-8988 or contact Lorraine at [merrittonmatters1@gmail.com](mailto:merrittonmatters1@gmail.com).

## **THE NEXT ISSUE?**

What would you like to read about in the next issue of Merritton Matters? We always announce on several Facebook sites that the MM is available for pickup or online, so let us know on Facebook what you would like to see. You can also email Lorraine at [merrittonmatters1@gmail.com](mailto:merrittonmatters1@gmail.com).

# **MILK BAG COLLECTION**

We are continuing to collect milk bags (the outer bags). These are woven into a portable, lightweight mat made from a recyclable product. The progression of need and production of mats over the years is interesting. The Lions Club of Merritton has helped to facilitate the collection of these bags since the beginning. These are given to the volunteers at the New Apostolic Church of Thorold. Their efforts began by weaving the milk bags into sleeping mats for people in third-world countries who needed something to lay on at night to prevent them from sleeping on wet ground. Now these are being distributed to people in need right here in Niagara. A few issues ago, Lisa Hickey from the church provided us with a detailed account of the making and distribution of these mats and how the church group takes these out to homeless people around various areas of Merritton.

Another big change is that more people are getting involved in mat making. Demonstrations are taking place to help to meet the growing need. Different girl guide units have attended how-to demonstrations. Other participants have included Thorold High students needing volunteer hours and a hockey team. Lisa Hickey has offered to have groups either participate with the church or has volunteered to train the groups on the mat-making process herself. Check out MilkBagMats on Facebook.

Please consider collecting these bags to further this local cause. To donate materials, contact Lion Sheila Morra at [morra@cogeco.ca](mailto:morra@cogeco.ca) or (905) 227-8988.



# PROPOSED ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

We originally learned about potential changes being considered to Chestnut Street in November 2022. At that time, a City of St. Catharines meeting was held to provide information and gather public input on potential changes in the area, including the establishment of a right-of-way for the extension of Chestnut Street from Hastings Street to Brookdale Avenue.

On April 16, a second public meeting on this topic was held at our local fire station. Updated information and changes since the original meeting, along with a preferred design alternative, were shared by city officials. A Class Environmental Assessment will now study three locations in downtown Merrittton to evaluate and recommend road improvements. The proposed road improvements include the consideration of upgrades in these three areas:

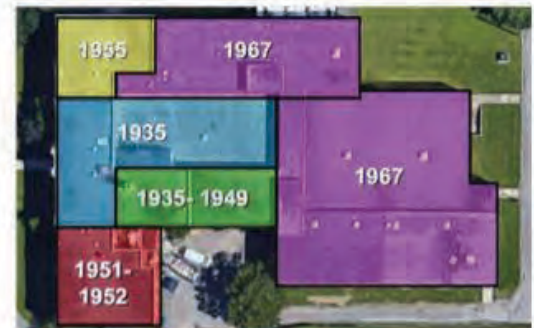
- **Merritt Street from 90 metres south of Almond Lane to Walnut Street**
- **Chestnut Street from Merritt Street to Glengarry Road**
- **Mountain Street from Glendale Avenue to the possible future extension of Chestnut Street**

Once the Class Environmental Assessment is completed, a report will be available for review with an opportunity for comments. Information related to the EA Study for Merritt Street Road Improvements and Mountain Street and Chestnut Street Extension project is available on the EngageSTC webpage at [www.engagestc.ca/merritt-chestnut-mountain](http://www.engagestc.ca/merritt-chestnut-mountain).



ABOVE: Our Cover Photo

A heritage impact assessment was completed to determine if the proposed re-use of the former Merrittton High School building would impact heritage value. No adverse impacts were identified as there will be no demolition or alteration to the building except for updating of windows, doors and landscaping.



ABOVE: The MHS building is comprised of several additions with dates of each shown above.

**Keith Whitwell**  
Midas Auto Service & Tires

St. Catharines: 905-688-6011  
Hamilton: 289-768-2121  
Brantford: 519-756-4370  
Stratford: 519-271-1020

[midas.hartzel@gmail.com](mailto:midas.hartzel@gmail.com)  
[midasbrantford@gmail.com](mailto:midasbrantford@gmail.com)  
[midasstratford9041@gmail.com](mailto:midasstratford9041@gmail.com)

**PETE'S PIZZA**  
313 Merritt Street  
St. Catharines, Ontario  
905-680-8080

**DINE-IN SPECIAL ONLY**  
12 Slice Pizza, 3 Toppings  
20 Chicken Wings/2 lbs.  
Garlic Bread w/Cheese,  
4 Pops  
**\$41.99 + TAX**

**ALWAYS  
TIME TO  
THINK  
ABOUT  
BARBECUE**

**SINCE 1975  
BARBECUE  
&  
FIREPLACE CENTRE**

**We Got  
You Covered**



**NAPOLÉON**  
Napoleon Phantom

**\$4 OFF PROPANE  
REFILL** Preset Coupon  
to Cashier

**SINCE 1975  
BARBECUE  
&  
FIREPLACE CENTRE**

(905) 684-0672 · [bbqandfireplace.ca](http://bbqandfireplace.ca)  
480 Eastchester Ave East, St Catharines, ON

Serving the Niagara Region for over 45 Years

# FORGOTTEN HISTORY

By Tom Barwell

In an earlier edition, I wrote about Merritton being a city in a village. In that article, I described all the businesses in that period, but I completely forgot one of the more important ones. That was Clayton Wilson Insurance Agency. It was located at 321 Merritt Street beside Hugh Main's drug store.

Some people at the time saw insurance agencies as suspicious, but they also knew that they had little choice as all aspects of insurance were necessary. Back in that time, I knew little of what it involved. One thing, however, I did know was that the community regarded Clayton Wilson Insurance with the utmost respect. Almost everyone in Merritton was their client, and I'm sure it is fondly remembered.

The owners lived in a beautiful house next door. It boasted a large front porch typical of housing in that period and there was a unique sunroom on the second floor that spanned the width of the building. Unfortunately, the house was torn down to make a parking lot and office for the Bank of Nova Scotia. Sadly, many of these houses had the same fate. It is a plague on important history, and unfortunately it is still happening.

An apology to the Wilson family whom I knew well.

**Exclusive IMPRINT .COM**

SCREEN PRINTING • CUSTOM CUT DESIGNS • EMBROIDERY  
APPAREL • BANNERS • DECALS

**VISIT US**



**113 CUSHMAN RD  
UNIT 3**

CALL 905.397.0705  
TEXT 905.650.6027  
EMAIL [wendy@exclusiveimprint.com](mailto:wendy@exclusiveimprint.com)  
[www.exclusiveimprint.com](http://www.exclusiveimprint.com)

 Exclusive Imprint  Exclusive Imprint



**100 T-SHIRTS  
SCREEN PRINTED  
\$4.95 each**

**WHITE T-SHIRTS (S-XL)  
ONE COLOUR DESIGN**

**IN HOUSE  
SCREEN PRINTING  
EMBROIDERY  
CUSTOM CUT DESIGNS**

**Need less than 100?  
Single orders starting @ \$20**

**\*NO Minimums\***



# FROM OUR WARD COUNCILLORS

It's summer in Merritton, and of course we have fun things happening in Merritton as usual. Fun in the Sun with the St. Catharines Fire Department has already taken place in Community Park, and we hope you had an opportunity to participate in the activities and learn about fire safety. Check the city website for locations at different venues all summer.

Building the splash pad is underway after a few delays. Hopefully, this will be completed by August to make the dog days of summer a bit cooler in Secord Woods. There will also be some traffic-calming initiatives installed on Woodrow Avenue to keep people safe and slow down traffic.

Speaking of traffic calming, one of the things Jackie heard the loudest when campaigning was that cars are moving too fast on our neighbourhood streets. Council voted to have the speed dropped in neighbourhood areas and you probably noticed the signs indicating that the speed is to be dropped to 40 km/hour, with school zones dropping to 30 km/hour. Regional roads and larger secondary roads like Hartzel Road will remain at 50 km/hour. Jackie also asked for a report that would allow us to put speed tables at all elementary schools. They identified Ferndale, St. Christopher and Applewood as school areas that would benefit from this type of calming. St. Theresa is situated on a circle, which is considered a traffic calming measure already. We are looking to the future to see what can be done to make our school zones safer.

Valleyview Park will have its official opening on July 26. This has also been delayed due to some unexpected problems, but we will finally get our official opening.

We were disappointed to learn that the dome on the tennis court will not be moving forward because of rising costs. (Editor's Note: See Chris Richard's article for more details about this.)

The by-law office is being slammed with complaints about property standards this year and assures us that they will get to every complaint. Before you file a complaint, be aware that the grass has to be as high as an official soccer ball. When you are making a noise complaint on Citizens First, remember to also download the noise log so you can submit it.



We welcome Low's Glass & Mirror to the neighbourhood as of June 1. This company is our newest resident and is located at 161 Hartzel Road. We would also like to welcome Canalside Cones. They are a great ice cream place at the end of Eastchester on the Canal Parkway. A great taste to a hot summer!

We are looking for donations for the fireworks display during the Merritton Lions Labour Day Carnival. If you want to donate, please contact Jackie Lindal, Steven Yendt at Pirie's Appliances, or Greg Miller. It's a large amount of money that has to be raised, and we will take any amount as anything helps. If you are a business, please reach out because we would love to add you to our sign that stays up all weekend long.

Andrea Michaud organized two amazing women's Disk Golf events at Richard Pierpoint Park. Andrea is always ensuring that women and children get to play this amazing sport. Drop by the park to see it in action and how you can join. You won't believe how much fun it is!

A reminder that the Queenston Neighbours group meets every first Wednesday of the month at Connaught school during the school year. July and August are summer hiatus months, and then they will start up again in September. This group does a lot of amazing things for the community, such as coffee and snacks on Queenston Street, the Harvest Market, the Easter Egg hunt at Connaught School, and more.

Reach out to Jackie Lindal at [jlindal@stcatharines.ca](mailto:jlindal@stcatharines.ca) or Greg Miller at [gmliller@stcatharines.ca](mailto:gmliller@stcatharines.ca) anytime and we'll see you at the wonderful Labour Day Festival again this year. Sincere thanks to the Merritton Lions Club. They rock Labour Day like no one else in the province!

# THE END OF AN ERA

By Tom Barwell

**Editor's Note:** Tom Barwell told us about the El Rebels gang in the Winter 2024 issue of Merritton Matters. (You'll find this issue 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. You could often find them hanging out around the railing by Main's Drugstore, helping ladies across the street at the corner of Merritt and Chestnut where there were no traffic lights.

It all came to a crashing halt when the stoplights were installed at the corner of Chestnut and Merritt Street. The lovely ladies no longer needed assistance crossing the intersection. But the boys each helped one more crossing as a symbolic gesture. Then they retired into an old barn down one of the many lanes to plan their future. Merritton seldom had any real serious incidents the boys could help with. They were redundant, but they were eager for some action.

Firstly they made a little pile of their cards and set them afire. It was a very solemn occasion. (Little did they know that there was one card remaining, and it would resurface many years later.) Next, they nicked a finger to draw blood, joined them together and became blood brothers. The days of El Rebel were over. Then the fun began.

Trapper Leo had a hard time catching muskrats as he found his traps mysteriously set off. One day he passed the boys on the street and asked if they knew anything about it. With their fingers crossed they answered negatively as he eyed their muddy boots. Unmentionable



Courtesy of Google: The Traffic Lights that ended the Good Samaritan role of the El Rebels

clothing disappeared from clotheslines and was found hoisted up on the Legion flagpole. Even a

bike was once found swinging in the morning breeze.

Swimming was great in the canal next to the Glendale bridge. A few daredevils would swim out and touch a boat as it went by. Train hopping was easy at the time as there was a great number passing through Merritton. It was discovered to be a way to travel to the Burgoyne swimming pool as they would slow down entering St. Catharines allowing the riders to jump off for a swim. Until one did not, and a group ended up in Grimsby.

And there were more shenanigans, like sneaking into the old buildings (now the Keg) and capturing racoons for pets. They learned very quickly after a few nasty bites that the racoons did not accept their fates. Another time, Livio's milk truck became a target one night. It was attacked with bars of soap inside and out. The boys were caught, but his truck became one of the cleanest ones in the fleet.

This list could go on and on, including trying to drop apples down the stacks of trains as they went under the bridge on Merritt Street. If successful, they would come back up like a rocket.

Then came the crowning achievement. It is too long for this edition so be sure to pick up the next Merritton Matters. The story is a well-planned hoot.

**TORA INC.**  
ISO 9002 Registered

INDUSTRY LEADERS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Inspection
- Rework
- NDT
- Packaging
- Assembly
- Machining

15 CUSHMAN RD., ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO L2M 6S7

Tel: (905) 227-2992  
Fax: (905) 322-0329  
Shipping: (905) 227-5088  
E-mail: rling@torainc.com

**RAY G. LING**  
President  
www.torainc.com

**Niagara Art Therapy Services**  
Serving the Niagara Region since 2007  
Private office in St-Catharines, ON  
[niagara-art-therapy.com](http://niagara-art-therapy.com)

Mélita Richardson, *RP, BA, DTATI*

Art Therapy Services for Individual, Group or Families

Phone: 905-353-5091    [melita@niagara-art-therapy.com](mailto:melita@niagara-art-therapy.com)



# HIKING ALONG THE OLD WELLAND CANAL



The 2029 Historic Welland Canals Task Force members recently embarked on a hike along some of the historic locks that are still visible, starting from Bill Wiley Parkette on Glendale and ending at the Disher Street bridge. We walked along the Merritt Trail route, realizing that there is so much more information available about these assets than would be apparent to the casual hiker. We were fortunate to be accompanied by knowledgeable people including museum staff and local canal historian Rene Ressler.

One particular topic that arose was the pleasant change from the unsightly water mess that used to float in the old Welland Canal along Oakdale Avenue. The canal was initially constructed in this location to supply water to the existing industries and to facilitate the growth of new industries. In a time when the understanding of environmental impact was limited, it must have been seen as an easy option for industries such as pulp and paper mills, industrial machinery and metals to utilize the canal as a convenient means to dispose of, dilute, and discharge waste. Those companies are gone, and we are much more environmentally conscious, resulting in the clarity of the canal water significantly improving compared to its condition around the mid-20th century. However, contaminants are very likely to remain in the canal.

On the loop back, we travelled south from the Disher Street bridge back up Moffatt Street, a pedestrian bridge over the canal, the waste weirs east of Lock 12 and ending where we started at buried Lock 14 beside Sobey's parking lot. Along the way, it was great to see that one Oakdale Avenue family had taken the initiative to plant and maintain trees native to the area along a section of the trail.

The 2029 Historic Welland Canals Task Force is currently awaiting the opportunity to present the draft Interpretive Plan for the commemoration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic Welland Canals to the St. Catharines City Council.



**Do you have any pictures of the old Welland canals from the days when the water was foamy, frothy and had tones of pink and green? Please send any to us via email at [merrittonmatters1@gmail.com](mailto:merrittonmatters1@gmail.com) so we can show these "before" pictures to people who might not believe us.**

**Window Tint Specialist**  
For any service, please call us  
**289-969-1966**  
455 Merritt Street

SUNDAY TO SATURDAY OPEN AT 11:00AM

LIVE MUSIC  
SATURDAYS  
6PM-10PM  
SUNDAYS  
3PM-7PM

**Olee's**  
Food & Ale House

DAILY SPECIALS!  
Team Specials!  
ANY DAY!  
EVERY FRIDAY is  
Fish Fry!

905-227-2200  
338 Merritt St., St. Catharines, ON L2T 1K6  
[facebook.com/oleealehouse](https://www.facebook.com/oleealehouse)



# OLD LOCK 6 – A LOST OPPORTUNITY

By Rene Ressler

Back in 1960, the former Dick’s Creek/First and Second Welland Canal that flows through what is now Richard Pierpoint Park was drained for routine maintenance. The drained canal quickly released a lost treasure from the early days of Merrittton’s rich and storied maritime history back into our collective consciousness. What was revealed was a well-preserved Lock 6 of the First Welland Canal. The timber lock was found with its walls and support cribbing relatively intact.

The rediscovery of this relic of “Mr. Merritt’s Ditch” after being submerged for over a century beneath the reach of the Second Welland Canal presented a rare opportunity indeed. Unfortunately, the opportunity to properly study and document the long-lost lock beyond a couple of photographs



PHOTO CREDIT: RENE RESSLER

for the St. Catharines Standard was never realized. The City Council of the day concluded that there were no funds available to do much of anything with the old lock. A concrete cap was installed over the lock to preserve the oak timbers until a future determination could be made. Here we are today, over 60 years since the historic lock was rediscovered, and as of today, nothing further has been determined regarding the preservation or showcasing of this almost 200-year-old relic.

The year 2024 marks 200 years since construction began on the First Welland Canal. Old Lock 6 provides a bucolic and tranquil spot in our community, and it holds the potential to one day offer up more historic secrets beyond being a beautiful location for photography and a quiet space.

PHOTO CREDIT: ST. CATHARINES STANDARD



*Rene Ressler publishes the “Friends of the Welland Canals” Facebook Group and is a member of the 2029 Historic Welland Canals Task Force.*



## Elm Street United Church

Experience our vibrant music program,  
where creativity, spirituality and  
community harmonize beautifully.

[www.elmstreetunitedchurch.ca](http://www.elmstreetunitedchurch.ca)

*Celebrating 165 years, caring for the community*





# MERRITTON LIONS LABOUR DAY COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

This year, the 78th anniversary of the Merritton Lions Parade, a highlight of the weekend's festivities, will take place on September 2, 2024, which also happens to be Labour Day. Initiated in 1946 by local residents, the parade has been organized by the Merritton Lions Club since the mid-1950s. The late Lion Willy Alexander, who passed away in 2024, was the first Lions Parade Marshall and served in this role for almost two decades.

The parade will leave the Pen Centre at 11:00 a.m. sharp, following the route from Chestnut to Glengarry, then Glendale, Merritt, and Seymour, concluding at the Park Avenue carnival site.

Remember, the parade is just one of many components of the Community Festival. There is an array of attractions along with delicious food—and a lot of it is served! A few years ago, we asked Lion Spud Flynn to let us know the final

tally of french fries sold at the Lions Booth. Turns out it totalled 50 bags of potatoes, each weighing 50 pounds—that's 2,500 pounds, or one and a quarter ton, of potatoes!

So, what is the highlight of the Merritton Lions Labour Day Community Festival for you? Could it be:

- Relishing the Beef on a Bun Event and dancing on Friday while reuniting with old friends?
- Roaming the Carnival throughout the weekend, indulging in the various foods, testing your luck vying for game prizes and delighting in the rides?
- Being captivated by Sunday's fireworks while enjoying live music, food, and drinks?
- Gathering along the parade route on Monday at your favourite spot where you can listen to the commentary and view the procession?
- Anticipating the call of your name during the grand prize draw on Monday at 5 pm?

## DO YOU HAVE YOUR RAFFLE TICKETS?

Buying raffle tickets is an essential part of the Merritton Lions Community Festival held on the Labour Day weekend, otherwise known as Merritton Christmas.

Ticket Prices remain the same as last year: one for \$5, three for \$10, or ten for \$20. First Prize is \$5,000, Second Prize is \$2,000, Third Prize is \$1,000, Fourth Prize is a Sobeys \$250 Grocery Card, Fifth Prize is a Food Basics \$250 Grocery Card and Sixth Prize is a Molson Bar Fridge.

Be sure to ask a Lions member or stop by the following locations to buy your tickets!

- July 26–27: Food Basics, Hartzel Road
- August 9–10: Foodland, Thorold
- August 16–17: Sobeys, Glendale Avenue
- August 23–24: Food Basics, Hartzel Road



**BOLDT**  
REALTY INC.

**KAREN BLACKLEY**  
Broker

blackleykaren@gmail.com  
Direct: 905-401-0633  
Office: 289-362-3232

boldtrealty.ca

211 Scott St., St. Catharines, ON L2N 1H5



*Sheri's.Creative Edge*  
USING CREATIVITY TO THE MAX!

*Specializing in making you look and feel beautiful for over 42 years*

*Hair Stylist*

Complete Unisex Hair Service  
t: 905.684.7992

116 HARTZEL RD. ST. CATHARINES, ON

TUESDAY + 9-1 | WEDNESDAY + 9-5 | THURSDAY + FRIDAY + 9-6 | SATURDAY + 10-1  
CLOSED SUNDAYS & MONDAYS

# ST. THERESA SCHOOL IS GOLD



and Gold status along with a few Silvers and Bronze. The goal of this province-wide program is to have students and school staff work together to participate in environmental activities that raise awareness of issues, incorporate environmental learning into the curriculum and work to reduce energy and waste.



We asked teacher Joanne Gustyn to tell us more about the eco experiences at St. Theresa's School. It sounds like a thoughtful combination of regular classroom-based learning and

Congratulations to St. Theresa Catholic Elementary School on their Gold Certification in the Ontario EcoSchools Program for the 2023–2024 school year! They were part of a strong contribution by every elementary and secondary school in the Niagara Catholic District School Board, with schools achieving Platinum

unique events with an educational focus, all offering opportunities for students to actively participate and become more knowledgeable about the importance of environmental stewardship. For instance, the school marked Earth Day by having students rotate through classes with each teacher providing a different environmental focus. Materials saved from the landfill were reused for other purposes such as friendship bracelets and decorative Christmas trees. Planting for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3 was an opportunity to grow food from seeds such as tomatoes, carrots and basil. There was an opportunity for interested students to join an Eco Club. We look forward to hearing more about the school's initiative next year!

## Universal Collision

Insurance Work Welcome • Competitive Rates  
(Special Rates for Seniors) Restoration & Fibreglass Repairs  
Monday - Friday 8 am - 5 pm  
Towing Service Available - Owned & Operated by Wayne Tucker

**Free Estimates**  
45 Turner Cr., St. Catharines  
**905.684.3765**



ACROSS FROM THE FLEA MARKET

## KENIRY'S SERVICE



Since 1964

Complete Auto, Truck & SUV Service

55 Ormond St. N  
Thorold, Ontario L2V 1Y9  
Tel: (905) 680-1712  
kenirysservice@gmail.com

homehardware.ca Register and Receive Special Offers!

## Home hardware

# BUY 8 GET 1 FREE



Beautifone

111 Hartzel Rd.  
St. Catharines, ON

Tel. 905-684-9438 • Fax 905-684-0201 • homehardware2@bellnet.ca



# Get a quote.

We're not just about policies - we're about people. Trusted since 1880, we offer personalized, fair-priced insurance solutions for your home, auto, farm, and business needs. As a mutual insurance provider owned by the very people we serve, safeguarding the values we share with our neighbours is what we do best. With BCM, it's more than just business - it's a mutual feeling of support.



Home



Auto



Farm



Business

*For a risk-free consultation and competitive insurance quote contact us today.*



1003 Niagara Street, Welland, ON  
(905) 735-1234 • (800) 263-0494  
[www.bcminsurance.com](http://www.bcminsurance.com)

# WONDERS OF AN OLD PHOTO

By Isabel Bachmann

Once in a while a photo appears that takes you back in your mind to your childhood, and vivid memories flood over you. This image of the mid-1950s does that for me and my contemporaries. It shows our old haunts from long before shopping centres and computers, when kids could wander for a day through cow pastures and mess about in ponds.

On the left edge of the image, you can see Mountain Street running up from the edge to a road roundabout. On the left of the roundabout stands one of the original locktender houses of the Second Canal, circa 1850. It sat on the corner of Mountain Street and Boyle Road, which was pretty much the west edge of town. Beyond this corner, there were mainly farms for growing grain and raising cattle. The cattle were still there in the '50s; shortly afterwards, the fields grew stores instead as the infant Niagara Peninsula Shopping Centre, the Pen, was built.

Looking up towards the top of the image, you might be able to make out the mainline railway. With a magnifying glass, you can see the tank cars standing on the track, probably waiting for the rail bridge at Lock 4 to lower for traffic again. Granny's Pond, unfortunately, remains in the haze. Just beyond the tracks is Hayes Steel, hammers banging away. There are a few white box-shaped houses and barns heading off toward St. Catharines. That's Moffat Street along Canal Valley.

Closer to our viewpoint, several locks are visible between the railroad and that roundabout on Mountain Street, with Lock 12 at the tracks all the way up to Boyle Road bridge near the locktender house at Lock 15. While the land to the left, was still fields and pasture, on the right the old canal ponds were now dry land between the locks and the local rail line, nicknamed the High Line that still served Merritton industries.

At the turn basin on the corner of Mountain and Lock Street, now Bradley Street, the route of the canal pivoted east to climb up the face of the escarpment to Thorold. You can see Lock 16 side on with its white limestone



Photo 3745N, Courtesy of the St. Catharines Museum: Aerial view of Merritton.

blocks. South of Lock Street, it was open country with an occasional small herd of cows plodding through scrub trees.

The street that comes directly toward the camera is Allanburg Road, the original dirt road heading all the way to the crest of the hill and beyond. We never called it anything but "Gully Road" because of the ruts in the mud track up the hill.

Centred in the photo just north of the canal are three major industrial complexes. On the left centre, that familiar Keg chimney stands at the defunct Beaver Cotton Mill. A walkway connects it to that tall stone building, the Independent Rubber Works, site of one of the largest fires ever in Merritton. The mills were powered by water, and you can see the ponds and stone weirs that controlled the flow to these two mills and then across the road to the Alliance Paper Company, later Domtar. If you look at the roofline of the Domtar, you can see that additions wrapped around the bones of the first mill, which is now reborn as the Stone Mill Inn.

This road network at this corner has been completely reworked to a proper intersection and looks very different to modern eyes. Close examination will show you that Front Street (or Merritt Street through Hartzel Road) is aligned almost exactly with Allanburg Road to the south, and this delineates the original survey lines from settler



days. Glendale was St. Davids Road, and it was also a survey concession road.

You might have spotted the triangular façade to the right of Domtar. That's the "Little School" with the "Big School" situated just behind it. Those were the main Merritton public schools in the town. Looking further past, you might make out the Catholic church and school, but the details are fuzzy as we get further back from the photographer.

Nearer the tracks, the old town hall is still there,

along with the Merritton Carnegie Library building. The steeples of St. Andrews and St. James are visible but are now decommissioned and repurposed.

I can't see the high school though I know exactly where it is. You can't miss the Alliance Lincoln plant, with its huge pile of logs waiting to pulp. The noise of each log dropping from the conveyor belt is permanently tattooed in my memory bank.

Such a great spark to memories, this photo, and of growing up in Merritton!



**THE KEG**  
STEAKHOUSE + BAR

344 Glendale Avenue • St. Catharines, ON L2T 4E3  
905-680-4585

Reservations Accepted SUN-THURS • [www.kegsteakhouse.com](http://www.kegsteakhouse.com)



**PIRIE**  
APPLIANCES  
LIMITED

SALES • SERVICE • DELIVERY & INSTALLATION • PARTS

324 MERRITT ST. ST. CATHARINES, ON L2T 1K4  
905-227-3953 or 905-227-3309

SALES@PIRIEAPPLIANCES.CA  
WWW.PIRIEAPPLIANCES.CA



**J&A**  
ATHLETICS

MANUFACTURERS OF SPORTS APPAREL  
...AND MORE

[www.jathletics.ca](http://www.jathletics.ca)

JOHN AND ANNA SHERIDAN  
315 Merritt St., St. Catharines  
905-359-7887 • [janda\\_athletics@cogeco.ca](mailto:janda_athletics@cogeco.ca)

OR FIND US ON 



**sun**  
collision centre

**Anthony DeMita**  
186 Merritt Street  
St. Catharines, ON  
L2T 1J6

**Tel: 905-227-7571**  
Fax: 905-227-3305  
[anthony@suncollision.ca](mailto:anthony@suncollision.ca)  
[www.suncollision.ca](http://www.suncollision.ca)

You're Driving Home Our Reputation™




**Scotty's**  
EST. 1959  
Auto & Truck Service Ltd.

**Mark Falconer**  
215 Merritt Street  
St. Catharines, ON L2T 1J7  
905.680.5472  
905.680.6135 fax  
[scottysauto@bellnet.ca](mailto:scottysauto@bellnet.ca)  
[scottysautoandtruck.com](http://scottysautoandtruck.com)

**Complete Auto Maintenance & Repair**  
Licensed MTO Inspection Station  
Domestic & Foreign Automobiles  
Fuel Injection, 4 Wheel Alignment  
Air Conditioning & Electrical  
Exhaust Repair  
New Tires & Wheel Balancing

 Follow us on Facebook



**S F** SEYMOUR FAIR  
INSURANCE BROKERS INC

**Rick Seymour** R.I.B.  
Senior Partner

20 Corporate Park Drive, Unit #203  
St. Catharines, Ontario L2S 3W2  
T 905-685-8500 Ext 215  
F 905-685-8590  
Toll Free 1-866-685-3247 (FAIR)  
[rick@seymourfairinsurance.com](mailto:rick@seymourfairinsurance.com)  
[www.seymourfairinsurance.com](http://www.seymourfairinsurance.com)

# FORMER HOSPITAL SITE

By Lori Littleton

It has been more than a decade since the former St. Catharines General Hospital closed. In 2023, plans to create more than 1,100 units on the site were presented to the community—only to have those dreams dashed earlier this year when the company responsible for the development went into receivership and the property was put up for sale. Offers for the 4.86-hectare property were being accepted until the end of March. Though no official news has been released, there has been recent activity on the site.

“I am optimistic this property will see some movement and growth with new ownership, bringing much-needed life back to Queenston Street,” said Merritton Councillor Jackie Lindal.

Tim Shields, who lives near the former hospital site and is a group leader with Queenston Neighbours, said he hopes the development will help with the current housing crisis and not just increase area housing prices.

“I hope it brings many homes and many families to our area, but also provides some... attainable housing for those with lower incomes,” he said. “[I hope] whatever is built seriously considers what is here already as a community.”

Merritton Councillor Greg Miller said everyone in St. Catharines, not just the Queenston neighbourhood, “knows how important that site is to the future of the community. When it is developed it will be a catalyst



Sign seen at a Coffee Outside event in the Queenston Neighbourhood

for renewal in Queenston,” he said. “This is why it is so disappointing to see development stalled and the site remain vacant after 11 years.”

The hospital site and its long vacancy “highlight the problem of leaving development wholly in the hands of the private sector,” Councillor Miller said, which is why the city recently created a Municipal Development Corporation.

“This will ensure sites like this are not only developed faster but also developed in a way that truly benefits the neighbourhood and the city as a whole rather than just provides profits for private developers.”

## GARDEN CITY PRODUCTIONS UPDATE

By Linda Gonschior

*Editor's Note: Linda Gonschior, a member of Garden City Productions (GCP), provided MM with an update on their Trivia Night held on May 10, which took place at the former St. Andrews Church building. GCP volunteers have converted the interior into a performance space and, with a grant from the City of St Catharines (SCCIP), have been able to complete the in-house sound system and make significant progress on the lighting technology. This enhances their capacity to use the venue for small group performances and events.*

Garden City Productions' recent Trivia Night brought together seven teams for an evening of fun and brainwork. Everyone said they had a great time, and this fundraising event raised \$850! Thank you to our Trivia master, Jeff Baker!

Tickets are now on sale for our next fundraiser production, Nonsense A-Men! An all-male version of the heavenly musical comedy revue Nonsense, this version will be held at the Kirk (as it is now known) at 372 Merritt Street. It features the same zany, wholesome, hilarious script with a little extra A-Men! Performance dates are from Friday August 16 to 25. Reserve your seats at [gcp.ca/nonsense-a-men/](http://gcp.ca/nonsense-a-men/).



## We make moving easy!

- ☑ Downsizing/De-Cluttering
- ☑ Packing/Unpacking/Setup
- ☑ Estate Services
- ☑ Free Estimates



Certified • Bonded • Insured  
Member of NASMM  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SENIORS MOVE MANAGERS

905-933-0730 [WWW.SENIORSONTHEMOVEINIAGARA.COM](http://WWW.SENIORSONTHEMOVEINIAGARA.COM)  
[SENIORSONTHEMOVEINIAGARA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:SENIORSONTHEMOVEINIAGARA@GMAIL.COM)



Royal Canadian Legion  
Merritton Br 138  
2 Chestnut St. East  
905-227-1821

Merritton Branch 138  
St. Catharines

*Serving Veterans and the Community  
for over 95 Years.*

HALL RENTALS - LEGION EVENTS  
FURTHER DETAILS AT: [HTTPS://RCLBRANCH138.CA](https://RCLBRANCH138.CA)



## Bold Eyewear AT ITS FINEST



**PersonalOptical**  
[www.personaloptical.com](http://www.personaloptical.com)

Visit Your Eye Gals TODAY!  
Eye Exams Available  
NEW Larger Location!  
905-227-9937

QUALITY EYEWEAR AND CUSTOMER SERVICE • INSURANCE CLAIMS ACCEPTED

# Summer is here!

Let us embrace the longer days and warmer nights in St. Catharines, fostering a sense of belonging and togetherness among all residents. Whether it's enjoying a picnic at a local beach, attending local events, or simply taking a leisurely stroll through our picturesque parks, here's to a summer filled with laughter, happiness, and cherished memories for all the businesses and residents of Merritton.

**Mayor Mat Siscoe**  
City of St. Catharines  
[stcatharines.ca](http://stcatharines.ca)

@MatSiscoe

@MatSiscoe

@MayorMatSiscoe

[mayer@stcatharines.ca](mailto:mayer@stcatharines.ca)



# MERRITTON - ATTAINABILITY VS. AFFORDABILITY

By Jane LaVacca

The cost of housing is driving people to homelessness in the Niagara Region! Housing has become unattainable for those with average incomes, and those with lower incomes have resorted to being on the street or in shelters. In the past, if money was an issue, families tended to turn to areas in St. Catharines like Merrittton, Facer Street or maybe Western Hill to purchase a small home with an affordable mortgage. However, this is not the case anymore. In a recent article by Jay Goldberg from The Niagara Independent, he shares that in the Niagara Region, a home selling for \$229,000 in 2013 had gone to \$629,000 by 2023. This is a 174% increase over 10 years. This is just not acceptable. We now have more people renting than ever before due to the high cost of living.

As the Executive Director of Westview Centre 4 Women, we are trying to help those who are underhoused or not housed and the barriers are so much more than funds. This situation has become a survival of the fittest to find housing. Barriers that prevent housing besides the obvious funds include asking for the first and last month's rent. When rents are as high as \$1,865 per month plus utilities for a 2-bedroom apartment, the cost quickly becomes \$3,730 plus utility deposits.

The idea that a high credit score is required is not even feasible as most people are working intermittently or collecting partial Ontario Works cheques to supplement their income, which still isn't enough to live on. Most landlords will not look at track records of perfect rent payments or a letter from a landlord saying this is a good tenant due to all the applications they receive. If the rent is reasonable, the applications flood in, and your application is one of hundreds. If the rent is high, you can't afford it. Those who attend the Centre often tell us they feel discriminated against as soon as the landlord finds out they are accessing assistance.

What is the answer to our housing crisis? I don't know, but I do know something drastic needs to happen across the province of Ontario so that everyone who calls St. Catharines home actually has a home!



**DQ** SOMETHING DIFFERENT

**Dimitrios Ladas**  
415 Merritt Street  
905-684-3763

**\$3.00 OFF ANY CAKE** with this ad  
(except for logs) Expires Oct. 31, 2024



**SULLIVAN | MAHONEY** LLP  
LAWYERS

*Client Committed. Community Minded.*

**Thomas A. Richardson**

Sullivan Mahoney LLP  
40 Queen Street, P.O. Box 1360, St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 6Z2  
Telephone: 905-688-6655 Fax: 905-688-5814

7085 Morrison Street, Niagara Falls, Ontario L2E 7K5  
Telephone: 905-357-3334 Fax: 905-357-3336  
tarichardson@sullivan-mahoney.com



*100% Locally Owned and Operated*

**COMPASSION FOR FAMILIES,  
PASSION FOR OUR COMMUNITY**

**Rick Westlake**  
Owner/ Funeral Director

**Kelly Liddycoat**  
Owner/ Funeral Director

**Bocchinfuso Funeral Home Inc.**  
2 Regent Street, Thorold, Ontario L2V 1T1  
905-227-0161 www.Bocchinfusofh.com



# SHERI'S CREATIVE EDGE MILESTONE

By Kim Epple

This year marks a milestone for female entrepreneurs in Merritton. The hair salon at 116 Hartzel Road, now known as Sheri's Creative Edge, was established in 1974 by Sheri's mother and grandmother. The business has been family-owned for three generations. It was originally Linda's House of Hair, located in front of the home where Sheri's mother, Linda, was raised. Sheri started working alongside her mother in 1986 and took over the business and property in 1999 upon her mother's retirement. As Sheri transitions to semi-retirement, she assures her clientele, "I'm not going anywhere."

Sheri's Creative Edge has maintained long-term employees, some of whom have been with the company since the 1970s. Among the current team, Bonnie Lynn has dedicated 30 years, Wanda has contributed 17 years, and Cindy, who joined in November, is the latest addition. Sheri consistently demonstrates a commitment to the community by supporting various fundraising initiatives, including the Merritton Lions, Merritton Matters, local charity golf tournaments, and Labour Day celebrations.

When asked about the biggest event in the business's history, Sheri responded, "Surviving COVID." The loyalty and dedication of both staff and customers were instrumental in sustaining the business during the mandated closures. Ownership of the property proved crucial and rent payments would have made it much more difficult. Additionally, the low overhead costs helped. To adapt, Sheri introduced take-home packages, allowing the hair salon to prepare custom colours for clients to collect via curbside pickup, bridging the gap until the shop could welcome customers back for their regular appointments.


In addition to regular hair appointments, they cater to proms, graduations, and weddings. Generations of families have remained loyal customers. Sheri mentioned, "Customers come from all over. Even if people move away, they still come back." It's this reputation for excellent customer service that has allowed Sheri's Creative Edge to remain in business for 50 years.




**TO CELEBRATE ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY, SHERI'S CREATIVE EDGE IS OFFERING A CUSTOMER APPRECIATION SPECIAL OF 10% OFF ALL HAIR SERVICES BETWEEN AUGUST 17 AND AUGUST 31.**

**Westminster United Church**  
180 Queenston Street, St. Catharines  
905-682-8140 • [www.westminsterunitedchurch.net](http://www.westminsterunitedchurch.net)  
(beside the old General Hospital)

**Minister Rev. Dr. Paul Miller**  
Organist: Jude Kudera



10:00 AM Worship Service  
Sunday School and Nursery Provided  
*Come Grow With Us*

"Pulling together to get things done to the Glory of God."  
Ample Parking 

## 60TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION OF THE MERRITTON HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF '64 AND FRIENDS

By Tom Richardson

On June 8, 2024, the Merritton High School Class of '64 and Friends held a reunion, almost 60 years to the day since they had written their last departmental Grade 13 exam. Arrangements were made through the current owners of Merritton High School to tour the school on Saturday afternoon. Some of us had not been in the school in 60 years and were, of course, surprised by the large addition put on only a few years after we left. However, the older part of the school was almost exactly as we remembered it, and those parts that had changed simply caused us to remember how things were in 1964.

That evening, 47 people from our group gathered at the Merritton Legion. Some of us are in contact on a daily or weekly basis, while we see others only at our periodic reunions. Two couples returned from British Columbia for the reunion. One of those couples we had not seen in 60 years!

You will recall that in 1984, a celebration of the 50th anniversary of Merritton High School was held. Many of us attended that event. A few years later, members of the class of '64 decided that we should meet periodically. We met for the first time, over three days, in 1988. Those get-togethers continued every five years for many years until our former principal, Mr. Smith, along with his wife, suggested that we reduce the time to two years. We did make that reduction, but not in time to see Mr. Smith again before his passage. Get-togethers every two years continued until the pandemic interrupted us, but we resumed again in 2023. Maintaining the two-year schedule would mean we would not meet again until 2025, but canvassing the mailing list led to the conclusion that we should hold a one-day event in 2024 to recognize the 60th anniversary. We are so glad that we did!

Who can say whether we will get together in the same fashion again? No decision has been made, but all who attended agreed it was extraordinary to remember our years at Merritton High School. We hope to continue those friendships into the future for many more years to come.

**WORKING TO DELIVER  
RESULTS FOR NIAGARA**



**Chris Bittle, MP**  
St. Catharines  
61 Geneva Street, Unit 1  
St. Catharines, ON L2R 4M6  
905-934-6767

**MERRITTON COMMUNITY PHARMACY**

**491 Merritt Street**

*Fast Friendly  
Service*

**St. Catharines  
905-685-4777**



**THANK YOU MERRITTON FOR 15 YEARS OF LOYALTY!**



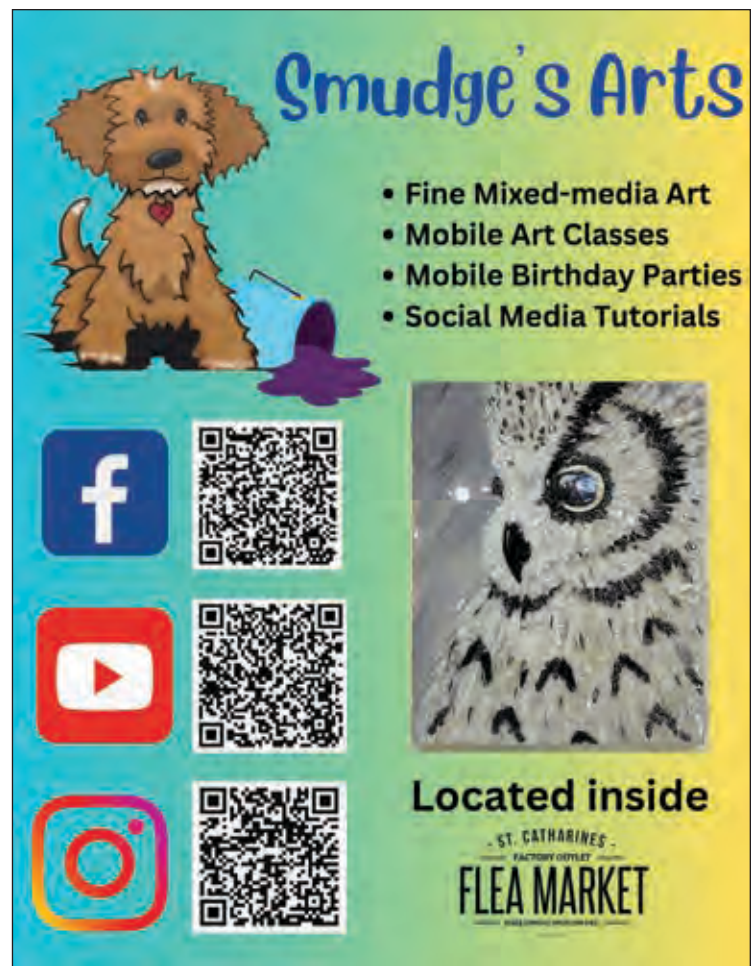
## MERRITTON COMMUNITY PARK TENNIS COURTS UPDATE – SUMMER 2024

By Chris Richard

Two steps forward, one step back. In June of 2024 Tennis Clubs of Canada advised the City of St. Catharines that it could not proceed with the winter dome planned for the tennis courts at Community Park. This was a disappointment for tennis players in the city but was due entirely to internal issues within Tennis Clubs of Canada, and was no reflection of the hard work and desire shown for this project by City staff and our local tennis community.

Despite this disappointing news, the City is moving forward with the rehabilitation of the Merritton Courts from the current aged and unplayable three courts, to four brand new competition-level courts. This project is a partnership between the City of St. Catharines and the St. Catharines Tennis Alliance. Upon completion, a new non-profit tennis club will be created, offering junior programs and adult leagues. As some redesign was required due to the elimination of the winter dome, we are awaiting confirmation of the date for the start of construction but are hopeful to see work starting this summer.

This project still represents a major investment in sport in Merritton, and upon completion will be the jewel of tennis in the city.



**Smudge's Arts**

- Fine Mixed-media Art
- Mobile Art Classes
- Mobile Birthday Parties
- Social Media Tutorials

Located inside  
- ST. CATHARINES -  
FACTORY OUTLET  
**FLEA MARKET**

When you're  
injured,  
we take it  
personally.

**ELKIN  
INJURY  
LAW**

[elkininjurylaw.ca](http://elkininjurylaw.ca)

St. Catharines



*Join  
Us*

# 2024 Labour Day Festival

**AUG. 30TH – SEPT. 2ND**

For our annual Labour Day Community Festival

5 Park Avenue, St. Catharines, Ontario

[www.merrittonlions.com](http://www.merrittonlions.com)

## **MIDWAY**

Rides & Games

*PROVIDED BY*

Townsend Amusements

LIVE MUSIC  
BEER GARDENS  
FIREWORKS  
PARADE



## **BECOME A MEMBER**

*Interested in becoming a Lion?*

Stop by one of our many booths  
on Labour Day Weekend and  
speak with a Lion to learn how  
you can join and help serving  
your community!

**LIONS CLUB OF MERRITTON**