

MERRITTON MATTERS

FALL 2017 • Volume 13, Issue 1 • www.merrittonmatters.ca

PHOTO BY SUSAN FLUELLON



Currently on display at Lock 3, this sheave was a component of a vertical lift bridge. Eleven original vertical lift bridges were constructed when the Welland Canal opened in 1932, with only three remaining in use. Two small motors raise and lower the lift bridge as the sheaves at the top of each tower rotate in order to balance the counterweights. Wires are guided through the grooves and are used to raise and lower the counterweights when the bridge is in operation.



SAVE THE DATE

You'll want to keep your calendar free for the evening of **FEBRUARY 24, 2018**. That's the date of our **Fourth Annual Trivia night** at the Merritton Community Centre. Please plan on attending for a great evening of fun that supports local community projects.

Merritton Matters is available at local businesses and the public library. If you would like to have home delivery, please call Sheila at 905-227-8988.

MERRITTON MATTERS VOLUNTEERS

This newsletter is a volunteer effort by a small group of people who are determined to keep the spirit of the Merritton community alive through providing information to our readers about the past, present and future of our neighbourhood. Formerly run as an independent group named the Merritton Community Group, we are now part of the Merritton Lions Club.

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Bob Sears, President of the Canadian Canal Society

Canadian Canal Society's Open Door

By Isabel Bachmann – Director, Canadian Canal Society

Psst! Have you noticed that there are big events happening this year in Canada? Yes, we're talking about our 150th birthday celebrations! There have been many ways to celebrate around the country and particularly right here in Merritton. One of the birthday celebrations that has already taken place was the Doors Open Day on June 24. Canadian Canal Society's contribution was centered around the new "Merritton Bill Wiley Memorial Parkette" on Glendale beside Sobey's plaza.

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WELCOME BARBURRITO!

A new Mexican restaurant just opened on Glendale Avenue in the Sobey's plaza. We'll interview the owner in the next issue and definitely do some taste testing.

2017 Trivia

Everyone had a great time at Third Annual Trivia Night held at the Merritton Community Centre on February 25, 2017. The tables were full of trivia buffs including the Ward Councilors and even the Mayor dropped by. All profits were donated to the Welland Canal Fallen Workers Memorial located in Merritton at Lock 3.

#Asksendzik – Chat About Queenston St.

Mayor Walter Sendzik holds regular chats with the St. Catharines Standard where he answers questions from the community and talks about some of the important local news stories. These are posted through the Standard, on YouTube and on MayorSendzik.ca.

On June 23, the conversation between Mayor Sendzik and Municipal Affairs reporter Karena Walter included the topic of the former General Hospital on Queenston Street. Connaught Public School had sent in a question for the mayor about plans for the area. The mayor confirmed that 'the property owner has applied for a demolition permit and the site is staged with construction equipment and ready to go. We expect to see plans for residential redevelopment come forward soon'. He thanked local residents and businesses for their patience during the road reconstruction and underground utility works.

DO YOU WANT YOUR BUSINESS AD IN THE NEWSLETTER?

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OLD FILMS OF NIAGARA REGION

In a previous issue Steve Hartwell, a Merritton resident, told us about his project to search for historic films of the Niagara Region. Steve is taking old 16mm and 8mm films, both personal family home movies and professional films, recorded long ago of the four Welland Canals, and other historic aspects of the region and turning these into digital format. Check out some of his results at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwx1yqwBDQebBEV24_0qnrEKioL-8cN13 and his website can be found at HomeMovies.ca.

Keith Whitwell

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IN MEMORIAM

We lost many citizens this year who embodied the spirit of Merrittonians. Below we've briefly noted some of the passings.



GOODBYE MARJ

By Michael Gander

When I first met Marj Leeson around 1999, she was very much involved with Royal Canadian Legion, Merritton Branch 38. I had been a member there for a few years but, really didn't come into

the place that often. My wife and I decided to take advantage of our memberships and started showing up on Friday evenings. Marj, who was Membership Chair at the time, noticed us, came over to our table and introduced herself. We got talking and she explained all the events that the Branch had to offer as well as introducing us to other members. Marj had served on the executive for the Branch in many capacities and received a Canada wide award for most new members in 2002. She was a Past President of the Merritton Lioness Club and was a devoted volunteer for the Lions Club. She seemed to be tireless in whatever she tackled. Marj finally retired from the executive about 2011, having served our Branch and members for many years. Sadly, Marj passed on Monday, June 12th, at the Haldimand War Memorial Hospital in Dunnville. Her husband Bill and son Mark predeceased her. She left behind a son Matthew and a daughter Marsha who will miss her, as will her grandchildren, great-grandchildren and extended families. Her many friends as well as "her membership" at Merritton Legion and the Merritton Lions Club will also miss her. Rest in peace Marjorie.



DAVID C. CRAIG, M.D.

By Phyllis Thomason

I first met David as he began his high school studies at Merritton High. There he was, standing beside my desk, a young redheaded boy with a ton of freckles, a twinkle in his eye, and a big grin on his face that seemed to say 'I'm here, let the

fun begin!' And no matter how often our paths crossed during his student years, he was always smiling and looking like he was having the time of his life while remaining the brightest kid in his class.

The last time I saw him was a few years ago at his annual family picnic which was held in Burgoyne Woods – now a grownup, mature man, with the same happy, friendly demeanor of his teenage years. In the intervening fifty years, he had graduated from university and medical school, married Linda, and began his career as a Doctor of Ophthalmology, one that was to last until just a couple of years ago, when he retired.

David started his career in ophthalmology in St. Catharines but made the decision to move to Henderson, Texas where he established an office and became widely known as a skilled eye surgeon and a treasured friend to many. But, he never forgot his roots nor his Scottish heritage and he flew home to Merritton to visit family and old school friends as often as he could. Once he learned about the existence of this Newsletter, which we mailed to him in Texas, he wrote several thoughtful articles for us on his old hometown and the people he grew up with.

A short while after his retirement he became ill and passed away on May 5 of this year – an unbelievably sad time for everyone who knew and loved him. Linda and their children held a Celebration of Life for David recently at St. John's Church in Thorold, giving all his Merritton friends the opportunity to say goodbye to this generous and humble man. He will be remembered.



TED COLLINS

Ted passed away on Friday April 28, 2017, at the age of 88. He was born, raised and resided in Merritton. Ted was a pillar of the Merritton Community and was a tireless volunteer for our community groups. He was a lifetime member of the Merritton Lions Club, a Merritton Volunteer Firefighter and long-time member of the Merritton Legion, Branch 138. Ted was instrumental in convincing the St. Catharines Heritage Committee to support the Lions request to re-name Merritton Pool after long time Lions Club member and Merritton resident Mr. Duncan "Dunc" Schooley. He also is well remembered in the greater community. In his youth, Ted was a star baseball and basketball player, and to this day, he still holds the record for longest hit homerun in Lancaster Park. In 2000, he was inducted into the St. Catharines Sports Hall of Fame. Rest in peace old friend.

Construction Ongoing and Upcoming

Queenston Street - As anyone who lives in the area knows, Queenston Street is undergoing a total reconstruction from Page Street to Eastchester Avenue. The work includes:

- Sanitary and Storm Sewer separation
- Watermain replacement
- Roadway reconstruction (including bike lanes and north side on-street parking)
- Street lighting upgrades
- Traffic signal improvements at Oakdale Avenue and Prince Street
- Streetscaping and Landscaping improvements

Demar Construction received the contract and the work is forecasted to last until December 2017. For more information, see <http://www.stcatharines.ca/en/governin/queenston-street.asp>.

The staff of Connaught Public School on Prince Street deserves much credit for their quick reaction after hearing of the impending work and their subsequent strategic planning for student safety in May and June.

Oakdale Avenue - The City is carrying out a 25-week project of roadway reconstruction and watermain replacement on Oakdale Avenue between Westchester Crescent and Lincoln Avenue. The top coat of asphalt is being removed and replaced between Lincoln Avenue and Disher Street.

Ball Avenue West - This future project will see new culverts installed adjacent to the existing bridge structure with the street realigned over the new culvert.

Burleigh Hill Phase 2 - In 2018, a sanitary sewer will be constructed, twinning Burleigh Hill Drive to Glengarry Ave.

Lorne Avenue - Work is underway to replace the existing cast iron watermain, construct a new storm sewer, replace the existing sanitary sewer, construct curbs on both sides of the road, repave the road, replace the existing sidewalks with wider sidewalks and replace the existing paved swales with grass boulevards. The duration of the construction is expected to be 20 weeks from when the construction began.



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Class of '64 Reunion

By Tom Richardson



Following the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Merritton High School in 1984, members of the Class of '64 had decided that it would be worthwhile to hold a class reunion. The first class reunion was held in 1988. An executive decision was then made that we would hold a class reunion every five years. Until this year, we have followed that schedule and have held a reunion every five years.

More recently, an executive decision was made, given our advancing age, that it might be appropriate to hold a reunion sooner than five years hence. As a result, a group came together and planned a reunion for 2017. The reunion, in fact, was held on June 9, 10 and 11, 2017.

In the intervening years, the reunion has become "the Class of '64 and Friends", representing those who actually graduated in '64 and those who graduated in the immediate following years!

The format in 2017 followed the same format established for the reunion in 2014. On Friday, June 9, we gathered at the Merritton Legion for a reception. The Ladies Auxiliary of Branch 137 provided food and there was a cash bar. The evening provided an opportunity to catch up on events over the preceding three years.

On Saturday, June 10, we then gathered at the home of Frank and Shirley Memme in Wainfleet. An afternoon of lively conversation followed by a delicious meal provided a further opportunity to renew friendships.

On Sunday, June 11, a smaller number gathered at Johnny Rocco's Restaurant in the Lybster Mill to round out the weekend.

The class of '64 was comprised of students, in the main, who started at the Junior School on Merritt Street, Pinecrest School, Smythe Street School and Consolidated School. Within those groups, were smaller groupings who passed through school from Kindergarten to Grade 13 in the same class. That is an experience that few, if any people, now experience in our education system. In any event, we all came together at Merritton High School in 1959 and graduated in 1964.

At our reunions over the years, we have been honoured to have in attendance former Principal James H. Smith and his wife, and teachers Ernie Umbrico, Jim Sernasie and Queenie Keir. Following the passing of Mr. Smith, Mrs. Smith has continued to join us for the last two reunions.

It is to me, a wonderful thing that persons who spent their formative years together and may now see each other only periodically at class reunions can come together with a feeling of warmth and familiarity as though no time at all has passed since we graduated.

It is my expectation that we will not wait five years for the next class reunion for the Class of '64 and Friends.

Smelt Continued

In a previous issue, Rob Mellor wrote about smelt fishing. Lots of comments continued the memories on Facebook and most agreed that it was a great feast.

- Len commented that they caught the smelt, ran them through the old ringer washer ringer and cooked them.
- Claude mentioned that going to the canal with his dad was a ritual every year when the smelt run started. He made a portable smelt rig with a two-hand crank and a boom to lower and raise the net.
- Nancy remembered that her dad would arrive home in the middle of the night with bushels of those smelly things and fill the bathtub.
- Karen used to go to the canal with her father who had his Colman stove, cast iron frying pan and a pound of butter. He would cook them and then they would eat while the next load was being hoisted out.

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At the Welland Canal Fallen Workers Memorial, the Gates of Remembrance list the names of those who died during canal construction and are intended to resemble the opening doors of a lock gate.



Fallen Workers Memorial

Work continues to move forward on the Welland Canal Fallen Workers Memorial at Lock 3 which honours the 137 men who died while building the Welland Ship Canal. We look forward to news of its opening celebration and to seeing how the memorial comes together.

When visitors approach the memorial from the north side, they will first see the element entitled the 'Veil' as a large, somber black steel wall. The 'Gates of Remembrance' will be a reminder of the lock gates of the canal and will contain the names and information of those 137 men who died during construction. The 'Timeline', the floor of the memorial, will have lines that indicate the number of deaths each year with the longest line representing 1928.

Information about the project and the canal's history have been shared through many avenues in the time leading up to the project's completion. There is an album on Facebook where updates are provided. A speaker series comprised of seven talks and organized by Arden Phair and volunteers concluded this spring. In August, there were cemetery tours where participants heard stories of those who died during the construction of the Welland Canal.

DID YOU KNOW...

- Donations for the memorial are still welcome and can be made online at www.stcatharines.ca/donate.
- As the construction project began, it was realized that one man would die building the Welland Canal for every \$1 million spent. The cost of the project was \$130 million and 137 men died.
- The Task Force volunteers spent copious amounts of time researching the men who died during the years of construction to ensure that every worker was included in the memorial.
- The Welland Canal Fallen Workers Memorial Task force had raised more than \$934,000 by June 2017.
- A book launch of *This Colossal Project: Building the Welland Ship Canal, 1912-1932* by Roberta M. Styran and Robert R. Taylor was held at the St. Catharines Museum. Fundraising chair Greg Wight, accompanied by Task Force Chair Mayor Walter Sendzik, presented an update at this event.

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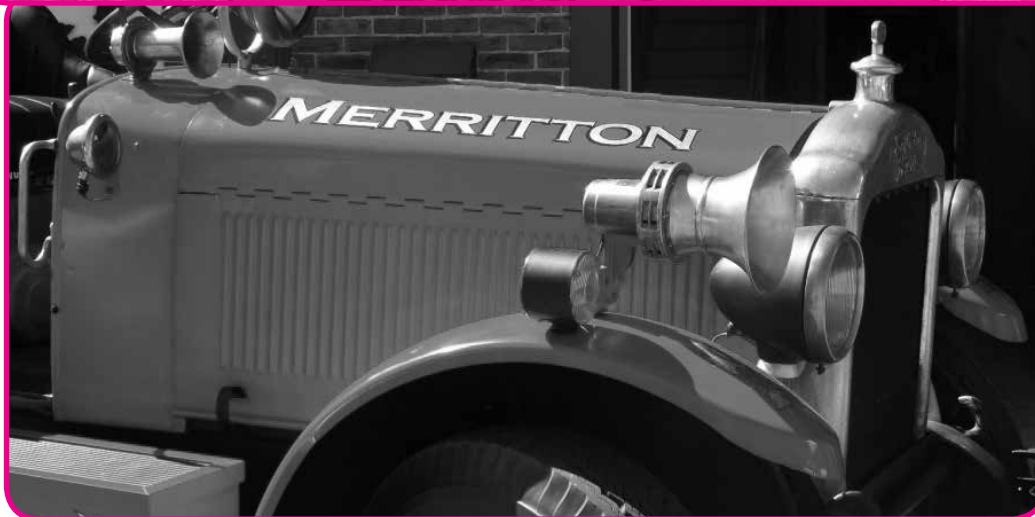
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Merritton Volunteer Firefighters Dedication Plaque Ceremony

On May 20th, the community paid tribute to the Merritton Volunteer Firefighters with a dedication plaque and ceremony. The plaque honoured those who served from 1888-1977 and is located at the Cenotaph Plaza. A social followed at the Merritton Legion with memorabilia on display. Thanks to the volunteer committee including John and Rosella Born, Councillor Dave Haywood and Denis Savoie for their organization and coordination of fundraising and to all those who contributed.



The pictures of the plaque dedication to the memory of the Volunteer Firefighters of Merritton were provided by the Firefighters Association of Ontario.





From left to right: Jack Bowes, John Bowman, Doug Haine, Al Lobsinger, Bob Davidson, John Jordan, Don Grimshaw Sr., Don Grimshaw Jr., Joe Vaccaro, Jim Clocherty, Roy Winstanley, Jack Hay, Ken Servos, Scotty Girotti

MERRITTON LEGION EXECUTIVE

Congratulations to the newly elected executives for the 2017-18 term.

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Bill Borden

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Bob Weir

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Kevin Froats

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Michael Gander

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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MERRITTON LIONS EXECUTIVE

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Merritton Lions hold their meetings on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month, from September to June and are looking for volunteers who would be willing to donate 2-3 hours at these meetings to set up and then clean up after the dinner. The meal starts at 6:30 pm so volunteers would be needed immediately before and after the meal. Volunteers don't have to commit to each meeting. This might be particularly good for high school students who live in the area and are in need of volunteer hours! Contact Sheila Morra at 905-227-8988.



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Sam Brennan of Merritton

By Isabel Bachmann

For the last six months I have been working with the Welland Ship Canal Fallen Workers committee researching the medical services existing during the building of the Welland Canal. One victim, Sam Brennan, was listed as being born in Merritton. Strangely his death occurred in 1935, three years after the canal construction was completed. My curiosity tweaked, I decided to see what I could discover about Sam and his life and his legacy.

Samuel Joseph Brennan was born August 1, 1896, in Merritton to James and Margaret (Reid) Brennan. James was a son of John and Mary (Lailey) Brennan who emigrated from Cork, Ireland. Margaret Reid was also Irish born, so Sam was raised in a traditional Irish Catholic home in Merritton and later in St. Catharines. His enlistment papers tell us he was 5 foot six, blue eyed with brown hair, and that he was a carpenter. His military demobilization papers say 5 foot ten, so maybe it's true what they say about the army building men!

As WW1 loomed menacingly, Sam served in the Welland Canal Force (19th Regt) guarding the canal. After three years, he transferred late in 1915 to active service with the 81st Battalion. He served 33 months as a gunner in France mostly with the 18th Battalion, receiving multiple wounds in September of 1916, May 1917 and yet again in May 1918. Sam made Corporal in February 1919 a few months before demobilization on May 24, 1919.

Back home, Sam married Grace Davis in 1920 and they lived at 30 Dexter St near Ridley College. Sam worked again as a carpenter, procuring work with a contractor on the Welland Ship Canal. He and Grace had a daughter Margaret "Lois" in 1921. Then fate intervened.

Sam was badly injured when a form collapsed at the construction site on the canal. The fall broke his neck, leaving Sam a paraplegic for life. As can be common with long term chronic conditions like this, Sam developed an uncontrollable infection that took his life in the space of just a couple of weeks in January 1935, making him the final fatality of workers killed in the building of the Welland Ship Canal. He is buried in the Veterans section at Victoria Lawn Cemetery.

Grace Davis Brennan eventually remarried and moved away, while their daughter Margaret Lois Brennan married George "Paddy" Gander, lived to the glorious age of 90 and was survived by her sons Mike and Brian and stepson David.

At least 18 of the 137 fatalities suffered in the building of the canal were veterans. As we remember the vets of the First World War these days, spare a thought too for Sam and his fellow vets who fell not on the battlefields of France but building a new future for their families.



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Photo By Len Mcintosh



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Camp Dorset

The Merritton Lions support many charitable causes and Camp Dorset seems to be a regular recipient. We wondered more about this camp and the origins of the Lions support so we asked the Lions for some background.

The idea of Camp Dorset came about at the 1974 International Lions convention. Lion Sandy Ailles of Dorset and Lion Herb Walpole of Hamilton East had a chance meeting. From 1972 to 1974, Hamilton East Lions had begun to provide a few cottages for families living with dialysis. The Dorset Lions had 380 acres of crown land in the early 70's as part of a plan to build baseball diamonds. However, after hearing of Hamilton East's dialysis retreats, the idea of building a full-scale camp emerged. Soon after, Hamilton East Lions and the Dorset Lions began to raise funds for the building of the camp.

On April 17, 1978, construction began. In the first year, three cottages were completed and the next year 5 more were completed. Lions Camp Dorset Corporations acquired the property lease later from the Dorset Lions and then this non-profit organization bought the property from the Ministry of Natural Resources.

With some assistance from corporate sponsors and various government grants, the Lions of Ontario have developed Camp Dorset into a unique facility that is now valued at \$3,500,000. Lions, Lioness, Leos and other interested parties completed most of the construction and the largest share of the funding for both construction and maintenance continues to come from members of the Lions family across Ontario. The camp is mortgage and debt free thanks to the funds provided by Lions clubs across Ontario.


Today, as in the past, groups of volunteers from clubs around the province give their time and experience to build new projects and upgrade the old. While services expand, client costs are kept to a minimum. The result is a state-of-the-art dialysis treatment facility providing a family getaway in the heart of Ontario's vacationland.

DR. THOMAS PEKAR IS GOING AGAIN

In January 2018, Dr. Tom Pekar will join other volunteers on the Smiles of Hope humanitarian mission to Jalapa, Guatemala, a country where there is little access to dental care. Dr. Pekar, whose offices are at 185 Merritt Street, has begun a fundraising campaign to raise money for the next expedition. This will be his sixth trip back to Guatemala where he continues to work to improve the oral health and quality of life for those in less fortunate countries.

KUDOS TO CHARITABLE EVENTS BY OUR LOCAL CHURCHES, SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Community members joined Pets Alive Niagara volunteers at Elm Street United Church to build winter cat shelters.
- A toy drive was organized by the Burleigh Hill School community of students, parents and staff and articles were donated to Community Care, bringing this school's contributions to Community Care to \$72,500 over the past 18 years.
- The Merritton Lions, along with others such as Wise Guys Charity, Meridian Credit Union, Niagara Community Foundation, contributed to a naturalized playground project at Bethlehem Place. This contribution was part of the Club's overall donations totaling \$17,000 in community and Lions Projects.



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Merritton Alliance Win 2016 Senior B OBA Championship Alliance Claim First Provincial Title in Team History

By Matthew Brady

"It's not how you start, it's how you finish that matters," said Larry Collins Merritton Alliance Manager.

This became a common quote from Collins as the losses continued to mount early on in the season for the Merritton Alliance Senior Baseball Team. Manager Collins continued to stay positive while those around the team could not help but wonder if this group could get the job done. The team started to put things together after their trip to New Lowell for their Civic Holiday tournament and was able to climb to a 12-12 record, finishing

fourth in the league. With confidence and expectations high, the team headed into the OBA Senior B Championship in Wyoming, Ontario.

Labour Day weekend brings the end of summer and two things those on the Alliance look forward to, OBA Championship Weekend and Labour Day Monday in Merritton. The team always has set its main goal each season to win the OBA Championship and secondly to win the league playoffs. Game one against the Barrie Angels and game two versus the Milton Orioles were both thrilling wins for the team.

The Alliance found themselves matched up against the Harrow Blues. They would send Kyle Parris to the hill in the finals. Mixing speeds well he was able to keep a very good hitting Harrow team off balance and off the scoreboard through six innings.

Then the offense for the Alliance was steady throughout the game with Adam Campisano, Matt Brady, Adam Hope, Ben Collins, Dave Collins, Jeff Young, and Pat Topping bringing in four runs through five innings.

"We need one more guys, dig deep and get it done," said Dave Collins in an emotional plea to give more of a cushion. He wanted one more and he got two. Brady singled with the bases loaded, two outs and two strikes to bring in two more runs in the home side of the sixth.



Bottom (Left to Right) Brett Fusco, Mark Fusco, Jeff Young, Adam Hope, Dave Collins, Jason Valliere, Matt Brady, Chris Heckley
Top (Left to Right) (Manager) Larry Collins, Brandon Bradt, Ben Collins, Mike Nardelli, Kyle Parris, Mark Parris, Pat Topping, Adam Campisano, Dustin Jenckes

With a six-run lead and three outs to get, thoughts of celebrations began to creep into the Alliance heads. Kyle Parris was gutting it out, but the Harrow bats had come alive. With a few defensive mistakes and some timely hits, the Harrow Blues had cut the lead to 6-4 with two outs and a runner on first. Larry Collins called on Brady to try to get the final out with the tying run at the plate. Getting the count to two strikes Brady threw a fastball that was lined back at him. The ball deflected off his

glove to second baseman Adam Hope who flipped the ball to shortstop Ben Collins.

"My favourite memory of the OBA weekend was seeing a group of guys who have battled for the last eleven years, come together and play as good as we did is very special. A true team effort and being provincial champions is something we all will never forget!" remarked Ben Collins.

The 2016 Merritton Alliance consisted of the following team members: (Manager) Larry Collins, Brett Fusco, Mark Fusco, Jeff Young, Adam Hope, Dave Collins, Jason Valliere, Matt Brady, Chris Heckley, Brandon Bradt, Ben Collins, Mike Nardelli, Kyle Parris, Mark Parris, Pat Topping, Adam Campisano, and Dustin Jenckes.

The team would like to thank Pam Radusin, Dave Dawdy's mother, for her years of support of the team and let her know that her generosity is greatly appreciated. The team would also like to thank Promotions Plus for making our team gear and Jerry and the staff at Ole's Ale House for providing the team with great hospitality. The team could not be more proud of their accomplishment of finally bringing home a Senior Provincial Championship to Merritton.

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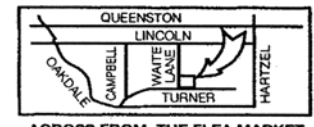
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ACROSS FROM THE FLEA MARKET

Thinking Back to Merritton Christmas

By Rob Mellor

Editor's Note: People from Merritton often point to the Labour Day holiday weekend as a source of many community memories. We always make sure we have a Merritton Matters issue available around this time as we know that many people will be returning to the area for the carnival and parade. However, in this article, Rob is looking a little farther ahead on the calendar to another memory-making holiday.

Instincts are often underrated. We all remember sounds, sights, tastes and experience emotions that bring us back to specific events, times, people and feelings that can overwhelm us. You all know what I mean because it is a common thread we all share. Where we grew up, what we saw and heard, people we hung with and encountered, familiar tastes, smells experiences etc. are the lasting imprints on our minds and memories!

Merritton was a vibrant community of hard working families and businesses that watched out for each other and helped each other thrive and survive. Everyone supported everyone else including the local companies who supported sports, education, jobs and the children.

After the Labour Day Parade, Halloween and Thanksgiving, it was Christmas. The best holiday of the year! Two weeks off school, anticipation of food, gifts, and happy times with family and friends. How could it get any better?

In the 50's, I don't recall anyone with an artificial tree. You either went out together and cut down your own real tree or purchased a real tree usually from your local church lot. Fir trees, spruce or pine natural trees with real needles. A pile of homemade decorations including coloured macaroni and popcorn strung like tinsel, lava light bulbs and aluminum foil tinsel came out of storage. Everyone in the family contributed. This brought the family together and created a common bond.

This was a time for visiting family, relatives and friends. Everyone shared in the joy of the season. There was no other celebration that even came close to this one. Neighbourhood snowball fights were mandatory! You had a team of friends battle rival teams on your block. Snow forts were built in designated property lots and collectively you would amass a staggering number of snowballs in anticipation of the looming battle. Just one rule! No ice balls! Well, you could never guarantee that was 100% true, given temperature change and handling.

Do you remember singing Christmas carols and shoveling snow to buy gifts for friends and family? That was a given in the 50's. My friends and I all went to sing or shovel snow for neighbours. Why? For extra stuff we wanted? No! To get gifts for family and friends! We were taught you had to work for what you get. Money for Christmas gifts came from work on your part. Parents did not hand out money for the kids to buy presents unless they worked for it. You worked to buy for others at Christmas. These gifts actually had more value and respect on all parts. Everyone I hung with understood this and had no problem with it.

Do you remember tobogganing and sliding? Sleds, toboggans, saucers, and cardboard boxes were a huge part of our childhood Christmas. In many cases, the simple cardboard box was more effective than the other options. We used to go to Leon's Furniture store or Cavers on Hartzel Road and dumpster dive for boxes. You could use the large boxes as infrastructure for snow forts and smaller ones for sleds. There is nothing like an insulated and dry snow fort!

All the kids in our area would go sledding and sliding together. As teens, we did the same but in the early evening. Once we were properly soaked and cold we usually came back to my mother's house. She was like a den mother with tea, hot chocolate, pies and cookies waiting. Everyone was welcome. My mother was a comedian but did not know it. She would make the funniest statements or off the cuff comments that had you laughing to the point of tears. She seemed oblivious at times. Example: Spraying her hair with Lysol and thinking it was hair spray; brushing her teeth with Brylcreem hair gel and thinking it was toothpaste. This stuff happened daily and I will not tell you about her tea bag casserole!



All of these experiences shaped our lives and left us with comforting memories. My most vivid thoughts are of going to sleep in the evening and hearing the familiar sounds, smells and images of Merritton in my mind! The trains, their whistles, chugging and track clatter. The Hayes hammers pounding out car parts. The paper mill logs dropping from conveyors, Ship whistles and foghorns from the Canal. This brings me home, to my roots and comfort zone.

I wish you happiness in all of your celebrations.



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IN HONOUR OF THE UPCOMING REMEMBRANCE DAY, WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING POEM
FROM OUR MERRITTON POET, KAREN TIFFNEY.

TATTERED BOOTS

By Karen Tiffney

*Only someone who has worn these boots cries
into the quietness of the night wondering if anyone can hear?
Will anyone be able to look into his eyes and tell him
he has nothing to fear?
Only someone who has worn these boots will say that he cries not
because he is afraid,
He cries because of the sacrifices so many of his brothers and
sisters have made.
Only someone who has worn these boots cries for those left behind,
And for the dark cruel days and nights that have been far too unkind.*

*Only someone who has worn these boots would be able to understand,
Exactly what was seen and done on foreign land.
Only someone who has worn these boots left behind loved ones and
friends traveling to lands afar,
the only connection to family to gaze upon a shining star.
Only someone who has worn these boots realizes
how deep the wounds to body, mind and soul,
These boots tattered and scarred will they ever again be whole?*

*Only someone who has worn these boots stands for
unselfishness always willing to forgive,
Giving unselfishly so that mankind can live.
Only someone who has worn these boots stands for
freedom world free from suffering and pain,*

*The blood that once enveloped his hands
no one else will ever see the stain.
Only someone who has worn these boots stands for heroism hero indeed,
Always willing to put his life on the line
whenever Canada or any other country has a need.
Only someone who has worn these boots stands for strength, courage,
integrity and maturity all personal traits,
Traits that could one day ultimately determine his fate.*

*Only someone who has worn these boots is prepared to fight and die
his agenda to protect the world despite the protests and beliefs of others
who boldly wave their signs,
Support them pray for themes they take their place behind enemy lines.
Only someone who has worn these boots has gone
where anyone else would fear to go,
These boots always moving forward braving the unknown sometimes
walking beside both friend and foe.*

*Only someone who has worn these boots will one day ask
an important question to God above,
Why this world has become so cruel and full of hatred
instead of filled with peace and love?
Only someone who has worn these boots
will fight the war within himself
questioning, wondering if a different path had been chosen
what he might have done?
These boots now filled with sand would have traveled a different path
if the choice in his life had been made not to carry a gun.
COPYRIGHT: Karen Tiffney, 2016*

You Can Take The Kid Out Of Merritton But You Can't Take Merritton Out Of The Kid

A few years ago, friends of the Facebook page Merritton Memories asked Bev Damiano and Pat McCabe to come up with a T-shirt slogan. They obliged and 'PROUD TO HAVE BEEN A MERRITTON KID' was created. Bev and Pat then decided to plan a fundraiser to give back to the community that supported them during their youth. They chose Labour Day for their event as they felt it was an important town tradition for Merritton with many returning to their hometown every year to rekindle friendships. The first annual event was held on the Saturday of the Labor Day Weekend in 2014 at the Merritton Legion and was a huge success. The Saturday afternoon event included raffle prizes, food and entertainment. People came from as far as Texas and B.C. and everyone that attended asked if this could be an annual event.

In the second year, T-shirts were printed with 'PROUD TO BE A MERRITTON KID' because residents currently living in Merritton but who were not born here were proud Merrittonians too. Hoodies were available with 'I LOVE MERRITTON'.

Last year golf shirts were available in various colors and embroidered with 'MERRITTON KID'. The proceeds from all the T-shirt sales provides the capital to run the annual event, as well as donations to the Merritton Legion. Merritton Kid shirts are still available this year.

Join Bev and Pat, along with many proud community members, at this year's event on September 2nd at the Merritton Legion. And, in case you're worried that you might not remember some of those long ago friends, nametags are available!



ABOVE: Ken Servos with Ted Collins

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ST. JAMES ANGLICAN AND THE ASTLEYS

By Isabel Bachmann

It always hurts to lose a part of our history. Recently one of our community churches closed its door for the final time.

I know from tracing my history that a long line of Astleys have followed the Anglican faith devoutly for generation after generation. My paternal grandfather, Albert Astley, was a staunch Anglican who emigrated to Merritton in 1911 from Bolton, Lancashire.

Grandpa felt a great attachment for St. James and worked with successive ministers in support of the church. I knew he had been the Sunday School Superintendent through a family story, one in which I took a starring role!

When my dad Fred returned to Merritton after service in World War II, he married the girl who lived down the road, Mary Florence. They wed in a small private ceremony in the St. James Church Manse due to the recent death of her mother, my grandmother, the other Mary Florence. When I was born, I was the first Astley grandchild. Grandpa decided I should be christened at St. James, but my dad had drifted away from the formal church. He blamed it on being forced to attend Sunday School and church services by his parents, and resisted attending once he was married and out of their control. My mother's families were Presbyterians and as such were suspect. So my grandfather baby-napped me one day and ushered me into the Baptismal ceremony, ensuring I was properly blessed and set on my path.

When I started Sunday School, Grandpa's worst fears came true and I attended St. Andrews Presbyterian congregation just up the street at the bridge. I like to think I've been twice blessed, but I'm not sure that's how Grandpa felt about it.

Albert passed away in 1955, when I was five years old. I do remember him, but his health was declining in those years. While he was a generous and gentle influence, he had a number of grandchildren by then and I suspect we were a little overwhelming.

I don't remember the funeral; I'm sure I was sheltered from it all. So I was left with fond recollections of a shortish quiet man with a nagging cough and a penchant for giving me treats. Sweet memories.

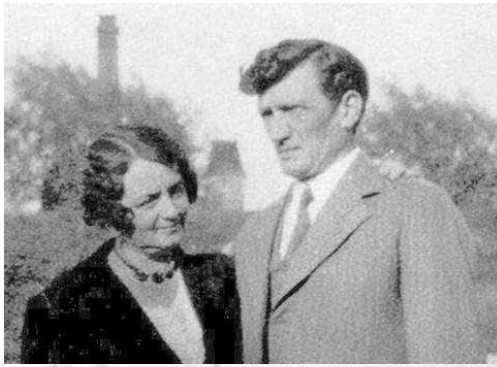
Shift to a springtime visit from my neighbour Denise Chuchman, who has been a member of St. James for many years. She said she had found something I might like to have, a plaque that mentioned a relative, or at least someone who shared my maiden name. There it was, an old brass plaque with a dedication to Albert Astley, Warden of the Church. I was struck speechless. She had no idea what the connection was, and was equally surprised to know that my grandfather and dad were members of St. James all those years ago.

As it turned out, the plaque had been attached to the counter surface of a bookshelf at the church, one that normally held service programs and announcements. I asked if I could perhaps purchase the bookshelf, but it was old and not especially desirable, so Denise said it was mine if I wanted it. I'm so grateful to Denise and Bill for retrieving it for me.

In came this old beat-up bookcase. I polished up the plaque to return it to its rightful place. It was obvious where it fit; there was a waxed outline of where it had rested for over 60 years. It wasn't until I read the whole text that I realized the identity of the donor: it was his fellow workers at the Alliance Paper Mill. They supplied the bookcase. Then I remembered who the carpenter must have been. The carpenter at the Alliance at that time was my dad, Fred Astley.

It is certainly not a fancy elegant piece of furniture, but it was made as a mark of respect and to honor Albert's service to the place he loved so much. It also says something about my dad who years after he abandoned the church, built a memorial for his dad and placed it in the old church that had held some importance in the Astley life here in Merritton.

Old and beat-up this bookcase may be, but it's priceless.



WELCOME HOMESTEAD DONUTS AND GARDEN CITY BAKERY!



After the long trip home from Grandma's house outside Woodstock, I remember my parents stopping to pick up long johns at Homestead. Maybe the first time we stopped it was because the donut shop was on our way home. Living in Merritton, Lake Street seemed like another world away for my family. But these delightful treats, created long before Tim Hortons, acted like a magnet that kept pulling our '69 Torino in to the parking lot. Then when I got to Merritton High, it seemed that everyone knew about the long johns and even the cafeteria carried them. During our regular euchre game, Brent Pfab, Jerry Byca and I got quite skillful at holding both the miniature playing cards that Lee Anderson brought to school and the cream-filled donuts.

The exciting news is that Homestead is now located close at hand at 54 Hartzel Road with even more to offer. In addition, for those taste aficionados, they still make my Dad's second favourite, the walnut crunch that you can no longer get at Tim Hortons.

Photo By: Randy Loewen

Emma is Up!

Several years ago an American documentary entitled 'Up Syndrome' won awards for its chronicles of a man who born with Down Syndrome as he starts to make his way in the adult world. Emma, from Merriton, has her own explanation of Up Syndrome with help from writer Crystal Comper.

UP Syndrome? It is not a new syndrome it IS actually called Down Syndrome however it really doesn't suit the word DOWN as who I AM, will only move on UP! I am strong and courageous and will lift YOUR spirits UP! From the moment I wake UP I put my positive STRONG foot forward and am a devoted caring big sister who is adventurous and beautiful!

I may be still young and not quite understanding yet how the big world can be. I hear it has some people in it they will immediately see my UP syndrome at first glance and MAYBE dismiss my abilities, my strengths, my heart and my fierceness to only look UP! This does not scare me but it saddens me because I want those people to be as happy as me! Judging and assuming is not such a happy people thing... I do not think anyway!

Learn to be happy and kind like me; I am not less than you are!

It is ok if you are feeling so DOWN with who YOU are that you quickly judge others and myself BUT please know you are missing so much fun UP where WE all are!

I love me and I love you. It is only UP from here...



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Curator Kathleen Powell gives a guided tour of the First World War exhibit before the "Three Day Road" Book Club

TALKING ABOUT BOOKS AT THE MUSEUM

Last winter I had the opportunity to go with friends to a Books and Brew book club held at St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre. We were expecting to just sit and share our thoughts about the book but it was not quite that simple as the museum is obviously putting their own unique twist on the book club experience. We started with a chance to mingle as a group of about 20 people in the permanent exhibit area then had a chance to sample a variety of new brews. The owners of Mahtay Cafe and Lounge were there to talk about the history of what we were drinking. And, that's all before we even started to talk about the book. I even had a chance to listen later to a Books and Brews podcast for additional historical context and input from those in the History Department at Brock University. Although I had tea at my book club, it has been rumoured that local beer is more often on the sampling menu. What a great way to mix a museum atmosphere with beer tasting and Canadian works of fiction – talk about book club excitement!

MOVING DAY

By Tom Barwell

(Continued from an article in last summer's Newsletter. In Part 1, Tom recounts his father's announcement that the family was leaving Merritton to move to a farm. A tractor was an important part of farm life so they acquired the town's old tractor, a 1927 Fordson, with faded insignia spelling out Merritton. After much work, his father was successful in getting the tractor working and moved it out of the town's barns which were located by Ricci's Tavern. Of course this is not the end of the story. The tractor still had to be taken to its new home and this turned out to be a very adventurous journey. If you would like to see Part 1, please go to www.merrittonmatters.ca and click on the Summer 2016 edition.)

One turn of the crank and the tractor burst into life and settled down into its familiar breathing, whooshing, and running noise. Thus began the journey to its new home. However, not without adventure, and a little heartbreak on the way.

We were all there. My brother and I, my Mom and sister, would follow behind in my brother-in-law's car. Then of course, there was the dog, shaking and barking with excitement.

Merritton was blessed with many lanes that in the olden days were used to deliver produce to the rear of stores and to provide access to the many stables located, at the time, behind homes. These we used to our advantage and we were able to gain a route to old Boyle Road East. Now of course it is Glendale Ave.

There were a few sights and obstacles on the way, the first being the train tracks. Fortunately, there was not a big problem crossing them.

Looking back, I noticed a gaggle of kids following us along with their ever-present dogs. It was quite a sight. I felt like a hero as the bikes came whirling past accompanied by a lot of hooting and hollering. Gradually they petered away as the whole scene became maybe a little boring.

The first building we passed was the slaughterhouse or abattoir - a place we avoided. There was the old yellow wagon and, as it was Saturday, it was not in use. It was the vehicle towed by a horse that carried doomed animals to slaughter.

Farther down was an old whitewashed building that seemed to have a host of rooms added on. This was reputed to be an old brothel that provided entertainment to the army of construction workers who toiled in the building of the 4th Welland canal. Then there was the canal bridge itself with its foreboding twin towers.

We cautiously approached the bridge to make sure we did not disrupt traffic, both land and water. Thinking the coast was clear; Dad drove the tractor onto the bridge decking. Immediately it started to tremble and the giant cables began smashing together. I happened to

look up and there was the operator hanging out of his gondola, shouting and yelling. It was bedlam. He sounded the siren and pointed up the canal. That is when we noticed a boat coming out of the lock. Panic set in. Dad picked up speed. Then suddenly, quietness. Everyone looked around in wonder. The tractor had stalled and at the worst possible spot. Right over the junction of the road and bridge deck at the east end. Soon the little trickle of traffic began backing up.

Dad literally dove off the tractor in a desperate effort to get it

moving again. Grabbing the crank, he started frantically turning. By this time, a small, very quiet crowd had gathered, no doubt holding their breath. One crank, followed by another. Then a backfire caused it to viciously kick back smashing into his wrist. He was hurt. I had never seen my Dad cry before and a tear trickled down his cheek. But, bravely, he again picked up the crank for maybe the last try. Then a wonderful growl was heard and the motor came alive in a full-throated roar.

I noticed the boat was half way out of the lock when we started to move. The operator patted my Dad on the back then ran for his controls while people scurried to their cars. Looking back, we noticed the bridge rising. We had escaped and could continue our journey.

After much twisting and turning on the many side roads, having to avoid the old #8 highway, we arrived at our destination. Up the long drive, we went towards the homestead and the waiting barn.

We spent only a few happy years there until my Mom became ill and we had to move closer to an area where medical care was more accessible.

I think back to those very hectic few hours and now, when crossing the Glendale Bridge, it brings to mind an assortment of feelings and of course chuckles along with it. I will never forget the name of that boat. It was "The Lemoyne". As for the tractor? It did its job. No doubt it is still there somewhere, sinking slowly into the ground, still proudly wearing the Merritton insignia.



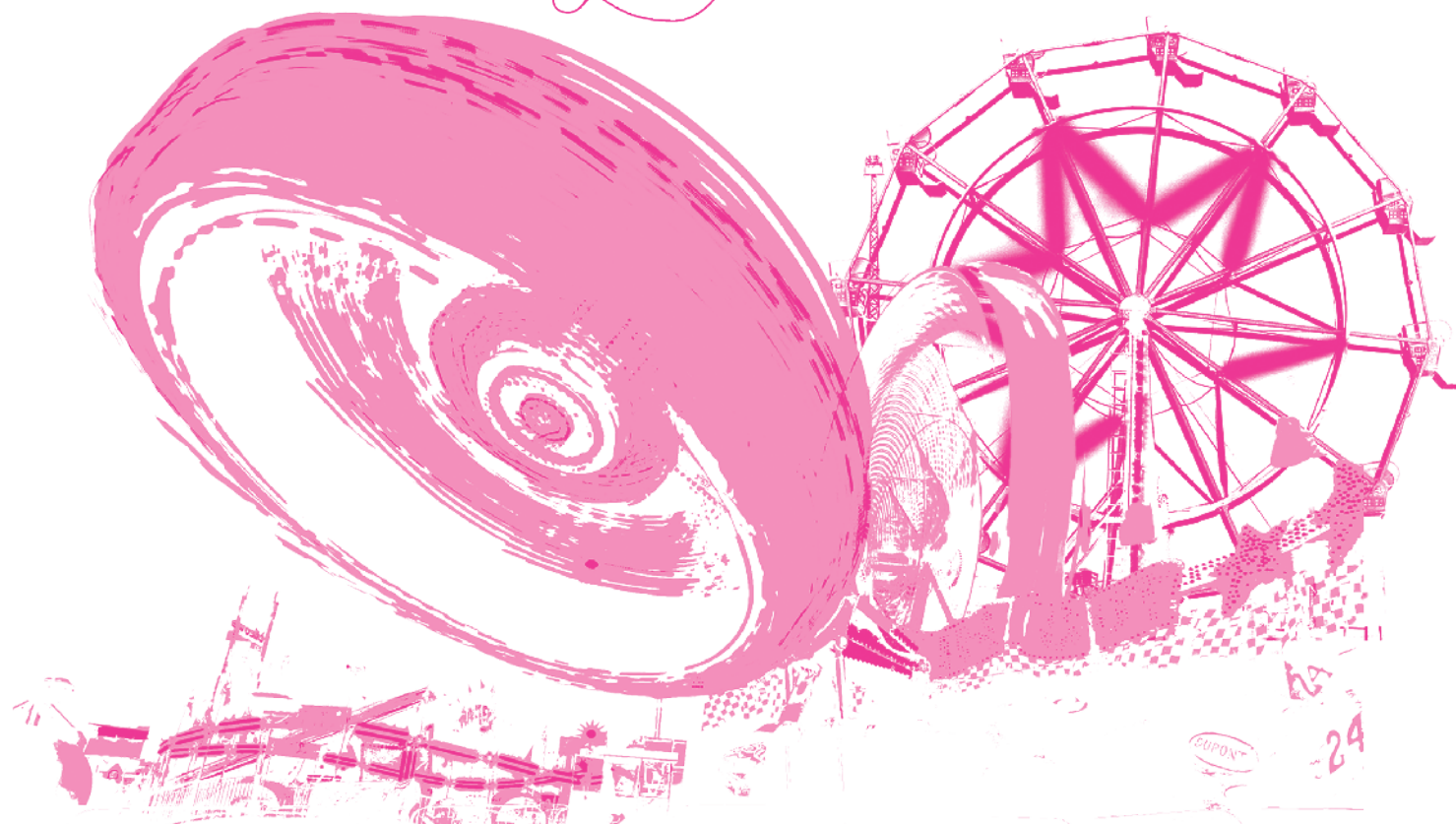
MANY PEOPLE HAVE ASKED 'HAVE I MISSED A MERRITTON MATTERS?'

Yes, it's true we went from Summer 2016 to Summer 2017. Unfortunately, we've been on a bit of a hiatus due to the editor's change of jobs. Volunteer work writing and editing the Merritton Matters was pushed to the back burner due to work demands. **SORRY!**

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