

# MERRITTON MATTERS

Summer 2011 • Volume 7, Issue 3 • [www.merrittonmatters.ca](http://www.merrittonmatters.ca)



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## INCLUDED INSIDE THIS EDITION:

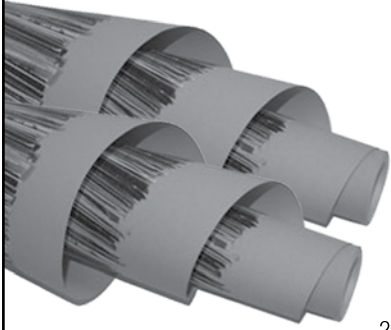
- Updates on Past Articles
- Top of the Hill Girls
- A Very Special Birthday
- Planting on Merritt
- MCG Open House
- Memorial to All Former Students
- Harvest Festival
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- St. Thomas Aquinas
- Lists, Lists and More Lists of Trivia
- A Letter from the Past
- Way to Go Nikki
- Interesting Way to Make a Living Kevin

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Do you know people who live out of town who might like to receive the Merritton Matters? If so, please call Jean at 905-938-7178 to arrange for copies to be sent to them.

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## THIS ISSUE

Contributors to this issue were Tom Barwell, Sheila Lippiatt, Kathy Sokoloski, Mary Stanko and Phyllis Thomson. Articles without a byline have been written by our editor Lorraine Giroux. Lana Pesant is our graphic designer.

## Merritton Community Group

The executive is comprised of Chair Morag Enright, Vice Chair Bill Wiley, Treasurer Jean Westlake, and Secretary Sandy Burns.

One of our projects is the very successful Adopt-a-Street event which was held this year on April 30<sup>th</sup>, a beautiful spring day. Members Jean Westlake and Arnold Harnett led students from Pinehurst School from Queenston Street up to the Thorold border.

## MM's Tenth Anniversary

Merritton Matters started as a project suggested at the Community Neighbourhood Improvement meetings held at the Community Centre and was taken on by the Merritton Community Group. Lorraine Giroux has been writing and editing it since the very first issue published in 2001. Lorraine's mother, Phyllis Thomson, has contributed an article to every issue since the newsletter's inception. Since then we've had a total of 28 newsletters published and distributed to the community. Jean Westlake, Pat Durocher and Tony Morra have always handled the advertising for this paper and continue to do so now. You can reach them through Bloomin' Busy at 905-688-8840.

Jean Westlake is our main photographer and in her 'retirement' from the city of St. Catharines, we keep her very busy tracking down story ideas and organizing events such as our Adopt-a-Street program. Congratulations to Jean for her photos in SNAP! If you saw the June 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Jean had taken the picture of Jane's Walk in Merritton.

If you have an article for this paper, or even ideas for articles, please send an email to [merrittonmatters@hotmail.com](mailto:merrittonmatters@hotmail.com) or by regular mail to 3 Capri Circle, St. Catharines, L2T 3X4. Please let us know if you have an event you'd like to publicize.

***Tributes to Merrittonians are always welcome for publication in Merritton Matters.***

# UPDATES ON PAST ARTICLES

## UPDATE ON OUR MYSTERY MAN

### *Our Search for Information*

Cyndie Rutherford of Halifax, Nova Scotia had contacted Merritton Matters in her search for more information about her grandfather Walter G. Rutherford. We printed her request in our Fall 2010 issue (Volume 7, Issue 3) and accompanying her plea, was a picture of her grandfather when he played for the City Industrial League in Merritton on a team called the Alliance Paper Mills F.C. Merritton. Cyndie never had a chance to meet him as he passed away before her parents were married but was interested in any information we could pass along.

Well, our wonderful readers came to the rescue! Ray Martin in Amarillo Texas called and said that he has information about Walter. It turns out that his middle initial 'G' stood for Gilroy and Ray's great uncle was Walter Gilroy, a Black Watch Regiment soldier killed in WW1. Ray has emailed Cyndie to provide her with information.

We also got a letter from Rita McIntosh who lived on Walnut Street most of her life. Her father, John McIntosh, also worked at Alliance paper mill and was good friends with Walter. She can remember as a child on Sundays taking meals her mother had made to the men, like Cyndie's grandfather, who were working at the mill during mealtime.

Mike Johnson took time to research Walter and provided us with some information. After reading Mike's information, we again were so impressed with the people of our past and the richness of our history.

## W.G. RUTHERFORD

Mike sent us clippings from The Standard with information that Walter Gilroy Rutherford died at age 43 on May 3, 1943. At the time of his death he was living on Chestnut Street, was a member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and an employee of the Alliance Paper Mill. He left behind his wife Mary, who also worked at the Alliance as a sorter, and son Walter Junior. Walter (Senior) was born in Scotland and had been an internationally known professional soccer player who came to Merritton in 1920. He had started playing professional soccer at the age of fourteen and had played in Scotland, England, United States and Canada. He had continued to play until two years before his death.

We're so pleased when Merritton Matters can supply the missing pieces!



## NEW FIRE STATION

We had previously printed that the new fire hall at 427 Merritt Street would have a construction start date in November 2011. We found out recently that the tendering is now going to be in early 2012 for this new building to replace the Walnut Street hall. Before the building is erected, the city will need to fill the grade and have a detailed geotechnical investigation conducted to see if there are any potential structural issues on the former Domtar Steam Plant site. There will be a new data centre located here rather than at City Hall and city council has passed a resolution that this new facility will seek Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification. This means that there will be third-party verification that the new fire hall was designed and built using strategies intended to improve areas such as performance in energy, water efficiency, and improved indoor environmental quality. This certification process ensures that there is a system for implementing green building design, construction, operations and maintenance.

## MERRITTON NEIGHBOURHOOD SIGN

The MCG is arranging a brief ceremony with the donors once the garden is completed around the base of the Neighbourhood sign. Now the city has assigned a staff person to help us finalize all the details and promised to proceed in a timely fashion. We'll be contacting each donor with the details of our ceremony.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to the cost of the Merritton Neighbourhood Sign, located at the entrance of Mountain Locks Parks. These names will be recognized on the rear of the sign.

### **Contributors to the sign were:**

Bloomin' Busy Flower Shop, Jim Bradley (M.P.P.), Marlene and Bob Bowman, Geoffrey & Sharon Crane, William Dickson, Nino Donatelli, Rick Dykstra (M.P.), Doreen England, Denis and Morag Enright, Art & Glenys Schooley, Elm Street United Church, Fred Fretz, Diane Emmett & Jim Mazurk, Lorraine Giroux, Merritton Lions, Merritton Lioness, Sheila & Tony Morra & Family, Dr. Tom Pekar, Pinehurst School, Senior Citizens of Merritton Ward, Jennie Stevens (Councillor), Bruce Timms (Niagara Reg. Councillor), and Bill Wiley.

## JACK GRANT MCNAUGHTON

While we were out on the streets of Merritton, we received lots of positive comments about the newsletter but especially Barry McNaughton's article about his father. So, we couldn't resist printing one more picture that Barry sent us!

This is from a Turkey Raffle in December 2010, an event that Jack always supported and attended with close friends and family members - mainly his sons Barry and Bruce, grandson David and granddaughter-in-law Kristen. David had shirts created to wear in Jack's honour at the event, shirts that included Jack's bomber squadron (Squad 433 Pride of the Porcupines) with the Royal Canadian Air Force logo and the porcupine icon on the front. In the picture are (L to R back row): Rachel McNaughton, Jamie McNaughton, Kristen McNaughton, Karen McNaughton, Bruce McNaughton, Barry McNaughton, Margo McNaughton, Mike McNaughton, Sarah Townsend (soon-to-be McNaughton) - (L to R front row) : Marino Girotti, Bill Marshall, David McNaughton.



# OLD BUILDINGS

By Tom Barwell

*Editor's Note: This is the conclusion to his article which appeared in the last edition, in which Tom and his young friends were heading, in the dark of night, for the Old Buildings (now The Keg) to catch pigeons.*

After digging through the high weeds at the rear of the building we finally found the broken window and we very carefully edged our way through. Inside we huddled on the old wooden floor. The pitch blackness was only broken by minute flashes of the so called heat lightning. You would think that in a place like this it would be deathly quiet. Not true. There was rustling, squeaking, and the soft cries of some small victim as it was caught by an unseen predator. The wind howled and moaned like a lost soul in the upper reaches. As well, there was the faint rumble of thunder joining in.

We found ourselves in a large room filled with old machinery and massive rolls of paper. In an adjoining chamber was a huge furnace with its doors open, revealing a large fire chamber. The door itself looked heavy, was very ornate and identified its maker in raised letters.

The pigeons would be up near the roof where there were broken windows for their entry and exit. So up we went, climbing two long flights of nearby stairs. Next, was a trapdoor accessed by a ladder that looked and felt a little shaky. This took us to the huge attic section of the building and, shining our lights up, we finally spotted our quarry. Pigeons of all colours, blinking and nodding in the flashlight glare, they probably wondered who these idiots were. There was quite a large flock, numbering fifty or more. The ledges they roosted on were piled high with all sorts of debris indicating that they had been here for a long time. At several points, ladders were built into the walls, probably there to service the roof vents and it made the ledges easy to get at. A piece of cake.

Two of us went up with the bags tied around our waists. One would hold on and the other would catch the pigeons by the legs and plop them into the bag. The other member of the team aimed a flashlight up for guidance. Satisfied with a dozen victims, we gingerly made our way back to the floor. Through the trapdoor, down a couple of levels, and we were soon back in front of the furnace. We were on the way when suddenly, our world seemed to end.

There was a sudden eye-searing flash of light. This was followed by an ear drum shattering explosion. If there was a crack of doom, this was it. What little light there was from our flashlights was absolutely snuffed out. Even in this pitch blackness we could feel ourselves enveloped in a cloaking cloud of dust and soot. Our storm had arrived.

Lightning had hit the chimney and the whole building seemed to dance and shake. This caused an avalanche of ancient debris to cascade down in a choking, thick mass. We were stunned but knew we had to get out quickly. Terribly frightened, crawling on our hands and knees, by sheer luck, we found the furnace room door. Crawling further, the air slowly cleared and breathing became easier. We were very fortunate, as suffocation was not a remote possibility.

Hacking and coughing we stumbled our way to the entrance window and fell through into a pouring rain. We huddled under an overhang catching our breath, all the while shivering and shaking chilled to the bone. Surprisingly, the pigeons seemed to be in good shape. I guess the burlap protected them. But not us. Our clothes and bodies were a mess.

It was decided that we would release the pigeons back inside then head for our homes. They would survive as most of the dust and smoke had cleared up. There was no way we could complete our sleep out in our condition. A return trip in better weather would have to be planned. I think, as well, that we were in a bit of shock. It was a very frightening experience.

\* \* \*

Last year my wife and I decided to go the Keg for supper. Inside I was surprised to see an old friend - the furnace door. Now it was painted a deep flat black and all the inscriptions were painted white. It was beautiful. But on our previous visits many years ago it seemed enormous. When I looked around it seemed almost impossible that this was the same place of our many adventures in the Old Buildings. If only the rest was still standing.

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# OUR MUSICIANS

In the last issue, we spotlighted two people from our community who are very successfully working in the music industry, Ron Sexsmith and Gerald O'Brien. We received lots of buzz from highlighting these two.

Ron is playing a concert at Brock during the upcoming season. Gerald, who lived in the Queenston/Niagara Gardens area, can be found on Facebook under The Music of Exchange where he is one half of the duo along with Steve Sexton. I'm assuming that the hometown which is given as Toronto must be Steve's as we know Gerald's hometown is Merriton.

Now the younger generation is aptly represented by a young man who was born and raised in Merriton and started his career in our area through promotion of local events and being involved with S.C.E.N.E. Music Festival, helping to launch Niagara Music Scene online network. Who is he? Watch for the next Merriton Matters!


## MCG Open House

We held our 6th ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE on Tuesday, May 17, 2011 at the Merriton Seniors Centre on Merritt Street. George Hostick shared his memories of the Merriton Lions Parade. He began his reminiscences in the 1940's when he and his sister Doreen decorated their bikes and rode in the parade which at that time was sponsored by the Merriton Athletic Association. They lined up on Pinecrest by Central School, hoping for prizes that were on display at Hardy's Hardware. He later was part of the Grenadier Drum Corp, starting as a 'Guide On', those who march at the end to keep the rows straight. Then he progressed to the Colour Guard and worked his way up to the Drum Line. They practiced in what is now the Senior Centre during the winter and then in the spring, marched on the ball diamond.

Many people could join George in his memories of Len 'Trapper' Leo always leading the parade with his shotgun. In the mid 1960's Willie Alexander of the Lions was the parade marshal. George himself became a parade marshal, at a times when they had to provide the convertibles for the dignitaries. The judges used to review from in front of Town Hall, and then moved to the High School because they used the school's power supply for sound. Then the grandstands were moved to in front of the pool, again for sound power but also to draw people to the carnival grounds after the parade finished. In the 1970's the unions became a big part of the parade but a balance was maintained between these groups and the community theme.


George brought back wonderful memories of the Labour Day parade for everyone in attendance at the MCG Open House!

Thank you to the Pinehurst students who were excellent volunteers at our 6th Annual Open House.



**Peter Kormos, MPP**  
Welland

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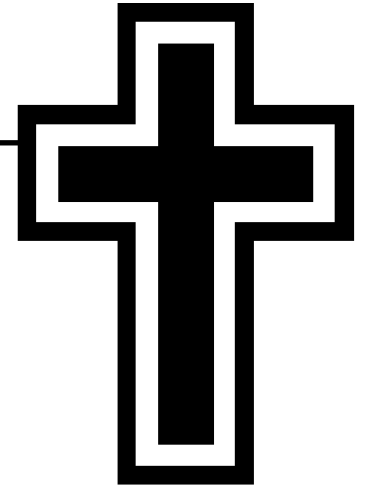
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# St. Thomas Aquinas

By Mary Stanko



On July 1, 1961, to serve the faithful of the Queenston Street-Eastchester Avenue area, Merritton's newest Roman Catholic Church became the first parish established in the new Diocese of St. Catharines. Before this parish was established, the east end Catholics of our city attended the Cathedral or Immaculate Conception churches on Church Street. Before this \$167 000 church/hall was built and blessed by Bishop Thomas McCarthy on April 28, 1963, Sunday Mass was celebrated by Father Reilly O'Leary at St. Thomas School (now St. Thomas Adult Learning Centre) on Eastchester Avenue. Daily Weekday Eucharist was celebrated at the Queenston Street Rectory adjacent to this Church and Tufford Manor/Nursing Home.

For over 15 years the Sacrifice of the Mass has also been celebrated at Tufford's for its residents on the fourth Thursday of every month and Holy Communion is brought there every Sunday by Parish Extraordinary Lay Ministers of the Eucharist. St. Thomas Aquinas' present pastor, Father Michael Basque, is also available to all ill Catholics in Tufford's or area private homes, who request Holy Communion or the Sacrament of the seriously sick or Anointing of the Dying or a Funeral.

Of contemporary design, this air-conditioned peace-inspiring church has a seating capacity of approximately 400. The simple white triangular front exterior recalls the Blessed Trinity, as does the tripod steel bell tower at the front. Inside, the stained, cedar, Chalet-like ceiling rises 35 feet above the light coloured wooden pews. All attention is directed to its Altar, which is seen against a backdrop of a shaft of stained glass window light, white glazed blocks, highlighted by an intricately carved, light coloured wooden, life-size Crucifix and flanked by ornately decorated grape-vine pillars rising from the floor to the ceiling on either side. The altar is made from a block of rough-hewn, Queenston, lively grey limestone. In the early 1990's, this Church underwent extensive renovations. The original massive altar stone was cut and refashioned to sculpt the present-day smaller altar, lectern and Altar of Reserve for the Blessed Sacrament, marked by a large, red Vigil Light to indicate Christ's Presence in the Blessed Tabernacle. Beautifully carved above this "Tent" is a life-size "Lamb of God" walking with His Resurrection Banner in front of rays of gold.

Parishioners are involved in numerous Parish Organizations, trying to follow in the footsteps of their founders to reflect Christ's caring. Thus, the Catholic Women's League, the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Knights of Columbus also look after the social needs of the community, such as, fundraising for Hannah House's Baby Needs, Monthly Food Vouchers/ Christmas Hampers, Haiti Relief, including the crocheting of milk bag sleeping mats, lobbying for those unable to speak for themselves and third world citizen's human rights /natural resources.

For future celebration information, please contact the Church at: 905-687-6971.

**Editor's Note** - Mary Stanko has been the chair of the Good Neighbours Public Awareness Campaign for the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship for the past 13 years. This organization works diligently to promote friendlier, safer and more responsive neighbourhoods. She would most enthusiastically like to invite everyone to attend its **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Good Neighbours Week Finale on Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2 p.m. at Westminster Church Hall, next to the St. Catharines General.** The topic will be *Positive Thinking to Avoid Alzheimer's*. Free food, draws, friendly social interactions are some of the other highlights! Don't forget that there is parking at the back of the church. **Good Neighbours work together to prevent crime!**



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# Hallett's Union House Updated

What's that at the side of Hallett's Union House? We've all known Pete's Pizza as a great pizza place and a generous supporter of community events. But recently we've noticed that the old Hallett's building has a new sign along the side.



Interesting blog about Hallett's the other day that talked about how important the Union House was to workers in Merritton back in the time the factories were being unionized. Merritton was settled by Irish Protestants and Catholics who came to build the first Welland Canal and they didn't get along that well but they found a common spot at Hallett's as a sort of clubhouse for the male workers. Maybe there is more significance behind the name 'The Union House' than otherwise might be assumed?

# JANE'S WALK

John Burtiak led the first ever Jane's Walk in the Merritton Ward accompanied by a very enthusiastic group of people. They walked a route that took them to the four churches located just around Merritt Street, starting at St. Patrick's, moving to St. Andrew's, then to St. James and finishing at Elm Street. Almost 20,000 people around the world went on a Jane's Walk on May 7 and 8, taking place in 75 cities.

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# John Dempsey Park

John Dempsey Park is named after the late John Dempsey, Sr., a very involved Merrittonian and former President of the Merritton Athletic Association, who passed away on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1980. When John's wife passed away November 5, 2007, his son John Dempsey Jr. found the following letter in her possession. He's not sure to whom it was sent or the exact date but we would agree with him that it is a true testament to the spirit of a past resident of Merritton that remains with many of us today. We've reprinted it below:

Dear Sir,

As a citizen of the town of Merritton, I feel it is my duty to let you know how I regard this amalgamation of St. Catharines, Merritton, Grantham and Port Dalhousie as ordered by the Ontario Municipal Board.

First let me say that we citizens of Merritton are primarily of Anglo-Saxon stock. That same stock defeated the French on the Plains of Abraham but who were democratic enough to allow the defeated foe to retain their own language. Naturally, therefore, we are somewhat confused by this turn of events whereby we are being forced into this amalgamation. In a vote that saw 98% of the eligible voters cast ballots all but 33 out of approximately 3000 were definitely against this amalgamation. In this democratic land of ours certainly such a vote must merit some consideration, plus the fact Port Dalhousie voted against the same issue. Furthermore, why weren't St. Catharines and Grantham given a chance to vote?

The Ontario Municipal Board's report it would seem to me, that Merritton's favourably high industrial assessment must be shared with the other municipalities. We agree that we do have a high industrial assessment but how did we acquire it? For many years we have had all sorts of annoying odours and noises from our local industries that we enticed to come to our town so they may benefit from our low taxation.

We are a shift-work town, so therefore we work and sleep around the clock. There are annoyances: hammers of the Hayes Steel, the main railway line to Niagara Falls and Buffalo runs through the town of Merritton. In the days of the old steam engines they would stoke up before making the run at the Niagara escarpment grade, emanating clouds of black smoke, much to the disgust of the housewife and the shopping centre of the town. Thank goodness the steamers are gone and in their place the new modern diesel engine. An improvement maybe from the smoke element but when they roar and shunt and blare their horns at all times of day and night, I wonder! The sulphur fumes from the acid plant of the paper mills where people in the vicinity are afraid to open their windows; the traffic hazard on some of our streets created from the steam of the mills. Last but not least, the old Welland Canal with its obnoxious odours, although I will admit it is not as rosy as it used to be.

We of the town of Merritton are a proud people. When we want something done, we do it. Granted we may fight with each other, as all good families do, but band together to further our combined interests. When a swimming pool was needed, we built one, tennis courts were erected, and we have a community centre that any town five times our size would be justly proud. Our ball park is the only covered grandstand in the Niagara Peninsula. The Merritton Athletic Association who looks after the needs of our youngsters receives a grant of five hundred dollars from the town while its expenditures are almost four thousand dollars a year; the difference raised by the members of the said association.

If the proud name of Merritton should be taken away, God forbid, the spirit that came from our ancestors throughout the years will surely be awakened. As a veteran of World War II, I fought for democracy so that I and my children could cast our ballots on any issue which we saw fit. In this latest vote our democratic way of life is challenged, when the wishes of the people are cast aside by a TWO man board.

It just doesn't seem fair to me, I am

Yours sincerely,  
John Dempsey Sr.



## WE WANT TO KNOW

### Antique Roadshow Type Advice Please

One of our readers has a wooden shipping crate stamped with The Independent Rubber Company Limited Merriton Ontario. When she received the crate in about 1996, the crate had been repurposed and the entire thing was covered in cloth which may account for the good condition of the crate. The top of it, where the two pieces of wood go across, was built up or packed with newspapers (dated from the 1950's) to even out and pad it so that lid of the crate could be used as a more comfortable seating area as well as possible storage.



Please let us know if you have any information about the uses or the history of this crate.



## Welcome to the Neighbourhood

We'd like to offer a warm welcome to the Ojeda-Valencia family who have opened the new Mexican restaurant on Hartzel Road! Chile & Agave is at 51 Hartzel Road.

We're also really looking forward to the new Harvey's that will be opening up this fall right beside the Keg. There will be a Swiss Chalet attached. It seems like eons ago that Harvey's on Hartzel closed! Crownview Holdings has purchased The Keg and the plaza will now be the location of RBC as well as Swiss Chalet and Harvey's. Apparently 12,000 square feet are still available for other commercial businesses to locate.

## Remember Sharp's Restaurant and Bar

Located at the end of Hartzel, close to Queenston Street, was a restaurant named after the Sharp family. A reader also asked us if that restaurant was ever called the Rose and Thistle. Anyone know the answer?

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# How well do you know this fine community of ours – past, present and future?

In the Dalai Lama's book, *The Art of Happiness in a Troubled World*, he discusses that happiness can come as a result of a sense of connection to others. Merrittonians do have this connectedness with a strong identity separate from any other community. We see our neighbourhood as having a high level of involvement in the organizations that seek to preserve this identity.

The community of Merritton that we tend to see hovering around the Hartzell Road/Merritt Street corridor is actually the largest ward in the city. Don't be limited by the pre-1960 ward but consider the updated ward boundaries which include Jacobson Ave., Highway 406 and Geneva St. in the west; the QEW and Eastchester Ave. in the north; Welland Canal and Glendale Ave. in the east and St. David's Rd. in the south.

It does have multiple challenges. And yet, we have the potential for substantial improvement with the support, imagination, and skills of the residents who live here. Becoming involved in your neighbourhood doesn't have to be difficult and can start with some of the simplest actions. Help us continue to build pride in our neighbourhood green areas, our schools, our churches and our gardens. Join or develop a neighbourhood association, open your doors and connect with your neighbours.

## *How well do you know this fine community of ours – past, present and future?*

Below you'll find some trivia questions and several pages away in the newsletter you'll find the answers. You are guaranteed to walk away from reading this with several different pieces of information that you can share over the dinner table, sitting around the Dunc Schooley pool watching the kids swim or even at one of the Merritton pubs tonight. This section will test your true neighbourhood knowledge!

### ORDER IN THE VILLAGE

**Put these in order of occurrence.....**

- A Merritton celebrated its one hundredth birthday
- B Village of Merritton became the Town of Merritton
- C Merritton High School was built
- D The town hall was built
- E The swimming pool was opened
- F Merritton Lions Club was formed
- G Merritton Legion, Branch 138, began

### BACK TO SCHOOL

Name the schools that are in the current ward of Merritton. Of these, which building is the oldest? Which one has the most students attending?

Name the schools that have been torn down in Merritton. Where were they?

Name the schools still standing but that have closed. Can you remember when they were closed?

### GREEN SPACES

How many green spaces are located in our ward? Which one is the largest? Which parks are named after important Merrittonians?

**Turn to Page 16 for the answers**

# Nino Donatelli and The Stone Mill Inn

On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, a large group of community leaders, from groups such as the Lions, the Legion, the Lioness and the Merritton Community Group, were invited to see the renovations at the old Lybster mill and were very impressed by the facilities. This building at 271 Merritt Street now contains Johnny Rocco's Italian Grill as well as the Stone Mill Salon and Spa, the Stone Mill Ballroom, and Zavitz financial. It is an impressive building that has retained its traditional appearance.



The time and effort Nino Donatelli has put into this remarkable restoration speaks volumes of his dedication to the community as well as his work in the preservation of our history here as in Merritton. Nino personally gave us a tour of the building which has had a long and interesting history. Travelling up the winding staircase where the woodwork has been custom made, you can see a beautiful and newly constructed Stone Mill Ballroom, which definitely lives up to what you would consider a grand ballroom. (An elegant bridal shower was taking place on the day of our tour.) Apparently they can accommodate up to 240 guests for any function and there will eventually be 35 rooms at the Inn. Pinehurst School just used the ballroom for their graduation ceremonies.

Nino has worked diligently to incorporate the history of the building into the facility. In 1860 this building was a cotton mill, then as the Lybster Mill, it began production of paper in 1911. It evolved into the Lybster Division of Alliance Paper and then became Howard Smith Papers in the early 1960's. Operating as Domtar, it closed in 2002. Nino purchased the facilities in 2009 and has been renovating it since then. Memory inspiring photographs have been placed on the walls displaying the history and the building's evolution into today's gem. People coming to the restaurant should definitely consider going upstairs to view these treasures.

Everyone on the tour heartily agreed that the attention paid to detail was extraordinary. Nino was a wonderful host and the tour included an opportunity to meet the owner of Johnny Rocco's Italian Grill, Tony Visca, who took time out of his hectic schedule to answer questions about his facility which includes the ballroom. People are already capitalizing on one of unique parts of Johnny Rocco's which is the intimate room for private parties, separated from the rest of the restaurant by glass doors, which means there is still the great atmosphere and the view of the open grill but also a little seclusion for those special events.

The building also includes the Stone Mill Salon and Spa where you can be pampered with all the modern day spa treatments while enjoying the historic charm.

# TOP OF THE HILL GIRLS

By Kathy Sokoloski



On October 4<sup>th</sup>, I had a very unique lunch date. You see, I had lunch with eight other women, some of whom I hadn't seen for more than 50 years. We all grew up in what was referred to as the Merritton Top of the Hill area. You found this area just east of Goose Island, south of Thorold, west of Krsul's farm and north of "The Quarry". Here we built tree houses and followed the tracks to the rest of Merritton "down the hill". It was a short trip south to Thorold and the pool, or to the "showers" at the old canal that flowed behind G. M. In the winter we dragged our toboggans across the tracks at the end of Ball Avenue East to ski-jump at Krsul's farm.

Our contemporaries will read this and say to themselves OMG, I remember her! These are the ladies who have reconnected and I've listed them by their married names with their maiden names in brackets. First the 'brains' behind our luncheon were Jeannie Adams and Eleanor Brown (Stark). Guests at the luncheon were Margaret Sergenese (Fluellon), Eileen Muir (Mills), Jean Godard (Bretherick), Helen Lockyer (Bretherick), Arlene Bittle (Delaney), Brenda Turcotte (Taft), and me Kathy Sokoloski (Taft).

We had a wonderful 3 hours together, reminiscing, catching up on children, grandchildren and in some cases great-grandchildren. If any of the other 'girls' who grew up with us are out there, please get in touch with us because we're going to get together again and would love for others to join us. You can email Jeannie Adams at [mjmad@hotmail.com](mailto:mjmad@hotmail.com) or me at [katron.sokoloski@gmail.com](mailto:katron.sokoloski@gmail.com) or call Eleanor Brown at 905-354-9469.

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## WAY TO GO NIKKI!

Nikki Allison has been awarded a PhD scholarship at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and will be studying at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence within the university's School of International Relations for the next 3 years. Nikki is the granddaughter of long time Merrittonian Dorothea Ives and daughter of Laurel Ives-Allison.

Being awarded this scholarship to St Andrews, Scotland's first university and considered one of the leading research-intensive universities in the world, is a wonderful achievement. For over six centuries it has established a reputation as one of Europe's most distinctive centres for teaching and research, besides being well-known for its alumnus Prince William. Congratulations Nikki!

## Interesting Career Kevin!

While the rest of us are enjoying the summer sunshine, you'll find Kevin Morra in the basement of Sheridan College, creating the unbelievable. He's capitalizing on his deep wellspring of imagination, working on advanced special effects at a brand new program that is the only one in Ontario. This program, called Advanced Special Effects, Makeup, Prosthetic, Props, will prepare about 30 students for jobs in the entertainment industry, amusement parks or even for the War Amps. Kevin is part of a team working on a co-op at Canada's Worst Drivers making props. We know we'll be watching the bottom of the movie credits and see 'Kevin Morra' flashing past.

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# The House at 14 Turner Crescent

Susan Christie had for years driven down Oakdale Avenue looking up at the neighbourhood on the hill and wondering about it. Then as luck would have it, there just happened to be an open house there when she and her husband were looking for a home. A bit leery about older houses and leaky basements, she still knew the moment that she walked in and saw the front entrance that she wanted it! Her husband needed more encouragement though!

One of the first things she did upon moving in was plant a willow tree in the middle of her huge backyard, something she had wanted to do since she was a kid. Their work on the house began immediately too.

Susan spent hours doing historical research on the house at the Welland Canal Museum, City Hall and the downtown library. She found and read handwritten logs of land transfers starting with the Welland Canal's purchase of land in the early 1870's for \$2500. In the following years this house was built and, according to her research, was a locktender's house for only 2 years. The house was then sold to a farmer for \$5000. She found a map at the Welland Canal Museum showing where the farmer had severed the land and sold it a few years later and the land surrounding it at this point was the entire block of houses connected to her yard now. These handwritten records go on for about the first 5 owners. The address was not established until about 1880 so she cannot pinpoint who the locktender was because, on the log book, the Welland Canal was the owner. The farmer who purchased the land was the first individual person/owner listed. She did find a phone book for that time frame that listed a Joseph Turner at the residence, likely the reason for the naming of the street when they started doing that in the 1880's. A search of the records reveals that a Joseph Turner, aged 25 married Ida May Wait in January 1881 in Merritton and this was the likely owner. Susan has gone through hundreds of pictures in the museum and, although, she was sure she had found a picture of the house from that time period, the museum personnel couldn't confirm it.

Since they purchased the home in 2001, they have continued the work of the previous home owner. In 2006 they had the house raised to remove the old basement and gave the exterior a whole new facelift and the house has continued through the past years to become increasingly beautiful. All the work on this house has certainly paid off. The tree now 10 years later is a whopping 40 feet tall and growing.

But, unfortunately, instead of being able to sit back and enjoy their intensive efforts, the Christie family has had to relocate due to a job. Susan's husband Steve has been enrolled in the Canadian Forces to become a Navy Sonar Operator. We thank them for their research about a historical building and their incredible dedication in making it a testament to the past.



## Memorial to All Former Students



Driving down Merritt Street, you might catch a glimpse of something looming in the corner of the Pinehurst lot where formerly the bowling green stood. Look closely and you'll see a stone there brandished with a commemorative plaque. It has been placed there to honour the memory of all former students who have passed away and was provided by the Merritton High School Reunion of 2010.



# MURRAY GIROTTI



Dr. Murray Girotti died December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at the young age of 62, leaving behind a legacy of accomplishments. Murray is survived by his wife Jan (Stewart) and children Katherine Aristone and Jonathan, Lindsay Spear and Randall and Matthew J. Girotti. He was the cherished Nonno of Charlotte and Annabelle Spear.

Murray grew up in Merritton, the son of Marino and Ann Girotti. He attended St. Patrick's School and completed high school at Denis Morris. He played hockey and baseball in the community and was a stand out on high school varsity teams. Murray received his medical degree from Queen's University. His contributions to the medical field are numerous and significant. Murray was passionate about medicine, a man of multiple, amazing talents, and a brilliant trauma surgeon. He was also a gifted teacher and was committed to his academic endeavours. Murray graduated from Queen's University with his honours B.A. in 1969 and his Doctorate of Medicine in 1975. He was Co-director of Trauma and ICU at Toronto General Hospital from 1984-1989. Murray joined Victoria Hospital in 1989 as Chief of Surgery and Professor of Surgery at the University of Western Ontario. As well, he was a surgical consultant in the Critical Care Trauma Centre. He served in a number of administrative roles including Senior Medical Advisor, Vice President of Medical Affairs and held the role of Medical Director for the Trauma Care Network since 1997. Merritton should be extremely proud of what Murray accomplished in his life!

## Harvest Festival

The Queenston Street Area Community is hosting the **Second Annual Harvest Festival** to celebrate this community and all who live and work in the area. Join them on **Saturday, October 1, 2011** at Centennial Park on Oakdale Ave. from 11:00 – 3:00 p.m. for free music, food, entertainment, games and more! All are Welcome!



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# PLANTING ON MERRITT



The next time you drive down Merritt Street and notice the beautiful flowers, say a thank you to Dawn Peters. After three days of her hard work in the middle of May plus assistance from the Sunday school children at Elm Street and a Denis Morris student, the street was already on its way to looking beautiful! This is the first year she has undertaken this project along the boulevards. Dawn, a member of Elm St. United and Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 138, had successfully applied for a grant from the United Way to cover the cost of the flowers, with Seaway Farms generously providing a discount and free delivery. The local businesses – Milk Maid, Piries, Jerry's Union House (Pete's Pizza), J&A Athletics, Bella Rosa Pizza Emporium (formerly Carley's) - have all agreed to keep the plants watered on a regular basis throughout the summer. Thanks also to Jerry from Pete's Pizza who donated pizza and drinks on planting day.

## Celebrating an 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday

By Sheila Lippiatt (McNichol)

Doug McNichol celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday at the home of his daughter Clara and family in Mississauga in March of 2010. Our family, the McNichols of Merritton, lived at 46 Walnut Street in an old pebbledash house across from the CN Train Station and had the Springers and MacIntoshs as our neighbours. Doug's high school girlfriend was Bette MacFarlane and she later became his wife.



Standing 6 foot, 4" tall with his brush cut, Doug was well known as the local teaser tormentor. He used to deliver meat for Mr. Keating, our local butcher on his bicycle for extra cash. In high school, Bob Davidson, Teddy Collins, Hughie Cosgrove and Doug played basketball together under the close eye of Angie Pastore and managed to win a few championships that included the Central Ontario Championship (C.O.S.S.A.). McNichol was a member of the 1947 Merritton High School winning senior boys team from Merritton High which, with only 200 students, was the smallest school at the time to ever win the title. At one game, my mother and I were the only family in the balcony cheering with the screaming teenagers.

As a youngster Doug played hard ball at the local grandstand diamond. Apparently on occasion he was made to take me along much to his chagrin in my baby carriage and he parked me on the first base side line. After high school Doug went to the University of Western Ontario and under another watchful eye of J. P. Metras, Western's coach and athletic director, became an excellent footballer. He also played basketball for the Western Mustangs. In 1953 Doug was the number 1 draft choice for the Canadian Football League (Big H) and played for the Montreal Alouettes and later for the Toronto Argonauts. He is a member of the St. Catharines sports Wall of fame, and had an 11-year CFL career as a defensive end and won East All-Star honours in 1953, 1954, 1955, 1958 and 1959. He stills works and takes daily charge of his business Road Savers in Toronto.



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# Lists, Lists, Lists of Answers

People seem to love lists. Wherever you look, you'll find them. David Letterman made a hierarchal list famous. We may not agree but it's still very appealing to read. Why do people love lists? Probably because lists are short and sweet but still provide readers with information in an easy format. They can't be boring because you can always skip over the details you don't care about, details that you might otherwise have to plough through dense text to find. You can easily skim through a list. Here are the answers to the questions posed to you back on the centre pages – in lists!

## Names of schools currently in ward:

### PUBLIC:

1. Applewood
2. Connaught – This is the oldest school building in our ward.
3. Ferndale – This is the school that currently has the most students attending.
4. Kernahan Park

### CATHOLIC:

1. St. Christopher
2. St. Theresa
3. St. Thomas Centre (Adult)

### FRENCH CATHOLIC:

4. Sainte-Marguerite-Bourgeois

### PRIVATE:

Pinehurst

## Schools That Closed and Were Torn Down:

1. Glen Merritt Senior School, Glendale and Merritt, which was originally Central School, built circa 1888, closed in June 1972 and demolished in 1978.
2. Consolidated Elementary, 421 Queenston Street, closed 2003
3. Glen Merritt School, Glendale and Merritt, closed
4. St. Joseph closed and demolished in 1972. However, an annex to the school, built in 1956 a little farther west on Chestnut Street, remained standing and was used for more than 20 years as an audiovisual centre for the board. It was eventually sold to the private sector as a commercial building.
5. Maplecrest P.S., closed 2001

## Schools Closed But Not Torn Down:

1. Valley Wood, Smythe Street, closed 1984
2. St. Patrick's, built in 1961 on Burleigh Hill Drive replaced by Sainte-Marguerite-Bourgeois In 1989
3. Merritton High, Seymour Street, closed 1999, became Pinehurst
4. Chestnut Woods – a Montessori school located across from the Seniors Centre on Merritt, closed 2010/11

## Correct Order of Occurrence D. 1879, B. 1918, C. 1934, F. 1938, G. 1938, E. 1948, A. 1974

### Parks in Merritton

1. Barbican Heights Park, off St. Davids Rd.
2. Barley Drive Park, 24 Capner St.
3. Bartlett Park, 69 Haynes
4. Canal Valley, 166 Westchester Cres – our largest park!
5. Centennial Gardens, 321 Oakdale Ave., Gale Crescent and Oakdale Avenue
6. Community Park,  
4 Seymour St., Seymour Avenue and Park Avenue
7. Douglas Park, 141 Bunting Rd. Bunting Road and Eastchester Avenue
8. Eastmount Park,  
15 Thorncliff Dr.
9. Glengarry Park, 63 Glengarry Rd.
10. John Dempsey Park, 131 Rockwood Ave.
11. Kernahan Park, 381 Queenston St.
12. Maplecrest Park, 6 Maplecrest Ave. Maplecrest Avenue and Merritt Street
13. Mountain Locks Park, 107 Merritt St., Bradley and Mountain streets
14. Neelon Park, 3 Neelon St.
15. Pic Leeson Park, 77 Dundonald St.
16. Princess Park, 4 Melbourne Ave., Melbourne and Collier Streets
17. Secord Woods Park, 80A Rockwood Ave.
18. Trapper Leo Park, 53 Hazel St., Glendale Avenue and Hazel Street
19. Treeview Park, 2A Via Dell Monte
20. Valleyview Park, 20 Ker St.
21. Wembley Drive Park, 92 St. Augustine Dr.



Trapper Leo

### Parks Named After Important Merrittonians:

1. John Dempsey Park
2. Pick Leeson Park
3. Trapper Leo Park

## WHICH GREEN AREA IS THE LARGEST?

You might think it's the Centennial Gardens but this is 9.3 hectares compared to the Canal Valley which is 18.8 hectares. Mountain Locks is 11.33 hectares. In the Centennial Gardens, you'll find the flagship garden of Community Action Niagara. It is 7,000 square feet of garden complete with running water, composting system, and sectioned plots. Some of the food from here ends up in food banks, shelters and churches.

# WE WELCOME J & A ATHLETICS TO OUR COMMUNITY

J & A Athletics is a family owned local manufacturer of sportswear and much more. We are thrilled that they chose our community as a location. Being in the historic Pizza Jerry's Union House seems like a great place to be, especially with a fireplace and hardwood floors! Owners Anna and John Sheridan moved into the community in 1993 and had been running their business out of their home since 1998. Now they have a great facility in a convenient location! There isn't a sportswear manufacturer in the city for local teams to go to so we can imagine they will be very busy catering to individual teams as well as leagues. By actually manufacturing the apparel, they control the design, artwork and time frame of the delivery of the product so that their customers can have a unique jersey that is always custom designed. J & A Athletics has also expanded to do plaques, awards and other unique items that are done on site through a sublimation process. In the future they plan on continuing manufacturing sportswear in the back section of the store. In the front area, they will start to feature signed memorabilia such as photos, jerseys, helmets and other items.

We thank them for their support of local teams and celebrate the fact that their 3 children (Sidney, Meaghan and Carson) are all active participants in hockey. In fact Carson will be playing for the Merritton Atom A/E team this year and John will be a coach.

When you pick up a pizza, stop in and visit their store for some unique items, order items for your team or purchase some clear-out specials. Check out the web site [www.jathletics.ca](http://www.jathletics.ca).



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**Monday** - Parade 11 am / Beer Garden / Bingo 1-6pm

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## YOU ARE INVITED TO THE LIONS Labour Day Parade IN MERRITTON

**WHEN:** Monday Sept. 5, 2011

**WHERE:** Pen Centre Parking Lot

**ROUTE:** Chestnut St. W., to Glengarry to Glendale E. to Merritt St.

**TIME:** Line up at 9 am. Parade starts at 11 am.

The Community of Merritton including: the Lions Club, the CAW, Legion Branch 138, the Merritton Community Group, the Merritton Councilors and the MAA join together inviting everyone to take part in this long standing annual tradition in the Community.

Come out and have some fun while showing your pride in the great community that is Merritton. There are no entrance fees for our parade.

**CONTACT:** Lion Jeff White: 905-684-3078 or [jwhite57@cogeco.ca](mailto:jwhite57@cogeco.ca)



# A MEANINGFUL GIFT

By Phyllis Thomson



Bennet is not yet two years old, but he already has a load of responsibilities for one so young. In truth, he may well hold someone's life in his large paws. Bennet is a Guide Dog – a beautiful, specially trained, black Labrador Retriever who has recently graduated from the Lions Club Service Dog School and has become part of a grateful family in Georgetown. There is a compelling tale to tell of how this came to be and why Al Rees and his family will be forever emotionally connected to this amazing dog.

Al was born in Merritton and grew up with two other siblings, Myrna and Bob, in the Rees home on Keele Street. "Growing up in Merritton was the best time of my life" Al said, reminiscing about his old friends and the fun times they had. His wife, Liisa, was born in Finland and came here with her parents and brother at the age of four months. He and Liisa's three daughters were all born in the Merritton area and, until a few years ago, the family still lived here. Al is currently involved with the Merritton Legion and has been a member of the Lions Club who, as you may or may not know, support a Guide Dog Program for blind, or visually impaired people.

The cost of training Bennet and other guide dogs is not cheap but who can put a price on something that will change a person's life so completely, giving them not only a faithful companion but a chance for freedom of movement that a visually impaired person may have never known before. The Rees family's donation of \$6,000 has done just that. What prompts someone to make such a generous donation? For Al, perhaps the idea began when he was a member of the Merritton Lions and became aware of the wonderful work they were doing with their Guide Dog program. Or perhaps it was his way of thanking the people of Merritton, through the service club, for their support of him over the many years he lived here. Or, quite simply put, this humble man and his family wanted to do something to help others and donating the money to train this dog seemed to be a great way of doing it.

Al had the opportunity to meet Bennet and his new owner at Bennet's graduation ceremony recently and it must have been an emotional time for everyone. It is not often that we get to see our donation destinations in such a tangible and inspiring way. I ventured the thought that this gift must have given him and his family a feeling of immense satisfaction, and his response says it all – "it is beyond words".

Congratulations to the Rees family for their thoughtful contribution which has undoubtedly changed the recipient's life in ways that we sighted people may never know. We should be very proud of them!

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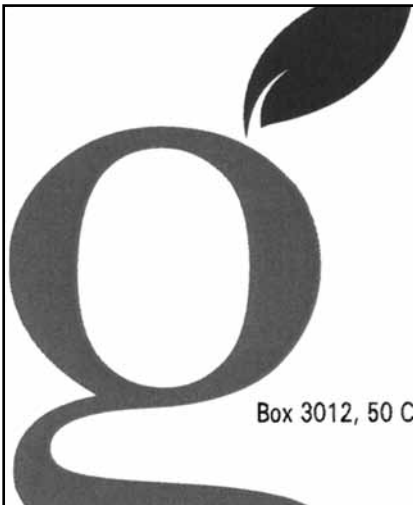
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