

# MERRITTON MATTERS

SUMMER 2016 • Volume 12, Issue 2 • [www.merrittonmatters.ca](http://www.merrittonmatters.ca)

Susan Flueillon



## MERRITTON BILL WILEY MEMORIAL PARKETTE TAKES SHAPE

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Arnold Hartnett  
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# I Wonder...About the Merritton Matters Newsletter

## Who are we?

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 associated with the Merritton Lions Club.

## Why didn't this newsletter get delivered to my house?

We've decided to experiment with our distribution. While we've loved being able to bring this newsletter right to your doorstep, it has been costly to have the Merritton Matters inserted into the St. Catharines Standard. You've also told us that the paper is often missed when mixed in with advertisements. So, for this issue, we are providing our local businesses and the public library with copies rather than paying for home delivery. That's one way to make sure you visit the fine establishments of Merritton!

We've considered the idea of only making our newsletter available online but realize that we have many readers who would rather have the paper version. If you have a concern about not having home delivery, please know that we do offer mail service. If you know someone who might like to receive the Merritton Matters by mail, please call Sheila at 905-227-8988.

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## Do you want to contact us?

Please take note that the editor has changed the newsletter's email address to merrittonmatters1@gmail.com due to an increase in spam received at the previous email.

## Why isn't my business ad in the newsletter?

We're glad you asked that! Merritton Matters is a self-sustaining publication thanks to these wonderful people. If you are interested in advertising with us on a one-time basis or with a regular ad, we'll welcome your contribution! We don't expect to make a profit but we do like to cover our costs, which we do through our ads.

## Are there any article ideas out there?

We gratefully accept ideas and articles for our upcoming newsletters. Your ideas and opinion matters! Send these to the editor at: merrittonmatters1@gmail.com or by mail to 3 Capri Circle, St. Catharines L2T 3X4.

## What to do about our Merritton Matters website?

We realize that we need to update and modernize our website. If you have ideas of how it can be more attractive and functional or, if you know someone who could volunteer to work on it, please let us know.

## Who writes the articles?

The articles have been written by the contributors listed and articles without a byline are by the editor Lorraine Giroux. We are thankful for all of the people who take time to add to our content, whether it is a regular contributor such as Tom Barwell and David Craig or a first-time contributor like Rob Mellor.



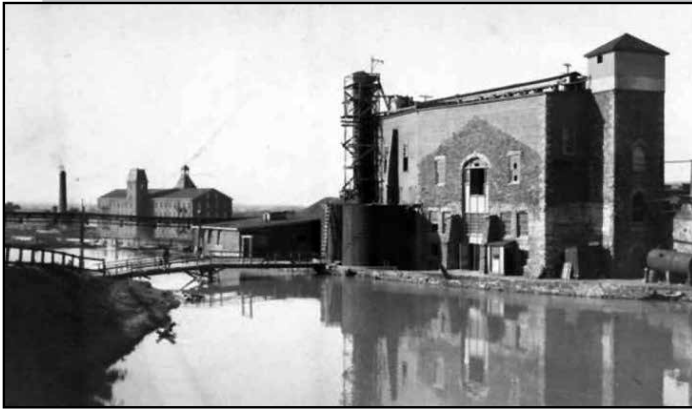
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# Merritton Matters Winter Cover Picture



People have asked for more information on the last issue's cover. The picture included three significant pieces of Merritton history - the Old Welland Canal, the Riordan Paper Mill and the Independent Rubber Company. It was an original black and white photograph and came from the Francis J. Petrie Collection at the Niagara Falls Public Library. Here's another shot of the Riordan Paper Mill and the Independent Rubber Company beside the Old Welland Canal in Merritton from a different perspective. This also comes from the Petrie collection.



## Remembering Mary

By Phyllis Thomson

In a 2011 edition of this newsletter I wrote about a remarkable Merritton woman who was celebrating her 100th birthday – her name was Mary Legue. I marveled at her memory and her agility and ended my article by saying that we would all look forward to her 101<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Not only did she reach that milestone, she far exceeded it. Mary passed away recently, just a few months before her 106<sup>th</sup> birthday! Earlier that day, she had had a new 'perm' – still determined to look her best, still interested in the news of the day, still wishing that she could hear and see as well as she once did. Otherwise, she had retained her spunky attitude and was still able to get around, albeit now with a walker, and to enjoy some independence. Her daughter told me that her Mother was happy and in good spirits on the day she died so, while we mourn her loss, let us also celebrate Mary's amazingly long life – she was indeed a Merritton Treasure!



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# WE REMEMBER BILL



Bill was a fourth generation Merrittonian from a family with a long history of making this community work. His mother, Clara Victoria Wiley (née Hastings), had been born in Merritton in 1901 along with the previous two generations of her family.

Bill was a secondary geography teacher who became Principal of Merritton High School in 1980 and was there until his retirement around 1989. His maternal grandfather, Thomas Hastings, had worked in the local paper mill and Clara worked there before and during the First World War. Thomas was elected Reeve of Merritton in 1916 or 1917. When Merritton grew in size, the post of Reeve became that of Mayor, so Thomas was the first mayor of Merritton around 1918. Hastings Street in Merritton is named after him.

Politics seemed to run on both sides of the family. The Mayor of St. Catharines during the First World War, James Alexander Wiley, was the uncle or great uncle of Bill's father. As the story goes, Bill's parents met in 1918 at a local war bond rally where his dad tried to impress his future wife by pointing out that his uncle was on the stage, whereupon Clara retorted that so was her father, representing Merritton.

Community service was a passion of Bill's. He was first elected as Alderman to represent Merritton Ward on St. Catharines City Council in 1986 and he served four consecutive terms as Councillor, finishing in 1997. He also served as Deputy Mayor for one term. He was a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, the Merritton Lions and the Merritton Community Group and proved to be an extremely knowledgeable source of historical information for the editor of this newsletter. Bill was a great supporter of heritage and had a leadership role with the St. Catharines Museum where he was on the Board of Trustees from 1985-1993, and served as Board Chair from 1987-1991, during the important time that led to the building of a new museum facility. For his contributions, he was recognized with several awards including Service Appreciation Award in 1998, the Judge Brian Stevenson Award in 2008, the Melvin Jones Award in 2010 and the Paul Harris Fellowship 2008.

He and his wife, Betty, bought and restored the old family home on Moffatt Street in the late 1970s. Betty passed away on September 3, 2006 and Bill followed her on July 3, 2011.

## MERRITTON BILL WILEY MEMORIAL PARKETTE IS A GO!

We're so excited that one of our most beloved Merrittonians will have a parkette named after him in the very community to which he dedicated so much of his time and efforts. And the spot beside Sobeyes plaza on Glendale has been readied for the honour by the St. Catharines Green Committee, the committee that Bill helped found. He would certainly appreciate their efforts as he was intent on the preservation of green space within Merritton and the rest of the city. The motion to name the parkette was pushed forward by Councillor David Haywood and supported by Councillor Jennie Stevens along with the rest of City Council members who voted unanimously in favour of the motion.

The Merritton Community Group, part of the Merritton Lions, has held two events to raise funds to contribute to the parkette memorial. Park benches will also be available for purchase.

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ACROSS FROM THE FLEA MARKET



# The Great Smelt Run

By Rob Mellor

Growing up in Merritton meant there was no shortage of water and waterways and many of the businesses, jobs and recreational options revolved around that fact. The Welland Canal was a Mecca of activity for everyone!

Many of my fondest memories revolve around the Canal and "The Annual Smelt Run", those tiny, silver, glistening fish that headed down the Canal every spring from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. Tiny fish with huge flavour! Clean them, batter them up, roll in cracker crumbs and fried in butter on my mom's iron frying pan! Pure Heaven!

We set up in Port Weller, on the canal docks, just before dusk. The old rusty winch and extension bar lowered and raised a large smelting net in and out of the water. Spotlights were angled toward the water to attract the prey in the dark. We came home with bushel baskets of fresh smelt for friends and family.

Everyone got together, cleaned the fish and shared in the spoils. Those activities often became a community extravaganza! Local bars and restaurants served Smelt Specials on their menus.

I doubt this even happens anymore. I remember a number of years ago the Olympia Hotel and Bar in Welland was offering "Smelt Meals". Good for them!

Who remembers these experiences and times?



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# If it's not Scottish, it's crap! (Mike Myers, SNL)

By David C. Craig

"I wasn't born in Texas, but I got here as soon as I could". That's a popular bumper sticker here in Texas, as an answer to the one "Born in Texas", for the native-born. In a similar vein, I was born in Maplehurst Hospital in Thorold in 1942, but I got to Merritton as soon as I could.

I was raised on Maple Street (now Maplecrest), up on "the hill". From my earliest days, I was enamored by speech and accents of my neighbors on the hill, and I got to listen to a lot of people, because of my paper route with 60+ customers on Townline East, William St. (now Dunn), Maple St., St. Peter St., Catherine St. (now Fairburn), Ball Ave. East, and Merritt St. All of these families were either Canadian, with no accent, like me, because we were all born here, or they were the first generation of another country, who had distinguishing accents of that country. The second generation, born here, spoke with no accent, although many were bilingual. I also learned to identify an accent

with a surname. For instance, I hung out with George Krsul, whose parents spoke with an accent, and I learned from George that his parents had emigrated from Yugoslavia (Croatia). I went to school with the Makinsons, and Mr. and Mrs. George Makinson had emigrated from England, as did Mrs. Bill Turner and Mrs. Mills, all from Maple St. They all had similar English accents. The first generation of the Girotti family, the Lorenzi family, and old Mrs. Mibelli all spoke with an Italian accent. Dan Mikitka on Catherine (Fairburn) St. had

a bit of an accent, as did his mom--- I think the family was from Czechoslovakia. (Boy---could Danny play the piano accordion!) Stewart Dion's grandmother, Belle McGlynn, had a Scottish accent.

So I learned early on that the population on the hill in the 1940s and 1950s were blue collar Canadians, with a lot of immigrant groups or "tribes" mixed in. My tribe, I learned early on, were the Scotch. (I know, I know---Scotch is the drink, the people are Scottish. But as John Kenneth Galbraith, JFK's favorite economist, says, the Scottish lowlanders refer to themselves as being Scotch, not Scottish. His book "The Scotch," is his memoir of growing up in Dutton, Ontario, near London.) I knew I belonged to the Scotch tribe, because my parents spoke with a Scotch accent, as did many of our neighbors on the hill. I was told that most of those speaking with Scotch accents were my relatives. I understood how someone with the surname "Craig" could be my relative, but I was told that I had all kinds of relatives with surnames other than Craig too. There was Cowan, Renwick, Henderson, Bartolucci, Smith, Legue, Ward, Peters, Munro, O'Brien, Astley, Murray, Difruscio, Sandham, Theal,

Burley, Ball, Dolan, Cottrell, Norton and Marlow. These were all my aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, and nieces! How confusing is that for a boy growing up? I never understood it, but just accepted it as fact, because my parents said it was so. And to add to the confusion--- I had three Aunt Maggies within earshot of our house, and two Uncle Jocks living in Merritton. Our next door neighbor, Margaret Cowan Smith, I called "Fat Auntie", to differentiate her from the other two, who were both Auntie Cowan. Fat Auntie was the dentist on the hill for anyone with a loose baby tooth. She always wore an apron ("peenie", in Scotch dialect), and she would put her thumb and forefinger in the apron cloth, around each tooth and ask "Is it this one?", until you indicated yes, and she would easily pull out the loose tooth, to go under your pillow that night.

It wasn't until I studied an old family photo closely, along with identifying names on the back, that the light bulb went off in my



Front row: John (Jock) McKenzie Craig Jr., Marion (Maisie) Craig, John McKenzie Craig, Matthew Craig, Mary Clark Cowan Craig, Mary Craig, Elizabeth Cowan. Back row: Margaret Cowan, James (Jimmy) Cowan, Thomas (Tam) Cowan. My thanks to my brother Donald for documenting all of this.

head. This photo shown here was taken circa 1910. The father and mother (center) are John M. Craig Sr. and Mary Clark Cowan Craig. Mary Clark had years earlier married Thomas Cowan, and they had four children--- James, Margaret, Elizabeth, and Thomas. Thomas Sr. died, and Mary re-married, to one John M. Craig Sr., shown here. They had four children too--- twins John (Jock) and Marion (Maisie), Mary, and Matthew. John M. Craig Sr. died in 1911. Mary and all of her eight children emigrated to Canada between 1911 and 1923.

And they all settled in Merritton! These eight people, most of whom married and had children themselves, were my relatives, and the source of my "tribe confusion". Fortunately, I now have a clear idea of how they were all my kinfolk.

The Hill was loaded with immigrants as I grew up, along with native-born Canadians. Many of the Scotch families on the hill were relatives. But there were two women everyone called by a familiar common name. Mrs. McKay, a constant knitter, was called "Granny" McKay by everyone, even though she was really just the granny to the McGlynnns, and great-grandmother to Stewart Dion. Her next door neighbor, Katie Boyle, who looked after Will Wilson, Dr. Art's father, was known as Aunt Katie to everyone, although she was really just the aunt of Kenneth Cameron.

So, growing up on Maple Street and its environs was fun, but sometimes confusing. In retrospect, I think everyone on the hill was related to each other, no matter your country of origin, by that common Merritton blood that flowed, and still flows, in all of our veins.

# EXCITING HISTORICAL FILM PROJECT

Steve Hartwell, a Merritton resident, whose website can be found at [HomeMovies.ca](http://HomeMovies.ca), told us about his fabulous project to search for historic films of the Niagara Region. He has collaboration agreements with the St. Catharines and Port Colborne museums and has been interviewed on CKTB Radio about it. Although he hasn't received any films yet, there has been some feedback that films do still exist.



cameras for personal and professional use.

I believe that at least some of them recorded "moving pictures" of the construction of the 4th Welland Canal. And, the 3rd Welland Canal was still in use during the fourth canal's construction, and even after its opening, so there must be films of the 3rd Canal as well. Plus, I'm sure there must be films of the abandoned or repurposed sections of the 2nd, and even 1st Welland Canals, when they were still in existence.

Please help me with this historic project and get your name,

As the old saying goes - still pictures are worth a thousand words each, but only "moving pictures" can appear to bring their content back to life. I am on the hunt for 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 Niagara Region. Since 2002, I have transferred old 8mm and 16mm films and other old video, photo, slides, and audio formats to digital format for people and families. In November 2015, my wife Tracy and I 'retired' to the Merritton area of St. Catharines, where I still provide my transfer services. We were immediately possessed by the local history, and in particular that of the four Welland Canals.



your family name and the name of the original filmographer included in Canadian Welland Canals history. Ask your family members, scour your family homes and old shoeboxes, and those of your relatives, and neighbours too. Find these old films and help get them saved for posterity, and to honour the lives of those many people who built the 4 Welland Canals, and the Niagara Region.

You can reach me at [HomeMovies.ca](http://HomeMovies.ca), [steve@homemovies.ca](mailto:steve@homemovies.ca) or by calling 647-470-1684.

My goal is to transfer old films of the four Welland Canals to digital format at no charge to the people who bring them to me, and also at no charge donate the amassed digital collection to the St. Catharines Lock 3 Museum as part of the scheduled unveiling in 2017 of the new "Fallen Workers Memorial" for everyone to see and fully comprehend the historic magnitude of these marvels of industrial technology of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The names of people and families who bring me films for this project will be included in a suitable credits manner.

But also for possible consideration, I'm hunting for other films that recorded significant Niagara Region historic footage of the way places, businesses, and people used to be way back when.

Just how far back can these old films have been recorded? I personally have transferred a bunch of 16mm films recorded between 1926 and 1932 by Denton Massey of the famous Canadian Massey family, which included a Lake Steamer day trip from Toronto to Port Dalhousie's Lakeside Park in 1929. I uploaded that film, along with others, to my YouTube channel for all to enjoy. Sixteen mm film and movie cameras became widely available in 1923 to anyone who could afford the technology. The cost of just the cheapest 16mm movie camera started at about \$180, which was a lot of money in those days when the average annual income in western countries was about \$1300. But, in fact, many people did buy them, before the 1929 global stock market crash. In the 1920s quite a few Canadian WWI veterans and other young men, and women bought these 16mm movie

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# NEW BUILDS IN THE COMMUNITY

## VICTORIA LAWN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

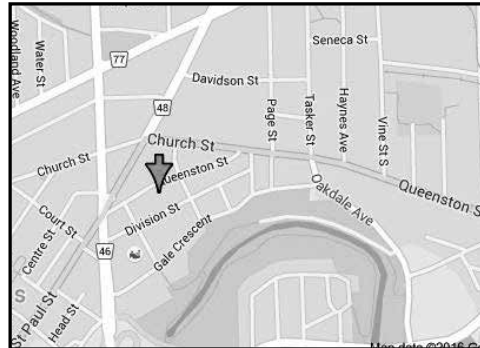
The old Grantham Fire Hall on Queenston Street will be replaced by a new Victoria Lawn Cemetery administration building. Raimondo and Associates Architects have received the contract for its design. This will replace the current building which was built in 1856 and is located within the cemetery boundaries.

## STONE MILL CONDOS

City council decided in February that they will invest in a major redevelopment project at the Stone Mill Inn. A six-storey condominium building will be constructed at the site on Merritt Street. Part of the City of St. Catharines community involvement plan, sponsored sites are provided with an annual property tax rebate for a maximum of three years after the project is completed that will help offset soil remediation and redevelopment. According to April's Building Services Annual Report on Revenues, Expenses and Stabilization, the site at 271 Merritt Street is zoned Mixed Use Commercial/Residential and will be comprised of 44 units worth an estimated construction value of \$9.7 M.

## QUEENSTON STREET APARTMENTS

A building permit for a four storey student residence apartment building at 36 Queenston Street was one of the top 10 construction projects for St. Catharines in 2015. Twenty-four units will be housed in the complex worth an estimated construction value of \$2.840 M. This site was the former home to CHSC 1220 until it was sold in 2008.



## CHSC 1220 AM/FM

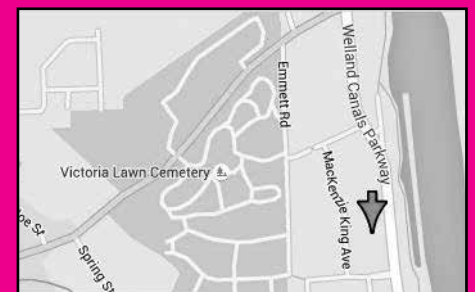
In a beautiful new building at 36 Queenston Street on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1967, Robert Redmond launched radio stations CHSC AM and FM, an unusual move at the time. Both stations operated out of the same location but with separate studios and control room. The SC stood for St. Catharines. Radio Station CHSC continued to grow and in 1978, the radio station went from 1,000 watts a day/500 watts a night to 10,000 watts full-time and in 1979 the AM station was allowed to simulcast early in the morning to reach more listeners. The FM changed its call sign to CHRE-FM. In 1990 Robert Redmond sold the CHSC portion to Douglas Settingington and he eventually moved the CHRE station to downtown St. Catharines while pursuing radio interests across the country. Unfortunately CHSC sought bankruptcy protection in 1994 and was deemed to be such in 1999. The owners who followed attempted several options to remain viable, including devoting programming to third-language programs but were not successful and in 2008, the former home of CHSC was sold in a bailiff's auction. 1220 CHSC did not leave the air until October 1, 2010 at which time its license had been revoked.

Robert Redmond, an amazing man who began a broadcasting milestone for St. Catharines, passed away on May 7, 2005. His famous morning man, John Larocque, who had worked at CHSC from the late 1960's to 1996, followed him 10 years later.

(With information from Bill Dulmage at the *Canadian Communications Foundation*)

# NEW ADDITIONS TO THE WELLAND CANALS SUBDIVISION

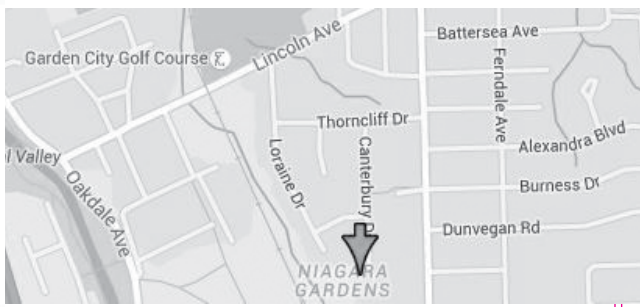
Fifty-four Mackenzie King Avenue, located off the Welland Canals Parkway, will be the site of new townhouses. A public meeting was held on January 25, 2016 for the subdivision approval application and then City Council received the report for consideration in February. Council had requested that staff also investigate traffic calming measures to see if these should be included in the overall design. City staff has said that the road would not meet the requirements. Generally, the proposed development would need to have speeds similar to those on Welland Canals Parkway to warrant traffic calming. But City staff also said that Mackenzie King Avenue could be added to the list of city streets that are candidate locations for potential traffic calming measures. This would be explored only after all construction is completed.



## Were You a Merritton Kid?

Mark your calendars for the Annual Reunion of Merritton Kids at Merritton Branch 138 on September 3<sup>rd</sup> with karaoke taking place from 2 to 6 that afternoon. We've heard wonderful feedback about last year's celebration! You might also want to consider getting your Merritton Kid golf shirts to wear to the event and these are available to order through the Legion.





# 149 HARTZEL ROAD

Dovetail Developments authorized an environmental site study of 149 Hartzel Road as part of their development of lands on Canterbury Drive. We know that Aiken and MacLachlan had a thriving construction and contracting business at that location from 1941 to 1968. Before then, the site had belonged to the Imperial Bank of Commerce from October 1930 to September 1941. Then from 1969 to 1988, it was owned by Grantham Packers. The building at the site was demolished in the late 1980's. Grantham Packers land use would have included livestock pens (agricultural land use), butcher (commercial land use), meat packing and cold storage (industrial land use).

All soil samples were within acceptable parameters, according to the report which is available to the public. There were no indications of contaminants at the sampling locations.

## AIKEN AND MACLACHLAN

Norman Seymour is currently researching the company Aiken and MacLachlan Limited. One of the founding partners was a barrister, Robert Johnston, who was also President of the Law Association in the 1940s.

If you have any information about this company, please email the editor at [merrittonmatters1@gmail.com](mailto:merrittonmatters1@gmail.com).

## CANTERBURY DRIVE TOWNHOUSES

In 2016, a building permit was issued for condominiums at 60 Canterbury Drive. There will be 29 units built with an estimated construction value of \$4.6 M.



## LEGION MEMBER PAT MCCABE

Branches of the Royal Canadian Legion select an outstanding member who goes above and beyond the normal expectations of a member of the Royal Canadian Legion. This year Pat McCabe was awarded the Legionnaire Award for Merritton Branch 138. Among her other wonderful contributions to the organization, Pat has been the treasurer of the organization since 2014 and is also the Ladies Auxiliary President as well as the Deputy Zone B5 commander. She previously received the Meritorious Service Award from the Ladies Auxiliary. Congratulations to Pat!



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# On The Move

By Tom Barwell

At the dinner table that night we all sat in stunned silence as Dad made a big announcement. We were moving. Leaving Merritton. Even though I was only eight at the time I had, along with my older brother, what could have been lifelong friends. I could see by the look on my Mom's face that she wasn't very happy about this development. We loved Merritton for what it was. A quiet, pretty little town where everyone knew everybody else and were always there to give a hand.

When we heard further of my Dad's plans it softened the blow a little bit. Horses and other farm animals were mentioned and this sounded very exciting. The farm was 13 acres in size and located on old #8 highway about halfway to St. David's. There was a large barn and an unfinished two story house. But first there was an essential piece of machinery missing and would have to be purchased. That was a tractor. But Dad, as efficient as ever, had partially solved that problem.

He had noticed a new town tractor roaming the streets. That meant the old one could be up for grabs unless it had been traded in. When he approached the town Superintendent of Works it turned out to be a fact. For a small price of \$25 it would be his. I might add that was a stiff price in those days of the forties. But never the less he took up the offer. Another problem was that it had sat in the town barns for a number of years and he would have to get it in working order.

Early the following Saturday we all strolled down to the barns. My Dad and Mom and then my brother followed by me and the family dog, Pattie. We swung open a set of barn doors and peeked inside. There it was. A 1927 Fordson, sitting like some prehistoric monster. Luckily it was backed in for easier access to the engine. Strangely, this type of tractor was not equipped with brakes but the clutch was set up to bring it to a stop, albeit slowly. No rubber tires for this thing. It had huge studded rear steel wheels. The smaller front wheels were also steel. It was red in colour and it sported a faded insignia spelling out Merritton.

Every evening the following week Dad labored on the machine, sometimes into the night. No proper manuals or special tools were available, having been lost long ago. A lot of thought came in to play to get by this problem and an array of strange looking gadgets were produced. At last, after many hours of work, he was ready to awake the old Fordson. Saturday morning was to be the big day.

Word got out and a small crowd gathered. Many doubted that Dad would be successful and a few hushed bets were placed. Kids gathered around with their dogs and it was turning into a party.

A crank was used and this could be a little dangerous. If the engine backfired the crank could violently kick back resulting in a broken wrist or arm. First the lever is adjusted and the magneto is set. Using the left hand, crank once. Reset the magneto and increase the gas lever then crank in earnest. Dad did this a couple of times and there wasn't a peep. A little chuckle rippled through the crowd. One more time. There was a loud bang and the crank whipped back catching Dad on the



Tom Barwell on the Fordson Tractor

arm. He sat on the ground rubbing the bruised area. And a gasp of sympathy was heard. Like a prize fighter with a determined look on his face he got up and gave the crank a mighty spin. With an ear splitting roar, belching oily smoke, the tractor came to life. A loud cheer came from the crowd. The dogs howled. The kids danced and held their ears. It was done. A piece of Merritton history was reborn and emerged from the barn with Dad in the driver's seat. We were all proud of him. Of course this called for a celebration and with people patting him on the back they all headed to Ricci's Tavern just a short walk away.

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. *Stay tuned.*




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Induction Ceremony for Incoming Merritton Lions President Doug Schroeder

# New Lions President

*Congratulations to Doug Schroeder on becoming President of the Merritton Lions. While he may not be the youngest in the Lions International history, he is the youngest for our local club. We asked Doug for his thoughts on this special occasion.*

I am very excited to be the president of a club with as much history as the Merritton Lions and grateful for this opportunity. I'm approaching this upcoming year with a theme of 'Past, Present & Future', in an effort to blend the experiences and accomplishments of the past, with some new ideas, allowing our club to remain relevant for the here and now, as well as for many years to come.

With a well-aged organization, we have achieved many goals and projects throughout the community, working alongside a variety of sponsors, committees and community members. Providing long lasting resources and programs for our communities is a large part of the Merritton Lions Club and Lions International legacy. I wish to continue this legacy by inspiring current and future generations to get involved and work together with our club, identifying some local projects and preparing plans to strengthen our community with a deepened understanding of what is needed for Merrittonians and surrounding citizens.

Our spirit is what sets the Merritton Community apart from the surrounding communities and I'm looking forward to igniting that spirit and rekindling our pride that has branched out over the years. My roots are spread deep into the community, as I am fortunate to have grown up in Merritton taking full advantage of the programs and services it has to offer. I'm looking forward to helping create those experiences for others and I'm excited to lead a newer generation in providing the same environment for our future generations and community members.

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# ON YOUR MARK!

By Ernie Jukes

I suppose there is a philosophy to most athletics and there certainly is to an individual sport such as track. Looking back now, at eighty-three years of age, I can testify to being ready for life through sport. As a youngster in elementary school I soon learned that it was a lot more fun to win than lose. I prized those first ribbons. One of my earliest competitions was a cross country during an International Scouting Camporee. We had to locate clues while orienteering with map and compass then run like hell. I swam across a muddy pond to beat out the scrambling opposition.

In those days I didn't get any real coaching in track and field until I joined the St. Catharines Harriers, in spite of the fact that I had already won my first high school championship at Merritton.

Scotty Fenton was my coach and Al Page, a British Empire 100 metre champion, was my mentor. They knew I had the will and some ability but particularly noticed my "crunch" or "kick" that I was able to turn on at the end of most distances. We realized that training was imperative and jogging 4-5 miles most days would be a necessary conditioner. Practicing 100 starts most days would also become common. But the ugly part was doing it in all kinds of weather...often alone...no team to help you there. However, our high school track guys would sometimes hop into an old jalopy and drive around to Fall Fairs just to run for chocolates or whatever prizes we could pick up. So it wasn't all just plugging. They were real pals and simply lots of fun.

I read everything I could find on track and field because I was still putting shot and high jumping. Lloyd Percival's Radio Sports College and his booklets on all sports were a great help to many of us. My buddy Graham Ireland was virtually a personal trainer. Stop watch in hand, he would often be critical of my times and watch my form. At meets he was there just past the tape with my sweat uniform ready to jump into when I had cooled out. What a guy. And would you believe Scotty actually gave me his own, and my first, outdoor spikes, with a caution not to "jump the gun."

The rules were simple for sprints. It was important to stay in your own lane. I recall the chopping arms of a Thorold opponent coming over on to my lane almost cost me a 220 yd. final. Evidently he was the same big dude that helped break my arch in a football game. Mind you, we did break his nose.

Sure it was a challenging sport but most of us did "run for fun". Even if the training was tough through rain, snow, sleet or slush. Even



if your very best times could be altered by something as simple as the wind. Runners of virtually any distance will probably agree that track is a lot like life. Only 10% is glamorous and exciting... the other 90% is slogging and dedication.

Certainly I had some wonderful highlights; one was right in the middle of a Niagara meet. I cockily bet cute Audrey Hough that I would win the next race in return for her new maroon and gold school ribbons. Well, I had them on my bedroom wall when we started dating many years later. It must have made a favourable impression for we have been dating ever since. This is our 62<sup>nd</sup> year together.

Another took place at a Central Ontario (COSSA) meet in Crystal Beach, near Fort Erie.

While we were up high on the roller coaster between events, a guy hollered every time we swooped to the bottom of the strip. When the "Comet" finally stopped there was Teddy Collins, advising that our 440 run had been suddenly moved up and they were holding for us. We quickly ran past the amusement park, through traffic across the busy highway, into the fairgrounds, past stadium officials right to our lanes just in the nick of time. My heart was pounding wildly as I set and checked my starting blocks...then I heard "On Your Mark," "Get Set." It was a total blur...as was the pistol shot....all I vaguely remember was hitting the tape before anyone else.

There have been many terrific times and great people that I have met, associated with the world's oldest sport. I finally had a once in a lifetime opportunity to run on the ancient track in Greece. Not as formal as the naked footrace, started with a trumpet, 776 years before Christ was even born. But there on that same track in Olympia where they light the Olympic torch. There Audrey and I at the ages of 62 managed to come second out of a group of thirty seven. Yes, we received our olive laurels and shared the podium with a pair of athletic newlyweds from Mississauga.

Well if this rambling piece can encourage even one young person to become interested in running competitively, then I would be delighted. If they need a bit more philosophy to guide them, perhaps I and compatriots would say "Let your mind run-your body will follow". I know from experience that the same will to succeed in this rigorous, humbling sport is the same will needed to help one succeed in life.

I speak for a lot of us old dudes when I say Sports has helped many of us stay younger. For some it's a refuge - for all, an enjoyment, even from our arm chairs or arena seats.

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# A Brief History of the Merritton Lions Community Days Parade

By George Hostick

This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Merritton Lions Parade. It began in 1946 when a group of community minded citizens decided it was time to celebrate Merritton. The leader of this action was none other than a great icon in the town by the name of Len “Trapper” Leo. Anyone who attended the parade in the early days has to remember Trapper leading off the event, dressed in his coon skin hat and coat and carrying his hunting rifle.

There was considerable emphasis on the children’s portion of the parade with bikes, wagons and tricycles riding along the route, all competing for the best decorated entry to win the prizes shown in Mr. Hardy’s hardware store window. This format carried on until the mid 1950s when the Lions Club assumed the task of presenting the event.

Lion Willy Alexander was the Lion who stepped up and became the parade marshal. He continued this activity for almost 20 years with the help of family and friends.

During this period, the parade grew in magnitude and the starting point changed several time from points that included Townline, the Pen Centre, Bunting Road, Queenston Street and Pinecrest Avenue.

One of the best received entries in the early and mid-1950s was the Merritton Grenadiers Drum Corps. This unit always led the parade

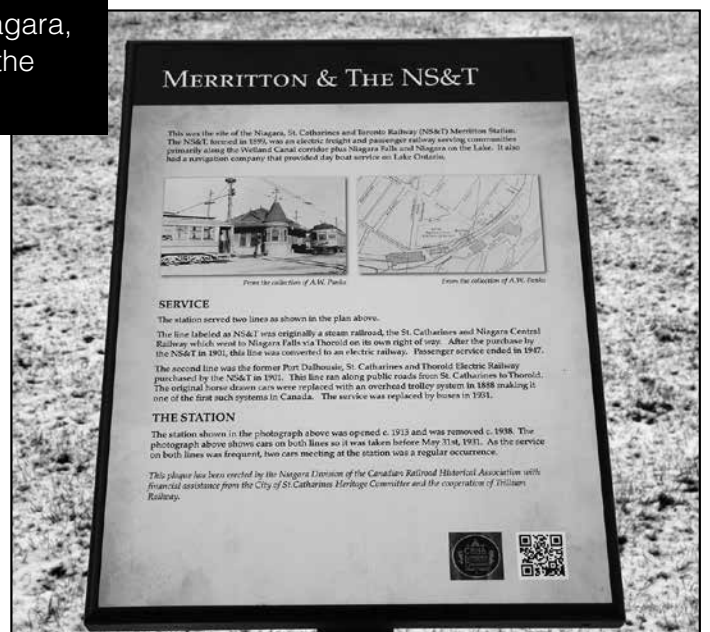
and displayed their talent as well with field shows and attendance when we had a “church parade” on the Sunday of the weekend. At the same time the parade welcomed some very talented bands from the United States with most being high school marching bands. These groups not only marched in the parade but also presented a “field show” in the community park following the parade. The local unions were invited to be part of the parade very early on in the years during the 1950s. It became a celebration of Labour Day and Community Days. This participation continues to flourish with many local and area unions and their membership taking part.

Presently, the parade remains a major happening within the Merritton and St. Catharines areas. Large crowds gather all along the route from the Pen Centre parking lot to the swimming pool. The Merritton Lions Club, under the direction of Lion Jeff White, continue to fund the majority of the major costs of the parade and prepare the line-up routine, as well as all of the other minutia it takes to present the event.

The people of Merritton show pride in the fact that they can call themselves “Merrittonians” and never more so than during our wonderful Community Day festivities.



This plaque, installed in Merritton by the Niagara division of the Canadian Railroad Historical Association, commemorates a Niagara, St. Catharines and Toronto railway station that used to exist on the corner of Bessey St. and Merritt St.



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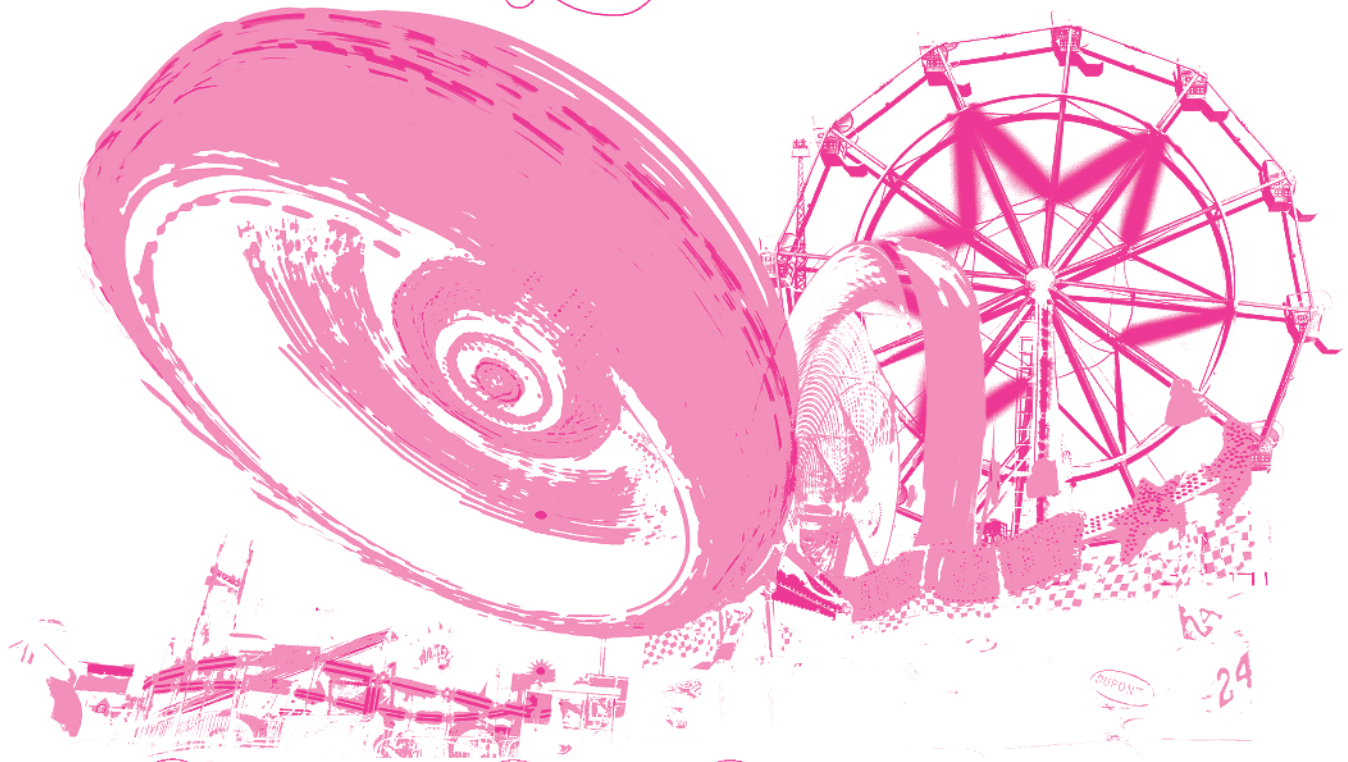
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