

MERRITTON MATTERS

Winter 2011 • Volume 7, Issue 2 • www.merrittonmatters.ca



Shown here is a picture from a postcard of Merritton's G.T.R. [Grand Trunk Railroad] Station. The postcard is currently housed in a collection at the Niagara Falls Public Library.

*Merritton came to an end in 1961
When amalgamated with the city
Though we vigorously protested
We lost the fight... what a pity.*

See page 7 for the rest of this poem!

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Mailing Merritton Matters

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.

Merritton Matters

Lorraine Giroux is the editor/writer of Merritton Matters. Contributors to this issue were Tom Barwell, Barry McNaughton, Wilf Mills, Phyllis Thomson, Brian Tibbs and John Wilkinson. Lana Pesant is our graphic designer. Jean Westlake, Tony Morra and Pat Durocher handle the advertising and can be reached at 905-688-8840. Jean Westlake is our main photographer and this issue also features a photo by Clarke Thomson. This newsletter is a project of the Merritton Community Group whose executive is comprised of Chair Morag Enright, Vice Chair Bill Wiley, Treasurer Jean Westlake, and Secretary Sandy Burns. If you have an article for this paper, or even ideas for articles, please send an email to 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.

Price Increase in Ads

We have not had an increase in the cost of our business card ads for 10 years but, unfortunately, we are now faced with increasing costs in printing, publishing and distribution. Our next issue will require an increase in the cost of the enhanced business cards from \$60 to \$75. Our Prices: Enhanced business card \$75.00, 1/4 page \$160.00, 1/2 page \$325.00, Full page \$600.00. For color and page pricing, please call, 905-688-8840.

Summer Sports Registration

The Merritton Athletic Association continues to offer great opportunities, starting as young as 4 for T-Ball and moving up to age 21 for Junior Baseball. Children are able to play soccer through the M.A.A. from ages 4 – 16.

Don't forget to register for these summer sports. You can do it easily online before April 15th or at the Merritton Arena on Park Avenue on March 2nd (6 – 8 p.m.), March 12th (9:00 a.m. – noon), April 2 (9:00 a.m. – noon) and April 6 (6 – 8 p.m.).

For more information contact: Linda Wood about soccer at lindawood@cogeco.ca and for baseball contact Mike Kviring at kviringm.maa@cogeco.ca. Fee assistance is available.

IMPORTANT DATE

Flip ahead those calendars and mark down this date. The Merritton Community Group will be holding our annual Open House on Tuesday, May 17th at the Seniors Centre on Merritt Street. There will be insightful speakers and many displays. Plan on attending!



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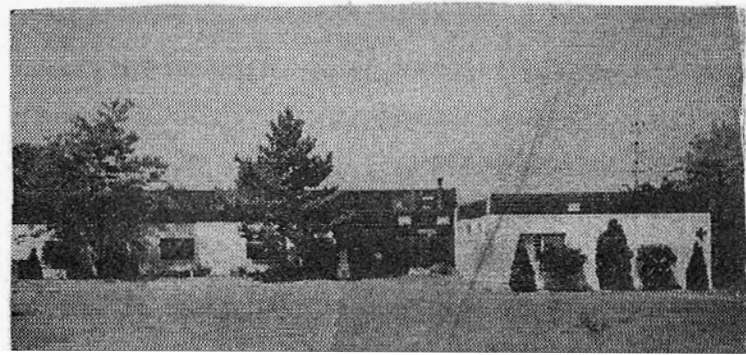
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99 Merritt Street



A picture of the building from an old real estate ad:

I'm sure you've driven down Merritt Street and seen the changes happening at 99 Merritt where construction is rapidly underway to develop new rental units. Originally intended to be condo units, that development stalled a few years ago. It's welcome news that the federal and provincial governments are now funding an affordable rental property at the site. MP Rick Dykstra and MPP Jim Bradley announced the news that the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program will provide more than \$9 million for several projects, including the \$4-million project on Merritt Street. It will have 38 units intended for seniors.

In the past, three businesses have occupied this parcel of land located right beside Duo-Temp. The building pictured was the Wade Electric Building, a business owned and operated by Bob Wade, a Merrittonian. Bob got his start in the electric business when electric motors were changed from 25 to 60 cycles. In the early days of electricity, so many utility frequencies were used that no one value prevailed. It wasn't until after World War Two, with the boom of affordable electrical consumer goods, that more uniform standards were enacted. In the 1950s, many 25 Hz (Hertz, a frequency measurement unit equal to one cycle per second) systems, from generators right through to household appliances, were converted and standardized. This became the perfect opportunity for Mr. Wade whose business flourished. He also worked with Hydro installing underground wiring in the new subdivision near the Pen Centre in the fifties.

But, by the early seventies, the Credit Bureau had moved into the building and operated there for a few years. The picture shown here is from an old real estate ad when the building was for sale.

The Red Cross then moved into the building but it is not known if the Bureau or the Red Cross actually owned the building at that time.

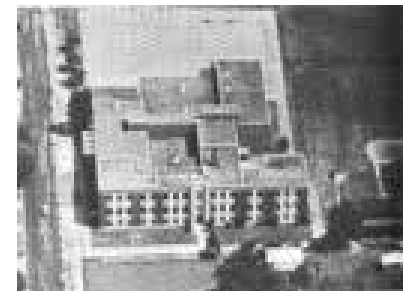
A few years ago the building was bought and a future condo on the property was announced. The old building was a magnet for graffiti artists until it was demolished in 2010, making way for the new units, now under construction.

ELECTION NOTES

Approximately 100 people attended the Merritton Community Group's All Candidates Meeting, held at Pinehurst School before the election last November. All the candidates but Cameron Alderdice attended. We have approximately 15,465 registered voters in Merritton and each voter was able to vote for two city councillors. Jennie Stevens received 2,294 votes, Jeff Burch received 2,064, David Haywood received 1,134, Garry Robbins received 817, Sam Sacco received 491 and Cameron Alderdice received 160 votes. You do the math!

Merritton Reunion

Congratulations to the organizing team for a much appreciated event. See their facebook for great pictures being shared, including the one we've printed here.



**for adolescents not yet motivated to achieve their full potential in traditional classroom settings
(a proud member of our Merritton Community since 2001)**

A MERRITTON TREASURE

By Phyllis Thomson



I am sitting here with a remarkable lady, Mary (Smith) Legue. At one hundred years of age, she can reel off events in Merritton, and in her own life, as though they happened yesterday. We have all heard of the primitive living conditions in the early 1900's, and here is someone who actually lived in those years and can remember and relate to them in personal terms. It hasn't been an easy life, but her Scottish fortitude has served her well. Here is her story.

A large ship pulled into Halifax Harbour in the spring of 1911, carrying many passengers who, after many days at sea, had finally arrived in Canada, their new home. Among the anxious passengers was the Smith family, Archie and Margaret, with their children, Stewart who was two years old, and Mary who was eight months. Their long voyage had begun in Glasgow, Scotland, and would end when they reached a small town north of Trenton, Ontario called Frankford where Archie found work on the Trent Canal.

After two years, the family moved on and settled in the little Village of Merritton where her father built a small house for his family on Maple Street and he began working on the Welland Canal. Mary's remembrance of the 'house' is that it was a 'shack,' explaining that all of the houses on the street at that time were exactly that, small

shacks, with just the bare essentials for living. There was no running water in the house, a tap outside supplied them with what they needed and coal oil lamps provided light. No inside toilet facilities were available for them in those years either and a pot-bellied stove did its best to keep them warm in winter. Hard for us to imagine as we sit in relative luxury compared to what they existed with in those years. I'm sure there were many happy times there on Maple Street, especially when relatives arrived from Scotland to become their neighbours, the Cowans on one side of them and the Craigs on the other. And sadness too when Mary's brother, Stewart, died unexpectedly while still a young boy.

Many of Mary's teen years were spent working in the Monarch Knitting factory in St. Catharines and, for fun, she would go to the dances held in the Catholic Church in Merritton. It was at one of these dances that she met George Legue, who became her husband when they married in 1934.

Ridgetown was their home for a short period and their daughter, Mary Margaret, was born there. When the opportunity to buy a butcher shop in Simcoe presented itself, George and Mary moved there but decided to return to Merritton four years later in 1939.

Across the road from the big clock at the Interlake Paper Mill on Merritt Street, sat a small grocery store which, as luck would have it, was for sale, and they decided to purchase it. It seemed perfect for them as it had living quarters above the store and Mary's family and relatives lived close by. It became a real family business with Mary and their daughter both working at the store with George through long and busy days and, when Mary Margaret became old enough, she delivered grocery orders to the homes of their customers on her bicycle. George had a cart that had two or three levels to it and he would pull it down the road and through the paper mill a couple of times a day to supply the workers with snacks and drinks on their break and, in the summer time when school was out, Mary Margaret could be found pushing the cart through the mill for her father.

Sadly, George passed away in 1960 at the age of 59, leaving Mary to run the store. It soon became too much to manage on her own, so the business was sold and she moved into an apartment.

For the past few years, she has lived in Tufford Manor on Queenston Street and, on any given day there, you will find her neatly folding towels for the housekeeping staff, 'just for something to do'. As I sat talking with Mary in her cheerful room, I couldn't help but marvel at this amazing centenarian. She looked beautiful, smartly dressed and welcoming – and I would be willing to bet that this is one resident who would always be dressed up and ready to go, no matter what the hour. And, if you weren't aware of her age, you would never guess that she is a century old. She has a great interest in the news, both local and world, and watches it regularly on several different channels on the TV in her room. Other than that, she confesses, the only other program she never misses is Coronation Street! Her general health is good – she would be happy if her eyesight and hearing were as sharp as they used to be, but she wasn't complaining about that either. She retains a good sense of humour and an enviable memory and, though she may be living in a nursing home, it is apparent that Mary still marches to her own drum and seems supremely capable of doing just that!

As Merritton's oldest (known) resident, we SALUTE you Mary and look forward, with you, to birthday number one hundred and one! And, as one Scot to another, I couldn't end without a wish that 'Lang may your Lum Reek'!



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Merritton Businesses Keep Expanding

It's encouraging to see that some of our long standing business owners are expanding and we know that this will have a positive impact on our community.



McDonald's before closing

Wilson's Animal Hospital has purchased the old McDonald's building right beside their current business and will be moving their services in the near future.

Hartzel Animal Hospital purchased The Christian Benefit Shop which had sat vacant after the Benefit Shop moved to Grantham Avenue. The Animal Hospital was previously located at 133 Hartzel Road, between Midas Muffler and St. Catharines Volkswagon.

Pete's Pizza has moved from the corner of Merritt and Glendale to the Halletts building, a 'new' location in one of our historic buildings originally constructed around 1875. We encourage you to stop by and say hi to Jerry DiPietro who has been a strong supporter of all things Merritton. You can still pick up a pizza but now you can also sit down and enjoy your meal.

TURNER CRESCENT

High above one of the old Welland Canals, nestled into a proud neighbourhood, sits a house at 14 Turner Crescent that is being lovingly restored. All older homes have a history but this one in particular connects us back to the days of a working canal in the Oakdale Avenue area. Next issue we'll feature this great project undertaken by the homeowners.



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LIVING ON MERRITTON'S GOOSE ISLAND

Continued from last issue

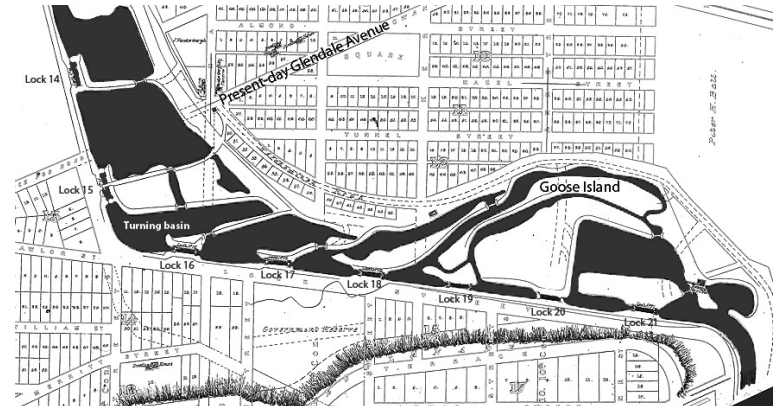
By John Wilkinson

Our property had once been a lumber yard so there was enough room to keep a few farm animals for meat and milk. Incidentally, the milk wasn't pasteurized until you'd raise a glass 'past your eyes'. Kidding aside, obtaining this food was a lot of hard work because the animals depended on you for everything; their fodder, water, shelter, health, cleanliness, and yes, even their demise. Our first cow, Sunday, was born on a Sunday while her daughter Monday was born ... Monday was my one and only delivery. Dad had explained all the steps just in case nobody was around for the birth and wouldn't you know it - nobody was around but me. We were at the nose to nose step so I blew a hard blast of air into her nostrils and Snap! Her eyes flashed open and there we were staring at each other - eyeball to eyeball. It happened so fast it frightened the dickens out of me but it became instantly clear what 'delivering a calf' meant, compared to say, delivering the mail. Monday's birth was just about as close to a biblical event as a twelve year old could get. Both cows shared the same father, a rough looking brindle bull known as Scrap Iron. One time my young brother was playing with his two friends, (brother and sister) and the boys began arguing about whether it was true the colour red really made bulls mad. The girl was wearing a red sweater so the boys locked her in Scrap Iron's pen, to do, as they said, 'a scientific experiment'. As expected, the poor girl was frightened but Scrap Iron didn't miss a beat rolling his eyes while chewing his hay and when the boys' laughter died down the experiment ended and the much relieved girl was set free.


Old Bidy was an independently minded Plymouth hen who, seemingly without reason, would drop from her roost and peck my brother exactly on his forefinger, right hand. Maybe it was the hen's way of paying him back for poking her but eventually prodding got my brother into more trouble than Bidy gave. Dad kept a polecat (ferret) in a wire cage and we weren't allowed near it because it might bite and not let go. One day my brother was crouched under the pen, poking the polecat with a stick when it decided to defend itself by peeing on his head. Nothing smells worse than polecat pee! Not even a week's worth scrubbing with tomato juice could rid him of his stinking head.

Lady was an exceedingly strong draw horse, bred part Belgian, part Canadian, kindly natured and a good communicator. She'd gladly ease into a single furrow plough, track it amazingly straight and do this all day. It was her pleasure to pull her sleigh through deep snow or clomp down Merritt Street nodding to everyone in exchange for their smiles and waves. When the cows couldn't reach apples on the other side of the pasture fence, Lady would stretch her neck up, grab a bough and shake it so the apples would land right at the cows' feet. One Labour Day morning Dad and I were returning from Wark's farm with a load of loose hay and, as we rounded the Lybster corner, the wagon's wooden axle broke and half the load slid off onto the road. People were already gathering to watch the parade, so time was important. We unhitched Lady; Dad rode her home, got another axle, and trotted Lady back with the axle under his arm. Meanwhile I forked the hay back onto the wagon and at the same time did my best to direct traffic. In record time the wagon was fixed, Lady was hitched and off we went without becoming an unexpected part of the Labour Day Parade. Despite the hubbub Lady rose to the occasion and even seemed to enjoy it.

Near summer's end, if pasture was becoming scarce, we'd tether Lady on a stake on the other side of the old canal's tow path and, at day's end, it was my job to bring Lady back to her stall using the canal's walking bridge. Although it sounds simple, it got tricky because the wooden bridge was missing more than one floor board. This was Lady's way of doing it and I never argued. Holding her bridle, we'd both quietly stare for a few moments at the far end of the bridge and I'm sure we each saw something different. To me the far end was home plate but I think Lady saw a starting gate because she'd jockey her hoofs back and forth trying to get her timing just right. Remember, she had four feet, I had two and just one hoof or foot through that floor meant trouble for the both of us. The signal to go was when Lady gently bumped her shoulder into my back and neither of us hesitated. Away we'd go with fast, measured steps, both looking straight ahead, not daring to glance at the water swirling below. Once on solid ground, Lady would always jerk her head up and whinny. She was a good communicator whose name fit her personality and is sadly missed. To be continued in the next issue.




1850s map of the area that is now known as Mountain Locks Park, including Goose Island. Map is from niagaragreenbelt.com.



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REMEMBERING THE TOWN OF MERRITTON 50 YEARS AGO



Prior to amalgamation, **Merritton** was its own separate entity and people from this community have worked diligently to attempt to retain our distinctiveness and tight-knit feel. We remain the largest ward within the city and the 'heart of St. Catharines'. Our boundaries include Jacobson Ave., Highway 406 and Geneva St. in the west; the QEW and Eastchester Ave. in the north; and Welland Canal and Glendale Ave. in the east and St. David's Rd. in the south.

It was 50 years ago on January 1st that St. Catharines benefitted from the amalgamations of Port Dalhousie, Merritton and Grantham Township. Recently in the Standard, Michael Johnson wrote a Letter to the Editor about the end of the town of Merritton. Mr. Johnson noted the loss of the town hall, the fire hall (soon to be torn down), the fire department, our own public utilities, the police department, the library, the elementary schools and the high school he attended, both Domtar mills, Gaile City Paper, the train station, Ricci's, etc. He, like many others, still miss the feel of the community that was here before amalgamation.

In a previous issue, we promised you that we would feature something from the long defunct Merritton Post, a newsletter that ran for only a few issues. It seems fitting now to feature this poem from the Post about colourful parts of our history.

MERRITTON HISTORY

UNKNOWN TITLE
UNKNOWN AUTHOR
(From "The Merritton Post", June 1996)

My home town was Merritton
Called Slabtown a long time ago
Also known as the valley town...
to leave, you must upward go

Dick Clark was our Town Clerk
For eight and fifty years!
Sam Moffat was our Chief of Police
with him we had no fears.

Then Joe Shee patrolled our streets
The bagpipes he did play
When he played them in our school
We wished he'd go away.

A lot of boys had nicknames...
Playboy, Chooch, Beez and Knobby
Who knows how they got them...
Pick, Buzz, Jiggs and Bucky.

The Schooleys ran the Post Office
Where we picked up our mail
You had to go fetch it
Through good weather or gale.

We got dry goods at Merritton
Mercantile
And drugs at Main's Drug Store
Groceries at Hunnifords and
Richardsons
And Makepeace had some more.

Halleis Hotel served beer and ale
Beatty's Barber Shop cut your hair
And there was a pool room in behind
Next door. Mr. Hardy sold hardware.

Richardson's Bakery had goodies
galore
Keating's Butcher Shop sold us our
meat
A layer of sawdust was on the floor
and they gave kids wieners as a treat

Joe Hilts had a blacksmith shop
'twas on the way to school
We stopped to watch him shoe a horse
His forge was seldom cool

For dances, plays and minstrel shows
We gathered at Town Hall
Where amateurship efforts were
applauded by all

In winter time we skated on
Granny's or Clifford's pons
In summer we swam at the "Res"
These fun times made kids bond.

If you heard the mouth organ played
It like was played by Jim Foy
The boys used to tease him
and called him "The Musical Boy"

Going to Thorold or to the City
We hopped on the N. S. & T.
The street car ride cost a nickel
When buses came, street cars we did
not see.

The Thorold boys walked down the hill
And Merritton girls walked up the hill
When they met at the stone wall
To most 'twas quite a thrill.

The M.A.A. Labour Day Parade
Was a big annual affair
Led by Trapper Leo
With coon cap on his red hair.

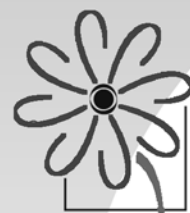
Along the Old Welland Canal
The paper mills stretched out...
Interlake, Alliance and Garden City
That's what our town was about.

Hayes Steel Products was there too,
Just past the arch it stands
It's been there for umpteen years
Giving work to many hands

Mammy's bread Wagon came down
our street
With Buzz La Chance and his horse
We had milk delivered too...
A great convenience, of course

There were coal and ice deliveries
And the egg man came to our door
Insurance premiums were collected
Could you ask for anything more?

Merritton came to an end in 1961
When amalgamated with the city
Though we vigorously protested
We lost the fight...what a pity.



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Way to Go Bryce



We salute Bryce Honsinger for his work inspiring and challenging Applewood Public School students to explore Canada's past. In an announcement made in May 2010, Bryce was honoured as a recipient of the 2009 - 2010 Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. Students in his class know the excitement of recreating pivotal events in Canadian history through Bryce's engaging teaching.

Bryce, a Grade 5/6 teacher, contributed to dialogue on education at the Van Leer Institute's 2010 Education Conference in Jerusalem, Israel in November. This conference brought together teachers, policy makers and academic scholars from over 15 countries to discuss educational issues such as curriculum reform, teacher development, performance and evaluation. While he was at the conference, Applewood students were able to speak with their teacher and get regular updates through Skype and emails.

Previously he was one of 25 finalists for the prestigious Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History. Bryce teaches with passion, conviction and imagination and motivates students by using real-world examples.

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Old Building Adventure

By Tom Barwell

It was a dark and windy night. Many a story has been started this way but, in our case, it was true. Far to the west there was even a faint sparkle of lightning dancing along the horizon. To make it less frightening to us; my Mom would call it "Heat Lightning". Too far away for us to worry about though. So we thought. Speaking of parents, they were under the impression that we were sleeping out in a backyard tent. This was often done because of the summer heat and, as well, it would mask our night time sorties.

So it was 1:00 am on a Saturday morning and three of us were gingerly making our way along the railway highline that bisected Merritton from north to south. Our destination was the Old Buildings and our focus was on pigeons. We thought by catching a few pairs we could make up a famous racing team. Or even to send secret notes to each other. I guess it would be an early version of email. A burlap bag and a couple of flashlights were the tools for the capture and night time was the easiest opportunity to catch them. On a previous scouting expedition we had spotted a glassless rear window in the main ground floor section of the massive structure. This would be our doorway in and out. Far from any prying eyes.

The highline cut through the paper mill and it was of course booming as papermaking was a big industry in those days. We had to be careful here as sometimes workers would be sitting outside having a smoke break. Luckily, the benches they sat on were empty. Once we were through, we hurriedly crossed what is now Glendale Avenue. And there, off to our right, loomed the Old Buildings.

Far over our heads soared the mighty frontal tower, presenting itself like some medieval monster. The gloomy night made it even more frightening. The lightning that was coming ever closer, flashed from its upper windows. I'm sure if one of us had hesitated, there would have been a cloud of dust and we would have hightailed it back to the safety of our tent. But we bravely soldiered on.

To be continued...

Going Postal at Shoppers

Remember when you would walk past Randy and Linda working hard at Midas Muffler and go right next door to the Shoppers to buy a stamp? Before you continued one more door down the street to get your coffee, of course!

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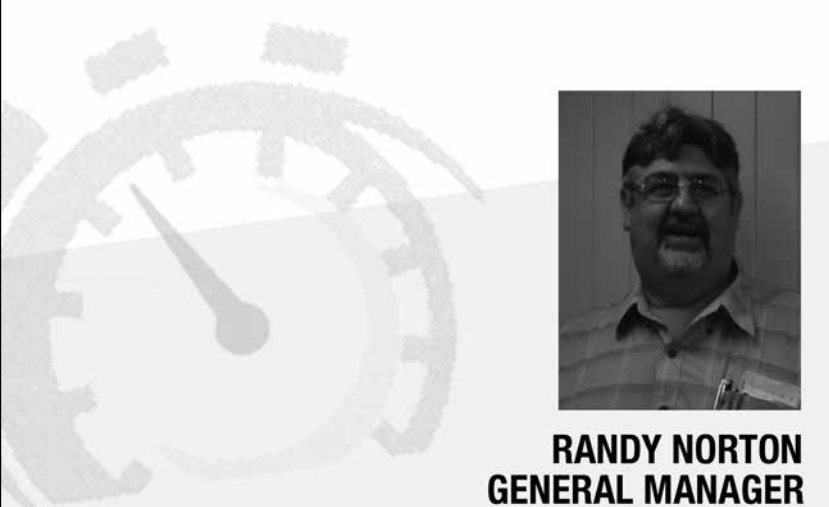
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Remembrance Day at the Cenotaph

The weather was glorious on the morning of November 11th as Merritton people took time to gather at the Cenotaph, remembering our freedoms and thanking our veterans for their sacrifices. Wreaths were laid at the renovated park by several groups under the watchful eye of army cadets from the 68th Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps who kept a 12-hour vigil. Legion members had gathered first at the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 138 before moving to the cenotaph.

The Merritton Cenotaph was honoured in January at the Niagara Community Design Awards for 2010 projects that had enhanced the built environment, made efficient use of land with creativity and vision. The Cenotaph received an honourable mention in the Public Realm category with the top award going to the Old Courthouse in St. Catharines.



JACK GRANT MCNAUGHTON, D.F.C., Q.C.

By Barry McNaughton

A father is someone you look up to, no matter how tall you grow. In our family's case, Dad was larger than life – a kind-hearted soul who sadly passed away on April 16, 2010. But what he did during his lifetime has influenced many people and left a lasting legacy that anyone could only hope to achieve.

Jack Grant McNaughton was born in Oshawa and lived in Fort Erie in early childhood. But in his heart, he was from Merritton and very proud of it. He moved to Merritton with his parents, Ivo and Grace, and his siblings, Dorothy, Duncan, Donald, Warren and Ralph during the depression. The family lived on Merritt Street across from the Interlake. Times were difficult for many people then and his father was fortunate to get employment with the Welland Ship Canal. After completing elementary school at the old Central School in Merritton, Jack moved on to Merritton High School.

Jack was very athletic in his youth with speed to burn and used his powerful legs to earn provincial track medals at meets sponsored by the Ontario Athletic Commission, or to power his way down the football field to reach the end zone or to chase down fly balls that some said no one else could have caught.

But his youthful pursuits were side tracked by the call of duty for his country. He and his good friend Walt Catterall went to enlist in the Air Force by the age of 17 but were rejected due to their age. They both successfully joined the RCAF on reaching 18. A tradition for many young recruits at the time was to get their haircut by Fred Munson who then would take a photo of the recruit. Today on the wall at the Royal Canadian Legion Merritton Branch 138, the photos of many of those young Merritton men are still proudly displayed.

Following his training as a navigator, Jack was transferred to England and eventually posted at Skipton-on-Swale, an air base built on a farm field outside a village in Yorkshire. A Halifax bomber, the 'Pride of the Porcupines' of RCAF 433 Porcupine Squadron carried Jack and his crew who were as close as brothers on 39 operational flights over Europe. He rarely spoke of what actually occurred during this tour of duty. But the Distinguished Flying Cross was modestly received by him after the end of the war for his skill in bringing his crew back safely.

At the ripe old age of 21 and some months, he returned to Canada from active duty with the rank of flying officer and the love of his life, Evelyn, a young gorgeous Yorkshire lass with the spunk necessary to ride with this character down the road of life as his bride. Evelyn herself had been a member of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force when their paths crossed and she came to Canada in 1945 as one of the first war brides in Merritton. They celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary in November 2009.

Upon his return to Merritton, Jack worked for

a short time at Interlake Paper but he knew that he had to continue his education which had been interrupted by the war. After completing his high school credits, he took advantage of the program available through Veterans' Affairs to study law at Osgoode Hall, Toronto.

Jack became a leading lawyer in the area who was devoted to providing nothing but the best service to his clients whom he treated as if each were a family member in order to help them achieve their dream or get through a rough patch in life. As a founding partner with Joe

Reid of the Reid, McNaughton law firm, he set a high standard for integrity and hard work. His word was his bond. He was given the honour of being appointed Queen's Counsel in 1969 and later he was given life membership in the Law Society of Upper Canada in recognition of 50 years of service.

Jack always gave to his community in many ways. As a young man, he was actively involved in organizing youth sporting activities with a group that ultimately became the Merritton Athletic Association. He was a member of the Legion, Merritton Branch 138 for 65 years, a member of the Merritton Lions Club for some time as well as a member of the Canadian Corps, Thorold Unit 44 where he was president in 1952-53.

He was a staunch supporter of the Merritton Community Centre building project when it was proposed and backed up his support as one of the handful of local Merritton men who guaranteed the construction loan. He was involved with various charitable organizations and sat on the board as a director and president of the former Children's Aid Society.

In the political field, Jack was first elected to Merritton council in 1953, was re-elected in 1954, became Deputy Reeve in 1955 and Reeve in 1956. In 1958, he became the first Reeve from Merritton since 1924 to be elected County Warden, Chief Magistrate for the County of Lincoln. He subsequently carried on as an Alderman for Merritton Ward after losing the fight to keep Merritton a separate entity. Merritton residents were overwhelmingly opposed to amalgamation but their protests and the lopsided referendum results fell on deaf ears as the provincial government mandated the joining of various municipalities



with St. Catharines. I can still visualize the effigies of political opponents hanging from the vacant structures of former paper mills on Merritt Street.

With his partner, Joe Reid also involved in politics, Jack withdrew from political life to focus on family, friends and his law practice.

Any of his friends can attest to the fact that Jack enjoyed life to the utmost whether in good times or bad. I believe this stems from the war years when you lived for the day as you might not be around to see the next day. And so there were the 'Merry Huntsmen', the 'Mighty Fishermen' and of course the 'Card Players' to

name a few who gathered at regular times for camaraderie and fellowship – they know who they are! Jack went hunting for years with the Merry Huntsmen but I honestly believe that in all of those years, he may not have even fired his rifle. Although he participated in the hunt, he was there to play – a prankster with a great sense of humour ready to run amok.

In recent years as his health diminished, his spirit was as strong as ever and he still ventured out to be with his buddies whether at a turkey roll or for euchre or poker gatherings.

After early years in the limelight, Jack preferred to help out his community without recognition – it was his choice to fly under the radar away from the accolades. He had all that his heart desired – his greatest treasure was his family. We have lost our hero but he has left us a lasting legacy of many wonderful memories.

Dad left a handwritten note on his desk among his papers that he had copied that gives his final advice:

When I come to the end of the road
And the sun has set for me,
I want no rites in a gloom-filled room,
Why cry for a soul set free?
Miss me a little but not too long
And not with your head bowed low.
Remember the love that we once shared
Miss me but let me go.
For this is a journey we must all take
And each must go alone.
It's all part of the Master's Plan,
a step on the road to home.
When you are lonely and sick at heart,
Go to the friends we know,
And bury your sorrows in doing good deeds
Miss me but let me go.

He will be missed by many. Thanks for everything Dad – we will miss you.

Growing Up in Merritton in the 50's

By Wilf Mills

After reading the articles by David Craig (Krsul's Farm) and John Wilkinson (Goose Island), a flood of memories came back to me. I too grew up on the 'Merritton Hill' in the 1950's when David and John were both there. They were heady times for the most part. The Second World War and the Korean War were both over and the Cold War hadn't really started. My mother was a war widow; my father was killed twenty-eight days before the war ended in 1945 when I was six months old.

Among my fondest memories was the milk delivery wagon and Walt Long, the milkman. I also remember the horse that pulled the wagon who was a huge white Morgan, named 'Dick'. Much to my mother and grandmother's horror, I could walk in and out between his legs, or climb up on his back and he'd never move a muscle. I loved that horse and I have to think he loved me too, or he'd have stomped on me and not stood so still. The dairy business must have stuck to me because, after six years of military service and a variety of jobs, I have just finished twenty-five years of service with what evolved from the same dairy company, only in Saskatchewan.

There was also a bread wagon, and for a while, an ice wagon. If you walked along behind the ice wagon and cupped your hands, a very cold drink of water was your reward. In the pre-airconditioning days, that was quite a treat. Those horses kept half the gardens in the neighbourhood fertilized. Every time one of them lifted its tail, someone with a pail and shovel would magically appear. My uncle bought a load of horse manure from John Wilkinson's dad every year for his roses. I'm sure that their horse regretted it because then he'd have to pull the wagon with manure from the Wilkinson farm to 9 Maple Street (now Maple Crescent).

We lived at 20 Peter Street which was kitty corner to 'Grandma's'. I could time it perfectly on a Saturday so that I was opening her back door just as she was opening her oven door – I can still smell those raisin squares. Because my mother was a widow and had to work, I spent most weekdays with Molly and Bill Taft at 31 Peter Street. Their daughter Kathy (now Sokolowski) was my playmate and as far as I was concerned, my other sister and still is. My sister by birth, Eileen (now Muir of Fonthill) stayed with Grandma during those times.

When I got a little older, but still a pre-teen, every Saturday would find all of the boys at the Tivoli Theatre on Front Street in Thorold where twenty-five cents would get you a double feature, a cartoon, the news of the world, popcorn and a coke. The double feature would always be either Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, or my favourite, Bill Boyd as Hopalong Cassidy. After the show, we would strap on our six guns and go to Krsul's field or Goose Island and dispose of the 'bad guys'.



It's said that everyone has some claim to fame and I guess mine is all of the fencing along the walls of the canal to keep people from getting too close. None of it was there when I was a kid and I can remember David Craig and I walking along the gates at the north end of Lock Four to visit his father Matt, who magically controlled not only the opening and closing of the gates but the raising and lowering of the ships on both sides, with only one arm I might add. I loved those trips. The canal fascinated me and I knew every ship that plied the lakes. I also knew the maintenance crew who maintained the canal and one was David's brother Jack who kept close tabs on me. It was all to no avail because on December 22nd, 1958, while trying to climb into the downside of Lock 6, using the ladder built into the wall, a wrung broke and I tumbled thirty-five feet into the empty lock. Thanks to some very brave firemen and Dr. Ralph (who climbed down the wing wall) I survived with only a badly shattered leg and a badly broken arm. So, all the Merritton and Thorold mothers who worry about their children getting too close to the canal, you're welcome for the fencing!

For my 65th birthday, my wife Vicki took me on a trip that included a stay at the Keefer Inn. It was great! When I was a kid, the Keefer Inn was called the Maplehurst Hospital and I was born there.

Now, here I sit entering my 'Golden Years', living in Saskatchewan for almost thirty years. It doesn't matter. Ask me where I'm from and Merritton will always, proudly, be the answer.



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A Scented Trip Through Time

By Brian Tibbs

I recently acquired an old fashioned percolator at a local church flea market sale. I had haggled the price of it with an older woman and the two of us came to the same conclusion about the fast pace of today and the need to sample the lasting memories and aromas of the past... such as the smell of percolating coffee. That lady's eyes had sparkled with a hidden joy of a simpler way of life gone by as we recalled the people and events that took place over the years of our youth in the small but independent Town of Merritton. I could sense her reluctance as she put that old tin pot into a bag; an old coffee pot that perhaps held for her a lifetime of family memories shared over a cup of warmth that it had produced.

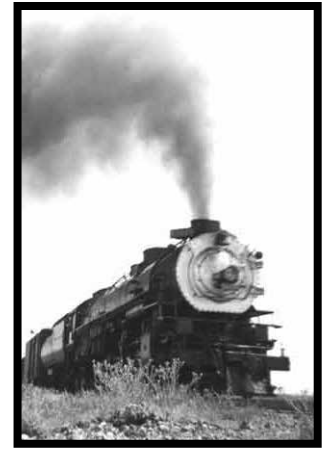
Now I was savouring the rich aroma emanating from my cup, the rising vapours lulled my mind back, back to another time... a time of my youth growing up in Merritton. Most vivid were the many smells that one inhaled of yesteryear and at the time confirmed you were a Merrittonian. The majority were good odours that brought a warm feeling to both young and old, especially, the rich, sweet aroma drifting on the breeze from Richardson's Bakery. It enticed many a Merritton youth to venture to the back door and ask for a day old handout. I recall that they were most generous.

As a young boy, I fell in love with the rich, enchanting smell of the "Old Merritton Train Station". The lingering smells of coal, oil, mixed with the steam and smoke discharged from monstrous steam engines that stood pulsating at the station waiting for clearance to proceed down tracks to infinity. And what good old boy, and in some cases some good old girls of our "Town" couldn't resist running as fast as our small legs could go; to stand on the old train bridge as a fast east or west bound steel Behemoth roared below us; spewing hot, dirty, smelly spumes of smoke that we proudly carried home much to the anguish of our harried mothers.

But, alas, not all were enjoyable scents. We were a united family in a paper mill town and in its heyday we were surrounded by the emissions they produced. Who needed to listen to the weather report on the radio when every Merrittonian could smell the sulphur from the Alliance Paper Mills stack; that heralded rain in the next few days.

And who, but a true child of Merritton, could tolerate the foul, strong invasion of the 'Old Canal's' charm as it descended like an invisible fog over the town. As my grandfather use to say on those days, "It's enough to gag a maggot". If these two odours weren't bad enough, one only had to wait till the winds changed and blew from the north, which produced tears to our eyes with the stench from the abattoir located on Harztel Road back in the 50s.

There were many odours that I recalled as I sipped coffee, some good... some not so good. The best I think was the annual burning of the autumn leaves on the roadways throughout the town in the clear air of fall. Like the smoke and fragrance from those fires... the rich (some times very rich) aromas of yesterday in Merritton are lost to history. A shame.



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Vanda Persia, Italian Interpreter

Ron Sexsmith – Not Our Trivia Answer



Many people thought that last issue's trivia question was about Ron Sexsmith. Ron is a Canadian singer-songwriter from St. Catharines who is currently based in Toronto. He started his own band when he was fourteen years old while he

was attending the Collegiate and released the first recordings of his own material seven years later, in 1985. He has won praise from artists such as Paul McCartney, Elvis Costello, Ray Davies and John Hiatt and is the subject of the film *Love Shines*.

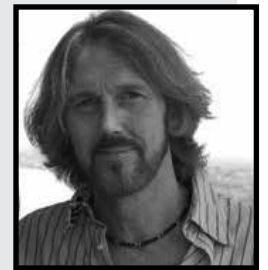
Why might people think our trivia question was about Ron? Well, that's because Ron spent several years living in our neighbourhood and he's a successful musician. In the September/October 2010 issue of *Niagara Magazine*, he talks about his life growing up in St. Catharines. He moved to Merritton at the age of nine when his mom Dorothy married Steve Grodesky. (As he was born in 1964, he would have moved to our community in 1973.) In particular, he recalls a scene on Seymour Avenue when he was trying to learn how to drive under the tutelage of his brother Don and ended up on the neighbour's lawn.

If you remember Ron as a neighbour in Merritton, email me at merrittonmatters@hotmail.com and we'll share some stories about this popular musician in an upcoming issue.



THE TRIVIA ANSWER

In the last issue we told you about a group of Merrittonians who squashed their competition at Larry Galasso's Trivia event held at the Merritton Legion and we thought that even the best of this group of winning rock historians, Brent Pfab, wouldn't know the answer to this question. Which award winning songwriter and musician hails from Merritton? If you need a hint, he's the one who has written music for Dr. Phil, Entertainment Tonight, The Insider, Rachel Ray, and more.



Well, we should have known that Brent would know the answer! And he was the only one who did or at least the only one who contacted me with the correct answer. Port Dalhousie has their Neil Peart and we've got Gerald O'Brien! While he is not listed on Wikipedia's list of Canadian Musicians, unlike Walter Ostanek, he has been very successful and Merrittonians should be proud!

Gerald makes his home now in Nashville, Tennessee. He has written successfully across all genres of music and extensively for film and television. A recent bio notes the following accomplishments:

- written music for the hit TV series Dr. Phil, Entertainment Tonight, The Insider, Rachel Ray, The Doctors and more
- written music for notable events such as the Tour De France, Calgary Stampede, The 1998 Nagano Olympics, the NFL Super Bowl, The World Series, ABC's Wide World of Sports, the PGA, and has scored numerous animated TV series as well
- written songs for Hall & Oates, Manhattan Transfer, Amanda Marshall, Deborah Harry, Loverboy, The Guess Who, Glass Tiger, Michelle Wright, as well as Martina McBride, Trace Adkins and Ronnie Milsap
- co-wrote 5 songs on the new SONS OF SYLVIA CD, called REVELATION and three of those five songs were also co-produced by O'Brien along with music partner, Catt Gravitt in his Nashville studio
- received awards from CMPA for Song of Year, SOCAN Classic Song Award and been nominated for 2 JUNO Awards
- as one half of the instrumental duo 'EXCHANGE' (Steve Sexton is the other half), recorded 6 CD's since 1989

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George is Definitely a Merrittonian

Not everyone who lives in Port Dalhousie can step out their back door and be in Merritton. But George Hostick can! He has a gazebo built in his backyard (built by Rene Emond) which provides a beautiful rest spot. However, being the "old Merritton boy", he had to have a piece of Merritton nearby.....so he named the gazebo Merritton. Good for you!



LIONS ELIMINATION WINNERS

Congratulations to Adam Tisdelle (ticket 1372) for winning \$2500 in the Lions Elimination Draw. There were many winners of \$25 and \$50 and two \$100 winners – a group from Kaupp Electric and Mike Purcer.

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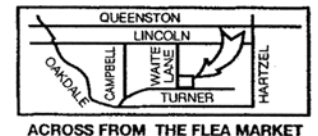
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Construction Engineer, City of St. Catharines, Phone: 905-688-5600 Ext. 1608.



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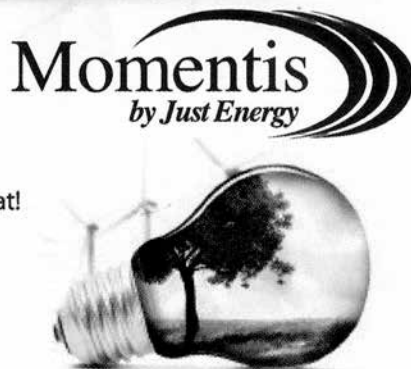
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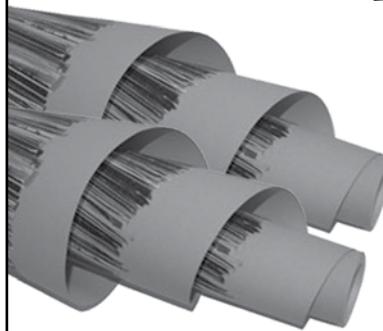
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VOLUNTEERS

THE EDITOR'S POINT OF VIEW

This summer, as part of my volunteer position as president of a national literacy organization, I was invited to make a presentation at a Literacy Conference in Texas. While in Dallas, I toured the spot where John F. Kennedy was assassinated and revisited the history of the 35th President of the United States. This January was the 50th anniversary of his inauguration address and I remember being touched while pouring over the speech in a museum in his honour. Although many reading this were not born then, his address at that time has continued to provide inspirational thoughts today. Yes, I do believe that in our hands 'will rest the final success or failure of our course'. One of my favourite lines is often considered the most famous words of the last half of the 20th century. He states that we should 'ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country'. I realize that it wasn't totally original as Khalil Gibran actually said something very similar in his 1925 work titled "The New Frontier", thirty-six years before President Kennedy's 1961 Inaugural Address. Gibran's words were "Are you a politician asking what your country can do for you or a zealous one asking what you can do for your country? If you are the first, then you are a parasite; if the second, then you are an oasis in a desert."

These words summon people to serve. Although it's difficult to 'do for our country', it's not as challenging to act locally. Those of us who volunteer regularly consider 'What can I do for my community?' part of our driving force. Rick Dykstra spoke out in the House of Commons during National Volunteer Week to recognize those within communities who give of themselves to make our lives better. In particular he thanked seniors and stated that the seniors in his constituency of St. Catharines play a key role. Seniors are often the uber volunteers, those who really step forward, volunteering throughout the season, over and over again. Seven per cent of Canadians contribute approximately 78 per cent of the volunteer time in Canada.

Many organizations couldn't survive without volunteers. The Merritton Community Group has a strong core of volunteers and all of us volunteer with more than one organization. Many of the members are seniors who have retired from busy careers and know that they have much more to contribute. Although a devoted group, we've come to the realization that we'll have to scale back some of our activities unless we can attract more volunteers. Please consider joining us!

MAA NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are needed for baseball and soccer coaching as well as convenors within the Merritton Athletic Association. Contact John Riley 905-684-0249 or Laura Gazley 905-227-3838.

LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS AT FERNDALE

Please consider donating a few hours a week reading one-on-one with students in grade 1 at Ferndale Public School. Teacher John Haynes is looking for volunteers in the mornings, any day from Monday to Friday. No experience necessary! Please contact him at johnhaynes1964@hotmail.com or through Ferndale's school phone number which is (905) 684-1101.

CONGRATULATIONS TO CITY VOLUNTEERS

We are thrilled that several of our members put their names forward to serve as citizen appointees to various councils, committees and commissions. Barbara Knight-Woodward, a Merritton Community Group volunteer who was instrumental in the successful implementation of the Historic Garbage Bins, has been appointed to the Graffiti Committee. Bill Wiley, a perennial volunteer for the city will be on the Committee of Adjustment and the Heritage Advisory Committee.

David Haywood didn't become a city councillor in the last election but that hasn't slowed down his interest in municipal affairs. He had stated publicly that, whether he won or lost, he would remain dedicated to the Merritton Community. We are thrilled to see that he has been appointed to the Green Committee. The previous Green Committee committed substantial funds to landscaping the Merritton Welcome Sign area and we're really looking forward to seeing this come to fruition as the weather warms.

We noticed several other Merritton residents on the list, including Matt Holley who will be a representative on the Green Committee. Congratulations and our appreciation to all who serve!



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