

MERRITTON MATTERS

WINTER 2020 • Volume 16, Issue 1 • www.merrittonmatters.ca



The site of the former St. Catharines General Hospital



A NEW COLOUR FOR MERRITTON MATTERS

We have decided to transition to white paper for the Merritton Matters newsletter as the cost of printing on yellow has become prohibitively expensive. We remain the same strong publication that provides you with information about the past, present and future of our community and we know that our readers will still reach for a copy at local businesses and public sites. Yellow paper was originally chosen for the very first publication in 2001 because of the traditional association with the colours of Merritton and the former Merritton High School. The use of white paper now allows us to cover the costs of printing without passing along any increase to our advertisers, both those who have faithfully been there since the beginning and new friends welcomed over the years. We hope that you enjoy this edition. If you have any comments or ideas for future issues, please email us at merrittonmatters1@gmail.com. Look for the next edition this spring.

MERRITTON MATTERS NEWSLETTER

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. (Margaret Mead)

A small group of people got together in 2001, calling themselves the Merritton Community Group, with the intentions of enhancing the social and economic character of Merritton while supporting Merritton as a distinctive heritage community. We are now proudly a part of the Merritton Lions. One of the first projects was this newsletter and since the inception of Merritton Matters, the Editor/Writer has been Lorraine Giroux. All articles without a byline are by Lorraine. Phyllis Thomson is editor extraordinaire. Contributions have been received over the years, with much appreciation, from a variety of local authors. This issue features the work of Tom Barwell. Tony Morra is relentless in his sourcing of advertising. Photographs are the very professional work of Susan Fluellon. Lana Pesant is our Graphic Designer who makes a perfect finished product. Our coordinator, idea generator and community muse, is the super resourceful Sheila Morra. Articles, or suggestions for articles are very welcome and can be sent via email to merrittonmatters1@gmail.com.

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IT'S A SPAWTACULAR DAY!

Welcome Spawtacular Dog Grooming, a new business located at 316A Merritt Street! The owner, Stephanie Mercier, was raised in our community and has chosen a location that is in the heart of her hometown. She has a keen desire to serve both our local community and beyond.

With her location on a busy street with close access for all, we think she's well situated to accomplish this.

Spawtacular is a dog grooming business for dogs of all ages, breeds and sizes. Dogs get one on one care and are not kennelled during their 'Spaw Day' which includes bubble baths, grooming, nail trims and much, much more. The staff treat each dog like their own and provide the best care to help the dogs feel comfortable and stress free.

Meeting the bubbly, positive Stephanie will convince you that she and her staff really do believe that 'every dog deserves a Spaw Day'.

WE'LL MISS YOU LARRY!

Everyone of a certain age remembers Larry Galasso – no explanation needed. He was the warm, congenial host who knew everyone's name and greeted you as if you were a family member when you walked into Ricci's Tavern, his home away from home as the owner/operator. Lawrence Galasso passed away peacefully in Simcoe on November 20th in his 78th year.



Merritton Matters Website

We've taken on a new look. Please take some time to explore merrittonmatters.ca.



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The Good Old Hockey Game Merritton Style

By Tom Barwell

In the 50's and 60's, besides Granny's pond, there were a couple more winter spots for skating. If you walked directly west on Chestnut Street from Merritt you would, of course, come to the highland. Then climbing to the top, directly below, would be a large pond. This was the remains of part of the spillway for the Second Welland Canal. Just a little farther to the west was the canal itself. Our name for this area was "the island" as it was actually surrounded by water which, of course, was heavily polluted. Nevertheless you would at times spot huge carp coming to the top gulping for air. Because of the pollution, it took a long time to freeze but it was a good place to skate as it was protected from the wind especially on the East side.

The other was called "the crusher". It was located on Glendale Avenue (formerly Boyle Road) about halfway between the railroad tracks and the canal lift bridge on the south side of the road. This pit was mined for limestone that was used for the construction of the Fourth Canal. It is now long buried under a scrap yard. It was not as popular because of the distance from town.

For instance, take a cold and wintery Saturday morning. Kids would begin to gather soon after sunrise when it was light enough to see. They would be carrying very sparse hockey gear as well as shovels and home made snow pushers. First task? Clean a large area for skating. Everyone had to do their share as it was the price paid to play and it was strictly enforced. If it was snowing during play, a small group was constantly clearing the ice and each person was expected to take a turn.

The mecca was, of course, Granny's Pond both for winter and summer activities. It was located directly west on the main tracks from the huge highline bridge. Incidentally, this bridge was purchased many years ago from the New York Central Railway. After crossing the old canal it would be on the south side. It was not very deep, maybe six feet at the most. I know, as I fell in. The water itself was quite clean, probably because of the feed from underground springs. It hosted a large variety of both aquatic life, birds, muskrats and all sorts of other animals. It was common to see large turtles, huge bull frogs and fish sparkling in the sun as they leaped out of the water. In the winter there was a sharp contrast.

Because of the cold, putting skates on was sometimes torture. Often there was a small fire burning and this helped in the formidable task. Girls did shoe up and were mostly designated as goalies. Some were great skaters and if the sides were uneven they played a good game. When a girl got new skates they usually



took them to Joe Conte and he, at no charge, would grind away the picks. There was not a lot of figure skating on the pond. Sides were chosen and teams could have up to a dozen on each side which was a great learning experience. Of course rubber boots made up the goal posts.

Equipment came in all shapes and sizes. Old heavy one piece sticks handed down through families were common. Broken and bent sticks taped and nailed together. Even home made contraptions were accepted. If it worked, why not? Anyone with a stick valued at five dollars was held in awe. They were rich kids. Pucks were treasured and some were misshapen from road games played during the summer. Play went on from dawn to dusk with the ever changing of kids leaving and arriving. Even adults at times took part and were surprised by the skill of the players.

The railroad was busy with both passenger and freight rumbling by. It was common for the trains to loudly blow their whistles in passing. Passenger trains would slow down and people could be seen pressing their faces to the windows, taking in the wonderful scene. Waves and raised sticks were exchanged. There is a wonderful watercolour painting, done by Robert Heard, depicting the pond in the summertime. One of a winter scene, although in stark contrast, would be beautiful as well and showing a scene never to be seen again.

Before the advent of the computer generation, any patch of ice could be a Maple Leaf Garden or Montreal Forum filled with kids living their dreams. Now they are mostly empty.

Sadly, the pond was drained due to the ever encroaching housing developments and the chance of an accidental drowning, which would have been tragic. A rich wetland, along with all its inhabitants, was swept away in the name of progress. I was glad I didn't witness it happening. No doubt a few tears would have been shed.

Editor's Note: Wonder how we got the picture of Granny's Pond? Oh the lengths an editor will go! It all started when Isabel Bachmann, webmistress of Merritton Memories and contributor to the MM, wrote to painter Bobby Heard about his painting of Granny's Pond. She had heard about it, knew that several people were looking for a copy and wondered if it would be possible to obtain one. While that didn't work out, Isabel did write about it on the Merritton Memories website. I saw it, knew that Tom had written an article about Granny's Pond, so I asked Isabel for Bobby Heard's email address. I wrote him and was very excited to get his reply.

Bobby, although not from Merritton, grew up nearby on Caroline Street when Glendale was still called Boyle Rd. and was his short cut from Pelham Road to Merritton. He remembers it as a small gravel road that was rarely used. He was very familiar with Granny's Pond and everything else in the area as he hung around the Merritton railroad station. He did many paintings of the station years ago and all the prints are gone although 1 or 2 paintings are left of the station in a gallery in Newmarket, ON.

By the way, the original of Granny's Pond, which was done about 25-30 years ago, is still available. It is about 18 X 24 inches and watercolour. No prints of the picture were created.

He offered his memory of Granny's Pond as 'a hobo jungle just east of the pond about 1/2 of a mile away in the woods and in from the tracks. I thought of putting that into the painting, but it wouldn't fit. The hobo jungle was there because that is where the guys hopped the trains. The trains always stopped there when the canal bridge was up. That's why the train is included in the painting.'

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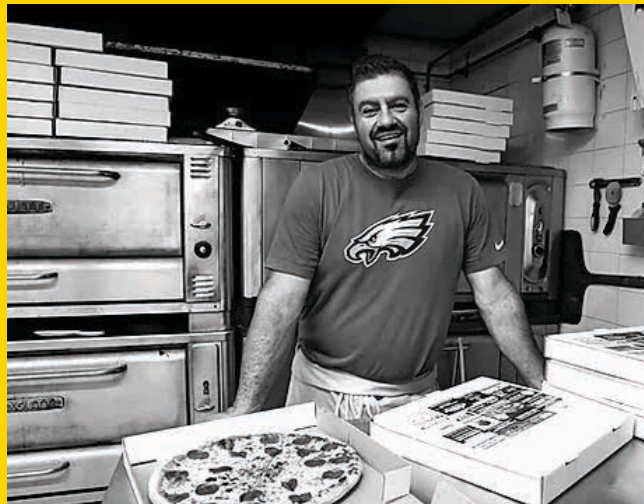
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ROD MAWHOOD AND PIZZA JERRY LIVE!

Did you catch Rod Mawhood on 610 CKTB on the morning of January 5th when he was providing his Sports Report? Turns out he was live from Olee's on Merritt Street for a very special event fundraiser for the Niagara Peninsula Foundation for Children. Brock University, Niagara College and Ridley had



representatives in attendance and all the proceeds of the purchase price of their meals were going back to that charity. It was Rod's first show of the new year and he was celebrating the show's second anniversary. The initial guest on the live broadcast

that day was Jerry DiPietro, better known as Pizza Jerry, and owner of the event location, Olee's Ale House. Jerry is a well-known and longtime supporter of the Merritton community, schools, events and sports. And, he supports not only our community but the wider community and many charitable causes in the area as well. The next guest on the Sports Report was Jack Foster who is the Chair of the Niagara Peninsula Foundation for Children. He had, with Rod and Jerry and others, helped to facilitate this and other fundraising events. The morning at Olee's Ale House raised \$3100 and counting. Well done!

Museum Chats

Sara Nixon, Public Historian and Programmer at the St. Catharines Museum & Welland Canals Centre, wrote an interesting 'Yearbook Flip' musing in December about local schools and their Christmas spirit. Digging back to the 1960's, she profiled yearbooks from secondary schools, including Merritton High's 1967 pages, which had photos of 'assemblies of Christmas carol sing-alongs, concerts, dances, and visits from Santa Claus himself (a role, in many cases, assumed by a student)'. Check out the MHS picture at stcatharinesmuseumblog.com/2019/12/18/yearbook-flip-festive-school-spirit.

Surprisingly, after the article was published, there were no comments by any of Merritton's former students to add to Sara's list of spirit adventures at the school. Why is this surprising? Merritton Memories Facebook page has pictures posted and memories recounted daily and it's a strong community of people who have the greatest recall ever.

We asked people about Christmas spirit memories and received comments, all from the decades after the 1960's. Who could forget Santa Claus Bill in the mid-1970's who came through the balcony doors and slid down one of the poles to deliver gag gifts to a number of staff in the auditorium? In the 1980's, Ivy remembers the Christmas plays and the football players dancing in tutus, and students making meals for the elderly in the Home Economics room which would then be delivered, accompanied by carollers. In the 1990's there were still the gag gifts to staff that Denise remembers and while David remembers the 'epic' Christmas assemblies with the staff and students showing their spirit, he also recalls the way the school and students sponsored so many local families which a few students would deliver, returning with stories of how grateful the families were to receive the gifts and food.

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Thanks to the Denis Morris Catholic High School High Voltage Robotics Team for their volunteer work at the Merriton Lions Elimination Draw.

Lions Club of Merriton Elimination Draw Winners Dec 6, 2019

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350	1299	CHARLOTTE/AARON BROWN	\$50
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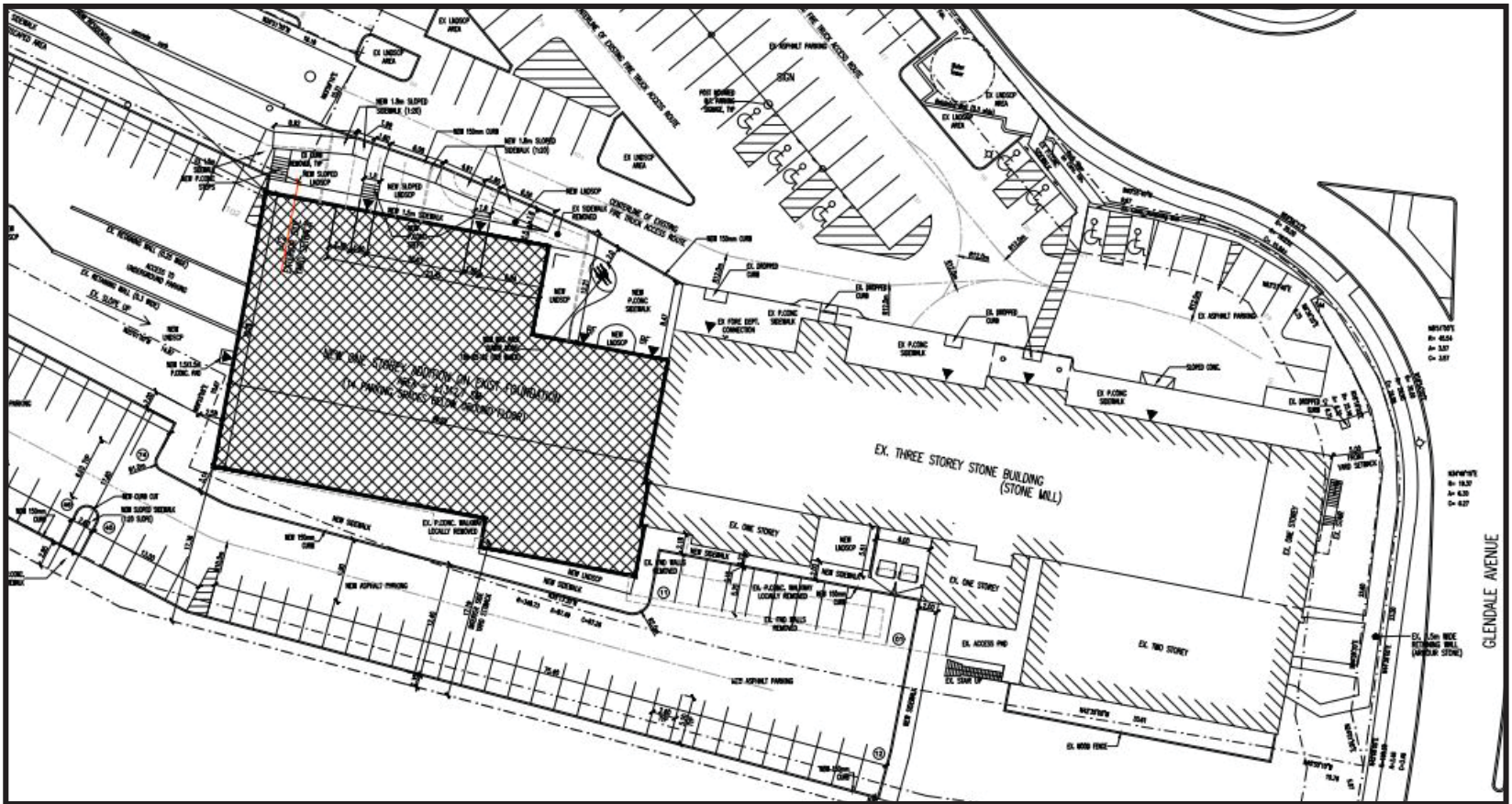
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STONE MILL ADDITIONS

Have you stopped to consider all the changes that have happened over recent years at the northwest corner of Glendale Avenue and Merritt Street? That's the location of Merritton's former Domtar Paper building which is now the Stone Mill Inn. To the north of the original building there is a new building addition of approximately 13000 square feet that houses several businesses and extensive parking. It's a great additional feature to this historic building and aligns well with the original structure.

The new businesses certainly do appreciate the building amenities, the warm reception from the community, all the parking availability and the great location with easy access for customers and staff. Vonn Marr Floral, a new company, will have been there for two years this coming March. Think how advantageous it would be to brides having their weddings at the Stone Mill Inn to have a florist located in the next building. Gary Waters, located beside Vonn Marr, is the latest tenant to move in after almost 60 years at the Pen Centre. At the back of the building closest to the Sobey's Plaza, Landlord Web Solutions moved their office here from Thorold about a year ago. They offer marketing solutions for the rental housing industry for multi-family operators. This company was founded in 2010 and in 2019 was named one of Canada's 500 fastest-growing companies. They too cite the benefits and it definitely provides easy access for their 42 employees, some of whom come from the Niagara area as well as those who drive down the QEW from Burlington, Stoney Creek and Hamilton. (Then we heard that one of the founding partners has in-laws in Merritton which we know was the deciding factor in why they were drawn to the neighbourhood!)



The short story of how it came to be doesn't capture all the necessary work that had to be done but let's simply say it was hard work and determination that made it happen. Council paperwork shows that in August of 2017, Donatelli Productions Limited asked for and then received some planning amendments from the city for changes in the zoning and special provisions. Arrangements had been made with CN for the land behind the mill, houses on Hastings and Merritt had to be purchased to clear the way and a parking lot had to be paved. All in preparation for the construction of the new building that sits on top of Domtar's former underground garage and beside the old Lybster Mill. As you would expect, there's much that would need to be taken into consideration when successfully adding on to a historic building such as the texture and shape, harmony of colour, balance between different elements and proportion in height and width. These are important factors to ensure that it's not only aesthetically pleasing but that it is appropriate to the integrity of the original building. The addition to our Merritton landmark works because it appears compatible with the mill constructed in 1860 and yet it is distinguishably different so that the historic building's character is preserved.

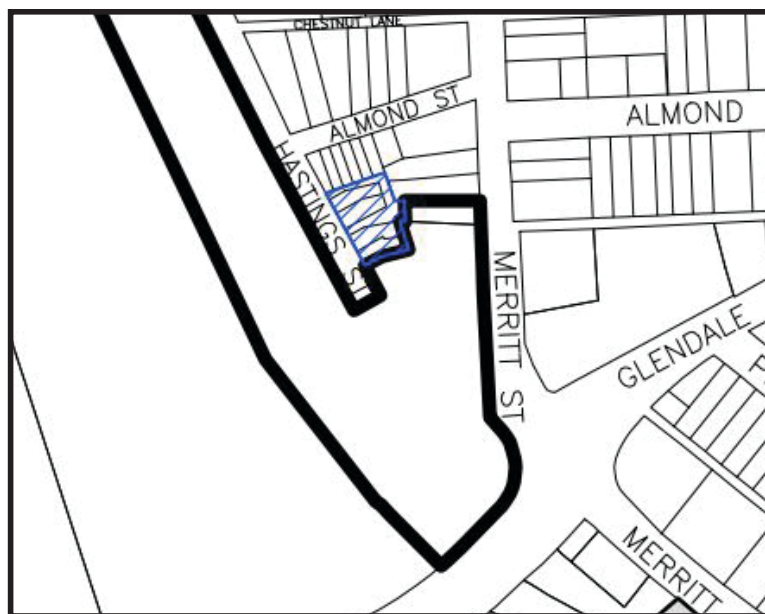
When you take the long view, it's a place that already has undergone many changes since it was constructed in 1860 by Gordon McKay and Co. of Toronto. It began as the Canadian Coloured Cotton Mills, one of two cotton mills located in Merritton and was also known as the Lybster Mill. The owners of the Lincoln Paper Co., located less than a mile north of the Lybster Mill decided to expand their operations and bought the Lybster Mill prior to 1908. After building additions to the south end and the east side of the old mill, and installing machinery, they started production in 1911. The company amalgamated with Ritchie and Ramsay of New Toronto in 1928 and joined the Georgetown Coated Paper Mill, and the name Alliance Paper Co. came into being. The Lybster Mill in Merritton then became the Lybster



Division of Alliance Paper Co. Dominion Tar and Chemical bought Alliance Paper Co. in 1962 and it was known for years as Howard Smith Papers, and later it was called Domtar. Domtar shut down its production of printing and specialty papers in 2002. It was purchased in 2009 and the paper mill was then redeveloped into the Stone Mill Inn through the driving force of Nino Donatelli. By 2011, a group of Merritton community leaders were given the opportunity to tour the impressive building that had retained its traditional appearance. They spoke highly of the preservation efforts that went into this restoration and the dedication of Donatelli to the community as well as his work in maintaining our history here in Merritton.

Doug Herod, former columnist at the St. Catharines Standard, calls Donatelli the 'Father of Modern Merritton'. With this new build, we have to appreciate Nino's concern for preservation as well as the re-purposing (or rejuvenating?) for modern use. One way to preserve historic properties is to use 'rehabilitation' techniques when you convert a property for a use other than its original one while focusing on retention of some of the historic features. Nino's nickname might now need some rethinking, although something

like the 'Father of Re-purposed, Rejuvenated, Rehabilitated Modern Merritton' doesn't flow off the tongue in quite the same way.



SPRUCING UP THE FAÇADE

Many of our local businesses have been working hard to spruce up their façade. Pay attention on your next drive down Merritt and Hartzel and you'll see evidence of owners investing in building upgrades, helping to improve and create an appealing environment on the street. One example is the fresh look that has been created by Sheri's Creative Edge at 116 Hartzel. Looking good!



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We Hear From Our Councillor Littleton and Councillor Miller

What a busy finish to 2019! We both had a great Labour Day weekend: volunteering, handing out candy in the parade and enjoying the carnival with our families. Thanks again to the Merritton Lions and the whole community who makes this such a wonderful weekend for all.

City Council passed our 2020 capital and operating budgets, and you can find out more about those on the City's website.

By now, you have probably heard that there is a development proposal for the former Merritton High School site. At this stage, it is important to keep in mind that that is all it is: a proposal.

It was wonderful to see hundreds of people come out to the open house regarding the proposal in December at the Merritton Lions Community Centre, but it's not too late to submit your thoughts on the project as staff is currently collecting feedback.

We are at the beginning of the planning process and what will happen next is staff will go through all the comments they've received, address those issues with the developers and then set up another public meeting, where staff will outline how those concerns are being addressed.

Staff have not evaluated the application in accordance with Provincial policy, Regional policy, City policy or good planning principles and design. We have been clear: we share some of the concerns of the community and are committed to being your voice.

After the next public meeting, you will still have the opportunity to come to Council and express your thoughts on the proposal. We will make sure you are given that opportunity by posting information about how you can stay involved in the process on our social media sites and by answering your questions.

To recap, here is some information about the proposed development at this point:

The application is for official plan and zoning by-law amendments. Currently the property is designated Low Density Residential in the Official Plan and zoned Community Institutional in the Zoning By-law. Currently, up to 200 residential units could be constructed on the site. The application is to change the Official Plan designation to High Density Residential and zoning to High Density Residential to allow for six apartment buildings with 410 residential units.

It's proposed that there be 3-storey townhouse-style units along



most of the Seymour Ave frontage, 6- and 8-storey buildings across the southern lot line abutting Merritton Community Park and 10- and 12-storey buildings at western end of property.

Merritton Community Park is not part of the proposed development, which means George Taylor Field, Lion Dunc Schooley Pool and two other baseball diamonds in Merritton Community Park will continue to be owned by the city. The baseball diamond on the privately-owned school property is proposed to be removed.

More information about the proposal can be found on the city's website at www.stcatharines.ca/development.

Last summer, we brought forward a motion for City staff to work with the Mayor's office to plan a neighbourhood forum for 2020 that will include the Queenston Neighbours and other neighbourhood associations to promote networking, relationship-building and identifying ways to collaborate. That event is coming up in early spring and it's open to everyone, including established neighbourhood groups, as well as anyone interested in getting more involved in a community group or forming their own. After the forum, staff will provide a report reflecting on ways the City can support neighbourhood-based community groups.

Additionally, City staff is working with the Region so the forum can also be an opportunity for those participating to provide their input into the Region's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. Additionally, there will be plenty of other opportunities for anyone interested to provide information about that plan as well.

We hope everyone had a happy holiday season and we look forward to a great 2020 for Merritton!

OUR COUNCILLORS WILL BE DEPUTY MAYORS

Traditionally, St. Catharines' Deputy Mayor has been appointed each year at the first meeting in December and has the mayoral powers when acting as the mayor. But when the term of Deputy Mayor Matt Harris was up, council decided to make some changes. Now there will be rotating councillors to fill the position starting in 2021 so each of the 12 city councillors will fill the position for a month. In 2021, both Greg Miller and Lori Littleton will have this opportunity. In the meantime, three councillors - Lori Littleton, Dawn Dodge and Sal Sorrento - stepped forward to experience the mayor's role for four months each in 2020.



SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSAL FOR THE FORMER MHS SITE

- 10 Seymour Avenue – 2 hectares (5 acres) in size.
- Former Merritton High School property (see air photo).
- Merritton Community Park is **not** part of the proposed development.
- George Taylor Field, Lion Dunc Schooley Pool and two other baseball diamonds in Merritton Community Park will continue to be owned by the City.
- One baseball diamond on the privately-owned school property is proposed for removal as part of the proposed development.
- The existing public right-of-way to George Taylor Field from Seymour Avenue will be retained.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- Six apartment buildings with 410 residential units.
- 3 storey townhouse-style units along most of the Seymour Ave frontage.
- Most of the school building would be retained and integrated with new development above and beside it.
- 6 and 8 storey buildings across southern lot line abutting Merritton Community Park.
- 10 and 12 storey buildings at western end of property.
- 412 parking spaces provided on site including 340 underground spaces.
- Area of old lawn-bowling club (west end of the site) will be retained as greenspace.

THE APPLICATIONS

- Applications submitted for Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments.
- Property is currently designated Low Density Residential in the Official Plan and zoned Community Institutional (I2) in the Zoning By-law.
- Application seeks to change Official Plan designation to High Density Residential and zone to High Density Residential (R4).
- Current Community Institutional (I2) zoning permits residential development.
- Under the property's current Official Plan designation and zoning, **up to 200 residential units** could be constructed on the site.
- The application is seeking to increase the number of units permitted to be built on the property.

NEXT MEETING

We know that the City of St. Catharines staff who were present at the meeting were surprised by the large turn out and many participants held expectations of a different type of meeting. Merrittonians wouldn't have been surprised because we have responded in full force in the past when proposals are seen as not good for our community. Many will remember the proposed and subsequently dismissed Waste Transfer site proposal. At the December meeting, people peppered city staff and the developer's representatives with questions and were not hesitant to express their opinions about what the proposed residential development would do to the area. Immediately after, a public Facebook page, Friends for Appropriate Development in Merritton, was created for those local and far away.

The next meeting is expected to be in a different style where staff can address concerns more formally and with information from the developer. Most recently, we have been told by Evan Acs, Planner, that we would receive 3-4 weeks notice of the next meeting. While we may be eager to have the next meeting quickly, we have to recognize that all the questions we put forward at the December meeting will be given to the developer and allowing them this time for consideration should mean more response from them. And possibly changes to the proposal. We know that both Councillors will communicate the date widely and we will ensure that the information will be on our Social Media as well as those belonging to local community groups.

As Denis Savoie, founding member of the Friends for Appropriate Development in Merritton page, noted '2020 will mark the 60th anniversary of amalgamation in 1960.....that was when the slippery slope started for many of us...and the grade on that slope just gets steeper...'

TIMING

Merritton High School has stood on the same site since 1935. After amalgamation of our town with St. Catharines, the school continued as part of the larger school system. Generations of neighbourhood families proudly went through those doors until the school closed. Despite not being able to see our own children attend the school, we might have taken some comfort in seeing the building standing and continuing its operation as private schools. Royal Imperial Collegiate of Canada (RICC) had seemingly operated successfully as a secondary school in the MHS building and were still actively seeking new students in July. We were glad to see the owners, the Fullview International Group Inc., spending considerable time and money to update the building after Pinehurst, the school operating before them, closed in 2014 with some controversy.

In 2019, it was the 20th anniversary of Merritton High School's closing. The Merritton Last Blast in June of 1999 was a weekend 'celebration' facilitated with the helping hands of many including those in the Merritton Community Group, anchored by Rod Mawhood and co-led by teacher Bruce Hemphill and parent Lorraine Giroux, that brought many back to their hometown for one more walk through those halls.

In the Spring issue of Merritton Matters, we presented a timeline of Merritton High and noted this 20th Anniversary. On June 8, a group of former students from the Class of 1964 had a great tour through the High School to witness the renovations. RICC proudly pointed out changes that had been made inside the building. Little did we know that the proposed development would instead be what we were talking about as we closed out 2019.



GOT MILK?!

Only a few years ago the Lions Club of Merritton collected milk bags (the colourful outside bags) for people in Haiti who needed something to lay on nightly to prevent them from sleeping on wet ground. Milk bags can be woven into sleeping mats with approximately 135 bags and 5 hours of labour going into creating one mat.

Sadly, we have now learned that many homeless people in Niagara are in need of these. Several community agencies have now requested sleeping mats as these provide a portable, light weight item. The New Apostolic Church in Thorold is currently making these mats. The Lions Club of Merritton will be helping to facilitate the collection of these bags. We would ask that you consider collecting these bags to further this local cause. To donate contact Sheila at morra@cogeco.ca or 905-227-8988.



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Gone

Recently the house at 25 Oakdale Avenue was demolished. Now it's an empty lot, as pictured on the right, and sits waiting for a three-unit townhouse to be constructed at the newly created Lots 25A, 25B and 25C. Each of the units will be considered separate property and the property is being severed into three lots. It's a few doors down from the former St. James Anglican Church and across the street from the entrance to the new Merritton Commons development. The house was built before the turn of the century and that's the 19th Century, in case you were wondering.

The proposal from Cairnwood Developments Inc. went to the Public Hearing of the City's Committee of Adjustment on May 29, 2019 and received consent with some minor variances. The Parks, Recreation and Culture Services did express concern about the reductions of greenspace and landscaping and suggested that the applicant submit a payment in the general tree planting reserve and that Planning and Building Services examine if a payment can also be collected in 'lieu of dedication of land for park purposes'. That doesn't mean that a tree planting will replace these trees but that the funds will be used to plant trees in the city. And a request that the minimum landscape area be reduced from 35% to 30% of the total lot area was not approved by the committee members.



Seems like it's part of a trend. At the Committee of Adjustment in December 2019, 35 Oakdale was the subject of discussion as an applicant



'proposes to demolish the existing residential building on the subject lands and to construct a two-storey semi-detached dwelling, with each of the two semi-detached units to include an interior accessory dwelling unit'.

Keep in mind that our province issued a statement in 2005 supporting land use intensification so it might not be that surprising that the final decision for 25 Oakdale reads 'the development is desirable for the appropriate use of the land and meets the intent and purpose of the City's Official 'Plan'.

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PHOTO BY SUSAN FLUELLON

FRONT COVER

The continued demolition of the former St. Catharines General Hospital can be found on the cover of this edition. In the Spring 2019 issue we used a picture of the historic doorway on the cover and included pictures and video of mid-process demolition.

In the next edition look for an article about the photographs and art that are being created from the demolition of the former hospital. One such piece has been recently added to the City's Civic Art collection.

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MERRITTON PEOPLE

- WE HAVE PHOTOS FROM YEARS AGO



TRAPPER'S DINNER

So.... the Editor received this picture a while ago and found it again while cleaning up her office. It's dated 1974 and the back of the photo identifies the people as Don Obee and Joseph Lillo as 'Chefs at Trappers Dinner.' Like a good detective, I immediately went to the Internet and googled it. Nothing popped up that I was hoping for, although I did find some good pictures of a few Merritton people I remember who competed for the Niagara Regional Raiders in 1974 (Rick Karr, John Uramowski) or were on the cheerleading team (Helen Keir) or helped organize the event (Dave Hayes).

Then I started thinking that maybe it was a 'big birthday' dinner for Len 'Trapper' Leo. Len was leader of the Merritton Lions Parade and an icon in our community. He would have been 60 years old in 1974 as he was born in 1914. Am I right? Anybody?

VALLEYWOOD GRADE 7A

The late Mike Collins left several pictures of home rooms from his days at Valleywood School. While I was happy to inherit these, there are no names on the back of most of the photos so I filed them away in my 'future' file. (And my mother wonders why my office is so full!) I was looking through some the other day while moving papers from one pile to another and noticed that one photo had the name 'Pete Vidican' on the back. Other people in Pete's class may have been Eddie Holowchuck, Harry Popiluk, Jerry Joy, Louis Covello and Ray Mozuras and of course, Mike Collins who saved the photo from Class 7A in 1957. So, Pete Vidican, if you're reading this and want a copy of the picture, please let me know.



Now, normally this name wouldn't have jumped out at me except that recently at a family dinner my cousin Barb mentioned to my mother that 'Fred Vidican' had died. My mother, Barb and my sister Anne remembered Fred well from their days at Merritton High. A little bit of searching turned up that Fred Vidican had sadly passed away at Joseph Brant Hospital on Tuesday, December 3, 2019 at the age of 72. The loving family he left behind included his wife and best friend, Sharon (nee McNeil) and brother Peter Vidican (Joann), and the late Barry Vidican (June). The obituary included his relationships as brother-in-law to Patricia Fuller (Bob), and Velma Politewicz (late Ron). He was a loved poppa to Gracie, uncle, and friend to many nieces, nephews, cousins and extended family. Our condolences to the Vidican family for their loss.

Could this be another 'Trapper Dinner Chef' picture?



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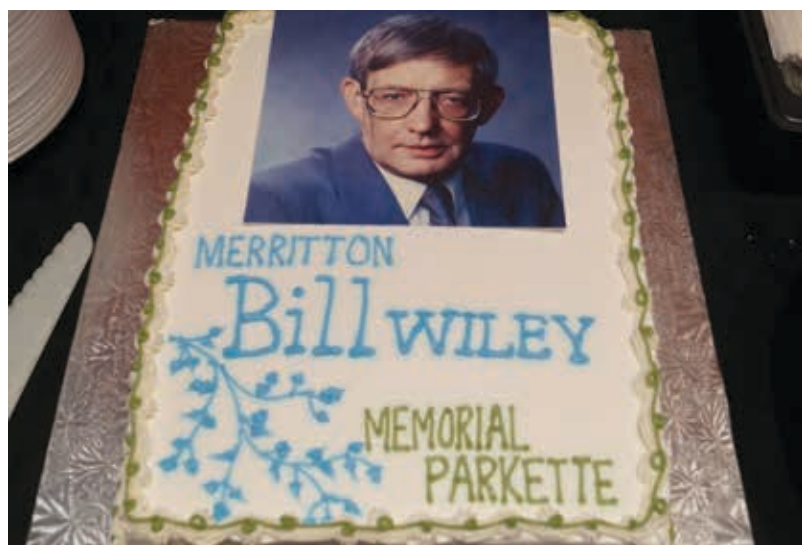


Honouring Merritton Bill Wiley

The Merritton Bill Wiley Parkette, located in the area beside Sobeyes plaza on the route of the First and Second Welland Canals, was officially dedicated to one of our most beloved Merrittonians on June 23, 2019 with family, friends and dignitaries in attendance. The group trooped over to barBurritos after for cake, a light lunch and to share memories. Bill Wiley finally has a beautiful greenspace named after him in the very community to which he dedicated so much of his time and effort.

Bill, a founding member of the St. Catharines Green Committee and a man with a long history of volunteer work, had passed away in 2011 and honouring Bill in this way was much advanced by the dedication and work of Sheila Morra, a member of the Merritton Lions.

In Summer 2016, Merritton Matters featured the beginnings of the Bill Wiley Parkette on the front cover. It was in that year that the motion was made by then Councillor David Haywood and supported unanimously by council members. Two fundraising events were held by the Merritton Lions to contribute to the parkette memorial and it was developed by the St. Catharines Green Advisory Committee.



Cake created and provided by Frosted Memories (donation)

Mark Molnar, Town Crier, provided us with the cry he wrote for the dedication.

OYEZ! OYEZ! OYEZ!

Naval officer, high school principal, St. Catharines City Councillors and Deputy Mayor – these are just some of the things for which Bill Wiley is remembered! Although he was born in Burlington, as a grandson of the first Mayor of Merritton and great nephew of a Mayor of St. Catharines, Bill was genetically predisposed to love Merritton. He loved the community and worked to preserve its historic landmarks – but what he truly loved were the people of Merritton!

Bill was able to direct his devotion to his community through his work with the Royal Canadian Legion, by founding the Merritton Community Group, and of course especially as a Past President and multiple award-winner of the Merritton Lions Club.

Today, we are here to return that love and devotion, accompanied by his family, friends, and members of that community that he so treasured, by dedicating this parkette to the memory of Bill Wiley. I only hope that this dedication serves to inspire more people to follow his example in service to their community, and to our country at large!

Mark Molnar used the background material provided by Bill's children, Trish Vaillancourt and William Wiley Jr, to create the town cry. We liked the background material so much that we decided to print some of the pieces that Mark didn't include here too.

The connection of William (Bill) Wiley to Merritton, after whom the park is named, runs through his mother, Clara, nee Hastings. Clara's father, Thomas, was village reeve in 1917, and, when Merritton became a town in 1918, he was elected as its first mayor. Hastings Street is named after him. A great uncle, on the paternal side, was concomitantly the mayor of St Catharines. The Hastings family first arrived in what became Merritton from the United Kingdom in the mid-nineteenth century, which is to say that Thomas (Bill's grandfather), his eventual wife and the three children born of the union, all came into this world in Merritton. As the position of reeve and later mayor were very much part-time jobs, along with Thomas's service in the Merritton fire brigade, Thomas was employed full time in one of the local mills - now the Keg Restaurant, situated within sight of the Bill Wiley parkette.

Bill was born in 1934 in Burlington, where his father, from St David's, was the manager of a canning factory at that time. Growing up in the Hamilton-Burlington area, where he attended McMaster University (1953-1956), Bill came to St. Catharines to teach at Grantham High School in 1961. Rising as he did through the teaching ranks, he eventually took the job as Principal of Merritton High School in 1980; shortly thereafter, he and his wife Betty bought and restored an old family homestead on Moffatt Street in Merritton. In or about 1984, while still an educator, Bill ran for election to St. Catharines City Council, winning a seat to represent Merritton Ward - in



truth, the only seat that would have been of any interest to him. His thinking at the time was that Merritton was being overlooked to a degree by Council, given its more modest (i.e., less-demanding) voters. In the end, Bill Wiley served on City Council for several terms, for a time as Deputy Mayor, to which he was appointed by the other members of Council. During his service on Council, he took a special interest in the preservation of historic landmarks in the city - most especially those in Merritton Ward - aside from his service to various community groups, most especially the Merritton Lions.



Merritton was dear to Bill's heart to put it mildly. What attracted him to the place, more so than the family connection, was the people of Merritton. Public service of any sort, and not least to Merritton, came naturally to Bill Wiley; were he still with us, he would be deeply honoured by the naming of anything after him and, one suspects, be embarrassed deeply by the receipt of recognition for that which came naturally to him.

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