

HERITAGE GAZETTE

OF
THE

TRENT



VALLEY



TWISTING HISTORY *(See page 4)*



As the new Editor of the TVA *Heritage Gazette*, I am thankful to President Maddie More for allowing me to help tell the fascinating stories of Peterborough's history. I grew up in Omemee and Peterborough, left for 13 years, but I'm back to help research the strange and lesser-known people and events in the Trent Valley. Our authors continue to uncover inspiring, beautiful, unknown, and extraordinary stories about the Trent Valley area. The stories in this issue prove that "diamonds in the rough" exist to be discovered in the Trent Valley Archives and archives across Ontario. For example, the Captain John Deserontyon (Odeserundiye) letter gives readers a glimpse into the life of an indigenous soldier during the Seven Years War and War of Independence. I am thankful to writers in the community who paint the picture of their memories for the *Heritage Gazette*. In this issue, Mike Parnell beautifully crafts a visual of Kelly's Island through the vivid imagery of his memories. We are thankful to researchers who find historical hiccups, such as Christine Fisher's deep dive into the misidentification of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill in two portraits. This issue also contains the background of how Ed Schroeter came up with the stories, real and imagined, for the play *Crossing Over*, coming to the Market Hall Performing Arts Centre in May, a wonderful mini-biography of James W. Fitzgerald by Elwood Jones and Dennis Carter-Edwards, and the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Activity Haven in Peterborough.

As Peterborough gears up for the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the Peter Robinson settlers in August, we hope everyone gets out to enjoy some of the amazing events organized by the local Nine Ships committee and Ballyhoura Development in County Cork, Ireland. If you have any stories of your "nine ships" family history that you would like featured in the *Heritage Gazette*, send them in!

As we plan the summer edition of the *Heritage Gazette*, we wish you a happy, sunny, and fun 200th anniversary. We hope you make friends with the tourists from Ireland (and elsewhere) who visit our city. This summer in Peterborough will be history in the making!



Alicia Bertrand, M.A.
Editor-in-Chief, Trent Valley Archives *Heritage Gazette*



ON THE COVER:
An illustration of Irish emigrants on the Mercey in 1846 from the Pictorial Times. Although the illustration dates from two decades after the Peter Robinson Emigration, it provides a glimpse of just how close the quarters would have been on the John Barry.

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Mark Tinkler

Thanks everyone.

HERITAGE GAZETTE

OF THE TRENT VALLEY



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HERITAGE GAZETTE

This issue of the *Heritage Gazette* was brought to you by the *Heritage Gazette* committee: Alicia Bertrand, Elwood Jones and Madison More.

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TWISTING HISTORY: *Confessions* of a HISTORICAL FICTION PLAYWRIGHT

BY ED SCHROETER

Stage plays inspired by history are ideally suited to exploring the nature, depth, and core of characters from the past, people who are often grappling with challenges similar to our own, and their lessons

learned. I have been writing historical fiction in playscript form since 1984 when I encountered the story of an early Canadian environmentalist, Grey Owl — Archibald Stansfeld Belaney — an

Englishman who masqueraded as a First Nations author and conservationist. My script won First Prize and the Solange Karsh Award in the Ottawa Little Theatre’s annual national One-Act Play Writing

Competition in 1989. When I wrote *Fire in the Stable*, about Wolfe and Montcalm, it won Third Prize in the same competition in 1993.

Since I have never been comfortable taking liberties with documented history, I have always written about well-known historical figures in the spaces between history that are adjacent to the historical timeline. I generally shunned chronological stories. For example, when I discovered that General Wolfe suffered bouts of rheumatic fever in 1759 while trying to capture Quebec City, and the Marquis de Montcalm wrote letters about being homesick to his wife and subordinate, Colonel Louis-Antoine Bougainville, I wrote about Wolfe having a fevered delusion that Montcalm begged him to defeat him. It’s the only explanation for Wolfe’s army’s impossible ascent up a

goat track to the Plains of Abraham and Montcalm’s decision to come out of the fortress and do battle.

Writing *Crossing Over* was much more challenging because the history of the Robinson Emigration is a far-reaching settlement story with a built-in chronology of events. I would have typically explored three or four characters from the event in a non-linear manner. However, the excitement and publicity surrounding the bicentenary of the emigration demanded a play more faithful to its history.

First, I realized the topic was so vast and the cast of 2000 characters so large, that I would need to narrow the focus for a play. Trying to write about more than a dozen characters would dilute the power

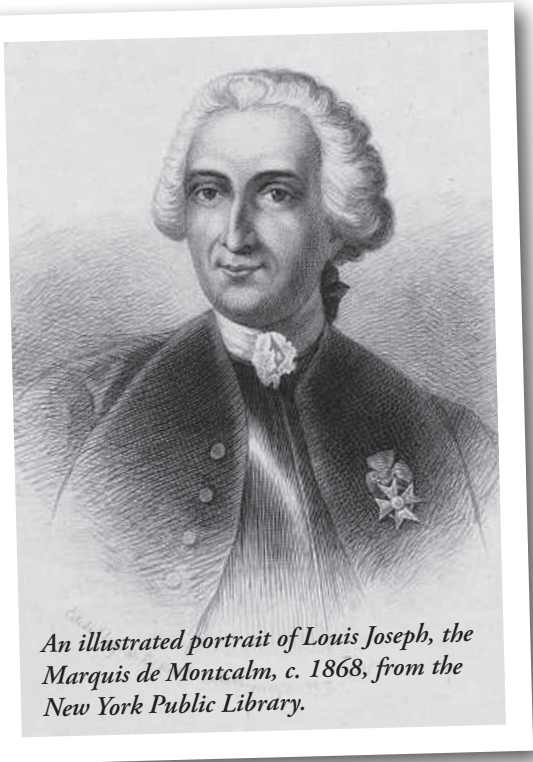
of the script and turn it into a revue, a type of theatrical performance consisting of a series of loosely connected sketches, songs, and/or dances. Revues are entertaining but rarely evoke emotions, provoke thought, and offer insight into human experiences through characters facing conflict and navigating complex themes. Furthermore, there are practical limitations on cast sizes when it comes to recruiting actors, staging,



Actors Keith Jones (Left) and David Fox (Right) portray Generals Wolfe and Montcalm in the play *Fire in the Stable*.

Crossing Over
script reading on
January 17.





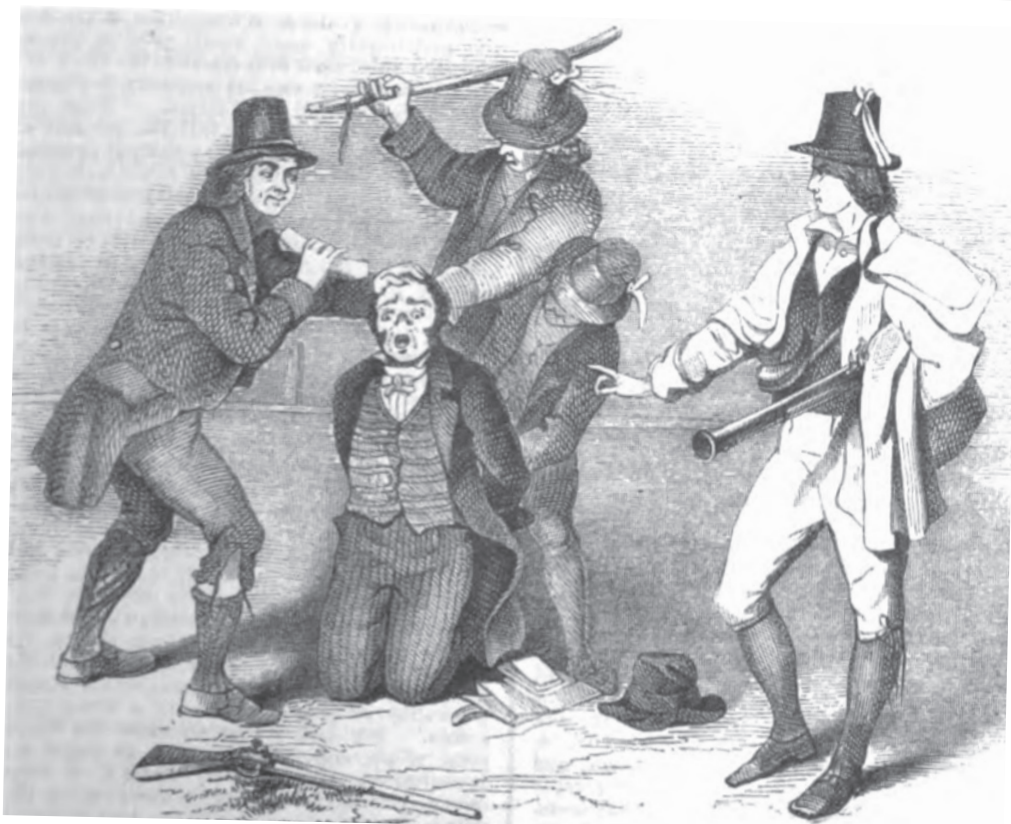
An illustrated portrait of Louis Joseph, the Marquis de Montcalm, c. 1868, from the New York Public Library.

Beaver (February-March, 1994), since renamed *Canada's History*.

The magazine article by Bennett McCuaig, which you can read online at <https://www.canadashistoryarchive.ca/canadas-history/the-beaver-feb-mar-1994/flipbook/22/>, tells the story of the storm-tossed emigrant transport ship, *John Barry*, one of the nine ships that carried the Robinson emigrants to Upper Canada. It ran aground in the St. Lawrence River, weathered a storm, and a revolt by terrified passengers while the ship was stuck on a sand bar. The story of an ill-fated vessel and frightened emigrants would add an exciting dimension to the play. Furthermore, ships are ideal settings for plays. They are contained, confined, pressure cooker environments from which

there is no escape for the characters. The environment forces them to show their true colours and confront their issues.

The first character to catch my eye was David Nagle, a passenger on the *John Barry*. His family was listed only as “Wife” with no settlement location given. Mysterious! Furthermore, he came with an entire backstory. Working as a land agent (rent collector) for a landlord, one of his jobs was evicting tenant farmers who were behind in their rent. In her book, Bennett McCuaig wrote that David was being pursued by the Whiteboys, an Irish agrarian rebel secret society set on redressing the wrongs committed by Anglo-Irish landlords and collaborators. Seven years later, after further research, Bennett McCuaig published an alternative account of David Nagle based on Ship’s Surgeon William Burnie’s diaries. In his version, Nagle was convicted of Whiteboyism, sentenced to death, turned King’s Witness, and his sentence commuted to transportation to Canada. Henry Bathurst, 3rd Earl Bathurst, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, sent an order to Peter Robinson to take Nagle and his wife to Canada as settlers. Whatever the case, Nagle was a man whose life was in



An illustration of Irish Whiteboys from George Lillie Craik and C. MacFarlane, *The Pictorial History of England: Being a History of the People as well as a History of the Kingdom, Vol. 5* (London: Charles Knight, 1849), 79.

and meeting other technical requirements of community theatre. I needed to find a handful of interesting characters to carry the story.

I felt uneasy because I would have to take several liberties with history to make the story work on stage. Like the Marquis de Montcalm in his letters, please let me confess my crimes against local history.

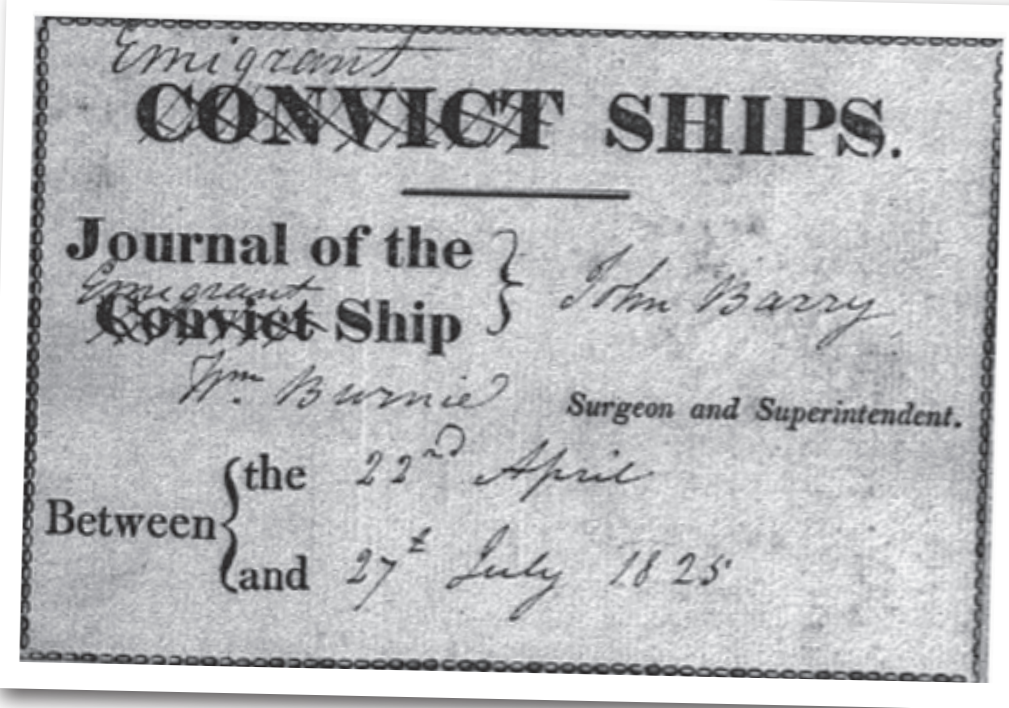
I stumbled across some great characters that I could enlist to tell part of the story of the Robinson Emigration on pages 124-125, 135-136, and 86-87 in Carol Bennett McCuaig’s book, *Peter Robinson’s Settlers 1823 - 1825* (1987), and her 1994 article “The Voyage of the John Barry” in *The*

turmoil and full of conflict — the stuff that great protagonists are made of.

Writing the character of Nagle’s spouse was the biggest challenge of the script. “Wife” was not much to go on. She is completely made up and is without question the biggest fiction in the play. I could have simply ignored the fact that Nagle had a wife and left her out, but my instincts told me that he needed a foil. I wrote the Nagle character as if he was still searching for his own identity, and the love of his life was willing to support him.

In developing Mrs. Nagle, I first looked through Bennett McCuaig’s *Peter Robinson Settlers* book. I found a family on the John Barry with a daughter as close to marriageable age as possible, somebody that David Nagle could meet and fall in love with. Mary Shea was only age 12, but I borrowed her name anyway and advanced her age by nine years. Mary Shea’s two-year-old brother Denis died within sight of land as the *John Barry* came up the St. Lawrence River and her father, Thomas Shea, 44, drowned on Rice Lake on the way to Asphodel, leaving Mary’s mother, Bridget Shea, a widow in a challenging situation. These tragedies made this new character, Mary Shea Nagle, very sympathetic.

As I developed her character, I realized that for the story to make sense, Nagle needed to have met and fallen in love with Mary a few months before departing Ireland. I decided to keep her name, Mary Shea, her mother’s name Bridget, and her deceased father, Robert. Everything else I invented. I decided that these fictional Sheas should be a different family from the one on the ship and that only Mary left Ireland. I also made them all very sympathetic characters. I decided that Robert had also been a land agent (tenant rent collector) working for Lord Kingston who had been burned alive in his cottage by Irish Whiteboy rebels, forcing Mary, her sisters, and her mother Bridget into domestic servitude in Lord Kingston’s household. Whiteboys were responsible for similar executions of English collaborators during the agrarian



The cover of Surgeon William Burnie’s 1825 medical log for the emigrant transport ship *John Barry*.

rebellion, circa 1821 to 1824, but as I wrote earlier, this one was all made up.

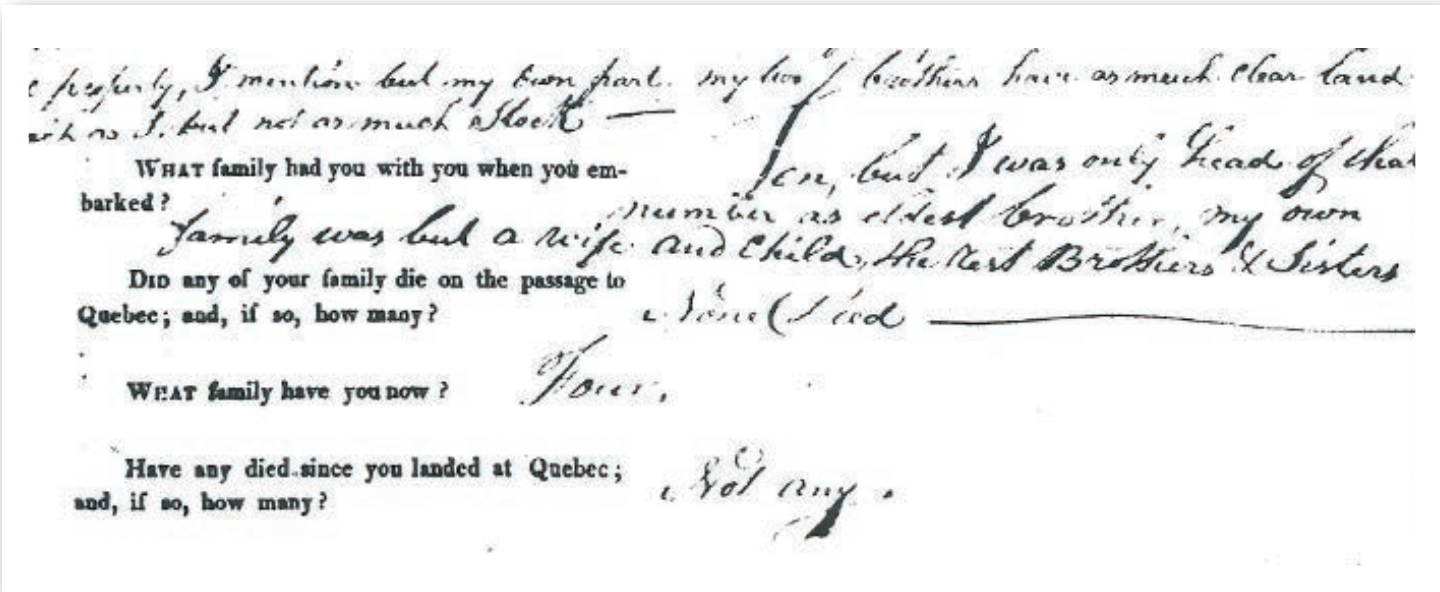
I needed a few more characters to populate the ship. There were 253 immigrants on board *John Barry*. I couldn’t write a play with 253 characters. I would have to try to create this illusion with a handful of passengers. Conveniently for me, another passenger on *John Barry* was Patrick Ryan. He was a schoolmaster, who settled in Emily Township. Under his family, Bennet had written: “Ship’s notes: ‘a good man. Instrumental in saving the ship’.” Saving the ship! I had another potential protagonist and an exciting plot with a natural climax: one group of people trying to save the transport ship and one group trying to get off it.

The space for the female head of Patrick’s household, his wife, was blank in Bennett McCuaig’s book. That fact was good news for a playwright. I decided to make Patrick a widower and a former soldier who had fought for England in the Napoleonic wars. I gave him a war injury - a limp. Both traits were historically plausible and would give him an air of heroism. It would make him a sympathetic character that would appeal

to the audience. Finally, I decided that since the play was set on a square-rigged sailing ship, I would make Patrick seasick for some of the time. As it turns out, it is well-documented that he was.

Bennett McCuaig’s entry about Patrick Ryan included another tantalizing piece of information: “Brothers Tim and John very troublesome.” The playwright in me seized on that: “Ah-hah!” I thought: “Here are my two antagonists! Not truly villains, but two characters in conflict with others. And two roles for young people. Now I have a play.”

Bennett McCuaig’s later article mentioned that the Ryan brothers, John and Tim, were indeed troublemakers, at least to some extent. William Burnie wrote specifically about their involvement in an immigrant “revolt,” when 12 families were so terrified that they demanded to be put ashore. However, I knew little about the brothers other than they seemed a trifle reactive and aggressive, and that Tim was 21 and John was 19, although directors seem to portray them as younger. I tried to differentiate between Tim’s and John’s personalities, making John a little more thoughtful, even-tempered, and deliberate



Patrick Ryan's 1828 Peter Robinson questionnaire.

in his actions. I added a few more details to the brothers' background, making Tim and John Whiteboy sympathizers. Everything else I made up, inferring how they might react to the people, situations, discoveries, and rumours they encountered on board the ship.

There is an interesting historical side note about Tim and John. I portray them as Patrick's sons, but a Robinson settler descendant, Christy Malone, posted in the Peter Robinson Settlers in Canada Facebook Group that they were Patrick's younger brothers. She sent me a copy of Patrick Ryan's 1828 Peter Robinson Questionnaire. In his answer to how many family members were with him when he embarked from Ireland, he wrote: "Ten, but I was only head of that number as eldest brother. My own family was but a wife and child, the rest brothers & sisters." However, this could be a different Patrick Ryan. He lists his occupation as Clerk in the Mercantile Department, whereas our Patrick Ryan is listed on the ship's list as a school teacher.

If Patrick was to be a widower and seasick for a period of the play and his sons were to be irresponsible, then there would need to be another family member to take care of Patrick, try to manage the two brothers,

and be a foil to contrast and highlight their qualities. Enter Elizabeth, age 21. As the eldest female Ryan on the passenger list, she seemed the natural choice. Historically, she would likely have become the female head of the household by default. As her father had sustained a war injury (you may recall I made this up) and her brothers were troublemakers, I decided that Elizabeth should be a long-suffering hard worker, making her a sympathetic character, too.

To keep the play interesting, I needed to add more conflict. I added further fictional details to their backstory, making up a feud between the Ryan and Nagle families. Since Nagle was a land agent, I decided that the Ryan family would become the embittered tenant farmer neighbours behind in their rent whose land Nagle had to repossess for the owner, Lord Kingston. There is no documented basis for this conflict but it is plausible and makes for good drama. That story is told in the prequel play, *Tide of Hope* (Trent Valley Archives, May 2024, Market Hall Performing Arts Centre).

Another fictional addition to the play is the character of Johanna Hagerty. She is a young woman whom I imagine to be in her late teens or early 20s. In the play, she has been masquerading as a boy named John. Historically, this is a twisted

amalgamation of two stories. On the ship *John Barry*, the Hagarty family of three was sent ashore because its members were masquerading as a different Hagarty family of five that had decided to stay behind in Ireland. Once aboard, the imposters tried to pass a daughter and son of the Young family as their own. On the *Brunswick*, the O'Grady family travelled instead of some other O'Gradys. The two families had the same number of children, except it wasn't an exact match. John O'Grady had to disguise himself as a girl named Johanna.

The last two characters are straightforward and as historically accurate as possible. The person in charge of the emigrants was Royal Navy ship's Surgeon and Superintendent William Burnie. He would therefore have to be part of the play. Burnie was from Barskeoch, Galloway, Scotland. From his writing, he seems to have been a caring, knowledgeable doctor assigned to the care, well-being, happiness, and management of Irish emigrants aboard the transport ship John Barry.

Finally, the script needed a narrator to fill in some details. I found him in the guise of the *John Barry* emigrant John Keleher in Don Willcock's article, "The Adventures of John Keleher: An Irishman, A Sailor, An Immigrant," in the *Heritage Gazette*

of the Trent Valley, Volume 14, number 2, August 2009. You can read it at <https://trentvalleyarchives.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2-ISSN-1206-hgtv-August-2009E.pdf>.

In the script, Keleher is portrayed as the (mostly) deceased ghost of a battle-hardened Royal Navy veteran of the War of 1812 and an 1825 *John Barry* emigrant. Historically age 28, he comes across in documents as a capable and charitable man of reason, integrity, and authority. I made him a fatherly figure who tries to take Tim and John under his wing. If the boys were going to turn out all right in the end, they needed someone in their corner besides their sister.

At this point, I worked backward from the climax and created a plot outline, although to be honest, the character development and writing occurred recursively and in stages. Next, it was time to write the script. In my experience, it takes two or three years to write a good play, but I was so busy helping produce the prequel, Trent Valley Archives Theatre's *Tide of Hope* (Market Hall Performing Arts Centre, May 2024), that there were just six months left to the opening. The only way to solve these deadline woes was to bring in another experienced playwright. Enter my friend and writing colleague, Gerry McBride, the director of *Tide of Hope*. We divided the play into scenes, wrote them, had various casts read them aloud to us, and sought their feedback.

After reading Don's article, however, it occurred to me that with the 200th

anniversary of the Robinson Emigration approaching, the play might come under intense scrutiny. I decided to enlist Don's help to fill in historical research details. Don is a historical researcher, writer, and editor. He has studied the surgeon's ship journal, the surgeon's private diary, and reports to and by Peter Robinson, making him an authority on the history of *John Barry*, its surgeon-superintendent William Burnie, and all things nautical in 1825. He is also the author of *Two Men, Two Wars: Peterborough's John Kelleher and James Rollins*, an Occasional Paper, Peterborough Historical Society, March 2017, of "The Adventures of John Keleher: An Irishman, A Sailor, An Immigrant," The *Heritage Gazette of the Trent Valley*, Volume 14, number 2, August 2009, and is writing about William Burnie. Gerry and I wrote, consulted with Don, rewrote, rewrote, and rewrote.

After we started to work with Don, we gathered new evidence, including the discovery of Dr. Burnie's diary, which surfaced after Bennett McCuaig wrote her 1994 *Beaver* article. The events of June 28 to July 1, 1825, might be less sensational than portrayed by the magazine. Don also shed some light on some of my other historical errors. For example, I discovered that the entire Ryan family, all eight members, were desperately seasick, whereas in the play only Patrick is ill. To get a sense of the conditions on board *John Barry*, you can listen to him reading from Dr. William Burnie's diary about his voyage to Canada from Ireland and hear Marie O'Connor, may she rest in peace, providing historical context at a meeting of the Lakefield



Historical Society at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rc2LdMtgmSY>.

This messy and idiosyncratic process resulted in the historical fiction playscript, *Crossing Over*, inspired by a true story. The plays' secrets and historical liberties now lie exposed to the world. I hope historians, researchers, and Robinson settler descendants will forgive my factual transgressions. They were all made to tell an important and entertaining story coherently.

Crossing Over will be performed at the Market Hall Performing Arts Centre in Peterborough on May 29, 30 and 31 at 7:30 pm and May 31 at 2 pm. Tickets cost \$30 for regular seating and \$40 for cabaret seating. Tickets can be purchased on the Market Hall website, here: <https://tickets.markethall.org/eventperformances.asp?evt=433>

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CAPTAIN JOHN DESERONTYON

(Odeserundiye) LETTER, 1809

BY JOHN DESERONTYON

The letter transcribed below details John Deserontyon's service to the King during the Seven Years' War. He was a young boy at the beginning of his service. His first engagement was when Niagara on the Lake was taken. In the letter, he talks about Montreal and Osnegatchy being taken, guarding white people from the Seneca Indians, being in Detroit, delivering letters in Montreal, being at Fort Hunter, and delivering letters in Albany, New York during the American Revolution. Copies are in the Mohawk archives in Six Nations, Deseronto and probably elsewhere. The Trent Valley Archives contemporary copy is in the Dorothy Gamble Hubbs fonds. This is a contemporary copy of a very interesting document. This is a direct transcription and editorial comments are noted in square brackets.

Note: Variations of his name include Deserontyon, Deserontyoy, Deseronto, and Odeserundiye.

NIAGARA DEC 1809 — ACCOUNT OF CAPTAIN JOHN'S SERVICES — FILE 10 OF OCTOBER 1809 J.B. CLENCH I.D.

Remarks of Capt. John Deserontyon's past services to the King of Great Britain.

This is the beginning of my service to the King of Great Britain in the time of war, while I was yet a young boy [The] first engagement I was in when Sir Wm. Johnson took Niagara on the Lake the year.... time after when Gen. Amherst & Sir Wm. Johnson took Osnegatchy & Montreal that was again in September

1765 *[or 1760] and after they took possession of Montreal, Sir Wm. Johnson made a speech to us all the Six and Seven Nations, and said —

Brothers, we have now thrownd down the French Colours, that used to trouble our minds, and I put the King's hatchet by your side and cover it for the present and if we should be in need for it here after we shall take it up again & make use if it.

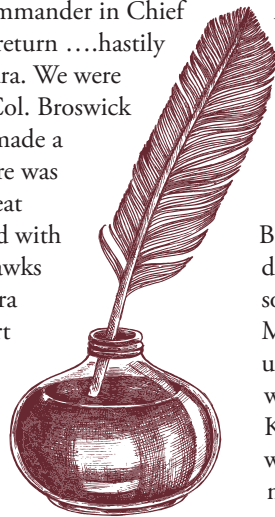
Some time after when the Seneca Indians were disturbing & killing the people at Niagara & at the place where they call the long wood point that was the reason our Commander in Chief sent us to guard the place and prevent the Indians in Destroying the white people, we left Johnstown in April (a party of Mohawks) and we remained there untill Col. Broswick [Bradstreet?] & Sir Wm. Johnson got there with their army and we left Niagara again in month July 1764 — and reached Detroit — and we were there all summer the commanding officer did nothing with his army, that was not our fault, for our Commander in Chief Sir Wm. Johnson had to returnhastily to Johnstown from Niagara. We were 900 Indians going with Col. Broswick [Bradstreet?] & we only made a great loss to the King there was a vessel wrecked and a great number of his people died with hunger, and we the Mohawks scarcely return'd to Niagara we got to our place at Fort Hunter the 17th Novr.

Again when the American war broke out in the year 1775, our Commander

in [Chief] Sir Wm. Johnson was dead the year before that. But Col. G. Johnson and Daniel Claus were in his place to take care of us. Gen. Kitts was then in Boston & the Americans looked upon them to take us their prisoners. It was then that Col. Johnson call'd for us the Mohawks to see what was to be done, and we thought that it would be very hard if we should lose them for it was only them help'd us so we abandoned our women and children & we took Col. Johnson & Col. D. Claus to Montreal that was in the beginning of June and in the month of Sepr. after Sir John Johnson sent me to Montreal again with a letter that came from Governor Sawyer from N. York I got to St. Johns two days after they fought the battle there.

.... commander of the Americans their were Capt. Daniel (a Mohawk) got killed by them, after that their came General Mon[t]gomery with 7,000 Americans, Major Brassket was the commander of the Fort, with 500 men under his command and we were in the fort when the American surrendered it and we had arms ready all night because the American officer said he would get into the Fort, But Major Brassket gave up the Fort seeing they were too strong for him and he said to us.

Brothers, now we are shut up & cant do nothing if you could make away off so we got out & scarcely escaped, one Mr. P. Johnson and Cratto was with us and when we got to Montreal there we found the people that were on the King's side all troubled did not know what to do, and General - Carleton did neither know what would be done for



the people for the Americans were already at [La Prairie] so he left the people and we[nt] down to Quebec, and the vessel he went in was taken at Sorrel and we escaped and we went back to the Mohawk River did not know what would become of us for it all there belong to the Americans.----

And now there was left one more the son of our late Commander in Chief that is Sir John Johnson the Congress looked upon him to take him as their prisoner & there was Gen. [Schuyler] came in the month of February [1796] with his troops and we done our best to help Sir John Johnson when we heard the enemies were coming but they did [not] nothing to him only took his peoples' arms away from them sometime after in the spring, Sir John Johnson heard by Capt. John McDonald that came from Albany that there was Col. Deaton coming to take him and he sent me to Albany to endeavour to know when they were to come away when I got there they were to set off in three Days time with 300 men, their I met with a man that was sent

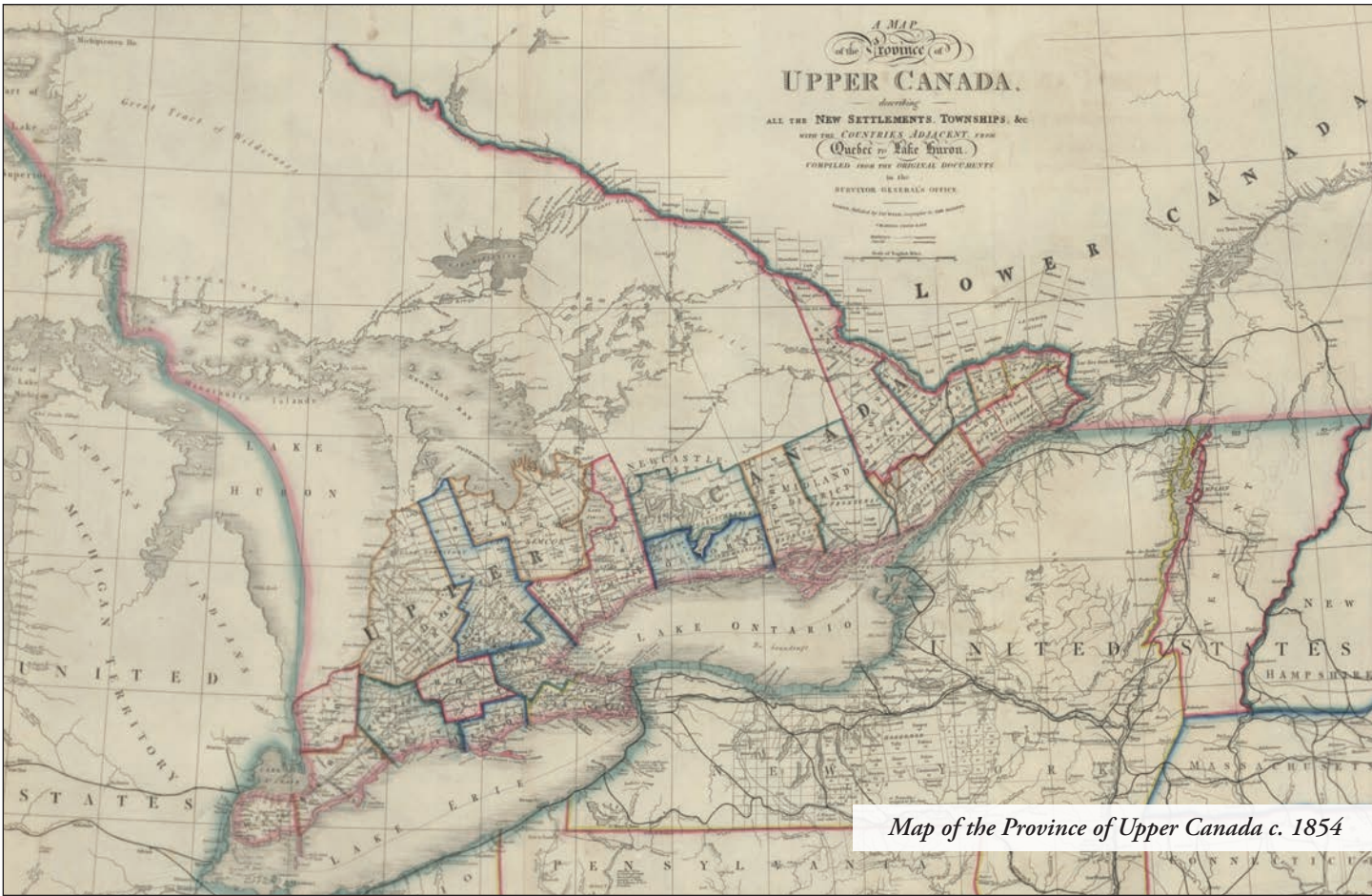
by Governor [William] Tryon with letters to go to Sir John Johnson so I went back with, we left Albany at 8 o'clock at

Night and got through 2000 Americans that were on guard all over the place & the man that was with me went back, and gave me the letters he had next morning I arrived at Johnstown by 10 o'clock and delivered the letters to Sir John Johnson their was some for Col. [Caldwell] at Niagara sometime after I left my house again to go at Niagara by way of of Col. Butler to hold a council and from there I went to Quebec there I met with General Burgoyne (the 4 May) that came from England, sometime after Col. Claus, & Sir John Johnson arrived too. General Burgoyne went with his army to Saratoga and Col. St. Ledger [Lager], Cols. Claus and Col. Butler went to Oshisga, Sir John and Col. Butler were there when we fought the battle the 6 August. There were 33 of the six Nations got killed and 15 wounded. Afterwards the 8th Sepr. all the Mohawks left their houses at.... Col. Burgoyne was

with his army and from there we all went to Montreal in the month November, where General Haldimand placed us at Lachine, as we were a going up to Niagara and he told us to remain and promised he would call of us for he said he wanted us very much so we done according to his request and there I encouraged the more to serve the King for their own people were there in surety. I never remained quiet during the last American war always fought for the King and Country & throwed down great many many that hate him. There is Sir John Johnson and Mr. Stuart can prove of the whole of my service.

Watermark Golding Snelgrove 1807

As well as at Trent Valley Archives, copies can be found at Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, Six Nations Library and Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County. There are likely other archives with copies but our copy dates from 1809. Thank you, Olivia Goadsby, placement student from Mohawk College, for your assistance in this research.



Map of the Province of Upper Canada c. 1854

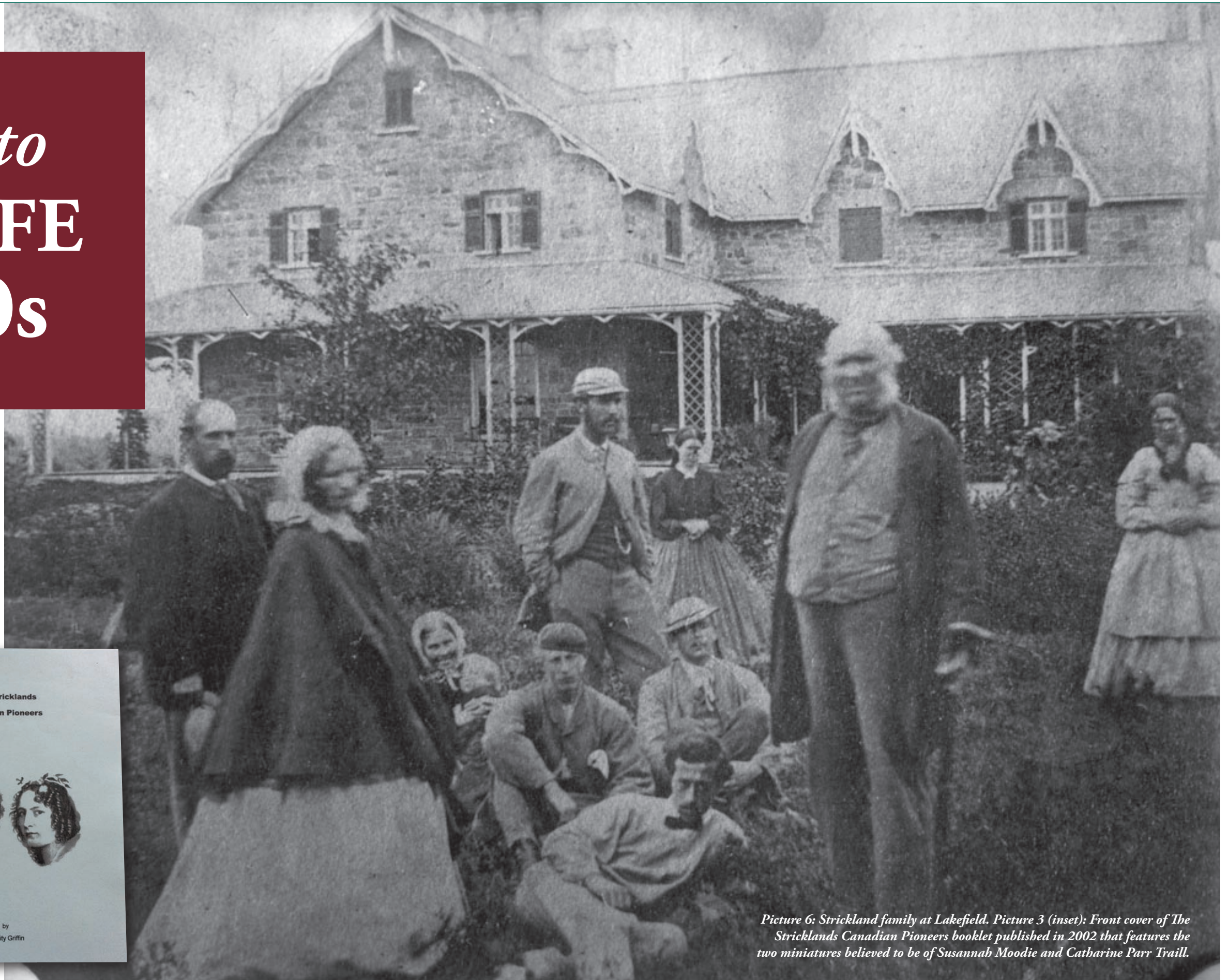
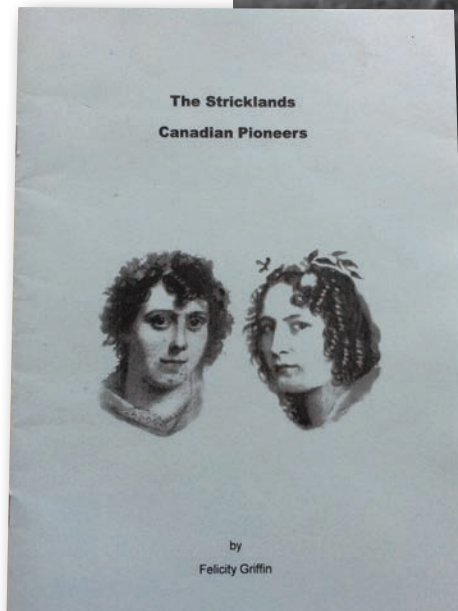
ONE WAY *to* FIND *a* WIFE *in the 1850s*

BY CHRISTINE FISHER, AUTHOR OF
THE STRICKLAND FAMILY

Work to identify two portraits in a small English museum has revealed a different aspect of mid-19th century life — young Canadian men visiting England and returning with English wives. The portraits which led to this finding are in Southwold Museum in Suffolk, England labelled as pictures of two Strickland sisters whose married names were Susanna Moodie (Picture 1 in a blue dress) and Catharine Parr Traill (Picture 2 in a white dress) but it seems more likely that they are actually two Ellis sisters who by marriage became Charlotte Stewart (blue dress) and Caroline Strickland (white dress).

The portraits were given to Southwold Museum in December 2014 by Felicity Griffin, author of a booklet entitled *The Stricklands Canadian Pioneers* published in 2002. The booklets' front cover (Picture 3) shows miniatures which were thought to show Susanna Moodie (on the left) and Catharine Parr Traill (on the right), but the booklet does not include the portraits of the young ladies in blue and in white dresses which she gave to the museum only a few years later.

Susanna and Catharine Strickland were brought up in Reydon Hall near Southwold, England. In 1832, they



*Picture 6: Strickland family at Lakefield. Picture 3 (inset): Front cover of *The Stricklands Canadian Pioneers* booklet published in 2002 that features the two miniatures believed to be of Susannah Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill.*



Picture 1: Portrait labelled Susannah Moodie



Picture 2: Portrait labelled Catharine Parr Traill

moved with their husbands to Canada to join their brother Sam who had emigrated ten years earlier. Twenty three children of Sam, Catharine and Susanna survived to adulthood. Fifteen of them were boys who by the mid-1850s were reaching marriageable age.

By 1855, Reydon Hall was somewhat dilapidated and had only two full time residents: the widowed mother (aged 82) of Sam, Catharine and Susanna; and their sister Jane (aged 55 and in poor health). It is a large and isolated old house over two miles from the nearest town, which is Southwold. Surprisingly, it had so many potential visitors in November 1855 that Jane had to write to Catharine in Canada, asking her to have a tactful word with Sam. Jane wrote:

“We are looking forward to seeing Robert Strickland with pleasure, but Mamma’s health and spirits are unequal to receiving any companion with him. Susan leads us to expect her son Alexander and indeed, dear Kate, he will be a welcome visitor. Mamma will be pleased to see George Strickland at some future time - five young men in the house at once would be too much for her.”

Sam Strickland’s eldest sons, Robert and George, were aged 25 and 22 respectively and Alexander Moodie was aged 21. The identities of Robert’s hopeful companion and the other potential visitors were not given.

Sam Strickland became engaged during a year spent living at Reydon Hall in 1851/1852, and returned to England to marry his third wife in April 1855. Robert Strickland met Caroline Ellis during a visit to Reydon Hall at about that time, and they married in Southwold in April 1856, Caroline Ellis thus becoming Caroline Strickland.

Caroline’s sister Charlotte Ellis had had some trouble with a previous Canadian visitor to Reydon Hall, and Jane’s letter to Catharine included refusing one specific guest. She wrote:

“It would not be pleasant for Mr Leigh to meet the Ellises. His proposing for Miss Hawker after his marked attention to Charlotte will make him unwelcome there. We like Mr Leigh much as a clever amiable and accomplished young man, and appreciate his talents and pleasant company - However, he is a dangerous companion for young ladies with the Atlantic between them.”

Charlotte Ellis soon married another Canadian. In 1860, she became Mrs. Charles Edward Stewart. He was a son of Frances Stewart of Peterborough, who was a close friend of Catharine Parr Traill. It seems from this little exchange, that surplus marriageable young men in the Lakefield and Peterborough region were using Reydon Hall as a kind of matrimonial agency.

All these pre-and-post-marriage surname complications show how easily a mistake might have been made in identifying the subjects of the two portraits. Further delving among papers in Southwold Museum uncovered the text of a talk given by Felicity Griffin in 1995 which contains the following paragraph:

“It was through the Stewart/Ellis family of Hill House on South Green that I came to be introduced to the Canadian Stricklands. Many of you will have known Miss Kaye Richmond who left her home in Southwold ... to make her home on the Island of Mull. Before she left I had the luck, sense or impertinence ... to ask her to explain her connection with that family. The immediate result was that she brought me a collection of books, papers and family memorabilia which she hoped might find a permanent home in our society’s Museum Library. I became totally absorbed in sorting out the story of these two families and their connection with Southwold.”

Among the Ellis memorabilia now housed in Southwold Museum are two small silhouette portraits dated 1848. One is named as Caroline Ellis (Picture 4) and the other as Charlotte Ellis (Picture 5) whose father, Capt. FW Ellis RN, was the Southwold harbour master. The silhouette of Caroline Ellis has some resemblance to the young woman in the white dress while the silhouette of Charlotte Ellis has some resemblance to the young woman in the blue dress.

Felicity Griffin’s period of being “totally absorbed” in the Ellis and Strickland families in 1995, her authorship of the Strickland booklet in 2002 (which does not contain any reference to the two Southwold Museum portraits), plus Caroline Ellis becoming a Strickland by marriage could easily have led to misidentification of the portraits either in 2014 when they were donated, or when they were subsequently re-framed. The donation was made when Felicity Griffin was 91 years old and in the midst of all the preparations needed to move from her long-established home in Southwold to a new home 400 miles away.

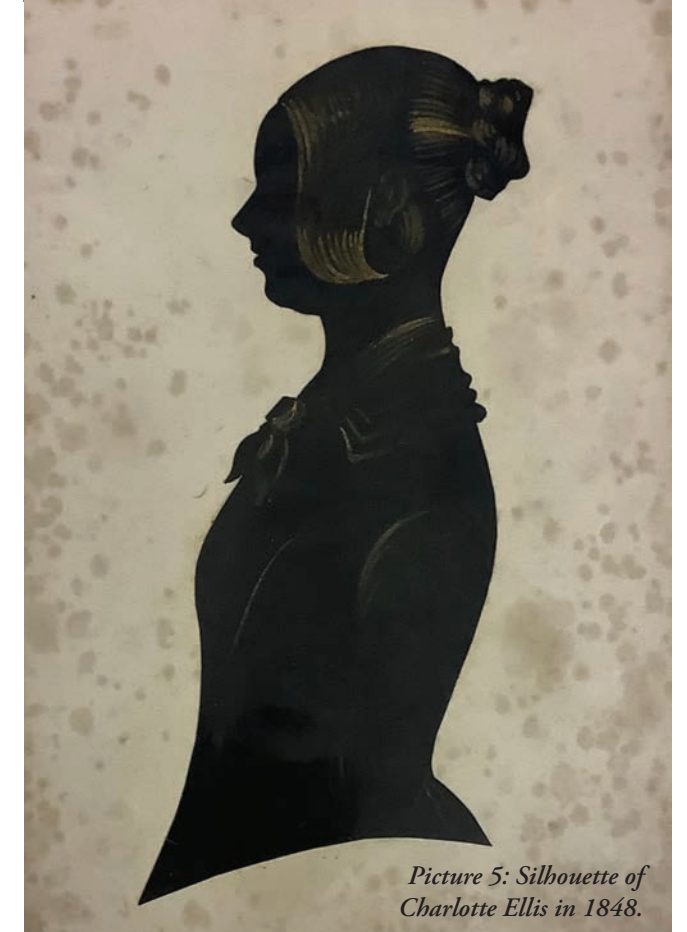
Kaye Richmond (whose papers and memorabilia she had passed on to Felicity Griffin in 1995) seems to have shared her ancestry with Caroline Strickland (nee Ellis) and there would be no surprise in her having portraits of the two Ellis sisters, Caroline and Charlotte, whose future husbands were Canadian and one of whom was a Strickland. However, there does not seem to be any explanation of how portraits of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill, which must have been made before 1832, could have reached Felicity Griffin. If such portraits had existed, it is probable that they would have been mentioned in Strickland family papers and, one way or another, would have found their way to Canada before the end of the 19th century.

In my opinion, the portraits show Caroline Strickland (white dress) and Charlotte Stewart (blue dress) with the portrait labels naming them as Catherine Parr Trail (sic) and Susannah Moody (sic) being simply a mistake.

Aside from the question of portraits, the surprising fact has emerged that several young men from Lakefield and Peterborough found English wives after visits to Reydon Hall in the 1850s. So, for any readers who have traced their forebears back to Lakefield/Peterborough but then found (or fail to find) an unexpected connection with Southwold/Suffolk in England, this could be the reason.

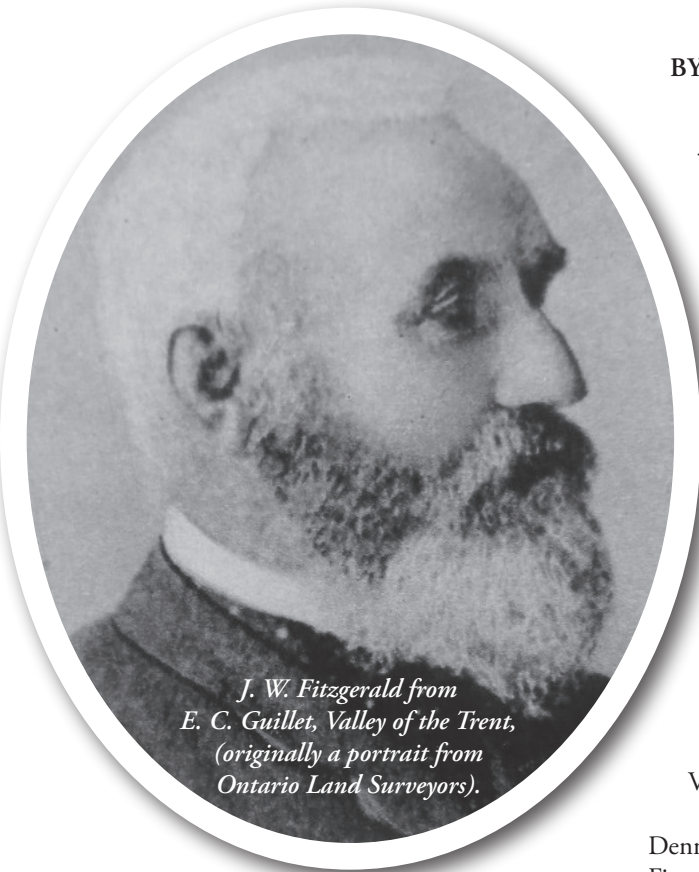


Picture 4: Silhouette of Caroline Ellis in 1848.



Picture 5: Silhouette of Charlotte Ellis in 1848.

The Well-Educated JAMES W. FITZGERALD



J. W. Fitzgerald from
E. C. Guillet, *Valley of the Trent*,
(originally a portrait from
Ontario Land Surveyors).

BY ELWOOD JONES AND DENNIS CARTER-EDWARDS

James W. Fitzgerald (b. 1829 - d. 11 May 1901) was a well-known citizen of Peterborough. He was a Public Land Surveyor from the 1850s, as was his father before him and his son after. Dennis Carter-Edwards notes Fitzgerald was a frequent commentator on local projects such as sewers, roads and water supply. Trent Valley Archives has recently received display copies of his survey projects in the north part of what was formerly the county of Peterborough but later became townships in Victoria and Haliburton counties.

Dennis has also learned that Fitzgerald was the surveyor behind the Romaine map which is a central feature of *The Historical Atlas of the Town and County of Peterborough* (1975). The Trent Valley Archives has research copies of the townships which Fitzgerald magnificently surveyed, including Minden, which became the model for subsequent surveys north of Peterborough. The original plans measured 5' by 8' and were on a scale of 4 inches to the mile. Fitzgerald Township in the Nipissing District is named for him.

Mary and Doug Lavery discussed Fitzgerald's surveys in *Up the Burleigh Road... beyond the boulders* which Trent Valley Archives published.

Fitzgerald surveyed Burleigh and Anstruther townships beginning in 1860 and the Burleigh Road from Burleigh Falls to the Peterson Road. "Fitzgerald proposed and designed the first bridge [at Burleigh Falls] an imposing King Post Howe truss design." (p. 14)

Trent Valley Archives also has copies of Fitzgerald's correspondence that were transcribed when the originals were lent to us in 2008. Fitzgerald was a vigorous writer. His letters, notably to Sir John A. Macdonald, provide insights into the competitiveness of getting surveying contracts working on the many railway projects that dominated Canadian politics from the 1850s to the 1920s. Fitzgerald was an Irish Catholic and active in Liberal Conservative politics (known as Conservatives) at a time when Macdonald had considerable support from Peterborough's Irish Catholics.

Fitzgerald lived most of his adult life in a house near Aylmer Street on the north side of Smith Street, the baseline for Smith Township, now known as Parkhill Road. On the Romaine map of 1875 his large property is shown as Block C lying west of Benson Street and his large house resides on the west side of the property, which is divided between two pages of the map as shown in the Historical Atlas of the town and county of Peterborough (Peterborough Atlas Foundation, 1975). In the 1888 directory, he is listed as living at 206 Smith Street.

The Catholic Register noted his death as May 18, 1901. "He was one of the Irishmen in Canada who unceasingly kept himself in touch with the affairs of his native land." It added, "He was a devout Catholic and a citizen whose worth was acknowledged by the people of Peterborough of every creed and class."

DOCUMENT 1: OBITUARY, *EXAMINER*, 13 MAY 1901

The death of Mr. J. W. Fitzgerald, civil engineer, took place on Saturday evening at St. Joseph's Hospital, where he had been lying for some time in a critical condition, being a sufferer from Bright's disease.

The late J. W. Fitzgerald was born at Cork, Ireland, on the 28th of December 1827, and was educated at Cork and Dublin. In 1849 he won a scholarship of forty pounds and a year's tuition in the School of Engineering at Queen's College, Cork.

In 1852 he served on the Ordinance survey of Ireland under Sir Richard Griffith, and on resigning that position he served under William Dargan, the great Irish railway Engineer and contractor, on the Dublin docks, the Irish Exhibition building, and on the Dublin and Wicklow Railway.

Coming to Canada In 1866 Mr. Fitzgerald was articled to Col. J. S. Dennis, of Toronto, who was afterwards Surveyor-General of the Dominion. He was admitted as P.L.S. in 1857, and at once appointed by Hon. Philip Vankoughnet, Commissioner of Crown Lands, to survey the township outlines in the Haliburton country, north of Peterborough. In 1857 he made a sub-division survey of Minden, and the plans and field notes of that township have since that date been adopted as the system for recording the returns of surveys in the Crown Lands office.

Mr. Fitzgerald settled in Peterborough in 1868. He has been steadily employed in surveying for either the Canadian or the Ontario Governments ever since, except from 1870 to 1875 when he was resident engineer in charge of a section of the Intercolonial Railway in New Brunswick.

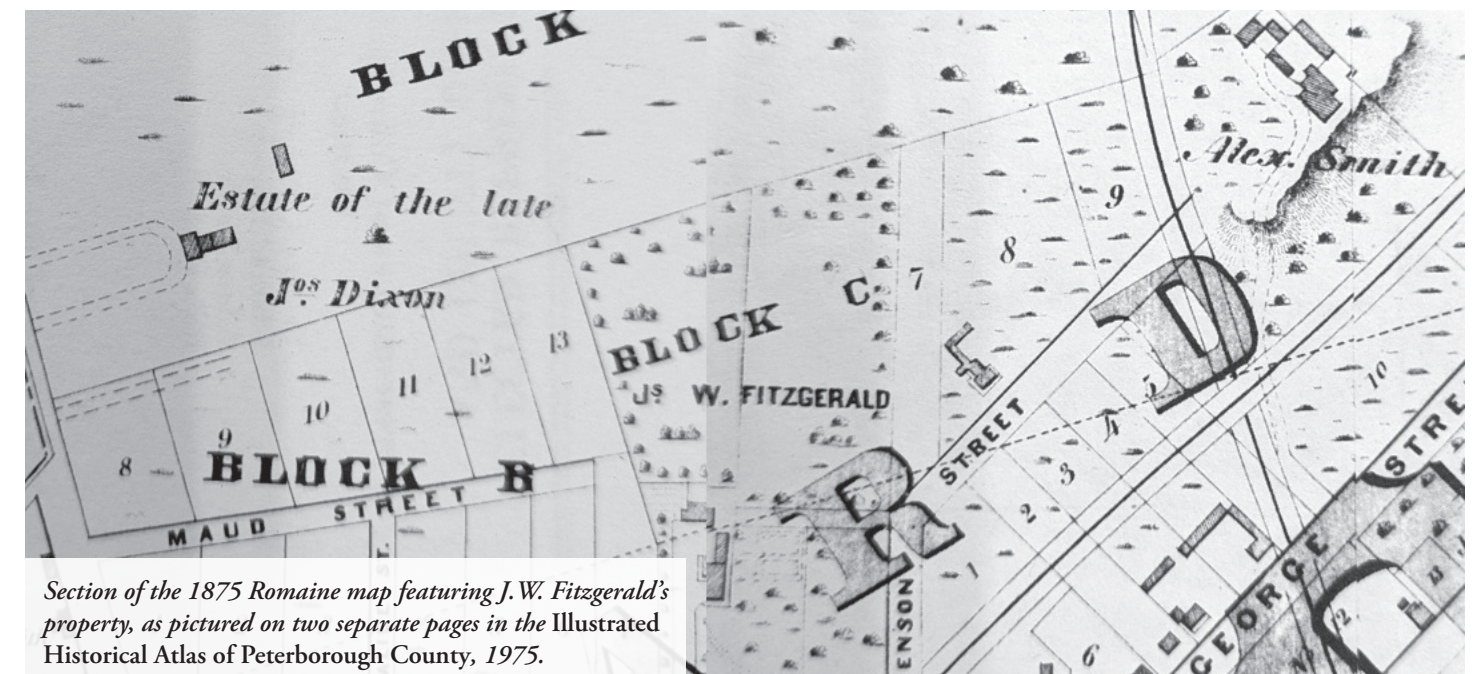
The late Mr. Fitzgerald was a thorough Irishman and was almost necessarily a man of warm heart and generous impulses. He had, however, great force of character and possessed strong convictions, and had the courage to express the sentiments founded upon them when occasion required. He was an enthusiastic Home Ruler and one of the most devoted sons of the Emerald Isle,

was an untiring advocate of her cause as he understood it and was also generous in contributing of his means for its promotion.

He was a well educated gentleman, in a broader sense than the academic. A wide range of elevating reading contributed to the unusual mental culture he possessed. Like all men he had his faults, but these were largely the outcome of his warm nature and strong convictions, and were far more than counterbalanced by his many generously good qualities. He passes away leaving behind him the memory of a long, busy and useful life.

The members of a grown-up family of six sons and one daughter, who are surviving the late J. W. Fitzgerald are: — Miss Mary Fitzgerald, of Lynn, Mass.; Messrs. D. J. Fitzgerald, of the Montana Ore Purchasing Co., Butte, Man.; W. H. Fitzgerald, Dawson City, Yukon; Dr Fitzgerald, of Cobocok; John Oliver Fitzgerald, Great Falls, Mont.; J. W. Fitzgerald, civil engineer, and Edward Fitzgerald, both of town.

The funeral will leave the family residence, Smith street, at nine o'clock tomorrow, Tuesday, and proceed to St. Peter's Cathedral, and from thence to the Roman Catholic Cemetery.



Section of the 1875 Romaine map featuring J. W. Fitzgerald's property, as pictured on two separate pages in the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Peterborough County, 1975*.



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- No tax receipt is given

DOCUMENT 2: LETTER FROM FITZGERALD TO JOHN A. MACDONALD, 30 JANUARY 1872

Several Fitzgibbon letters at the Trent Valley Archives were transcribed in 2011 from loaned originals. Of those letters, this is my favourite. Fitzgerald’s comfort in writing to Sir John A. Macdonald is amazing. But his account of what it was like to be an Irish Catholic surveyor is useful for understanding the world of the 1870s. His comments on Sir Sandford Fleming are noteworthy.

J. W. Fitzgibbon
Bathurst, N.B.

Honbl Sir John A. MacDonald
K.C.B., Premier

I received duly your reply to my note on the subject of matters connected with the Welland Canal.

As regards the contract for “Deep Cut” — although I hear it has not yet been declared I am satisfied my chances are nil, and as for the office of Superintendent, I see by the Globe of 22nd and this morning that a Mr. Biggar, C.E. of Hamilton, formerly of Intercolonial and latterly of ???, has received the appointment.

In your reply referred to you say:

“The whole canal policy of the government will be before Parliament next session, and until that is settled no appointments of an engineering ??? will, I ???, be made connected with the Welland Canal.”

Situate as I now am subject to the ever varying commands of sundry chiefs, without the least power to exercise my own skill or judgement, I declare I hardly know what to say or do.

Lord John Russell (???) at one time said of the Catholic religion that “It confined the intellect and enslaved the soul”. Of my position here I might truly say that “It confines the intellect and degrades the soul”.

As long ago as July 1867 you promised to procure for me a position of

prominence on some of the larger public works sure to follow the accomplishment of confederation.

What have I got after four years waiting?

Of twenty-three sections into which this railway is divided I have charge of the meanest and the only least calculated to bring my name before the public — so isolated, unimportant and buried in the forest is it that neither Chief Engineer nor Commissioner have ever set foot upon it. Between River du Loup and Halifax it is the only section not topped in some way by a road as it is also, I presume, the only one considered fit for an Irish Catholic engineer to superintend.

I understand it has been squeezed out of the adjoining sections, probably for my special benefit.

I admit that in a measure I have to thank the great Sandford Fleming for this but as sure as he bears his name he will yet hear of me and in a way perhaps he will least expect.

I do not yield to him one jot in my knowledge, either theoretically or functionally, of my profession.

I obtained the first scholarship and honours in the Queen’s University in Ireland at a time when he was selling needles and pins in Peterborough and I was engaged upon my own father’s works when he was moping about the townships surveying ??? for boot laces (???).

You will say I am ??? in using such language towards the accepted engineer in chief of the Atlantic and Pacific Railway but though his talents enabled him to bridge over these mighty oceans, which they do not, I will not permit him presumptuously and unwarrantedly to reflect on my professional reputation which is as dear to me as his is to him.

With all respect Sir John, I think that in my case you ought not act upon the opinion of a man wholly ignorant of who and what I am.

Even as a “Surveyor” my work has been used as a model for all the surveyors of Ontario employed by the Crown Lands Department since 1859 and to this day lithographical copies of it accompany instructions to them.

Will Sir Fleming slander the reputation or question the ability or fitness of young Blakewell, fresh from a Grand Trunk work shop, to superintend an important section such as no. 23 extending into Moncton ?? Not a bit of it. Blakewell has Mr. Brydges at his back, but I, an Irish Catholic, have no one.

Soothing over the face of the dominion at the present time and confining myself solely to the positions occupied by engineers and surveyors what do I find?

On the Intercolonial there is Mr. Fleming to begin with loaded with emolument, power and patronage. Next comes his man-of-all-work Schreiber, who never passed the assoc. receiving \$3000 — and larger expenses annually with the privilege of carrying on a railway contract in Prince Edward Island. Then come district engineers, ??? promoted division engineers.

I will pass over old Canada where no Irish Catholic can presume to anything above mediocrity in the profession or as Mr. Fleming said of me, a “mere surveyor”.

In Manitoba there is the brave and chivalrous Stoughton Dennis at the head of affairs.

On the Canada and Pacific Railway, ???, we have again Mr. Sandford Fleming leading off with Messrs. ??? following closely behind filling prominent positions as engineers in charge of immense districts. I should like to know what capacity or professional record either of these gentlemen can show to entitle them any more than your humble servant to positions of such importance and distinction.

I should like to know what help politically you have ever received from any or all of these while to my direct

influence and means you, at least, owe two of your fast supporters.

Believe me Sir John this treatment of your Irish Catholic friends in Ontario will not and cannot redound to your advantage.

I know the language and pulse of the Irish heart as well as any man in Canada and rely upon it Sir John what I have stated to you is true.

Surely within the vast range of the public works of the Dominion there are ample opportunities to provide a suitable position for at least one Irish Catholic engineer. Something more than \$2000 a year less \$300 for horse hire and travelling expenses and \$300 more for board.

Considering the season of the year and the state of my personal affairs, owing to my acceptance of this office, it would be inconvenient for me to leave here just now, but unless my position is enhanced by the opening of navigation about 1st May - I shall place at your disposal the situation I hold through you. Of this I informed Mr. Walsh, here last summer and at Kingston, Ont. during the fall.

At the latter place he said he would see you on the subject on his arrival at Ottawa.

Like most men I have obligations and responsibilities which I cannot disregard.

I have a large family, little means and some ambition.

I must keep them going.

I remain Sir John
Very respectfully
Your obedient servant
James W. Fitzgibbon

P.S. I have written to Mr. Walsh and it is my intention before I resign this appointment to write Mr. Fleming demanding from him proper satisfaction. If he refuses, I shall ??? this question otherwise for I cannot allow his libelous attack on my professional reputation to pass unchallenged.

DOCUMENT 3: LETTER TO THE EDITOR, *EXAMINER*, 23 MAY 1892

James W. Fitzgerald wrote several letters to the *Examiner* in 1892 critical of the proposed sewer from Edison Electric as designed and redesigned by a consultant, Mr. Alex Macdougall. The town had to build a sewer as a condition for Edison Electric (later Canadian General Electric) coming to Peterborough.

Sir, I am glad to see in the *Examiner* of the 20th another “modification” by the engineer of the town. It is formally addressed to the chairman of the town sewerage committee and to contain replies to questions put by this gentleman.

With much less grace than cheek, the people have been told they may tell the questions from the answers. As a citizen and ratepayer of the town I now formally ask that all the written questions on this subject from the beginning to this date, be given to the public. Until they are, no proper or conclusive appreciation of the answers can be arrived at.

This time the engineer “modifies” with a vengeance. In this brief communication I do not propose to be specific but I am prepared to be so at any time. The main trunk outfall sewer on Lock street he modifieds from a capacity of 5.30 square feet to a dribbling drain of 1.76 and to a possible lesser one of 0.96 capacity and to

relieve its flatness proposes to give it head by raising the sewer grade on George street from Sherbrooke street. I am glad of the change as far as it goes. I am glad to find the engineer and chairman of sewerage coming to my view — coming to Park street I hope the next “modification” will modify the ill designed Lock street sewer right out of existence and with it the fantastic overflow sewer. “Overflow” sounds high, but in our case it is not wanted. If an outflow pipe of proper capacity be laid in Park Street it will not only be ample to carry off all this overestimated “cellar and storm water” but the water will be absolutely required, even on the good grade which Park street supplies, to rinse out and keep free and clean the pipe.

Mr. MacDougall “finds nothing in Mr. Fitzgerald’s letter of the 14th to remark upon.” All right. I thank him for the unintended compliment. It shows he found nothing wrong in it. As long as the engineer and chairman of sewerage are coming over to my side and to right conclusions I shall be satisfied. A complete new plan is required or we shall have modifications and patchwork all the time. I warn the people to guard against this. I have promised to be brief, I shall be so. It would take columns of your paper to expose fully the twistings, turnings, evasions, misleadings, modifications and humbug that have been employed by the authorities to prop themselves on this question. No doubt more engineering and modifications will be resorted to, but it strikes me that public attention is now on the track of these gentlemen and they will be more careful in the future than they have been in the past.

I have read the last report of the Board of Health. It is very good and true; but why lug the filth and poison around the streets when from the point complained of, they can be directly carried to the river the shortest line, along Park street. In the name of prudence

and common sense let something of the kind I have been aiming at soon be decided upon and carried out on a permanent and systematic basis. Above all let as much as possible of your beautiful, health giving river be kept clean and free of sewage stuff. One by Park street can easily and well do all the work.

J.W. Fitzgerald
23 May

DOCUMENT FOUR: THE ROMAINE MAP WAS MINE, LETTER TO THE EDITOR, *THE DAILY EXAMINER*, PETERBOROUGH, 11 APRIL 1893

To the Editor.

At a meeting of the Board of Trade last night I was glad to hear the map of Peterborough and Ashburnham lauded.

I was not aware it possessed any special merit; but if it does, it appears to me a strange thing how Mr. Hay could have sat silently by, especially in my presence and have allowed it, without comment, to be called by his name.

It would have been quite parliamentary, though perhaps not over-seemly, on my part, to have at that moment contradicted the statement and claimed the paternity of the map in question.

Excepting a portion of the northern suburbs, north of Smith Street, incorporated into the town about the year 1872 or 1873 I think and a few minor details the map was made at considerable labour and expense to me in my office under my supervision by two of my pupils, Mr. Thos. Bulger, now city engineer of Kingston and Mr. John. J. McGee, Clerk of the Privy Council at Ottawa.

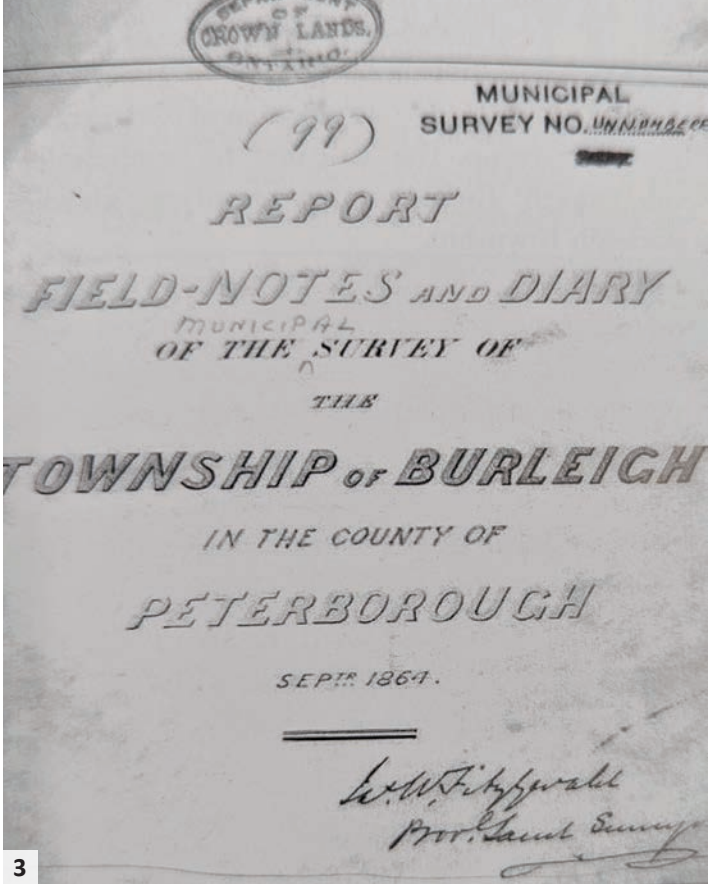
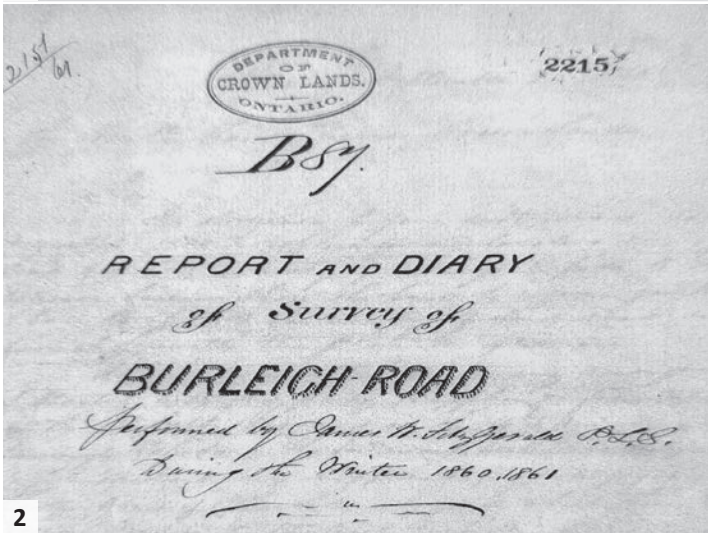
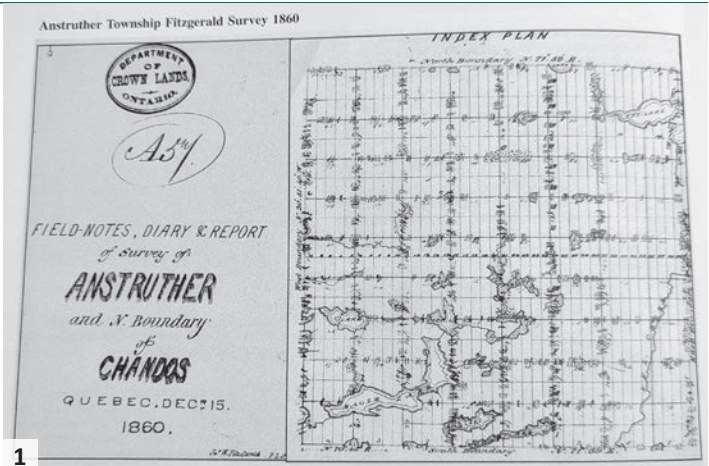
I have in my possession, all the notes and measurements of every dwelling house and appurtenance that stood in Peterborough and Ashburnham at the time the map was made.

The town council of the day having refused to grant me any assistance towards its publication or to purchase the map or even a few of them, I gave the map to Mr. Bulger who sold it for the magnificent sum of one hundred dollars to the late Mr. Robert Romaine.

I am pleased to find the old map appreciated at last and to hear a new addition of it spoken about.

J.W. Fitzgerald, Peterborough April 11, 1893.

1. Title page of Fitzgerald’s 1860 survey of Anstruther Township, as pictured on page 90 of Up the Burleigh Road ... 2. Title page of Fitzgerald’s 1860-61 survey of the Burleigh Road, as pictured on page 24 of Up the Burleigh Road ... 3. Title page of Fitzgerald’s 1864 survey of Burleigh Township, as pictured on page 31 of Up the Burleigh Road ...



Section of the 1929 Peterborough insurance plan showing J. W. Fitzgerald’s house at 206 Smith Street.

BY MIKE PARNELL

*Kelly's Island in the summer of 1979
(Mike Parnell)*

KELLY'S ISLAND — *The Flagship of Chemong Park*

If there was ever an iconic landmark that most people in Chemong Park could relate to, I would have to say it was Kelly's Island. The historic building that stood there for nearly a century was burned down due to arson 36 years ago, and as time goes on, I'm afraid some of my memories of the place will be lost as well. Hence, why I composed this article.

Originally built to house the Peterborough Rowing Club in the Fall of 1889, it was later known as Hopwood, Kerr, and then Kelly's Island. This unique structure on a piece of land jutting out from the shoreline has been the backdrop of many photos

taken over the years. If you see it, then, like the causeway, you can get your bearings while studying the photograph.

My maternal grandparents, the Dewarts, bought the cottage located at 668 Hatton Ave. from John Patte in the spring of 1933, after they had rented it from him the previous year. From their lot you had a spectacular view of the island, especially in the morning sun. My mother, Joyce, from the age of two, spent her summers in Chemong Park and she remembered the Hopwoods living there. She and her friends particularly liked Mrs. Hopwood who offered them warm, homemade cookies

when they stopped by to visit. However, in their world, it was never referred to as the Hopwood cottage. Instead, it was affectionately nicknamed "Jumpstick Island"! The Hopwood family were the first to use the building as a cottage and they owned it from September of 1900 to the fall of 1935.

Thomas S. Kerr was the next owner of the cottage island. He and his wife had only one child, Ruth, who later married Dr. Douglas Kelly. T.S. Kerr was a good friend of my grandfather, Col J. A. Dewart, and he would come over to our family cottage to visit. Of course, this was all before my



Peterborough Boat Club on Kelly's Island, Chemong Park (Mike Parnell)

time. But I remember Kerr's grandson telling me stories of Thomas going out in the lake to retrieve "small chunks of floating land" and using them to attach to the island. Kerr also owned the old Lakehead Barn out on the Lindsay Road, close to Fowlers Corners. He would use a barge to transport rocks from his farm to the island to reinforce it from the constant beating of the waves.

Fast forward to 1977. Like my mother Joyce, I also had the privilege of spending summers in Chemong Park on that same lot and the adjacent lot to the east at 670 Hatton Ave. The island cottage always fascinated me. Dark and mysterious, it spent most of the year all boarded up like an army barracks with not a pane of glass in sight. Only for two months were all the heavy wooden shutters removed and the sun and wind could once again stream inside. The winter of '77 was particularly hard on the old landmark. Vandals had broken in and stolen the old coal stove from the dining room, taking it out onto the ice through the large French doors. Many things were broken, and coal ashes were spread everywhere. And if that wasn't enough, other vandals ripped railings and decorative

wooden braces from the wraparound balcony and destroyed parts of the east porch, using the pieces to make bonfires.

In June, while reconstruction was taking place, I phoned Dr. and Mrs. Kelly at their residence, "Clonsilla" at 694 Sherbrooke Street in town. I asked them to let me clean the cottage for them. After much convincing they finally agreed and days later I met their son Ian out on the island. He handed me the keys and gave me a tour. It was a dream come true to walk through the darkened rooms and learn how to unbolt the 30 wooden shutters that protected all the glass behind them. Ian helped me remove the heavier shutters and then left. It was June 22nd; a memorable milestone for me. But I had to have the place cleaned by the 25th as Ian and his wife were moving to it that day.

I worked hard the next few days, manhandling all the furniture out of each room to do a thorough cleaning. In my journal, I described the place as a mess from the recent vandalism. I emptied each bedroom of furniture, storing everything out on the balcony. I couldn't use a camera to record where everything came from (the

film would never be developed in time). So, I opted to draw pictures so things would go back exactly as I found them. The second floor was approximately 1500 sq ft, like the main level, and there was not a single plug up there, just a lone hanging light fixture in most of the bedrooms. I had to run a vacuum cleaner using an extension cord that went all the way downstairs to the plug on the back of the kitchen stove. The east side of the balcony also required a lot of attention. I had never seen so many cobwebs! It was the least windy side of the cottage and the only place they could survive in any number. After the upper level was finally reassembled, the downstairs was next, and I drew pictures of each room as before. The morning of the day that the Kellys were to move in, I completed the cleaning on the main floor and packed up my stuff. The Kellys were thrilled with the cleaning job and three days later they invited me over for supper. Thus began a close friendship with them that started 48 years ago and continues to this day!

The cottage itself was approximately 30' X 50' providing almost 3,000 sq. ft. between the two floors. A notable feature was the wraparound balcony on all sides of the second floor, with a pagoda-shaped roof overhead. Many trees grew on three sides of the building, providing privacy, but also making the rooms somewhat darker inside. The wraparound balcony also contributed to the interior darkness. There were 16 exterior doors on the cottage. Ten of these were French doors that led out onto the balcony on the upper level. Of the six remaining doors on the main level, three were larger French doors. The cottage also had nine windows. Three were large, square, stained-glass windows on the second floor, and there were six smaller windows on the lower level, some with yellow and blue stained glass in their upper panes.

As you walked on the island, there was an expansive lawn with trees all around and to the southwest was a stony beach under the willow boughs that offered a great view down the lake. We called this area "the library" and it was here that the Kellys and I would spend hours reading (before they had children!). In later years, when other family

members visited, we would break out the croquet set and play on the south lawn. But we played viciously, with the ultimate goal being to send another player's wooden ball right off the island and as far as possible out into the lake! The game would often be delayed while we waited for the waves to bring the ball closer to the shore so it could be retrieved with a paddle or rake.

Though not the official entrance, everyone entered and left the cottage from one of the south doors leading into the kitchen that was located on the left side. The kitchen was a dark room with three small windows. Part of one wall was painted to help brighten the room and it was the only paint on any wall in the entire cottage. Along with a fridge, stove and sink, the room had two large harvest tables that served as countertops on the east and west walls. There was no table for eating at in the kitchen. One item of interest in this room was the original ice box which was built into the wall with many shelves and an intricate locking system. The icebox door was made of thick layers of wood, varnished on the outside. Until the time the place burned down it was still used, but as a cupboard for dry goods.

Heading north from the kitchen you passed through a small pantry on the west side with a built-in cupboard for dishes and cutlery. On the other side was a small door leading to a space under the staircase with shelves for canned goods and other items. The pantry was a very dark area and you had to pull the chain to turn on the hanging light there, even in the daytime.

Passing through the pantry, you reached a large spacious dining room, brightly lit with two sets of French doors to the west and north. This room was roughly 14' X 27' and it contained four tables along with a sitting area containing two large rocking chairs. A dart board was located beside a coal stove that helped heat the room. This was a very windy room so items on the main table had to be weighed down. Prevailing winds caused waves to hit the rocks close by and many times you felt as if you were in a lighthouse. The large French doors to the west offered a great

view down Chemong Lake, along with some beautiful sunsets. But at night the room was particularly dim with a single lamp hanging over the table. In later years I found an antique chandelier with five bulbs. I hung it over the table and moved the other light to the sitting area of the room. Beyond the French doors at the end of the room was the 'north porch' which was fully screened, breezy and protected by numerous cedars, a great place for daytime naps during hot weather.

From the dining room you could head east through a large archway into the living room, also identical in size, but much darker in the daytime as it only had a long narrow window and one set of French doors leading to the north porch. This room contained a large brick fireplace with two mantels and a small cupboard to the right with a yellow glass door. Another small cupboard hid an old musket ball, probably from the days of Champlain. (It was one of the few items recovered in the ashes from the fire). Inside the fireplace was a large swinging bracket. The pot for it sat on the hearth. This room was well furnished with two chesterfields, many armchairs, bookshelves, an old hi-fi system, several table and floor lamps and various paintings on the walls. Despite its size, it had numerous conversation areas which

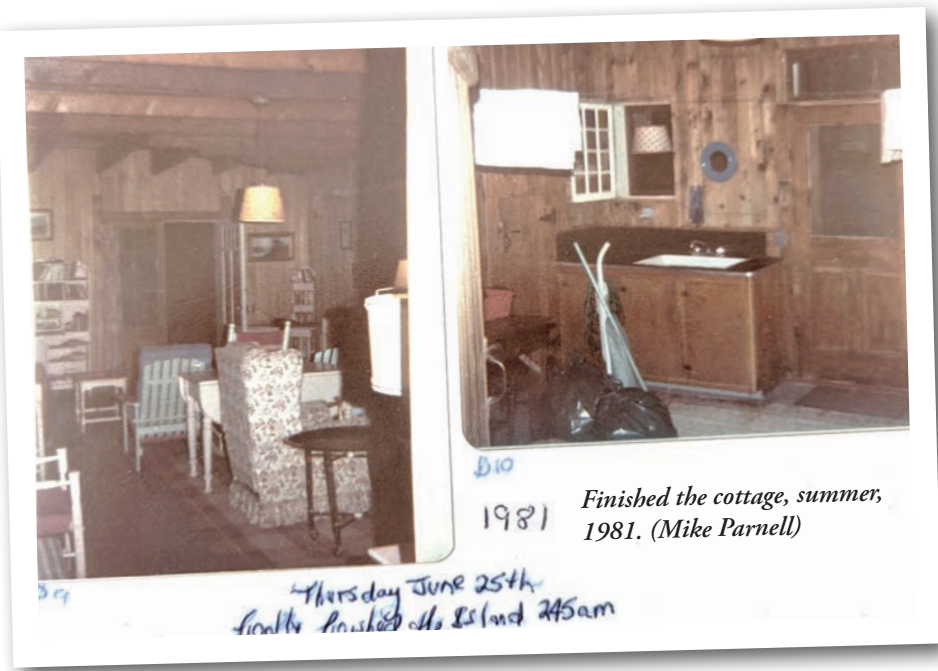
made it a very cozy, well-lit room for evening, especially when a large fire was burning in the fireplace. At the north end you could watch a show on an old black and white television, and it was here that I saw an episode of "Dallas" for the very first time in 1978. Another thing that sticks out in my mind is the three floor lamps in this room. One was plugged in. The other two were wired directly into junction boxes in the ceiling by old, twisted wires that hung down. Another memory is of the morning sun penetrating the cedar trees and coming through the stained glass in the top panes of the window, casting yellow and blue light down on the painted wooden floor.

In August, the fireplace was used more frequently. You could really feel the warmth from the large fires, but it was difficult to heat this vast space. Occasionally the drapes were drawn in the archway to the dining room where the coal stove was fired up. But if there was a brisk west wind, those drapes would just remain stationary at a 20-degree angle and you had to settle for sweaters, blankets and a hot drink. It was a true cottage!

From this room, you headed south through a small archway into a tiny formal vestibule. To the right was the staircase to the second floor. To the left was an antique



Dining Room in the summer of 1981 (Mike Parnell)



stand of natural wood. It had a bench with arms, and a movable top to store the phone books. The high back contained a large mirror with ornate double hooks on either side for umbrellas. On the other wall hung an old rotary dial phone with a heavy headpiece resting in the cradle. Various phone numbers were written on the tongue and groove walls. Nearby, coats hung along the wall from hooks. The main entrance door, with a small window and fancy hardware, was hardly ever used. It had a separate wooden screen door with spindles and gingerbread. This gave you access to the east porch, which was very secluded behind several trees, but there was no wind there. I remember only Dr. and Mrs. Kelly ever sitting out there on the swinging couch.

Continuing south through another door you would find yourself in the storeroom. A right turn from there would lead you immediately back to the kitchen. But in this room, you would see all the wood and coal stored to the left behind a decorative wooden panel. Lots of tools and implements hung on the walls. It was the kind of area you could revisit continually and still

discover something new every time. To the right, further down, was a large workbench with numerous cupboards and shelves. In front of it was a small bench with one of those little wooden wagons with the red wheels and frame stored below and a heavy steel toolbox sitting full on top of the bench. I still remember this area after the fire; nothing was left except the toolbox sitting on top of the metal wagon frame. The bench was completely gone.

A little further down on the right was the back of the ice box jutting into the room as the front of it was flush with the wall

in the kitchen. At this location, there was access to the upper compartment where the large ice blocks were brought in through the exterior door and loaded in with a large ice pick that hung nearby. Adding to the clutter of this room was a tall, narrow, hot water heater, the water pump and an old wringer washing machine. However, the pathway through the center of the room was always kept clear as it led to the only washroom in the cottage, which was tucked away in the southeast corner. Both it, and the storeroom, were the only rooms in the cottage where the wall studs were visible. All other walls throughout the cottage were finished. The washroom had a small multi-paned window with yellow and blue stained glass at the top, and it was the only window on the main floor that commanded the best view of the esplanade winding near the shoreline that provided public access to the island. Also tucked away in this room were the fuse panel and the burglar alarm system. During the off-season, you had to make your way to this little room from the kitchen to disarm the panel and get some lights back on. Even during the day when the cottage was all boarded up, only little cracks of light made their way through the French doors, making it very dark inside. The only illumination came from inside the fireplace which contained a rectangle of light coming straight down the chimney. It was an eerie sight, a pale ghostly light!

Now we are back in the little vestibule and standing at the foot of the staircase which rises to the west. A future article will continue through the beautiful old cottage up the sturdy well-built steps to another world, unlike the main floor. A world that used to offer a spectacular elevated view of Chemong Lake in both directions. This is the first glimpse into the long history of the flagship that once was the Peterborough Rowing Club. I thank the Trent Valley Archives for the opportunity to make some of those memories come back to life.



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ACTIVITY HAVEN is 50 YEARS YOUNG!

BY LISA MORE IN COLLABORATION WITH ACTIVITY HAVEN PRESIDENT MARK TINKLER AND MADISON MORE

Activity Haven, Peterborough's longest-running recreation centre for older adults (50 plus) is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. It began when a group of 20 seniors approached the City of Peterborough with an interest in starting recreation activities for older adults. On October 2, 1975, Activity Haven officially opened its doors under the City's Recreation Department. Lacking a building of its own, it was run out of Peterborough's Lawn Bowling Club on McDonnell Street. In its first year, it had around 200 members who

each paid an annual membership fee of \$2 to participate in activities including euchre, carpet bowling, luncheons, and crafts.

In 1977, the club expanded to Mount St. Joseph, where they rented activity space and established a community garden. In the late 1970s, activities included French lessons, quilting and yoga.

In 1983, the City acquired the former Queen Alexandra school building (see sidebar) and opened the Queen Alexandra

OPENING WEEK PROGRAM October 6th - 11th, 1975		
MONDAY October 6th	2:00 p.m.	Bug Hooking Guild Demonstration & Display
TUESDAY October 7th	7:00 p.m.	SOCIAL EVENING
WEDNESDAY October 8th	2:00 p.m.	Weavers' Guild Demonstration & Display
THURSDAY October 9th	1:30 p.m.	Hecrams Demonstration & Display (Mrs. Wakeford)
FRIDAY October 10th	4:00 p.m.	Crocheting Demonstration & Display (Mrs. Zolnowski)

Community Centre. In 1985, it became Activity Haven's home base of operations, although programming continued to take place at Mount St. Joseph's. At this time, the club shared the Queen Alexandra Community Centre with other community groups and non-profit organizations, including Meals on Wheels, The Peterborough Symphony Orchestra, Girl Guides of Canada, and the Peterborough Handweavers and Spinners. Over time, Activity Haven took over the whole building and ceased renting space from The Sisters of Mount St. Joseph. In 1990, it became an incorporated non-profit organization.



People register to become members on Activity Haven's opening day, October 2, 1975.

ABOUT ACTIVITY HAVEN

Activity Haven's mission is to promote socialization for adults 50 plus and to provide a friendly, healthy and caring environment. Our members are encouraged through intellectual, physical, creative and social engagement to be active and involved, to develop friendships and to maintain an independent and healthy lifestyle. There are currently more than 1,000 members and over 80 programs on offer, including instructor-led classes, casual drop-in activities and special events throughout the year. Our current annual membership fee is \$30.

To learn more about Activity Haven, visit <https://activityhaven.org/>.



Right hand page: Exterior of Activity Haven c. 2010s. Inset above: Activity Haven's opening week program, October 6 to 11, 1975.



Queen Alexandra School Kindergarten Class, 1951.

HISTORY OF QUEEN ALEXANDRA SCHOOL

Originally named the North Ward School, Queen Alexandra School was built in 1889 at 180 Barnardo Avenue and welcomed students the following year. The first principal was William Walkey, who presided over the school from 1891-1908, and the first teachers were Elizabeth Beckett, Jennie Davidson, Lydia Broad and Lizzie McLelland. One of just a few public schools in Peterborough at the time, the school educated children from kindergarten to grade eight.

In the early 1900s, after Edward VII became king, the school was renamed to Queen Alexandra to honour Edward's wife and was fondly referred to by students and teachers alike as "Queen Alex."

When the nearby Peterborough Normal School opened in 1907, Queen Alexandra School was expanded to become a model school for student teachers to train in, adding an additional six classrooms to the existing four. Throughout the school year, student teachers would visit Queen Alex to teach lessons, and on rare occasions, students from Queen Alex would visit the Normal School to participate in demonstrative lessons there.

In 1927, the school bought the property running along the east side of Conger Street, expanding the school grounds to 2.57 acres. The school grounds were divided into two sides with one side for girls and one side for boys, and the building also had separate entrances and stairwells for each gender. In the 1920s and 1930s, school officials took it a step further by having each class march back into the school after recess to the sound of martial music played on a gramophone!

While the school prioritized a quality education for its students, it also made time for fun. In 1920, a Home and School Association was formed to oversee extracurricular activities and special events, including the annual school picnic at Nicholls Oval in June.

After a decrease in enrolment over the previous decade, the school closed in 1973. It was used as office space until 1976, when the City of Peterborough purchased the property for \$100,000.

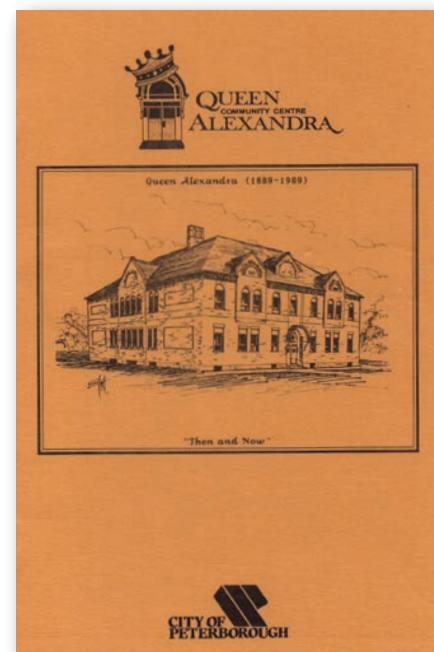
Source: Queen Alexandra (1889-1989): Then and Now by Murray Patterson and the Planning Committee for the Queen Alexandra Community Centre 100th Birthday Celebration, 1989.

In 1994, Activity Haven undertook a major building expansion project to create additional program space, make the parking lot bigger, and make the facility accessible with ramps, washrooms for the disabled, and an elevator. This was made possible through a combination of fundraising efforts and government funding.

Since the mid 1990s, the Queen Alexandra building has continued to be an ideal location for Activity Haven, serving as a community hub for its members. While the COVID pandemic in 2020-2021 seriously impacted operations, Activity Haven has more than fully recovered. The Centre looks forward to its continuing role, serving Peterborough's older adult community over the next 50 years.

There is something for everyone at Activity Haven. Come out and play!

Activity Haven will be celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout the year, including at their outdoor anniversary party on August 14th that will feature children's activities, a barbeque, and live music. Everyone is invited.



Queen Alexandra (1889-1989): Then and Now booklet cover, 1989.

2025 HISTORICAL TOURS

MAY:

Sunday, May 18 at 2pm | Peterborough's Irish:
Downtown Walking Tour

Sunday, May 25 at 2pm | Peterborough's Irish:
Downtown Walking Tour

JUNE:

Friday, June 20 at 7pm | Tragic Tales:
Little Lake Cemetery Walking Tour

JULY:

Friday, July 11 at 7pm | Peterborough Perpetrators:
True Crime Downtown Walking Tour

Friday, July 18 at 7pm | Peterborough Perpetrators:
True Crime Downtown Walking Tour

Friday, July 25 at 7pm | Peterborough Perpetrators:
True Crime Downtown Walking Tour

Sunday, July 20 at 2pm | Tragic Tales:
Little Lake Cemetery Walking Tour

AUGUST:

Friday, August 1 at 10am | Peter Robinson's Peterborough:
Downtown Walking Tour

Monday, August 4 at 10am | Peterborough's Pioneer Cemetery:
Downtown Walking Tour

Monday, August 4 at 7pm | Beyond the Ships' Lists:
The Peter Robinson Settlers and their Descendants
St. Peter's Cemetery Walking Tour

Friday, August 8 at 10am | Peter Robinson's Peterborough:
Downtown Walking Tour

Sunday, August 10 at 1pm | Beyond the Ships' Lists:
The Peter Robinson Settlers and their Descendants
St. Peter's Cemetery Walking Tour

Friday, August 22 at 7pm | Women's History:
Little Lake Cemetery Walking Tour

Sunday, August 24 at 2pm | Movers and Shakers:
Little Lake Cemetery Walking Tour

OCTOBER:

Wednesday, October 22; Thursday October 23; Friday,
October 24; Wednesday, October 29; and Thursday, October 30
at 7pm | Ghost Walks (Both Downtown and Ashburnham)

NOVEMBER:

Sunday, November 9 at 3pm | Military History:
Little Lake Cemetery Walking Tour

Tickets for all tours will be available for sale via the events page on our website in late April/early May at www.trentvalleyarchives.com/events.

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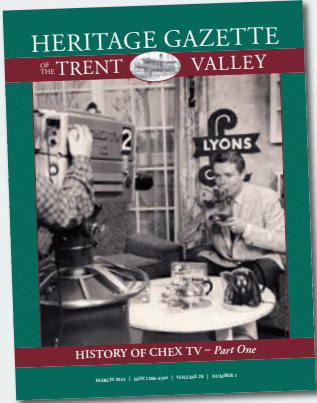


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