

# NIAGARA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM



## Museum Chronicles



### SPRING 2008 NEWSLETTER

#### *Year of...The Art of Niagara*

#### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MARCH 20	Art of Niagara Lecture Series – <i>Niagara Parks Commission Art Collection</i> by James Campbell, 7:30pm
APRIL 17	Art of Niagara Lecture Series – <i>Preserving Niagara's Art: Highlights from Eight Years of Conservation Projects</i> by Sandra Lawrence, 7:30pm
APRIL 30	Volunteer Appreciation Day – drop in after 1 pm
MAY 15	Summer Exhibition Opens – <i>Inspired Landscapes</i>
MAY 15	Art of Niagara Lecture Series – <i>The Art of Landscape Architecture</i> by Wendy Shearer, 7:30pm
MAY	May is Museums Month!
JUNE 4	Janet Carnochan Day – Official Opening of <i>Inspired Landscapes</i>
JUNE 19	Art of Niagara Lecture Series – <i>The Artistry of Ships</i> by Bill White, 7:30pm
JULY 17	Art of Niagara Lecture Series – TBA
AUG. 21	Art of Niagara Lecture Series – TBA
SEPT. 18	Art of Niagara Lecture Series – <i>Theatre in Niagara-on-the-Lake</i> by Fred Hall, 7:30pm



#### CHRISTMAS WRAP-UP

Congratulations to this year's Christmas Gift Hampers – First place: Mrs. Quadrini of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Second Place: Gertie Jacobi of St. Catharines! The baskets had a combined valued of over \$800!

The Museum again took part in the Chamber's Annual Christmas Tree decorating on Queen Street. This year we decorated our tree to look like Sir Isaac Brock, to get everyone thinking about the Bicentennial of the War of 1812. We did not win this year, but thought that our tree was definitely one of the most creative.

This Edition of the Museum Chronicles is generously sponsored by:

**DAVID MURRAY**

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Walker, Peggy  
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Weiss, Carolyn & Paul  
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White, Robert  
Wilkinson, Dianne  
Ziraldo, Donald

### **CENTENARY**

Burrroughs, Sarah  
Shaw Festival  
The Niagara Foundation  
Walker, John & Carol  
Werner, Barb & Ed

### **MUSEUM**

Garrett, Lionel  
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Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary  
Foundation  
Rednall, John & Shirley  
Waugh, Bob

### **NEW LIFE MEMBERS**

Baxter, Susan  
Couillard, John  
Maplesden, Elizabeth  
Tarr, Douglas

## IN KIND

Adamson, Sally  
Allen, Chris  
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Enns, Molly  
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Mactaggart, Terry  
McCarthy, Barb  
McKiee, Jay  
Merritt, Dr. Richard  
Murray, David  
Nixon, Carol

Oliver-Malone, Elizabeth  
Palframan, Carolyn  
Rigby, Caroline  
Riverbend Inn & Vineyard  
Rumble, Neil  
Smith, Jim  
Steele, Owen & Doreen  
Swayze, Margaret  
Taylor, Les & Jean  
Taylor, Richard & Monica  
Tierney, Sheila  
Vodraska, Florence  
Walker, Glenn

**Thank You to all of our donors from 2007 who helped to support the many functions of your Society & Museum. Without your support we could not continue to preserve the rich heritage of Niagara-on-the-Lake!**



Centennial volunteers and sponsors were thanked at a reception on November 13<sup>th</sup> for all of their efforts during our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Pictured on the left are volunteer Bob Waugh with past president Kelly James and current Vice President of the Museum, Jim Armstrong;



volunteers Sheila Hill, Mrs. Derbyshire and co-chair of the Centenary Committee, Sheila Tierney.

## PUBLICATIONS

***The Documentary History of the Campaign on the Niagara Frontier 1812-1814*** by: Ernest Alexander Cruikshank (NEW PRINTING) - Cruikshank's collection of correspondence and papers has provided generations of historians and genealogists with detailed firsthand accounts of events and personal experiences during The War of 1812. No history library is complete without these nine extensive volumes, which can be purchased individually or as a complete set for \$365. If you are interested in obtaining a copy for your collection, please contact the Museum, we will order them and you will receive your 10% membership discount when you buy it from us! Due to the price of the set, we would appreciate that if you request a copy that you do follow through and purchase it. For more information on the books visit

<http://globalgenealogy.com/countries/canada/military/resources/101151.htm>

The Columbia County Historical & Genealogical Society has also produced a new publication that may be of interest to some members. ***The Whitmore Saga*** tells the stories of five Whitmore children who were taken captive by Indian raiders during the American Revolution. The research tracks these children into their adult years and includes information on two local U.E. Loyalists, John Whitmore and Daniel Servos. If you would like to purchase a copy of the publication, please let us know and we will order one for you. The cost of the book is approximately \$18 with shipping, but may vary depending on US exchange rates.

## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION 2008

National Volunteer Week is April 27<sup>th</sup> – May 3<sup>rd</sup> and the theme is “**volunteers. from compassion to action**”. Please do not forget to thank our community’s volunteers for the work they do with the many charities and organizations in Niagara. We have thanked many of our volunteers already this year for their commitment to the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary projects and we will again show our appreciation during National Volunteer Week in April.

Rather than have a formal seated presentation this year, we invite volunteers to have some cake and coffee on April 30<sup>th</sup>, anytime after 1:00 pm. Please drop in to visit us and your other volunteer friends and enjoy some light refreshments as a thank you for the work you do as a Museum volunteer. Volunteers, look for your invitations to Volunteer Appreciation Day in the mail in April.

## WE ARE HONOURED!



Sheila Tierney and Terry Mactaggart, Centenary Committee Co-Chairs.

Joy Ormsby, one of the Museum’s long time volunteers, also accepted the award for Citizen of the Year. Joy delivered a humorous and heartfelt thank you to the community for “giving her more than she gives them”. Many have benefited from Joy’s research of the town’s history and we are honoured that she is a part of our family here at the Museum.



## WILFRID AGNES

Wilfrid M. Agnes, Honorary Life Member of the Niagara Historical Society, died recently. He was born in Montreal and shortly thereafter, returned to France the ancestral home of his Father. After the war he attended university and subsequently joined Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs. He served in a number of legations abroad, including terms as Ambassador to Haiti and Ethiopia. Later, in Ottawa, he was an Aide to the Gov. General, the Hon. Jules Leger and Gov. General, the Hon Edward Schreyer.



During their foreign service, both Wilfrid and his late wife, Pat, were involved with the well being of fellow Canadians and the local populations. This concern carried over to their retirement in Niagara - on-the-Lake where both were involved as volunteers in a number of organizations. While President of the Society, structural problems with the Museum’s fabric called for major restoration work. Wilfrid was a driving force in fundraising, planning and overseeing a major part of this work. Pat was also a long-time volunteer with, and supporter of, the Society.

Wilfrid was a Director of the Christian Children's Fund of Canada and participated in the planning and implementation of aid projects around the world.

Above, Wilf Agnes in 2005 after accepting his Honourary Life Membership, pictured with Richard and Monica Taylor.

## REMINISCENCES

Town resident Chris Allen is seen in this 1955 photograph taken by his mother in Simcoe Park. The dance hall pavilion in the back ground was built in the late 1800's and stood until the early 1960's. It was located where the public washrooms in Simcoe Park are today. On summer evenings, band leaders Bud Allen, Minnie Sutton or Ma Finn played swing music while young couples danced under coloured lights. Ma Finn's band also played for square dances held in the Court House on Queen Street.

With thousands of soldiers in town staying at Camp Niagara the dance hall was a very popular place for girls in town to meet a soldier on the dance floor. The four walls of the dance hall were opened in the summer with chain link wire preventing entrance from other than the doorways. Wooden benches surrounded the entire dance floor which was built on wooden pylons about four feet off the ground. Dances were five cents each and tickets were sold at the concession stand. Although the concession stand was a separate four-walled building, it was under the same roof as the dance hall with a walkway separating the two.

From the walkway, there were two entrances to the dance floor. Because the dance floor was elevated a set of four steps had to be climbed to reach the dance floor. Bill and Mary Bishop ran the concession stand through the 1930's with the help of their niece Elizabeth Bishop (Nesbit). In 1940 Jim and Daisy Elliott took over the refreshment stand, which they ran until 1944. Jim and his son John Elliott cut the grass in the entire park using hand push mowers. After the Elliott's, Mrs McClelland from McClelland's West End Store ran the concession stand.

On Wednesdays, when the big bands were not around, young couples danced to the nickelodeon (Juke Box). The dance hall was never locked in the summer months but was

locked in the winter and the open sides were closed to keep out the snow. Beside the dance hall was an open air band stand also raised from the ground on pylons and decorated with coloured lights from the chestnut trees that still adorn the park. It was located just off to the right in the photograph and was there when this photograph was taken. On Sunday evenings Archie Haines and his brother Charlie, a couple of singing Welshmen, would lead a sing-along from the stage. A movie screen was set up and the words to each song were projected for all to follow the bouncing ball. The wooden benches from the dance hall were brought outside to sit on, and people brought their own chairs. Some people even watched from their cars, angle parked on Picton Street. Along with the sing-along, residents were invited on stage to show off their talents. Young Horace (Scope) Russell had a talent for whistling. Up on stage he went and whistled out a tune to great applause. Bonnie LeDoux, who's mother Florence re-established the Angel Inn, performed "Bell Bottomed Trousers" in a sailor suit. There was even a piano on stage, which was kept in a small shed built right on the bandstand floor.



In the early nineteen fifties, Bing Raven took over as Master of Ceremonies from Archie Haines. Bing was a crooner who, in the 1960's, was a popular singer at the Oban Inn where Marion

Swanson played the grand piano. Also in the fifties, band leader Fred Willett came to town and moved into the house on Victoria Street, now owned by Angie and Hartley Strauss. Fred Willett played Big Band music on the bandstand while his parents ran the refreshment stand. Fred came from Thorold and his band was well known for playing Sundays at the Queenston Heights band shell.

By the mid fifties things were slowing down. A three-piece band played country music on Saturday evenings. During the week, teen-agers danced to the juke box any time they felt like it. In the late 1950's the dance hall was used by the

*Continued on next page...*

ladies of the I.O.D.E where they held rummage sales on the dance floor. Finally in the early 1960's, when it appeared the town was doing renovations to the building and the roof was being held up just by scaffolding, a gale force wind brought the entire building down. The

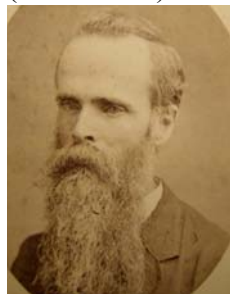
roof sat where it fell for a long time until it was finally dismantled and removed. A finale note, Charlie Haines was Noel's father and he played tuba in The Niagara Fruit Growers Band.

**Submitted by Jim Smith**

## The Year of..... *"The Art of Niagara"*

*The Society has dedicated 2008 to the artists who have created art in Niagara or portrayed it in its many forms. Our lectures and exhibitions ("Inspired Landscapes") will reflect this. The lecture series will have topics ranging from historical landscaping to the Niagara Parks Commission art collection.*

### **Francis Hincks Granger** (1829-1906)



A wonderful example of mid-Victorian advertising states: "F. H. Granger... House, Sign and Ornamental painter.... In all its various branches.... All orders in his line executed on the shortest notice, with promptness and dispatch, and IN A MOST SUPERIOR STYLE". Francis Hincks Granger moved to Niagara for the same reason many others did between 1830 – 1860. He was employed in the Dock area by Brainerd, Pierson's and Company to paint for the company who produced cars (rail) in town.

984.1.247  
F.H. Granger

Born in England, he emigrated to New York City and was a student at the American Institute of Art. He moved to Toronto in 1849 to work as a scenic artist at the Royal Lyceum Theatre on Queen Street. In 1854 he moved to

Niagara. His advertisement states that his business was on King Street, most likely on the west side between King and Regent.

He is listed as a member of the Lincoln Militia in 1871. Furthermore, in 1874 he was involved in the Niagara Dramatic Club's production of "Self Accusation or, A Brother's Love" (988.5.179) at the Courthouse, where he was manager and had several parts. His obituary states "he was a very quiet, unassuming man but had the happy faculty of making and retaining friends. He was liked and respected by everybody, and his death will be regretted by all the townspeople."

The Museum currently has 10 paintings of Granger's in the permanent collection. Some were donated by the artist; others were purchased or commissioned by the Society. Together they offer a wonderful array of scenes of Niagara and images of Niagara's built heritage that are no longer with us.

The Society has a considerable amount of information on Mr. Granger, but if anyone else should know of any of his work or have material related to this important Niagara artist we would appreciate it. The Society would like to thank Mr. Peter White for his research on F.H. Granger.



988.191  
Watercolour of the Military Hospital,  
Niagara, 1864 by F.H. Granger

## RESEARCH ROOM CONSTRUCTION UPDATE



With the research room nearing its March completion date, I am pleased to bring the museum's membership, as well as the general public, up to speed on what we have accomplished over the last few months.

The first, and most daunting, task involved in the room's creation was organizing nearly seven-hundred volumes that would comprise its collection. The sheer range of topics, and the very esoteric volumes therein, was almost overwhelming. At times, I felt very much like an early natural philosopher attempting to bring all the subjects of the world into one cohesive system. It was no small task finding a place for an early 20<sup>th</sup> century guide to proper powder room accoutrements, while at the same time ensuring that an 1831 catalogue of carpentry supplies was not overlooked. From books of 19<sup>th</sup> century legal precedent to biographies of William Kirby, it seems that we really do have something for everybody.

Despite this vast array of topics, I have attempted to make local history a focus within the research room's volumes. This history is not limited to Niagara's proud military history,

## CONSERVATION PROJECT UPDATE

With the help of volunteers Richard Taylor and Fred Johnson, I have been hard at work for the last four months fulfilling the recommendations of the Canadian Conservation Institute. Their recommendations called for the painting of the storage room floors and the re-wrapping of artefacts in tissue paper. Though almost all our artefacts are stuffed, wrapped, or otherwise packaged in non-acidic tissue paper, over time the tissue paper becomes acidic and brittle, the acidity having transferred out of adjacent objects, which helps to extend their lifespan. We are now one third of the way done the task of re-wrapping these items. The floor is painted a nice shade of grey, and new blinds and ultra violet protective screens are on (or soon to be on) the windows.

although it is well represented. Within the research room you will find travel books, foremost among them is an 1848 traveller's guide to Niagara and the surrounding area, town directories, and many volumes on the town's settlement.

Because accessibility has been the cornerstone of our plans for the research room, we have installed a computer workstation that will allow visitors to easily search both the text volumes and our extensive research files. Additionally, this workstation will allow guests to cross reference their print sources against the remainder of our collection. In this fashion, we hope that the research room will allow museum members, as well as guests, a greater understanding of the scope of artefacts that we have in our collection.

It has been my humble pleasure to play a role in the creation of the museum's research room. I would like to thank Clark Bernat, Amy Klassen and the Museum Board for affording me this opportunity. It is my sincere hope that all those who use the research room in the years to come will have a positive and informative experience.

**All the best,  
Adam Durrant**

This program has allowed me to go through the collection, preparing a list of items in need of conservation work, and to inventory the collection. While I have seen a number of amazing artefacts ranging from uniforms to a purse that apparently belonged to Florence Nightingale, there are also many mundane items. Before I started this job I thought folding the laundry was bad, but after the 20<sup>th</sup> box of off-white linen petticoats, tablecloths and textile fragments, one does start to go a little nutty. Luckily the work is interspersed with special events, research and friendly volunteers & staff!



**- Steven Baxter**

**If you have not done so, please don't forget to pay your 2008 Membership!!**

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Here we are into the month of February and the weather is indicative of winter and all that it has to offer.

The Museum, at this time of year as expected, is not as busy visitor-wise as in the summer months. Having said this, it does not mean that the board and staff are not hard at work planning our course for the coming year and beyond.

We are going to be hard pressed to follow on the success of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary but believe it or not, we are already looking ahead to 2012, the bicentennial of the War of 1812, which, if we don't start planning now, has a way of creeping

up on us before we know it. I hope all our members and fellow residents will start thinking about how you can contribute to this historic event.

Our Museum is vibrant and alive with our history and we wish to celebrate with you all our upcoming events. Your support is our breath of life. Keep in mind, we are thinking of you; are you thinking of us?

**Sincerely Yours,  
Neil Rumble**

### Board of Directors

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Jim Armstrong, VP Museum  
Deborah Paine-Corbiere, VP Society  
Daryl Novak, Treasurer  
Amalie Enns, Secretary  
David Murray  
Harry Murdoch  
Brett Sherlock  
Charles Jackson  
Dennis Kam

### Honorary Life Members

Joy Ormsby  
Richard Taylor  
Wilfred Agnes

### Museum Staff

Clark Bernat - Managing Director  
Amy Klassen – Society Administrator

### Niagara Historical Society & Museum Hours

The Museum is open daily, except for New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

May-October: 10 am to 5 pm  
November-April: 1 pm to 5pm

### Address

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P.O. Box 208  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON, L0S 1J0  
Phone: 905-468-3912  
Fax: 905-468-1728  
[amyklassen@niagarahistorical.museum](mailto:amyklassen@niagarahistorical.museum)  
[clarkbernat@niagarahistorical.museum](mailto:clarkbernat@niagarahistorical.museum)  
[www.niagarahistorical.museum](http://www.niagarahistorical.museum)



**The Society & Museum wish to thank  
the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Province of Ontario  
for their ongoing support**

