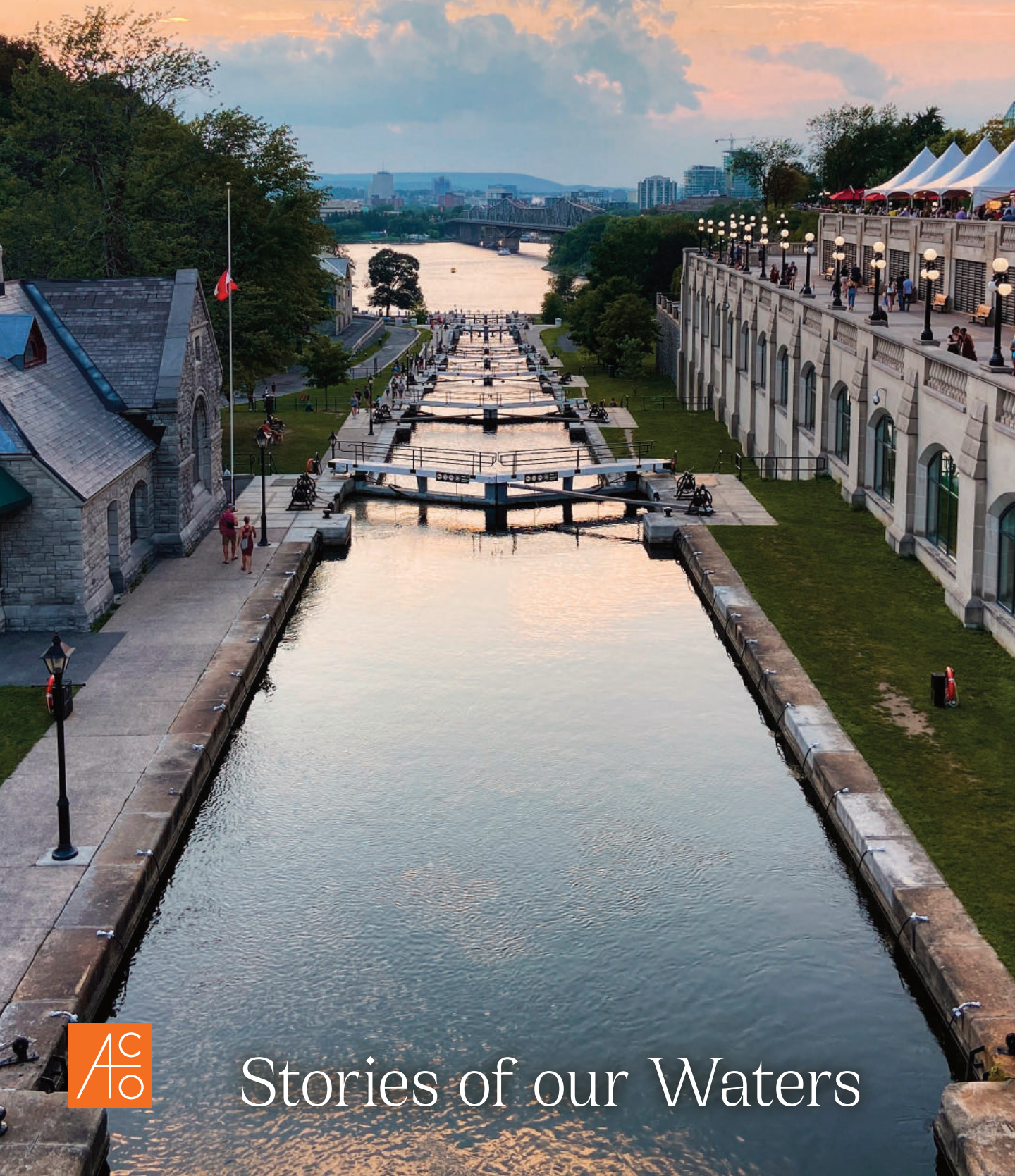


# Acorn

Architectural Conservancy Ontario

Fall 2021



Stories of our Waters

# Working together to preserve Ontario's history



photo Barnum House in Grafton was the first building that ACO saved, at the time of its founding in 1933

Since 1933, the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario has helped save hundreds of architecturally significant buildings for future generations to use and enjoy. We believe that our heritage structures and landscapes are more than just a physical connection to the past; they enhance well-being, reduce environmental waste, and provide strong economic and social benefits. Helping communities preserve their heritage is why ACO exists. It takes a lot of work, and in our ongoing efforts every person makes a difference. ACO's mission depends on the commitment and contributions of our members, volunteers and donors. To everyone who has given their time, energy, and money, thank you!

If you care about preserving heritage structures and neighbourhoods, please consider making a donation. Contributions from generous individuals and companies who care about heritage help us do the important work of protecting these resources for future generations. The most popular way of giving to ACO is through an annual or monthly donation. We are also grateful to our members who include ACO in their will. We can't do this work without you.

## We're in this for the long haul, and we need your help.

You can donate now at [acontario.ca](http://acontario.ca) or at [canadahelps.org](http://canadahelps.org). If you are interested in making a legacy gift in your will, or if you would like any information about giving to ACO, please contact us at 416.367.8075 ext. 403.

ACO works on behalf of all Ontarians.  
Your support is vital.



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The Pretoria Bridge, a lift-table bridge crossing the Rideau Canal Skateway in Ottawa, 2021.

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## Correction Notice

In the Spring 2021 issue of Acorn, in the article titled *From Magdalen Asylum to Bridgepoint Active Health*, the sentence giving credit to the Heritage Architects ("the Don Jail by architect William Thomas and restored by ERA Architects is now the Bridgepoint Administration Building") was incomplete. There were two heritage firms engaged in this project as members of two large architectural teams, The Ventin Group (+VG) Architects and ERA Architects.

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# Acorn

Fall 2021  
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View of the Ottawa Locks 1-8 from Plaza Bridge just a stone's throw away from Parliament Hill, 2020. **Photo** Jonathan Got

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# The influence of water



Our earliest settler communities sprang up on these shores.

For thousands of years, the Indigenous peoples depended upon the waters for food and transportation. The Great Lakes and its tributaries were also a dominant force in the settlement of peoples who have come to this land. As a result, settlements sprang up along these waters.

Some disasters occurred on these waters, and others were caused by these waters. Ontario is mostly bordered by water from the Great Lakes to the south, the Hudson and James bays to the north, and the Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers to the east.

The Great Lakes and the watershed feeding them have always defined the region's economy, culture and climate, just like how an ocean defines those same aspects of the coast. The impact has defined both settler and Indigenous landscapes. Before the advent of road and rail travel, water was the only means of travel and trade. Consequently, settlements developed along the waterways. Our earliest settler communities sprang up on these shores. Communities such as Moose Factory, York (now Toronto), Kingston and Cobourg owe their existence to the waterways they exist along.

For many individuals, their attachment to water is almost primordial. I grew up on the beaches in Toronto and spent many summers on the lakeshore. When a quieter town became a need in my life, I moved farther up Lake Ontario to Cobourg. I live only metres from the lake and walk the boardwalk all year round.

I have come to know the stories of others who were influenced in the same way. Sir John Murray founded the study of oceanography spent his formative years in Cobourg. Fern Blodgett Sunde was the first female to serve in Second World War as a wireless operator, making 78 safe transatlantic crossings, delivering much-needed supplies to the Allies. Her youth was spent on that very same shoreline as Sir John Murray.

In this issue, you will find more stories that speak of the relationships between the peoples who live here and the waters that they depended upon.

As incoming Chair, I want to thank Kae Elgie and Leslie Thompson, who have guided me through my year of learning. I can only hope to follow the amazing pathway that they have forged. ■

— Diane Chin, [president@acornario.ca](mailto:president@acornario.ca)

# Why ACO needs you

Since 1933, countless volunteers and financial supporters of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario have worked to preserve buildings and structures of architectural merit, and places of cultural and historic significance. This is all part of our shared history and must be protected so that we, and future generations, can understand our past, enjoy the present, and look forward to the future.

Here we are in 2021, and ACO is still at it. This isn't easy, quick work; it requires persistence, collaboration, and resources. ACO has helped save hundreds of buildings across Ontario. We have advocated for better legislation, helped many communities, large and small, champion their local heritage structures and neighbourhoods, promoted wonderful adaptive reuse projects, and supported the preservation of traditional building skills. If you're reading this, you already know how much heritage enriches our lives.

ACO can't do any of this work without your support. While historic places can be designated at the federal, provincial, territorial or local level, statutory protection is weak. Most heritage advocates expend their energy trying to save buildings at imminent risk of being lost, but small groups standing up for individual buildings in their communities is a band-aid solution. ACO helps us stand together to get things done and strengthen heritage protection legislation. ACO's presence across the province demonstrates that Ontarians care about their heritage.

So please step up! When you support ACO's province-wide operations, you help strengthen an important voice for all Ontarians. Together, we can keep our heritage alive for future generations. It's easy to give online at [www.acontario.ca](http://www.acontario.ca). Thank you for your support! ■

— Will Coukell

## Call for Submissions

### Acorn Spring 2022 – Heritage and Sustainability



The Kensington on 165 Wellington Street, Kingston.

Over ten thousand places are listed on the Ontario Heritage Act Register. Every one of these buildings has embodied carbon - greenhouse gas emissions associated with its construction.

The Spring 2022 issue of Acorn will focus on the environmental benefits of heritage conservation to “encourage the conservation and reuse of structures, districts, and landscapes of architectural, historical and cultural significance to inspire and benefit Ontarians.”

Topics could include life-cycle analysis of heritage buildings, deconstruction, green retrofits of heritage buildings, the carbon footprint of new builds versus retention and reuse of heritage buildings, the environmental value of heritage restoration, etc.

Feature articles can be either a maximum of 450 or 900 words in length with three to five high-resolution photos. Before commencing to work on an article, please send your proposal to [acorn@acontario.ca](mailto:acorn@acontario.ca) to avoid duplication and ensure submission guidelines are received.

Deadline for submissions is January 15, 2022, early submissions are welcome. Submitters are encouraged to read past issues available at the ACO website: [acontario.ca](http://acontario.ca).

# Tide's up

How amphibious building technology could protect Ontario's historic buildings

By Patrick Handrigan



Imagine it's 2050: a winter of heavy snow and rain in Moose Factory, northern Ontario, sends flash floods thrashing down the now-unpredictable Moose River. The waters rush against the white clapboard walls of the historic St. Thomas' Anglican Church, shaking the structure from its moorings. Within hours, the red-shingled steeple floats off on the horizon: two centuries of history washed away.

Canada's built heritage is becoming increasingly at risk of being damaged or destroyed by the results of climate change. With more than 250,000 lakes across Ontario, rising water levels are just one of the challenges the province faces with our changing climate. Architects, engineers, and heritage professionals are looking for ways to save historic buildings from the waves. One





2

method that could be a contender: amphibious foundations that protect buildings from flooding while maintaining their original location.

“When you start putting the houses up on stilts, way up above the sidewalk, you’re just not going to have the same community dialogue,” said Dr. Elizabeth English, associate professor at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture in Cambridge, Ontario who is working on amphibious foundations.

In 2006, English founded the Buoyant Foundation Project, which supported New Orleans’ endangered traditions and the impact Hurricane Katrina had on its historic “shotgun” homes. This research led her to design amphibious foundations that could be used to protect buildings from flash floods and rising sea levels.

“I became interested in amphibiating these houses as a way to preserve their social structure. As well as the visual aspect of a jagged streetscape, it’s as much a social and cultural impetus as well,” said English.

An amphibious foundation retrofit is an innovative and low-impact approach to flood damage reduction. This system allows a building to float in the event of a flood while maintaining existing heritage elements of the structure. When water levels rise, the building is lifted to the surface through the help of vertical guidance posts and buoyant blocks. When water levels recede, the building is guided back to the land. Amphibious foundations work with the ebbs and flows of nature, allowing buildings to remain on their original landscape for decades to come.

Amphibious foundations have been extensively researched in North America. In 2019, the project received a grant from the National Research Council to further explore this retrofit. They constructed an amphibious pavilion prototype at the University of Waterloo to test this foundation in a Canadian climate. Although further construction was hindered due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the foundation hopes to reexplore this method at a larger scale in the near future.



3

Now, English is exploring the use of amphibious construction to help northern Indigenous communities become more resilient to climate change.

“Indigenous communities have such fundamental strong ties to the land. If their community is at risk of flooding, then amphibiation can help them stay there safely.”

She believes that it has the potential to help protect and preserve northern Ontario’s coastal heritage assets while furthering community and cultural resilience in the face of flooding caused by climate change.

Moose Factory is one such community located at the mouth of Moose River along James Bay in northern Ontario. Its heritage assets, including the St. Thomas’ Anglican Church, are synonymous with the town’s identity and remain increasingly vulnerable to the effects of global warming.

“The problems with climate change in the Moose Factory region are more related to the river – freeze and thaw patterns are becoming more random and unpredictable, erosion and sedimentation, and the like,” says Doug Evans, a cultural heritage consultant with nearly four decades’ experience.

Evans said that although fluvial flooding has occurred historically, it has become increasingly common and poses a risk to the already deteriorating wooden church.

According to English, nineteenth-century wooden churches are an excellent candidate for amphibious foundations as they are often slab-on-grade and structurally adaptable. The church, however, is at risk of deteriorating to a state of ruin due to neglect. It was recently listed on the 2021 National Trust for Canada’s Endangered Places List. She hopes that the church can remain stable enough until amphibious foundations become common practice. She said more effort is needed in retrofitting existing buildings so they can remain an important cultural facet in the landscape.

If amphibian foundations are successful, the St. Thomas’ Anglican Church could stand boldly against the ravages of flash floods, rising tides and unstable weather for another two centuries.

“We do the accommodating; the water is not our enemy. It’s a whole different way of looking at relationships with nature,” said English.

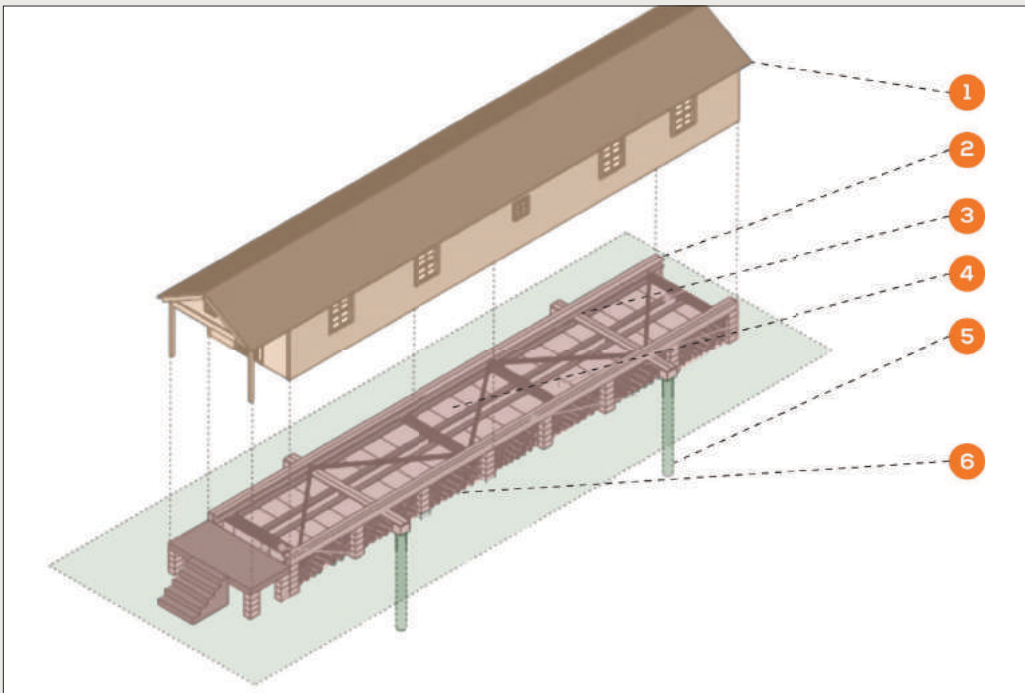
Visit the Buoyant Foundation Project’s website at [buoyantfoundation.org](http://buoyantfoundation.org) for more information.

# In Detail: Amphibious Foundations

Heritage elements are maintained as the structural intervention largely takes place between the baseboards and the ground. The existing crawl space is retrofitted to include steel structural supports, buoyant blocks, and vertical guiding posts, all hidden behind a lattice screen to help filter water-

borne debris. The only ground intervention is the installation of vertical guiding posts. Ideal candidates for amphibious foundations are lightweight structures with an existing foundation system that is pier-and-beam construction or similar with crawl space beneath the ground floor. ■

- 1** Existing Structure
- 2** A steel channel is installed for reinforcement for the existing sill beam which runs the length of the structure. This subframe supports and stabilizes the building while connecting it to the buoyancy elements and vertical guidance posts.
- 3** Steel double-angle "T-beams", secondary steel framing, and diagonal bracing aid in further supporting the buoyant foundation and mitigating structural damage to the existing structure.
- 4** Buoyancy blocks are spread across the interior subsection of the structure helping to displace water and cause the building to float above the water's surface.
- 5** Vertical guidance posts are placed in the ground that help restrict horizontal movement so the building can move up and down but not float away.
- 6** A lattice screen covers the area between the structure and the ground, hiding the interior buoyant elements and providing a filter for water-borne debris.



**i**

**About the author**

Patrick is an architecture student at the University of Toronto. He was an Executive Liaison with ACO NextGen this summer as part of the heritage internship program with the UofT's Faculty of Art History, worked on architectural heritage projects in his home province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and gained a deep appreciation towards adaptive reuse to conserve built heritage.

- 1** Historic Ice: Ice piled up around St. Thomas' Anglican Church, n.d.
- 2** Floating Shotgun Home: Rendering on how amphibious foundations can help mitigate flood damage of Louisiana's historic shotgun houses.
- 3** Waterloo Prototype: Buoyant foundation prototype constructed at the University of Waterloo.
- 4** An exploded drawing depicting the structural components of a buoyant foundation as designed for a Louisiana "shotgun" house.

# Point Clark shipwreck

Cooperation between a volunteer organization, the community, and the government

By Scarlett Janusas

It all started with the passing of Arthur Amos, a founding member of the Ontario Marine Heritage Committee (OMHC). Prior to his death, he wanted to donate his archival collection to an appropriate research facility. But here's the rub. There were no existing facilities to house marine heritage and underwater archaeology archival collections. A team of four, Patrick Folkes, Ken Cassavoy, Burke Penny and Scarlett Janusas, representing the OMHC, appealed to the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre (BCM&CC) to accept the Amos collection and to develop an Ontario Marine Heritage and Underwater Archaeology Resource Centre. Following a presentation to Bruce County Council both groups were successful in their proposals.

As a result of this initiative, a partnership with OMHC was formed, whereby any marine-related issues would be redirected from BCM&CC to OMHC members. One such request came from residents of the Point Clark area, located along Lake Huron, where shipwreck pieces had been washing up on shore. Janusas and Folkes met with residents who were anxious to see the pieces protected and identified. An archaeological investigation licence was taken out and OMHC volunteers, assisted by community members, began the task of recording the six pieces on shore.

The question of ownership and responsibility was raised about what to do with the pieces. The narrow fringe of beach belonged to the province, not the municipality, as originally thought. The municipality of Huron-Kinloss, however, jumped in with signage along the beach identifying the need to protect the pieces and report additional pieces. Another eight or so calls came in and these new pieces were added to the investigation.

The investigation also included recording of all the pieces on shore, a scuba survey, and will include a metal detector search of the beach and an offshore side sonar to find the main piece of wreckage. Historic research was also conducted on wrecks in the area.



Locals facilitated the investigation by providing a search of the beach, a report of daily conditions, and access to the main pieces of wreckage. They also cleared pieces of sand for recording and even participated in the recording of some pieces.

What to do with these pieces, scattered nearly over a kilometre of shoreline, was of major concern. Wood exposed to the air after being water saturated will dry out, crack, warp, distort and eventually disintegrate. Or worse, some pieces will be collected by local cottagers for firewood. Discussion with the municipality, BCM&CC, the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry are underway to find a nearby location where the pieces can be gathered and buried to ensure their preservation. This will serve to establish a recognized protocol for what to do when shipwreck pieces are washed ashore in future.

At least three pieces have been reported along the Lake Huron shoreline this spring. They are almost certainly from three different shipwrecks. There will undoubtedly be many more along other Ontario shorelines.

The wreck at Point Clark has been identified as the *Honer H. Hine*, a three-masted schooner, measuring about 105 feet in length, built in 1865 and sank in 1881. ■

i

## About the author

Scarlett holds a BA and MA in archaeology, served as President of the Ontario Marine Heritage Committee for a decade, President of the Ontario Association of Professional Archaeologists for four years and is a board member of the Tobermory Hyperbaric Facility. She has been working in underwater archaeology for over 40 years.

1 Volunteers recording part of the centreboard box.

# Wood on the beach

## The Leuty and Cherry lifeguard stations

By Katerina Bong



On the cusp of Woodbine Beach, the Leuty Lifeguard Station stands as a rare wooden building type designed by Alfred Chapman and J. Morrow Oxley in 1920. The progenitures of the Beaux-Arts movement are known for their eclectic masonry buildings such as the Royal Ontario Museum. The station's shingled roof surface and projecting horizontal cornice point to the predominant Shingle Style that prevailed in seaside cottage coastal towns of North America from the late nineteenth century.<sup>[1]</sup> Still fully operating in its original capacity, the wooden station persists as an intermediary between land and water, life and death, and boat to shore.

Wood is vulnerable to erosion and can appear disconcerting on this waterside building. Nevertheless, the station's cedar shingles act as protection against wind, water and other natural elements. Buildings constructed of cedar are known for their toughness. Cedar's durability alleviates decay from water, making it an ideal material for boats and canoes, exterior building cladding and roofing, and outdoor furniture.<sup>[2]</sup> Shingle, a tapered piece of wood, also offers resistance against strong winds through high durability and thermal insulation.<sup>[3]</sup>

Owing to the qualities of the wood, the Leuty Lifeguard Station endures as one of the few waterside wooden heritage structures that still serving its original function. Lifeguarding mechanisms such as the look-out tower offer a bird-eye view of the water while the jetty facilitates speedy access to the lake. While the rescuers surveil the waters, the station's presence brings a sense of security to the swimmers, canoers, and beachgoers, taking advantage of its unique proximity to the waters.

An identical lifeguard station exists at Cherry Beach, whose deck rests on water. The jetty functions as an immediate springboard for emergency rescue as well as a breakwater for waves bridging water to land via wood. Emergency boats and canoes can be promptly launched into the water because it extends ten meters from the shoreline. The situation of the Cherry Beach station is less fortunate than the one on Woodbine Beach. Below the building, thin pieces of interlocked wooden brackets precariously support the structure near the water while the rest reclines on the sand.

The appeal of wood for the Leuty and Cherry Beach lifeguard stations hinges on the overall architectural trend of the period. The two lifeguard stations' wooden aesthetic — such as the shingled roof, emphasis on horizontal beams and planks — conform to the Cottage Residences or Cottage Styles that dominated seaside architecture throughout the late nineteenth and into the interwar periods. Such styles also exist on streets near the Beaches neighbourhood like at Alfresco Lawn and Waverly Road.

The boardwalk that existed from the mid-1850s and early-1860s encouraged the cultivation of wooden aesthetics around the Beaches area. Its long wooden planks offered a promenade, shielded residents from the sandy beach, and provided a

connection between the land and water through the use of wood.

In the 1920s, Toronto's Beaches neighbourhood began attracting an upper-middle-income population due to its proximity to the city and the waterfront, reflecting the rise of metropolitan suburbs in Toronto.<sup>[4]</sup> The wooden aesthetic of the beaches was boosted by the abundant supply, low cost, and easy transportation of the material during the interwar period.<sup>[5]</sup> In addition, wood's docility made it easy to handle. The coolness and dryness of the wooden buildings offered sanctuary for the city dwellers against summer heat.

After a hundred years, the Leuty Lifeguard Station's wooden construction required two major restorations. Due to prolonged exposure to water, the jetty, timber floor and joists, the fascia and siding, and wooden window frames were replaced during the 1993 restoration campaign called "Save Our Station." In 2017, the rising water levels at the Toronto beaches threatened the station. As a preventive measure, the City of Toronto elevated the building with sandbags and large stones.

The 1993 restoration was prompted by the Beaches community who were aware of the lifeguard's historic, communal, and functional value. Designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act since July 19, 1993, the Leuty lifeguard station symbolizes not only the history of the Beaches community but also a unique wooden heritage structure that continues to perform its duty. Though some may criticize the building for its outdated conditions, especially the interior, the history and community formed by the lifeguard station and its functional value makes a convincing argument that its counterpart at Cherry Beach must also be preserved and protected.

The wood that clads the two lifeguard stations, despite its perceptible fragility, connect the land and water through its function and style. Its durability against wind and water allows the building to persist to this day while the wooden aesthetic highlights the local and architectural trends. ■



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3

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#### Building:

1 The Leuty Lifeguard Station

2 The Cherry Beach Lifeguard Station

#### Location:

1 2 Willow Avenue, Toronto

2 1 Cherry Beach, Toronto

#### About the author

Katerina Bong is an architecture Ph.D. student at the University of Toronto and earned her M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania in art and architectural history. Her research is on the early modern period with an emphasis on failure in architecture. She's invested in the field of heritage preservation and conservation and serves as the vice-chair of the ACONextGen.

1 View from the west side of the Leuty Lifeguard Station, July 2021.

2 Facade detail of the Cherry Beach Lifeguard Station, July 2021.

3 The Leuty Lifeguard Station Look-Out Tower, July 2021.

<sup>[1]</sup> Vincent J. Scully, JR. *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Richardson to the Origins of Wright* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), xli.

<sup>[2]</sup> T.S. McKnight and E.J. Mullins, *Canadian Wood: Their Properties and uses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 10-11.

<sup>[3]</sup> Danny Scheidt, *Cape Lookout National Seashore Portsmouth Life-Saving Station: Historic Structure Report* (Atlanta, GA: National Park Service, 2006), 18.

<sup>[4]</sup> Nik Luka, "From Summer Cottage Colony to Metropolitan Suburb: Toronto's Beach District, 1889-1929," *Urban History Review* 35 (2006): 18.

<sup>[5]</sup> Jeff Stinson, "Heritage and the Evolving City: the Lesson of Old Industry in Toronto," *Environments* 24 (1996): 3.

# A Place in Time

By Marilyn Scott



How do you like your history? Fairly recent? A few hundred years' worth? Maybe ancient? At the confluence of the Grand and Speed rivers in the City of Cambridge, you can take your pick.

This Confluence is the heartland of the Grand River watershed, a place of rich cultural, historical, and natural significance. It's also an outstanding example of the co-existence of nature at its best within one of the most highly developed regions of Canada. Each of Cambridge's four founding communities is linked to one another via the Confluence: upriver on the Grand to Blair, upriver on the Speed to Hespeler, downriver on the Grand to Galt, and Preston at its centre.

Much of the landscape we see today is the result of glaciation over the past 18,000 years as advancing ice sheets shaped the natural landscape, their retreat filled the basins that became the Great Lakes, Niagara Falls and the Grand River watershed.

For this reason, the Confluence is topographically diverse: small islands, a limestone escarpment with its rim and steep cliff face, wide flat floodplains, shallow pools, and fast-flowing rivers. This area is home to both endangered and common birds and mammals, and a mix of native and introduced vegetation. Two major North American forest zones meet here: the Carolinian and the Northern Hardwood.

The riverbank and its floodplain support a wealth of wildlife. Some birds, such as northern diving ducks and bald eagles, a species at risk, use the rivers and their banks for wintering over, while numerous other bird species depend on the Confluence as a stopover on their long migrations.

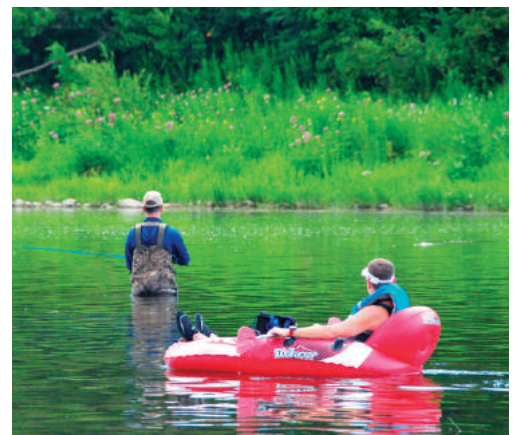
With such abundance, it's no surprise there's archaeological evidence of human activity here dating back 13,000 years.

Among the many Indigenous nations who have inhabited the river valleys and Confluence are the Neutral, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabec.

Following the American War of Independence, Indigenous allies of the British Crown moved from Upper New York State and were resettled in the Grand River valley. As compensation for their loyalty, in 1784 Sir Frederick Haldimand, governor of Quebec and representing the British Crown, granted the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations) a tract of land "allotting to them for that purpose six miles deep from each side of the river beginning at Lake Erie and extending in that proportion to the head of the said river, which them and their posterity are to enjoy for ever."<sup>[1]</sup> Although much reduced today, this land is still referred to locally as the "Haldimand Tract."

In 1798, Chief Joseph Brant, acting as agent for the Six Nations and with the consent of the Crown, sold six blocks of land. One buyer was Col. Richard Beasley, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada, a pioneering merchant and land speculator. His purchase of 90,000 acres (Block 2) is still cited today as the Beasley Tract.

The German Company, a joint stock company set up for settling families to transfer funds, also bought land, with Benjamin Eby appointed as secretary-treasurer. Eby later founded neighbouring Berlin, today's Kitchener.



1

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photos Greg Pautler



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Among the growing number of settlers to arrive in the early decades of the nineteenth-century were many Pennsylvania loyalists; and in 1805, John Erb, a Mennonite of Swiss descent and his wife purchased 7,500 acres of land and settled on the Speed River. Erb built the area's first sawmill and gristmill on the banks of the river. The hamlet known as Cambridge Mills was one of the first European settlements in the region. The Waterloo Historical Society's plaque of 1928 notes that the gristmill, formerly Dover Flour and now P&H Milling Group, is "the oldest place of continuing business in Waterloo County."

In 1833, William Schollick, a surveyor and Justice of the Peace, laid out the guidelines for the community and renamed it Preston after his hometown in England. Five years later, Peter Erb discovered Preston's mineral springs while boring for salt. By the end of the century, Preston and its mineral baths and spa hotels had become an international destination.

In 1838, Jacob Hespeler erected a mill near the Confluence, and eight years later, moved his businesses upriver to New Hope, later renamed Hespeler.

In 1845 an influx of German-speaking tradesmen and artisans prompted George Bernhardt and his son Henry to establish the Bernhardt Brewery, later known as Rock Springs Brewery. By the 1860s, acres of land on either side of the Grand and Speed Rivers were used to grow hops. So plentiful were the harvests that they supplying were soon supplying breweries all over North America. To this day, hops can still be found growing along the trails and laneways of Preston.

This unique landscape provides as much a place of inspiration today as it did hundreds of years ago. Open space and natural surroundings are

easily accessible right in the midst of an urban landscape. Riverside footpaths, hard-packed groomed trails, and grassy parkland invite exploration. The vista is perfect for contemplation, especially for artists, photographers, and writers. For those looking for more physical pursuits, it's ideal for fishing, canoeing and kayaking, biking, walking, and cross-country skiing to name a few.

The Confluence of the Grand and Speed Rivers is an endowment from our past to our future generations, worthy of preservation for all ages and abilities to experience. ■



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#### About the author

Marilyn Scott is a member of ACO Cambridge & North Dumfries (formerly Heritage Cambridge), a former board member, and an active volunteer with numerous cultural organizations in Cambridge and Waterloo Region. She is grateful to Cambridge photographer Greg Pautler, [gregpautlerart.com](http://gregpautlerart.com), for capturing the beauty of the Confluence in his photos.

- 1 The Confluence and Grand River watershed were gouged out during the retreat of the last glacier to cover North America, August 4, 2021.
- 2 Natural surroundings, abundant wildlife and gleaming cliffs provide an everchanging panorama for birdwatching, fishing, canoeing and kayaking, August 4, 2021.
- 3 The Confluence's riverside groomed trails, with open space and natural environs, are easily accessible on foot and by bike, August 4, 2021.
- 4 The Confluence's riverside groomed trails, with open space and natural environs, are easily accessible on foot and by bike, August 4, 2021.

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/haldimand-proclamation>

# Watery pursuits

## Recreation on the Speed and Eramosa rivers

By Susan Ratcliffe

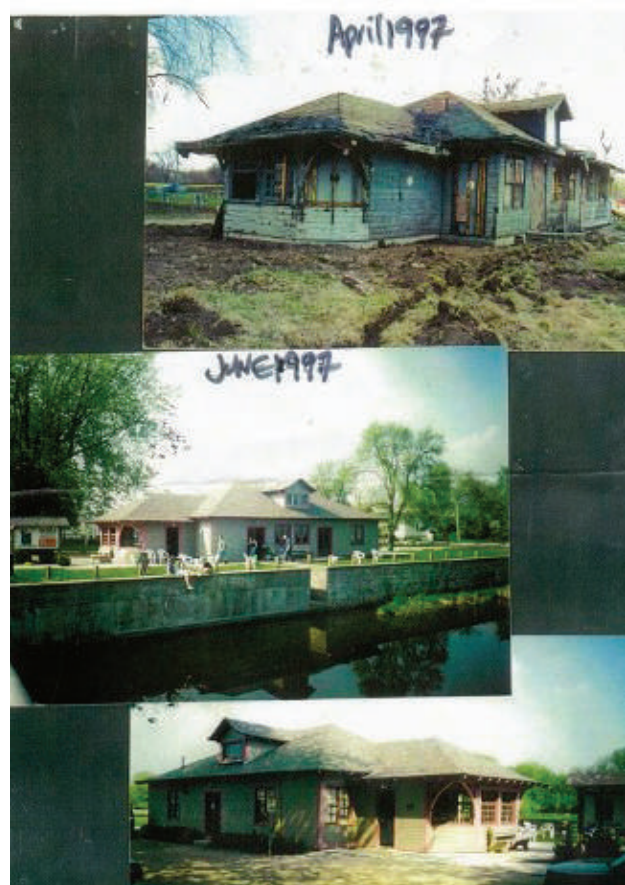
In 1898 Guelph, you could cruise down the river on a summer Thursday evening beneath the moon along with 50 other canoes. The flotilla started at Johnson's Boat House near the Dundas Road and meandered up the Eramosa to Victoria Park where the boaters would disembark to listen to concerts, eat, drink, and enjoy an evening of camaraderie.

"Around midnight – in those days, a scandalously late hour – the fleet would embark for the down-river voyage, a transport to fairyland," reported the *Guelph Mercury* in 1927: "The river valley would echo and re-echo to the noisy choruses which were shouted lustily all the way down." Linking hands and arms and holding torches aloft, the paddlers would wend their way back to the city. Hired musicians and bands, like the London Harpists, played not only for the rowers as they progressed to Victoria Park but also for concerts and dances held at the park. The Club's constitution stipulated that a captain "had sole charge of the fleet and saw that the rules governing trips were strictly enforced." The torches illuminating the Thursday night voyages were purchased by the Club.

This beautiful scene played out on the Eramosa River every Thursday evening from 1895 to 1900, orchestrated by the Speed Canoe Club members. As many as 250 members ensured the weekly pastime of rowing and canoeing was enjoyable. The first Guelph Boating Club was founded in 1870 in response to the Paris Crew's success in European regattas in 1867 and Toronto Island hero Ned Hanlan's world championships in the 1870s and 80s.

The need to attract settlers to the Huron Tracts lands induced Guelph's founding father John Galt to locate the townsite on the Speed River in 1827, recognizing the river's ability to power mills. As the city grew, this focus on the river as an economic driver was soon replaced by recognition of its role as a popular source of recreation like boating, swimming, curling, and fishing.

Members of the boating clubs not only enjoyed their evening paddles but also helped clean up the rivers, thus enhancing



recreational and commercial opportunities along their banks. Some moored their own vessels at small boathouses along the river, but many used the canoes supplied by Johnson's Boathouse. The first business was built in 1876 near the Dundas Bridge (now Gordon Street) to supply rental canoes to the eager boaters, and was owned and managed by the Johnson family from 1882 to 1924. From 1920 until 1941, the boathouse structure became a social club and dance hall. It was also used during the Second World War by the Navy League for training and from 1946 until the 1990s by the Sea Cadets as a clubhouse and training centre.

Badly deteriorated by this time, the City wanted to demolish it and build a parking lot. Fortunately, the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee recognized its heritage value and had it designated. When restored, it reopened as an attractive tearoom, ice cream parlour and river information centre. Once again, canoes are rented to those who want to paddle the Eramosa River.

A new park was also created on the Eramosa River. Cameron Shelley's website "Guelph in Postcards" explains how the club rented land from the Macdonald farm, providing facilities for picnics and a substantial dock along the river with stairs carved into the rock. According to the *Acton Free Press* in 1886, the park's "banks are replete with natural beauty; green hedges dotted





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with flowers, and interspersed with vines that mount in tangled profusion to the tops of the trees in some places, and fringed at the water's edge are ferns reflected in the clear mirror of the river, and you row along in a fairy land of nature's own."

The Speed and Eramosa rivers provided many other types of recreation, including swimming at Simpson's Mill in Riverside Park – especially popular for energetic children. Complaints about their nakedness in the 1870s resulted in efforts by a certain Sergeant Dooley to catch and fine them, but he was repeatedly outsmarted. The Speed was also a popular fishing spot, known as "one of the finest streams for trout in the whole province." Today, hiking and biking trails, along with lovely parks, continue to entice visitors and citizens to enjoy the rivers.

In winter, the frozen rivers provided a surface for sports. Scottish immigrants using wooden blocks or granite boulders as stones founded the Union Curling club in 1838, the third oldest club in Canada. Similarly, skating parties were frequent on the Speed River flats along the western edge of the city: in the 1860s they would have been outfitted in hoop skirts, top hats and iron skates curled up at the front.

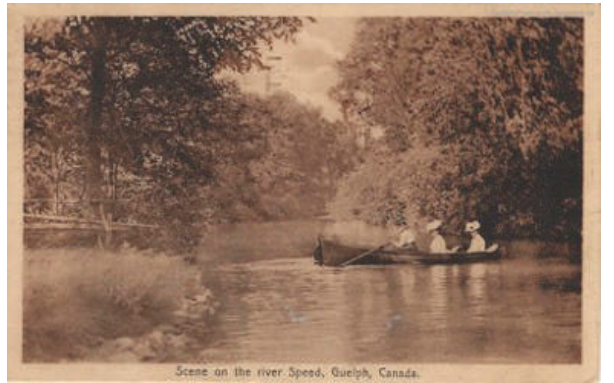
Even though the Speed no longer powers mills, it along with the Eramosa has powered recreational activities since the community was founded in 1827. In fact, past 10 years have seen the Two Rivers Festival celebrate the rivers' stories and their role as the heart and soul of the city. ■



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**About the author**

A long-time tour guide and heritage advocate, Susan was President of ACO and its Guelph and Wellington Branch.

She works at the Guelph Public Library and is the Site Coordinator for Doors Open Guelph. She has walked her golden retrievers along Guelph's rivers for many years and loves their stories.

- 1 The Boathouse, Guelph, 1997.
- 2 The Boathouse, Guelph, 2006.
- 3 The Boathouse, Guelph, 1935.
- 4 Curling and skating on the Speed River, 1870.
- 5 Scene on the river Speed, Guelph, 1910.

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# Underwater finds in the Nipigon Lagoon

Changes illuminate the past, present and future

By Richard Harvey and Lisa Sonnenburg

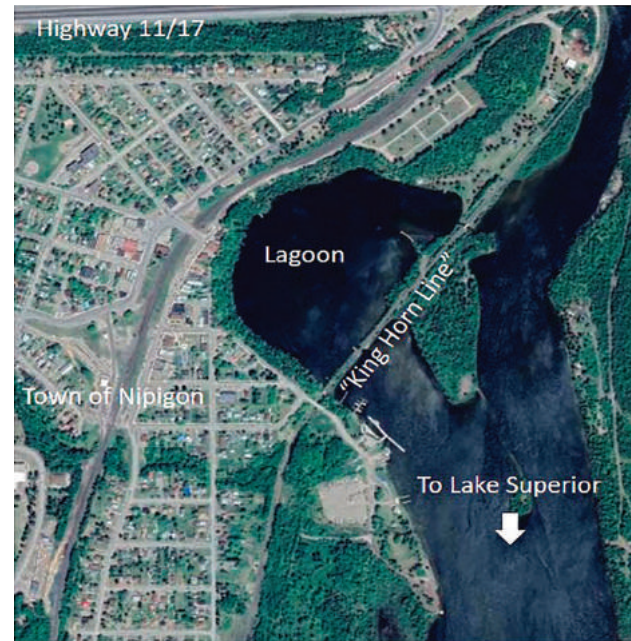
The area now referred to as the Nipigon Lagoon in the Township of Nipigon, located in Thunder Bay District, was at one time a bend in the river at the mouth of the Nipigon River leading to Lake Superior. It was the most northerly point in the Port of Nipigon and the farthest a vessel could go before encountering the first rapids. The site likely has a long history of settlement, starting with local Indigenous peoples and by the 1600s, the fur trade (Hamilton, 2013).

By the early 1900s there were many boathouses and docks at what is now referred to as the Lagoon, as the sportfishing industry flourished (Chochla, 1999). In 1905, the Grand Trunk Railroad (now Canadian National Railway) began construction on the “King Horn Line,” diverting the Nipigon River and creating an oxbow at what was at one point the mouth of the river (Hamilton, 2013; Harvey, 2018). Due to its location, both before the diversion and after, it became a common location for the residents of Nipigon to dispose of garbage and other items.

In the 1950s and 60s, the Nipigon Volunteer Fire Department started a “car sinking draw” when a car would be placed on the ice and people could buy tickets for the date when they thought the car would sink at ice breakup. The normal practice at that time was to remove the car from the lagoon after breakup but stories were told of cars that were left in the water (Harvey, 2018).

In 2010, several local divers decided to explore the lagoon, and they collected side-scan sonar data and discovered various items (Harvey, 2018). In analyzing the data, they were able to pinpoint interesting structures located in the lagoon. These included mid-twentieth century items such as a car, van, and station wagon which are undoubtedly leftovers from the car sinking draw. In addition to the sunken vehicles, the divers also found numerous items such as old cribbing from boat houses, tires, freezers and even a washing machine (Harvey, 2018).

In addition to the more modern “trash,” there were older items that likely pre-dated the formation of the lagoon from



its original riverine course. A five- to six-meter-long boat, originally identified as a schooner, has now been identified as a Collingwood skiff (Harvey 2018; Dagneau, pers. comm) making it one of the most interesting finds in the lagoon.

These vessels were used by the fishing industry along the North Shore of Lake Superior and throughout the Great Lakes in the nineteenth century (Canada Science and Technology Museum, Accessed July 21, 2021). Given the reasonably intact nature of the vessel, it is likely to have been abandoned after its useful life was over. It is also possible that the skiff may have been purposefully sunk by travelers going up river with the intention of retrieving it upon their return as was the practice at one time (Rob Swainson, pers. comm). The location of the wreck, in less than 10 meters of water at the northernmost point in the lagoon, was likely an eddy below the rapids before the river was diverted (Harvey, 2018).



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In addition to the boat, a two-wheeled wooden wagon was located, upside down and buried in the mud and silt with the wooden axel, leaf springs and wheels visible. Similar wagons from the nineteenth century have been documented in sketches from the time period (Hamilton, 2013). It is unclear exactly how the wagon may have gotten into the lagoon; however, before the railway came through Nipigon, there was a portage trail at the top of the high clay banks (Harvey, 2018), and it is possible the wagon slid down the slippery clay banks. Whether this was deliberate or an accident is not known and will likely remain a mystery.

The finds in the Nipigon Lagoon show how the use of the lagoon has changed through anthropogenic manipulation. The skiff and wagon that likely date from the nineteenth century, show the activities that occurred in the area prior to construction of the railroad, at a time when water was the main form of transportation. After the railroad was built in the early twentieth century, and the lagoon was created, it was seen as a place to dispose of junk. However, in the twenty-first century, cleanup efforts in the lagoon have allowed for the re-establishment of local flora and fauna, and the area is now enjoyed by both locals and tourists (Harvey, 2018). Future dive operations and high-resolution mapping are planned, which will allow the underwater finds of the Nipigon Lagoon to provide present and future generations the opportunity to learn about how people and nature created the interesting history of the area. ■

photo Richard Harvey

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#### About the authors

Dr. Lisa Sonnenburg completed her Ph.D. at McMaster University researching submerged landscapes in the Great Lakes. She is currently working for Parks Canada as the Cultural Resource Management Advisor at the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area in Nipigon, Ontario.

Born and raised on the north shore of Lake Superior, Richard Harvey grew up plying the waters of Lake Superior with his father. It was during this time that his interest in, and love for shipwrecks developed. Harvey is the Owner/Operator of By The Bay Adventures and the Mayor of Nipigon, Ontario.

- 1 Map of the Nipigon Lagoon, 2021.
- 2 Image of Collingwood Skiff, 2017.

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# John Brown's imperial towers

Helping to navigate the lower great lakes

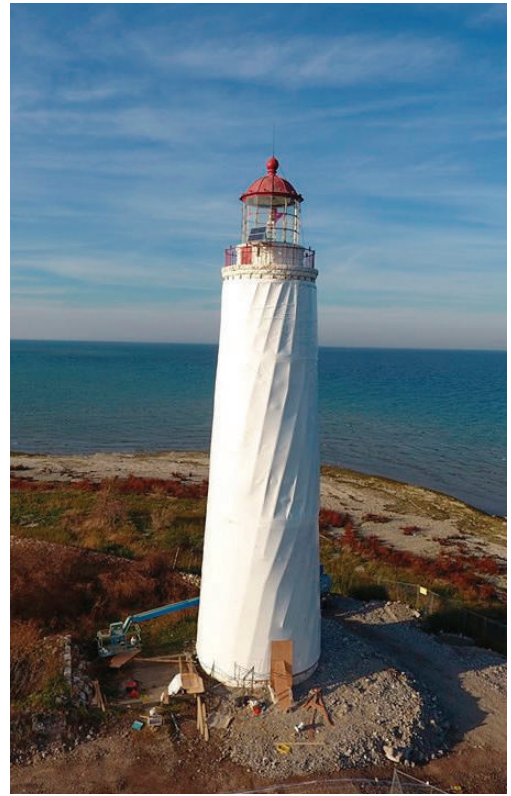
By Sarah King Head

In 2016, the National Trust for Canada included the Nottawasaga Lighthouse on Georgian Bay in Canada's "Top 10 Endangered Places."<sup>[1]</sup> A few years later, its rehabilitation is being hailed as a success story.

What is perhaps not fully appreciated is that this Dolomitic limestone structure was one of six built by an individual whose remarkable output over a few decades is worthy of a biography in the Canadian Encyclopaedia. But, Thorold's entrepreneurial contractor John Brown has largely been omitted from the history books for various reasons, most probably because he died intestate and unmarried in 1876 at the peak of his professional career.

Historians of the Welland Canal or the Niagara region tend to focus on Brown's establishment of a hydraulic cement and plaster mill in Thorold – and that he died while supervising work on the Third Welland Canal after being thrown from his carriage.

Notably, Brown was not an accredited civil engineer but rather a stonemason's apprentice who arrived in North America from Scotland in the early 1830s. Born in the Strathclyde region near Glasgow in 1809, he first settled in New York state before crossing the Niagara River and helping to establish some of the most productive and fruitful quarries in Upper Canada. Through this work, he made a name for himself as a preeminent contractor on the Second Welland Canal. This led to other projects, including rebuilding and dredging harbours and other canal work throughout the Great Lakes. His success in



hydraulic engineering was, of course, his access to the aggregate by-product of the high-quality Dolomitic limestone extracted from the quarries he managed along the Niagara Escarpment.

It is worth noting that while he did construct stone structures on terra firma (including municipal and domestic buildings and even the cairn commemorating the Battle of Beavertams in Thorold), Brown earned his reputation for work that relied on hydraulic engineering expertise. And the key to this success was a recipe for "Quick and Water Lime, and the best quality of Building Cement" that earned him international awards at the Exposition Universelle in Paris (1855) and at the Great London Exposition seven years later.

Reinforcing maritime harbours or even constructing the massive stone piers supporting Niagara Falls' iconic Suspension Bridge was one thing, but the design and construction of lighthouses were another.

Brown's first contract was a private commission for the Mohawk Island lighthouse in Lake Erie (1844–48). Recognizing the calibre of his work, a commission in 1855 for 11 more on Georgian Bay and Lake Huron from Christian Island to White Fish Island came from the

Board of Works. As part of a centralized policy to standardize and modernize lighthouse operations throughout Upper and Lower Canada, the government was also responding to the navigational needs of increased maritime transportation associated with trade and the policy of western expansion from the early 1850s.

It is clear that Brown underestimated the monumentality of this undertaking: not only was attracting employees to such as yet remote locations a challenge in those days, transportation of the limestone in the absence of basic infrastructure, like roads and docks, were a “logistical nightmare.” Faced with bankruptcy, Brown was forced to petition the government for funds to complete the job – adding that he was doing so “without profit to himself.”<sup>[2]</sup>

In the end, Brown could only finish six of the original contract, all of which circumnavigated the Bruce peninsula and included those at Point Clark and on Chantry, Cove, Griffith, Nottawasaga and Christian islands in Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. These became known as Imperial Towers. The others providing a maritime link to Lake Superior were meant to extend from Badgeley to Whitefish islands along Lake Huron’s North Channel and were completed later in the century.

Brown’s exactingly high standards have ensured that all his lighthouses survived. The limestone was extracted from three of his quarries, located in Bruce and Grey counties, and chosen carefully to ensure that both the towers and adjacent lightkeepers’ cottages would remain completely impermeable. Not only the materials but their craftsmanship exhibits the highest quality of functional design and aesthetics.

Although each of the Imperial Towers were designed identically, there were inevitably slight variations in detail. A constant 3.2-metre internal diameter was achieved throughout by ensuring the width of the walls tapered from the foundations where the walls were on average about two metres thick to being slightly more than half a metre at the top. Each of the glazed lantern rooms was cast iron construction with a corbelled copper roof and was equipped with innovative glass Fresnel lenses fitted into the lamps, and all manufactured in France. Not only did these rooms require added granite reinforcement, but each was equipped with 10 gargoyle lion heads at the end of bronze downspouts for condensation drainage.

Of note, the Cove Island lighthouse was the first to be lit in 1858 and last to remain operational until 1991. West of Flowerpot Island at the

tip of the Bruce Peninsula, this Imperial Tower kept lightkeepers employed for more than 130 years – an experience Robert Square of the Cove Island Lightstation Heritage Association evocatively captured in evidence he presented to the Commons’ Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans prior to passage of the *Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act* (Bill S-125) in 2008:

“[O]pening the heavy wooden door as you enter the tower, you are immediately greeted by worn grey circular stairs rising upwards within the tower. The darkness inside the tower is broken only by a small, single window on each landing. Personally, I can envision the ghosts of the lightkeepers walking up those stairs every night carrying their cans of sperm whale oil or kerosene to light the lamp, and throughout the often long night, they kept constant vigil tending to the lamp and keeping the area safe for mariners. They were always there for mariners, standing out as a symbol of security.” ■

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#### About the author

Based in the Niagara region, Sarah King Head (BA Hons, MA, PhilM, GDip Planning, CAHP) is grateful whenever she has the opportunity to pursue her passion for architectural history – while supporting local and national heritage preservation initiatives. Studies and work brought her from Saskatchewan to Ontario and then to England before returning her to Ontario.

<sup>1</sup> Nottawasaga Lighthouse, 2016.

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<sup>[1]</sup> For more information see the ‘Top 10 Endangered List’ (<https://nationaltrustcanada.ca/nt-endangered-places/nottawasaga-lighthouse>), the Nottawasaga Lighthouse Preservation Society (<https://www.nlps.info/about-our-organization/>) and the ACO’s Collingwood branch.

<sup>[2]</sup> See Sapulski, 1995 b, 1996.

# Eastern Lake Ontario's h

By Marc Seguin

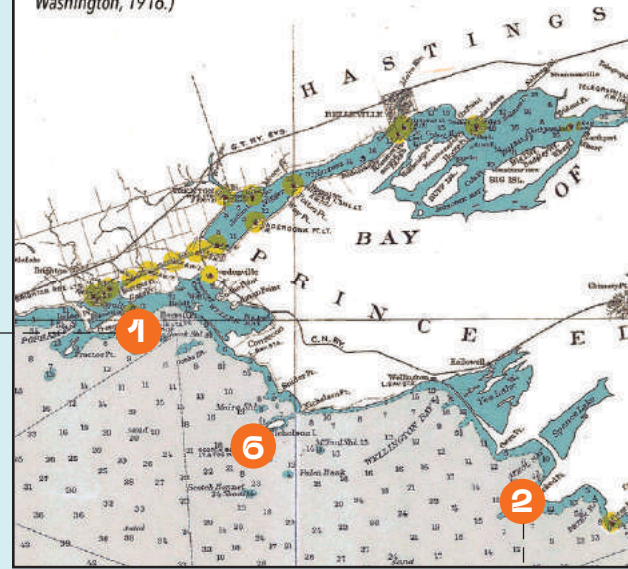
The Canadian shores of eastern Lake Ontario once boasted one of the world's largest concentrations of lighthouses, with forty-five constructed between 1828 and 1914. Today, only seven of these historic structures remain and several are close to disappearing altogether.

For almost two centuries, lighthouses on the Great Lakes were essential to navigation, helping to keep thousands of ships on course to arrive at their destinations with their hulls and cargoes intact, and their crews and passengers safe. Nowhere were these iconic structures more important than along the shores of eastern Lake Ontario, from Presqu'île Point near Brighton, Ontario, to the entrance of the St. Lawrence River at Kingston. This 65-nautical-mile stretch, dominated by the irregular-shaped peninsula of Prince Edward County protruding into Lake Ontario, offers no harbours of refuge along its treacherous shore of rocky reefs and sandy shoals. So many ships were lost in this area that it became known as "the graveyard of Lake Ontario."

It was here that a sprawling network of lighthouses and light towers was constructed "for the safety and convenience of navigation" in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The future of these lighthouses is uncertain.

## THE HERITAGE LIGHTHOUSES OF EASTERN LAKE ONTARIO

The yellow dots mark the location of many of the lighthouses that have been documented. (Adapted from the nautical chart, LAKE ONTARIO, from the Survey of the Northern and Northwestern Lakes published by the War Department, U.S. Corps of Engineers Washington, 1916.)



**Presqu'île Point - 1840**

In its day, this octagonal masonry tower with its gothic-arched door and windows was the most elaborate lighthouse on the Great Lakes. Despite being a heritage property designated under the Ontario Heritage Act and owned by the Province, the lighthouse has fallen into disrepair and the protective wood shingle cladding has hidden many of its architectural details. However, thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Presqu'île Point Lighthouse Preservation Society, work has begun to stabilize the crumbling limestone interior and restore the iconic lantern of this active lighthouse.



**Salmon Point - 1871**

This is the oldest of the pyramidal form lighthouses still standing on the shores of Lake Ontario. This iconic Canadian style of wood-framed lighthouse was built in the aftermath of the horrific sinking of the schooner *Jessie* in 1870, and it was the site of Canada's first Great Lakes lifeboat station. No longer active, the Salmon Point lighthouse is now privately owned and rapidly deteriorating. While the municipality of Prince Edward County has attempted to designate it as a heritage property, threats of prolonged and costly legal action by the wealthy property owner have deterred the local council from proceeding.

# Heritage lighthouses



**Nine Mile Point - 1833**

This cylindrical limestone tower is the most historic lighthouse on the Canadian shores of the Great Lakes, and the last of a trio of masonry towers built in the early nineteenth Century to guide ships to guide ships to safety through “the graveyard of Lake Ontario”. The other two lighthouses (False Ducks Island, 1828, and Point Petre, 1833) were demolished in the 1960s after the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada deemed them to be “of no historic importance.” The Nine Mile Point Lighthouse, is eligible for heritage designation if transferred to a local community organization to be conserved under the federal Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act. However, a dispute between two local groups vying to take ownership of the lighthouse has placed the transfer in bureaucratic limbo. While the lighthouse remains an aid to navigation, the Canadian Coast Guard, has no mandate to conserve heritage buildings or any interest in the costly maintenance of a deteriorating masonry structure when a simple steel tower could be erected for much less money. This lighthouse should be properly conserved by Parks Canada for its architectural and historic importance.



**Prince Edward Point - 1881**

Originally built to mark the proposed port at the eastern terminus of a never-completed section of the Central Ontario Railway, this pyramidal lighthouse also marked the entrance to Long Point Harbour for local commercial fishermen. Its current owner, Parks Canada, has recently stabilized the structure under the terms of the Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act, but they have no plans to restore it.



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### Main Duck Island – 1914

The tallest and most majestic lighthouse on Lake Ontario was built to guide larger ships through deeper waters after the expansion of the Welland Canal in the early twentieth century. Since 2015, a local community organization has been trying to take ownership of the deteriorating reinforced concrete tower to conserve it under the Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act. The slow process of transferring the property is still ongoing

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### Scotch Bonnet Island – 1856

An important beacon to warn ships away from the Scotch Bonnet shoal off the western tip of Prince Edward County, this masonry tower with its attached keeper's dwelling was deactivated in the 1950s. Even though it is now a crumbling ruin, it was designated as a heritage lighthouse in 2015. Unfortunately, the custodian of the lighthouse, the Canadian Wildlife Service, is in contravention of the Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act by not stabilizing it to prevent further deterioration.

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### Pigeon Island – 1909

This tall steel and wood tower is the second lighthouse to occupy the remote Pigeon Island, situated on the once-important shipping lane between Oswego, New York and Kingston, Ontario. Even though it is eligible for designation, the remote location of the Pigeon Island lighthouse has deterred community organizations from applying to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for ownership of the property.



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These seven lighthouses are representative of the state of heritage lighthouse conservation across Canada. More efforts must be made at all levels to ensure the preservation of these valuable pieces of our marine heritage. stabilizing it to prevent further deterioration. ■

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### About the author

Marc Seguin is a founding member of the lighthouse preservation organization, Save Our Lighthouses and has been an ACO member for more than a decade. Marc graduated with a degree in Canadian history from the University of Western Ontario and is the author of several books on Lake Ontario marine history.

- 1 The Presqu'île Point Lighthouse after restoration, 2020.
- 2 The Salmon Point Lighthouse, 2012.
- 3 The Prince Edward Point Lighthouse, 2013.
- 4 The Nine Mile Point Lighthouse, 2013. Built in 1833, this is the oldest active Canadian lighthouse on the Great Lakes.
- 5 The Main Duck Island Lighthouse, 2011. The lighthouse has deteriorated significantly over the last ten years.
- 6 The Presqu'île Point Lighthouse after restoration, 2020.
- 7 Map of heritage lighthouses on eastern Lake Ontario.

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# Taddle Creek

## Seen and unseen

By Lynne Delehanty DiStefano and Sue Dexter

What is Taddle Creek? Where is it? How much of it is visible? Should it be seen and recognized as part of a cultural landscape or a heritage precinct?

Toronto's grid is superimposed on a natural landscape divided by rivers, one of which is Taddle Creek. The creek rises in the northwest part of the city, west of Bathurst Street, north of Davenport Road, and in line with the ancient bluff of Lake Iroquois. From its likely source, the creek flows in a southeastern direction, emptying its waters into Lake Ontario near Berkeley and Mill Streets.

But the creek is now unseen because decades ago its waters were diverted to subterranean sewers. The rationale was two-fold. The creek had become polluted with human waste and garbage – and a flowing creek hindered property development.<sup>[1]</sup>

Unseen is not entirely correct. South of the presumed source of the creek, water has been dammed to form a pond as the centrepiece of

a natural heritage “reserve” in the midst of Wychwood Park, a late nineteenth-century planned development.<sup>[2]</sup> Taddle Creek pond is a self-contained pocket of nature at its urban best.

Overflow from the pond seemingly vanishes once it reaches Davenport Road. The only hints of a water course remain far to the southeast, unless one considers flooded basements.

The first hint is at the southwest corner of Bedford Road and Lowther Avenue, where a small park, named in recognition of the creek, has recently been developed. However, no creek runs through Taddle Creek Park, above ground at least; rather, in the midst of the multi-purpose park, a water feature in the guise of a large-scale, open-mouth pitcher alludes to the continuous flow of creek water. The four kilometers of stainless steel rods that comprise the pitcher refer to the length of the watercourse. The park's green area is almost level, with no evidence of a creek bed or ravine.

The second hint is more rewarding – and more than a hint. To the south, on University of Toronto property,



Philosopher's Walk runs from the Queen Alexandra Gateway on Bloor Street to the Bennett Gates on Hoskin Avenue. A heavily-treed pathway closely follows the creek bed, which was buried in the late nineteenth century, and a rising slope on the west speaks to the original ravine.<sup>[3]</sup>

The third hint is the least known to many, but it is the most dramatic reminder of the creek's continuing presence. To the south of the University of Toronto's Hart House, the eastern bank of Taddle Creek remains visible. It separates the table land, which now includes the Provincial Legislative Building and Queen's Park, from the university's historic St. George Campus. Although Queen's Park Crescent West hugs the east side of the bank, it is only from the mid-twentieth century bridge crossing Wellesley Street West that the residual drama of the landscape is fully revealed.

Moving south, there are very few reminders of Taddle Creek, itself, until its murky waters merge with those of Lake Ontario.

### An Associative Landscape

Taddle Creek and its waning presence in the landscape is only part of the story. Historically, the creek and its environs were a gathering place for Indigenous communities (the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation). Its waters provided fish, and the surrounding land was used for

foraging and hunting. Until recently, the remnants of the creek on the St. George Campus were largely ignored and considered more of a burden to maintain than an important associative landscape feature.<sup>[4]</sup> Fortunately, and in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 2015 Calls to Action, the University of Toronto is acknowledging and embracing the landscape as an Indigenous landscape. In the words of the university:

"...a new U of T landscape project [the Indigenous Landscape Project] looks to pay tribute to the Indigenous nations that lived alongside Taddle Creek, while providing the university's current Indigenous students, staff and faculty with a place to gather, commemorate and celebrate Indigenous history and culture."<sup>[5]</sup>

The project will be situated on Hart House Green, close to the now buried creek. It will include a striking installation as part of the landscape's most recent layer, a layer that circles back to the original landscape and the people that occupied it and treated it with respect.

Although historic maps and contemporary accounts of Taddle Creek exist, there are

currently few markers in the landscape that help us understand the river as a whole. Exceptions are the impressive walking tours of Lost Rivers<sup>[6]</sup> and a forthcoming Heritage Toronto plaque, which will include a succinct text and a helpful map.

The acknowledgement, protection, and celebration of a portion of Taddle Creek as an Indigenous landscape are important steps in understanding the multi-layered history of the area. Another layer is the Queen's Park Heritage Precinct that has been described as a cultural landscape. The precinct includes parts of Taddle Creek as its western boundary (both Philosopher's Walk and the extant river bank on the St. George Campus) and is comprised of the buildings, parks, and green spaces along and within the area defined by Queen's Park (north), Queen's Park Crescents East and West, and Queen's Park (south).<sup>[7]</sup> As with the area associated with the Indigenous Landscape Project, the extensive Queen's Park Heritage Precinct layer is infused with meaning and importance.<sup>[8]</sup> This layer, too, needs to be recognized, protected, and honoured. ■

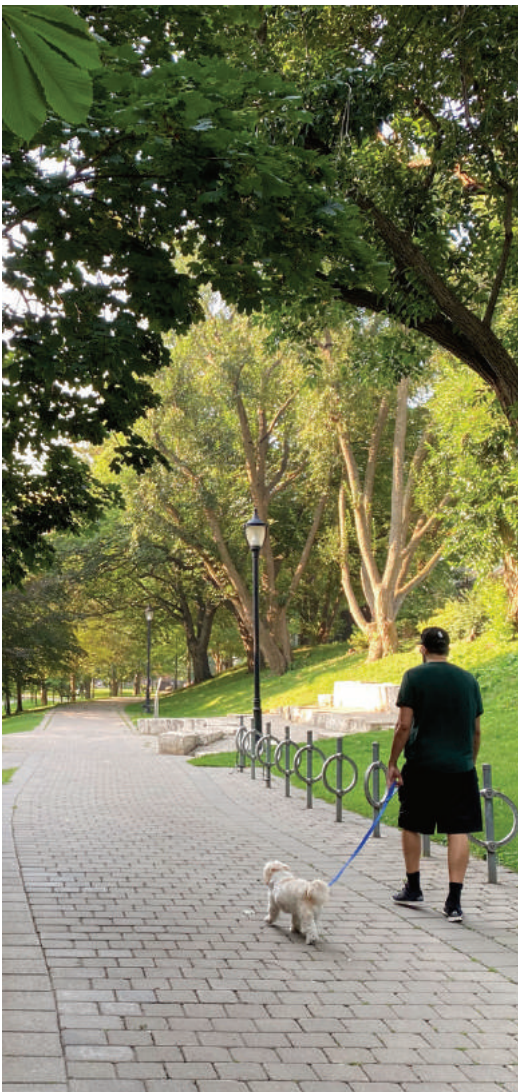


photo Lynne DiStefano

### About the authors

Lynne DiStefano is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Hong Kong and a Faculty Associate at Willowbank School of Restoration Arts. She has served as an ICOMOS Expert and Technical Evaluator for World Heritage Sites, worked as an international consultant, sat on the Ontario Heritage Trust Board, and is a member of Heritage Toronto's Program Committee. Lynne lives close to Taddle Creek Park.

Sue Dexter is a retired journalist, television producer, and for many years was a sessional teacher in the Journalism Department of Ryerson University. She is on the Board of the Harbord Village Residents' Association, which has actively sought protection of heritage assets in the north end of downtown Toronto.

- 1 Looking west from Queen's Park Crescent West to the exposed upper bank of Taddle Creek as seen beyond the Lime Ridge Monument, July 2021.
- 2 The original path of Taddle Creek through the University of Toronto is clearly indicated in this 1859 map. *Campus Map of area bounded by College, St. George, Bloor and Surrey Place*, c.1859.
- 3 Philosopher's Walk looking south, July 2021.

<sup>[1]</sup> See Alfred Holden, "The Forgotten Stream: The real Taddle Creek - a brief history," *Taddle Creek 1* (Christmas 1997). See also: Eduardo Sousa, "Re-inhabiting Taddle Creek," in *HTO: Toronto's Water from Lake Iroquois to Lost Rivers to Low-flow Toilets*, ed. Wayne Reeves and Christina Palassio (Toronto: Coach House Press, 2008) 331-55.

<sup>[2]</sup> See: Wychwood Creek in Lost Rivers: Taddle Creek, [lostrivers.ca](http://lostrivers.ca) Accessed July 6, 2021.

<sup>[3]</sup> In the 1960s, Michael Hough, a landscape architect, redesigned the landscape. See: Philosopher's Walk, [toif.org](http://toif.org) Accessed July 5, 2021. In 1997, John Borrows wrote about Philosopher's Walk from an Indigenous perspective. See: "Buried Spirits: Ancient natural power lies beneath Philosopher's Walk," *University of Toronto Bulletin* 15 (March 3, 1997) 16. The authors are grateful to Megan Maloney for drawing our attention to John Borrows's essay.

<sup>[4]</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, the creek was damned, creating McCaul's Pond, a well-used recreational site for several decades—and captured in a number of period photographs. See: McCaul's Pond, [torontopubliclibrary.ca](http://torontopubliclibrary.ca) Accessed June 28, 2021.

<sup>[5]</sup> See: Indigenous Landscape project at U of T's St. George campus to bring history, culture and learning to Hart House Green, [utoronto.ca](http://utoronto.ca) Accessed June 28, 2021.

<sup>[6]</sup> See: Wychwood Creek, Annex Reach, University Reach, St. Patrick Reach, and Muddy York Reach in Lost Rivers: Taddle Creek, [lostrivers.ca](http://lostrivers.ca) Accessed July 6, 2021.

<sup>[7]</sup> The precinct is described as a cultural heritage landscape by the Queen's Park Heritage Precinct Coalition. For more information about the coalition, see: [queensparkheritageprecinctcoalition.com](http://queensparkheritageprecinctcoalition.com) Also: The precinct partially overlaps with other forms of recognition and other initiatives, including an initiative by the Ontario Capital Precinct Working Group.1

<sup>[8]</sup> We are grateful to Chris Bateman, Pleasance Crawford, Michael McClelland, Harvey McCue, Catherine Nasmith, Dan Schneider, and Elizabeth Sisam for providing comments and insight.

# Captain Munro's shipwrecks

By Keith Stelling

Chantry Island with its Imperial Tower lighthouse lies just off the coast of Southampton in Ontario's Bruce County. Some days there's an eerie feeling around the lighthouse. There have been over fifty shipwrecks here.

There were many perils facing nineteenth-century sailing vessels: running aground on shifting sandbars; being blown helplessly off course in fierce gales, or losing all landmarks and navigational references in sudden fogs. The masts of schooners attracted lightning. But the dread of every mariner was to be caught in the tentacles of Chantry Island's mile-long shoals that stretch from the ends of the island-- sometimes only four feet beneath the water. In 1851, just eleven days before Christmas, the *Saucy Jack* sank after becoming entangled. The loss of the winter provisions it was carrying threatened the future of the fledgling settlement. Fishing families accepted these dangers as the challenge of the occupation and preferred to believe shipwreck would not be their fate.

Take, for example, the strange story of Captain John Munro and the ghost ship. In 1898 he had watched helplessly from the deck of his schooner *Azov* as his 22-year-old son James fell overboard and drowned in a fierce storm. After his two nephews also drowned beside the *Azov*, he sold the boat and retired, passing his leisure time out on the lake fishing from a small sailboat.



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In 1911 a load of lumber shifted and overturned the *Azov* off the coast of Michigan. The crew were blown in their lifeboat right over to Goderich. Meanwhile, the *Azov* righted itself and on its own headed straight to Southampton. We can only imagine the amazement of Captain Munro when he watched it turn towards Port Elgin where it was smashed to bits.



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Then in 1915 Munro fell off his sailboat and drowned. Hundreds of sticks of dynamite were exploded in the lake in the belief that it would raise the body but it wasn't found for two weeks.

Many sons became fishermen like their fathers. However, it was always remarked as uncanny when disaster struck more than once in the same family. Frank Granville, for example, wrecked his schooner the *Ontario* on Southampton beach in a storm in 1907. Its anchor can be seen in Southampton's Pioneer Park.

His nephew, 25-year-old Gabriel Granville, one of the many Métis coopers who built wooden barrels on the beach, was skippering the schooner *Grand Trunk* one day in 1895 when it was struck by lightning. He was "blown to bits." Eight years later, his father, Gabriel Sr. drowned after being hit by the boom of the *Grand Trunk* and knocked overboard.

Both bad and good luck ran in families. George Dobson Jr. was lucky when his boat was struck by lightning near the Saugeen River dock in 1901. The newspaper reported: "The lightning came down the mast and struck him on the shoulder, tearing his clothing and rubber boots to ribbons. Mr. Dobson received a very severe shock and was badly burned, but will recover."<sup>1</sup> His grandfather had died in the late 1850s after falling off a scaffold while helping to build Chantry Island lighthouse.

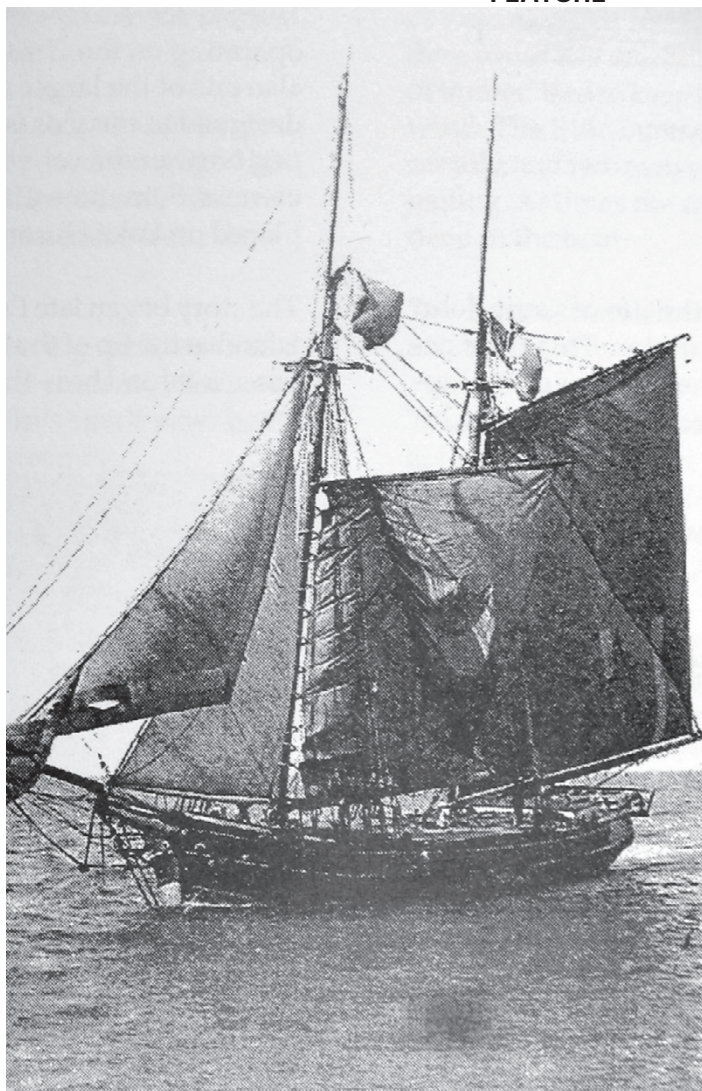
Southampton's earliest shipwreck has national historical significance. The British warship, *General Hunter* built in 1806 and captured by

the Americans during the War of 1812, washed up on Southampton Beach on August 19, 1816, in a violent storm. It was being used across the lake as a transport brig by the American Army. The recent excavation by marine archaeologist Ken Cassavoy assisted by 200 local volunteers confirmed the identity of this 1806 battleship. It has been reburied in the wet sand, its ideal preservation medium. A 2/3 scale model can be seen in the Bruce County Museum.

Even the modern reinforced steel fishing tug, the *Jackson Brothers* with its powerful diesel engine, radio and radar proved no match for a three-day gale in 1979. Captain Ed Jackson had vowed never to leave his tug in Southampton for another winter hoping to avoid the spring break-up ice damage of previous years. He and mate Lavern La France perished after many hours of battling blinding snow squalls and punishing waves.

It took a search helicopter 11 days to spot the boat lying on its side five fathoms down. Lavern's body was never found.<sup>[2]</sup>

The "Imperial Tower" lighthouse on Chantry Island was first lighted in April 1859. But it seems to have done little to deter tragedy. Duncan McGregor Lambert, its first light keeper personally saved dozens of people from drowning in shipwrecks. In 1892 "he rowed his boat into the teeth of a gale to rescue three crew members of the sinking *Nettie Woodward*; they had spent ten hours clinging to the mast, the only part of the schooner above water".<sup>[3]</sup> He and his son William (who succeeded him as light keeper in 1880) were both awarded the Imperial Service Medal and a gold watch from the Canadian government in recognition of the many lives they had saved. His awards can be seen in an online collection of the Bruce County Museum. ■



left photo Keith Stelling; right photo Ron Beaupré

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#### About the author

Keith Stelling is a member of the Southampton Cultural Conservancy and lives in Bruce County.

- 1 Nameplate from schooner *Azov*.
- 2 Wreck of *Jackson Brothers* fishing tug, 2021.
- 3 Plaque marking excavation of the *General Hunter*, 2021.
- 4 Built in Southampton by Capt. John Spence, an Orkney apprenticed boat builder, the *Wanderer* was typical of schooners of the era. From John Weikel, *Forgotten Times*.

<sup>[1]</sup> Hilborn, Robin. *Hilborn's Guide to Old Southampton*. Family Helper Publishing, 2019. [www.familyhelper.net](http://www.familyhelper.net)

<sup>[2]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[3]</sup> The Record, Kitchener, September 8, 2000.



# HMS Speedy

## Preserving marine heritage

By Dan Buchanan

Ed Burttt said he was 99.99 per cent sure that he had found the remains of *HMS Speedy* in Lake Ontario off Presqu'île Point. Marine archaeologists scoffed at such pretense and repeated the theory that the ship broke up far out in the lake. Ed's certainty was based on pictures, videos and documents from three summers of underwater survey work. The old theory was based on one report of debris from the *Speedy* found on the south side of Lake Ontario a few weeks after the ship was lost. Who are we to believe?

*HMS Speedy* was a twin-mast British gunboat that sailed from York to Newcastle on Presqu'île Point on October 7, 1804. It carried twenty people who planned to conduct a murder trial at the courthouse in Newcastle. The solicitor general of Upper Canada was on board along with a judge, magistrates, lawyers, soldiers and sailors. Down in the hold was a young Mississauga man named Ogetonicut who was accused of murder. The ship approached Newcastle late in the evening of October 8, 1804, pushed by a strong westerly storm.

Before the ship could enter Presqu'île Bay, a vicious nor'easter struck the area and raged for two days. After the storm passed, the people of Newcastle found not so much as a stick of wood or piece of clothing. *HMS Speedy* and all twenty souls onboard disappeared with only some spars and debris washed up on the US shore more than a week later. This was a huge disaster for Upper Canada and the Town of York, which were both little more than a decade old. Mourning the loss of those onboard would last decades.

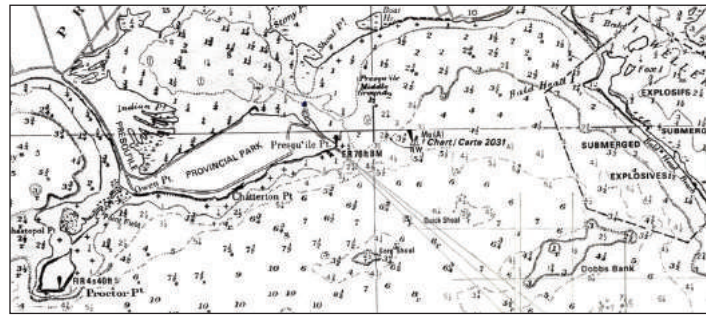
During the first three years of the 1990s, Ed Burttt, a commercial diver in Belleville, conducted underwater survey work south-east of Presqu'île Point and in the end was certain he had found a large debris field of scattered items from a very old shipwreck. He passed

away in the fall of 2017 and, a year later, his family gave me his personal papers. I had worked with Ed and the family knew I was interested in doing a book about the Speedy story. They hoped that his work might receive fair treatment.

The collection contains documents related to the three years of underwater survey work in the area of Dobbs Bank, which is 7.5 kilometres south-east of the lighthouse on Presqu'île Point. There are daily diving records and annual project reports along with many pictures of items found under the water. We also see pictures of surface activity with boats, equipment and divers. There is even a VHS tape that contains foggy images of artifacts photographed on the ground by a remotely operated underwater video camera.

These documents make clear that Ed Burt found many artifacts scattered widely across a debris field extending two square kilometres. There is evidence of cannonballs and at least one small cannon. Two identical masts appear in pictures and many pieces of decking, spars and rigging were identified, including several dead-eyes and pullies. Divers recognized many bottles, jars and metal pots as well as personal items such as eyeglasses and clay pipes.

These items appeared to Ed and his crew to be part of a very old ship, tentatively dated around 1800. In order to narrow down the time period, the size and shape of items can suggest the era of their construction. There are very few shipwrecks in Lake Ontario from before the War of 1812, so this one is unique. Each item was of interest, but the consistent nature of many items from a similar time period suggests a far greater value in the collection, rather than individual pieces. No other ship was recorded lost in this area, so the evidence points very much to *HMS Speedy*.



To this day, a serious historical anomaly exists regarding the resting place of *HMS Speedy*. Ed used the term “99.99 per cent sure” to express his opinion but he could not say 100 per cent because no professional marine archaeologist had studied the artifacts he discovered over Dobbs Bank. In effect, the science has not been done. Today we live in an age of high-resolution underwater photographic technology and efficient remotely operated vehicles. Also, there is abundant knowledge in the archaeology world about handling artifacts that have been underwater for a long time. Now, we also have good information from previous survey work on the site.

The story of *HMS Speedy* will never be understood through a lovely intact shipwreck that recreational divers can explore. The reality of a large, complex debris field, rather than an intact shipwreck, is unusual and is difficult to promote to the public. On the other hand, we have the opportunity to study and preserve the remains of a very old shipwreck that exists in Lake Ontario. Hopefully, one day the results of good archaeology work done on this site will provide fascinating insights into Upper Canada’s history during a period we don’t hear much about.

Let’s get to work. ■

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#### About the author

Dan Buchanan is “The History Guy” of Brighton Ontario. He is the author of “The Wreck of *HMS Speedy*: The Tragedy That Shook Upper Canada” and two other books. He has done genealogy research which is published on [www.treesbydan.com](http://www.treesbydan.com). See his main website for more info: [www.danbuchananhistoryguy.com](http://www.danbuchananhistoryguy.com).

Editor's note: Ontario's underwater cultural heritage is protected under provincial and federal legislation. As important bearers of historical information and given their often-fragile condition, these sites are best conserved *in situ* and accessed with professional archaeological services.



left photo Dan Buchanan; right photo Ed Burt's collection

- 1 A sketch of *HMS Speedy* by Snider & Staples. C. H. J. Snider in 1949. Owen Staples added watercolours to produce this image.
- 2 Historical Plaque at Presqu'île to commemorate the Loss of the Speedy.
- 3 Nautical Chart Showing Location of Dobbs Bank. This chart shows Presqu'île Point to the left.



# Diving into history

## A ship that sunk three times

By Kayla Martin

The Great Lakes are the world's largest freshwater lakes. From the mouth of the St Lawrence River to Duluth Minnesota, ships travel more than 3,000 kilometres into the heart of North America.

For millennia, the Lakes have been plied: from Indigenous watercraft to the era of wind and sail and today's massive Great Lakes carriers.

But the Lakes also harbour a dark side: wide, deep and cold they have claimed both sailor and watercraft. For time immemorial people have been drawn to their final resting places.

The City of Brockville is located at the centre of the Thousand Islands and its waters are home to many shipwrecks. One of the most famous of these is the *Robert*

*Gaskin*. Knowledge of its history makes a dive more exciting, so let me tell you about a ship that was sunk not once, but three times!

The *Gaskin* was launched as a triple-masted barque in 1863, the same year American president Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War. Thereafter she was converted into a work barge and used for salvage operations.

She first succumbed late in September 1889 while attempting to salvage the *William Armstrong*, a train ferry that had sunk two months earlier. A pontoon that was being filled with steam broke loose from the *Armstrong* and rocketed to the surface, striking the *Gaskin*



in the bow like a torpedo. The huge hole in her hull sent her to the bottom in just minutes, where she landed right on top of the *Armstrong*! About six weeks later the *Gaskin* was raised, but as she cleared the waves, a coupling detached, and she sunk for a second time. Of course, Canadians do not give up easily, so 12 days later she was successfully brought to the surface – but as she was being towed to shore, a chain attached to the keelson tore the stern away and she went down for the third and final time.

In 1980, local divers located the *Gaskin* just 500 metres from the harbour in Brockville lying sideways to the current with her bow pointing towards the shore. With her deck just 17 metres below the waves, it quickly became a popular dive site. In the earlier days of diving, little concern was given to protecting the wrecks. The common practice of divers snagging their anchors on the wreck in order to descend caused major damage.

Save Ontario Shipwrecks (SOS) is a provincial heritage organization whose mission is to promote and preserve Ontario’s marine heritage. For more than 40 years it acted as a steward through various community outreach programs and tireless efforts of many volunteers.

One hundred years after going down for the final time, SOS embarked on its preservation of the *Gaskin* in September 1989. It was necessary to deploy a 2,500-kilogram cement mooring block with attached buoy at the site of this historical time capsule, allowing boats to moor without an anchor and provide divers with a safe means of descending to and ascending from the wreck.

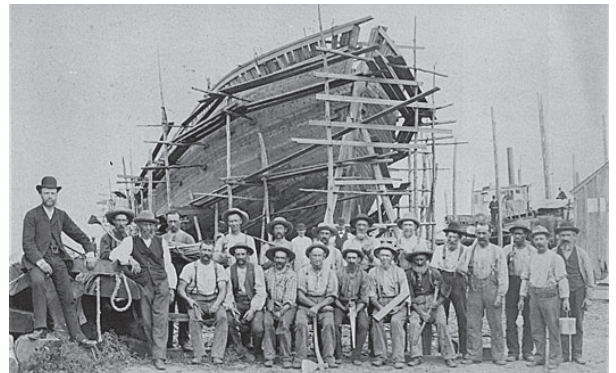
Recognition of the fragility of these shipwrecks is another key consideration. Not only are divers not to disturb or remove artifacts, they must never rub, grab, or hang onto the hull or machinery. With increased diving tourism, another unique solution to protect Great Lakes’ wrecks was

developed: the underwater sculpture park was designed to provide new divers with a location to practice their skills and master buoyancy before exploring fragile shipwrecks. In 2014, Canada’s first underwater sculpture park was opened at Centeen Park in Brockville.

The underwater sculptures were created by local artists Dave Sheridan and Stephen Hatch as well as Thousand Islands Secondary School and Brockville Collegiate Institute students to commemorate those who have lost their lives in the St. Lawrence River.

The City of Brockville and SOS have set up an annual diver permit system. The funds raised through the purchase of dive tokens help maintain and expand the dive park attraction. Each year additional sculptures have been added, along with diver gear-up benches and underwater training platforms. Currently, 31 underwater exhibits can be explored. Native fish species like carp, bass, and pike also now populate the amazing life-size sculptures and training platforms, enhancing the diving experience.

I hope to inspired the explorer spirit in each of you to visit and partake of the rich history that lies beneath the waves at Brockville and elsewhere throughout the Great Lakes. ■



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#### About the author

Kayla Martin is currently studying Applied Water Science (BSc) at Wilfrid Laurier University. In her spare time, she is a Heritage Ambassador promoting Low Impact Diving for SOS and is active doing fieldwork with the Ontario Marine Heritage Committee



left photo Durrell Martin; right photo Courtesy of The Maritime History of the Great Lakes Collection

- 1 Example of a 19th-century triple-masted barque, similar to the *Robert Gaskin*.
- 2 Author exploring the wreck of the *Robert Gaskin*, September 17, 2017.
- 3 Shipyards at Kingston Ontario.

# S.S. *Keewatin*

## The Canadian Pacific Railway's "Mini-Titanic"

By Richard Longley



Her name means “blizzard from the north.” Moored at Port McNicoll, east of Midland on Georgian Bay, the S.S. *Keewatin* is a reminder of when ships of the Canadian Pacific Railway Upper Lake Service steamed between Georgian Bay, Sault Sainte Marie and Fort William (now Thunder Bay). The service began in 1883, to convey workers with the horses, rails, explosives, food, tobacco and tools they needed to build the railway that would connect Canada east to west around the north shore of Lake Superior.

The last spike between Montreal and Winnipeg was hammered in at Noslo, east of what is now the ghost town of Jack Fish, on May 16, 1885 (less than six months before Donald Smith drove in the “official” last spike at Craigellachie, British Columbia). Completion of the railway did not sink the Upper Lake Service; it was never intended to. Built on muskeg and blasted through the Canadian Shield, the section leading to Thunder Bay was the most difficult east of the Rockies and, when it was done, often blocked and unreliable. Compared with what might be a four-day journey by rail, a two-and-a-half-day lake cruise was an enticing alternative. CPR ships would continue to convey immigrants west and return laden with grain for another 62 years.

The 3,856-ton *Keewatin* was built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. at Govan, Scotland. She was launched on July 6, 1907 and began a two-week crossing of the Atlantic on September 14. At Lévis, Quebec she was separated into two parts to allow her to pass through the Welland Canal. Re-connected at Buffalo, she arrived at Owen Sound on Christmas Day. On October 7, 1908 she set off on her first voyage.

The Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railway was acquired by the CPR in 1883, the year it launched its Upper Lake Service. The former TGBR terminal at Owen Sound was the service’s southern port, until its two grain elevators burned in 1911, reinforcing CPR Vice President David McNicoll’s determination to create a new port, with easier access by rail than the steep incline into Owen Sound.

Port McNicoll opened in 1912. Immigrants, grain and increasing numbers of tourists were the chief cargoes of the Upper Lakes steamers, until 1929, when the Great Depression brought the boom to a halt. It would pick up again after the Second World War.

Reached at Port McNicoll in three hours by the *Steamboat* train from Toronto, outfitted by the T. Eaton company, with its flower pot lounge, skylights of Murano glass, hand-carved wood panelling and Canadian art; for her wealthier passengers the *Keewatin* was a luxury liner in miniature. Steaming past the 30,000 islands of Georgian Bay, the rugged shores of Lake Superior, being a passenger then was a magical experience but, with increasing automobile ownership and the opening of the Trans-Canada Highway in 1962, the Upper Lake Service could not last. It came to an end in 1965.

In 1967 the *Keewatin* was purchased by Michigan entrepreneur and steamship enthusiast Roland J. Peterson. He had her towed 1,000 kilometres to Douglas, Michigan where, with all but her original boilers intact



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she became the Keewatin Maritime Museum, advertised as the “Mini-Titanic.”

Eric Conroy worked as a waiter on the *Keewatin* in 1963, to “make some pocket money and meet girls.” In the 1990s he befriended Roland Peterson. In 1997 he became the *Keewatin*’s “Honorary Captain.” In 2011 he negotiated her sale to Skyline Developments, who shared his goal of returning the ship to Port McNicoll. Towed by the tugs *American Girl* and *Wendy Anne*, the *Keewatin* arrived at Port McNicoll at 2:30 pm on June 23, 2012 — 45 years to the day after she had been hauled away to Michigan. Between 2012 and 2019 she was restored by an army of volunteers, to nearly the condition she was in when she retired.

But in 2021, her future is uncertain.

Donation of the last survivor of the Upper Lakes fleet to the Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston is being negotiated but her friends are determined to keep the *Keewatin* in Port McNicoll. Wayne Coombes, Marketing and Communications Director for Friends of *Keewatin* writes:

“Skyline has inexplicably decided to renege on its commitments and donate her not to the charity it founded to receive her but instead to a different charity in a distant city with no relationship to her history — to the consternation and disappointment of the volunteers and the community.”

The Friends of Keewatin petitioned the Government of Canada to halt the transfer. They received this response from the office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage:

“The application for designation presented by the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston and Skyline Investments Inc. is deemed eligible and, as such, the Government of Canada does not have any grounds to reject its review... While the Government recognizes

that the decision surrounding the donation belongs to the owner of the S.S. *Keewatin*, we remain hopeful that it will be donated to a heritage organization in Canada so that its story can continue to be told.”

For now, the *Keewatin* remains at Port McNicoll, fenced off due to COVID-19. Entry is barred even to the volunteers who maintain her. Her fate, like that of so much built heritage in Ontario, remains to be determined. ■



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**About the author**

Richard Longley was President of ACO from 2013 to 2015. He leads heritage walks in Toronto and regularly contributes to Acorn and to NOW magazine. Inspired by ACO’s participation in a campaign to save the Gore buildings in Hamilton, he recently authored *That Very Intelligent Architect*, a pictorial biography of William Thomas, an Anglo-Canadian architect.

- 1 S.S. *Keewatin*, the “Mini-Titanic,” June 8, 2013.
- 2 S.S. *Keewatin*, Murano glass, June 8, 2013.
- 3 S.S. *Keewatin* returns to Port McNicoll, June 23, 2012.

top photo Richard Longley, bottom photo Craig White, Friends of the Keewatin

# Launching new life into old shipyards

By Kimberly Monk



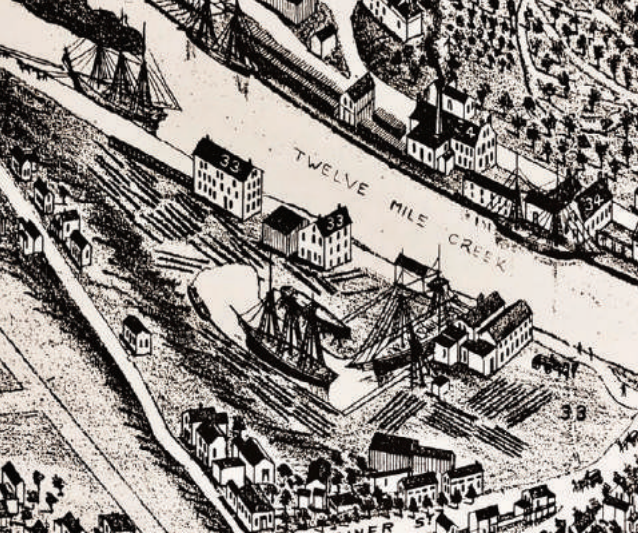
Along the banks of Twelve Mile Creek, adjacent to downtown St. Catharines, a thriving industrial maritime landscape once rang with the sound of the shipwright's caulking mallet. Two- and three-storey buildings that lined the creek were obscured by a forest of masts, while plumes of smoke were expelled from steamships navigating the narrow waterway. Teams of horses towing canal vessels walked wearily along the quayside, while a horse boy encouraged them on. Today, the Welland Canal no longer utilizes Twelve Mile Creek, and the municipality razed much of its nineteenth-century canal heritage in the 1970s to make way for Highway 406. The only visible evidence that ships once reigned this historic corridor is the stone masonry of the Second Welland Canal locks, vestiges of the region's maritime legacy.

The opening of the Welland Canal in 1829 generated a new route for the export of key staples, particularly timber and wheat, that led to the establishment of a port community at St. Catharines. Factories, mills, quayside services, towing businesses, sited along the canal route from Port Colborne on Lake Erie to Port Dalhousie on Lake Ontario transformed the area from an agricultural to an industrialized landscape.

At the heart of this rapid growth industry was wooden shipbuilding. Shipyards sprang up along the banks of the canals to support the transportation of goods and people. Of the two dozen shipyards that were established along the Welland Canal, the Shickluna Shipyard would become the largest industrial enterprise in the Niagara region and a nationally recognized centre for wooden shipbuilding during the period of the First and Second Welland Canal (1829-1881).

The property was first settled by shipbuilder Russell Armington in 1827, but his premature death in 1837 presented an opportunity for a young, industrious Maltese shipbuilder named Louis Shickluna (1808-1880) to establish his business and apply his ingenuity and fine workmanship. Crafting some of the most beautiful ships that floated on the Great Lakes, Shickluna would construct over 100 steam and sail vessels that serviced bulk trade markets, supported passenger and packet lines, and maintained port and canal infrastructure. Shickluna was a master shipbuilder, a shipowner, City Councillor, and philanthropist who was celebrated by the community, respected by his workers, and frequently lauded in contemporary newspapers for his contributions to shipbuilding and his impact on Canada.

Shickluna's land holdings stretched a half-mile on the south bank of the Twelve. These included a blacksmith shop, moulding loft, joiner's shop, rigging loft, boat manufactory, an office building, a storehouse, and 16 dwellings for shipyard labourers. Construction of a double drydock in 1846 enabled two vessels to be floated into a watertight basin, the water pumped out, leaving the ships supported on blocks, which increased his ship repair business by 50 per cent. The drydock property housed a sawmill, an additional blacksmith shop, planing mill, block shop, and further storehouses, to support constant demand.



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On Louis' passing, his son Joseph maintained the yard and continued building and repairing ships which then conformed to the dimensions of the Third Welland Canal. Joseph closed his books for the final time in 1891, leasing the shipyard and drydock to local businesses. In 1932, descendants of Shickluna sold the property to the City of St. Catharines, and the ship basin was filled in. The site has since been used as a training centre for sea cadets, city snow disposal and as a fire training station.

The Shickluna Shipyard holds significant historical value to Canada, while archaeologically it provides a rare opportunity to examine a land-based maritime site. In addition to the shipyard and the drydock, the hull of a Welland Canal schooner *James Norris* (1854-1887) lies buried within the shipyard basin. Historic sites like the Shickluna Shipyard are truly buried treasure, enabling a rare glimpse into our maritime past through examining the practice, process, and product of skilled artisans.

In 2018, a team of academics from across Brock and McMaster University initiated a multi-year project to visualize and reengage this industrial site. Through connecting methodologies from across the humanities, social and physical sciences, including historical and maritime archaeology, digital humanities, dendrochronology and dendroprovenancing, physical and human geography, their aim is to address the early development of maritime industry and its impact on the local historic environment. What can we learn about the country's industrial and maritime landscape through the study of this site? How did nineteenth-century industrialization impact the early canals? In what ways has the region's role as an entrepôt on the Atlantic - Great Lakes route, shaped its material history? The work is currently supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and through the generosity of the Niagara community.

While the academic aims of the project have been at the centre of the work, the enthusiastic community response to the project has led to a series of outreach opportunities to educate, advise and share the value of Niagara's maritime and industrial heritage. Importantly, this research connects us with communities that continue to support trade along the Welland Canal, whilst reimagining the legacies through our multidisciplinary fieldwork. ■



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#### About the author

Kimberly Monk is an adjunct professor in historical and maritime archaeology at Brock University, where she teaches courses on Great Lakes maritime history and local historical archaeology.

If you would like to follow the project, please visit us at <https://www.facebook.com/shicklunashipyard>.

- 1 The Shickluna Shipyard in 1864. The Welland RR steam propellers *Enterprise* and *Perseverance* under construction to the left of the boathouse (the rectangular building). The schooner *Clyde* and the tug *Samson* are to the right, beside the ship basin. The barkentine *Valetta* is in the foreground, fitting out in the basin.
- 2 Herman Brosius Bird's Eye View of the Shickluna Shipyard, St. Catharines, 1875.
- 3 Louis Shickluna was born in Malta in 1808. His father and grandfather were skilled shipwrights who ran their own small shipyard and contracted to serve the British Royal. At age 7, Louis began to help out at the dockyard, learning both the craft and the business.

# Founder of the Royal Canadian Navy

Charles Edmund Kingsmill, 1855-1935

By Richard Longley

Charles Edmund Kingsmill was born in Guelph on July 7, 1855, and spent his early childhood at *Woodycrest*, the Tuscan-style villa built on land his father, John Juchereau Kingsmill, Crown Attorney for Wellington County bought from John “Quaker” Howitt in 1850. Later re-named Homewood, it was described in the Guelph Mercury of the time as “one of the most beautiful residential properties of which Guelph boasts.” It still is.

The future founder of the Royal Canadian Navy would not enjoy life in Guelph for long. In 1879, when he was a boarder at Upper Canada College, Governor-General Lord Lisgar nominated the 14-year old Charles Kingsmill to leave Canada for England where he joined the Royal Naval College in the three-decker man of war H.M.S. *Britannia*. Kingsmill’s naval education was intense but brief. In 1870, at the age of 15, he was assigned to the steam frigate H.M.S. *Ariadne*. In 1905 his Royal Navy career reached its zenith when he became captain of the battleship H.M.S. *Dominion*. One year later, his career would reach its nadir.

On August 16, 1906, the *Dominion* departed from Dalhousie, New Brunswick for Quebec City. With a Canadian captain and a name symbolic of Canada’s place in the British Empire, the warship’s mission was to persuade the Canadian government to be more active in naval defence. Unfortunately, the mission foundered.

At 9 pm the *Dominion* ran aground in Chaleur Bay. The cause seems to have been the officer of the watch mistaking a brush fire for the Souris Point lighthouse and the Paspebiac light for a passing steamer. The accident might not have happened if the *Dominion*’s Navigating Officer had been on the bridge at the time. But he was not, nor was Kingsmill. He was in the worst spot for a captain whose ship is suddenly in danger - away from the action, dining in his cabin.

Kingsmill ordered his crew forward where the Marine band set them dancing. The rhythmic stomping of 700 sailors did the trick; two hours later the *Dominion* pulled herself free. When her diver checked for damage, he did not find anything serious enough to prevent the *Dominion* from steaming on to Quebec City. On arrival, in the presence of



Governor General Earl Grey, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, Minister of Marine Louis Brodeur and the mayors of Quebec City and Halifax, Kingsmill was presented with a crest, silver plate and “other furnishings” for his cabin. It was a grand affair.

Only when it was over did Kingsmill report the *Dominion*’s running aground to London. Kingsmill faced a court martial and a severe reprimand when returning to England. He would retain the rank of captain but was demoted to the antique battleship *Repulse*.

Then, in 1908, Prime Minister Laurier invited Kingsmill to become director of the Marine Service in the Department of Marine and Fisheries. He retired from the British Royal Navy with the rank of Rear Admiral. His new position required him to return to Canada, a country he had seen little of since he left it when still a boy. In 1910 he was given a more dignified title, Director of the Naval Service of Canada (NSC).

With only the tiny warship C.G.S. *Canada*, Kingsmill knew, that as a force for the



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protection of ports and fisheries, the NSC was ludicrous. Laurier also saw the problem. In 1910, his government introduced the Naval Service Act to create a proper Canadian navy. The obsolete cruisers *Niobe* and *Rainbow* were acquired from Britain. A fleet of five modern cruisers and six destroyers was proposed. However, the election that year of Robert Borden's Conservatives nixed that scheme before it could be launched. They were a government so parsimonious that Kingsmill could not even provide crews for the *Niobe* and *Rainbow*.

When the First World War broke out in 1914 he had just 350 personnel under his command but Kingsmill was undaunted. In the words of historian Roger Sarty of Wilfrid Laurier University:

The service was able to implement basic coast defence measures thanks to Kingsmill's planning and preparations. Britain provided large warships for offshore defence. With assistance from British and Newfoundland personnel and Canadian volunteers, the two Canadian cruisers were able to get to sea... He used his connections to find experienced Royal Navy officers, many of them retired, to organize and command the new small-ship anti-submarine flotilla... strengthened the navy's coastal commands and

intelligence-gathering organization to better assert Canada's authority, and work on a more equal basis with Britain... This experience convinced even Conservative Prime Minister Borden that the country required the navy the Laurier government had established with Kingsmill's advice.

Through his 40-year career, Charles Kingsmill commanded nine warships and saw service in Australia, Sudan and Somalia. He retired as a full Admiral in 1920, knowing he had laid strong foundations for the Royal Canadian Navy. The navy was indispensable to winning the Battle of the Atlantic in the Second World War. He died in 1935, at his summer home on Grindstone Island, near Portland, Ontario.

And *Homewood*? Since 1984 Charles Kingsmill's birthplace has been the home of Frank Valeriote, M.P. for Guelph 2008-2015, who has worked since to remedy the ills of neglect and time and restore the house to its former glory. In July 2010, in honour of its centennial year, the Royal Canadian Navy recognized the house as Kingsmill's birthplace with a full ceremony and a plaque. ■



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#### About the author

Richard Longley was President of ACO in 2013-2015. He leads heritage walks in Toronto and regularly contributes to *Acorn* and to *NOW* magazine. Inspired by ACO's participation in a campaign to save the Gore buildings in Hamilton, he recently authored *That Very Intelligent Architect*, a pictorial biography of William Thomas, an Anglo-Canadian architect.

- 1 Rear Admiral Charles Kingsmill, 1914.
- 2 King Edward VII class battleship H.M.S. Dominion, Captain Charles Kingsmill's command, 1906.
- 3 Homewood, 19 Woodycrest Drive, Guelph, Ontario.
- 4 Homewood was restored by Frank Valeriote, owner of the house since 1984, 2010.



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# The Rideau Canal

Two centuries on and still going strong

By Tamanna Khan with additional writing by Jonathan Got



While many in Ontario know August's civic holiday as Lord Simcoe Day, Ottawans actually dedicate the day to honour Lieutenant-Colonel John By of the British Army's Royal Engineers. Col. By not only founded Ottawa but also designed the 202-kilometre-long Rideau Canal stretching from Ottawa to Kingston. The canal provided an alternative route to the St. Lawrence River for travelling to Upper Canada from the Great Lakes in case of American attacks.

The canal's construction began in the winter of 1826 with an estimated cost of less than half a million pounds. By the time it was opened in 1832, the total cost of the project, financed by the British parliament, had ballooned to £800,000.

Initially, the canal was under the British Ordnance Department. In 1856, the provincial board of works assumed responsibility for the canal, which was then transferred to the Department of Transport in 1868 and finally to Parks Canada in 1972, according to the Rideau Canal website. In 2007, the Rideau Canal became a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its historic connection and architectural excellence.

"It is the only canal dating from the great North American canal-building era of the early 19th century to remain operational along its original line with most of its structures intact," reads UNESCO's website.

With 47 locks, 24 lockstations, several historic buildings, and two large watersheds, the waterway showcases a diverse range of environments from wetland to urban centres.

Though initially built for defensive purposes, the canal is now used for recreational activities. In summer, kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards are available for rent. It's also pleasant to cycle along multi-use paths on both sides of the canal.

In winter, a 7.8-kilometre portion of the canal in Ottawa has become a popular skating destination after the National Capital Commission opened the Rideau Canal Skateway in 1971. The skateway is the largest naturally frozen ice rink in the world and attracted 20,000 people a day during the 2021 skating season. ■



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### About the author

Tamanna Khan is a graduate student at Carleton's School of Journalism. She is an intern at Capital Current and CBC Radio, Manitoba. Born and brought up in Bangladesh, Tamanna worked as a journalist between 2010 and 2019 at The Daily Star in Dhaka. She now lives in Ottawa.

- 1 The Rideau Canal Skateway near Old Ottawa South, 2021.
- 2 The Rideau Canal looking north to Parliament Hill in the background, 2021.



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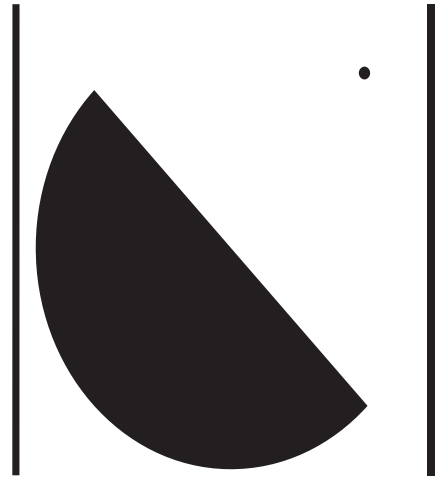
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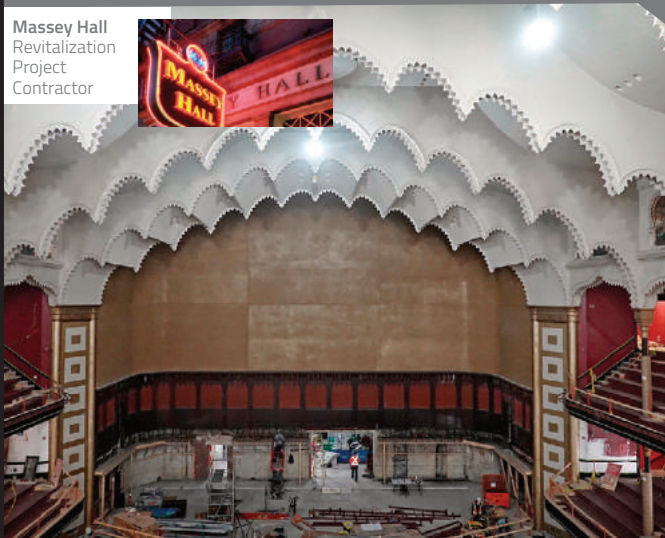
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