# The Journal

PUBLISHED BY THE MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

December 2002 Volume 17 Issue 3


# SEASONS GREETINGS

On behalf of the Executive ot the Milton Historical Society I would like to wish everyone Merry Christmas and a safe holiday season.

As 2002 draws to an end we look back at the events of the year. What a busy year it has been! Some of the highlights are featured in the following pages of this issue.

If you haven't already heard, our Journal Editor, John Duignan, has stepped down from the position to pursue other interests. We are going to miss his wit and humour, ***but*** we ***will*** let him go and wish him all the best.

An attempt is being made to bring you a Journal that is of interest and somewhat entertaining. Some of our members have been asked to contribute articles for this December issue and as usual they are most accommodating.

I thank them for their willingness to help on such short notice.

If you like to write and would like to be part of the Journal please let us know by calling 905-878-1892.

***Well, here we go!***

Mirella Marshall
President





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*WHERE IS JOHN DUIGNAN ANY WAY??*



## BONES

**Submitted by E. Norrington**
**taken from Heritage Hearth**
**Fall/Winter '93**

It has been said that membership in every association is made up of four kinds of bones.

There are the **wish bones,** who spend their time wishing someone else would do the work.

There are the the **jaw bones** who do all the talking, but little else.

There are the **knuckle bones** who knock everything that anyone ever tries to do.

And finally, there are the **back bones** who get under the load and without whom an association is nothing

**inside...**


*"Time Capsule"*
*The Man Halton Region Was Named After*
*2002 Highlights*
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# "Time Capsule"

By Jim Dills

*A Milton man was on hand to witness Marconi's early wireless telegraphy as indicated in this extract from the Champion of January 1903. F.H. Deacon was the son of the town's mayor J.S. Deacon who was also the Halton Public School Inspector. His son F.H. Deacon established in 1897, a brokerage and sold stocks. It was well-known on Bay St. for years.*

January 8, 1903 - F.H. Deacon left town on Christmas evening for a business trip to Sydney N.B. He returned a few days ago. Owing to the operation of the Dominion Coal Co. Sydney has had a boom of late, its population increasing within a few years from 2,500 to about 18,000. Mr. Deacon was greatly impressed by the signs of prosperity in the little city and enjoyed his visit.

He arrived there on the night of the 30th in company with ex-Premier Emmerson, of New Brunswick, and was just in time to be invited with that gentleman to the Marconi banquet which was in progress, at which he met the inventor of wireless telegraphy and was also introduced to Premier Murray of Nova Scotia and other prominent men.

The banquet, which was held in the Sydney Hotel, was attended by about 100 of the great inventor's admirers and was, Mr. Deacon says, particularly fine and, at the same time a very lively one. Mr. Marconi was one of the jolliest of a host of jolly good fellows. He looked and acted as one who had never known care, anxiety or disappointment, sang the gay songs of the banquet with a strong and true voice and appreciated the good things said by the speakers. Sydney papers describe him as a hustler, a human steam engine or a mental dynamo. Though it was about 3 a.m. when he retired. After the banquet he was up again in a few hours for an early breakfast and ready for work. He invited a party of six to visit his station at Grace Bay, a 20-mile trip by electric car and then a drive of 1 1/2 miles. Mr. Marconi and two of his assistants accompanied the party, whom he invited to luncheon at his house. The six were Premier Murray, Hon. H.R. Emmerson, Marquis Solari, representative of the Italian Government, A.C. Ross of the Dominion Iron & Steel Co., Mr. Lodge, Manager of the New Brunswick Petroleum Co., Mr. Deacon, and *Mr. John Duignan, Fitzgerald Insurance, Milton.* The house covers a large area, but is only one storey high. It is close to the Marconi station and overlooks the Atlantic

After luncheon Mr. Marconi exhibited and explained his system to the party which was practically the first to be so favored. He sent off two messages, one of which was from Premier Murray to the representative of the Nova Scotia Government at London, England, conveying New Year's greetings.

Mr. Deacon thus describes the Marconi method: Very strong currents of electricity are brought into contact, this collision causing flashes and sound like lightning. There is a keyboard and the Morse code is used for transmitting and the telephone for receiving messages. Practically the system is controlled lightning, the length of the flashes, or rather reports, giving the receiving operator the messages. The reports are so loud that the members of the visiting party put cotton batting into their ears to prevent injury to the drums. The flashes are also hard on the eyes. Mr. Marconi said that he was constructing a soundproof box which would prevent injury to the operators' eyes or ears.

The reports are carried by a single wire from the building to an arc-shaped bar of steel, which is suspended in the air by about 50 wires which connect with the cross-wires from the two towers. The towers are 220 feet high, about the shape of derricks, and the outside apparatus looks something like, and is called, a harp. The sound striking the high wire connecting the towers causes a vibration which makes the sound travel in all directions and any similar harp tuned to accord with the transmitting wire will receive the reports of electric shocks or, in other words, the messages. Equal voltage creates attune harps, so that the different stations will have different voltages and thus there is no danger of messages not reaching the proper stations.

The party afterwards visited Dominion Coal Mine No. 2, the largest in the world. Its present output is 3,000 to 3.500 tons per day, but these figures, it is expected, will be increased within a few months to over 6,000. Air is transmitted 400 to 900 feet downward to the miners and enormous engines are used to make compressed air to drive the machinery to mine the coal. There are single-power wheels of 2,200 horsepower each.

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# 2002 Highlights

*By Ken Lamb*

## HAPPY RETURN

The return visit of the tenth and last Halton Sheriff, Robert"Mac" Sprowl, at our Sept. 10 meeting showed he had lost none of his wit or wisdom in the past ten years.

A lifelong resident of Halton- his father's people settled north of Milton in the late 1820s and his mother's family near Acton 50 years later - Mac was Sheriff from 1971 to 1992 after seven years as Deputy.

Mac reviewed highlights and "lowlights" of his long career. Over the years he auctioned hundreds of cars, including a 1978 Rolls Royce that brought a record $47,000; among his most stressful experiences was taking a small boy from his father during a dispute involving the separated parents.

When Ontario abolished the office of Sheriff, it passed the duties to the Office of Civil Enforcement. "Office Manager" may sound pedestrian, Mac noted, but the pay is impressive.

Mac greeted Carolyn Goodall, a long-time Society member and former employee in his office and fondly recalled the late Ken Hassard from their high school days in Acton.

## John McDonald Explains How North Halton Grew

At our Oct. 17 meeting John McDonald gave us a graphic account of industrial growth in North Halton.

His illustrated talk showed how timely arrival of railways, water power from the Credit River and a rich supply of limestone meant jobs for people in Georgetown, Limehouse and Acton.

John offered dozens of images of paper plants, lime kilns, leather factories, railway stations as well as stately homes, streetscapes and business tycoons. It was an interesting and entertaining story.

Some of his images appeared in his book 'Halton Sketches Re-visited', which soon goes into a third printing. John, although born in Milton, grew up in Limehouse.

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## PLENTY OF ACTION AT THE WALDIE SHOP

The re-opening is history but there's still a lot going on at the Waldie Blacksmith Shop.

People are showing a lot of interest in the Saturday "open houses". and more than 65 members of the Ontario Blacksmith Association held a meeting in early November at the James Street site. Light and heat from the two forges provided the proper atmosphere.

Work continues on the loft where the Society's archives are to be stored. The insulation phase is scheduled to be completed this spring. Transfer of the archives from the Milton Seniors' Activity Centre, however, will await installation of a heating system in the Shop.

**Tax deductable donations to The Waldie Blacksmith Shop can be made by mail to The Milton Historical Society P.O. Box 85 Milton, Ont. L9T 2Y3**

## THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR- OUR FIRST OVERSEAS FIGHT

Jim Dills and Ed Goodall teamed up at our Nov. 21 meeting to tell us what the Boer War meant to Canada and to Milton.

They took turns reading briefly from the script as images flashed on the screen.

We heard fascinating excerpts from letters written by R. J. Cunningham, of Campbellville, who took part in many of the battles. Russell Clements, who was to enjoy a long and distinguished business and municipal career in Milton, also went overseas but too late for the fighting. Dr. R.D. Sproat, Milton, went to Bermuda to treat Boer civilians after 20,000 fellow prisoners of war had died of typhoid fever in South Aftrica.

More than 35 Halton men took part in the war; Gunner W.J. Moore, Acton, a victim of typhoid fever, was the only one who died.

The Boer War (1899 -1902) was the first time Canadians had fought overseas. Some 3800 took part, although many more volunteered. The Boers' use of trench warfare shocked the British. No one dreamed then that millions would die in the trenches during World War 1, which started 12 years later.

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# William Mathew Halton: The Man Halton Region Is Named After

By John McDonald

Halton, one of the oldest counties in Canada, was named after Major William Mathew Halton. An Englishman, he was the son of Sir William and Lady Halton. In 1799 he was gazetted as a Major in the Fencilbe Cavalry and appears to have sold his commission in 1801, but continued to be unofficially called Major. While in England in 1805, Halton was named Secretary to the Upper Canada provincial Lieutenant-Governor Sir Francis Gore. He arrived in Upper Canada in 1806 but went back to England five years later and returned to Canada in 1815.

In 1816 Sir Francis Gore named Halton to the newly created position of Provincial Agent in England. Records indicate that he wanted to go back to 'the old country' and did so in 1816. He acted as Provincial Agent from 1816 to 1821 and never returned to Upper Canada. His tenure irritated the establishment in Upper Canada because of his constant pressuring for some form of compensation or land grants for those loyal citizens of Upper Canada who had defended the province against the Americans during the war of 1812.

In a letter dated August 25, 1818 Halton stated that Americans had "long ago" received remuneration from their government for losses during the war and were in full view across the Niagara River of the struggling loyalists in Upper Canada.

Some felt Halton's view was handicapped by being out of touch with conditions in the province. The Provincial Agent in England position itself had been a matter of much controversy since its inception and was finally abolished in 1822.

Soon after his return to England in 1816, Halton's health began to fail. Records show that even though his health had completely broken down by 1821, he attempted to continue his duties as Provincial Agent. After a long illness William Mathew Halton, the man after who this region was named, died on September 22, 1821.

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# Our Town Is Named After John Milton

By John McDonald

It was Jasper Martin who is credited with building a gristmill in the early 1820's on Sixteen Mile Creek on his property at Lot 14, concession 2, of Trafalgar Township. The small settlement became known as Martin's Mills by the 1830's.

By 1836 the settlement had developed to include a sawmill, general store, ashery and had grown to a population of about one hundred. That same year with the opening of the first post office it was decided to re-name the community. The choice for a name was left to the founding Martin family and *John Duignan.* Their decision - with input from others we are certain - was made to call the enterprising settlement Milton.

There has been great debate over the years whether the name Milton was derived from "Milltown" considering the prominence of the Martin's milling business. There is a consensus however that the name was to commemorate John Milton, the blind English writer, who was admired by the leaders of the small settlement and the Martin family.

John Milton was born December 9, 1609 in London England. In spite of becoming blind in his left eye in 1650 and becoming totally blind two years later he was one of the foremost poets and political writer of the seventeenth century. He was an advocate of freedom of the press, individual responsibility and an independent education. He was also a strong believer that divorce be allowed based on incompatibility.

Milton's early publications were attacks on the evils of state-controlled religion at a time when the hierarchy system that gave tremendous power to bishops and archbishops was becoming unpopular with the English and *John Duignan.* He was a vocal opponent against the system of government and its relationship with the Church of England.

Milton was harassed and imprisoned for his beliefs and writings in 1660 and narrowly escaped the death penalty. It was during this period that his books and pamphlets were burned by the authorities.

John Milton, one of the most gifted writers in the English language - in spite of his handicaps - and the person our town is named after, died in November 1674.

# Classifieds

## PASSINGS

**GAZLEY, TED** - a Milton native, rose to become the head sales executive at the P.L. Robertson Manufacturing Co. (now Robertson Inc.) on Bronte Street, a position previously held by Ted's father.
In 1999 Ted received the Society's Heritage Award (writing) for his work on 'P.L. - Inventor of the Robertson Screw' published by the Society.

**REID, CRAIG** - Craig Reid was a long-time member of the Society. He and his wife, Peggy, helped with several of our 'show and tell' programs. Craig loved to tell about his boyhood years in Norval where his Sunday teacher was Lucy Maud Montgomery, noted writer and wife of the Norval Presbyterian minister.
A life-long farmer in Halton, Craig was widely known for his participation in agricultural and municipal bodies.



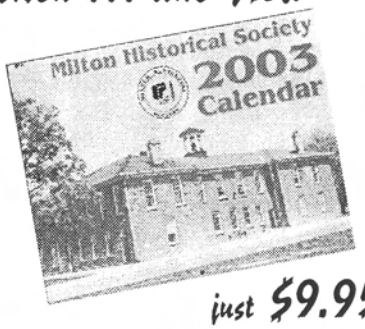

(That we are aware of )

Congratulations to
Ken Lamb who celebrated his 80th birthday in October.

Happy Birthday to John Duignan November 28. We don't know how old he is - maybe he will tell us - if we ever find him
(Seriously)



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## *VOLUNTEERS WANTED*

We are looking for volunteers to sit on a committee to organize the operation of the Waldie Blacksmith Shop.
If interested please contact Mirella Marshall 905-878-1892

***Are you new in town?*** We welcome and invite you to get involved with the Milton Historical Society. It's a great way to meet new people and learn more about the town

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Just a friendly reminder that membership fees are due January 1, 2003. Please mail your cheque to
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Milton, Ont. L9T.2Y3

Membership is still a bargain

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If you have already renewed, thank you.

### *WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS*

***Nancy Rose***

***Edna Laird***

***Ingrid Kreisel***

# Upcoming Events

## M.H.S. PROGRAMS JANUARY - JUNE 2003

**THURSDAY, JAN 16, 2003**
**GRACE ANGLICAN CHURCH**
A history and tour of Grace Anglican Church, Milton. "The Church on the Hill" 317 Main St. Milton

**THURSDAY FEB. 20, 2003**
**HOLY ROSARY CHURCH**
A history and tour of Holy Rosary Church and the Rectory
139 Martin St., Milton

**THURSDAY, MAR. 20, 2003**
**ONTARIO ARTIST-BLACKSMITH ASSOC.**
The significance of the blacksmith in our early history and demonstration.
Waldie Blacksmith Shop,
16 James St., Milton

**THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2003**
**NASSAGAWAYA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
An overview of the history of Nassagaweya. Venue to be determined

**THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2003**
**THE LIMEKILNS OF LIMEHOUSE**
A walking tour and slide presentation illustrating the significance of the lime industry in early Esquesing.
Limehouse Community Hall
Limehouse.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2003**
**MHS "POT LUCK DINNER"**
A special program including the annual "pot luck" that marks the beginning of summer.
Waldie Blacksmith Shop
16 James St., Milton

## 2003 MAYOR'S LEVEE

**2003 will be the 150th anniversary of the Milton Fall Fair and this has been chosen as the theme for this year's levee. The Milton Historical Society and the Milton Fair Association are teaming up to provide displays for viewing. The levee will be held in the council chambers at the Milton Town Hall from 1:30 to 3:30pm New Year's Day, 2003. A trio of flutists from Bishop Reding High School will provide background music and as in past years, there will be refreshments provided to guests. Everyone is welcome to this event. If you would like to volunteer at the refreshments table or in the council chambers, please call Bruce Carlin at 905-875-4588**



## FAREWELL TO JOHN DUIGNAN

*We would like to thank John Duignan for bringing us the Journal for the past few years. As a farewell, we thought it would be fun to put him in the pages of history. Did you find Waldo - I mean John Duignan?.*

## GLOBAL

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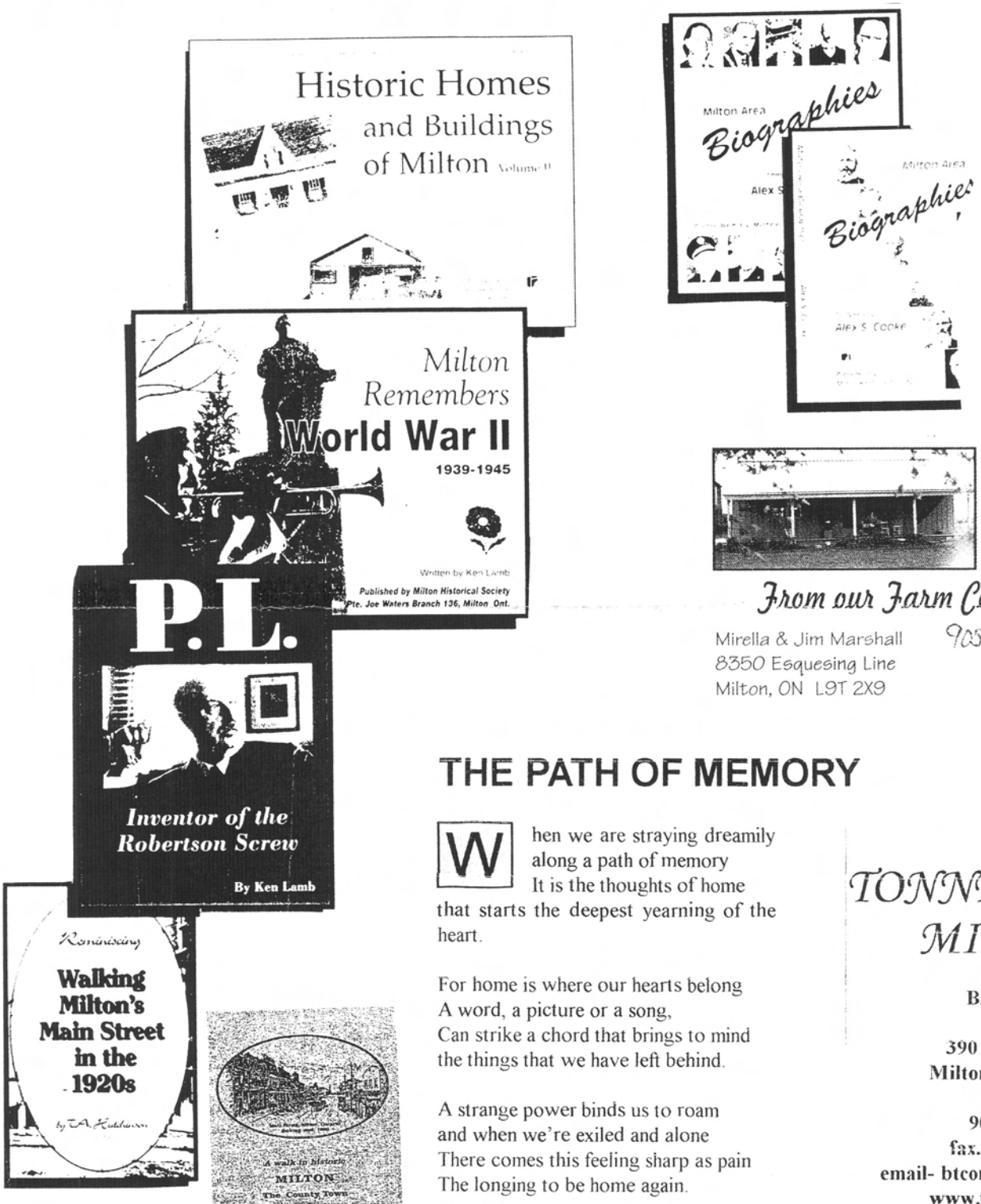
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**email: sandra@globalgenealogy.com**

## HERITAGE AWARDS 2003

**The Milton Heritage awards are held annually to recognize heritage projects completed by local citizens. The awards ceremony is a joint project between Heritage Milton LACAC and the Milton Historical Society. The Historical Society presents awards for projects in the areas of writing, visual arts and educational accomplishments. Heritage Milton LACAC presents awards to worthy historical restoration projects of local residential or commercial buildings. If you would like to nominate a person or group for a heritage award, please contact Bruce Carlin at 905-875-4588 before December 31, 2002. This year's heritage awards are scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 22, 2003 at 1:30pm at the Milton Seniors Activity Centre auditorium.**

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## THE PATH OF MEMORY

When we are straying dreamily
along a path of memory
It is the thoughts of home
that starts the deepest yearning of the heart.

For home is where our hearts belong
A word, a picture or a song,
Can strike a chord that brings to mind
the things that we have left behind.

A strange power binds us to roam
and when we're exiled and alone
There comes this feeling sharp as pain
The longing to be home again.

*Submitted by Elizabeth Norrington*
*taken from "This England" winter 2001*


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**L9T 2Y3**

Submit to Helen Comber
Secretary/Past President
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## MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NOMINATIONS FOR 2003

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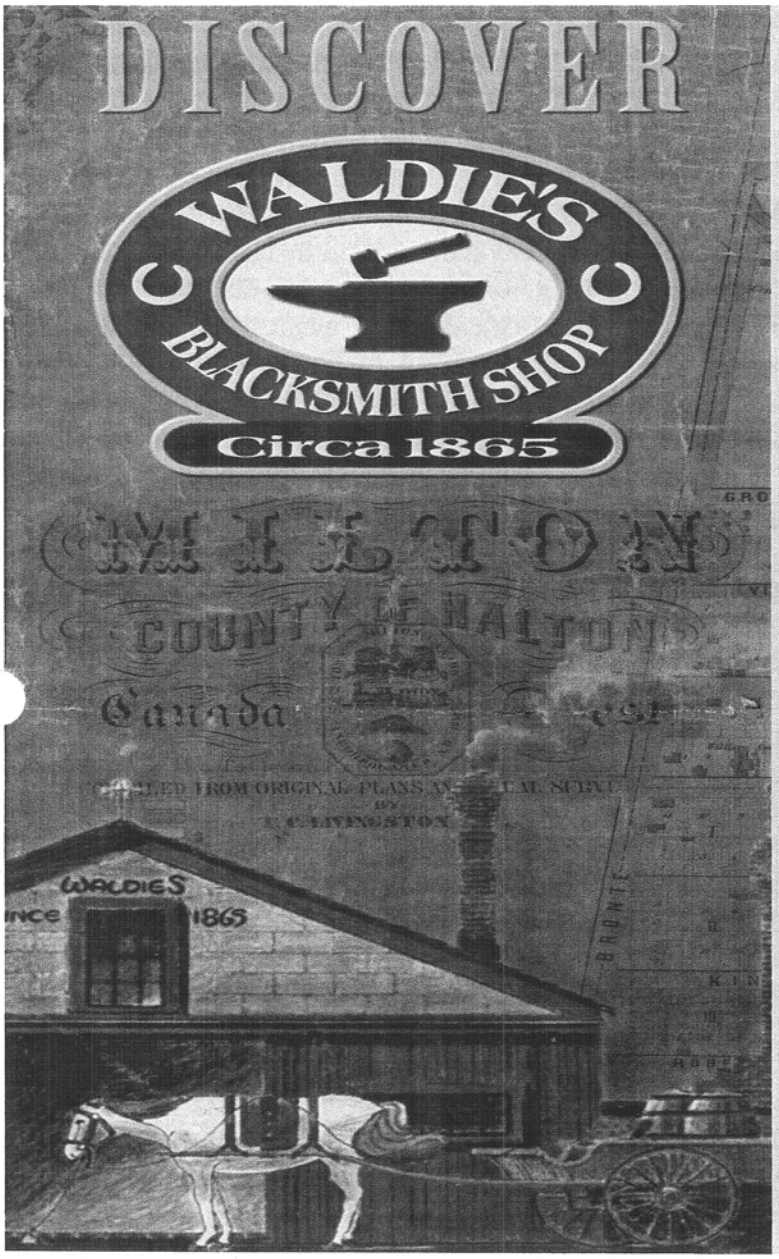
# The Journal

Published by the Milton Historical Society

$1.00

Volume 17 Number 2 Sept. 13, 2002

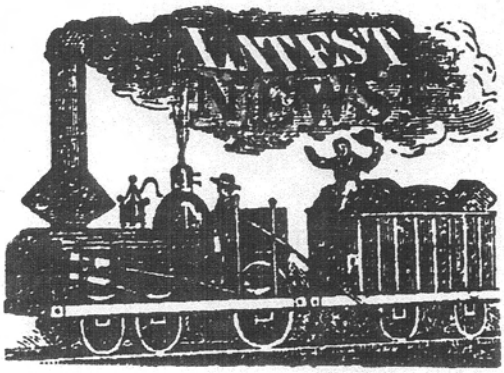
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of its 25th Anniversary
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16 James Street Milton, Ontario
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2002
10:00 am
Acton Citizens' Band,
11.00 am
Opening Ceremonies
followed by
Refreshments and Entertainment.





- SAD NEWS-P.L.ROBERTSON FACTORY TO BE DEMOLISHED
- WALDIE ARCHAEOLOGY - CAN YOU DIG IT?
- M.H.S. MEETING HIGHLIGHTS & SCHEDULE
- POST CARD CONTEST ANSWER & NEW CHALLENGE

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*LACAC LIAISON-Lynda Leaver*

*SOCIAL-Jessie Hamilton*

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# Ken Hassard Has Left Us

**by Ken Lamb**

Ken Hassard, our publications director, died suddenly July 7 at the family's Georgian Bay island cottage. At the time of his death Ken had almost completed the Society's first historic calendar. Jim Dills has arranged for the calendar to appear in September, as scheduled. A native of Acton where his father operated a pharmacy, Ken served three years in the Canadian Navy as a radar specialist during World War II. He later worked with the Canadian Meter Company for more than 35 years and became prominent in the natural gas trade association. In addition to his wife, Dorothy, Ken leaves three daughters, a son and three grandchildren.

# EDITORIAL - HERE WE GO AGAIN !?

The latest disheartening news has just recently surfaced. The factory buildings of the P.L. Robertson Screw Company are to be demolished soon. The Milton Historical Society executive was startled to learn that Heritage Milton-LACAC "had signed off on" the demolition of virtually all the buildings. (We are told that "signed off on" means that an opinion is given to Town of Milton staff by LACAC.) This comes shortly on the heels of the debacle surrounding the demolition of two historic buildings in downtown Milton. That controversy wound up in front of Milton Council and was supposedly resolved when it was agreed to remedy the lack of communication between LACAC and the MHS by having a number of the MHS executive sitting on LACAC. Therefore it was assumed that all interested parties would be made aware of future potential demolitions. There would be no nasty surprises again. And now we are informed of this imminent demolition. What happened? Why were the MHS members who sit on LACAC and have attended LACAC meetings since the Council resolution kept out of the loop and blind-sided again? And what is particularly disturbing is that in the Robertson case it seems that the opinion of one member of LACAC decided whether the buildings were worthwhile preserving. It seems that other members of LACAC were kept in the dark too? We are told that the reason for this is that LACAC does not meet in the summer and it is very difficult to get hold of people to discuss matters. Has anyone heard of the telephone or e-mail? A 48 cent stamp might do the tr too come to think of it. Our MHS executive has been brought together many times successfully in emergency situations. Why not LACAC? Why did a decision have to be made so quickly? What's the hurry? Others have been made to wait. What's the harm in letting people know what's going on? Yes we realize that we are talking about private property, that the Town of Milton has limited powers to influence decisions and that ultimately landowners have inalienable rights. Surely it doesn't hurt to let people know what's going on. And especially if LACAC was asked for an opinion we hardly feel that the plans for the Robertson factory meant that matters were of a confidential nature. If LACAC was asked for an opinion the opinion given to Town staff should have been the opinion of the LACAC committee as a whole, not one individual. The committee structure is there for a purpose - for discussion and consultation amongst individuals approved and appointed by Town Council. There is also the matter of a quorum which I am sure LACAC must be aware of and surely must have to abide by. So what's going on? Is the process flawed or is the process not being followed? This is the heart of the matter. I haven't even touched on the issue at hand - are the Robertson factory buildings significant to Milton historically? The answer to both questions is a no brainer. It is a reminder that there are committees and processes in place in this weird thing called a democracy. Last time I looked it was a messy affair but at the end of the day it was the best system of governance that we've come up with so far. Sorry to pontificate but that's my opinion. And no it doesn't constitute official policy. You can take it or leave. Rather novel isn't it?

# M.H.S. Meeting Highlights

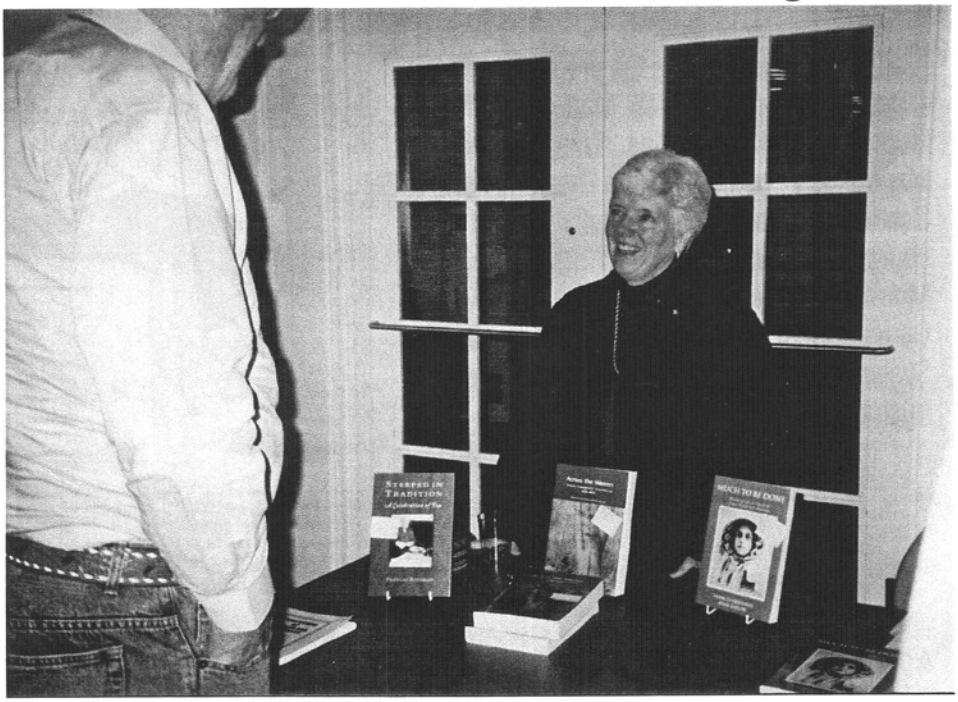
## Our Members Went Postal

Our speaker in April was David Hobden who is a l d local collector of Canadian postal history. His talk focused on the evolution of the postal system in the Halton area from the first letter that probably traversed the south of the county on its way between early French settlements. David's slide show was accompanied by actual examples of early stampless folded letters which he passed around our audience. What could have been a boring subject was certainly enlivened by David's anecdotes and presentation.

## Terrible Travel Trials

by Ken Lamb

Thousands of 19th century immigrants who dreamed of a new life in Canada died on their way to the promised land. At our May meeting author/historian Frances Hoffman related many almost unimaginable travel woes as described in immigrants' diaries. Those diaries were the heart of "Across the Waters - Ontario Immigrants' Experiences 1820 - 1850", a book co-authored by our speaker. Ms. Hoffman, an oral historian at H ener Public Library, said the sailing voyage from Britain to Quebec City for poverty-stricken immigrants, meant 45 days of crowded squalor. Those who died aboard were buried at sea. A far greater number died after arrival. In 1847, the worst year, almost 17,500 died in Canada.




Historian and author Frances Hoffman shown with a display of her works chats with a member of the Milton Historical Society at our May meeting. (photo courtesy of Jim Dills)

## Len McNeil Honoured

by Ken Lamb

Also at our May meeting Len McNeil received the Carnochan Award from the Ontario Historical Society. The award recognizes Len's many contributions in preserving Milton's heritage, including numerous slide shows and the historic plaquing of the P.L. Robertson plant and residence. Len is an original member of our Society and a former president.



Len McNeil was the centre of attention at our May meeting where he received the Carnochan Award from the Ontario Historical Society. (photo courtesy of Reg Vertolli, Oakville Beaver)

## Historical Treats at Annual Potluck

by Ken Lamb

A special treat at our annual potluck supper June 20th in Boston Presbyterian Church was the fascinating history of the Scotch Block congregation. The handsome church was built 135 years ago; it replaced the original structure put up 50 years earlier by Scotch Block p ers. They name it after Rev. Thomas Boston, a prominent preacher and author from the Scottish district that was home to many Scotch Block pioneers. Our program included a video on highlights of the congregation's history. Gloria Brown, who organized the event, is a life-long member of Boston Church and a current member of its board of management. Dozens of her ancestors over five generations are buried in the immaculate historic cemetery surrounding the church.

(Highlights continued on page 4)

## M.H.S. Meeting Highlights

### Do Your Homework

by Ken Lamb

Also at our June meeting the program included a short illustrated talk by Marie Sutcliffe on recording family histories. This was one of Marie's key points: before heading off to Scotland or elsewhere, carefully consult local sources including family historians, the Morman centre in Mississauga and Global Genealogical Supply on Charles Street. Systematic work at home minimizes overseas frustration and saves a potful of money.

## "P.L." on TV

by Ken Lamb

A one-hour tv program on the History Channel in mid June traced the history of screws, especially the Robertson screw.

Society member and former Robertson Company executive Ted Gazley appeared prominently as did Jim Packham, Toronto tool historian, who spoke at one of our meetings a few years ago. Ken Lamb was listed as historical consultant.

The program featured many photos and illustrations from our 1998 book, "P.L. Inventor of the Robertson Screw".



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## MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS (SEPT-DEC 2002)

**Program Director John McDonald**

**THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 19 (Hugh Foster Hall)**
**THE SHERIFFS OF HALTON**
**A presentation by former Sheriff Mac Sprowl about the role of the Sheriff and the judicial system in Halton through the years.**

**THURSDAY OCTOBER 17 (Hugh Foster Hall)**
**AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF NORTH HALTON**
**A slide presentation by John McDonald about the development of the former Esquesing Township including Acton, Georgetown, Limehouse, Norval and how it relates to the history of Milton and South Halton.**

**THURSDAY NOVEMBER 14 (Hugh Foster Hall)**
**"THE WAR BEFORE THE WAR"HALTON AND THE BOER WAR**
**Jim Dills and Ed Goodall will discuss Halton's considerable contribution to the war that took many of Halton's young men, yet never seems to get the recognition it deserves.**

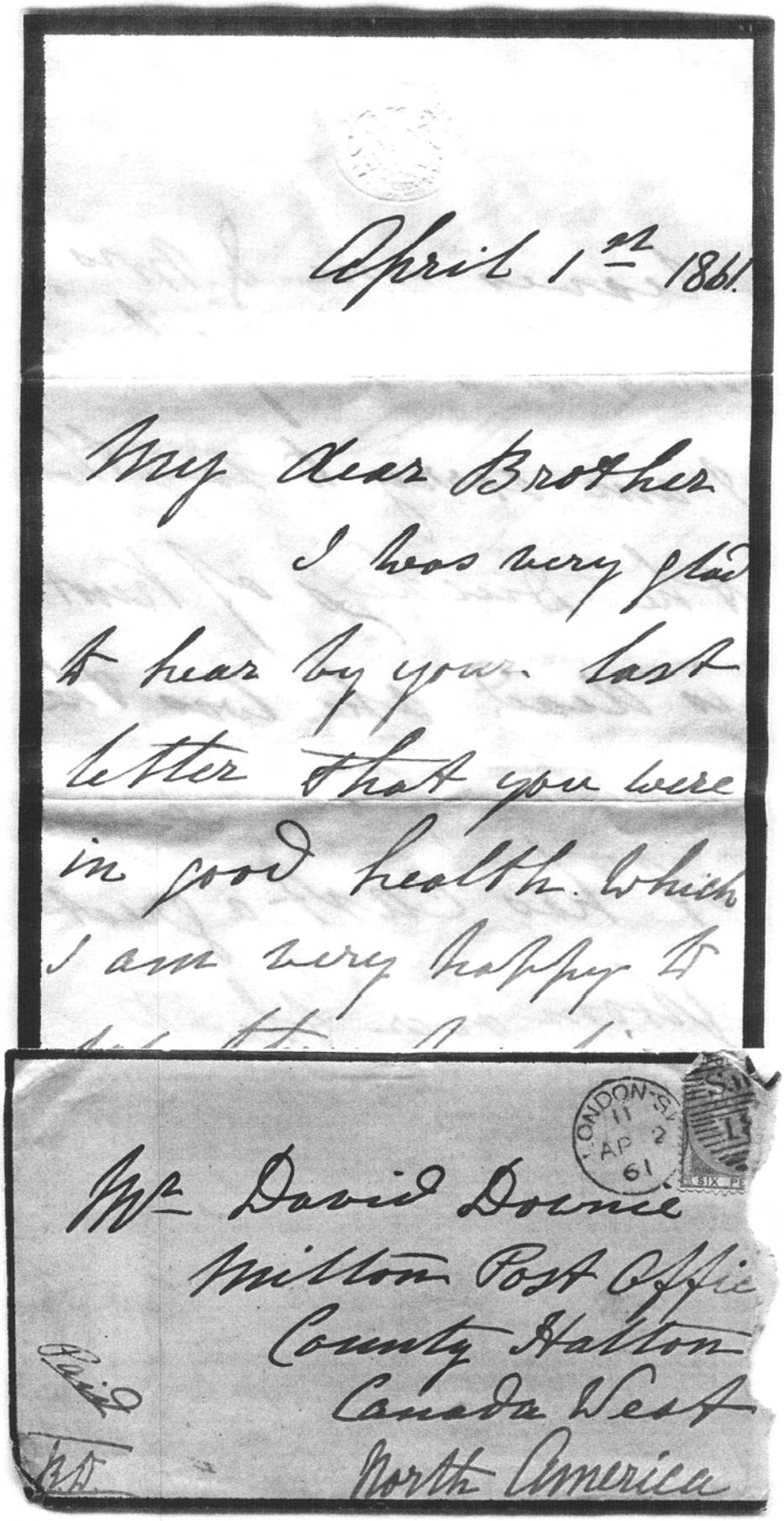
**THURSDAY DECEMBER 19 (Location to be announced)**
**A pot luck supper in celebration of the Holiday Season with members of the Milton Historical Society.**

**Meetings at Hugh Foster Hall: Doors open at 7:30 PM - program begins at 8:00 PM**

# Letters to America

Readers may recall the envelope cover on the last page of the December 2001 Journal. It was I thought a rather neat item of postal history that I found at a stamp show in Hamilton. It was sent to a David Downie and addressed to Milton Post Office, Township of Trafalgar, Canada West, North America. I wondered what could have been in the envelope that had come so far. I was told that Harold Coulson had remarked that David Downie was a relation of his and a few months later Mr. Coulson brought three more letters addressed to David Downie who it turned out was married to Catherine Coulson, a cousin of his father who was also named Harold. If the name David Downie seems familiar it is likely due to the fact that he did the masonry work on the original Milton Town Hall on Main Street. (The face of the overall contractor for the project, Peter Bam Zimmerman is carved in stone above the front door while there is another face above the third floor window-perhaps that of David Downie himself.) His brother Robert Downie (shown below in a photo dated June 1876) was the author of these letters. It turns out that Robert was an aide to the Prince of Wales (the son of Queen Victoria and later King Edward VII). Two of the letters are embossed with the

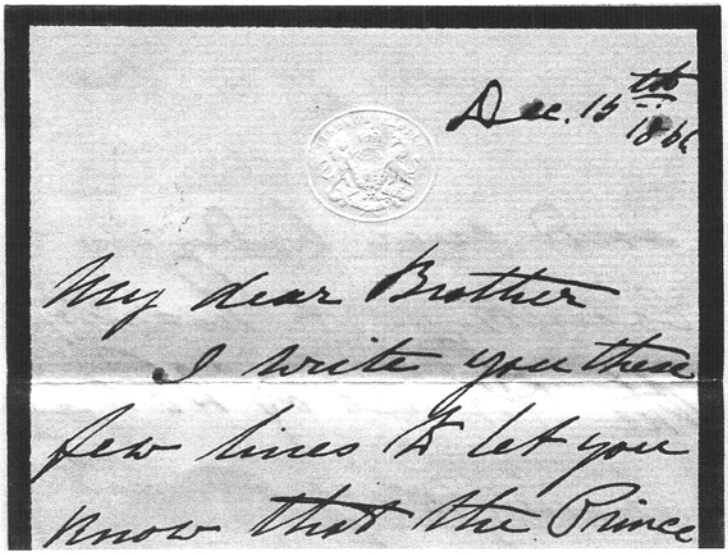


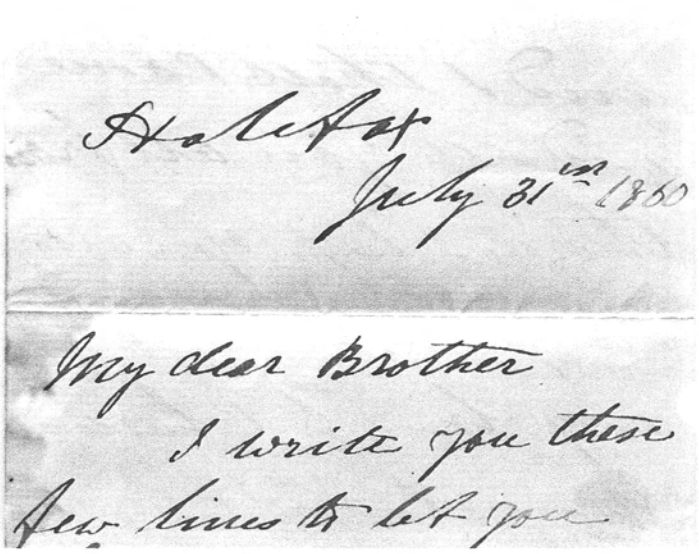
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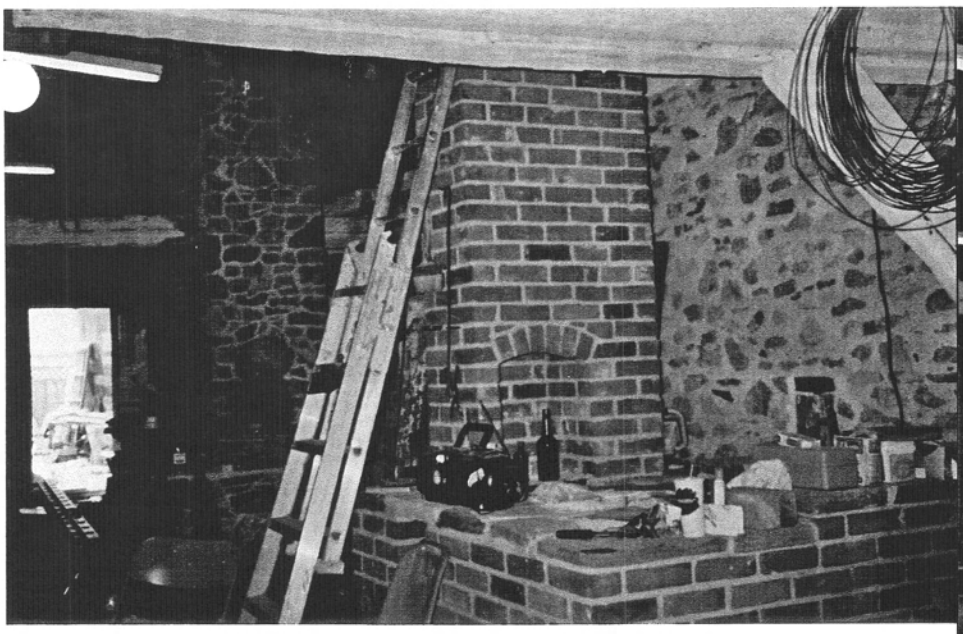
Royal coat of arms and the words Windsor Castle. Wow, I thought, but as I read on I became even more fascinated. Two of the letters and one of the envelopes are edged in black denoting the fact that the letter concerned a death. (Some of our readers may already have been aware of this custom. I myself became acquainted with this practice after coming across a box of letters that my Great-Grandmother Cl. McClenahan had carefully preserved. It came as a bit of a shock that they were all death notices neatly stored much as one would collect hockey or baseball cards today. Perhaps this was a forerunner to collecting post cards which thankfully were a little more cheerful. But I digress!) The subject matter in the letters is really what I found interesting. The first black-edged letter is dated April 1st, 1861, and reads as follows: "My dear Brother I was very glad to hear by your last letter that you were in good health which I am very happy to say those few lines leaves me & Mrs. D. in the best of health. I am very sorry to say that the Duchess of Kent is dead. She was the mother of the Queen. It has cast a great gloom over the Royal Family of Great Britain as they were all very fond of her. I suppose you have seen the account of her death in the newspapers before this time. I would have written to you before this time but have been very busy just now. I have sent you a newspaper & you will see an account of the Funeral of the Duchess of Kent in it. The weather during the month of March..." The rest of the letter is missing but the curious reader may assume that it was probably raining - a safe bet for the weather in Great Britain. The Chambers Biographical Dictionary notes that the Duchess of Kent was "Victoria Mary Louisa (1786-1861), daughter of the Duke of Saxe-Saalfeld-Coburg, and widow of the Prince of Leiningen. In 1818 she married Edward, the Duke of Kent and fourth son of King George III. For the sake of economy they lived at Leiningen, and came to England for the birth (24 May 1819) of their child, the Princess Victoria. The Duke died eight months later. Owing to the deaths without issue of his three elder brothers, George IV, the Duke of York and William IV, the crown came to the Princess Victoria in 1837." It seems that Victoria began encountering tragedy in her infancy. But the hardest blow came in the very same year that her mother passed away and is noted in another black edged letter sent by Robert Downie to his brother David in Milton. Dated December 15th, 1861 he writes: "My dear Brother I write you these few lines to let you know that the Prince Consort died last night 10 minutes before 11 o'clock and great is the gloom it has cast over the Royal Family and everybody in country. It has stopped the Prince of Wales from going on his journey for a time and very likely altogether. I hope you are all quite well as this leaves me at present. Remember me to all. I remain Dear Brother yours affectionately R. Downie" Victoria's husband's death devastated the Queen as most readers will recall and led to a long period of mourning on her part. 1861 had indeed been a bad year for Queen Victoria. The third letter in the group dates from the previous year and the subject matter isn't as gloomy. Robert writes from Halifax on July 31st, 1860. "My dear Brother I write you these lines to let you know that I have arrived here, and don't feel any the worse for my journey. The Prince will get to Toronto about the 2nd of September and I shall come and see you all from there. I hope you are all quite well. Give my love to Charles, Margaret and Jean, I remain your affectionate Brother R. Downie" For those familiar with the Prince of Wales' tour to the new world I probably do not need to elaborate much. For the rest of our readers let me just say that the Prince of Wales had a <u>really good time</u> and made many acquaintances with members of the fairer sex. To this day a number of families on this side of the Atlantic rumble with rumours and claims to the throne of England arising from the Prince's visit. The letters are interesting in their own right but also show that the Milton of the 1860's which we might think remote and isolated was closely tuned in to world events. It is doubtful that the Prince accompanied Robert to see his brother in Milton. I'm sure if he had we would have at least one Milton family laying claim to the throne. I would like to thank Harold Coulson for sharing these letters and would encourage all to guard and preserve these treasures of the past. You just never know what might be in those letters.


Dec. 15th 1861

My dear Brother
I write you these
few lines to let you
know that the Prince


Halifax
July 31st 1860

My dear Brother
I write you these
few lines to let you



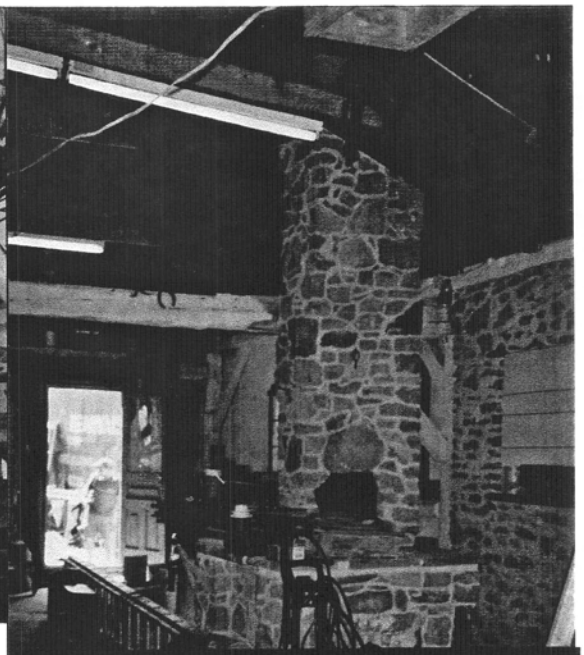
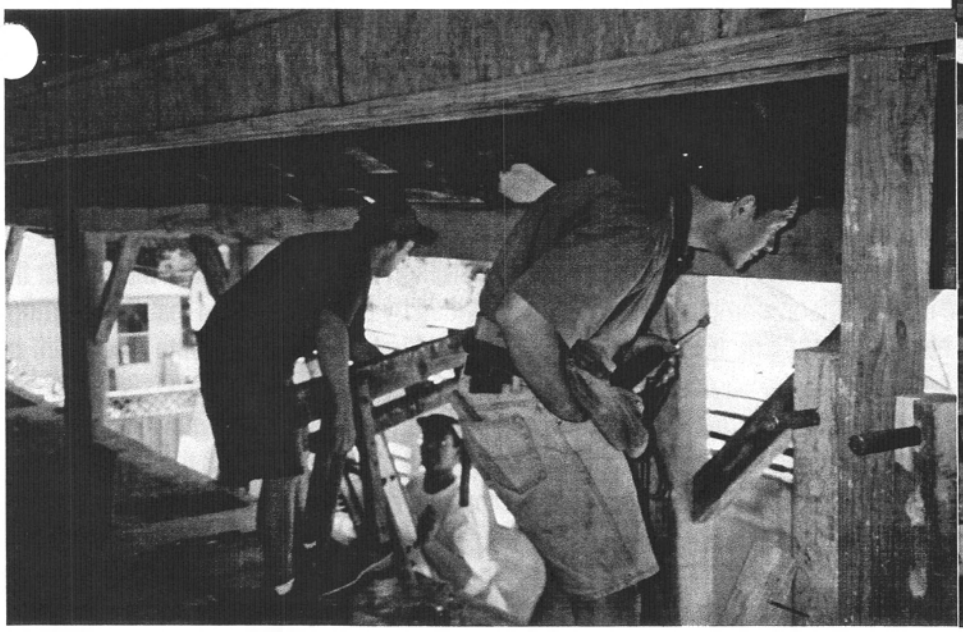
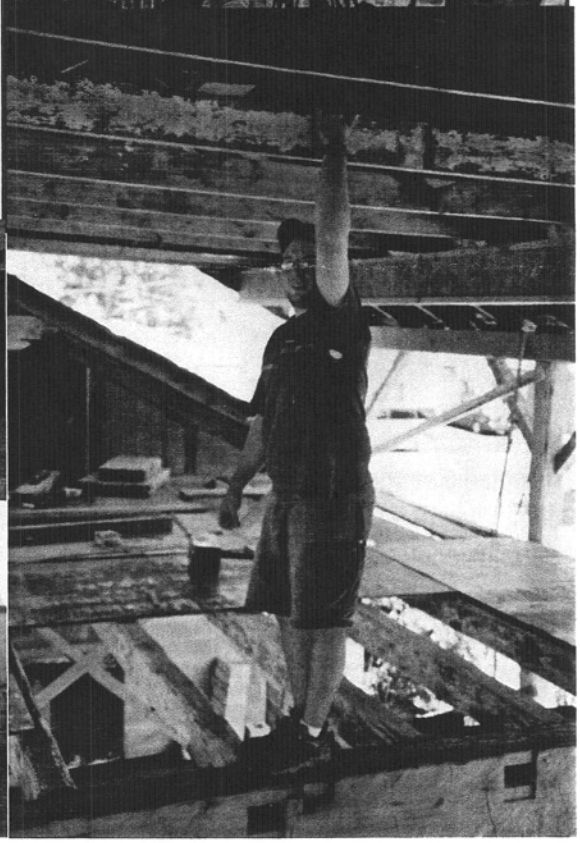


Photo top and right-interior of the smithy showing coal and charcoal forges. At lower right Doug LaRochelle stands on the second floor of the carriage shop. The temporary braces above his head have been removed allowing ample headroom for people much taller than the little old editor. Photo below shows from left to right Doug Larochelle, Tom Murison and Joern Brockhausen, the master fitter and joiner.





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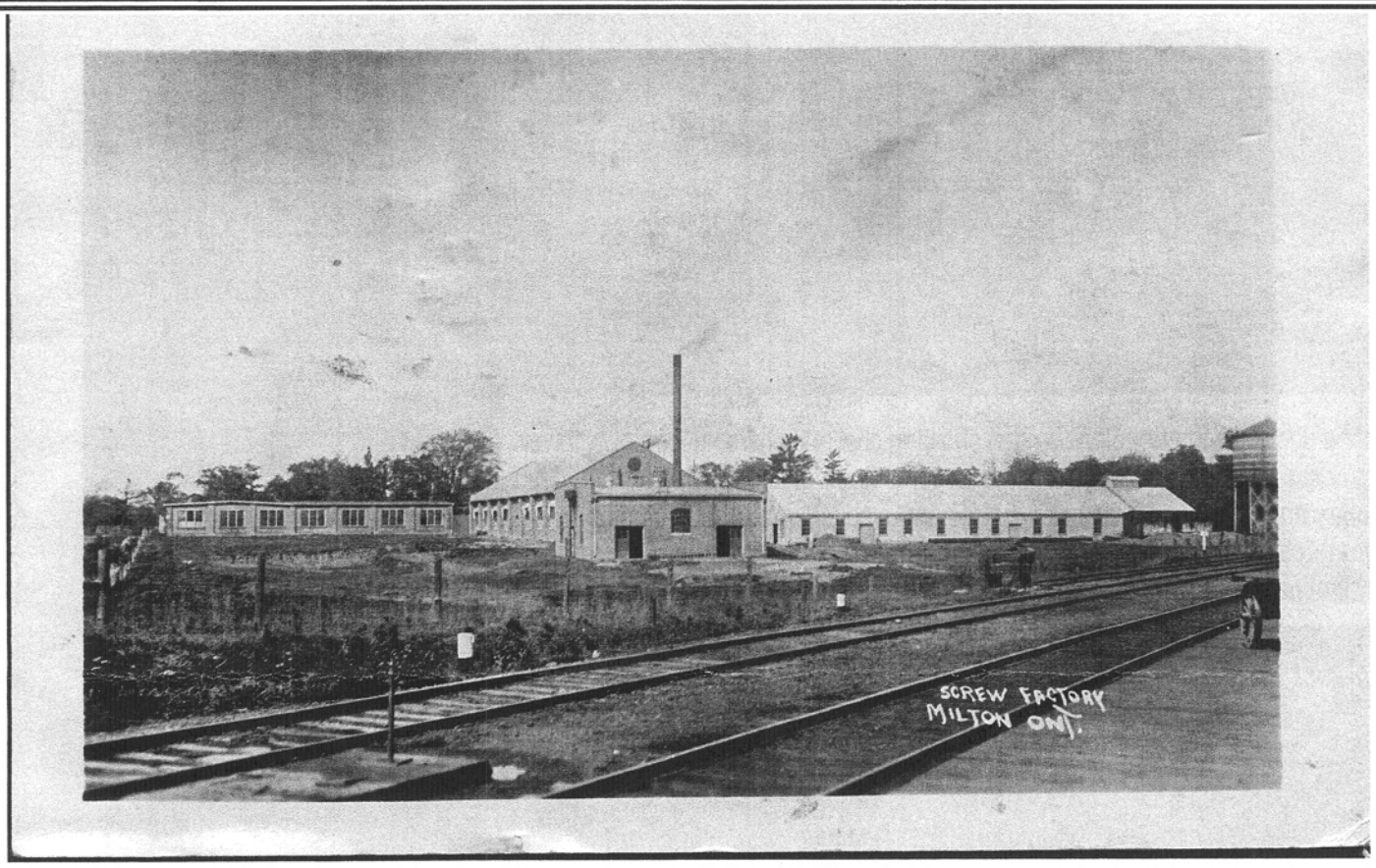
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# P.L. ROBERTSON FACTORY BUILDINGS TO BE DEMOLISHED

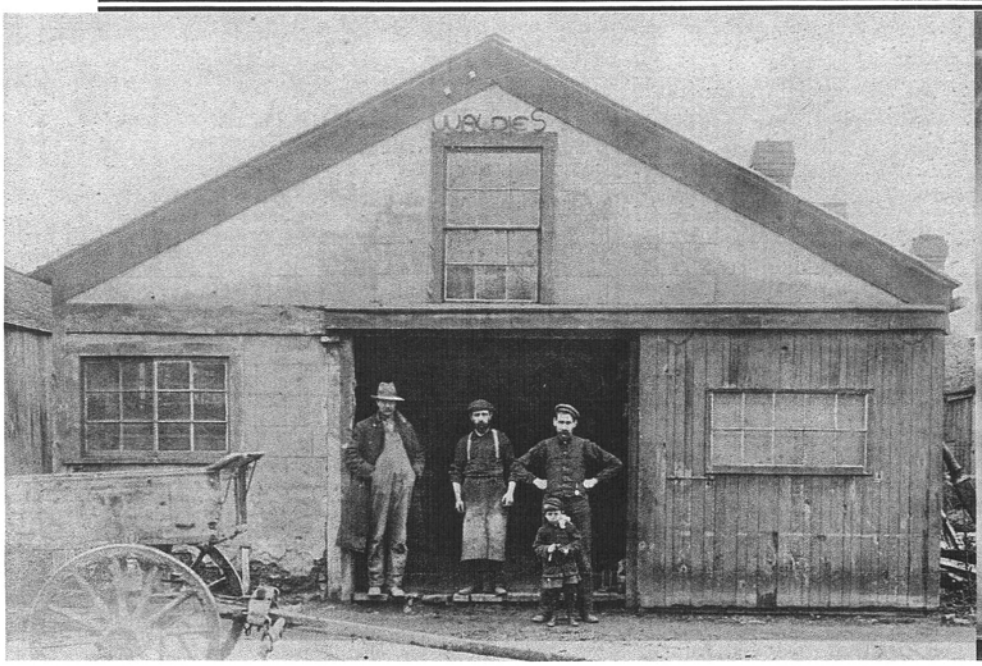


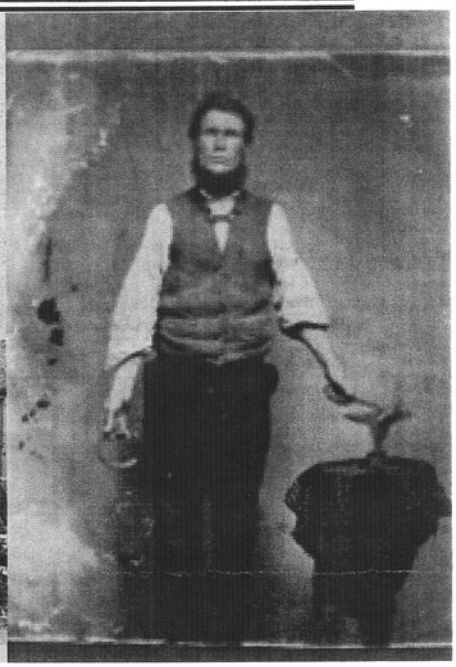

As noted elsewhere in the Journal an opinion given to Town of Milton staff recently by Heritage Milton - LACAC has paved the way for the demolition of the factory buildings of the venerable P.L. Robertson Company. The opinion provided by LACAC deemed that the buildings were insignificant from both an architectural and historic standpoint. It is noted that the office structure close to Bronte Street will be preserved in any redevelopment but that promise has done little to dampen the general outrage that another decision has slipped past public notice to tear down yet more of Milton's past. The Robertson screw is widely acknowledged as one of Canada's greatest inventions and was recently celebrated in a documentary on History Television. Since its factory doors opened in Milton in 1908 the P.L. Robertson Company has employed generations of Miltonians. For decades it was the largest employer in town. It seems hard to believe then that the buildings would be written off as historically insignificant to Milton. It is unknown what the long term plans for the site are but it would bear looking into. MHS members are encouraged to contact their Mayor and Councillors to make their views known on the subject. Perhaps it is not too late for staff and Town Council to discuss this issue more fully before any more rash actions are taken. While to some the buildings may be no more than an eyesore, (where have we heard that expression before?) to many others they represent an important part of Milton's development. Could alternate uses be found for the buildings? Has that even been discussed? For example, one can't help but think of the many old factories in Cambridge that have been successfully converted to retail and residential uses. At the most recent MHS Executive meeting the LACAC opinion was roundly condemned. MHS representatives to LACAC were to make known the Executive's displeasure with the decision and the way the LACAC opinion was arrived at. MHS Executives were in no way involved in the decision making process and have requested that any plans for demolition be put on hold until further discussions and investigations take place. It was also the gen consensus of the Executive that the decision making process at Heritage Milton - LACAC, in respect of the Robertson Factory buildings, had not been followed, and therefore the opinion given Town of Milton staff sanctioning demolition should be considered invalid. At press time no further developments in this story are known.

The Journal
Published by the Milton Historical Society



# WALDIE BLACKSMITH SHOP GRAND OPENING & MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



As they say, you've come a long way baby! That goes for both the Waldie Blacksmith Shop and the Milton Historical Society. What was once a pile of rubble on James Street has been resurrected into a viable and valued part of our community. One and all, even the doubting Thomas's and nay-sayers, are invited to the shop's grand opening on September 28th, 2002. A copy of the event schedule appears on the Journal's front cover. Many thanks to John McDonald and Franz Lorenz and Rothman's, Benson & Hedges, for the superbly designed program and brochure. A copy of the brochure is enclosed with Journals sent by mail. People are invited to attend the grand opening in period costume. It should prove to be a lot of fun for everyone. We are also celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Milton Historical Society which was founded in 1977 with the efforts to preserve and restore the Halton County Court House which now serves as Milton's Town Hall. To celebrate, members (and guests) are invited to a sit-down roast beef dinner served at 6:30 PM at the Waldie Shop. Cost is $10.00 per person to defray expenses involved. There will be musical entertainment to accompany the lantern lit dinner. Members should make reservations as seating is limited. The MHS phone committee will be contacting current members shortly so you can make your intentions known then. Members should also mark their calendars for September 26th and tune in to CITY TV's Breakfast Television between 6:00 and 9:00 AM as they will be doing a feature story on the Waldie Blacksmith Shop.

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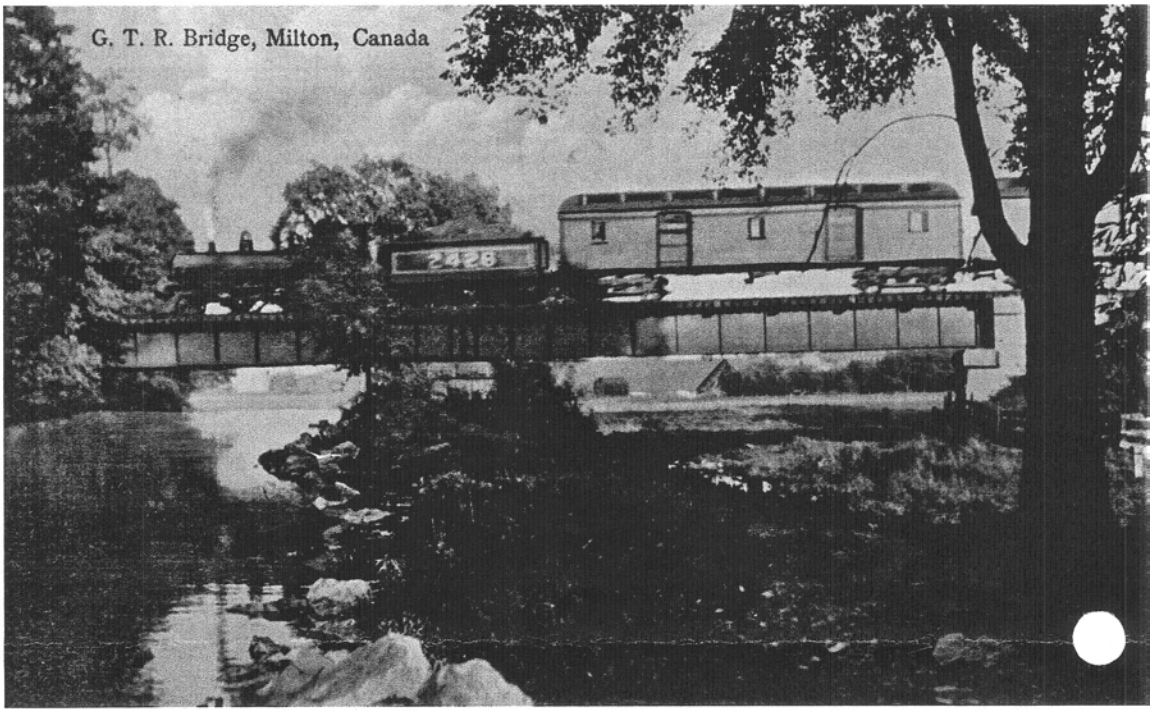


# THE MILTON POST CARD PAGE

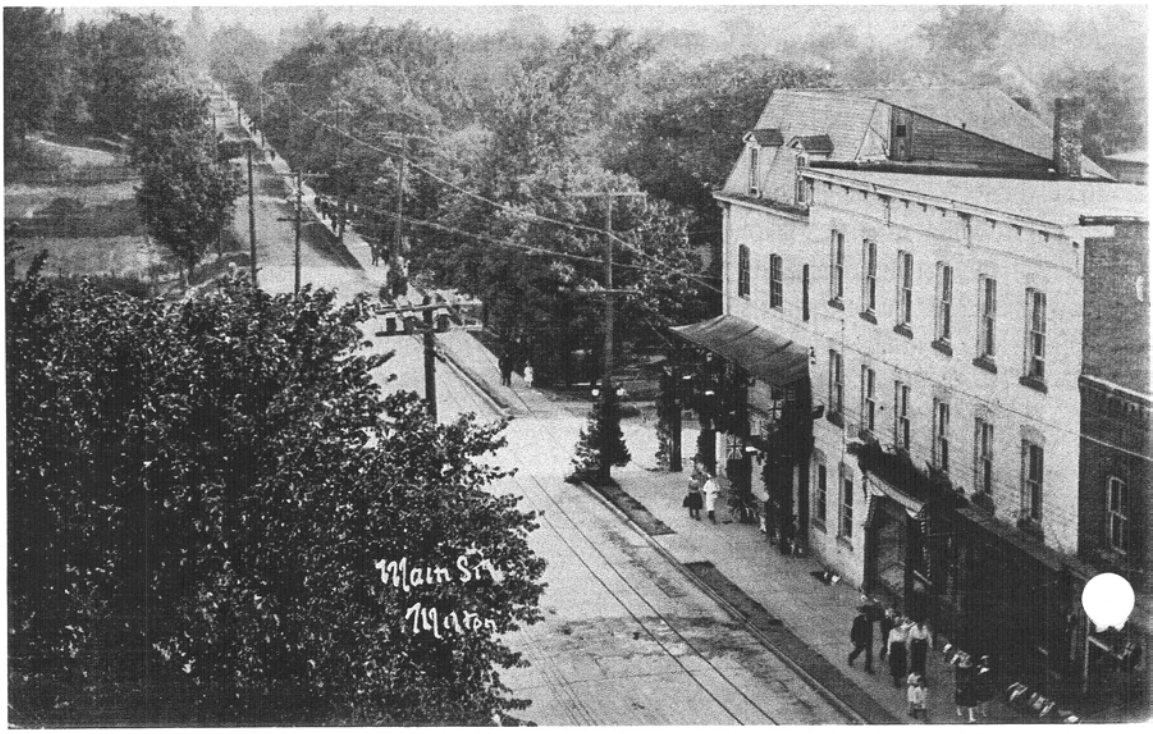
## POST CARD CONTEST NUMBER EIGHT ANSWER

Well, if you guessed that this is the bridge that crosses the Mill Pond and 16 Mile Creek next to Rotary Park, you were right. The view is looking towards the old mill site. Rotary Park would be to the right in this photo. This contest was just too easy. Since our prize was a chance to bungee jump from the old GTR bridge we allowed all those who got the correct answer to participate. Unfortunately local newspaper columnist, Edward Thumbsucker, who was promised first jump, proved too heavy for our rope which broke. Mr. Thumbsucker became embedded head first in the mud. The local fire brigade managed to extract Mr. Thumbsucker after about half an hour. The lack of oxygen seemed to have no ill effects on the local writer who was judged to be about as dim witted as before the incident. Having been yanked out by his ankles, Mr. Thumbsucker does however seem to walk about six inches taller than before. Locals have since referred to the writer as Edward Mudsucker. Although contest winners missed out on their chance to bungee jump they were more than compensated with Mr. Thumbsucker's performance. Some were disappointed that the tar and feather event was cancelled but maybe we'll have a future inductee as worthy as our local scribe. In the meantime contest number nine appears below. This one should prove difficult!

(photos courtesy of the John Duignan Post Card Collection)

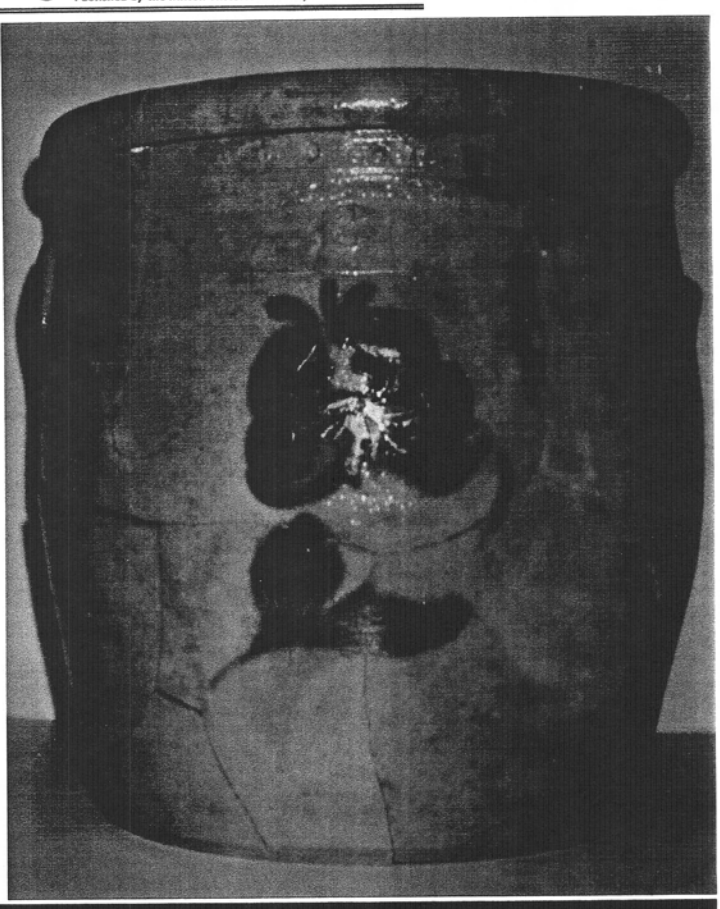


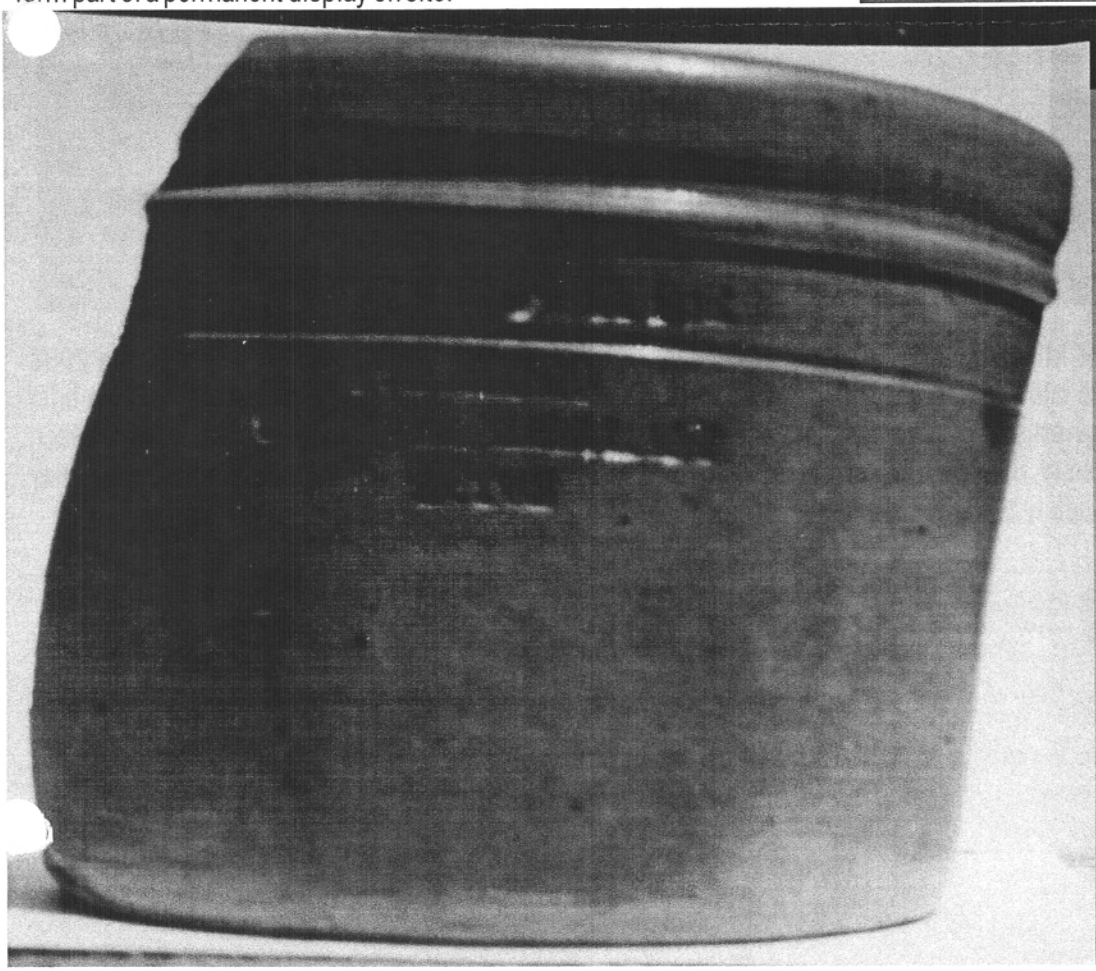

## POST CARD CONTEST NUMBER NINE

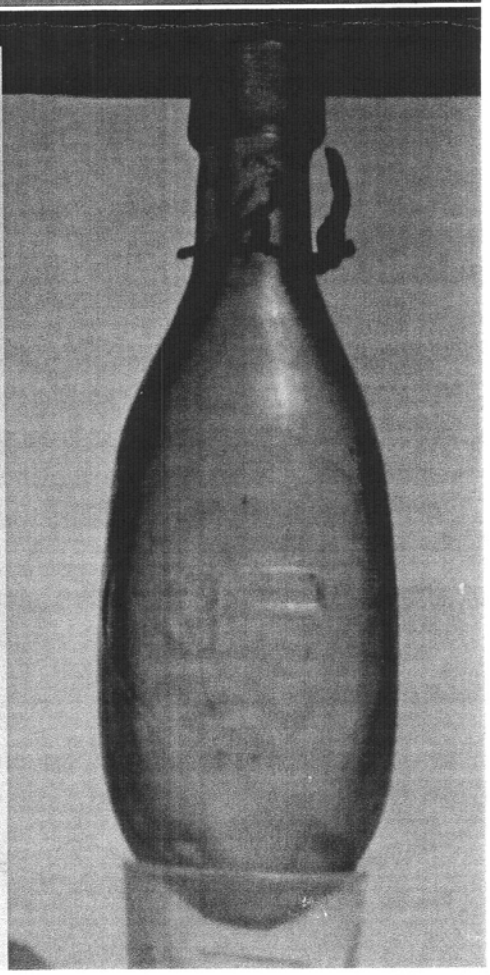


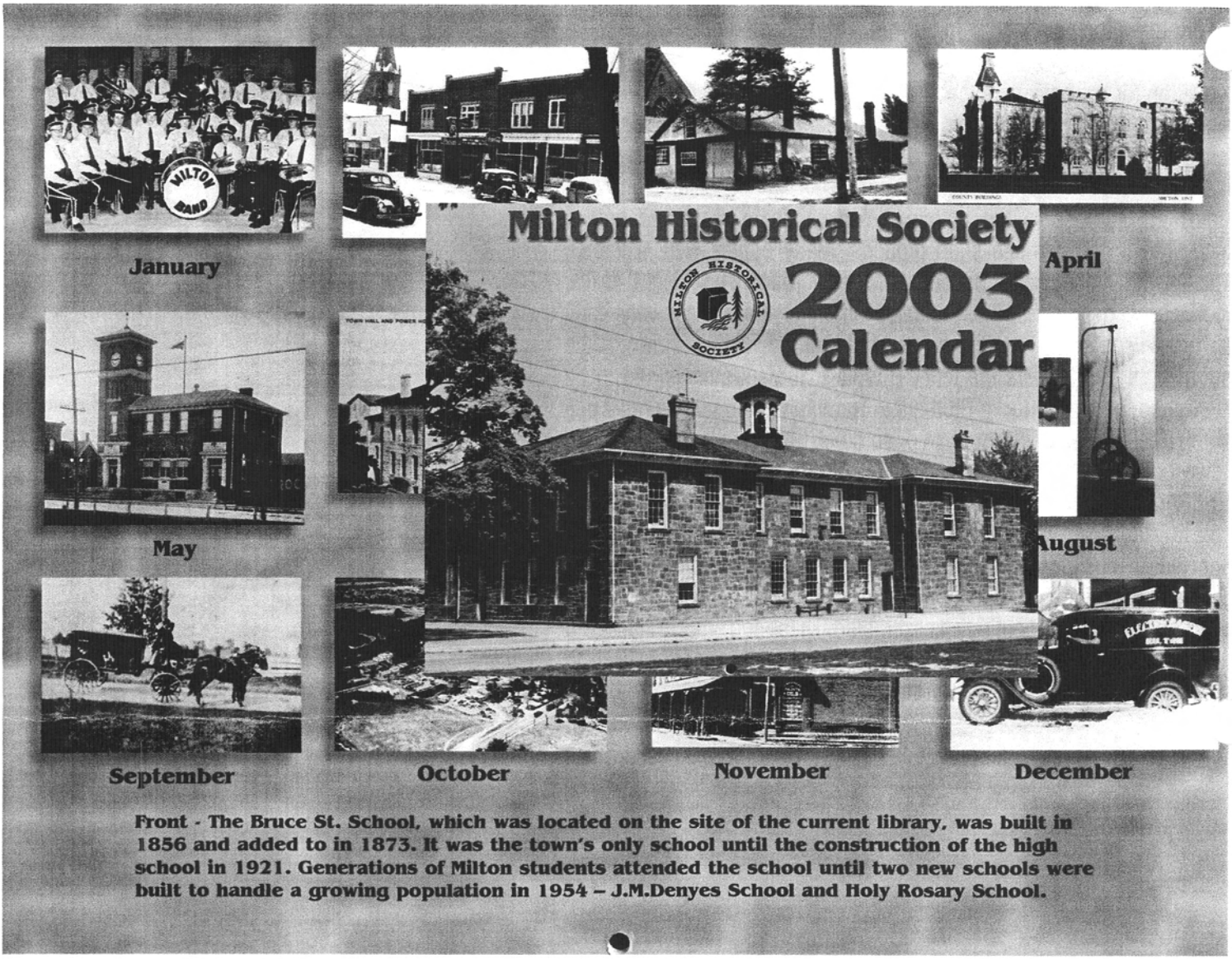
# WALDIE BLACKSMITH SHOP DIG

The local amateur archeologists have been at it again. It seems whereever you dig in Milton you can't help but run into discards from the past. The Waldie Blacksmith Shop hasn't disappointed in this regard. In excavating a foundation for the back carriage shop numerous shards of glass, pottery, china and iron have cropped up. An earlier dig by professional archeologists was limited to a small area in the vicinity of the old forge in the blacksmith shop. This yielded tiny fragments which while significant weren't as dramatic to the untrained eye as entire cups and bottles discovered in the carriage shop grounds. Many bottles were extracted virtually undamaged such as pumpkinseeds, round shouldered flasks, medicines and poisons. Two notables amongst these were very early Charles Wilson sodas. A broken but whole torpedo bottle shown in the bottom right photo bears the letter P. What that stands for is still to be determined, perhaps Pilgrim Brothers in Hamilton. (And no it is not a pee bottle!) The front and bottom of an open crock was reassembled which is shown below. The inscription is "MADE EXPRESSLY FOR T.A. MASON GENERAL MERCHANT ACTON". This is significant as James Waldie Sr. came to Milton from Acton and perhaps brought this crock with him when he relocated. To the right is a beautiful three gallon blue-flowered open crock of F.P. Goold, Brantford who operated from 1859 to 1867. This crock though broken has been almost entirely reassembled. These and other artifacts will be on display at the Waldie Blacksmith Shop grand opening and are likely to form part of a permanent display on site.










A GREAT GIFT IDEA OR KEEPSAKE The Milton Historical Society is proud to announce the publication of its first calendar. The 2003 Calendar is the result of the efforts of the late Ken Hassard and Jim Dills. Each month features an historic photo accompanied by a brief description below. Many thanks to our advertisers who have made this publication possible. The calendars are being sold for $9.95 each and are available locally at Harris Stationery, Spice O' Life, Global Genealogy, Bergsma's Paint, Coles Books and Home Hardware. They may also be obtained directly from the Society at P.O. Box 85, Milton, Ontario L9T 2Y3.

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## New 2002 Membership Rates Still a Bargain

At $10 for individuals and $15 for families membership in the Milton Historical Society is still a pretty good bargain. Your renewal ensures that you continue to receive The Journal. We realize that many people can not make it to our regular meetings. In light of that we try to keep in touch with our newsletter. We hope that it is informative and entertaining. Send you cheque to P.O. Box 85, Milton, Ontario, L9T 2Y3. For more information about membership please call Sue Paul at 878-0657.

# The Journal

Published by the Milton Historical Society

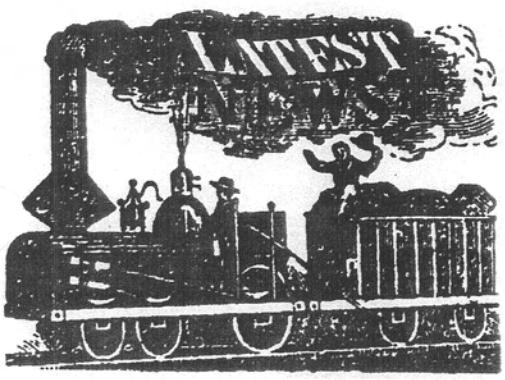
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Volume 17 Number 1 April 13, 2002

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Well it just seems like yesterday that they tore up the Main Street. Hey, wait a second, it was yesterday. It appears that the water works have been a perennial problem/project in Milton. This scene captured by local photographer J.A. Cockburn summed up the locals' frustration with the numerous breaks in the early waterworks. I guess they had brown water back then too! This view dates from about 1896. A tombstone was erected early one morning with the inscription, "Sacred to the Memory of the Water Works Committee". Surrounding the grave in front of 217 Main Street are Doc Wharton, Tom Wilson, William Clements, William McKenzie, Chester Bowman, J.M. Fields, Fred White, Walter Lawrence, Sam Bews, Tom Ford, Tom Conway and Fred Daley. (John Duignan Photo Collection)





☞ MIRELLA MARSHALL SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT

☞ TWO NEW PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE M.H.S.

☞ M.H.S. MEETING HIGHLIGHTS & SCHEDULE

☞ HERITAGE AWARD WINNERS HONOURED

**M.H.S.2002 EXECUTIVE**

PRESIDENT-Mirella Marshall

PAST PRESIDENT-Helen Comber

SECRETARY-Helen Comber

TREASURER-Lynne Bundy-Davis

MEMBERSHIP-Sue Paul

PROGRAM-John McDonald

WALDIE RESTORATION-Mandy Sedgwick

RESEARCH-Jim Dills, Elizabeth Norrington

PLAQUE PROGRAM-Marsha Waldie

GENEALOGY-Ruth Taylor

PUBLICITY-Vee Lapstra-Keates

LIAISON-Audrea Lear-Costigan

JOURNAL EDITOR-John Duignan

ARCHIVIST-Gail Richardson

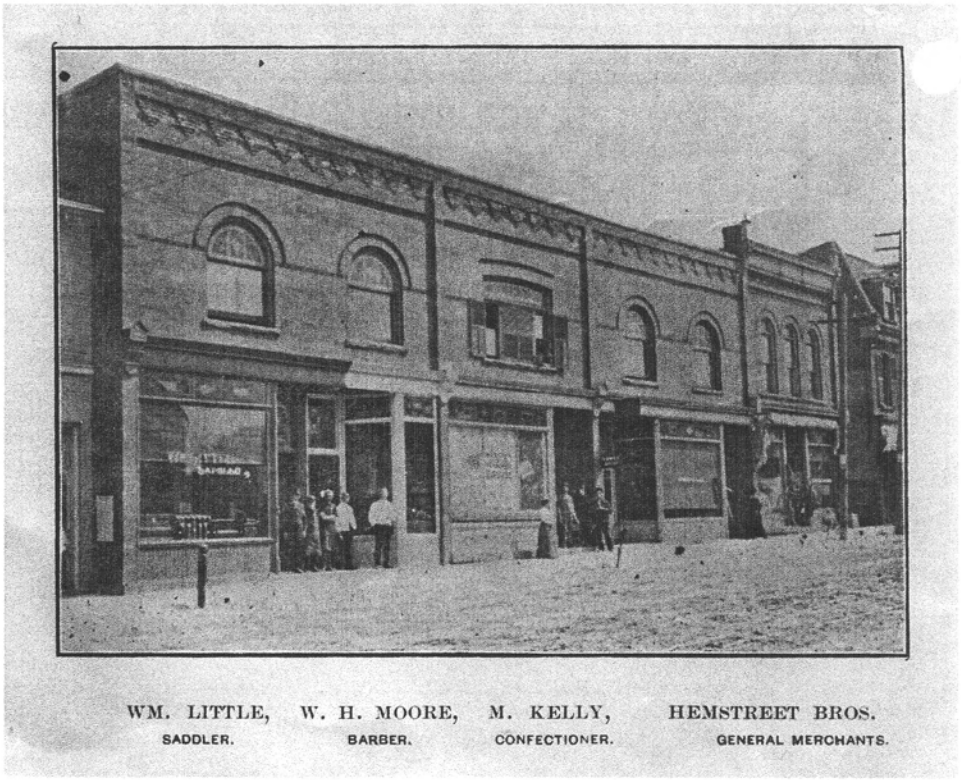
SPECIAL EVENTS-Bruce Carlin

PUBLICATIONS-Ken Hassard

LACAC LIAISON-Lynda Leaver

SOCIAL-Jessie Hamilton

TELEPHONE COMMITTEE-Carolyn Goodall, Lou Bradley, Gail Pearson, Gerri Faggion, Mike Ledwith, Lois Thomson




# A SAD DAY FOR DOWNTOWN MILTON

Historically minded people were saddened recently by the demolition of 198 and 200 Main Street. This represented one third of the Little block and the Hemstreet building to the west. These are the two stores shown to the right. This photo appeared in the August 4, 1904 Souvenir and Official Program of the Firemen's Demonstration held in Milton on that date.

# M.H.S. PRESIDENT SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT

As many of you may already know - on March 12, the dismantling of one of our "silent witnesses of history " on Main Street took place.

March 11/02 When we were informed ( which was at the eleventh hour) of the demolition of 198 and 200 Main Street we, the executive, sprang into action. Tom Murison, restorationist, and Peter Devine, stone mason for the Waldie Blacksmith Shop, happened to be working that day. We asked them to visit the site and give us their expert opinions. When they arrived at the site they found a building that was totally gutted (it had been that way for months) except for the front and side wall. About twenty workmen were milling around the site trying to come up with a strategy for demolition. Yes, the building had been compromised but both Tom and Peter felt the facade, at the very least, was salvageable. They wanted the advice of Eric Jokinen who was the engineer for our restoration project. Tom felt that if anyone was creative enough for this project it was Eric. The rest of us were on the phone calling the Mayor, Councillors, the newspaper - anyone we could think of to help our cause. I made appointments with the Planning Department staff and met with them later that day. They, also frustrated with the whole project, indicated that nothing could be done - a demolition permit had already been issued. Besides, the Main St. construction was starting , safety was a concern and the scaffolding had to come down. We asked permission to speak to the Milton Bible Church for a possible "stay of execution." As long as the facade was secured and safe , the planning department was in agreement.

I spoke to the project manager for the Milton Bible Church that afternoon. He also was a frustrated and angry individual. After listening to much conflicting information it was evident how this project got out of hand. By the end of the conversation he had softened and wished, as did, that we could have spoken six months prior. He agreed that if their architect was willing to listen to our proposal they might postpone the demolition for at least a few days.

(continued on page 3)

Only a Cog in a Wheel

A man there was of unusual gifts
Bearing an honored name,
.e came to him with outstretched hands
Proffering wealth and fame;
But he carelessly turned his head away,
The prize made little appeal,
Contenting himself with a minor part,
He was only a cog in a wheel.
When opportunity knocked at his door,
It found him asleep and deaf;
Long and patiently it waited there,
But he did not come to himself
His golden chances were wasted like chaff,
He took no account of the real:
Each day a monotonous grind to him,
He was only a cog in a wheel.
In the image of God this man was made,
With power to do and to serve;
Strong of mind and body was he,
But he lacked essential nerve.
So he drifted along from day to day,
Without ambition or zeal,
Playing a dull and nondescript part,
He was only a cog in a wheel.
What place do you fill in life's great machine
Are you using your gifts aright?
Today have you wrought some truly fine thing
Can you claim to have fought a good fight?
Will it surely be said that you "played the game"
That your life was productive and real?
Or will the world say, as it goes on its way.
He was only a cog in a wheel?
--Anonymous

(Editor note: Only a Cog in the Wheel was submitted by Jim Dills. It's a rather inspiring piece and reminds us all that each and everyone of us has a purpose and can make a difference. The demolition of 198 to 200 Main was a bitter pill to swallow and demoralized many of our members."Why do we bother?" was a common refrain. The answer quite simply put is - because we were right - the facade could have been preserved. Progress does not have to mean demolition. The future is . blocked by preserving old buildings as some would have you believe. And I promised I wouldn't do it but too bad- Sometimes a Hack Reporter is Just a Hack Reporter.)

M.H.S. PRESIDENT SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT

(continued from page 2)

We called an emergency executive meeting. It was voted that if necessary we would pay our engineer up to $2000. for an assessment and stamped engineer's report. It was also decided that we would attend the Administration and Planning Committee Meeting the following week to state our case and put forth some solutions to prevent a future situation.
March 12/02

A call Tuesday morning from Mandy Sedgwick confirmed that demolition had begun. In disbelief, I put a call in to Councillor Challinor, who is also the chair for L.A.C.A.C. , and left a message of anger and disappointment. ( We found out that LACAC knew in early February about the demolition. The liaison to our committee who very rarely attends our meetings "didn't know" until March 10 when we were informed) In a later conversation with Mr. Challinor, he did admit that they were remiss in not informing the MHS of the situation. Mr. Challinor assured me that the church was going to save the decorative parts of the front wall which later would be reconstructed into the facade. Because the building had never been designated as a heritage building - there was nothing else they could do.

Tom Murison called the Milton Bible Church's Architect , who was not very cooperative. He didn't understand why we were so upset - Milton hadn't done a good job of preserving the downtown facades so, "What difference did it make?" Unfortunately I encountered a sentiment of indifference toward the situation ranging from some of the downtown merchants to our local newspaper.

At a meeting, March 18 with the Town Administration and Planning Committee we expressed our disappointment and offered solutions for the future. This is the first step in the right direction toward remedying the gross miscommunication between Town, LACAC and MHS. We hope it will lead to the development of a criteria that will preserve and maintain our heritage areas.

As I write this letter 24 days have past. The scaffolding is still up. When I walk by the site and peek through the hole in the plywood wall, I sadly see a mess of red bricks laying in a huge pit.

I would like to thank all the members who took time to call the Mayor and Town Councillors, and those who wrote letters to express their concerns regarding the demolition of "The Milton Bible Church" site. A special thanks goes to Tom Murison who spent two days visiting the site, talking to the work crew, meeting with town staff, talking to architects and engineers, and drawing sketches, coming up with solutions, and to Peter Devine, our Scottish stone mason, who also visited the sight to assess the condition of the facade. Thank you to the executive who worked tirelessly calling and meeting with anyone and everyone who they thought could make a difference. And last but not least thank you to Mandy Sedgwick , whose kitchen was headquarters, whose phone never stopped ringing and who was kind enough to feed us.

We " fought a good fight" - even though we didn't get the results we had hoped for.

The Oddfellow Hall ( 174 Main St) is for sale. With a little tender love and care it could be a proud and magnificent site. We will be watching closely.

Proud to be a member of this "special interest group" (re: Milton Champion editorial, Mar 15/02)

Mirella Marshall, Milton Historical Society President

# M.H.S. Meeting Highlights

**by Ken Lamb**

## Members Fill Hall For Christmas "Do"

More than 40 members and friends attended our traditional Christmas party December 20th at the Oddfellows Hall.

We enjoyed an enormous choice of potluck goodies before Marsha Waldie spoke on the history of the building and the Rebekahs' social and charitable society.

The building was erected in 1877 as the residence of William Eager, an Irishman. Later it served as a manse for the nearby Knox Presbyterian Church. It has been owned by the Oddfellows fraternal society since 1924.

The Rebekahs society originated in 1819 in the United States; the local women's group dates from 1905. Rebekahs who are also members of our Society are Helen Comber, Annie Drew, Sharon Hyde, Marjorie Powys, Edna Waldie and her daughters Gayle Brown and Marsha Waldie.

## Mayor's New Year's Levee Serves Rich Heritage Fare

The Waldie Blacksmith shop restoration was the star attraction at the Mayor's New Year's Levee in the Town Hall. The fun began at the sign-in table in the lobby. As guests shook hands with Mayor Gordon Krantz and Town Councillors they stood within two feet of Jack Hardy's wooden reconstruction of "shoeing" at the historic Waldie shop.

Upstairs in the Council Chambers guests enjoyed numerous displays. These included dozens of blacksmith's tools, photos of the Waldie family, the Society's publications and mementoes and more than 60 photos of the restoration work.

Half way through the program Mayor Krantz announced that Marsha Waldie had won a heritage conservation award from the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

Except for the award ceremony violinist Alex Frank performed throughout the two-hour session. Alex is a grandson of the late Sheriff and bandleader Andy Frank. Those responsible for the program and the refreshments afterwards were Gloria Brown, Bruce Carlin, Helen Comber, Mike Ledwith, Mirella Marshall, Tom Murison, Gail Pearson, Mandy Sedgwick, Edna Waldie and her daughters Gayle Brown and Marsha Waldie.



Above, Marsha Waldie holds court in the Oddfellows-Rebekah Hall. Below M.H.S. members sing along to Christmas Carols.




## Kindred Spirit Shares His Experiences Restoring a Blacksmith Shop

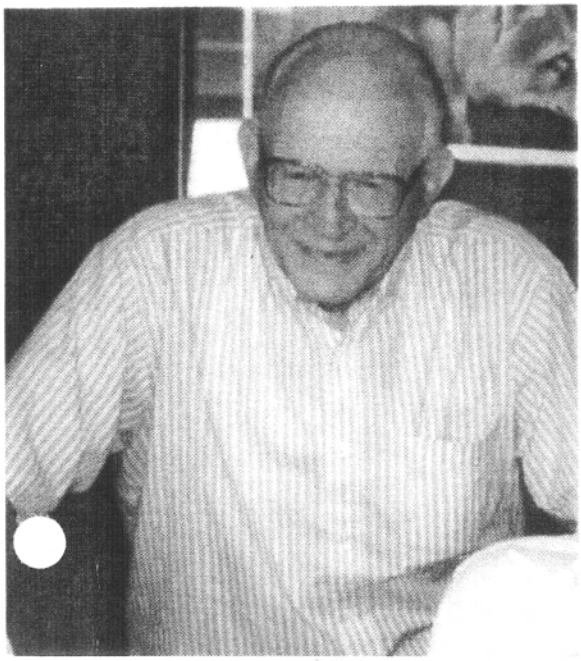
The speaker at our January 17th meeting was Ron Bunston who recounted his trials and tribulations while restoring a blacksmith shed dating from the 1850's. The building west of Flamborough had served many functions during its life time and was in a truly sorry state when Ron began his work. The small shed has been successfully restored and converted into useable living space. As he noted, everyone seems pleased with the end result except for some dozen squirrels that were evicted from the originally ramshackle shed. With that project complete Ron's current task converting an old dog kennel into living space. Talk about being in the 'doghouse'!

(continued on page 5)

## M.H.S. Meeting Highlights

(continued from page 4)

His words certainly seem to resonate with the p. sophy of many of our Society members. (Editor note: This review by the editor will be supplemented elsewhere in this issue with a partial transcript of Ron Bunston's essay about old buildings. I'm sure our readers will appreciate his viewpoint especially after the demolition on Main Street.)



Ken Lamb (sans P.L.'s top hat) spoke at our February meeting.

"P.L." Died in 1951 But Still Makes News

Although our February 21st meeting in Holy Rosary parish hall intended to show how P.L. Robertson dominated Milton's past, the present kept intruding. The inventor's top hat, a 1930's Christmas card bearing his elegant signature and a liquer set and painting from his collection held people's attention. So did contributions by speaker Ken Lamb, Marjorie Powys, Milree Latimer and Anne and Doug Ptolemy.

The audience of 40, however, showed equal interest in current Robertson developments:

-the screw plant Robertson Inc. has just built near ghai; the plant's output will replace products now imported from other Asian producers.

-Town Councillor John Challinor's efforts to have "P.L." inducted into the Canadian Business Hall of Fame.

-how Kathy Sellers, David Wentzell and their two children are making out in their Margaret Street home, which was occupied by "P.L." for about 35 years.

Robertson Inc. provided a picture of their new Chinese plant and a display of scores of company products.

Names drawn from "P.L.'s" top hat decided who would take home eight bricks from the original Robertson building demolished last year.

Former Robertson Company employees at the meeting were Jim Gilbert, Bruce Kitchen, Ralph Merkley and Doug Ptolemy.



Members of the Milton Horticultural Society receive their award from Mayor Gord Krantz at the Heritage awards presentation on February 24th.

Eight Heritage Awards Presented

The stirring sound of bagpipes set the stage for the annual heritage awards ceremony February 24th at the Milton Seniors' Activity Centre. More than 100 attended the event, which followed the pattern set in 1990 when our Society lauched the program.

Eight awards were handed out - four each by Milton Historical Society and Heritage Milton (LACAC).

Milton Historical Society Winners

Writing Award: Betty Brownridge and Reid Kennedy for "Shoebox Memories", a series of 50 Nassagaweya and Esquesing Township family histories published since 1998 in The North Halton Compass.

Visual Arts Award: Milton and District Horticultural Society for planning and developing the Milton Millennium Garden at Chris Hadfield Park (Martin Street, north of Steeles Avenue).

Educational Awards: E.C.Drury High School (grade 11) and Holy Rosary School (grades 7 and 8). They painted the many lively images on the plywood fence enclosing the James Street restoration site of the Waldie Blacksmith Shop.

(continued on page 6)

## M.H.S. Meeting Highlights

(continued from page 5)

Heritage Milton (LACAC) Winners

Renovation of a Non-Designated Property: Doug Kocher, owner of McKersie Kocher Funeral Home. Designed by architect Brian Williams, a 5,200 square foot addition was completed last year. It faithfully matches the original (1905) character of the Main Street building.

Infill Development Awards: Carla and Luciano Biasutti demolished the original cottage at 80 Bruce Street to build a two storey Victorian style Williamsburg brick home. They did virtually all the work themselves on a building compatible with the neighbourhood's historic setting. Frank and Robin Loconte took down a small home at 25 Mill Street and replaced it with a two storey Victorian home, an appropriate addition to a well recognized heritage area. The couple moved in right after their honeymoon.

Award for Restoration of a Building Designated Under the Ontario Heritage Act: Over a three year period the Halton Railway Museum (Guelph Line) restored the building that originally served as the CNR station at Rockwood. The late Gus Bryant of Guelph removed the "Insulbrick" and meticulously replaced it with the original shell of board and batten in "railway" red. Total cost: $3,500.

Mayor Gordon Krantz, MP Julian Reed, Peter Berry (representing MPP Ted Chudleigh) and Town Councillor John Challinor made the presentations.

The awards consist of metal plaques attached to slabs of limestone salvaged by Brad Clements from the historic Bruce Street School; the building stood for more than 100 years on the present library site.

March Meeting Marks St. Paul's Anniversary

More than 50 members and friends met in St. Paul's United Church March 21 to celebrate the congregation's 150th anniversary.

The program opened with a 20-minute concert by St. Paul's chamber group directed by Berry Smith. Berry is the husband of our archivist, Gail Richardson.

Jim Dills, elegantly dressed for the 1800's, Ad woodley and Ken Lamb spoke o[n] various aspects of St. Paul's history.

The congregation was known as the Milton Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1852 when it built the original chapel on Main Street. In 1925 more than 400 of the Methodists and about 100 local Presbyterians voted to join the newly-formed United Church of Canada. Other members of the Knox congregation chose to retain their Presbyterian affiliation, as did about one third of the Presbyterians throughout Canada.

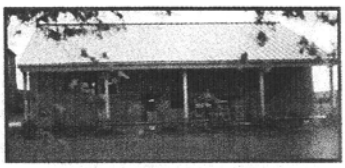
The present Milton United Church building dates from 1891. At that time the original Methodist chapel became part of the larger building. In 1962, however, with the building of St. Paul's Christian Education Centre, the chapel was demolished.




A view of St. Paul's United taken by local photographer Henry Sherman in the 1920's.




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May 24 , 1900 Canadian Champion Annual meeting Halton Historical Society at town hall on Tuesday evening. ttendance not large. Last year's officers were reelected. Drs. Robertson and Richardson and W.H. Young were chosen as representatives to attend the annual meeting of the Provincial Historical Society to be held at Hamilton on 6th and 7th June with Robert Coates as a substitute. Secretary Robert Coates laid before the meeting a plan of Milton, 1843, as he remembered it, showing locations of the 18 buildings it then contained, which included two stores, two hotels, a tannery, grist mill, a shoemaker's shop and eleven dwellings, one of which was used a couple of years later for occasional Methodist services. Benjamin Walbrook of Trafalgar, representative of the Oakville branch delivered an address on "The Early Settlers and Settlement of the New Survey of Trafalgar." Mr. Walbrook was born in Trafalgar 74 years ago..... Trafalgar's first white settler was Timothy Robbins, who put up his shanty on lot 15, con. 2 in 1782. The next was Mr. McCraney, father of Wm. McCraney, ex M.P. for Halton who settled near Oakville in 1805. Halton was in the Gore District and was coupled with Wentworth until 1853 when it was separated by legislation, having the 22,000 of population necessary to entitle it to a parliamentary representative. The county was settled from England, Ireland, Scotland, the United States and the "land of Evangeline."... Trafalgar was covered with oak timber, some trees measuring as much as 6 feet in diameter. The timber was early in demand for staves for West Indian puncheon manufacture. Staves were of blue and white oak, 2x5 inches was the standard. Those 7 feet long were worth $95 per 1,000, 5 ft. $65. and 3 ft. $45.Richard Fallis and Forbes were the principal rafters. On one occasion Mr. Chisholm served them, for Mr. Bolton, with an injunction to forbid them to raft staves over the dam. Fallis was for peace, but Forbes was a fighter, cut a way through the dam, ran the staves over and won the subsequent legal proceedings. The settlers drew their land in 100 acre lots by a lottery. Tickets with numbers of lots were put into a box and shuffled. Applicants drew them. On doing settlement duties, i.e. building a house, clearing four acres and opening up a road in front of the lot, the settler got his deed. Jasper Martin, the founder of Milton was born in Northumberland, England. He was a particularly handsome man. One eccentric character in afalgar wore his cap so much on one side of his head that it seemed in danger of falling off, but never did. Owing to bad work by his shoemaker he suffered from corns, which he got rid of by cutting off in succession with a chisel, all his toes except his two great toes. He sharpened his axe every spring and bled himself with it. The settlers were religiously inclined, but superstitious, believed in fairies and banshees and ancestral spirits which presided over families of Jewish extraction. Clothing was manufactured directly from the sheep's back. The wool was shorn, carded, spun, woven and made into clothing at home. The cloth was innocent of artificial dyes and of style. The cutting was literally done with a broad axe. The cloth was laid on the floor, the pattern chalked out and as there were no sheers, the broad axe was used. The settlers of old times did not suffer from sunstroke. Some original preventatives were used. A snake was sometimes put on a man's head inside his hat and, being a cold-blooded reptile, kept his head cool. When he became too obstreperous he was released. Bullfrogs were utilized in the same way. (Editor note: I don't think I need to tell anyone not to try these home remedies but you just never know. A few of these sound as if somebody was trying to pull someone's leg. At any rate if you find a rattler please do not wrap it around your head, okay! Thanks for sharing this gem with us Jim. Keep up the good work!)

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May 16th, 2002 at Hugh Foster Hall

Our meeting will begin earlier at 7:30 pm with the presentation of the Carnochan Award to Leonard McNeil a lifetime member of the M.H.S. Following this our speaker will be author Frances Hoffman who will discuss her book 'Across the Waters' about the ordeals of the early immigrants to North America. It should prove quite interesting and eye-opening.

June 20th Potluck at Boston Church

Our telephone committee will give more particular details about timing to our members prior to the meeting. As with our potlucks members are asked to bring either main courses or desserts. And don't forget those plates and cutlery or you'll be eating with your hands like the old editor here! Our speaker will be Marie Sutcliffe who will continue her talk on genealogical research. Marie encourages members to bring along their own research to share with the group. Mementoes such as family bibles would be an interesting addition to the evening.

M.H.S Archivist Gail Richardson Gets Some Well Deserved Recognition

(Editor note: Jim Dills spotted this piece which should be of interest to our readers.)

Weaving a web of virtual libraries Halton model tops in North America

By Tony Fitzgerald, The Hamilton Spectator, December 14, 2001

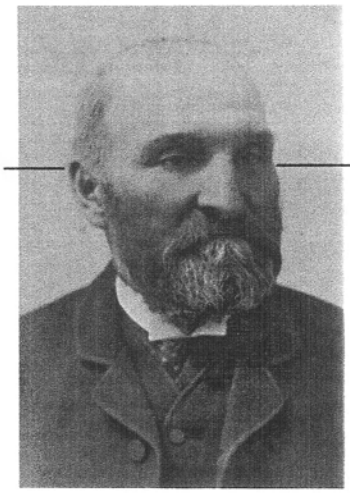
Three librarians from Halton Hills have made Halton's library system of preserving genealogical and newspaper data on the internet a role model throughout North America. Walter Lewis, deputy chief librarian at Halton Hills library, spearheaded the project with the help of Gail Richardson and Geoff Cannon to make the Halinet site a useful place to look for information. Halinet is a consortium that includes the four public libraries in Burlington, Oakville, Milton and Halton Hills as well as Sheridan College, the Halton District School Board and the Halton Roman Catholic School Board. The group's Web sites provide links to all partners' Web pages...the project goes further than static and staid data. It provides online access to census, court and land information as well as newspaper and genealogical information. Lewis and the gang began "exploding the walls" of traditional libraries in the late 1980s. The libraries agreed to load their catalogues onto a single computer network and now they have turned their facilities into virtual libraries linked to the mushrooming resources of public networks around the globe. Along the way, they have won countless awards for technological innovations. ...A general search brings 500 to 700 visitors a day. Newspaper searches attract another 400 per day. ...The historical data has been inputted by volunteers, summer students and library staff. ...Lewis says he can't begin to estimate the tens of thousands of hours people have spent entering births and death notices and newspaper indexing from material that had been in dusty binders on the bottom of library shelves. ...People checking for family records could spend hours in front of a microfilm going ble eyed. Under the Halton system, one five second search can result in a huge amount of content from 21 data sets. They have 210,000 genealogical entries and 130,000 article index references. Richardson said public expectations will drive the content. "People want extra value." Richardson said. "That's what we're trying to fulfill by adding more and more content." Other library systems have become quite interested in how they can adapt the Halton method for their own purposes. There has been interest from the United States in learning how to make all those old newspaper articles accessible on the Web. ...Their awards didn't bring financial gain and they have received no federal money for this project. Cannon says if they did have funding they could develop new and creative ways of making it better.

Excerpts From Ron Bunston's January Presentation to the M.H.S.

(Editor note: Ron has rescued a blacksmith shed from demolition and converted it into useable living quarters. I have extracted some of his thoughts in regard to the preservation and value of historic buildings in the Ancaster and Flamborough area which I thought our members would identify with.) "If I had the resources or access to them I would buy and restore both of those houses in memory of the Books, Shaws, Culvers, Drummonds, Parkins and all the other families who built that which we all inherited and ravage in our rush to some ill defined, sterilized electronic future. I am more than saddened at this sudden bit of news. I am tired and disgusted with a seemingly endless struggle against an ethic that has limited vision, a vague memory, a small heart and no respect for either the past or the future. Tearing them down rather than making the small effort to preserve them seems a sacrilege that has a certain distasteful air. It is like defacing a monument, a gravestone, a flag. ...Purpose can be justified, use can be found, to convert to a temporal relevancy historical buildings. Working buildings, the architecture of space constructed towards a specific purpose, a barn, a blacksmith shed, a stable, always has a multitude of opportunities for redesigning with a contemporary use while preserving the labours and the resources of generations gone before. Are these things worth saving? This will always be cause for debate and struggle. The struggle, however, is larger than specific patriotic, cultural, or metaphysical issues. The most profound wealth can be discovered in touching the art, hence the impact of one anonymous soul through his or her walk on the earth. These are the touchstones of time. These are the memories of those who travelled through this dimension before us; who took the steps westward and eastward to bring us to this place and time."

# THE HALTON HALITOSIS

"THERE'S SOMETHING BLOWING IN THE WIND-THE STENCH THAT COVERS ALL OF HALTON COUNTY" APRIL 1, 2002



## FROM MY PERSPECTIVE UNDER A ROCK WITH EDWARD THUMBSUCKER

WELL, DEAR READERS I WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE MYSELF FOR A JOB WELL DONE. THE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR HAVE BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE OF MY POSITION ON THE VALUE OF OLD BUILDINGS. A TEARFUL MHS PRESIDENT [illegible]ELLA MARSHALL CALLED TO APOLOGIZE FOR WHINING ABOUT THE BUILDINGS' DEMOLITION. SHE AGREED THAT IT WAS TIME TO MOVE FORWARD IN DOWNTOWN MILTON. WE BOTH AGREED THAT THE MODEL FOR REDEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE BASED ON THE BUILDING FURTHER UP THE STREET WHICH EMULATES THE REFRESHING ARCHITECTURAL STYLINGS OF THE MACDONALDS ON BLOOR STREET. CLEARLY EMBARRASSED AT THE PUBLIC BACKLASH MS. MARSHALL WENT INTO SELF-IMPOSED EXILE IN ITALY. SHE CONFIDED THAT SHE HAD SEEN THE ERROR OF HER WAYS. HER PLANNED AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE WHILE OVERSEAS WOULD NOW BE DEVOTED TO CONVINCING THE HOLY FATHER TO STUCCO OVER THE CEILING OF THE SISTINE CHAPEL AS IT WAS A TACKY PAINTING FULL OF CLICHES AND BASICALLY AN EYESORE. WE WISH HER WELL. WE APPLAUD THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY HAS DECIDED TO DISBAND. THEIR EFFORTS WOULD BE BETTER PLACED IN ENCOURAGING NEW RETAILERS FOR DOWNTOWN MILTON. MY SUGGESTION FOR A THEME WOULD BE MAVIS ON MAIN STREET. BRING ON THE [illegible] BOX STORES, THE WALMARTS, COSTCOS AND THE [illegible]ECLUBS. THINK OF THE CONVENIENCE AND AS AN ADDED BONUS THE FORMER MHS MEMBERS CAN GET JOBS AS WALMART GREETERS. PLEASE DON'T THANK THIS HUMBLE SCRIBE, I'M JUST GLAD I CAN BE OF SERVICE. E.T.



## OUR READERS RANT

DEAR EDITOR:

I READ WITH GREAT INTEREST THE COLUMN BY EDWARD THUMBSUCKER IN LAST WEEK'S PAPER. HIS POINTS ARE WELL TAKEN AND UPON DEEP REFLECTION AND MUCH NAVEL GAZING I HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT I HAVE BEEN DWELLING TOO MUCH ON THE PAST AT THE EXPENSE OF THE FUTURE. AS SUCH THE WALDIE BLACKSMITH SHOP WILL BE CONVERTED INTO A 4 LANE BOWLING ALLEY TO BETTER SERVE THE COMMUNITY.

YOURS REGRETFULLY, MARSHA WALDIE, JAMES STREET, MILTON

(EDITOR NOTE: NOW QUIT COMPLAINING MARSHA, WE DID PRINT YOUR LETTER.)

DEAR EDITOR:

WE WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND EDWARD THUMBSUCKER FOR HIS RECENT OPINION PIECES. IN ONE OF HIS COLUMNS HOWEVER HE COMMENTED THAT UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN MILTON HE FOUND THERE WAS NOTHING REALLY SPECIAL ABOUT THE TOWN AND NOT MUCH TO DO. WE WOULD LIKE TO SHOW EDWARD SOME OF THE FINER POINTS ABOUT MILTON THAT HE SURELY MISSED. THERE IS BUNGEE JUMPING FROM THE GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY BRIDGE OVER THE 16 MILE CREEK. THEN THERE IS AN EXCITING NIGHT TIME GAME INVOLVING TAR AND FEATHERS. IT'S A GREAT DEAL OF FUN FOR EVERYONE.

YOURS ANXIOUSLY, THE FRIENDLY CROWD DOWN AT THE HOTEL MCGIBBON

DEAR EDITOR:

IN ALL THIS KERFUFFLE OVER THE DEMOLITION OF 198 AND 200 MAIN STREET EVERYONE HAS NEGLECTED TO MENTION THE LOSS OF THE LAST OUTHOUSE IN DOWNTOWN MILTON. SINCE THE DEMISE OF THE WASHROOMS BEQUEATHED BY P.L.ROBERTSON THE FRAME ONE SEATER BEHIND THE OLD DEPARTMENT STORE HAS BEEN THE LAST REFUGE FOR THOSE SUDDENLY CAUGHT SHORT. (GRANTED IT NEVER DID HAVE ANY TOILET PAPER BUT THAT'S WHAT THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER IS FOR) WILL THE TOWN FATHERS ENSURE THAT THE FACILITY IS REPLACED IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

DESPERATE IN DOWNTOWN MILTON, LOU CRAPPER

DEAR EDITOR:

IN RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY BY MR. CRAPPER MIGHT I SUGGEST RECYCLING THE BRICK OF THE OLD BUILDINGS INTO A NEW WASHROOM FACILITY. OUR COMPANY SPECIALIZES IN SUCH STRUCTURES WHICH ARE FAR SUPERIOR TO FRAME. OUR WORK IS HERALDED WORLDWIDE. "BUILT LIKE A BRICK _____HOUSE. NO ONE EVER REGRETTED BUYING QUALITY."

YOURS RESPECTFULLY, THE TERRA COTTA TOILET WORKS

# POST CARD CONTEST NUMBER EIGHT

This post card shows a view that I have never seen before. Just when you think that there are no more scenes to collect another photo pops out of the woodwork. I have another view of a train crossing the CPR Bridge but this one is rather novel as train service was discontinued on this line before my time and I have never seen a train cross it. It shouldn't be that much of a challenge for our readers to identify the bridge but the orientation might prove a bit tricky. The prize winner gets to go bungee jumping off this bridge after Mr. Thumbsucker has had his turn.

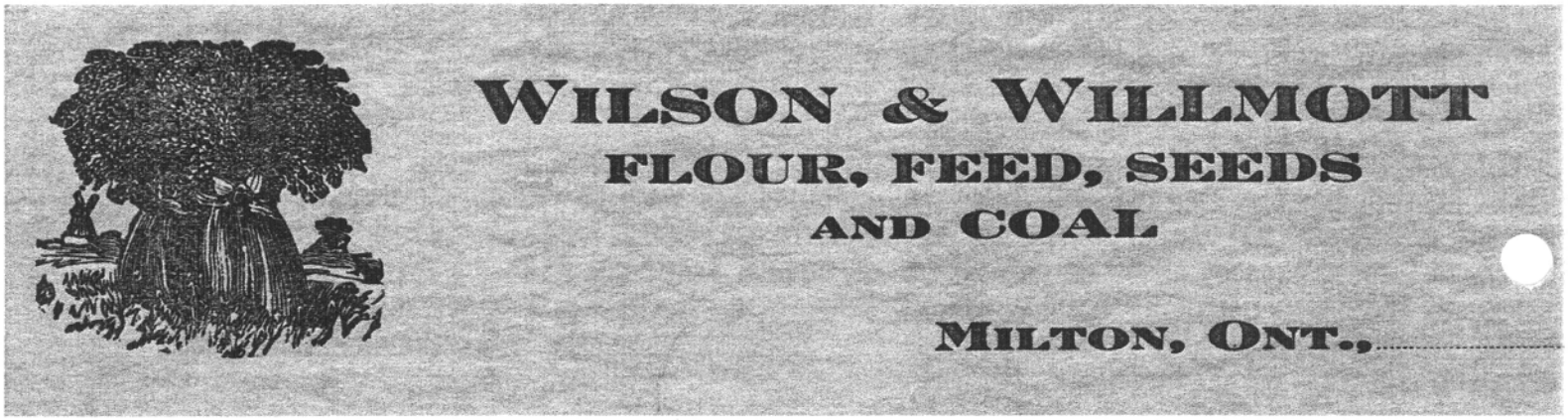
(John Duignan Post Card Collection)




## NEW INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE ERECTED

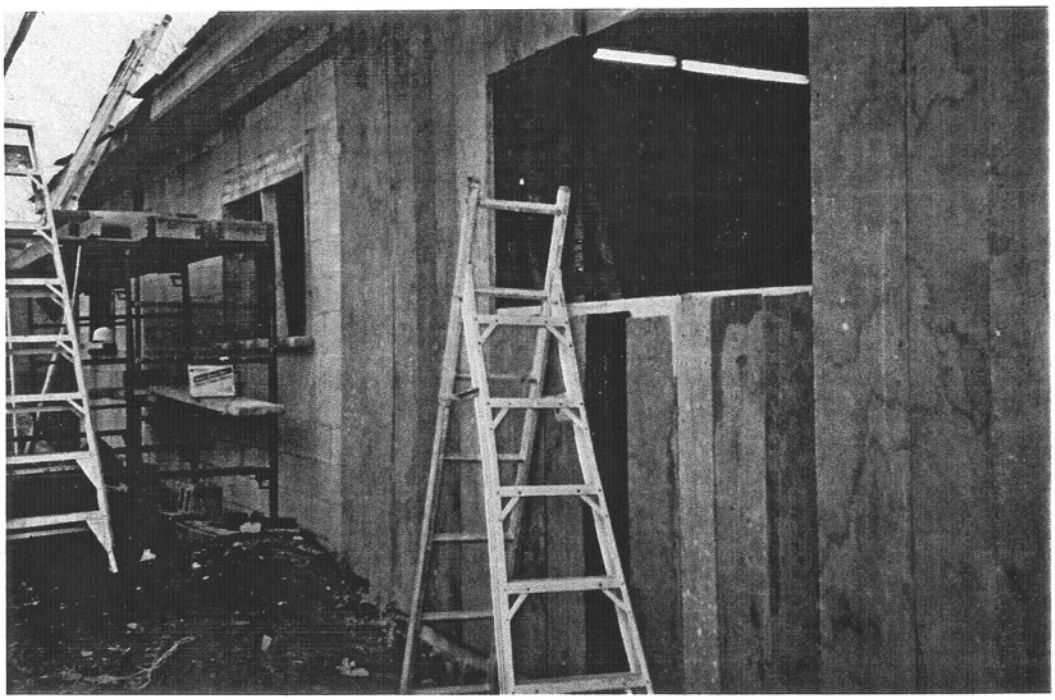


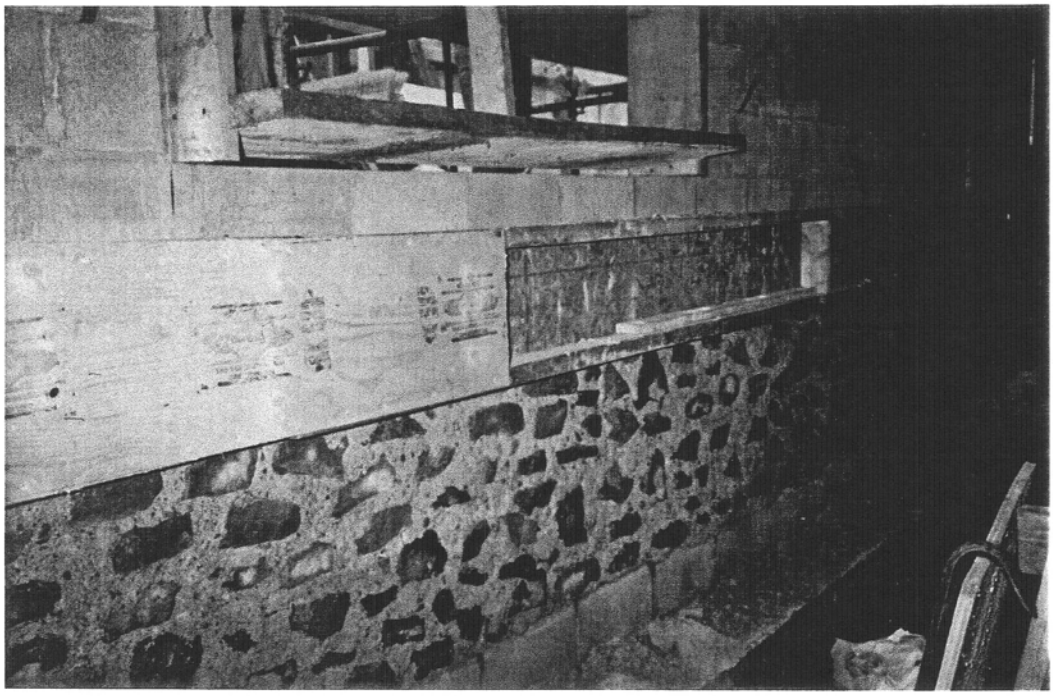

Many of our readers may have noticed new signage recently erected at Centennial Park next to the Mill Pond. The interpretive sign has a map of the walking trails and significant features in the area. The centre portion of the sign shows a few post card views of the area produced for T.C.Livingston when he ran the park that still bears his name. A photo of Martin's old mill appears in the lower right corner while an ice cutting scene by F.K. Hunter covers the lower left. Being quite partial to post cards the editor thinks the sign is a great addition to the park. (Now we just need to teach town staff about the etiquette of including credits for photos used! Hint, Hint. But seriously folks, individuals might not be as forthcoming about sharing such materials in the future. If I did the same I would sure hear about it.)



# WALDIE BLACKSMITH SHOP UPDATE

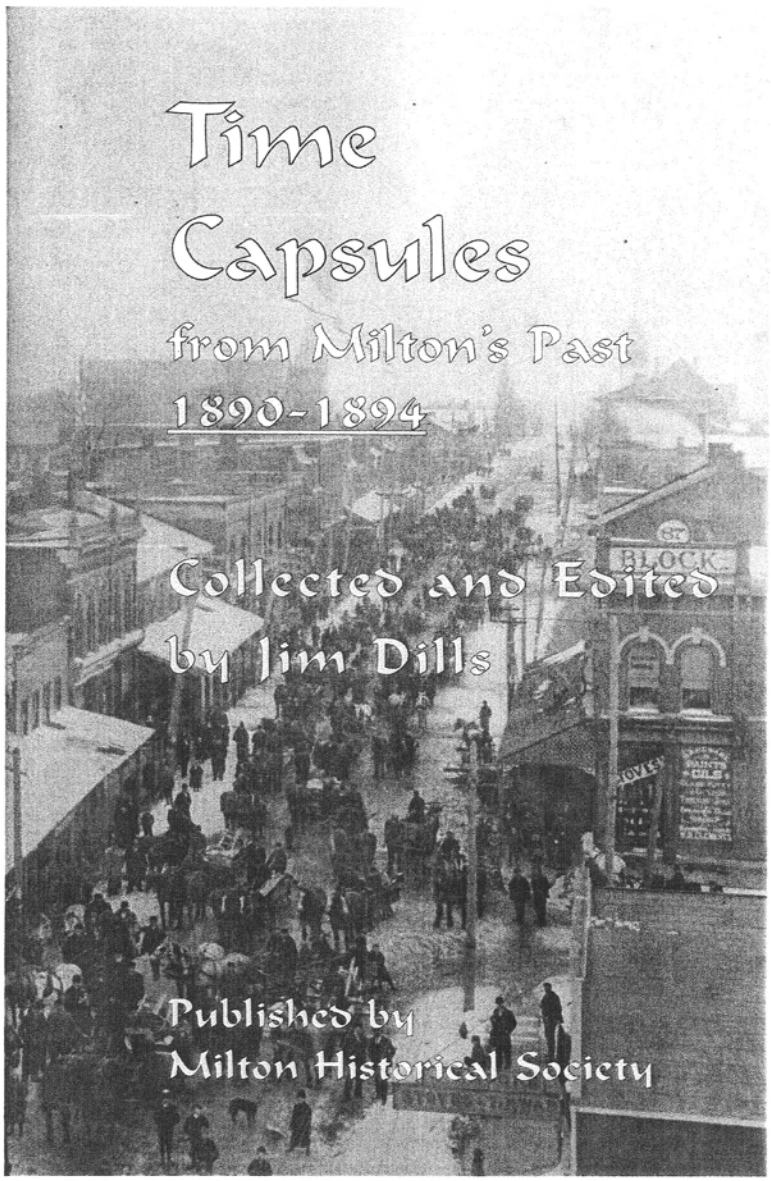
The Waldie Blacksmith Shop restoration gress is truly impressive. For those of our readers who saw the smithy before work began, the transformation is truly remarkable. When I think back to what it had been like, I marvel that the building could have been resurrected. The amount of work that has gone into the place is mind boggling. I think it's one of those projects that you'd never start if you knew all that was involved. Sometimes it's best not to know these things. But the results are well worth it. The top right photo shows the boards being installed on the west wall of the shop by Tom Murison. The lower photo shows the restoration of the stone work by Peter Devine. This work has been completed and recently the floor was poured for the interior of the smithy. Next the interior forges will be reconstructed. Windows and doors will be installed in near future. Meanwhile, Tom's work has shifted to the next phase of the project which is the restoration of the carriage shop. While the front of the building will be a working blacksmith shop, the rear portion will serve as the future meeting hall for the M.H.S. and provide a permanent home for our archive collection. There is still much work to be done but the work completed so far shows just how worthwhile and rewarding this project is. As always donations of money, material and labour are most appreciated and will be required to complete this restoration.





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# Mrs. Merry's Memories



*From a series of taped interviews by Lou Bradley*

*Edited by Deborah Quaile*

A GREAT GIFT IDEA OR KEEPSAKE The Milton Historical Society is proud to announce the publication of two new books. The first is a compilation of Jim Dills' popular Time Capsule columns that have appeared in the Canadian Champion. The book consists of noteworthy, interesting, humourous and bizarre excerpts from the Champion of 1890 to 1894. Price is $7.50. The second book is a transcription of taped interviews of Amy Howes Merry recorded by Lou Bradley in 1976. Deborah Quaile as editor has produced a fine volume detailing what life was like in the Hornby and Drumquin area in the late 1800's and early 1900's. An audio CD of the interviews accompanies the book. Price is $19.95 These are available at local book stores or by writing to P.O. Box 85, Milton, Ontario L9T 2Y3.

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## New 2002 Membership Rates Still a Bargain

At $10 for individuals and $15 for families membership in the Milton Historical Society is still a pretty good bargain. Your renewal ensures that you continue to receive The Journal. We realize that many people can not make it to our regular meetings. In light of that we try to keep in touch with our newsletter. We hope that it is informative and entertaining. Send your cheque to P.O. Box 85, Milton, Ontario, L9T 2Y3. For more information about membership please call Sue Paul at 878-0657.