

A Flood of Memories

At this glorious time of year joy abounds in a celebration of rebirth. As Buffy's Corner takes shape, the falling rain gently encourages growth and renews memories of earlier times when it often precipitated the dreaded Brampton floods. The Etobicoke Creek, fed by tiny branching tributaries, snaked through town. Its flooding was an integral part of Brampton's historic landscape.

When discussing floods, many assume we are talking about Hurricane Hazel in 1954. By the time Hazel arrived we already had the Diversion Channel and we patted ourselves on the back with a "Just in time!" As the floods decreased, stories about them increased.

The last flood was my first one. A newcomer to Brampton, I was at the old Roxy Theatre on Nelson Street. Shortly after the film started, it stopped. As the lights came on, the announcement, "Rain check - flood coming" was drowned out by the cheers and stampede for the exits.

The water rushing down Main Street was a source of entertainment. My new friends took me to a nearby home, gave me hip boots and we hurried to join the parade. Chances of meeting a friend or neighbour were good; everyone knew everyone else in the little town of 5000. The overflowing of the "crick" was my initiation to Brampton in the early fifties.

Everyone knew the best place for viewing was a corner. The award for comedy went to Jim Algie, with his cornet and fishing pole. People drifted by on boats and rafts. The next day, while wet clothes and boots dried out, soaked store goods were sold in "Water Sales".

Thanks to Russell Cooper, former photographer and reporter for the Toronto Telegram, we have a lasting record of the Brampton Floods. Half a century later, no one asks, "Did the early settlers have poor environmental planning policies?" We simply remember when the floods came, a community connected.

We invite you down to the Four Corners where it all happened. We dedicate this issue to the once famous and infamous floods. History is stories; yours, mine, ours.

Celebrations will occur at the BHS Summer Festival in July. Our memories and celebrations are as unique as we are; as unique as Brampton is.

Buffy

Buffy's Corner

The official newsletter of the Brampton Historical Society
Conserve, Educate and Celebrate Brampton's History

Newsletter #4

May/June 1999

Buffy's Corners, the original name of Brampton, was the site of the respectable tavern owned by William Buffy, considered to be the father of Brampton. His pioneering spirit (pun intended) lives on in the name of our journal. History "buffs" are invited into The Corner to share their stories and comments.

In This Issue:

Memories Overflow
Clean Your Clock!
Peace in The Meadow?
Arrests in Brampton

Buffy's Corner Staff

Editor..... Dorothy Willis
Assistant Editor..... Angie Duchesne
Photographers.....Michael Seaman, Heather Gunter

Brampton Historical Society Executive

Founder..... Paul Hunt
President.....Michael Seaman
Vice President..... Heather Gunter
Treasurer..... Gerry Clarkson
Recording Secretary..... Angie Duchesne
Corresponding Secretary..... Peter Murphy

Buffy's Corner
c/o Dorothy Willis
#305 8 Lisa Street
Brampton, Ontario
L6T 4S6
dorothy@netcom.ca

BHS c/o Denyse Churchill
85 Wellington Street East
Brampton, Ontario
L6W 1Y6
Phone 905.457.4365
bhs1998@hotmail.com

Brampton Hysterical Society Joke-of-the-Month
Student "blooper": The Greeks were a highly sculptured people, and without them we wouldn't have history. The Greeks also had myths. A myth is a female moth.

Buffy's Corner, published 5 times per year, is free to BHS members (see back page for membership details)

All Aboard!!!!

New members: welcome to the BHS!

John Browning	Michelle Browning
Ruth Burns	Jane Crouch
Phil Crouch	Robert Crouch
Bob Cummings	Mary Lou Cummings
Russell Grafton	Great War Flying Museum
Joan Hutchins	Gail McKay
Sharon Peet	Bob Scott
Mary Scott	Jennifer Warne

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Welcome to the May-June 1999 issue of Buffy's Corner. It's hard to believe that more than six months have passed since the first meeting at the Peel Heritage Complex to discuss the possibility of having a "historical association". The overwhelming response to that meeting and subsequent society events have demonstrated that there is a definite need in Brampton for a historical society to help us to conserve, educate and celebrate our history.

Thanks in particular to the dedicated work of the various sub-committee volunteers, the Brampton Historical Society has achieved a remarkable level of professionalism in its organization and activities. This has been demonstrated by such works as the entertaining lecture evenings which many of you attended on "Ghost Railways of Ontario", and "History of Brampton", the noticeable positive impact of our architecture and advocacy committee on local heritage policy, and the outstanding quality of news and presentation in the Buffy's Corner newsletter. It is easy to forget that we are such a new organization.

Young we are however, and inevitably we will experience growing pains along the way. In order to keep on track, and become the all-encompassing organization that we hope to be, the Brampton Historical Society continues to need your input. If you have ideas or comments on any of our society activities, as to how we might better serve our membership, please let your executive know, and we will try our best to implement them.

Better still, join one of the many committees. While active participation is by no means a requirement of membership, if we are to become a sustainable organization, we need to encourage more people to become directly involved in planning events and activities, drafting and implementing policies and generally helping to achieve the society goals.

I think you will enjoy the many interesting and fun events the society has planned over the coming months and I look forward to seeing you soon.

Best wishes for a terrific Spring.

Michael Seaman

CLEAN YOUR CLOCK!

Michael Avis, Chair, Architecture Committee

Recent suggestions by Mayor Robertson that any building renovations and improvements in the downtown core be made in harmony with the existing vintage buildings are most welcomed.

One building that deserves to come under closer scrutiny is the Dominion Building at Queen and Main Streets. The cupola and clock that sit atop this magnificent structure have looked woefully neglected for a number of years.

The Dominion Building, built to serve as Brampton's first post office in 1889, was designed by Thomas Fuller, an architect of international stature. As chief architect of the Department of Public Works, he was responsible for designing the original Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

Although the cupola and clock were added in 1914, their design and scale blends harmoniously with the original architecture.

Thomas McClure, the contractor responsible for the construction of the cupola, built the crowning addition complete with lantern to illuminate the clock. What an imposing sight this majestic building presented!

Finally and thankfully, there seems to be an interest emerging in matters relating to Brampton's past that defines what we were yesterday, what we are today and how we should evolve tomorrow as a community with a sense of pride.

With its pedigree and prominence, the Dominion Building is a landmark most deserving of our care and attention. This highly visible historic treasure could be returned to an absolutely stunning focal point of interest and a source of pride to all of Brampton. No expropriation or by-law changes are required. Just the will to do it.

Editor's note: a letter to this effect appeared in the Wednesday April 21 Brampton Guardian. On Saturday April 24, a crew was spotted painting the cupola!

Committee Chairs

Advocacy	Paul Hunt
Architecture	Michael Avis
Financial	Gerry Clarkson
Fundraising	Chris Kuhlmann
Membership	Denyse Churchill
Newsletter	Dorothy Willis
Outreach	Susan Barnes
Programme	Tricia Carlos
Publicity	Angela Duschesne
Research	Dorothy Willis

We invite members to join our committees and thank those who have already "signed up" - we will be in touch with you.

BHS HAPPENINGS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

On Thursday, March 18 the BHS INTRODUCTION TO BRAMPTON slide show was presented to approximately 60 people in the historic Peel County Court House. With the help of our membership, there will be more such presentations on Brampton's history and its people.



Photo Courtesy of Heather Gunter

On Monday, March 29, Paul Hunt made a presentation to City Council outlining 9 proposed strategies for improving Brampton's heritage policies. A copy of CITY OF BRAMPTON HERITAGE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES may be obtained by phoning the BHS.

On Thursday, April 15 - A general meeting was held at the Peel Heritage Complex. The group enjoyed the friendly, informal atmosphere where Chairs described their committees and encouraged new volunteers to join. To the delight of everyone, Member Paul Willoughby showed a piece of the Dale Greenhouse chimney which he had rescued during a demolition activity. An ardent post card collector, Paul also passed around some interesting old post cards of Brampton.

On Saturday, May 22 - We will be having a booth at the Folk Festival at Gage Park, across from City Hall.

On Monday, June 14 - Bill Blance presents "A Look at Lacrosse", our oldest sport and the role it plays. (pun intended) 7 p.m., Heart Lake Presbyterian Church.

On the July 17-18 weekend The BHS Summer Festival takes place at Downey's Farm, 13682 Heart Lake Road.

Ontario Genealogical Society Seminar '99

The twin pursuits, history and genealogy, are rooted in our past and appeal to many who enjoy mysteries, folklore, research, traditions, and anything old. Genealogists use histories of events and places for clues, while historians use families to enliven their efforts. Historians or genealogists; often it is difficult to draw a line between them.

Seminar '99 is hosted by the Halton/Peel Branch of the OGS and will take place at the Regal Constellation Hotel on Airport Road on May 28, 29 and 30. "Our Ontario Families" promises to be a weekend of fun and

education; something for everyone. One feature will be Threads of Family History II, an outstanding juried exhibition of textile arts. There will be tours, lectures, networking and book sales. Volunteers are also needed. For more information: phone 905 846-3061.

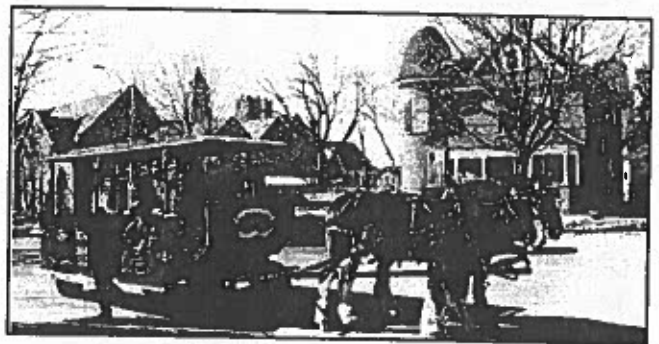
WHERE IN THE WORLD???



Photo Courtesy of the Peel Heritage Complex

Thanks to historical author, Bob Cooper of Fergus for his answer: on Wellington Street in front of the Heritage Museum. We hereby brag about your "know-how", Bob and look forward to the publication of your newest book, HISTORY OF PEEL REGION

This months Where in the World ...



This photo was taken in Brampton. Where? Send your guesses to Buffy's Corner for bragging rights next issue!!

"Memory is history recorded in our brain, memory is a painter, it paints pictures of the past and of the day." Grandma Moses

Committee Chairs

Advocacy	Paul Hunt
Architecture	Michael Avis
Financial	Gerry Clarkson
Fundraising	Chris Kuhlmann
Membership	Denyse Churchill
Newsletter	Dorothy Willis
Outreach	Susan Barnes
Programme	Tricia Carlos
Publicity	Angela Duschesne
Research	Dorothy Willis

We invite members to join our committees and thank those who have already "signed up" - we will be in touch with you.

FROM THE FILES

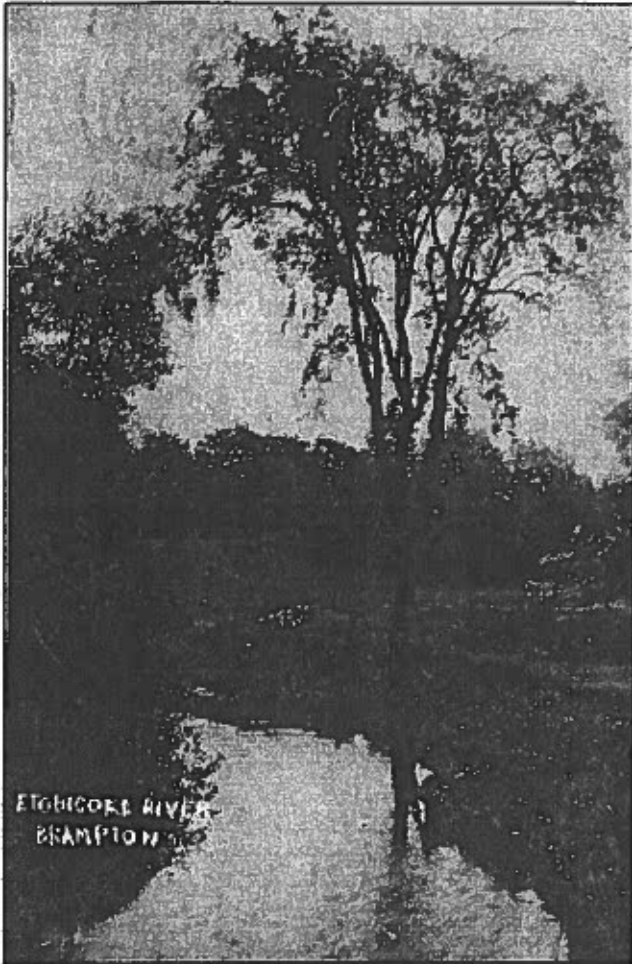


Photo Courtesy of the Peel Heritage Complex

BEFORE

IMMENSE FALL OF RAIN! BRAMPTON FLOODED!

Last night such an immense fall of rain took place, that, early this morning, the River Etobicoke rushed down with fearful velocity, and so overspread its banks, that the greater portion of Brampton was flooded. Through the two railway bridges the water rushed into the principal streets which were soon like rapid rivers. The water, in several places in the village was above five feet deep. It went in at the windows of some houses. The damage done is considerable. The planks and sidewalks of some of the streets have been torn up, and small bridges in the neighbourhood carried away. One house has been thrown on one side by the violence of the torrent. Business has been entirely suspended. The flood is now decreasing rapidly; so, by tomorrow, we expect Brampton will assume its usual appearance. It is acknowledged by all that this very unexpected immersion of our village is the worst yet experienced.

From: *Brampton Times* Friday, August 28, 1857

AFTER

A Flood Control Channel straightened the natural course of the Etobicoke Creek. The Diversion which cost \$250,000.00 was a joint project of the Town of Brampton and the Province of Ontario. It funnelled water away from downtown Brampton through a cement channel. It was officially opened in November, 1952. A cairn at Church and Scott Streets commemorates the completion of the Diversion.

A Main Mystery

Well-known Brampton artist, Albert Seaman has sparked interest in the origin of the name Main Street, the name given to the part of Hurontario Street that runs through the old part of Brampton. When asked the origin of the name Main Street, most locals will reply, "because it is the main road of course." However, Albert informs us this is probably inaccurate. More likely it is named for the Main family whose residence at 9 Church Street, a focal point of the old town, was known as "The Knoll".

Running through the property was Main's Creek, a branch of the Etobicoke, which continued to overflow after the Diversion was built. There was also a Main's Lane or Main's Walkway between Main Street and Diplock, according to Albert Seaman.

It is believed that J.W. Main was an early Brampton magistrate. In the Lynch Directory 1873-4 there is a listing for James W. Main Steam Mill, Hurontario.

Ethel Lavelle's grandparents purchased the Main House in 1907, and it became the home of her parents, John and Frederica Patterson. Ethel also believes Main Street was named for the early Main family. The white stucco house had a centre hall with six bedrooms. She remembers the nearly one acre property having a lovely lawn and flowerbeds. The home was sold, demolished in the late 1980's, and replaced by an apartment building.



Photo courtesy of Albert Seaman



Photo Courtesy of the Peel Heritage Complex

MEMORIES OVERFLOW

Margaret Richardson

"As teenagers we would sit on the C.N.R. bridge over Main Street and watch the ice flow down the street. In 1948 the spring flood was particularly bad because of early rains and a quick thaw. A laundry business on the south east corner of Queen and George was completely wiped out by large ice chunks. Three bridges in Brampton were also destroyed by the flooding ice. The Etobicoke Creek bed ran behind Main Street stores and crossed Main Street at Wellington. The creek then passed in front of the Baptist Church and Ward's Funeral Home. As far back as 1859 the Town realized they had a problem with water in the spring. The children of Brampton had their favourite fishing and swimming holes in Etobicoke Creek in the early days".

Russell Cooper

There are stories behind the flood photos of Russell Cooper; some were included in past reports in the Telegram, some he enjoys telling his friends today. He remembers standing on the corner, watching the water rise; but hastens to add, his aunt could recall a flood occurring in the fall one year.

During the 1948 flood, Russell was going westward along Wellington Street, returning home for more film. Although he could have walked north and crossed Main Street at the CNR tracks he decided on the more immediate route. Nearing George Street he experienced a slipping sensation and was swept from side to side. Undaunted, he knelt down and slowly filled each rubber boot with water, one at a time, so he could outweigh the sloshing barrier and navigate the rising waters.

Tharx for the pix, Russ!

Bert Sutton

Bert was a salesman at Farr's Garage on Main Street, which happened to be strategically located at the north end of the flooding. "I remember going down Main Street in my canoe and picking people up." Thanks for your rescues, Bert!

Ron Rider

Many people recognize Ron's name because he started up an oil business in Brampton which he operated for forty years. His outstanding flood memory is of delivering oil to a home on Main Street South. Descending to the basement he discovered the flood water had lifted the oil tank off the floor and had turned it on its side.

Norma Atkinson

"Brampton had acres and acres of greenhouses. You could go down Main Street and know everybody; now you go downtown and you don't know anybody and there's nothing down there. You could stand and spend half the time talking, more time talking than shopping. But there were lots of stores and they used to get flooded out. Chainway, Beamish, F.T.Hill and the grocery stores; Loblaws, Dominion, A.and P.and Caruso's and lots of restaurants and tearooms. One tearoom was at the corner on the way to picking up your mail at the old Post Office (now O'Malleys), another further along Queen Street. There were four dairies. I had eight brothers and they liked to dare me to jump on an ice floe and ride down the river to Gage Park in the floods."



Photo Courtesy of the Peel Heritage Complex

Ethel Lavelle

Ethel was born and raised in the Main House at 9 Church Street, west of Main Street. Mains Creek ran through their property, parallel to Main Street and crossed Church Street. Flooding waters covered the lawn and would reach halfway to the Hewetson House on the north side of Church Street. "Floods were neat", said Ethel, "Jim Algie would bring his cornet and play 'How Dry I Am'. The water was deep and there were homemade rafts and boats."

Mary Bailey

Long time resident, Mary remembers back to 1919 and driving the cows from the family farm at Kennedy and Steeles to the "flats" twice a day. When she walked up Kennedy Road she never saw a car. She used to go to the old high school on Church Street. (now houses) and in the winter it was hard to get to town because of the snow drifts. "When the floods came the water would come up the street and flood the basements of all the stores; the grocery and produce stores. Boats would be going up and down Main Street. Jim Algie played in the band and he brought his trumpet and made us laugh".



Photo Courtesy of the Peel Heritage Complex

Irene Tribble

Irene came to Brampton in 1940. "It was a nice town to live in. In the 40's if you went down Main Street, that was your night's entertainment. Not many people had cars but there were lots of bicycles. In the floods there were boats. In 1943 there was a bad flood, real scary. It rushed around the corner and came bang-crash right down and blocks of ice smashed out the store windows and flooded the stores. Another time, I was working in the motor grill, corner of number 10 and 7 highways. I told my boss I would look after things to let him go down to Brampton to see the flood since it really was worth seeing."

Kudos to our Memorable Citizens for their memories and to Roving Reporters: Heather Gunter and Gerry Clarkson for making it possible.

Editor's note: The March flood of 1948, a major catastrophe, inundated Brampton with six feet of water and caused nearly a half million dollars in damage.

ARRESTS IN BRAMPTON

Peter Murphy, Corresponding Secretary

Two suspected Fenian sympathizers were arrested on Tuesday by High Constable Ellis. But the date was May 5, 1868! The excitement surrounding anticipated raids by the Irish insurgents from south of the border was widespread throughout the newly formed Dominion of Canada.

The Fenian Brotherhood had been founded in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day, 1858, the same day there had been serious rioting in Toronto leading to the stabbing death of a man named Sheedy. This incident led to the formation of "The Hibernian Benevolent Society of Canada". Under the auspices of this society the Fenians briefly flourished.

Rumour was rife in regards to the threatened activities of the Fenians. Orangeville, for example, was in a state of panic in December 1864 when a myth circulated that, "Several hundred Fenians had, the previous night, destroyed the Orange Hall and Presbyterian Church in Mono, and were rapidly marching towards the village destroying everything in their way, and putting all Protestants to the sword, regardless of age or sex." The townspeople were joined by neighbouring farmers and organized to resist the onslaught, only to discover it was all the product of their own imaginations.

Although not well known to Canadian authorities, the Fenians had no sooner reorganized after the U.S. Civil War, then the movement split. One group headed by John O'Mahoney pursued revolution on Irish soil. The other faction, under William R. Roberts promoted the invasion of Canada; to take Canada hostage and to release it for the independence of Ireland.

While the members of the Fenian Brotherhood of Canada shared the nationalistic ideals of their compatriots in the U.S. and Ireland, fighting for them in Canada did not hold much appeal. So, under the leadership of Michael Murphy, who owned a public house on the Esplanade in Toronto, they opted to support O'Mahoney's group.

The Brampton episode was reported in the Brampton Times of May 8, 1868, a month after Thomas D'Arcy M'Gee, a father of Confederation and ex-rebel had been assassinated in Ottawa. The same paper reports other suspects arrested in Guelph and Toronto. With the passage of an act suspending the writ of Habeas Corpus, tensions were high throughout every community.

The first Brampton suspect was Peter Broddy (no relation to the more popular townsman Mr. Win. Broddy). He was arrested and accused of making pro-Fenian statements while under the influence of liquor at Mr. Macdonald's tavern and later at M'Gee's. He was subsequently discharged for lack of evidence.

A second suspect was a man named James M. Cummins, "Who claims to be an Englishman, and also a Barrister, but has lately been making his living by driving pigs for drovers. He is from the other side of the lines, and cannot give a good account of himself - at least not one that can be relied upon." However, the report further states that he would likely be liberated also.

PEACE IN THE MEADOW?

Paul Hunt, Chair, Advocacy Committee

There appears to be a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, regarding the recent uproar over the Fletcher's Meadow developments, and the premature issuance of demolition permits for three houses in the area slated for development.

The developers are having an open house for people who might be interested in moving any of these three homes which have a demolition permit hanging over their roofs. Although the relocation of a heritage home to another area is not the appropriate way to save our heritage resources, hopefully some of these doomed buildings will be rescued from the wrecker's ball.

It is our sincere desire that this will be the last time that the City of Brampton's unofficial position of "Move it or Lose it" will come into play and that the forthcoming legislation will put an end to these fiascos.

Negotiations are still underway between the developer, the city and a restoration company regarding the Hunter House. We are all hopeful that these talks will come to a satisfactory conclusion, and this significant historical home will be saved and restored for future generations to enjoy.

Where were YOU on Black Friday?

Black Friday, February 20, 1959, occurred with Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker's shatteringly abrupt announcement, "The conclusion arrived at is that the development of the Arrow aircraft and Iroquois engine should be terminated." Over 14,000 employees at Avro Aircraft and Orenda Engines were released in a single afternoon with a total of 25000 people being directly affected. The cancellation of the Arrow and its aftermath irrevocably changed the lives of Brampton residents who worked in nearby Malton.

The Arrow story began in 1953 with the Royal Canadian Air Force's requirement for a new supersonic interceptor. There was an influx of talent in the field of aviation and space technology into Canada, to Brampton and in the next four years we saw the development of a years-ahead-of-its-time aircraft. The unveiling of the Arrow Programme took place on October 4, 1957, followed by the first flawless flight on March 25, 1958.

On the 40th anniversary of the Arrow's cancellation, new theories emerge regarding the political intrigue surrounding it. Many files still remain closed. At the time, we prided ourselves as a fast growing, enviable entity in the field of aeronautical break-through. Only now do we appreciate life's redirection due to an undeniably historical event and wonder how our lives and the story of Brampton would have differed.

If you or your family are Black Friday Survivors, we welcome your stories to share.

People Sent Us Mail!!!

Something unforeseen happened to the BHS, which was a pleasant surprise: we received two letters of good wishes from far afield.

One was from David Dowey, Treasurer of the Lethbridge Historical Society. The other was from Louis J. Launer, member of the St. Charles County Historical Society in Missouri.

Both of our fellow history buffs have offered congratulations on our beginning and the benefit of their experience from their own established societies.

We appreciate this kind gesture that both gentlemen have generously offered to the BHS. We apologise for not being able to print your letters but space considerations prevent this.

.....

Application for membership in the BRAMPTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY for the 1999 calendar year:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Additional Family Members: _____

Signature: _____

I enclose a membership fee of \$20.00 per household _____

I wish to enclose an additional donation to the Society of \$ _____

Please mail cheque or money order to:
Brampton Historical Society
c/o Deryse Churchill, 85 Wellington St. East
Brampton, ON L6W 1Y6