



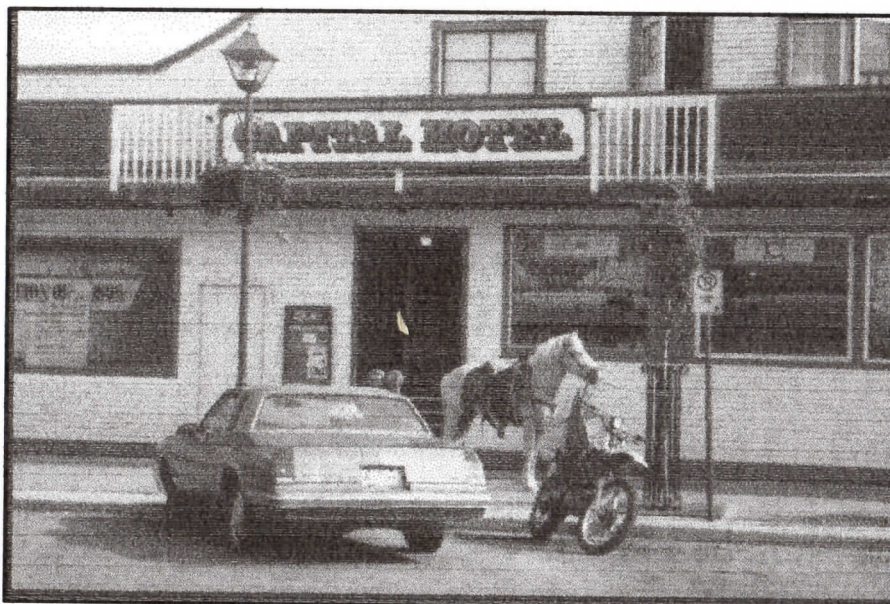
BHS Quarterly

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Brantford's Connection to the Klondike Gold Rush

by Ruth Lefler



The Capitol Hotel, July 1998. Whitehorse, Yukon.

*"There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who moil for gold,
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold."*

Robert Service

The year was 1898 - exactly one hundred years ago - gold fever
had struck the Yukon!

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President's Reflections

It hardly seems possible, but here we are once again heading for Christmas and all its holiday festivities. This will be my final message as President of the Society. The past two years have gone by rapidly and with considerable change. Since I assumed the Presidency in January 1997, we have experienced a total change in staff in the Museum which brought with it some problems, most of which have been resolved. We are also functioning in a different and more independent relationship with the County and no longer have County representatives on our Board of Directors. We are in the process of re-writing the Society's Constitution and hopefully it will receive Board approval by year's end.

Changes have also occurred in relation to our Market Square location, particularly with the loss of Eaton's and Shoppers Drug Mart in 1997 and many other businesses in 1998, which has severely affected traffic in the Mall. By the end of 1998, the lower level of the Mall will be closed to the public with the remaining businesses occupying a condensed portion of the main level. It remains to be seen how much longer Laing Properties will maintain this white elephant. On the positive side we have had the good fortune of having Marilyn McDonald working at the Market Square location and with her excellent sales skills, we have seen favorable results in the Gift Shop.

We are losing one of our newer Board members,

Wayne Townson, who will not be returning in 1999. Wayne has a young family and job commitments which he found made it difficult to be an effective Board member. However, Wayne hopes to return in the future.

Three Society members were elected as new Board members, Mike Hand, David Judd, a former Society President and John Wyatt. We thank Mike, David and John for their interest and for allowing their names to stand and we welcome them to the Board.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Board members for their support and hard work over the past two years, during some particularly difficult and trying times and also to Elizabeth, Sonia and Debbie for their hard work and diligence in keeping us on track.

On behalf of Anne and myself, I would like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy healthy and prosperous New Year. I also wish the Society continued success and prosperity in the future and to Bob Glass who assumes the Presidency in January. I wish him every success in his tenure.

Robert Deboer

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Brant Historical Society - 90 Years Young

by Ruth Lefler

Ninety years ago on May 11, 1908 at the Conservatory of Music (presently Hill and Robinson Funeral Home) the Brant Historical Society was organized. The first president was Judge A. Hardy. The purpose of the Society was and continues to be the encouragement of research into Brant County history and the promotion of the preservation of local history and artifacts.

Continuous growth has taken place throughout its 90 years. The Brant County Museum and Archives is maintained and operated by the Society. This Museum and Archives has one of the finest collections in Ontario for a museum of its size. Artifacts from the collection are displayed throughout the community and the valuable, well used photo collection has over 5000 photos depicting the life in Brantford and Brant County from its early beginnings to the present.

In 1992 the Harrison M. Scheak collection was endowed to the Brant Historical Society. This major collection consists of groupings basically from the 16th to 19th centuries. Some of these groupings include fine collections of pewter, wedgwood, miniatures and Canadian coverlets. An excellent library of books complements this fine collection.

The Museum and Archives has an excellent collection of local

archival material that individuals, groups and companies use to enhance both their written and pictorial documents. Some of the special archival documents that have been donated include the



The Brant County Museum

original, handwritten field notes of Lewis Burwell who was an early surveyor in the area, the W. Ross Macdonald papers, Thomas B. Costain papers, Brant News newspapers from 1982 to 1995, the Alma Luard genealogical family histories and research, Brantford City Directories, local church histories, local maps and books by local authors.

The publishing of local history has always played an important role. The Latest publication has been completed as a Brantford sesquicentennial project in partnership with CKPC, the local radio station. The book's title, "The Way We Were", is a collection of very short clips and photos of what happened in Brantford's bygone days. This publication plus many others about the history of Ontario

can be purchased at the two locations of the gift shop at 57 Charlotte Street and the Market Square Mall. Many unique items are for sale in the shops. Please come by to see our shops.

Young people and school groups are making very good use of the varied programmes offered by the staff of the Museum & Archives. This greatly helps the students to understand their rich heritage. Regular monthly programmes have been highly successful.

The Brant Historical Endowment Fund was established in 1986 to generate a fund from which the interest is used to help ensure the future of the Brant County Museum & Archives.

Since 1908 the Brant Historical Society and Brant County Museum & Archives have had a long successful track record keeping local history alive in our community.

**"When a society or civilization
perishes
One condition can always
be found,
They forgot where they came
from"**

Carl Sandburg

Brantford's Connection to the Klondike

continued from cover

George Carmack, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie discovered gold on Bonanza Creek near Dawson City in 1896. News spread like wildfire to the outside world and the search for gold in the Klondike was on!

One of the Stampeders was Harry O'Dell, a 21 year old resident of Brantford. He left here in 1898 with \$500. in his pocket, a desire for adventure and to quickly join the ranks of the nouveau riche. When he reached Vancouver, one of the many ports of entry, his money disappeared rapidly as he had to purchase \$400. worth of equipment, a sleeping bag, blankets, warm clothing and food.

Were his blankets made by the Slingsby Company here in Brantford? A December, 1897 copy of the Expositor reported that the Slingsby Woollen Company, located on Grand River Avenue, was among the first Canadian manufacturers to send blankets to the Klondike. The company had begun negotiations with northwest trading companies two or three years before the major rush and when the rush did come their blankets were there! Slingsby employees worked day and night manufacturing the heavy grey blankets which were six or eight pounds heavier than the average blanket.

Mr. O'Dell made an arduous four

month journey by boat and snowshoe from Skagway to Dawson City which was a collection of wooden shacks, makeshift shelters and sidewall tents. For 2 1/2 years he shared a hut with 3 other men. Their staple diet was bannock, beans and pancakes.

Mr. O'Dell did not stake a claim but worked a 10 hour day on a sluice for \$1.50 an hour. This claim was owned by the Guggenheims. This family was known as the gold kings of the Klondike. They bought up claims and eventually formed the Yukon Gold Company thus weakening the individual and smaller operations.

While Mr. O'Dell was sluicing gold, S. G. Read, a real estate and mining broker whose office was at 117 Colborne Street, Brantford advertised in the Brantford Courier that Brant Yukon Mining certificates could be purchased at 25 cents per share and that they would make good Christmas presents.

Mr. O'Dell came back to Brantford and settled down. He later joined the local Klondike Club that was started in 1897 by a group of 10 to 15 year old boys who wandered at night around the main downtown Brantford block. One of them suggested that they start a club. They found a clubhouse above Tom Quinlin's livery stable on Dalhousie Street where Ludlow's is

presently located. The club got its name because their dingy room was as cold as the Klondike. Mr. O'Dell was invited to join because he was a genuine Klondiker.

Mr. O'Dell lived in the neighbourhood in which I grew up and many a time he shared his memories of the Klondike with the neighbourhood kids. I'm really glad that I knew him.

If you have any other information about local people who were involved in the Klondike Gold Rush, please contact the Brant County Museum & Archives at 519-752-2483 or 519-753-8578.

Bibliography

- Brantford Courier, December, 1997
 Brantford Expositor, June 23, 1973
 Brantford Expositor, August 26, 1977
 Coates Kenneth, Morrison William; Land of the Midnight Sun.

Book Review

"Soldiers and Warriors" The Early Volunteer Militia of Brant County 1856-1866.

AUTHOR: Roger Sharpe

EDITOR: Edward Pancoe, Lieutenant-Colonel CD (ret'd)

PUBLISHER: Canadian Military Heritage Museum, 149 pages, 52 illustrations, \$ 10.00

In the 1780's and '90's many people who wished to remain loyal to Britain fled from the United States to Canada seeking continued British rule, their own land and peace. But unsettling times pursued them. British regulars and sedentary militia protected Canada during the War of 1812. In 1854 Britain became involved in the Crimean War with Russia and began withdrawing British regulars from Canada. Canadians feared an invasion from the United States. In the 1860's there was the threat from the Fenians, a group of Irishmen who wanted to conquer land in Canada to use as a base of operations to liberate Ireland. It was most important that volunteer militias be formed for protection of the Canadian border.

The first volunteer militia began

in 1855 and, in 1856, the first unit formed in Brant County was the Paris Volunteer Rifles which was the only paid militia in the county. Villages such as Mt. Pleasant, Burford, Tuscarora, Onondaga, Newport and Drumbo established volunteer units. The Burford troop of cavalry was officially recognized in 1866 and, in the same year, the employees of the Brantford Grand Trunk Railway Company formed their own volunteer companies.

The Tuscarora Rifle Company was officially organized on December 11, 1862 under Captain William John Simcoe Kerr. He was the youngest child of Chief William Johnson Kerr who led the warriors at the Battle of Beaver Dam during the War of 1812, and Elizabeth Brant, daughter of Joseph Brant. During the Fenian crisis, First Nations sent warriors to help defend this area.

Roger Sharpe, a military historian, has meticulously researched and written a detailed account of Brant County's first organized militias from 1856 to 1866. Many interesting anecdotes have been included. To enhance the five chapters, Roger provides the reader with numerous, interesting photos. The addendum contains paylists and lists of officers for the various militias. An index is provided. Genealogists will appreciate this.

This valuable reference book captures little known facts about Brant County's military history.

This book is available for purchase at the Brant County Museum and Archives gift shop locations and the Canadian Military Heritage Museum, Brantford.

Thank you to Ruth Lefler for writing this review.

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 Phone: 519-752-2483 E-Mail: bcma@bfree.on.ca

Highlights From the Harrison M. Scheak Collection

The Punch and Judy puppet show has been enjoyed over the years by both young and old alike, but the question remains, why is Punch such a popular puppet. He is not handsome, in fact he is rather grotesque. With a hunch back, a very crooked nose, warts all over his face and a rather sinister disposition it hard to imagine him as a well loved character. Is it then the story which attracts people to this character? The story is one of lies, deception and murder, not unlike most modern movies of today. Whether its the story or the unpleasant appearance of Punch and his fellow characters, we all love to laugh at Punch.

malicious caricature of King Henry IV of France.

In the beginning of the 19th century, performances of Punch



Punch Puppet, c. 1800 from the Harrison M. Scheak Collecton

Not many Punch comedies have been written or printed since 1825 and Punch's origins have been much disputed. Some scholars have argued that Punch arrived in England in 1662 while others believe that he came from France and was the younger brother of the insolent and arrogant Polichinelle, a

and Judy took place daily in the

streets of London. The puppeteer always worked alone but used an assistant to carry his small theatre and set it up, attract people with a horn, bagpipe, or drum and collect the money after the performance. The puppeteer used his right hand exclusively for Punch while the other characters had to share his left hand.

The Brant County Museum and Archives is fortunate to have a Punch puppet from the Harrison M. Scheak collection. It is carved and painted wood with glass eyes and human hair. His costume is made from silk with applied mica panels, paste gems and brass bells. He is possibly English, c. 1800.

The Punch puppet is currently on display at the Museum in the Square. Hurry if you'd like to see it because it will be replaced with another artifact soon.

BRANT COUNTY MUSEUM & ARCHIVES
57 Charlotte Street, Brantford, Ontario
(519) 752-2483

Admission:

Adults - \$2.00 Seniors/Students - \$1.50

Children - \$1.25 Under 6 - Free

BHS members - Free

**Hours: Wednesday to Friday 10 am to 4 pm,
Saturday 1 to 4 Open Holiday Mondays**

THE MUSEUM IN THE SQUARE
(A Satellite of the B.C.M.A.)

**Second Level, Market Square Mall,
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(519) 752-8578**

Admission by Voluntary Donation
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Saturday 10 am to 5:30 pm**

Brantford's connection to the Klondike
continued from p. 4



Sam McGee's original cabin is presently located at MacBride Museum in Whitehorse, Yukon

DID YOU KNOW that Sam McGee was a real person who lived in Whitehorse, Yukon. Robert Service, who wrote the poem "The Cremation of Sam McGee", worked in the Bank of Commerce in Whitehorse. One popular story is that Service got McGee's name from a bank list. Others say that Service asked McGee if he could use his name.

Christmas Programs a Huge Success at the Museum

This Christmas the staff at the Museum was very busy playing host to over 600 students from Brantford and Brant County. The students were introduced to the other celebrations that take place around Christmas time. They saw displays on Hanukah,

Ukrainian Christmas, Hogmany, Chinese New Year and a Victorian Christmas. The students also made a gingerbread cookies to take back to school with them.

The program could not have been a success without the help of our volunteers Jean

Edge, Jasmine Aitcheson, our Co-Op student, and Ruth Lefler. We would also like to thank the community groups that came in to set up the various displays.

B.H.S. HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS

The Way We Were	\$16.95	Brant County Place Names & List of Professionals and Trades, 1855	\$ 5.95
A History of Brant County & Its People:			
Vol. 1	15.95		
Vol. 2	14.95	Oakland Township	8.00
Set of Vol. 1 & 2	22.50	Lewis Burwell's Diary of the Indian Surrender	8.00
The Grand River Navigation Co.	21.95	Grand River Tract Assessment Rolls	
St. George Continuation School	7.00	1816, 1818-1822	5.95
Rural Schools of South Dumfries Township	8.00	Grand River Tract Census	
How Brantford Cooked	4.50	1824, 1827, 1829, 1832	5.95
A History of the Brantford Pottery	9.95	Directory of the Townships of Brant, 1880	10.00
Brantford Arts & Entertainment	9.95	City of Brantford Municipal Directory, 1880	10.00
From Automobiles to Washing Machines	9.95	Irwin's Directory, 1883	10.00
A History of Mohawk Park	2.00	City of Brantford Municipal Directory, 1883-86	8.00
Tuscarora Township	5.95	City of Brantford Directory, 1899-1900	15.00
Brantford City Directory 1910	16.00	Wild Mammals of Southwestern Ontario	8.95

B.H.S. Publications Order Form

TITLE	UNIT PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL PRICE

* Please ADD \$3.00 to cover the cost of postage. ALL ORDERS ARE TO BE PREPAID!

Ship to: NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
POSTAL CODE: _____ Telephone/FAX: _____

Please make cheque or money order payable to: **BRANT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
Mail or bring to: **Brant County Museum & Archives**
57 Charlotte St., BRANTFORD, Ont. N3T 2W6

NEW AT THE GIFT SHOP

Looking for just the right gift for someone or something special for yourself. You don't have to look far. Come and visit the gift shop at the Museum in the Square to find truly unique items. Members, don't forget that your membership entitles you to a 10% discount on all purchases over \$10.00.

BOOKS

"The Way We Were"
The fascinating new Brant Historical Society publication about Brantford.

"Quilting: Celebrating an American Legacy"
A must for all quilters!

"Historic Communities"
A series of children's books exploring 19th century life. All books have great craft and activity ideas.

"Grand River Conservation Authority Books"
Always an excellent idea for a gift are any of the books from the Grand River Conservation Authority. Don't miss the new book **"44 Country Trails"**

GIFTS

County of Brant Commemorative Plates
A wonderful way to remember the 146 years of the Townships of Brant County.

County of Brant Lapel Pins
Beautiful pins with the County of Brant insignia.

County of Brant Souvenir Collector Spoons
A must for all souvenir spoon collectors.

Crafts from the Pine Tree Native Centre
A wonderful new selection of Dream Catchers and jewellery from the Pine Tree Native Centre.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to help museum staff with research requests. The museum is constantly getting phone calls and letters from researchers requesting our help. If you enjoy researching and writing then this is the

volunteers position for you. Please contact museum staff at 752-2483 or at 752-8578 for this project or any other volunteer project that you may interested in.

A Brant Historical Society membership offers:

- ◆ free admission to the Brant County Museum & Archives, Bell Homestead and Myrtleville House Museum (excluding special events)
- ◆ exemption from regular research fees in our Archives
- ◆ bulletins about upcoming Museum activities
- ◆ subscription to the "B.H.S. Quarterly"
- ◆ discounts on Heritage Bus Tours, Children's Museum Club, and other programs
- ◆ 10% discount on Gift Shop purchases over \$10

- ◆ **Memberships are Tax Deductible!**

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57 Charlotte St., Brantford, Ont. N3T 2W6

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Linda Lowrey

ENDOWMENT FUND

The Brant Historical Endowment Fund is one of the ways in which we can ensure a viable future for the Society and the Museum. The fund currently holds \$81,531 up from \$79,000. We thank the following donors for their generous recent contributions to the Endowment fund:

Robert and Anne Deboer
 Joan Harrison
 Dr. William H. Minshall
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 Leo and Sandra Vos

In memory of Wes Switzer
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 David Cullen

In memory of Dorothy McCartney
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In memory of Willard Miles
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