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Captain Joseph Brant: His Status as Chief



Joseph Brant, 1776. *Portrait by George Romney*

By Robert L. Deboer

In the early years of the Brant Historical Society after its formation in 1908, a controversy periodically arose concerning the status of Joseph Brant as chief. The most definitive position regarding Joseph Brant's lineage and status as chief was presented in a paper delivered by Major Gordon J. Smith, Superintendent of the Six Nations Indians and an active member of the society. The paper was presented on June 2, 1911, during the Ontario Historical Society convention, the first hosted by the Brant Historical Society and which was held in the courtroom on the second floor of the Brant County courthouse and in Ohsweken where Major Smith delivered his paper. The following is extracted from the paper which was reproduced in its entirety in The

Expositor.

The word "chief" can be used in many senses.

Civil Chief — Royaner: The League of the Iroquois was founded in the middle of the 15th century. . . . The government of this league was placed in the hands of 50 Sachems or Royaners, divided among the tribes as follows: Mohawks, nine; Oneidas, nine; Onondagas, 14; Cayugas, 10; Senecas, eight. To each Sachemship was given an appropriate name and this name was assumed by each Sachem upon his appointment, and borne until his death, resignation or deposition.

The same names have been used by successive generations of Sachems down to the present day (1911) and are hereditary in the several tribes to which they belong, passing through the female line.

Assistant Chief or Messenger.

War Chief: Only two war chiefs were officially recognized. They were assigned to the Senecas. All others were independent and without status.

Pine Tree Chief: On occasion a man through his native ability, zeal for the public good and general high standing, is elected by the Six Nations Council to the office of Pine Tree Chief, but his office is not hereditary.

Chief: With the partial disruption of the Six Nations Confederacy during the troublous period of the Revolutionary War, the civil power of the Six Nations was largely usurped by their militia leaders [who] by

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Celebrating 94 years of preserving local history

Captain Joseph Brant: His Status as Chief

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their force of character and ability practically [constituted] themselves the ruling body of the Confederacy. In the sense that they were leaders, they were chiefs, in the same sense as a successful merchant is designated a merchant prince, a successful stockbroker, a Napoleon of finance or a Rockefeller, an oil king.

Brant's parentage is not a matter of absolute certainty. He was born on the banks of the Ohio in 1742. . . . From historic records, some made during Brant's life and some made at various times down to 35 years after his death, when means were available for obtaining authentic information, we must come to the conclusion that Thayendanegea was not born of distinguished parents but he was a half-breed, and therefore, if his father was not a full-blooded Mohawk, his mother would not have been an Indian and therefore, her son, according to the laws of the league, could not inherit a Sachemship.

That he was not an authorized war chief is proved by the fact he was a Mohawk. Only Senecas could be representative war chiefs.

In 1788 a Deed of Territory along the Mohawk River was executed by 65 chiefs and witnessed by Colonel John Butler and Joseph Brant. Had Brant been a chief, he would have signed as such and not as a mere witness.

In 1798, a deed of surrender was executed by Captain Brant as attorney for the Six Nations, beginning as follows: "I Captain Joseph Brant, Thayendanegea, Sachem, and Chief Warrior of the Five Nations."

On the 20th May, 1796, at the Mohawk Village on the Grand River, a conveyance of 2,000 acres in the Township of Brantford to Nancy Kerr and Mary Margaret Kerr, grandchildren of Mary Brant, Joseph's sister, was executed by the Sachems, War Chiefs and principal women. In this deed Captain Brant's name does not appear, although he was then living at this Mohawk Village. Had he been a Sachem and Chief Warrior as he described himself in the deed of surrender of 1798, he would undoubtedly have been made a party to the deed.

In 1804, "the Sachems and Chiefs of the Mohawks and others of the Six Nations of confederate Indians residing on the Grand River at River Ouse . . . to make, constitute and appoint our beloved brother and Principal Chief Captain Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea) our true and lawful attorney, representative and agent." The wording of the power of attorney implies differences between Sachem and Chief. Both Sachems and Chiefs signed this document and amongst the signatures hereditary names of the Sachems appear. Brant is described as "our beloved brother and Principal Chief." Had he been a Sachem, he would have naturally taken steps to ensure he was so described.

The following is a portion of the inscription upon that beautiful and artistic monument erected to the memory of Captain Joseph Brant in Victoria Park in 1886:

"Thayendanegea Born in 1742, died 1807, interred at the

Mohawk Church and to the Six Nations Indians for their long and faithful service on behalf of the British Crown and their strict observance of treaties."

It will be noticed that Brant is nowhere mentioned in the inscription as chief . . . Towards this monument the Six Nations subscribed \$5,000 and consequently they were made parties to its erection and consulted in all details. Chief Smoke Johnson, a Mohawk, and a veteran of the War of 1812, was present at the laying of the cornerstone of the monument. He was then in his 94th year and the only living Indian who had known and remembered the great Thayendanegea. If Brant had been a chief and recognized as a chief by the Six Nations, Chief Johnson and those Indians associated with him in the erection of the monument would not have allowed Brant's name to have appeared without all the honour to which it was entitled, and to an Indian the title of chief is much greater than captain.

Miss Evelyn H.C. Johnson, a daughter and granddaughter of chiefs . . . and a diligent student of Indian history, in a paper recently presented before the Brant Historical Society, says:

"Born leader of men, Brant became a leader of leaders of the Six Nations. A commander of the Six Nations he was not."

The constitution of their government prohibited any one head of the whole Confederacy. Nowhere has the writer been able to learn of Brant leading as a chief in the deliberations of the Great Council of the Six Nations. That assembly of inflexible legislators would never permit it. True he was present at their councils — so were other warriors. That he frequently spoke in council was his right. That he, of course, called a council is without question. His position as interpreter and as a deputy superintendent and finally leader in war would give him the right, and with an Indian as with other nations, they glorified their great leaders who excelled in war and followed them to death and to the grave.

That Brant in his day was the chief man of the Six Nations is indisputable. It may be said of him that he was born to fame, he acquired fame and fame was thrust upon him. He was not a Hereditary Chief. There are no hereditary chieftainships in the Brant family on the Six Nations Reserve as any chief today will affirm. He was not a Pine Tree Chief. On the contrary, the Six Nations themselves do yet and always have denied that Brant was a chief.

The writer has not been able to find any person on the Six Nations Reserve, either among the chiefs or old men who will affirm that Brant was a chief. . . .

That he was a chief by courtesy — a leader of leaders, a great warrior, a great Indian, no one will deny. There are today many leading Indians on the Six Nations Reserve who are called chiefs by white men and by the press because they think that being prominent Indians they must be chiefs, but the Indian never makes that mistake, nor will he ever give that great title to anyone who is not entitled to it.

President's Reflections

If you did not attend the annual meeting of the historical society in February, you missed two good things. First, Dr. Peggy Brooks-Bertram made a follow-up presentation about John William Dungy, the slave who escaped from Virginia and lived in Brantford during the Civil War. After the war John William returned to the States and went on to found colleges and churches throughout the land. Dr. Brooks-Bertram also brought John William's granddaughter and the family scrapbook to the meeting. This is an excellent example of how our local history is connected to and impacted events far beyond our geographic boundaries.

Second, it was the society's annual meeting. While there was a small deficit of slightly under \$2,000.00, this in itself is not a great concern. However, there are a couple of other things happening that the society members should be aware of. The Clean Air Bylaw (non-smoking bylaw) affects the Delta Bingo Hall on June 1, 2002. If the mechanical ventilation in the smoking area is not adequate and the operation has to go completely non-smoking, there is a concern that the players who come from out of town because they smoke will not return and

revenues will go down. The BSSC is conducting a survey of the players about this possibility and it will advise its member charities of the results and action to be taken. As well the City of Brantford is developing a mechanism for giving grants to local groups now that BRAC no longer exists. This format and the funds to be made available have not yet been determined, but it is being worked on. I will pass on the information on these matters as it becomes available.

On a much more positive note, the revenue generated by the Brantford Film Group has been very good so far this year. Margaret Glass and the people who help her are doing a great job and I urge you to support this program. Also, the museum is co-ordinating a show at the Museum in the Square to celebrate Brant County's 150th anniversary. The former Townships and Paris are all putting on displays and this event has initiated a positive relationship between the Brant Museum & Archives and the other smaller local museums in the county that should be fostered.

Sincerely,
John Wyatt

The Museum in the Square (A Satellite of the B.M. & A.)

Main Level, Market Square Mall
1 Market Street, Brantford, Ontario
(519) 752-8578

Admission by Voluntary Donation
Hours: Monday to Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed Saturdays

Brant 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 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday 1 to 4 p.m.

Web site:

<http://www.bfree.on.ca/comdir/musgal/bcma>

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Do you remember?



Photo courtesy of Margaret Lorenz

Sunday morning in the early 1920s in the city of Brantford usually began with getting dressed in one's "Sunday-go-to-meeting" clothes and heading out to one of the many churches that dotted the downtown area.

The afternoon was often spent socializing with friends and relatives. These five young ladies decided to take advantage of the beautiful spring afternoon to go for a leisurely stroll around Colborne and Dalhousie streets to admire the trend-setting clothing on display in the many shop windows.

They then made their way toward Lorne Bridge, discussing the events of the day. What a great location for a photo opportunity with the Brantford Armoury and the now demolished Prince Edward (Bestview) Hotel in the background. Seated at the base of the Boer War monument, these five friends remain frozen in time.

By the way, this was the original location for this monument.

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Lifetimes of Service

The following is an excerpt from *Peacemakers & Lawbreakers: A 125-Year History of the Brantford Police Service*, available in April at the Brant Museum and the Elgin Street police station for \$29.99.

By Heather Ibbotson

Sgt. John Wallace, Sgt. Stephen Cara and Det. Thomas Boylan were three of the longest serving officers ever to police the streets of Brantford.

Wallace joined the force in 1888 and retired in 1927, after almost 40 years of service. In September 1927, Chief Donnelly told the board of police commissioners that Wallace had been ill and unfit for duty for three months and had been of little use as an officer for some time. A medical exam revealed Wallace suffered from hardening of the arteries. As a result, the board asked Wallace for his resignation and agreed to grant him a gratuity of three months' salary to be paid at a rate of \$30 per month for 15 months.

Days after this decision, the board received a letter from the city clerk advising commissioners of a resolution passed by city council on Sept. 27, 1927, which requested the board look into the question of allowing Wallace a suitable pension for the remainder of his life as set forth in the Consolidated Municipal Act. In reply, the board advised council that it appreciated the long service of Wallace but that it was not justified in exceeding the customary allowance of three months' pay granted in other cases, in addition to the full pay Wallace had received since he was away from duty while ill. However, the board would heartily support any action which council might take by way of an additional retiring allowance for Wallace.

On Oct. 24, 1927, city council adopted the following resolution: "That in view of the 40 years of faithful and continuous service of Sgt. John T. Wallace, your Committee recommend that the Police Commission consider the reinstatement of this officer. That in the event of the Police Commissioners failing to reinstate Sgt. John T. Wallace to the Police Force, your committee recommend that he receive a pension of \$1,000 annually to be paid in equal monthly instalments."



Police commissioners responded that due to Wallace's physical condition, they could not recommend the retention of his services, but they approved the allowance made by council in lieu of the amount previously granted by the board.

Sgt. Cara joined the force in 1908 and retired from duty in 1941 due to advanced age and ill health. However, the sudden resignation of the police station's janitor, William Jarvis, gave Cara an opportunity to stay on in a different role. In June 1941, Cara requested he be appointed as Jarvis's replacement. His request was granted and Cara took over janitorial duties on July 15, 1941, at a salary of \$100 per month. He continued as caretaker until 1951 when age forced him to retire completely. Cara was granted a leave of absence with pay until the end of the year. Meanwhile, former Sgt. Robert Lindop took over Cara's duties as caretaker.

Det. Boylan joined the city police in 1896 and retired in 1941, at the age of 70, after serving an incredible 45 years with the force. A letter from the board of police commissioners to city council in mid-1941 requested that Boylan be rewarded with a retiring allowance, as provided by the Municipal Act, commensurate with his length of service. Boylan felt he deserved a reward for his long, continuous and efficient service. During his time on the force, he was paid a straight salary with no allowance made for overtime, although his duties often required it.

City council granted Boylan an allowance of one year's salary spread over three years. In early 1946, Boylan wrote to the board of police commissioners requesting his allowance be extended for another year. The board granted the request and added the sum of \$600 to that year's budget estimate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Brant Historical Society gratefully acknowledges support from:

The County of Brant

The City of Brantford

The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation



Brantford Film Extra

The Brantford Film Group will be hosting a special event on March 21st. Along with the scheduled film "On the Nose" we will be showing a short film, "Possibilities," directed by Rob Page, a filmmaker from Brantford. After the film there will be a reception at Callahans. Your ticket stub will admit you for beer, wine and nibbles and the chance to meet Rob Page and three other ex-Brantfordians who have gone on to bigger and better things in the film industry.

At the Museum

Education Program Report

By Debbie Olsen

After enjoying a rather busy festive season where we had the pleasure of meeting and working with so many students from our area, we are now looking forward to the March break camp. Students who enrol will enjoy a week of hands-on activities and learn all there is to know about the Middle Ages. The Medieval period is part of the Grade 4 curriculum, and is offered as one of our education programs at the Brant Museum & Archives. Another program that teachers could book for their pupils is "Pioneer Life", in which students take part in typical pioneer chores like candle dipping, textile-related chores and pickling. Enrichment modules and Outreach Kits, based on the curriculum, are available too. We are working closely with our co-op student from W. Ross Macdonald, and will soon be offering the school two programs especially designed for the visually-impaired student. Summer camp plans are already in motion, and students can look forward to exciting and fun-filled programs.

Stay tuned and spread the word — the Brant Museum is the place to be!

Assistant Curator's Report

By Shanna Dunlop

First of all, I would like to say how thrilled I am to have recently been hired as a full-time staff member at the museum.

I look forward to working with Stacey on the many curatorial projects and exhibits ahead!

Currently, our Museum in the Square continues to feature the fascinating exhibit "Eastern Treasures from the Harrison M. Scheak Collection," running through March. We are excited to announce an upcoming co-operative exhibit celebrating Brant County's 150th anniversary. Together with historical societies, museums, and tourism and heritage organizations representing all six townships, the Brant Museum & Archives will offer this special commemorative exhibit from April 15 to July 5, 2002, at the Museum in the Square.

We are also hoping to put together a temporary exhibit on local sports legend Wayne Gretzky. We will, however, need the assistance of the Brantford community in realizing this goal, namely through the loan of Gretzky artifacts and memorabilia. If you are able and interested in aiding us with this exhibit, please contact me at the museum — I look forward to hearing from you!

With regard to the museum's collections, I am starting to make some progress with the backlog of cataloguing, but can always use extra help! If you are interested in becoming a curatorial volunteer, please drop by to see me. I would also like to mention some exceptional new accessions donated by Bob Deboer, in particular, seven photograph volumes featuring Brantford buildings and their histories. The collection is certainly the end result of much hard work and his dedication to preserving Brantford's history! Thank you, Bob — these will be a valuable resource for the museum archives.

Curator's Corner

The beginning of this year has definitely been busy for us at the museum. Between exhibits, school programs and grant writing, there hasn't been a lot of time to sit and chat with those of you who have come in.

We have had another staff addition that has helped to ease the strain of covering both of our sites. Caralyn Kelly is working three days a week down at the Museum in the Square. Caralyn has a Ph.D. in Geography and began here in January as a research volunteer. We are very pleased to welcome Caralyn to the museum family.

We have been very busy with exhibits this year. The Eastern Treasures exhibit continues until March, when the next show will celebrate the County of Brant's 150th anniversary. In addition to exhibits at the Museum in the Square, we have created small displays at Charlotte Street to commemorate February as Black History Month. On that note, I would like to thank Dr. Peggy Brooks-Bertram for speaking at February's meeting. Some of you will remember Dr. Bertram, who spoke last year about John William Dungy, an escaped slave who lived in Brantford from 1860 to 1865. This year she brought with her not only John William's granddaughter Laura, but also the scrapbook that he began in 1870. It was a very enjoyable evening. I invite you to visit Dr. Bertram's web site to learn more about the Dungy family: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/uncrownedqueens>

I would also like to thank all of our members who have been supporting the Historical Society's fundraising efforts by attending the Brantford Film Group screenings. Our showing of "Bread and Tulips" was one of our best ever! We still have several films ahead, so please come out and join us.

I'll be on vacation for most of March, but I know that I'm leaving the museum in good hands. I'll see you all when I return.

Stacey McKellar

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In Memory of Jack Krug

Cy and Marg Walter
(and Laura, Rick, and Brolley)

A Brant Historical Society Membership Offers ...

- free admission to the Brant Museum & Archives, Bell Homestead and Myrtleville House Museum (excluding special events)
- exemption from personal 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

Happenings

Brant County Museum & Archives

Exhibits

"Eastern Treasures From The Harrison M. Scheak Collection,"
Dec. 3 to March 31, 2002.

"Brant County's 150th," April 15 to July 5, 2002.

Volunteers

We are always looking for volunteers to do general tasks around the museum. If you would like to volunteer some of your time, contact the museum at (519) 752-2483 or (519) 752-8578, and it would be appreciated.

Kids' Club

- March Break Kids' Club Camp: Medieval March Madness
- Kids' Club Saturday programs: Easter Day Camp



Brant Historical Society

Brantford Film Group

March 21	On The Nose (also short film before and reception after, see page 5 or check with Margaret Glass for details)
April 11	Monsoon Wedding
April 25	Amelie
May 16	Rare Birds

General Meeting Speakers

Meetings are held Wednesday evenings at 8 p.m.

March 20	Robert Nixon will make a presentation about the life and times of his father, Harry Nixon.
April 17	Larry Devine, a river historian, will talk about the Grand River and the navigation canal.
May 15	David Bailey, the owner of Sunnyside in St. George, will speak about the house and its restoration.
June 19	Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, location to be announced.



Brantford Film Group

On the Nose (Canada/Ireland) An original Celtic-Canadian comedy starring Robbie Coltrane as a porter at a Dublin medical college. On the verge of financial ruin, he discovers a shrunken head in the basement which has the uncanny ability to pick the winning horses at the local track. He enlists the aid of a visiting doctor (Dan Ackroyd) and his co-workers and sets out to beat the odds and to outwit a trio of nasty bookmakers.

Monsoon Wedding (India, subtitled) In modern New Delhi, an upper-middle class wedding attracts family members from Toronto, Dubai, Houston, Silicon Valley, and Australia, each group with its own brand of social mores. In the five days before the ceremony, illicit trysts, betrayals and bitter feuds form and interweave. The runner-up for the People's Choice Award at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Amelie (France, subtitled) This film has been nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Film. Amelie is the only child of eccentric parents, schooled at home and brought up in a sheltered and imaginative world. She grows into a beautiful young woman who works in a Montmartre café frequented by a host of odd characters. She discovers the joy of contriving covert miracles for those lost souls around her, mending relationships, fulfilling lifelong wishes and consoling the inconsolable. But her sweet world of the modern missionary is disturbed by a chance encounter which leaves Amelie to work a miracle for herself.

Rare Birds (Canada) A whimsical comedy set in Push Through Cove, Newfoundland, where Dave Purcell (William Hurt) and his restaurant The Auk have both seen better days, when his neighbour (Andy Jones) proposes a mad but ingenious scheme to revive the flagging fortunes of the area. They fabricate a report of a rare duck and suddenly birders from around the world are flocking in.

Get Well Wishes

Bob Nixon

In Sympathy

Lucy Hagopian, on the loss of her husband, Sid

Keep bringing in those Zehrs tapes!