



Winter Newsletter

2017

Winter Newsletter 2017

February

From the President's Desk

April 9th marks the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. As a result of the Battle which lasted four days, the Canadian Corps suffered 10,602 casualties: 3,598 killed and 7,004 wounded. Some twenty-three soldiers from Brant-Brantford were among those killed. Two local residents were also seriously wounded. Members of the 56th Field Artillery Regiment participated in the battle, as did other regional regiments.

Vimy was the first battle in which Canadian troops fought as a united corps and it represented an important step in Canada's evolution as a nation.

The Brant Historical Society is working in partnership with other organizations to honour those who had served and died at Vimy Ridge one hundred years ago. Our partners include the Brant Theatre Workshop, Sanderson Centre, the 56th Field Artillery Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, members of the First Nations and others. Our program includes the premier performance of Vincent Ball's new play: *Veteran of Vimy*. The play is the second in a trilogy devoted to the impact of the First World War on the citizens of Brantford and Brant County. The first play, *Doing Our Bit*, premiered last November and has been published by the Brant Historical Society.

The premier will take place at the

Sgt. William Merrifield VC Armoury (Brantford Armoury) on Sunday April 9th. The program includes a behind the scenes tour and historical displays beginning at noon. The matinee performance will start at 2:00 pm.

The matinee will be followed by a Gala Dinner featuring a tribute to Six Nations Veterans by actors, singers and dancers, cuisine based on a three sisters menu – corn, squash, beans – prepared by Six Nations Chef, Brian Skye. Included in the Gala package will be an autographed copy of *Veteran at Vimy*. The Gala Dinner also includes access to the Officers Mess at the Armoury. The evening performance of the play will begin at 7:30 pm.

We believe this program offers a unique experience and we have developed several options in how you can participate. If you choose, you can simply purchase a ticket for either performance of the play. Costs are: Veterans (\$10), Seniors/Students (\$12), and Adults (\$15). The Gala Dinner (\$75) includes tickets to either performance, access to the Officers Mess, the three sisters dinner and entertainment, and an autographed copy of *Veteran of Vimy*. Tickets can be purchased through the Sanderson Centre <http://tickets.sandersoncentre.ca> or through the Brant Historical Society at 519-752-2483.

Michael St. Amant
President

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Sarah Thomas
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Operational Report

At our Meeting on November 23rd, entitled Unearthng Brantford, we printed 100 copies of our newsletter and provided attendees a list of upcoming events with a membership form on the back. It was a very positive experience to run out of supplies with the popularity of the talk.

Paul Racher gave a very interesting lecture highlighting the stratigraphy of the dig from the modern rubbish through the Victorian and early Brantford layer. These layers contain some of the 400,000 artifacts, although he points out that a broken pane of glass could count as several hundred artifacts.

Underneath this layer, they also discovered a First Nation layer that contained mainly early First Nations artifacts like smoking pipes and burnt corn kernels. Underneath this layer was another very thick organic deposit that either suggested a very large settlement there for a time or a smaller settlement there for a very long time.

In December, staff took down the map exhibit so that we could continue to do research for visitors of the museum. December is usually a month where we start winding down and preparing for the end of year requirements and start pre-planning for the following year. We also had a meeting with Laurier to discuss programming for their winter term.

Our Laurier Class for the term is Dr. Tarah Brookfield's Canadian Women's and Gender History course who is also a member of the Brant Historical Society. Staff wrote a procedure to guide students in entering information from the Women's Institute Minute Books. We made a brief visit to her class to orientate students to the procedure and assist them with the hand writing.

Over the last two weeks of January, we had a class of about 30 Laurier students each take 1 year of records from the Women's Institutes collections during the war. When students submit their assignments, we will receive copies of their work and compile it together to make a herstory of the work of the Women's Institutes during WWI and WWII. This will assist in the making the research for the May exhibit and several volunteers have assisted with filling in the blanks with other years.



Laurier Students

The end of the year results in compilations of reports in preparation for the AGM, continuing to do collections work, and planning for the spring which tends to be our busiest time of year for activities. In addition to these planning activities, we also completed the Heritage Week Travelling Exhibit to take place Heritage week between February 20th and 24th. While this travelling exhibit is a free event, it will act as a great promotional tool to raise awareness of the Brant Historical Society in the community. John Minutillo has been a great volunteer who has offered transport this exhibit for us the past two years

Nathan Etherington
Program Coordinator

Volunteer of the Year Award

We aim to recognize valuable volunteers who contribute to the great work of the organization. It is very important to recognize our volunteers as they enhance the efforts of staff and often have a greater impact in the community. This year, we chose to recognize Benedict Sarabura who has tirelessly worked on the scanning of slides in the collection. Congratulations Benedict!

Myrtleville House News

Despite the cold weather outside, we have had a warm and cheerful winter season at Myrtleville House. Our biggest event of the winter season is the Good Cheer Education program which brought over 1000 students through our doors over the month of December. This program gives the students a tour of the house decorated for Christmas, a chance to bake gingerbread cookies in the historic kitchen and guides them through making wooden toys and a tree ornament to take home. This incredible feat could not have been done without the help of our dedicated volunteers. To thank them and our members, the Brant Historical Society hosted our annual volunteer appreciation night on December 14th at Myrtleville. This pleasant evening was a well-earned opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of the year.

Due to the popularity of the family camps, the Myrtleville House Museum hosted a New Year's camp January 2nd – 6th. Campers enjoyed making crafts, playing outside in the snow and baking every day. We would like to thank our junior volunteers for assisting with all of our activities. Our March Break camp (March 13th – 17th) will provide another opportunity for high school students to get their volunteer hours for graduation. Any interested students can contact the Myrtleville House Museum or email the education officer at sarah.thomas@brantmuseums.ca.

The Myrtleville House Museum was open on Monday, February 20th for Family Day. Activities ran from 1 – 4 pm. This free event encouraged families to spend the afternoon together touring the house, baking cookies and getting creative. To celebrate Canada's sesquicentennial, we joined The National Trust in exploring the theme "My Canada". A watercolour station gave an

opportunity for children and adults to paint their vision of Canada.

We will be hosting our annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday April, 15th. The hunt will start at 10:30 am sharp with free crafts and face painting will be available before and after. A tour of the house will start at 11:00 am. Admission is by donation and free candy prizes will be given to all participants.

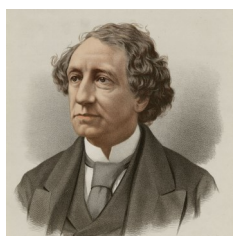


Easter Egg Hunters

To continue our sesquicentennial celebrations, The Brant Historical Society will be hosting a Fathers of Confederation Picnic on Saturday, June 17th. This festive and fun-filled day will include free activities for all ages and interests. Children's programming, re-enactments, local musical talent and historical demonstrations will keep visitors entertained all day. Further details about this event will coming soon.

Sarah Thomas
Education Officer

Canada's 150th Anniversary: Dinner with John A. Macdonald



I recently had the pleasure of attending the Brant Historical Society's: Dinner with John A. Macdonald. In case you could not attend the dinner, I will give you a taste of the evening below!

The Brant Historical Society began the celebration of Canada's 150th Anniversary by celebrating John A. Macdonald's birthday on January 11th, 2017 with a din-

ner at the Brantford Club. A sold-out crowd of 60 people, some in period costume, enjoyed an 1867-inspired menu and historical re-enactments. "Chef Eric" Wasylenky, his kitchen staff, and serving staff are to be commended for the delicious dinner they presented!

The dinner attendees included some special guests from the Ichthys Theatre Company: Hugh Sutherland playing John A. Macdonald; Sandra L. Anderson playing Mrs. George Brown (Anne); Kevin Proctor playing Wilfrid Laurier, with their Director, Martin

Canada's 150th Anniversary...(con't)

Smith. All the actors gave speeches during the dinner relating to Confederation and all were dressed in the period costume. There were also two dignitaries in attendance: MPP Dave Levac brought greetings on behalf of himself and MP Phil McColeman; and Counsellor David Neumann brought greetings on behalf of City Council.

The reception started with Brian Moore, chair of the Events Committee, calling upon our President, Michael St. Amant, to offer an "Acknowledgement of the Land". Afterwards, the sponsors whose contributions ensured we could hold a successful event were recognized. Our harpist, Kristen Vollick, was thanked for the beautiful music we enjoyed during the reception. Brantford's Town Crier, David McKee, wrote and presented an original "cry" specific to the occasion. During the reception, toasts were offered to Queen Elizabeth the Second, to our predecessors, to the Confederation of Canada, and to the birth of John A. Macdonald. A toast also offered to honour the Brant Historical Society Directors, staff, and volunteers for striving for almost 110 years to preserve the records, artifacts, and significant stories of Brant County, of Ontario, of Canada, and even of North America. Jean Kendall offered Grace, then we withdrew to the dining room.

Concluding remarks were made by Michael St. Amant and the evening closed with a poem by Pauline Johnson, titled "Finale" read by Annette Minutillo.

The Brant Historical Society would like to thank the following sponsors whose generous donations helped make our Dinner with John A. Macdonald event a success.



Small Town Appeal • Professional Eye Care



If you are reading this and feeling that you missed a wonderful evening, then know that the Brant Historical Society and the Events Committee are busy working on other events to help celebrate Canada's 150th Anniversary. Please see page 10 of this newsletter to read about these upcoming events.

As a new member of the Brant Historical Society, I joined the Events Committee and it has been a very rewarding experience. Becoming a member has allowed me to contribute to my community and meet new people. I would invite all of you to support this important part of our community. Inviting friends to become a member of the Brant Historical Society would be a great way to celebrate Canada's 150th Anniversary!

Jean Kendall
Special Events Committee Member



Rob Long
(Wine Sponsor)



Our History Matters

Brant's Members of Parliament in 1867

Since Confederation, Brantford and Brant County have elected representatives to the Parliament of Canada and the Ontario Legislature who have played significant roles nationally and provincially. If, however, you asked residents of the City and County who represented the ridings of Brant North and Brant South in 1867, few would know. As we celebrate our nation's 150th anniversary, it seems only fitting to take a few moments to consider the men who represented us at the beginning.

Edmund Burke Wood was first elected in 1863 as the member for Brant West in the 8th Parliament of the Province of Canada. Born February 13th, 1820 near Fort Erie, he was the fourth son of Samuel and Charlotte Wood who owned a farm in the Niagara District. Although Wood was initially trained as a teacher, he did not find teaching rewarding. He subsequently attended Oberlin College in Ohio and graduated with a BA in 1848. The next year, he enrolled as a student with Law Society of Upper Canada. He first articulated with the firm of Freeman and Jones in Hamilton, and then with Archibald Gilkison in Brantford. Called to bar in 1854, after serving as the Clerk of County Court and Deputy Clerk of the Crown in Brantford, he entered into partnership with Peter Ball Long. Wood handled many controversial cases and soon established a reputation as one of the leading practitioners in Brantford. Despite the fact that their legal business was very profitable, Wood could be difficult to deal with and in 1860, the partnership was dissolved.

Throughout his career, Wood's legal and political activities were often intertwined with his business activities. In 1856, he became involved with the Buffalo and Lake Huron Railway for whom he acted as both solicitor and a principal promoter. It was his desire to extend his business influence that drove him to seek public office in 1863 when he ran in Brant West as a moderate Reformer. When the Buffalo and Lake Erie Railway was taken over by the Grand Trunk Railway in 1864, Wood established a close relationship with the Conservative party. As the movement towards a united Canada evolved, Wood proved himself to be an ardent supporter of Confederation. He often spoke in the Legislature and was dubbed "the Big Thunder" by Darcy McGee.

As political turmoil developed in 1866 when George Brown called for the end of the "Great Coali-

tion" that had been put in place to foster Confederation, he rejected Brown's approach and joined a Liberal-Conservative "Patent Combination" coalition under John Sandfield Macdonald. In return, he was appointed Ontario's first Provincial Treasurer.



Edmund Burke Wood

Wood's decision to run on the Liberal-Conservative ticket and his decision to serve as Provincial Treasurer irked the members of the local Liberal Riding Association. In the election of 1866, they decided to run a Liberal candidate, H. B. Leeming, against him. Wood

was furious and he immediately announced that he would also run in the impending Federal election. Wood defeated both Liberal candidates in the federal and provincial elections by several hundred votes. Thus, in 1867, Wood represented Brantford and parts of Brant County in both the Ontario Legislature and Canadian Parliament.

As Provincial treasurer, Wood was a strong advocate in protecting Ontario's financial interests. He opposed giving Nova Scotia better terms in Confederation, took a hard line in financial arbitrations between Ontario and Quebec, and continually advocated limiting government spending. At the same time, he protected his own interest. He opposed the construction of narrow gauge railways that would have impacted the Grand Trunk Railway. The *Globe* referred to him as "an active paid agent of the Grand Trunk."

Following the election of 1871, it was clear that Macdonald's "Patent Combination" was about to dissolve. Wood resigned as Treasurer and rejoined the Liberal Party and supported the new government of Edward Blake. This was a thinly disguised attempt at survival. He had lost credibility with the Liberals and was not offered a Cabinet post under Blake. Upon the passing of legislation forbidding "dual representation", he devoted his attention to federal politics. In 1873, he won a safe seat in West Durham and provided an effective attack against the Conservatives during the Pacific Scandal. Despite his efforts, Wood would not form part of Alexander Mackenzie's cabinet when the Liberals formed the government in 1873.

Our History Matters (con't)

Wood had always lived beyond his means and it was financial difficulties that drove him to accept the post of Chief Justice of Manitoba in 1874 at \$5,000 per year. As Chief Justice, he was involved in many high profile cases, including the trial of Louis Riel's lieutenant, Ambroise-Dydime Lepine. Although he initially played an important role in asserting the authority of British legal institutions in Manitoba, he became embroiled in partisan politics, railway disputes and fights with creditors. His intemperance often impacted his legal judgments, to the point where several lawyers and politicians petitioned to have him removed from the bench. Several strokes impacted him physically and, before an investigation could begin, he died on October 7, 1882. He left his wife, Jane Augusta Marter, four sons and two daughters in dire financial difficulty. Though an intelligent man and knowledgeable jurist, self-interest limited him achieving all that he could have achieved.

Unlike his counterpart in Brant County, Doctor John Young Bown was more focused on his local riding than personal ambition. Born December 30th, 1821 in Dorsetshire, England, he studied medicine at the University of St. Andrews and was a member of the Royal College of Surgeons. He and his brother, Theodore, immigrated to Canada with their parents Robert and Mary about 1851. Both John and Theodore opened medical practices in Brantford. Although he developed a good reputation as a medical practitioner, he was also interested in botany, microscopes and painting. He was financially independent and this allowed him the freedom to pursue a political career. He was elected to the 7th Parliament of Canada in 1861 for the riding of Brant East. He was elected as a Reformer and was re-elected in 1863. He was elected to the 1st Canadian Parliament as a Liberal-Conservative for the riding of Brant North. He won his seat by two votes.



John Young Bown

While in Parliament, he served on Committees reviewing Immigration and Colonization, Hop Growing and Salt Interests in Canada, and Methods of Protecting Hemlock Timber from Destruction. He also served on the Joint Committee reviewing the establishment of the Library of Parliament. Bown did not seek re-election and returned to Brantford where he resumed his medical practice.

He married Rebecca Campbell and they had two sons and four daughters. They lived at 98 George Street, the location of the Brantford Club. He died September 25, 1890 and is buried with his family at Greenwood Cemetery.

Michael St. Amant
President

Special Contributor

The Ford—A Better Idea?

There's been a debate for many years, as I learned quite recently, about the true location of Brant's Ford across the Grand River. Usually the discussion also centers on the placing of a monument to mark its precise location. We have modern knowledge of hydrology. We also have maps and photos of the

earlier versions of the Grand River's course and its flood plains. Together this knowledge can help us determine where the most suitable site(s) for a ford should have been.

The best answer can be found in the 1800s geography of West Brant. From northeast of the present intersection of the dyke and Ballantyne Drive in

Special Contributor (con't)

Lorne Park, river water flowed southeastward through a now extinct southern river channel (which paralleled Gilkison Street) to a point northwest of the end of Fordview Court. Here it re-entered the main river at a meander, that humans have also altered, which obviously no longer exists. Imagine most of Lorne Park, Fordview Park and the Lorne Towers apartment buildings on an island, and you have the picture.

There is no doubt that the splitting of flow around the West Brant "Island" would make for a shallower river somewhere across the main north branch south of the future site of the Lorne Bridge. But it got better than that.

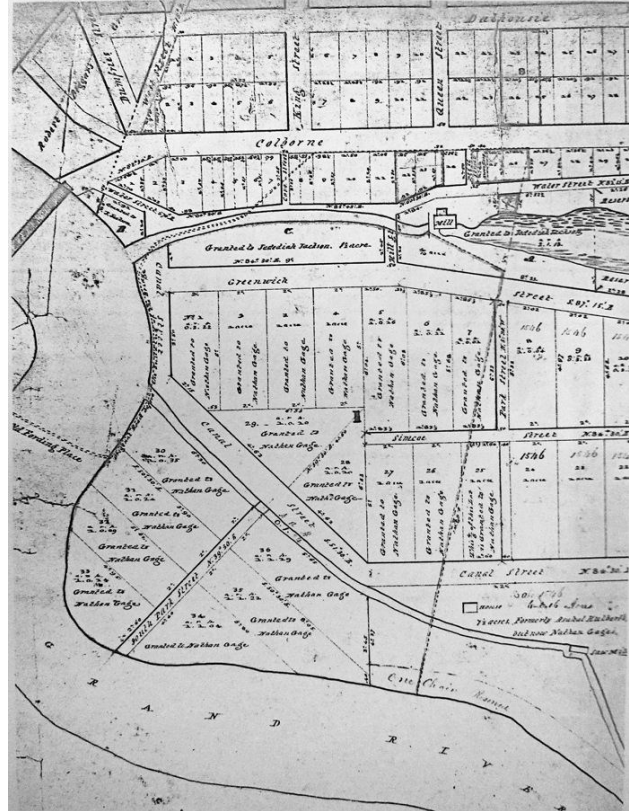
There were other drains on the main river towards Market Street from its northeast shore.

In 1848 the Grand River Navigation's new dam, replacing the former millers' dam, now steered a great deal more river into the GRNC's new canal. This construction appears to have obliterated the ramp of the possible earlier ford near the bottom of Icomm Drive hill. This wasn't such a bad thing though.

From at least 1830 and on, another canal diverted flow from the Grand River. From just south of the former Canadian National Railway trestle, it continued to a saw mill directly west of the old TH&B Railway station at Market Street and Erie Avenue.

Ultimately then, between certain points on West Brant "Island" and similar points on the opposite side of the former West Brant river bend, flow in the river had been significantly reduced by these re-routes. Water through the West Brant island's southern channel by-passed these two sets of points, re-entering the river downstream from these shallows. Upstream and before these points, water left the river to serve both mill races on the east side south of downtown. Decreased flow of this magnitude meant a much shallower fording site than any before. On one of the historical maps available in the Museum you will see the optimally situated "Old Fording Place" clearly marked across the river just downstream a few feet from the entrance to the saw mill canal.

However strong the evidence is for the location of this particular fording place, we can't solidly refute the existence of others. That low ramp sketched by Warre at the bottom of Icomm Drive hill could have served as a ford. There is a second sketch of Brant's



Ford (also in the Museum's collection) that muddies this location choice to a certain degree. "An early artist's sketch of Brant's Ford" also features a view towards a West Brant landing, except it's from a much higher point than Warre's sketch depicts.

Fortunately, a more detailed photograph of the ford towards the West Brant side is also available. Although this picture's resolution is not so good, the scene's higher vantage point closely matches the second sketch's view. In it the river appears to be uniformly dark in shade with no white or grey areas indicating the presence of gravel or sand bars as we would see today. This evidence points to a lack of deep runs in this area as contrasted with what we can now see between the bridge and Earl Haig Park.

And, of course, there were very dry, safer episodes for the Grand ford. During these extreme droughts, the crossing could have been made virtually anywhere. While bridges were eventually an option, they had a rather inconvenient habit of collapsing. Worse, they charged tolls. That wouldn't stop the shunpiker from finding free passage elsewhere across the river, especially during those dry times. For several

Special Contributor (con't)

more decades, the original Brant's Ford (or Fords) wasn't going away.

Through the magic of Google Earth's image overlay setting you can see, with respect to today's very different river path, where the preferred "Old Fording Place" was. Stand facing downstream in Fordview Park at that end of the former CNR pedestrian bridge. A few meters away near the top of the bank, you would have descended a ramp to the ford's West Brant landing. But don't go looking to place an historical marker at its landing on the far side of a no longer existing river bend. If you do go, you'll need a bathing

suit or a boat. Today's river runs right through it.

If there is any debate as to the exact location of Brant's Ford, we should perhaps consider searching for fords in the plural and in a broader historical context. We mustn't underestimate how changes in our early technology affected changes in our river which in turn enabled pathfinders to develop better transportation links.

James McDougald

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Endowment Fund Vote & AGM Notice

You should have received a ballot by mail with a self-addressed and stamped envelope for changes to the Endowment Fund By-laws; If you didn't, it is likely that you didn't renew your membership. Changes to the Endowment Fund require that 2/3rds of the membership vote in order to be binding, so it is imperative that each member vote. This will be ratified at the AGM on March 27th at 7PM at the Brant Museum and Archives.

MM Edwards Foundation

In October, we received a large grant for nearly \$20,000 to the M. M. Edward Foundation towards Myrtleville House Museum Programs. We wish to thank the M. M. Edward Foundation and contact Erica Martisius for their support of the Brant Historical Society and Myrtleville House Museums which allows us to meet our mandate.

Rob MacMillan Collection

Long-time member and supporter of the Brant Historical Society, Robert MacMillan, recently gave an archival collection of Arts & Entertainment in Brantford's History. The collection fills a void by including some contemporary collections from the 1970s to current and has some newspaper clippings for earlier Arts & Culture Events that have occurred in Brant County.



From the Collection

Recently, I saw an article in the Brantford Expositor about how students attending Walter Gretzky Elementary School were learning about Black History month. In the article, it made reference to the big names in the United States and no reference of students learning local African American History. We frequently hear about strong Black Canadian communities near our borders in Chatham-Kent and the Niagara areas. To that end, I set out to find some content at the museum that some students could engage with to enhance their identity in Brant County.

Heritage Canada provides a brief history of the movement in Canada:

In December 1995, the House of Commons officially recognized February as Black History Month in Canada following a motion introduced by the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine. The motion was carried unanimously by the House of Commons.

In February 2008, Senator Donald Oliver, the first Black man appointed to the Senate, introduced the Motion to Recognize Contributions of Black Canadians and February as Black History Month. It received unanimous approval and was adopted on March 4, 2008. The adoption of this motion completed Canada's parliamentary position on Black History Month.

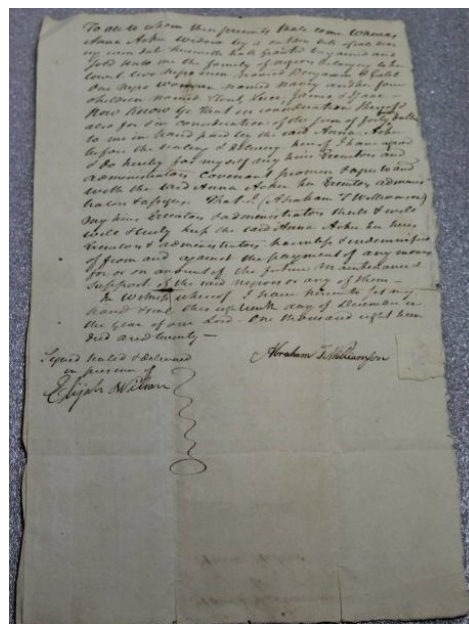
Locally, African Americans arrived with Joseph Brant when he brought up thirty to forty slaves that he used to work his lands or staff his home at the Mohawk Village and Wellington Square. Also John Thomas, who arrived to build the Mohawk Chapel, also brought a slave couple with them when they set up their home near Cainsville. Joseph Brant also encouraged intermarriage as his daughter married ex-slave John Morey.

In her book, African Hope Renewed by Angela Files, she talks about a Bill of Sale of Negro Slaves that we have at the Brant Museum and insists that this is a clear violation of the Simcoe's Bill outlawing slavery in 1793. However, there is nothing on this document indicating where the slaves are sold so that it these slaves could have been sold in the States at the time

where it was still legal. The sale is described as:

To all whom these presents shall come whereas Anna Acker, widowed, by a certain bill of sale bearing even date herewith hath granted and sold unto me the family of negroes belonging to her. Two negro men named Benjamin and Caleb: one negro woman named Nancy and her four children named Thout (?), Luce, James and Isaac, for in consideration fo the sum of forty-five solar to me in hand paid by the said Anna Acker, before the executor and administrator covenant promise and agree to and with the said Anna Acker, her executor, administrator and assayers that I (Abraham T. Williamson) my heir and executor and administrator shall and will truly keep the said Anna Acker her heir executor nameless and indemnified of, from and against the payment of any money for or on account of the future maintenance negroes or any of them.

In witness whereas I have been unto set my hand and seal December 18, 1820 sign, sealed and delivered in the presence of Elijah Wilson.



(con't)

BRANT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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We're on the Web!
Brantmuseums.ca

Donations

We are always accepting donations for the museum. Not every donation needs to be financial. We also accept office and museum supplies. If you have something you would like to donate, please contact us to make arrangements for your donation.

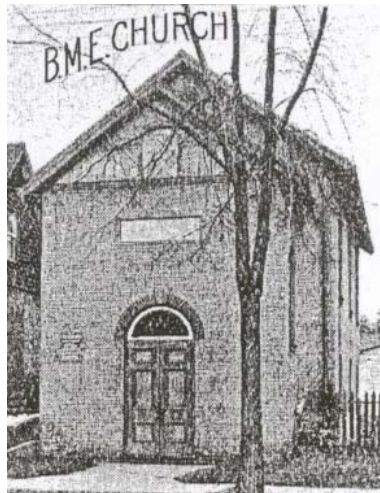


**BRANT
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

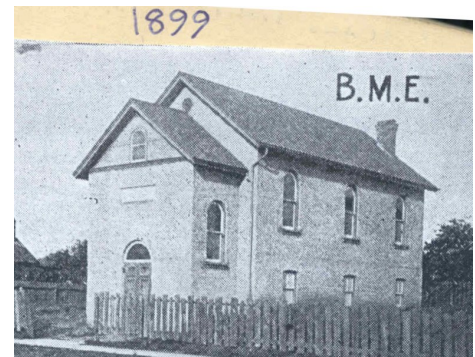
Your History Matters

From the Collection (con't)

When African American families started settling in East Ward, it was then termed as Little Africa and formed the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Brantford in 1835 and it shown on the map of the village of Brantford. The first church building was located on the north side of Dalhousie Street just east of Murray Street on lot 46 and was a small framed structure built by the community. On November 15, 1896, they built the church that is now the S. R. Drake Memorial Church, which was erected by Rev. C. A. Washington. This church is now a designated heritage property for the community.



Nathan Etherington
Program Coordinator



Upcoming Events

March 2017

March Break Camps – March 13th-17th – Crafty Kids—Myrtleville
Annual General Meeting—Monday, March 27th—Brant Museum & Archives @ 7PM

April 2017

Vince Ball: *Veteran of Vimy* play and Gala Dinner at the Armories Sun. April 9th
Easter Egg Hunt – Saturday, April 15th – Myrtleville House
PD Camp – April 28th – Dino Dig— Myrtleville
Walking Tour – Saturday, April 29th – Brantford Architecture [NEW] – BM&A
Speaker Event—Tuesday, April 25th—Topic to be announced

May 2017—Museums Month

Exhibit Launch “HERitage” - May 3rd—Brant Museum and Archives
CARP Fair—Wednesday, May 10th—Civic Centre
Museum Crawl—May 18th to the 28th — various locations (visit: brantmuseumcrawl.ca)
Walking Tour—Saturday, May 7th—Paris Upper Town Walk
Walking Tour—Saturday, May 20th—Earliest History at the Fording Place