

The Grand Dispatch

A brief social history of Port Maitland Ontario, and the surrounding area
Port Maitland, "On the Grand" Historical Association (PMHA) Price \$2.00 - Free to PMHA members

New Grand Dispatch Completes first Full Year!

History of a Farmhouse

Recently, Wendy Strong, nee Hanna sent me information about her family home on Port Maitland Road. This was news to me. I have done some research since and can confirm that Eaton's did indeed sell homes in their catalogue. Please enjoy Wendy's story of her home as she tells you of its past and current use.

A home from a Catalogue

By Wendy Strong

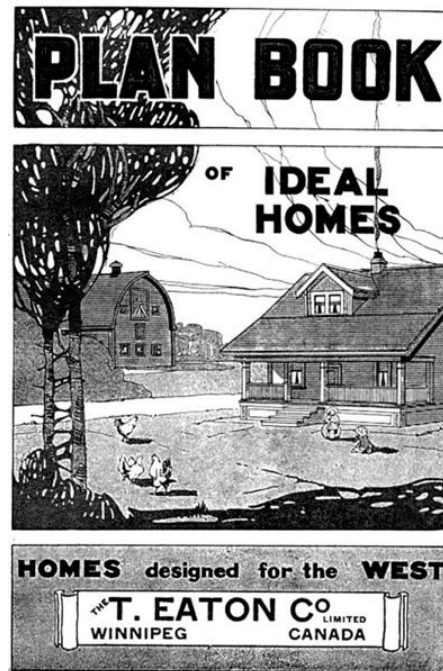
My parents Earl (grandson of Alexander) and Marion (Dickhout) Hanna moved to this farm in September 1937. They started their farm life with a team of horses, 6 cattle (3 cows and 3 steers), 44 barred rock chickens and a few pigs.



The house is a prefab Holiday Home built in 1927; original blueprints were found during the renovations in 2010. The house was built by my aunt Mildred Hanna (My dad Earls' sister) and her husband Sam Lyons. It was purchased from

the Eaton's Catalogue and cost \$2000.00. The cellar was constructed from gravel obtained from the local beach. The labour cost to erect the house was \$2.00 per day.

Irish Roots: *Alexander Hanna (Grandfather of Earl Hanna) immigrated to Dunn Township from Kilkeel, County Down, Ireland in August 1866. The photo (taken July 2009) hanging over the desk in the Dining Room is known today as "Tommy's Cottage", is the original HANNA homestead in Ireland.*



The kitchen was the centre of daily life on the farm. The original kitchen consisted of a wood burning stove which was the main source of heat for the entire house; an ice box kept the food cold (ice was horse

drawn from the lake in the winter), a hand pump was located outside at the well and water was carried in daily.

The wringer washer was located in the corner and was hauled out into the middle of the kitchen once a week to wash the clothes. A clothes line was strung across the kitchen **where** clothes were hung to dry during the winter time when it was too cold to hang them outside. The kitchen always had a couch were Earl would take power naps after lunch before returning to the fields.

Many great meals were prepared in this kitchen; a big breakfast, dinner which was a hot meal served at noon, and then supper another hot meal was usually served at 6:00 pm before the evening milking. Pies were made by the dozens, lots of chocolate cakes and cookies were baked, canning and jam preserves were prepared every summer to eat over the winter. There was never a shortage of food.

ATON Co. CHICAGO

MODERN HOME NO. 674

ELEVEN ROOMS—Parlor, Den, Dining Room, Kitchen, Pantry, Summer Kitchen, 7 Bedrooms and Bath Room.

This beautiful home is sure to find favor amongst the successful farmers and business men of the west. The outside appearance is that of a solid and substantial home.

The first story is finished with novelty siding, the second story and veranda with shingles. This makes an excellent combination and lends itself to very attractive and artistic color schemes in exterior decoration.

The front door opens into a very handsome vestibule which is cut off from the main hall by glass door and side lights. The whole arrangement of the entrance gives a very favorable impression. The first floor is exceptionally well arranged, the rooms are large and well lighted. The second floor is equally well laid out. You get four splendid bedrooms on this floor, all good square rooms and practically equal in size. Each room is equipped with good size clothes closet, also a large fur or linen closet in placed in the hall. The bath room is also of good convenient size. There is a clothes chute leading from the landing on this floor to the laundry in the basement. The third or attic floor is divided into 3 splendid bedrooms although they are attic rooms they are quite as good as will be found in second floor of the average home.

Read about the construction of Our House on Page 26.

WRITE FOR LATEST QUOTATIONS ON LUMBER FOR THIS HOUSE

Price of Material

Lumber, Lath, Siding, Mouldings, Doors and Windows, Finish	1861.65
Paint (all walls only)	89.70
Paint, Shingles, Stains and Putty, exterior only, F.O.B. Winnipeg	22.25
Hardware	12.50
Plumbing	43.18
Building Paper	1793.24
Total	1793.24

Price of Hot Air Heating Plant


For the sum of \$40.00 we will supply a complete Hot Air Heating Plant, consisting of furnace, registers and all necessary pipe and fittings, as shown on our heating plans for this house.

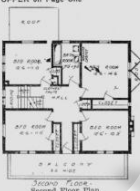
Price of Plumbing Material

For the sum of \$40.00 we will supply a complete Plumbing outfit, consisting of bath tub, lavatory, low down closet in bath room, sink and 36 gallon boiler in kitchen, and all necessary pipe and fittings for the installation of same, as shown on our plumbing plans for this house.

Page Fifty-two

Size 31 feet by 30 feet including 18 feet porch
See Our FREE PLAN OFFER on Page 108





The dining room was only used for special occasion meals, Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving. The biggest meal of the year was served when the threshers came in for a huge feast after threshing the grain usually in late August. Ten to twelve very dirty men sat down to the extended dining room table with a white linen table cloth to eat supper.

The living room, referred to as the "front room" was used when company came to visit and to watch Television. However the TV was only used during the off season, and never turned on from about May to October, as everyone was busy working outside in the daytime and everyone was too tired in the evenings. The original hardwood floors throughout the house were uncovered and restored in 2010.

The downstairs bedroom where Earl and Marion slept is very small compared to today's standards. Babies were born in this room. The upstairs was very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter, but the children slept up there regardless. Today furnace vents allow warm and cool air upstairs.

The original house had gas lights and replaced with electricity in 1944. Running water followed in 1950. The original house did not have indoor plumbing; the pantry next to the kitchen was converted to a very small bathroom in the 1950s. In 2010 the linen closet, front bedroom closet and small bathroom were gutted to make room for a modern bathroom with shower. Flowers grow today where the outhouse once stood.



Painting of the Hanna farm house
Painting supplied by Wendy Strong nee Hanna

Today the furnished farmhouse is rented out on a short term basis allowing city folks to experience country living. The farm is now home to Irish Dexter cattle reflecting the Irish roots of the Hanna family.

This house has seen many changes over the years; we have tried to update it to today's standards keeping much of the original character.

Contact Wendy at wendy.strong@shaw.ca

When Summer comes to an end!

As late August rolls around in Port Maitland the summer residents begin the process of packing their cars with just a little bit more than they did the weeks before; a reversal of what they did in June and July. Summer vacation is reaching its end and it is time to reduce the clothes, toys and appliances brought from the city; time to return to a more regulated schedule of work or school. During the last week in August as Labour Day approaches, many of the cottages are empty as Mothers' needs time for shopping for the kid's school clothes and of course school registration is needed for the younger ones. Those left behind are mostly the older folks and those without children. The beach is a quieter place than just a few days ago.



Yes, this is my school in Stromness, but a day or two before my time!

Photo from Late Arthur Clark Collection

Labour Day arrives and many of the early homebodies return for one last fling minus many of the conveniences they had during the summer. It is their camping weekend so to speak. The last hurrah! This describes what those of us who live at Port Maitland the year round (or at least used to) experience. I am certain some locals also have a hurrah moment as the city slickers finally go home. However, this is not what all experience. Personally, I always found this a rather sad time while also a time of peacefulness that is hard to explain. I missed my summer buddies, while I enjoyed once again having complete freedom to go where I wished and cut across anyone's lawn I chose. The lake was virtually mine to swim when and where I wished. There was quietness that though nice; was also a bit discomfoting.

During the entire summer those older folks who have now decided to hang in for another couple weeks never bothered to speak a word to this ragged little kid, but now I exist and they wanted to talk. They ask; "What had I done during the summer? Who were my summer friends? What grade was I in?" What I was going to do when I grew up; as if they really cared!" This was bonding time with the local kid. Come next summer they would forget me again until they found themselves just a little bored after Labour Day. It was neat though as I also learned a bit about them as well.

Soon even the older folks got cold at night and headed for their centrally heated home in the city. My father would soon make his rounds of many of the cottages, draining their water pipes and emptying their pumps of water and for those who had indoor plumbing he would empty their tanks and plug the drains; so they would not freeze during the long cold winter ahead.



Winter at Beckley Beach - Debbie Dennison

Photo from Tom Dennison Jan 1, 2009

There was an abundance of trees on a couple of properties in Beckley Beach. My sisters and I would take our rakes and pile the leaves into one very large pile and jump into them. Had the owners seen these industrious kids raking and gathering their leaves, they would have been thrilled. The thrill would not last long as we soon jumped and ran through them scattering them as if we have never been there.

When winter set in the river froze solid enough by Christmas for skating and ice fishing. In the fifties and sixties when I was a youngster the fish tugs tied up in early to mid December for the season. From that point on until mid to late March the river had no traffic leaving the ice to freeze; in a severe, winter, to as much as three feet in thickness! At least two or three winters saw cars travelling up and down the river. In fact Allan Asher lived in west Port Maitland and while the ice was safe to do so, he drove across the river and parked his car in the Feeder Canal while he went to work at Dominion Fertilizer.



A rather wintry looking place!
From Wm. Warnick photo collection

Dad installed a high wattage flood-light on the peak of our home shining it onto the river giving us light for night-time skating. On at least one occasion he took his gas powered water pump onto the river and flooded the ice giving us a large smooth surface to skate on. Mother Nature was not always so kind in that regard. The ice surface could be a rugged place to skate without Dad's help.

Two consecutive winters were particularly cold. I believe they were the winters of 1960/61 and 1961/62. Not only Allan drive his car to work via the river, but it was common to see a number of cars and small trucks parked on the river as their owners fished through the ice for smelt.

In a much earlier winter say circa 1953/54 there was so much ice on the Grand that with a quick thaw it jammed up between the piers to the extent it needed dynamiting to prevent serious flooding. Once the dynamite punctured the ice pack the ice rushed out of the river taking ice from below the dam in Dunnville to the mouth of the river.

During the ice jam the ice had overflowed onto the marshes and when it suddenly let go, it took many of the banks' inhabitants with it. My memory of this was standing at the ferry dock and watching muskrats, mink and other river animal running on top of the fast flowing ice. I suspect many were swept out into the lake.

Winter for me and my siblings meant a long cold walk to Stromness and back each day for school. We always managed to find shortcuts through the fields and sometimes the bush that is now the property of Beckley Beach Cottagers Corporation. On occasion I even walked the ice surface of the Feeder Canal from Stromness to the lock. When we tell our kids we walked three miles to school – up hill both ways, we were not far from the truth! This long cold walk always seemed unfair as the younger siblings had to freeze their %^&* off, while the older children had the comfort of a warm bus twenty feet from the front door! Once you attended high school a bus picked you up at the end of the walk.

What we need at Port Maitland Is:

With this issue of The Grand Dispatch I am going to start a "What we need at Port Maitland is:" column. Readers of The Grand Dispatch know that our hopes for the Port Maitland Lock are sitting in purgatory or maybe it is limbo. Are they the same place! Never the less, I am not a happy camper right now! So, I decided to add to that glum by telling you in future issues what "I" want, and never expect to receive! In this column my wishes will intentionally be selfish, maybe even unrealistic and may not in any way reflect anyone else's desires. Just mine!

World's tallest flagpole

We need, a 542 foot (or 165.2m for you younger Canadians) flag pole set just off the end of the west pier. Why, because if the city of Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan the poorest country in the former Soviet Union can build 541foot 4 inch one surely we can build one a foot taller! According to the Guinness book of World Records, as of 2012 Dushanbe has the tallest freestanding flag pole in the World.

Ours will be at least one foot taller. It could be built by one or all of those companies who have speckled their wind powered electric generators

all over the countryside. I understand they have agreed to provide some money to Haldimand County as some kind of a heritage fund. Maybe they could build Haldimand County a real tourist attraction instead of giving them money which the County will only spend as they wish. This way Port Maitland and in turn the County will actually get something and what a tourist attraction it will be!



Our Yankee friends travelling along the New York, the Pennsylvania and maybe even the Ohio turnpike will be able to see a massive CANADIAN flag somewhere across the lake and wonder where is that place? If that doesn't impress our Haldimand councillors and staff, then the County might as well close up shop and let we thinkers do it right!

Port Maitland has very poor cell phone reception. This flag pole could be a great place for the cell providers to place their transmitters. Even the American television and radio stations could make good use of it. They might even let our Canadian stations put up their transmitters provided Verizon does not object! Of course the National Security Agency could use it for a spy platform. Funding from these groups could help offset the cost of upkeep and buy a new flag from time to time.

This is serious, we need a flag pole; a really big flagpole! The biggest flagpole! Come on Haldimand County get with the flagpole idea!

The next issue of the *Grand Dispatch* will review and support the lock which was to have been built in the Dam at Dunnville; the one Lorne Boyko supported so fervently in the 1990's. In view of current technology, in the months before the next issue more thought will have to be given to how the lock should look and what function it should serve.

Delivering -The Grand Dispatch

So, you think publishing and delivering *The Grand Dispatch* is a piece of cake, or a walk in the park, or maybe even like taking candy from a baby. This year we delivered the *Dispatch* free to over seven hundred people who included the cottagers and permanent residence along the lakeshore. Don Blunt made sure that the people at Beckley Beach and McDonald's Beach received theirs while Barry Fraser and Karen Schmidt took care of the west side of the river.



In August my granddaughter Cierrah and I also made the delivery throughout west Port Maitland. The day started out fine, but soon turned into one of those days from hell! Cierrah is not particularly fond of bugs; especially spiders. Any decent mailbox in the country houses a nest or two of spiders and maybe even a wasp nest or two. We started out by Powel's shipyard on Port Maitland Road. Very reluctantly she put in the first *Dispatch* with her bare hands, and then she soon turned to opening the boxes with a Kleenex in her hand. By the time we reached Lighthouse Drive she was in a panic. There was just no way she could any longer stick her hand near a mailbox! The solution was for me to drive to the end of the delivery route and come at it driving

on the wrong side of the road, something as a Postmaster I often criticized Rural Route drivers for doing.

As we passed Freedom Oaks Golf Course a rather disturbing popping sound emanated from somewhere in my car. Just as we were nearing the end of the road a couple of motor cyclists drove by and one fellow yelled to me. "You have a flat tire." Sure enough my front right tire was flat. My cell phone would not pick up a signal for me to call the auto club. Within a few minutes things began to look up when Tina Deboersap came along and took me to Robert Rowe's cottage where he let me call the auto club. Soon a young fellow by the name of Dave from Alternative Tire arrived and my tire was quickly fixed. The tire had picked up a nail. We don't have nails on the road in the city!

Ah, we are back on the road and things are going grand – you think! Lately, I take pictures of just about everything and I wanted one of Cierrah delivering the *Dispatch*, so we stopped at a mail box (with no bugs) where she faked inserting a *Dispatch* as I took some photos. I have owned very few new cars in my days. Currently I own one that had less than thirty kilometers on it when I drove it from the lot. Scratches are not on my wish list, but as we pulled away from this totally unnecessary stop, I scratched the passenger mirror against the mail box! This was turning into an expensive trip!

At any rate, all the *Dispatches* were delivered and another fine publication was put to bed.

Our Memories often confuse us!

A number of years ago, I wrote an article about the repair of the Port Maitland lock. Carroll (Carl) Kenney who lived just a few hundred feet from the lock (though it was some ten years after the date I wrote about) told me I was nuts! My article told of the electrification of the lock and the placing of a new floor in the lock. Carroll's objection was about the electrification of the lock. He claimed it never had electricity; not light or motors for the gates.

My information came from a number of newspaper articles describing the work and its progress. Carroll always proved to be a reliable source of information but how could the newspapers of the day not be at least reasonably correct?



Schooner West Wing from Buffalo being repaired in Port Maitland Lock

Photo circa 1901, from Gerould Stange Buffalo

Why would the Department of Railways and Canals (DRC) electrify and do major repairs to a lock when the canal was no longer in use. Today we have heard of politicians building highways to nowhere! Was this the same thing? Recently, I found the Annual Report of the Department of Railways and Canals for the Fiscal year ends June 30, 1879-1906; March 31, 1907-. It is 4,738 pages long. No, I did not read every page, but I read a lot of them! In short this report confirmed my article and all of its facts. It even goes so far as to print the following.

"The lock at Port Maitland, which has been leaking badly for some years, has been unwatered, two heavy dams being required, and the foundation is now being repaired.

Slow progress is being made on the installation of an electric light and power system along the canal. The poles are nearly all in position and considerable wire and other material is on hand, but it will be late in the season before the lights will be in use. Power is to be obtained from the Lincoln Electric Light & Power Company of St. Catharines, who has contracted to deliver power, from DeCew Falls into the distribution station,

which is to be built on the canal bank at Thorold, the department distributing the power along the canal as they may require.

In my last report I stated that ' the canal was beginning to show signs of age, and from this on considerable trouble may be expected from leaks in banks, washing out of foundations, &c.' This prediction is unfortunately being fulfilled, as last fall a settlement in the bank in rear of the north wall of Lock No. 15 showed plainly that there was something wrong with the foundations, and preparations were made to repair them before the opening of navigation this spring. In the early spring a similar settlement occurred in rear of the wall of lock No. 16."

I do not know the author of the above report, but as mentioned it came from the DRC. The report also reported the following statistics about the Port Maitland lock. *PORT MAITLAND BRANCH. Length of canal 1 miles. Number of locks 1 Dimensions of locks 185 feet by 45 feet Total rise or lockage 7 feet. Depth of water on sills 11 feet.*

The length obviously referred to the length of the Feeder Canal from the lock at Port Maitland to Stromness which came as result of an extension added to the Canal during the building of the second Welland Canal. This report had many more reference to the Port Maitland lock which clearly showed that the Feeder Canal did not close in the 1890s as often written about by others, and even great memories as that of Carroll Kenney can sometimes get it wrong. However, I will still continue to review the hours of taped interviews I had with Carroll and 99% of the time will trust him 100%.

HEAR YEE! HEAR YEE!

With the end of September came the end of the 2012 – 2013 fiscal year for *Port Maitland*, "*On the Grand*" Historical Association (PMHA). A few months ago many of you were sent a membership which would run out on September 30, 2013. It is over! There are some who might give you all kinds of high and mighty reasons for this earlier generosity, but then there is me! Yes the reasons had *some high and mighty* to them,

but more than anything we wanted you to feel an ownership of PMHA that you might consider taking into our new fiscal year. We hoped you might consider supporting our causes by taking out membership on your own. Membership is \$10.00 annually and is due now. Please consider sending us a cheque thus supporting *The Grand Dispatch* and our goals. Please mail the cheque to the address below made out to **Port Maitland, "On the Grand" Historical Association.** By the way, as of this issue of *The Grand Dispatch*, all paid-up members will receive the printed copy via mail.

It happened; When?

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1848 | Mohawk Island, John Burgess, a farmer from Burgess Point [Rock Point Provincial Park] was the first person hired to man the lighthouse on Mohawk Island around 1848, at £65 per season. |
| 1870 | Propeller driven ship- GUIDING STAR 619 tons, exploded boilers. Seven lives lost |
| 1879 | W. R. McIndoe is erecting a warehouse at Port Maitland (Editors note – this building was likely built just east of the Port Maitland Lock on the north side of the Feeder Canal.) |

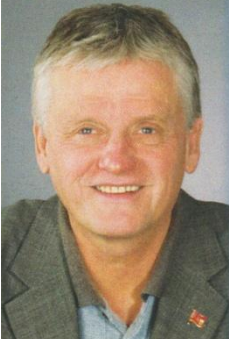
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