

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

William Dickson acquires Sherbrooke Township!

Dickson's Sherbrooke Lands

Researched and Composed by Larry Devine
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According to all written records, William Dickson was born July 13, 1769 in Dumfries, Scotland. He was third son of a Scots merchant, John Dickson. After John fell upon hard times, in 1785, Robert, Thomas, and William were invited to Upper Canada, by their cousin, Robert Hamilton. William served an apprenticeship with the firm of Hamilton and Cartwright. Part of William's apprenticeship was spent on Carlton Island, near Kingston, as a forwarding agent under Richard Cartwright, and part was spent as manager of Hamilton's mills and store at Twelve Mile Creek (St Catharines).

Robert had moved to Queenston. William arrived at Newark (Niagara on the Lake) by 1794. Soon after he married Charlotte Adlam, she provided him with three sons. They were named Robert, William and Walter.

Robert Hamilton's invitation became paramount to his hope for personal success. It would be the acceptance of Robert Hamilton's help that initiated a welcomed opportunity to escape some dismal prospects in Scotland. He would place his trust in his own abilities and aptitude to advance in Newark's social and merchant class community.

What's in the Dispatch?

Dickson's Sherbrooke Lands! by Larry Devine	pg -1
Boys of Summer at Port Maitland! by Patrick J. Hayes	pg -4
Washington D.C. & 9/11 Memorials! by Bill Warnick	pg -7
Beckley Beach Memories by Rick Wilkins	pg -8
New Webpage is now up and running	pg -10
About Membership with PMHA!	pg -11
Dispatch is looking for writers!	pg -12

The Hamilton family was recognized as the most powerful family in Upper Canada, during this time. By accepting the benefit of their assistance, your success, could be assured or be limited. This

often meant prosperity or degradation. As financiers, they had launched successful enterprises in milling, transportation, banking, and debt retrieval merchandizing.

Mr. Hamilton held the firm belief that in order to succeed; you needed to surround yourself with a particular type of individual which held specific characteristics. There-fore, he felt assured in bringing his relatives from Scotland. This calculating action proved successful in most instances. However, Robert Gourlay would prove to be a different scenario. However, William was one of his classic success stories.



William Dickson

He repeated this system of sponsoring lower Scots into Upper Canada. He demonstrated this practice when he invited, the second generation of the Clark family. As each relative arrived, they received opportunities for employment or possibility of a management position or apprenticeships within his many enterprises.

The traits that Mr. Hamilton relied upon were found in his Scottish born associates, and were ingrained in their characteristic personal code of values. Loyalty, to family was intense, and their integrity in their work ethic surpassed many other societies. Within a short time, he had amassed £68,721 in New York currency. His speculation land yielded 130,170 acres.

William Dickson's first successful appointment, was taking over management of Mr. Hamilton's merchandizing establishment in Newark. Implementation of William's keen business acumen, endearing himself to the "Family Compact", and gathering the most influential associates into his business dealings, only swelled his influence. In the short term, he was considered a staunch member of the clique. This social establishment controlled society and political appointments to such a degree that the most influential legal appointments were awarded to its members.

With the wealth he was amassing, he ventured into land purchases along the Niagara River. He also was trading and shipping goods in conjunction with the Niagara Dock and Harbour Company. He was also involved in influencing Lower Canadians in buying shares in the Welland Canal Company. This action would later become a minor irritant.

His thirst for land speculation continued. He transformed himself into a carbon copy of Robert Hamilton.

He was now investing in land with various partners; especially, in larger parcels of property. His main partnership at this plot includes Samuel Street, and Thomas Clark.

His influence brought political prominence. By 1803, William's began to take prominence. The clique assisted him in obtaining a position in obtaining a special license to practice law. He was now a member at the Provincial Bar. He was required to officially serve as Justice of the Peace.

His practice also brought him special clients and cases. Perhaps, the most complicated case was initiated by Joseph Brant and designated sachem of the Five Nation chiefs. They requested that he represent them in a legal matter dealing with a group of American speculators who in league with a couple land brokers were trying to obtain reservation land.

William was successful in winning this contest,

which earned him the respect of both Joseph Brant, and Indian Trust official John Claus. They approved a special gift of reservation land, amounting to 4,000 acres. This he later was issued a Royal Crown Patent for the entire acreage.

The years appear to bring one attainment after another. It continued until the War of 1812-1814 when the American forces were retreating from Newark. The army had abducted a group of local elites which included William Dickson. As they treated themselves to a slash, burn, and bounty party, William's house was left in ashes, and Charlotte was re-situated to the snowy yard. Also left in ruins was the library of 1,500 books to deteriorate.

He was placed in Greenbush Prison, at Greenbush, in the state of New York. The reputation of this prison was ruthless with many deaths occurring in connection with the war.

It was here that William and Absalom Shade become acquainted and their relationship is cemented. The nature of the relationship is as blurry as William's land acquisitions.

My research has uncovered at least two separate theories. The first was recorded by James Young in 1879, at Galt. He said that Shade was living and working in Buffalo at the time of their meeting. But an opposing explanation by Walter Reville places Absalom at the prison, doing what is inconclusive,; but Mr. Reville maintains that Absalom was able to provide William special privileges, not available to other prisoners. This made his incarceration more tolerable; or even comfortable until Absalom was able to assist him in escaping from this hell-hole.

The versions of this initial meeting are constantly recorded verbatim and yet are seldom challenged. Whatever, the truth is, I believe they met, conversed about themselves, and William, impressed with Absalom's abilities, kept him in mind for a special opportunity. This was the special task of preparing and developing 94,000 acres of prime real estate. (Dumfries Township)

Even though, Sherbrooke was still in Dickson's

possession, he left it relatively untouched and unsettled. Its earliest development came with the Royal Navy acquisition. They desired a portion of this survey for a naval depot. Apparently, a section of the Indian reservation bordered Dickson's, therefore, the Navy decided likewise, to acquire a portion of the western bank of the river.

Unclear, that William had solicited the Iroquois to sell their land for the depot, it was constructed any way. The largest section of the depot was constructed on Sherbrooke Twp. This netted, him a sale of 400 acres; once again providing him available property which the Welland seems to have purchased. I believe this to be true as Broad Creek is included in Sherbrooke and the Feeder constructed incorporating the creek into canal.

1816 he had attained the pinnacle of his political and legal success. He was now installed as "Chairman of Quarter Session", and had all the clout he needed to silence, anyone who agitated him. This being said, the inevitable critic came Robert Gourlay.

Robert was the loudest opponent amongst the Upper Canadian clique. He became a complete annoyance. He was especially vocal when it came to William's property acquisitions. Sherbrooke presented Dickson with never ending challenge to both his judgment and conscience.

He suspected that the Sherbrooke patent was not gained legally. He felt that fraudulent acts were used to acquire the 4,000 acre parcel. Also implicated in this unscrupulous act was Six Nations trustee, Col. John Clause.

William was now impatient with Gourlay and had him charged with sedition and he made it stick. Several times, Gourlay cried foul and his sentence was bogus attempt to attain his silence. William was never investigated, never saw an inquest. But was severely scolded by his brother, Thomas Dickson, for what he believed was a blot on the family name.

The sale of this township proceeded in 1861, by

William Dickson (his son). Only because the Honorable William Dickson was deceased by 1826 the time of the document was enforced.

Sherbrooke in this patent was leased between Thomas Clark and Samuel Street (leased in-common?) for the exception of the naval reserve, and separate lots in a village for a school, a park, and 6 other individuals. Sherbrooke Twp. was to become a part of Haldimand County, the village is now Stromness.

In all likelihood, William had used the township to earn seed money for Dumfries Township.

There is little published, in any regard. This second, Crown Patent for 2,000 acres, was issued, after the Naval depot was completed. This increased his initial 4,000 acres to 6,000 acres; less the naval allowance.



I am assured that this document still exists somewhere therefore I will be writing additional articles when I do. In summary, this township became a critical section of property in the navigation story of the Grand River.

Dickson's north property line was right through the feeder, and it would provide another exit/entry into Port Maitland from the Welland Canal with a vital supply of water and power to supply mills with energy.

The effect this politician, judiciary, and land speculator, had on the Grand River, would contribute to the prosperity, not only for Sherbrooke; but he lent considerable influence at Dumfries, Galt, and within the Grand River Navigation Company. at Brantford William will always be remembered as one of the most influential visionaries and participants in Upper Canadian business. Sometimes cursed and at other times heralded, the contributions will be there. ©

Note: This article along with others will be featured within my "upcoming published e-book entitled "Life Along the Inland Waterway". There will be upcoming edits due to new research and revision as new material comes to the forefront.

You can learn more about William Dickson at <http://niagarahistoricalmuseum/media/NiagaraHistoricalSocietyNo.30.pdf>

Boys of Summer at Port Maitland

By Patrick J. Hayes

Of all the boys I knew at Port Maitland, Billy Barnes was the most boisterous and he imitated Johnny Weissmuller famous yodel to a T. Weissmuller, who made many Tarzan films once explained how the famous yell was created. Recordings of three vocalists were spliced together to get the effect—a [soprano](#), an [alto](#), and a hog caller.

Barnes, a tow-head and mischievous Buffaloian, lived with his parents in a neat cottage perched on a bluff, facing the old ferry dock, now long gone next-door to Dr. Bachman and family, a Buffalo dentist and his daughters Dorothy and her sister who later married Hens of the well-known Buffalo department store Hens & Kelly. Her son, J Michael Hens, killed in action in Viet Nam was honored with a Buffalo VMW Post 7870 in Clarence named after him. Soon after his marriage, Billy Barnes was killed when shark spearing in Florida. This was a double tragedy as his son would be born soon after his death. Junior Barnes was also a tow-head person with light blonde hair.

Of all the cherished memories I have of the lazy summertime days I spent at Port, my particular favorite was the camaraderie that came to be among the guys I knew. Don MacDonald, a Toronto native whose mom was a former O'Reilly had three brothers who were Catholic priests much older than her. Already deeply entrenched in the summer activity at Beckley Beach, Fr. John, Frank and Joe had a cottage adjoin the main compound of a vast amount of sandy property they called the "Bunkhouse" which was just that and the main cottage was to me the most amazing structure at Port, a wide screened veranda leading into a lodge-like room with comfortable furniture dominated by a cozy mantel fireplace and bookcases along an outer wall.

The other side and back had a number of simple curtained doors resembling dressing rooms, each with a single bed and a wash stand with ewer and

washbowl. Beyond this awesome living space was the big kitchen and dining area with a back door leading to the backyard and a large two-seater backhouse.



Paul Warnick, Don MacDonald,
Patrick J. Hayes Photo collection

It was in this immense, airy place, I got my first glimpse of what I came to know as simple but luxury holiday living, built to accommodate guests from the city and a place for a large family to entertain. Many an evening, after supper, Don would invite me to regular family activities like listening to the latest recorded Broadway musicals like "Oklahoma" and "South Pacific", watching in fascination Fr. John's prized collection of 8mm travel films, newsreels and shorts, some of which in color and sound, and many open discussions on world happenings.

Don McDonald, Paul Warnick, and I were Altar boys at the Sacred Heart Chapel where we read the Mass responses from large plastic covered plaques in Latin every Sunday morning and on weekdays when one of the O'Reilly brothers or others needed us. Father John was the most regular, who would urge us to wear our swim trunks under our clothes and join him for a swim after some weekday services and who always treated us to a special trip each year to the now long gone Crystal Beach giving us each a roll of quarters to spend on the rides.

In most cases, our carefree time was a common thread we shared with boyish glee. Our fathers absent at Port and busy at their jobs in Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo all summer long were seen only on weekends leaving us to the innocent mischief and mayhem we could conger during the week. Our mothers and our cottages were merely a touch base for meals and sleep. The rest of the time

was rife with swimming, fishing, and continuous cavorting, an exploration of possibilities. There wasn't a thing we didn't discover we could do.

The daily saunter to the lake, depending on the off-shore or warmer wave conditions, the biggest attraction was heading for the "Break" halfway out the long East pier. There, we found the thrill of adventure and daring-do, especially when there were girls around. We would dive headlong from the concrete edge of the wide span created by a break in the pier's substructure the first year it was built by the corps of engineers who never repaired the serious damage it made. We would show off by jumping, flipping, and belly-flopping to the onlooker's awe.



It wasn't long before we were swimming across the span of water, which none of us even thought about the depth and what hazards might impede our dangerous goal to reach the far side. Over there, a large slanted slab of solid concrete awaited our arrival. Like seals basking in the hot summer sun, we would stretch out and let our bodies tan.

Ron Biddle was a life-long friend of mine and a fellow altar boy at St Nicholas Parish in Buffalo now a retired "Flowers From The Courtyard" flower shop owner and proprietor in Williamsville. His parents rented our back cottage, a former 4-car garage my Grandfather built to house his Ford Roadster, which later my mother refurbished as a two-bedroom, kitchen & living space and rented to people on weekly holiday vacations.

At 15, in 1952, we were not alone in the number of boys our age nor the only ones in that bracket. So also, as Catholics, we were altar boys at our home parishes in Buffalo as was Paul Warnick and Don McDonald. While we three never really thought about it, the TH&B Railway designation name also

stood for Don, Paul and my hometowns Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo. We were regular servers at Sacred Heart Chapel before High School.

The only girls we ever knew around Port were the Reid's three daughters next door to me: Joy, June and Joanne. Their younger brother Billy was my brother's age, five years younger than me.

Older boys could and did spend many evenings after supper jumping off the roofs of the vacant moored fish boats on the Feeder Canal. Red Denman, the Curtis boys, many others would wait until the boats were vacant and the days catch sorted, boxed in ice and sent on their way to market. After the fishermen left the premises, the boys would hop aboard and climb up on the roofs to dive head-long into the cool evening water of the Feeder canal. This was clean enough in those years.



Seyah on the left and the former garage is on the right. Now owned by Derek and Fiona Chetwynd

Patrick J. Hayes photo collection

Most of all, many of us found a hike to the Point an adventurous escapade (now a provincial park). Except for the smelly seaweed clusters and the terrain of shale and rocks, it had a clear view of Mohawk Island and huge cliffs. We didn't dare swim around there but took the time to stretch out and sunbathe before the trek back to Port. I actually swam back on a tranquil, hot day while Joanne Reid rowed a small dingy ahead of me. Little did we know, her mother had sent out an alarm that we had disappeared and made a big fuss about the lateness and the fact that we didn't tell anyone about where we were going! I admit - shudder now to think how careless and impetuous we were but that was how it was in those summer days of yore. Those were the happiest of days, long gone now but always in memory. ☺

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My visit to Washington D.C. And 9/11 Memorials!

By Bill Warnick

Early in May this year my granddaughter Cierrah and my sister Margo Calvert went to Washington D.C. We had a great time! We actually ran into people we knew. One of them was a long-time priest friend of mine who made a impulsive and somewhat unexplained visit to Washington to visit the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. He is one of those priests who believe strongly in being prudent with our gifts and maybe eccentrically vigilant to be careful not live above the means of the people he serves.

When I ran into him he told me he had been driven to the Shrine by some busy bodies who believed he should be shielded from the public and always given first class accommodations. He told me he managed to "blow them off" his words; and was taking a cab back to the airport when he realized he did not have any money with him. He asked if he could borrow twenty bucks. I offered more as it would take more for the cab, but Frank being Frank, refused to take more than the twenty. He said he would ride as far as the twenty would take him and he would walk the rest of the way. He needed to get out a bit more anyway! We went our separate ways, but I continue to wonder how he made out and if I will ever hear from him again! *See page 11 for photo.*

On our way to Washington we visited Shanksville Pa, where United Airlines Flight 93 went down on 9/11. I believe the media usually refer to the site as a farmer's field or maybe simply a field. Oddly, enough it was not a farmer's field but rather a restored open-pit coal mine. This is obvious when driving in the mile and a bit from the main road. Still very rough, with uneven ground and every type of weed found in Pennsylvania. I believe it is today just a seed of something which will be very impressive. I would that I could live another twenty years to visit it once more when it is well established. None the less there is a gut wrenching memorial to the forty passengers and crew. In a field some distance from where visitors are permitted to go is a large boulder marking the location of where the plane ended up. A long white memorial wall following the planes path stands just ahead of where it came down. This same thinking would come to light at the Pentagon in Arlington VA. The names of all who died on flight 93 are recorded individually on this wall, each having their own stone. Before reaching this memorial wall is yet another very long walkway with an artificial stone wall the full length of the walk. Placed about every two to three hundred feet are small indented ledges where people leave mementoes behind. They may be a coin, or a crucifix, or some personal medallion. These items are gathered up daily by the National Parks Service personal and some may become part of an interpretive centre presently under construction. <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm>

Off to Washington and Mass at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, where I met my priest friend mentioned above.

First though, we made a stop at the Pentagon 9/11 memorial. This was yet another gut wrenching memorial, well thought out with many small but significant details. A bench which I am sure no considerate minded person would ever sit on with a small reflecting pool under each is placed in the flight line of American Airlines Flight 77. On the end of each bench is the name of one person, starting from the youngest to the oldest at the far end of the memorial. If that person was traveling with someone else those other names are listed under the water in the base of the bench. Those names will be repeated again as you find their personal memorial. What struck me most was that the youngest person; a child of two was in the row next to the second youngest person, her nine year old sister! Names of the people on flight 77 face the Pentagon, while those who died in the Pentagon face the direction of the incoming plane. <http://pentagonmemorial.org/>

The Grand Dispatch is not about the United States. It is intended to tell history which took place along the Grand River. I will end my story on my recent Yankee visit with a note of gratitude to my American friends who for whatever reason became the target of terrorists and have spent the past 13 years redressing that attack. ©

Beckley Beach Memories

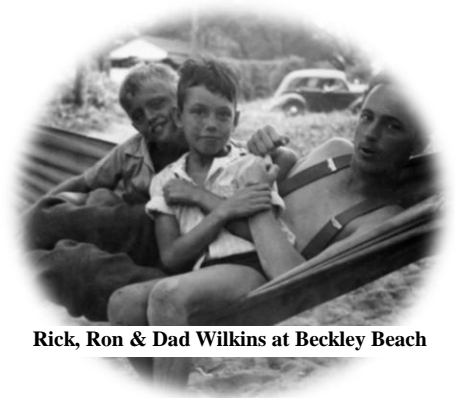
By Rick Wilkins Scarborough ON
All photos by Rick Wilkins

From the time I was a toddler 'till my late teens I spent many happy summers growing up at Beckley Beach. It was an idyllic spot, with a lovely lake, mostly sandy beach, and with young friends from Hamilton, Toronto and Buffalo. My family stayed at my grandparents place "Hursthaven " a small cottage about five minutes walk from the lake.

In the early years, (1940's,) we had no power. We used coal oil lamps which my granddad lit every night at sunset and then blew out at bedtime. When my brother and I were old enough, we carried drinking water from the Culp's pump. Culp's was the last cottage before the pier, and a 10 minute trudge through the sand back to our cottage. The iceman from Root's dairy delivered a big block of ice to our fridge.

The first trip every summer from Hamilton to the lake was always an exciting time for us. As we drove down the canal road and rounded the corner where the canal joins the Grand River, we spotted the lineup of fishing boats across the river headed up by the two largest, the EarleeJune and the Maitland Rose.

There were two ponds walled off from the Grand River by huge boulders which we called "the rocks". The smaller one, closest to the lake was still swimmable in those days. The larger one was where everybody kept their boats. That's where we kept our green rowboat my dad had built in the cellar of our Hamilton home. In the days before power came to the beach, one had to row across the river to McKee's store to buy groceries. I can recall one terrifying incident when my mom and Aunt Kay had gone to buy groceries. While we kids remained at the cottage, a violent thunderstorm erupted with many loud thunder claps and flashing lightning. We were afraid we'd never see them again and we're quite relieved when they showed up completely drenched about an hour later. Their boat had been swamped in the storm and they required rescue by a friendly boater who also salvaged a few floating groceries.



Rick, Ron & Dad Wilkins at Beckley Beach

Hursthaven was "vacation central" for the Hurst family. Although the cottage was rather small (a central dining room/kitchen with a sofa bed, and two adjoining bedrooms with built-in bunk beds), Manny and Florence enjoyed having their family come visit them. I can recall all of my aunts, uncles and cousins staying there at some point and joining in the family camaraderie. We were all there for the celebration of Manny's 70th birthday when people arrived from all over Southern Ontario, New York State and Michigan. At the time, we youngsters thought that 70 years sounded pretty ancient, but nowadays, it's not looking quite so old.

Over the years we made many new friends. One of the first was "Smokey"(the Culp's grandson and the first to smoke). He wanted to grow up to be a Seabee (U.S.

Navy), but I don't know if he ever made it.

Other friends from the lakeshore were David Miesner, Art Jones, and the McGowans (pretty Sally, Jimmy, and Joe) We spent a lot of time at the Denmans' (Sonny & Donny) playing "relieval"(a type of tag) at the sand hills behind their cottage, and doing our Tarzan impression by swinging from the vines in the swamp behind the hills.

Francis Priester was severely handicapped and could only speak a few guttural phrases. But after a while, we were able to understand him and became good friends. He'd invite us over to his cottage to play croquet and miniature golf. He usually won. Donald McDonald (across from the Curtis store) introduced me to my first Stan Kenton record. Exciting stuff with searing brass and pulsating rhythms! That stuff that later drove my parents crazy.

I can't remember exactly when the Curtis' store opened but it became the hangout for all our friends. We'd go there to spend our allowance, play the pinball machine and listen to our favorites on the jukebox (Frankie Laine, Joe Stafford, Johnny Ray etc). The Curtis' youngest son Gord was a bit of a mentor to us, telling us jokes, showing us card tricks, and doing various Chaplinesque shtick. We had our occasional naughty moments too. While someone stood guard, one of us would clamber up the Pepsi truck while the driver lugged a case into the store, and toss a few bottles into the bushes for later retrieval.

The Reid sisters (Joy, June, Joanne and brother Bill) lived a few cottages down from the store. Their place was "Action Central" for the gang. We'd play old Spike Jones records, somewhat off-colour party records, play canasta, and watch the first TV in the beach. Lots of laughs!

A few more doors down along the river was the Warnick house. Their family lived there all year long. I had a budding relationship with the oldest daughter Maureen for a while, but it was terminated due to geography. The other family kids joining in the gang fun were Skip (now Maurice), Lallee, Arthur (now Bill) and Margo. Billy Barnes was the all-American boy (tall, blonde, and handsome). His cottage was on the river a few cottages short of the canal. He was a bit older than the rest of us and hence the leader of the boys gang. He also had use of his parent's slick runabout with a 5 hp Evinrude motor. We'd all pile in and he'd take us down past the point to

Mohawk Island (or Gull Island as we used to call it). We'd skinny dip in the clear waters for a while and then climb the abandoned lighthouse for the views. Tragically, he died in a hunting accident a few years after his family had moved to Florida. *Editors note. This is the same Billy Barnes who died three different ways in Pat Hayes's story!*

My brother Ron & I used to hang out at the fish houses on the canal. We'd pester the older workers to show us how to clean fish and perhaps give us a few to take home. They agreed, but first we'd have to do a few chores. They'd ask us to "run up to the next fish house and borrow the "left-handed monkey wrench". When we eagerly obliged, we were met with howls of laughter. They eventually showed us how to scale and clean fish, which put us in good stead for the rest of our fishing endeavors.

For a few weeks in July, we'd go to the Catholic Church; not to pray, but to play "housie", a variation of bingo. The proceeds went into a "field day fund" and the event was always held on the Marrs' lawn (Andy & Elizabeth Marr). There were the usual potato sack and three legged races; The O'Malley boys always seem to win the long-distance race. My dad and Bill Reid senior once won the horseshoe pitching contest (the prize, a case of beer).

Spending most of our summers at the beach allowed Ron and me to learn to swim at a very early age. I think it was around five years. The next big challenge was to swim "the break". It was about a 20 yard gap in the eastern pier probably caused by ice damage years ago. Naturally, our folks said no! It wasn't until the age of nine that I was able to swim from the second pier to the shore, with my dad rowing beside. After that, we had the green light for "the break". A few years later we were able to swim the river (not too pleasant) and climb the ladder to the lighthouse. This is where we got into some ill-conceived teenage exploits. Bill Barnes was the first. He'd get a boost from one of us to climb up onto the lighthouse ledge (which was about 8 to 10 feet above the pier). After assessing the risk, he'd run as fast as he could, jump off the ledge (clearing the pier) and land feet first into the Grand River about 35 feet below. Those of us who were old enough and foolhardy enough also attempted this, fortunately with no accidents. Even more fortunately, our parents never found out.

Other fond memories: Picking tomatoes at the Paisley farm, along with the requisite tomato fights. - Trips to Dunnville to go to the movies and Root's dairy bar. - Hiking down to "the point" and Niece's farm. - The make-shift baseball diamond behind the Reid's and Warnick's. - The enormous coal boats slowly gliding down the river to the docks.

Alas, not all was rosy in Eden. In the early 60s while driving from Hamilton, one could see the trees dying along the canal road. There was more moss and algae on the ponds and the fishing industry seem to be in decline. The cause, as we later found out, was a chemical company (ERCO) located near Dunnville. The pollution from their smokestack was detailed in a 1967 CBC documentary "Air of Death". So much for "progress"!

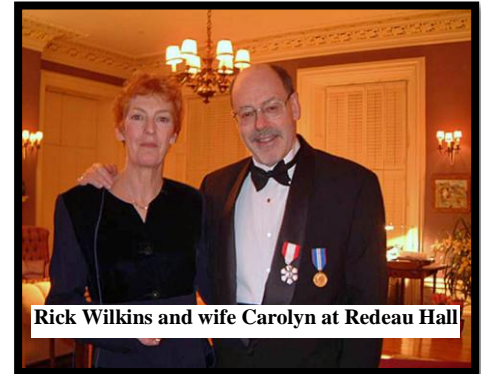
I returned to the "Beach" a few times with my young family; staying once at my uncle Doug and Aunt Mabel's one bedroom cabins and another time renting the Wheeler's cottage across the road from Hursthaven. Francis Priester was happy to meet my two young daughters.

A few years ago my wife Carolyn and I decided to drive down and check out the old "hood". We saw the sign "private property, no trespassing" but decided to ignore it. While driving up the road to look at things, we noticed we were being followed. So we kept on driving, driving up to the loop and turned around, (with the car was still following us.) I decided to get out and find out what the problem was. Turned out it was Eddie Boyle, acting as a neighborhood watch dog. He was a bit surly at first but once I told him who we were, he invited us over for tea and we sat and chatted for two or three hours.

In the summer of 1957 I moved from Hamilton to Toronto to pursue a career in music. I had what we call "a day gig" for two and half years, while I made enough contacts to establish myself as a full-time musician in 1960. I worked as both an instrumentalist and arranger for CBC variety television, working with artists such as Tommy Ambrose, Juliet and Wayne & Shuster. A few years later I had the pleasure of working with Anne Murray, arranging the string arrangements for her big hits "Snowbird" and "You Needed Me." Oscar Peterson has always been one of my jazz heroes. I was fortunate to work with him as an arranger and conductor on such projects as the Calgary Olympics and the opening of Toronto's SkyDome.

While much of my work was in commercial assignments, I still got my big band kicks by working with the Grammy-winning Rob McConnell's "Boss Brass". In a smaller setting, I enjoyed working with the wonderful Canadian guitarist

Ed Bickert. In 2001 I was honoured to receive the "Order of Canada" for my contribution to Canadian music.



Rick Wilkins and wife Carolyn at Redeau Hall

This coming summer, my brother Ron (from California) is coming to visit; and I hope along with him, and my wife Carolyn, that we'll make a trip out to Beckley Beach to have a look at the old "stomping grounds. Maybe the late Eddie Boyle will be smiling down upon us! ☺

New Webpage is now up and running!

www.port-maitland.ca

It has taken some years to get to this point, but finally we have a webpage. Our webmaster (Bill Strong) tells me that a webpage is never finished. It grows with time and availability of information. I believe from what I have already, it also grows as new ideas are added. If you have any ideas for our webpage, please contact us and we will give them every consideration. By the way, before I forget; thanks to Bill Strong for all the work he has already done and will be doing as the page grows.

There are a few pages which I particularly am pleased to have working. The first two that come to mind are the "Grand Dispatch" and the "Publications" pages. Why? Because they fall directly into our charter to share local history. These two pages have all the Grand Dispatches from day one. At this point the publication page has a number of my Dunnville Chronicle articles. As I find time to prepare them for the webpage, eventually the entire set of articles will be included. It is through these pages that all future digital Grand Dispatches will be available to members and non-members. I will no longer be sending them as attachments to emails. However, all

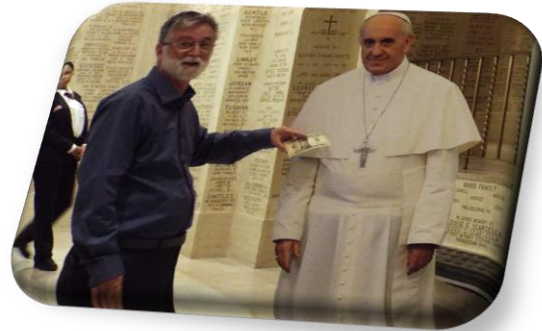
members and non-members will still receive a notice that the newest Grand Dispatch is available on our webpage.

We have a sponsor's link. This is a very important link as it displays all our sponsors and links you to all our sponsors who have their own webpage. Please consider reviewing this page from time to time, and more importantly, if you have the opportunity to support them, please do so.

You will find a genealogy page with charts for families in the Port Maitland area. We are still fine tuning this page. All information on it comes either from public sources or from people who have provided me with their family's information. Currently we show dates and location of birth and death. Some concern has been expressed to me about this. So what is my difficulty? I am trying to decide if since this is public and/or provided information; should these dates be published or should the privacy of living individuals be paramount. Please offer your suggestions. info@port-maitland.ca I am listening and will respond accordingly.

There is a photo link as well. Over the years I have gathered several thousand photos in addition to my post card collection. Most of the photos have obviously come from others. Some of the donors have now gone to their greater glory. Others may not be happy with photos they gave me being given away willy-nilly to anyone who wants to copy them from our webpage. I am also concerned that my many years of collecting could be scooped up in minutes by someone wanting easy access to these photos. To this end, Bill Strong has found a way to prevent the collection from being snatched and any photos that a smart web hunter may be able to obtain has been reduced in size so as to make it virtually useless. If you find a specific photo of interest, you may email me with your reason why you would like this particular photo and I will make a judgment as to whether to send you a workable copy or to decline your request. info@port-maitland.ca In this way I am honouring the work others have done and respecting their trust in me. We are thinking about putting a link on our webpage to assist our readers to find long lost friends. It would not be one of those professional finding pages that cost you money. My vision is that it would have a list of people who want to find someone, naming themselves and the person they wish to find. The seeker would provide his/her email or mailing address on the site and if

someone knew where the individual was they could inform the seeker. This would take our site out of the circle. The search would be strictly between the seeker, the person assisting and the hope to find individual. However, we would love to hear from the successful searchers. ©



Bill loaning Pope Francis twenty bucks!

Let me tell you about Membership with PMHA!

Since the inception of PMHA, we never had more than ten members in our little organization. The Grand Dispatch was never a part of PMHA until the Winter issue of 2013. Then in 2013, we began delivering the Dispatch free to homes; at first in west Port Maitland and Beckley Beach. In the fall of 2013, we delivered them to the Lowbanks area. We also began sending digital copies out to anyone who wanted one including our members. If you wanted a printed copy you had to be a paid up member of PMHA at the annual rate of \$10.00. I do not see any major changes coming in this arrangement in the near future, certainly not regarding cost to you. We do hope though that membership will still be of interest to you. Emailing them has become a nightmare as I need to break down mailing list into no more than twenty-five to thirty recipients. This means I have more than fifteen different lists and that number continues to grow. What happened all too often was that I would get postmaster reports telling me that "some or all" of the recipients "may or may not" have received the attachment or the email. What a nightmare! Last month I had over one hundred of these notices yet only a few actually did not receive the email with the Grand Dispatch attached. It seems it was the attachment that was the issue. (I hope) With the advent of our new webpage, the method of informing the digital receivers their Dispatch is ready

will be changing. We may need to use Gmail and send an email from that server advising the recipient that they can find the latest version on our website at www.port-maitland.ca

As of now, there are sixty-two paid members of PMHA. Since membership numbers are important, we've experienced wonderful growth. This improves our revenue, and is acceptable for now; although the \$10 membership doesn't quite cover the printing and mailing costs. Hence donations are still a great blessing.

Membership numbers will hopefully provide an increase in volunteers as well as give us greater credibility. Granting agencies, whether private or government, always look at membership numbers when applications are reviewed, and hopefully in the future we will seek this kind of help.

We are always very pleased when complementary copies of The Dispatch give rise to extra memberships. Our thanks go out especially to those of you who have been able to support the Dispatch and PMHA in this way.

Dispatch is looking for Writers!

You may have noticed in this and the Spring issue of The Grand Dispatch we had guest writers. This is something we would like to keep up. We are looking for writers who know some history of Sherbrooke and Dunn Townships specifically. However the "On the Grand" was a well thought out and important part of *Port Maitland*, "On the Grand" Historical Associations name. It was put there because we wanted to represent all communities bordering on the Grand River. If you have any stories you would like to write about regarding any area along the Grand River you are invited to send them to us. We like stories such as you have found in this issue. People like to read about names as Pat and Rick wrote about their childhood friends. Dig deep into your memories and tell us about them and send along some photos. You should know though The Grand Dispatch has full use of your articles and your photos. You are still free to use them as you wish, but so can we!

Also, if you know of any stories already written that you feel our readers may find of interest and permission can be obtained from the owner of the story to reprint it, we would be interested in taking a look at it.

We Need More Sponsors!

We want to continue this free home delivery in specified areas (depending on what articles are in a current issue), but this will only happen if we get sufficient sponsors to cover the cost of printing these extra copies. So, please, if you know anyone with a business or even someone who wants to privately sponsor an ad, please tell them about us and ask them to consider contacting us at info@port-maitland.ca.

Boss's note! Well my comments!

The stories by Pat and Rick are one of the reasons I enjoy local social history so much. Pat is a few years older than I and has a fantastic memory. I have no reason to doubt any of his memories; he tells us how he recalled Billy Barnes death. My memory is that Billy and a snorkel diving friend were spear fishing in Florida, possibly for shark and his friends' spear gun discharged accidentally striking and fatally injuring Billy.

I took this question on the road, asking others who may remember this incident. "He was shark fishing and he had a revolver in his pants to shoot the sharks and the gun fired." or "He either was killed in an accident (car) or as a soldier (Vietnam?)" were a couple of the replies.

This is a learning moment for me and maybe for you. As much as I attempt to always be accurate with facts in The Grand Dispatch it remains a repository of peoples' memories, including mine. Memories change with times and circumstances. I know mine does. Please enjoy the Dispatch but if you decide to take on the task of writing an academic history use my notes with caution. It can and I believe is a good source to begin your scholarly research, but it is not by any means a primary or scholarly thesis. It is produced from my memories and research; and hopefully is an enjoyably spent minute or two for your reading pleasure. We will remain wondering how Billy Barnes left this earth!

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS!

From the TORONTO STAR April 13, 2014

"Heaven goes by favour. If it went by merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in."

- Mark Twain

"If there are no dogs in heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went."

- Will Rogers

"You think dogs will not be in heaven? I tell you, they will be there long before any of us."

- Robert Louis Stevenson

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