

# 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

## The Excitement grows as does the Cairn at Port Maitland!

### Cairn Dedication being Planned for Saturday August 29th!

By Bill Warnick

It all began as the result of an archeological assessment at Port Maitland in 2012. Though the assessment failed to find the result hoped for, it did require that this experience not be forgotten. Is there something at Port Maitland that current technology and lack of records have failed to reveal? Will future technology and as yet undiscovered accounts cough up the full story! The new cairn at the mouth of the Feeder Canal will at least keep our 2012 assessment at Port Maitland alive. Maybe because of it, our grandchildren will find what we did not!



The Cairn represents much more than the assessment, but the assessment is the catalyst for the desire to create it.

See Dedication event being planned - page 7:

### An Old Man's Memories to be updated!

In the Winter 2015 issue of the Dispatch I told you we would be updating a book called "An Old Man's Memories by William J. Imlach" This is progressing, slowly but it is progressing! The work up to now has been fascinating; not so much for the local history that is being discovered, but for the international events that are intertwined into the original article. For Instants: The author's wife a daughter of a prominent East India Company hierarchical figure (Col John Johnson) was born in Down House an historic site in southwest London which still exists today.

"Down House" - where the Johnson's lived in Kent England. It is the house, in which most of their children were born, including Wm. Imlach's wife Catharine Louisa  
 This is the house where Charles Darwin conducted his evolutionary research on barnacle; then wrote his major work "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life". This was the books original name. Today "Down House" it is a tourist site.  
 Sketch by W. A. Johnson son of Lt. Col John Johnson

The Journal of Negro History  
 Coverage: 1916 – 2001 (Vols. 1-66)

### THE BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY AND AFRICAN SLAVERY IN BENKULEN, SUMATRA, 1687 - 1792

*In their vast researches on African slavery, historians, especially those from the West, understandingly have stressed the extensive trade from Africa to the West Indies, South and North America. However, this emphasis on the westward movement of human chattel from the dark continent has tended to minimize the fact that European trading companies in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and even as late as the nineteenth century, transported a not insignificant number of African slaves into Asia, particularly into India and Southwest Asia. Among the companies to engage in this traffic to the East, the British East India Company took an auspicious part. Thus while another English company, the Royal*

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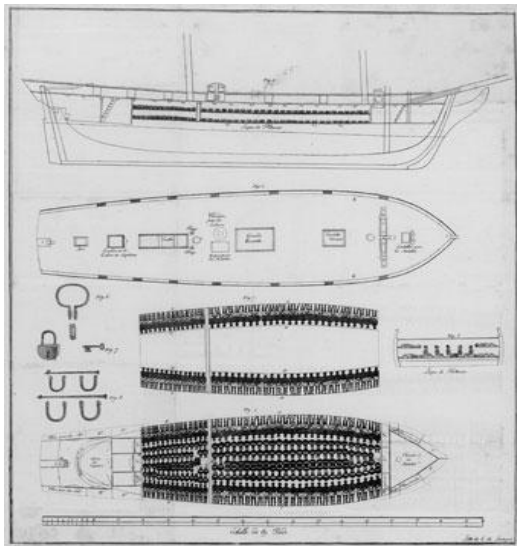
*African, was busily transporting Guinea slaves westward into the then new lands of North America and the West Indies, the East India Company was similarly occupied, though on a smaller scale, with the business of shipping Madagascar slaves to India and the East Indies. This article concerns itself with the latter company's use of African slave labor in its pepper "factory" and fort at Benkulen on the island of Sumatra in the closing years of the seventeenth century.*

*It is significant to note, however, that for almost a year after its establishment in 1686, Benkulen apparently was without African slaves. But as a result of the excessive illness, followed in many cases by death, of the Company's*

### **Britain and the Slave Trade!**

National Archives Great Britain

*In addition to the African companies, other companies set up under Royal charters were involved in the slave trade. For example, the East India Company was involved in the East African slave trade but also collected slaves from the West Coast of Africa for its settlements in South and East Africa and in India and Asia.*



*The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, along with subsequent Acts tightening up the provisions for monitoring and suppressing the trade and international treaties with European and American countries, gave Britain the role of international policeman. Following the passing of the Act, British naval squadrons were set up to patrol the coast of West Africa and the Caribbean looking out for illegal slavers. The Navy also encouraged*

*exploration of the coastal rivers and waterways, bombarded slaving settlements, made treaties with friendly African groups and encouraged other forms of trade such as in palm oil. Britain's diplomatic role led to treaties with slave owning and slave trading countries (such as Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal) if not to stop the slave trade at least to manage it better. This led to the gradual suppression of the slave trade and slavery throughout the Americas and to a lesser extent in Africa, the Middle East, India and the Far East.*

The above articles are cut and pasted with numerous paragraphs not included here. It can be found by going to the following webpage. One must be very careful when referencing any webpage. I leave it up to the reader to come to your own conclusions.

[Britain and the Slave Trade - The National Archives](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/slavery/pdf/britain-and-the-trade.pdf)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/slavery/pdf/britain-and-the-trade.pdf>

### **Why would the above articles be of interest to us?**

As I have only very sketchy information on the background of some of the people who travelled to Canada via New York with Mr. Imlach, I am not in any position to confirm their part in the slave trade, there does seem to be some indications (in some records) that at least some of these people ventured to Canada as their income from slave trading dried up under the British flag and they went elsewhere to create their fortune. It may be that some of our early founders in this area had a connection to slavery prior to arriving in this country. That is of interest and needs recording, however.

*Note: The East India Co. was involved in trading spices, tea and precious items, as well as slaves. Slavery was abolished in the British Empire including India in 1833, only a couple of years before the Johnson party returned to Britain and headed to Dunn Township. As written by Wm. J. Imlach "My grandfather, in retiring from the East India service, brought home with him a black man, an East Indian, who had been his body servant for over forty years . . ."*

### **The History of Minor Fisheries**

By Rod Minor



Commercial fishing in this area dates back to the early 1820s establishing its importance as a major industry for Dunnville and Port Maitland. The natural harbour created by the Grand River along with the completion of the Feeder Canal which opened a passage way to the rest of the Great Lakes and beyond was an ideal location for the fledgling industry. With the abundance of a variety of fresh water fish species, the Grand River fishing business was the precursor to the modern Lake Erie commercial fishing industry and by the first half of the 1900s there were more than 50 fish tugs and fishing boats operating from Port Maitland. Since the 1950s, however, one family has been synonymous with fishing in this area...The Minor Family!

It was 1948 when a very young Wray Minor decided not to follow in the family butchering business but to try his hand at fishing. His brother Bob joined him and they soon purchased a commercial fishery from Harry Siddall. Younger brothers Dan and Pete soon followed in their older siblings footsteps with Dan joining Wray on one boat and Pete working with Bob on the other.

Both Bob and Pete eventually left the business but Wray and Dan continued on with Dan eventually purchasing his own commercial fishing license and boat and going out on his own. Wray and Dan operated their own vessels selling their catches to local packers or shipping their harvests to the U.S. market.

There was also local demand for fresh fish and both Wray and Dan set up small fish stores at their homes where they would fillet their own fish and sell it to the public and to local restaurants and bars.

After many successful years of operation, Wray and Dan decided to join forces once again and in 1974 they built Minor Fisheries Ltd. on West Street in Port Colborne.

The location was chosen because it was located across the street from the Welland Canal, which allowed for easy

access to the fish tugs and for its close proximity to the local market and U.S. border. The plant was designed and built to pass federal regulations so that products processed from Minor Fisheries could be shipped internationally. Minors still hold this designation today.

Minor Fisheries has always been a family affair concentrating mostly on the wholesale market. Wray and Dan not only fished their boats, but they often cut, packed and shipped the fish themselves.


Dan's wife Jeanette ran the small retail outlet and the sons and daughters worked on the boats, in the plant or in the store after school and on weekends. Many extended family members also worked at the plant. Their number one goal was always to provide fresh high quality fish.



Dan's boat the "VAC" as a fish tug

While Wray concentrated solely on fishing, Dan branched out into other areas in which he could use his fish tugs. In the late 1960s Dan started using his fish tug in the natural gas exploration business and in 1972 had a new fish tug designed and built to service the drilling rigs on Lake Erie. The decision to diversify has worked well for Dan and his family. Over the last 30 years Dan has built two commercial dive boats used exclusively in the natural gas business and purchased a number of other boats to meet the various demands of the natural gas exploration and servicing industry.

Continue on page 6:



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Over the last 30 years the commercial fishing industry on Lake Erie has seen many changes. Arguably the most controversial being the introduction of the individual transferable quota system in 1984. Although the system had many flaws, most fishermen would agree it was necessary for the management of the fresh water fishery.

The most trying times for the industry and the Minor Family were in the 1990s. Many small independent commercial fishermen were forced to sell out because of drastic quota reductions and severe fishing restrictions and regulations. Quotas were cut so drastically that Wray and Dan's combined quotas were no longer enough to supply the demand of the local markets or sustain their processing plant on West Street. It was during these very difficult times that Dan and his sons had to make the choice between selling their commercial fishery or investing significant capital to buy out a fellow fisherman in the same situation. They knew if they wanted to stay in the commercial fishing business, they needed to obtain more quotas and the only way that was possible was to buy out another commercial fisherman.



Dan Minor & Sons tug Lynsey Lenore

Quota increases did not happen as fast as the reductions occurred and it soon became apparent that buying out one fisherman was not enough to recover from those earlier drastic cuts or satisfy the local demand for fresh Lake Erie fish. Dan and his sons once again came to the conclusion that they would need to buy out another commercial fisherman in order to make their fishing business viable. It was only after buying out a third commercial fisherman a few years later that Dan was finally back to the quota levels he had prior to the drastic cuts. The investment was significant but the local demand was very strong and his sons were eager to continue in the family business. Fortunately, since these times, as fish populations have

strengthened, quotas have once again increased and the Minors are once again able to supply the ever growing local demand for fresh water fish.

Both Wray and Dan's sons have grown up working in the commercial fishing industry and have gradually taken over for their fathers on the boats, as well as at the plant.

With a new and younger perspective, the Minor boys also saw the huge potential that the location of the plant on West Street offered. There had been many changes to West Street since Wray and Dan first built their plant and their sons decided to start focusing on some of the retail possibilities that were now apparent there. So, in the early 1990s, Minor Fisheries opened up its Take-Out Fish & Chips Restaurant from the front of the plant.

With the success of the restaurant, the introduction of new processing equipment and the demands of regulatory requirements the Minors decided Minor Fisheries had finally outgrown its West Street location and a new modern processing plant was built on Elm St. in 2008

While there have been many changes in the Minor Family fisheries, it is exciting to see that the third generation of Minors are taking an interest in the Family Fishery.

As of the writing of this Issue of this Dispatch, I have not met Rod. Hopefully, that will change on August 29<sup>th</sup> when he brings his fish fry wagon to the dedication of the Cairn at Port Maitland Park East. I know I am looking forward to a Perch Burger!

### **Dedication Event being Planned!**

Continued from page 1:

By the time you receive this Dispatch the cairn at Port Maitland will be all but complete. Currently, we are waiting for the base for the paver stones to be built, and then some armour stones placed to protect the cairn from traffic; and finally the landscaping needs touching up.

On Saturday August 29<sup>th</sup> high noon, we will begin our dedication of the cairn by having perch on a bun and a soft drink. At 1:00 sharp the event will begin with the singing of "O Canada" a few of us will offer up some words, both of historic interest and spiritual value. All are welcome!

[Here are some photos of the cairns progress to date.](#)



Below you will find a list of those who have in some way contributed to the finances or volunteered their time to build the cairn. Spouse's names were used when given to us! It is impossible to put together such a list without missing some names. For that I apologize. If you are aware of any names I have missed, please contact me and I will publish them in the next Dispatch. We are forever grateful to all who have participated in any way to make this cairn possible.

Andrea Warnick  
 Archaeological Research Associates Ltd., Dr. Dean Knight  
 Barry & Margaret Fraser  
 Beckley Beach Cottagers Association  
 Betty Siddall  
 Bill & Wendy Strong  
 Brian Kenney  
 BUCA- Canada Kerry Wilson  
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 Tim & Donna Tufford  
 Tom & Therese Kelly  
 Tom Warnick  
 USW Local 6304, Phil Head, and all who assisted  
 Wainfleet Historical Society  
 Wayne & Nancy Siddall, & Family  
 Wm & Carole Warnick  
 Zynomirski Family

Lock. We are currently only cutting about half of what is available and hope in the near future to be in a position to keep the entire property speck and span.

We will hold a cleanup weekend at the lock and the site of the cairn on Saturday **August 1<sup>st</sup>** and as of course we have great hopes of installing life rings, placing a couple more benches on the lock, trimming all the rough spots and generally making the lock a great place to visit. We must thank the people at **Canadian Pacific Railway** for giving us the lease for the property. Come and give us a hand, Oh bring a rake and a lawn chair!

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### Our other project – Port Maitland Lock

From the kindness of Otto Bulk we have a 48 inch John Deere lawnmower to mow the acres of grass at the Port Maitland