

The Grand Dispatch



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

From Very Real Fish Story to Reality!

Not so fast with those Fish Stories!

So . . . , I am sitting in front of the television completely crammed with the Donald talk and bored to tears! I am also trying to figure out what to write for the Summer Dispatch. Why not make use of my time and Google "Port Maitland", maybe something will come from that! I find lots of articles! Some with information I already know about, while others are either new to me or I only have an inconsequential knowledge of.

First I want to tell you about the articles I already knew something about. I have even written about them or have touched on some aspect of what I found during my Google search.

Even the Library of Congress Agrees!

Brett Kelly, of Dunnville wrote in an article in The Welland Tribune of May 20, 2009 "[A tall fish tale](#) rises from Lake Erie's murky depths."

He tells about swimming at the pier in Port Maitland near the lighthouse and hearing strange noises coming up from the lake, "splashing that could only have come from a very large animal!"

He later learns that there have been numerous media reports including in the Ottawa County Beacon (I presumed in Ohio, but then there is one in Oklahoma.), the Dayton Daily News, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette and the Columbus Dispatch. All newspapers with the highest journalistic accreditations, I am sure! He also notes that articles were carried in the Dunnville Chronicle in the 90s as well as on CBC radio.

Even the Library of Congress keeps records of strangeness of numerous sightings within our Great lakes.

Brett even goes on to hint that as Lake Erie has a overly disproportionate number of shipwrecks. This author (Me / Bill) wonders if maybe, just maybe the monsters

had something to do with this!

In November 2000, I wrote an article for the [Dunnville Chronicle](#) and repeated it in [The Grand Dispatch](#) in January 2002 of a spider catching a fish. No fish story! Really! I told you about the spider catching a rock bass. "A rock bass was seen swimming beneath the bridge behind Haney & Middaugh's Mill in Dunnville. As it rose to the surface, a large black spider suddenly dropped upon the fish, clinging to its back fin."

In the same article I wrote about being fooled by trusted adults. I have grown wiser since I let Archie, Harry, Don and my Father fool me with stories so poorly contrived that anyone with a half a brain knew them for what they were. What I wonder, is did the reporter for the Reform Press ever meet my dad and his story telling chums? In a competing Dunnville paper, only four months previous, the spider and the following bass story was told.



"The physical powers of the Lycosidae, the popular running, ground, or wolf spider, are well illustrated by an instance recorded in the proceedings of the Academy of Natural Science of Philadelphia. The result, as reported, was achieved by pure strength and activity, without any of the mechanical advantages of snare.

Mr. Spring, while walking with a friend in the swampy wood, was attracted by the extraordinary movement of a

large black spider in the middle of a ditch. Closer examination showed that the creature had caught a fish. She had fastened upon it with a deadly grip just on the forward side of the dorsal fin, and the poor fish was swimming round and round slowly, or twisting its body as if in pain.

The head of its black enemy was sometimes almost pulled under water, but the strength of the fish would not permit an entire submersion. It moved its fins as if exhausted, and often rested. Finally it swam under a floating leaf near the shore, and made a vain effort to dislodge the spider by scraping against the underside of the leaf.

The two had now closely approached the bank. Suddenly the long black legs of the spider emerged from the water, and the hinder ones reached out and fastened upon the irregularities of the sides of the ditch. The spider commenced tugging at his prize in order to land it. During an interval of six or eight minutes' the spider had drawn the fish out of the water: then both creatures had fallen in again, the banks being nearly perpendicular. There followed a great struggle, and the fish was hoisted head first more than half its length upon the land. It was very much exhausted, hardly making any movement, and was being slowly and steadily drawn up by the spider, who had evidently gained the victory." This information came from the *Dunnville Gazette* of June 27, 1890

It sounds very much like someone, named Mr. S. Haney, and his buddies had a good laugh at the expense of the *Gazette* reporter who failed to read the competitors paper.

I decided to contact the Academy of Natural Science in Philadelphia to see if they could add anything to this story. I looked them up on the internet and sure enough they are there with an excellent web-page, but no e-mail address available. Even though I am retired from Canada Post, I admit that placing a stamp on a letter seems like too much trouble now that I have been spoiled by cyber-mail. It is likely a good thing that there was no e-mail address, after all what was I going to ask them? Could this be a true story? Duh! Have I once more been fished in! Archie, Harry, Don and my Father would be laughing their sides off at my foolishness. But wait a minute, what if it were true, and I am destined to spend the rest of my life not knowing the truth because I am to vain to ask!

Update! Update! Update! A response is in from the Academy of Natural Science in Philadelphia. Finally an email with the information I wanted from the Academy! See note below from Evan Peugh.

Witmer Stone wrote an article in our 1890 proceedings describing Lycosidae. Here is the citation for the article:

Stone, Witmer. "Pennsylvania and New Jersey Spiders of the Family Lycosidae." [*Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, vol. 42, 1890, pp. 420-434.](#)

Evan Peugh
Archives Assistant

Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, Philadelphia
1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia PA 19103-1195, USA

If you are not receiving this issue of the Dispatch digitally you can type the following to get this article. Stone, Witmer. "Pennsylvania and New Jersey Spiders of the Family Lycosidae." *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, vol. 42, 1890, pp. 420-434.

www.jstor.org/action/doBasicSearch?prq=witmer&swp=on&fc=off&wc=on&acc=off&hp=25&so=rel&Query=Lycosidae

I have looked at this article and nowhere in it can I find any reference to any spider eating a fish. However, true or not, I have found a photo of a Lycosidae spider eating a minnow size fish!

In an earlier article from the *Dunnville Gazette* of July 27, 1888, I found the following tale. "As this is the season for fishing stories, the latest comes from Port Maitland. It appears that one day last week Mr. John Taylor, a resident of that place, while working on the pier, noticed something floating on the water. He got a boat and proceeded to the spot, but just as he arrived at the place where the object had been noticed, it was discovered to be a sturgeon. Mr. Taylor cautiously approached it, and caught it by the tail, but in his anxiety did not succeed in getting it. His fellow workmen on the pier gave him the laugh.

However, Mr. Taylor did not despair, for in a few moments the finny monster again came to the surface, when a second attempt was made by Mr. T. who caught the fish in his arms and landed it in the boat. This is another illustration of what may be accomplished by patience and perseverance. Mr. Taylor returned to his work on the pier, with the laugh all on his side of the

house.” I am not aware of what construction was taking place in the summer of 1888, but apparently there was work being done on one of the piers.

Fair Transportation for Haldimand

Not often, but sometimes I write about current events and this article has both current and past events. The August 10th *The Haldimand Press* had an article by Brandy Fulton titled “*Seeking transportation In Haldimand.*” The article informs the reader of a group of people who call themselves *Dunnville Bridges*. They met recently to discover if there is any possibility of Haldimand having a transportation system that could provide county residents transportation to and from places such as Hamilton. Of course, they desire transportation between the roughly 10 communities within the County of Haldimand as well. Maybe Hamilton was an add-on and inter-county transportation was the first objective!

Yours truly, got into the act by sending them a letter of support suggesting a number of other ideas. This letter found its way into *The Haldimand Press*.

I believe transportation between communities in Haldimand and beyond is of top importance. I hope that by writing a bit about its past will interest folks to demand better than what we have today, which is nothing. Sorry Taxi and Uber companies.

So here is the deal. The following story is the best I have to work with for now. I will try to be accurate, but I know even before I start that you should not ever, ever, or ever use this article when defending your Doctorial thesis! Unfortunately, land transportation information in and around Haldimand has never been high on my wish to know list. This seems like a good time to learn a bit and maybe share some local transportation information.



My best recollection of it was when I was about seven years old my cousin Jo-Anne Reid took me to Hamilton to


see Santa. We got on a Canada Coach bus at the Dougherty coffee shop at about 7:00 a. m. where we began what I thought was a never ending trip. As I recall, the bus went through Cayuga then Caledonia and finally along # 6 highway to Upper James St. in Hamilton to the bus depot on Rebecca St. Later I had occasion to use the bus a few more times and always found it a bit of an ordeal. At least; ordeal or not, I got where I wanted to get to! We can't say that today!



Over varying years of the twentieth century there have been a number of transportation services in the Dunnville area.



Continued on Pg 6



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Continued from pg 3

I can also tell you that: *“Dunnville’s dream of generations has been realized! Tuesday, December 22, 1914, the first regular scheduled train over a competitive railway system entered our town over the tracks of the Erie & Ontario Railway, operated by the TH&B Co.”*

The TH&B ran a bus line from between Smithville and Dunnville in the 1930’s.

I am doing some guessing here, but my suspicion for the existence of this service was that the railway ran passenger service between Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo. In 1914 the railway extended to Dunnville and ultimately Port Maitland. Passenger service became a fixed service to Dunnville year round and to Port Maitland during the tourist season. I am guessing that after 1937 rather than run a passenger train to Dunnville the railway put on a bus!

1937 Photo of TH&B bus in Dunnville L. to R. Joe Murray, Ed O’Dell, Charles Bilger, Manfred Schier, Holsie Webber, William J. Warnick, John Clark, David Hastings, Herb Stonham, Chester Thomas, B Hill, Marvin Shaver, David Brown and driver Bert House



What I can tell you for sure about this bus line is that it still existed as late as August 1955, it was still up and running but had informed the town of Dunnville that “if conditions do not change, the service would be discontinued.”

Even earlier than this, back in July of 1904, *“William Tweed was kept busy every day taking summer visitors arriving from Buffalo from Stromness Station to Port Maitland.”* and of course returning them!

I found an advertisement in the *“Hamilton Tiger Official Program of 1925 of a bus service owned by “Highway King Busses Limited” Phone 389 Dundas. This bus line belongs to Jim Grightmire.”* This is brought to your

attention only as a memory for the old-time residents of Beckley Beach. Mr. Grightmire had a cottage at Beckley Beach for many years. After talking with my cousin Greg Warnick, Mr. Grightmire’s grandson I am not sure if this bus service ever served the Haldimand area.

Another transportation service serving Dunnville during the mid portion of the twentieth century was Greyhound out of the United States. Bus service was from Buffalo to Detroit. The bus passed through Dunnville where it picked up and dropped off passengers at Kline Brothers Service Station.

Archie MacDonald, who farmed just across the road from the Port Maitland lock used his hay wagon and made regular trips to and from the Stromness Station carrying cottagers and locals along with their goods.

A newspaper article from July 1904, tells us of art students from Buffalo finding their way to Port Maitland via the Stromness railway station. *“The Art Students’ League, which goes on its summer sketching trip to Port Maitland this year, will leave Buffalo Saturday, July 2, at 7 a.m., via Grand Trunk Railroad, Exchange Street Station, arriving at Stromness at 8:29 a.m., where conveyances will be in readiness to take passengers to Port Maitland. Returning - leave Stromness Saturday, July 30, at 11:20 a.m. Mr. Edward Dufner [Duffner] accompanies the class as critic this year.”*



Passenger transportation has taken a number of forms in and around Haldimand. Certainly, in the late 1800’s and the early 1900’s transportation by boat or ship was common. In a recent painting by Wm. Biddle that PMHA had for a prize, two methods of water transportation were featured. In this painting is the lake

cruise ship *Olcott* and the river taxi *Silver Spray*. Along with a number of other ships the *Olcott* transported people to and from ports in the United States. The *Silver Spray* owned by Percy Siddall was a local river taxi that gave tours of the river and transported many locals and cottagers to and from Dunnville and Port Maitland.

By the way, ask me about purchasing this print!

On December 1, 1923 Mr Elis Dorsey, proprietor of the REO BUS SERVICE purchased and put into service a bus service between Dunnville and Welland. His first bus was a Guelph built twelve passenger Reo, Model W six-cylinder Reo chassis and as modern as a Pullman car shown below.

“Many of Reo’s passengers were “drummers” (traveling salesmen) who had arrived in Welland by train and were brought to Dunnville to be ensconced with their samples in local hotels. The Reo Bus Service operated between Dunnville and Welland until the early 30s, and the hard times of the depression. From this time on, there was no bus service in and out of Dunnville until 1940 Burt Phillips started his bus service up.” Transcribed from Remember When Series by Lorne Sorge.



“In 1913 Bert Phillips established freight transportation in Dunnville for freight when he put together a team of horse and a wagon moved freight to and from Monarch Knitting Co. and the Grand Trunk Railway station. As motorized trucking came into existence he purchased a number of trucks. In 1941 he built a garage and office at 105 North Cayuga St. By 1952 the Phillip’s Transport Company was one of the largest in the Province.

By 1940, Burt saw a need for people to get around and added a bus to his business. He started with a Coach and Body Co bus. He later grew his bus company to a total of four buses. Over the years his buses ran from Dunnville to Smithville, and Welland. He also ran a

regular run to the Air force station at Dunnville. In 1945, Burt sold his license to Canada Coach who continued service though modified until 1960s”

The above information comes from a note written by the George H. Smith - Dunnville Fire Chief of 1931!



Bert Pettigrew drove bus for 41 years, starting with the Dominion Power and Transmission. (Now that is a bus company I never heard of.) However it would be bought up by Mr. Grightmire’s Highway King Coach Line which was eventually purchased by Canada Coach as was Phillips Coach Line. Bert Pettigrew drove for all these companies.

Bert was well known on his route and much liked. To regular passengers he was “Canada Coach Lines!” Bert would have been the bus driver who took me to Hamilton as a child! Thanks Bert! The ride was long and slow for this youngster, but I still fondly remember that bus driver who until writing this article I had no idea who you were. The last run between Dunnville and Hamilton took place on February 25, 1983. Bert retired in 1971 wearing cap badge number one. He started with number 63 working his way to the top!



MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE!!

As you may recall we advised you in earlier Dispatches “that dues are going up to \$15.00 beginning October 1, 2016.” This is due to the cost of printing and mailing the Dispatch as well as there being more cost to maintaining the Port Maitland lock than anticipated.

Some have still not paid their 2016-2017 dues. Maybe you do not wish to continue. Please just let me know. However we are prepared to make you a deal. To get caught up to (expiry Sept 2018) we are asking you to send us a cheque for \$25.00 only.

All members who are paid up, please remember that your membership ends on Sept 30, 2017. We would appreciate your 2017-2018 dues at your earliest conveniences. With thanks, your executive.

Please make payment to Port Maitland, “On the Grand” Historical Association and mail to Bill at address below.

The Grand Dispatch wishes to thank Judy Kambeitz at the Dunnville District Heritage Association for much of the information used in this article. Photos were also kindly donated by Isaac Phillips, Tom Pettigrew and Judy Kambeitz.

Volunteers needed Badly!

Yes our group is growing older and slower. We are still able to teach you youngens what needs to be done and even how to do it if necessary. Even if we do not return to the lock next year we have our hands full at the cairn.

Correction re. Vol 3-A No 1 Winter 2017

In the winter 2017 Dispatch I told you that Down House was located in India. A misread by myself and worse yet a misgiving of information; again by me! Down House is not in India. It is in Kent England on the south west outskirts of London

PMHA sends proposal to CPR to acquire The Port Maitland Lock.

On August 30th PMHA sent a request to CPR asking them to donate the 9.7 acres of property know as the Port Maitland Lock. Without offering details here, we felt we were able to put together a good package which we felt would benefit both PMHA and the railway. Hopefully by our Fall issue of The Grand Dispatch we will have an answer from the railway and good news for us.

Update: While typing up this note I have received an email from CPR telling me that they are not interested in donating the property but they would sell it for \$35,000!

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