Diving into E. coli
NOTL sewers are contaminating lake, two-year town investigation shows

Children play in Lake Ontario in 2018. The water has had problems with E. coli, according to the town. RICHARD HARLEY

Old, damaged and deteriorating sewer pipes have been allowing untreated sewage to seep into the waters of Lake Ontario at Queen’s Royal Beach for several years, a two-year investigation by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has found.

Investigators hired by the town concluded the sewage and runoff is depositing dangerous E. coli bacteria from human and animal feces (from birds, raccoons and horses) into the lake at the beach area near the gazebo and also the nearby Niagara River.

The worst culprits are broken, disused and inappropriately connected sewer pipes, which have led to an expensive and serious crisis at the crown jewel of the Niagara River.

Darte won’t discuss why public not notified

Former Lord Mayor Pat Darte says he has not read the report on NOTL’s E. coli crisis and he hung up when a reporter asked why he didn’t ensure the public was aware of problems at Queen’s Royal Beach.

On Wednesday morning, Darte, who was lord mayor when the investigation began, was asked why, in the almost two years since the investigation was launched, nothing was said publicly about the investigation or any of the interim reports the town received.

“Well, we didn’t have a report. We didn’t have all the information,” he said.

When he was asked why, when it was known there was E. coli in the water, the public was not notified, he said, “You should ask the staff that. They were in charge of that.”

As mayor at the time, what input did he have into the process? "I’d have to go back and recollect the whole page report on the investigation. Thank you very much," he ended the call.

Darte abruptly ended the interview.

The Saturday derby will also be cancelled. Festivities are set to run May 18, 19 and 20, ending with a fireworks display on Victoria Day Monday at 9:30 p.m.

Stampede cancels derby, moves rides off grass

Richard Harley

The Virgil Stampede is going to be a little different this year.

Due to heavy rains and muddy grounds, rides will be set up in the parking lot of the Meridian Credit Union Arena instead of in the field at the Virgil Sports Park. The Saturday derby will also be cancelled.

Sharon VanNoort, a member of the Virgil Business Association, which hosts the annual carnival, said the rest of the event will be the same, including the concession stands, magicians, special guests, nickel sale and fireworks show.

“Everything else is a go,” VanNoort said. “It will just be different in areas of the park.”

She said because the rides will be taking up the parking lots, there will be “extremely limited” parking, though organizers are trying to find an additional lot nearby.

The schedule is unchanged. Festivities are set to run May 18, 19 and 20, ending with a fireworks display on Victoria Day Monday at 9:30 p.m.

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to act on its recommendations and councillors agreed to do so last week.

The document warns, “If the town is not actively working toward a solution it is certain that the (Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks) will order the town to close the Queen’s Royal Beach and remove the beach designation.”

The town is taking the problem seriously, Di sero said. Sections of “the sanitary system are leaking into the storm sewers, which dump (the contaminants) into the lake.”

“Some of the repairs that are being done will be very quick and have a very large impact” on the problems, she said.

Overall, however, “This is not going to be a quick and easy solution. We are an old community. This is something that took years to get to this point and it’s going to take some time. We are going to move as quickly as we can to resolve the issue, but it may take longer than just a few weeks to fix.”

Most strains of E. coli are not harmful, according to the Mayo Clinic, but some can cause severe abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhea and vomiting.

The report says E. coli levels above 200 CFU/100ml (colony forming units per 100ml of water) lead to beach closings. Queen’s Royal Beach was “posted,” or ordered closed, six times last year due to high E. coli levels, the engineers said.

One chart included in the report shows E. coli samples with between 10 CFU and 2,000 CFU/100 ml in areas near the waterfront park.

The Queen’s Royal Beach water will be tested bi-weekly this summer, the report says.

In all, 11 properties near King and Queen streets in Old Town, mainly private homes, but also an art gallery, a bed and breakfast, and one church, were found to have problems requiring urgent repairs.

However, the report also said it is likely there are more problems elsewhere in town and recommended that every manhole in Niagara-on-the-Lake be thoroughly inspected.

“‘This is not the only area of town that has E. coli levels exceeding (environment) ministry standards,” the report says. In particular, the sewer discharge “located at Two Mile Creek has been identified with similar E. coli characteristics as Queen’s Royal Beach,” the document says.

It also notes that E. coli in storm water is common. Hamilton Harbour, Toronto Harbour and Lake Erie State Park beach in New York state “have similar E. coli issues with storm sewer outlets.”

When the former council ordered the investigation after learning of the situation during a closed session on July 17, 2017, all anyone really knew was that unsafe and abnormally high E. coli readings were occurring off Queen’s Royal Beach.

The engineering firm conducted months of extensive testing, including using CCTV cameras in the sewer system, to pinpoint causes and suggest solutions.

While most of the problems involve deteriorated hookups between residents’ homes and the town-owned sanitary sewers, some of the contamination could be from improper installations, one official told The Lake Report. But many of the sewers involved were installed as far back as the 1970s, so the concern now is fixing things, not assigning blame.

In the case of the town-operated wading pool in Simcoe Park, the sanitary pipe from the pool was connected directly to the storm sewer – instead of the sanitary sewer – allowing contaminated water to head
The investigation from 2017 to now has cost the town $372,404, with planned repairs estimated to push that to $493,000. The report says the town has sufficient budget to cover those costs. Part of that total could be defrayed by government grants of up to $150,000. Property owners are responsible for their own repairs, but could receive government grants of up to $1,500, the report says. There are no estimates for how much each affected resident’s repairs might cost. However, with more investigations required the town’s price tag could increase. Properties on Queen Street, where the most abandoned old pipe connections are located, have not yet been examined by CCTV, the report notes. Parts of Garrison Village are also being checked.

The investigators from GM BluePlan have been quietly compiling and analyzing a long list of problems and recommended fixes. The engineers categorized problems from low to high urgency regarding repairs. Most of the properties listed in the report are homes on King or Davy streets, with one property each on Queen, Platoff and Picton streets. The previous town council launched the investigation in 2017 after elevated E. coli levels were flagged by the Niagara River Remedial Action Plan, a Welland-based organization dedicated to protecting the river’s ecosystem. However, little has been said publicly about the town’s sewer problems, until now.

Many residents whose hookups or pipes were identified as problems, and others’ whose were tested, were apprised of the investigation, however. E. coli is a sensitive issue. Under the heading “Communications,” the report says, “Access to E. coli data is limited as it is sensitive information due to public perception.”

“Due to the sensitivity of the investigation and findings, public awareness and education will be a key factor moving forward.”

“The key to public education is to allow residents to understand the town is doing (its) part to reduce the levels of cross-contamination between the sanitary and storm sewer systems, but in some cases private property sanitary issues are also a contributor to the elevated E. coli levels.”

Some relatively minor problems related to bird and animal feces were also found, according to the engineers. Raccoon feces was found in some storm sewers after the animals were able to squeeze through large openings in some sewer grates. Those grates have been or are being replaced. The report also says monitoring of horse carriage routes showed “horse feces droppings were evident on the road in multiple locations … This confirms that the horse collection bags do not collect all horse droppings. This adds significant E. coli to the storm sewer” when it rains.

Disero said her main concern is fixing the sewer problems related to human E. coli. “I don’t know how you stop geese, I don’t know how you stop raccoons. So I don’t think the horse and carriage operators, the Senneals, or whomever, should be worried at this point. They may want to review the methods they’re using for controlling” their horses’ droppings, Disero said. “I’m not going to say, ‘We need to take them away.’ I’m not prepared to think about the extreme in that regard,” she said.

The full report can be found online under the Council Business tab on www.notl.org.
Editorial: Mr. Melling’s attitude is concerning

Richard Harley
Editor-in-Chief

At the beginning of last week’s Local Planning Appeal Tribunal hearing regarding SORE obtaining party status in ongoing litigation, Two Sisters Resorts Corp. lawyer Michael Melling approached the local media in attendance. He said he would not be offering any comments to reporters.

Regardless of Melling’s worry about his own words being published, not commenting was completely within his rights, and arguably could have saved us all time.

But then, during the public meeting, while the chair was confirming a date for a continuation, Melling advised the crowd he would be addressing them after things wrapped up with a few words from himself and his client.

This is where Melling went wrong — he somehow got the notion that he could force the media out of the room. After he told the audience he would speak later, I asked him if he would be telling the crowd the same thing he told the media about having no comment.

He replied that he would be asking the media to leave, and when I responded that wasn’t going to happen, he proceeded to say he would have the media removed.

Needless to say, no matter who you are — some hotshot lawyer or not — there is a set of reasonable standards when it comes to withholding information from the media and ultimately the public. Journalists covering a public gathering on a matter of major public interest were with their rights to be there.

The idea that Melling did not want his words reported is concerning.

Mr. Melling, you are welcome to come to Niagara-on-the-Lake to plead your clients’ case anytime, but the NOTL media will not be pushed around by your demanding attitude.

ditor@niagaranow.com

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Memories of the Thistle Shamrock

Dear editor:

I am writing in reference to the Thistle Shamrock Restaurant, which was featured in Exploring Photos: with Jim Smith, on May 9. I was the owner of the Thistle Shamrock when that featured photo was taken. I purchased the restaurant on my 21st birthday, March 21, 1963, and sold it to the Oban Inn in December of 1972.

During the time I owned the restaurant, the Shaw Festival was just beginning and the town was developing into the tourist destination it is today.

Monty Ruller
Fonthill

A vintage 1963 menu from the Thistle Shamrock Restaurant.

Wetland Horrors sage continues

Dear editor:

I have to tell you how much I have enjoyed James Tupman’s epistolary serial, The Wetland Horrors, and his concerns about converting the Department of National Defence lands into a park.

The suspense he’s built up for his next installment makes me believe some mysteriously created monster wetland, Swampy Bog, will surely erupt from the murky depths of obnoxious effluvia of the sewer ponds and swallow the lot of us – having first subdued us with West Nile-injected muzzy bite serum and black-legged tick Lyme disease bile.

Ryder Payne
NOTL

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Boats at full sail on the Niagara River. BRITTANY CARTER
Rental properties are a fact of life in NOTL

Dear editor:

Re: the letter: Who wants to live beside a party house? published May 9, the answer of course is no one. But then no one wants to have a noisy neighbour or be next to construction, yet these situations exist for all of us. We don’t evict noisy neighbours or cancel all residential construction or complain about it in letters to the editor.

In fact, many short-term rental owners are not “absentee” but live in town and try to make a small income from renting a second house. Many more have professional managers that live locally and enforce their house rules, such as no parties. Many guests have pets or children and hotels or B&Bs aren’t suitable, yet they want to visit and stay in town, sometimes for a week or more. To suggest limiting rental homes to owner-occupied isn’t what the guests want and certainly isn’t feasible for most owners who don’t want to operate a B&B and serve breakfast to guests. Rentals are a fact of life in this town. They are closely regulated and the licensed owners pay a substantial fee that helps pay for bylaw officers to enforce the rules. If there is a complaint about a rental, the neighbour should first complain to the owner and if that doesn’t work, they should file a complaint with the bylaw officers. Part of the solution would be increased bylaw enforcement over the weekends. That way we can all be good neighbours.

Tony Chisholm
NOTL

A liberal defence of Tory Sam Oosterhoff

Dear editor:

Sam Oosterhoff, the MPP from Niagara West, made himself all sorts of political enemies last week.

The sharks are circling around this young Tory lad. First he called the police on an ostensibly angry mob of septuagenarian bibliophiles storming the Bastille of his Beamsville constituency office. Then, to make matters worse for himself, he spoke at a pro-life rally, and he said he wants to make abortion “unthinkable” in this province. If the Southern Ontario Library Service has a sense of humour it should interlibrariy loan this boy a copy of a book on how to be politically correct in 2019.

I write with the intention of defending Oosterhoff at the political philosophy level. I write as a classical liberal, but I will defend a Tory. Regrettably, most people who call themselves “liberal” today have forgotten what liberalism actually means.

Oosterhoff has done the “unthinkable” in politics; he has committed a thought crime, especially against a group like feminists, a sacred cow group. You can’t criticize these people.

Poor Oosterhoff is going to be relegated to the classes of neo-Nazis, bigots, homophobes, misogynists, Islamophobes, xenophobes, white supremacists and all the other neologisms invented by the phobia-fighters of the left.

So let me give Oosterhoff some philosophical defences. Defending dissenters is an important aspect of Canada’s system of parliamentary government.

For example, Wayne Gates, the MPP whose riding includes Niagara-on-the-Lake, attacked Oosterhoff on Facebook with a weak post. The opening post was something like this: abortion has already been debated; the debate is now long over; it is time to move on.

But Gates’ view is contrary to how the Westminster system of government works.

“Even more important is that in the Westminster process decisions are not final,” writes McMaster political scientist Janet Ajemian in her book, The Canadian Founding: John Locke and Parliament. She goes on to say that this process of decision-making best conforms to the “equality principle” and that “it is difficult to imagine one that is more inclusive.”

Equality! Inclusivity! My goodness, the Westminster system of government sounds like the leftist ideal. (It really isn’t). So even if one completely supports abortion rights, Oosterhoff still has a right as an MPP to continue this debate as long as he wants to.

We should never pass a “permanent law” to end a controversial debate because it is, quite frankly, tyrannical. For example, just before the southern states seceded from the Union, some Americans proposed an “unamendable” amendment to the Constitution. If it had passed, the United States would still be a slaveholding nation in 2019.

Second, if Oosterhoff is going to be crucified by all those oprophoric terms I mentioned earlier (Nazi, misogynist, etc.), then I think he should fight back in the time-honoured tradition of fighting fire with fire.

Take, for example, International Women’s Day celebrated on March 8. I bet that most people think this is a great idea — we should celebrate strong women, inclusiveness, diversity, equality and all of that melifluous stuff. But why should we celebrate a Soviet holiday? Why do we pay homage to Lenin? (If you think I am making this up, please see: https://daily.jstor.org/the-socialist-origins-of-international-womens-day)

So in conclusion, Sam Oosterhoff, if your opponents start throwing swastikas at you in order to defame your name and to silence you, then you can throw a few hammers and sickles right back at them.

Neil Tokar
NOTL
Councillors divided over plastic straw ban

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva

The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake council seemed wary this week of immediately banning single-use plastics in town and deferred the decision to its next meeting, a special session on Saturday morning.

At a marathon council meeting Monday, some councillors questioned how banning single-use plastics would work in the town.

Coun. Norm Arsenault made a motion to ban selling and using single-use plastics in town facilities, parks, town events and public spaces, and use non-plastic, compostable alternatives instead.

He also suggested that town staff speak with the public and business owners, come up with a plan for how to reduce and eliminate single-use plastics and report back to the council with a draft bylaw.

Chief administrative officer Holly Dowd said the town couldn’t do that right now and instead offered to start with town facilities not purchasing plastic straws and stir sticks.

About 57 million plastic straws are sold in Canada every day and about 20,000 plastic straws are used in NOTL daily, Arsenault said in a presentation.

“We were elected to bring change to Niagara-on-the-Lake, change that will benefit all of our citizens,” Arsenault told councillors.

“I seek unanimous support for this motion so that our children, grandchildren and all of our citizens can enjoy a cleaner and healthier future,” Coun. Erwin Wiens said.

Erwin Wiens questioned how the ban would be enforced and what alternatives to plastic items were available.

“I wholeheartedly support what Coun. Arsenault is doing,” said Wiens. “But it’s very premature to ban it at this point in time. I think we need to have more consultation.”

Coun. Clare Cameron said she wasn’t convinced a ban would have the intended impact and said she would support the motion if it only limits the ban to town facilities. Coun. Wendy Cheropita agreed and suggested holding off until the town sees what the province will do about the issue.

“Maybe now is not the time to ban anything but maybe to do with what is in our own control,” Cheropita said, asking how community events would work.

“What would about water?”

You would have to bring in water stations … We really need to think these things through,” Arsenault told councillors the intent isn’t to ban anything up front but to educate the public. Plastic straws, stir sticks and plastic utensils are replaceable, he said, as being talked to some businesses in town that were in favour of a ban.

He said he would like to see a draft bylaw in the next six months after having public consultations and working with the region and the province. Banning plastic bags and plastic bottles isn’t realistic as it would hurt their own businesses, Arsenault said, but he wants “to get the ball moving.”

Coun. Gary Burroughs said he would vote in favour of “getting it going,” but not for imposing the ban right now.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero also asked Arsenault to revise his motion and exclude the word “ban” from it.

The councillors met until 11 p.m. Monday, without completing their agenda. The meeting will resume on Saturday at 9:30 a.m.

Ash trees removed from town’s preferred planting list

Despite objection from Coun. Clare Cameron, Niagara-on-the-Lake town council voted to remove ash trees from its list of species preferred for replanting.

Coun. Norm Arsenault put the motion forward, saying it wasn’t appropriate to recommend planting ash trees in light of issues with the emerald ash borer — an invasive beetle native to Asia, which can damage and kill healthy ash trees. One of the ways NOTL addresses the problem is by removing ash trees based on the degree of the potential danger, according to the town’s emerald ash borer fact sheet.

More news that happened this week:

• Man, 24, charged with sexual assault at Outlet Mall

A man who was cautioned by Niagara Regional Police last week for bothering two girls at the Outlet mall outlet mall has been charged with sexual assault in connection with a separate incident at the shopping centre a few days earlier.

On May 7, police cautioned a suspicious man who appeared to approach two teens. It was later discovered that the same man allegedly assaulted an 18-year-old girl on May 4 at the Outlet mall.

Salith Sarayyupoghe, 24, of Niagara Falls has been charged with sexual assault. He was charged once the May 4 incident came to light, Const. Philip Gavvin said in an email to The Lake Report.

TIDBITS:

Reducing single-use plastics in the community.

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Helping home owners for more than 20 years.
Save Our Rand Estate wins third party status victory

Richard Harley
Editor

It’s now three for three for a group of activists in Niagara-on-the-Lake. A crowd of about 260 people showed up for a public meeting at the NOTL community centre last Thursday morning to show resident support for Save Our Rand Estate, a group that is fighting a hotel and subdivision development on historic properties in town, and advocating for protection of a heritage estate.

The group requested party status at the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal in a matter between the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Two Sisters Resorts Corp.

Two Sisters Resorts Corp. and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake both accepted SORE’s request and meeting chair Blair Taylor granted SORE party status about 20 minutes in, making it SORE’s third time being awarded party status by judicial bodies, the others being the Superior Court and the Conservation Review Board.

The Niagara Parks Commission was also granted party status in the matter. Representative Daniel Richer said it’s “statutory duty” of developers to consult with the NPC on any developments within its jurisdiction, and further, that the town’s official plan states Niagara Parks must be consulted on any development adjacent to the Niagara Parkway.

David Bell, a representative of SORE, had also been scheduled to apply for party status, but withdrew his application during the meeting, saying that for the sake of simplicity SORE would adequately represent his needs. All parties agreed to adjourn the meeting for eight weeks.

Two Sisters lawyer asks media to leave the room

Davies Houses lawyer Michael Melling asked media to leave before addressing stragglers left over from a meeting during which local activist group Save Our Rand Estate was granted party status.

After the meeting, Melling, Two Sisters’ lawyer, addressed people who stuck around to hear a few words from himself and Two Sisters. He asked local media to leave before he would speak. None of the media in attendance left the room.

“So here is what I’m able to share with you since the media won’t leave and what I say will now be on the record,” Melling said.

“When I was retained on this file in January, I candidly didn’t know what I was getting into, but since January I’ve spent a lot of time trying to understand what has happened,” Melling said.

“When I was retained on this file in January, I candidly didn’t know what I was getting into, but since January I’ve spent a lot of time trying to understand what has happened,” Melling said.

“Once I felt I had a sufficient understanding, I asked my client for permission to, and received instructions to, reach out to the lawyers for the town and SORE association, to talk to them about trying to settle the case ... And I said, among other things, that I would consent to SORE obtaining the party status it obtained today.

“I said I would prefer therefore if the discussions among the lawyers and their expert witnesses and their clients remained confidential. And the other parties agreed to that. You may have noticed, since I was engaged, that my client has gone dark in the media. That is because of me ... So regardless of what you might read in the media, while our clients are in good faith discussions with the town and with the SORE association, you won’t be hearing from us in the media. I think that the dialogue has in some respects thus far been counterproductive.”

Lyle Hall, core SORE member, said he thinks Melling’s comments should be clarified.

“It is only the heritage experts who are talking and I have no idea if there is any reasonable prospect of them reaching common ground. There are no other experts meetings planned or under discussion to my knowledge,” Hall said.

“Any suggestion by Melling that agreement on (developer Benny) Marotta’s convention centre and hotel plans can be reached will depend entirely on four things: his client’s willingness to make material changes to his proposal to respect the heritage assets on the entire estate; restore the heritage features he destroyed last November; bring it into conformity with the town’s official plan and minimize adverse impacts to the residential neighbourhood in which it sits.”

David Auger, a resident who was in attendance, said he thinks people should be careful about believing anything that comes from the “other side.”

“The community believed most of what has been said by the other party? No. The other party (Marotta) has said, ‘Trees, nobody loves trees more than I do,’ and he’s on film saying that. That was just before the mass killing of trees. So I take it all with a grain of salt,” Auger said. “I’ve never seen a leopard change its spots before.”

The delay in the procedure is understandable, he said, though he is concerned the provincial government might effectively bring back the Ontario Municipal Board, which was seen to often favour developers.

“All parties agreed to adjourn the meeting for eight weeks.”

“A crowd of about 260 people showed up at the community centre last Thursday for a public meeting about SORE’s application for third party status. Richard Harley, the group’s representative, said it’s been scheduled to apply for party status, but withdrew his application during the meeting, saying that for the sake of simplicity SORE would adequately represent his needs. All parties agreed to adjourn the meeting for eight weeks.”

Did you know?

“The Lake Report’s printer sources 100 per cent of its paper fibre from industry leading paper mills, which use quick-growth, sustainable, renewable plots of trees. The ink is also vegetable-based.

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Segregated black militia honoured

New plaque at Fort George recognizes contributions of the Colored Corps

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Members of Cana-
dia’s black community
received long overdue rec-
ognition Saturday with
the unveiling of a plaque
commemorating the role
of segregated black militia
units in Upper Canada.

The group known as the
Colored Corps is now cel-
brated with the plaque at
Fort George and its mem-
bers are funded for their
role at Queenston Heights
during the War of 1812,
serving during the 1837 Re-
bellion and helping to build
Canada.

Rosemary Sadlier, an Or-
der of Ontario recipient and
founder of the Black Cana-
nian Network, fought for
years for public awareness
of the historical significance
of the Colored Corps, which
served from 1812 to 1850.

In 1994, Sadlier said she
was part of the provincial
effort to commemorate the
Colored Corps. From that
effort, a plaque was erected
at Queenston Heights.

That was a start in bringing
Canadian black history to
light, but there was more
work to be done, she said.

“I was disappointed in
realizing that, even with that
effort, we weren’t seeing
much more in terms of the
commemoration of blacks
in the military.”

She said a stereotype ex-
ists about black people not
having earned their right to
consider themselves Cana-
dians and feels it’s critical
to change that through aware-
ness and education.

“Sometimes that right is
seen as having come about
through their service in
the military. And when you
consider that people of
African descent have been
serving in the military since
before it was even Canada,
and most people don’t know
that, it was very important
to put this into play.”

The plaque serves as a
reminder and as a catalyst to
seek out more information
about the history of black Ca-
nadians and their dedication
to both Canada’s freedom
and their own, Sadlier said.

“I think that whenever
you have a plaque, it’s a
little piece of history that is
structured and tangible and
accessible. It doesn’t tell the
whole story, but what it can
do is allow people to ask
questions. And to wonder
why they maybe didn’t learn
about it in school.”

Sadlier said she would
like to think people will
come away from the plaque
unveiling knowing there
has been a positive, produc-
tive and purposeful black
contribution.

“Not just in the GTA, not
just in Toronto where it’s sort
of assumed and expected,
but everywhere in this coun-
try. Even if you don’t see it
today, it doesn’t mean that
it wasn’t there before, and it
doesn’t mean that it won’t be
there in the future.”

Her initial push for rec-
ognition and education stemmed from learning
about her own fam-
ily’s background, she said.

“I was horrified when I
was in my 20s to realize the
extent to which my family
was involved in the mili-
tary, because that’s just not
something I grew up being
aware of, for many different
reasons,” she said.

She learned that her fam-
ily formed 60 per cent of the
recruits to the Number Two
Battalion, from New
Brunswick.

“I was absolutely shocked.
And, it’s my family,” she
said, adding that her interest
wasn’t just because of her
family’s connection.

“If I don’t have it (the
historical information), and
it’s my family, what about
the people who might not
even begin to consider that
(connection). I think it’s just
really important to be
mindful. And hopefully this
helps to make people more
mindful.”

NOTL Lord Mayor Betty
Dissero and St. Catharines
MP Chris Bittle were
among the dignitaries on
hand for the ceremony.

Brock University
president Gervan Fearon,
who also was in attendance,
said the black community in
southern Ontario and across
Canada play a signifi-
cant role in the history of
Canada.

“The unveiling of the
plaque provides an oppor-
tunity for all Canadians to
become aware of that his-
tory, as well as to celebrate
the outstanding country
that we’ve all been a part of
building,” Fearon said.

Historic life’s work of local humanitarian to be celebrated

The Lake Report

A prominent member of Niagara-on-the-Lake society a century ago will be honoured on Sunday, May 26, for her efforts to help young Polish soldiers struck down by the Spanish Influenza pandemic in 1918.

A special St. Mark’s Church service and dedica-
tion of a memorial stone will celebrate the life and
work of Elizabeth Ascher (1869-1941), who, for her
tireless efforts, was awarded the Polish Knight’s Cross of the Order of Polonia

Restituta, the highest Pol-
ish civilian honour for a
foreigner.

The celebration is a
cooperation between St.
Mark’s Church and the
Polonia Canadian Institute
for Historical Studies.

“Elizabeth Ascher was
extremely important in the
early life of our town,” says
Donald Combe, histo-
rarian and member of the St.
Mark’s archives committee.

“Not only was she called
the Angel of Mercy and
Godmother of the Polish
soldiers, she was instrumen-
tial in establishing the Polish
military cemetery for those
who died from influenza
during their training here.”

Ascher grew up in
Niagara-on-the-Lake. Around
the turn of the 20th century, she became
the correspondent for the St. Catharines Standard, the
Buffalo News, the Mail and
Empire, and the Niagara
Advocate, contributing to
those newspapers for many
years.

She developed interests in
many local causes, includ-
ing: the local library and
historical society, the local
chapter of the Imperial
Order of the Daughters of
the Empire and she started
the local branch of the Red
Cross Society.

She was a board member of
local Boy Scouts and a
founder of the hospital’s
auxiliary in 1920.

In 1930, Ascher became
a life honorary vice-pres-
ident of the Polish Army
Veterans’ Association in
America.

She was also a life
member of the Polish White
Cross and of the 35th Bat-
talion, CEF.

The special service begins
at 10:30 a.m. The dedication
will take place in St. Mark’s
cemetery, followed by a
reception in Addison Hall.

Elizabeth Ascher

Rob Weier

Personal Taxation | Trusts & Estates
Corporate Accounting and Taxation

1567 Highway 55
Virgil, ON
L0S 1T0
905-468-7836

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Advertising Inquiries? advertising@niagarawow.com
Lord mayor bowls them over

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Lord Mayor Betty Disero helped open the Niagara-on-the-Lake Lawn Bowling Club’s official season on Saturday.

Disero was dressed in white and met the group behind the community centre on the lawn bowling green, where she was invited to deliver the first bowl of the season. It was the first time Disero played the game and club president Elly Warren said the lord mayor was a natural.

“She did very well and everyone seemed to like having her around,” Warren said.

Disero said although she hadn’t played before she was excited to see how she would hold up against the club members.

For the opening day, 42 of the club’s 56 members were in attendance, all of them resplendent in their white attire. “Traditionally on a day like that we do wear all white,” said Warren. “And we have a moment of silence for the people that passed away this past year. There’s a welcoming address and then we do a parade, we kind of walk up and down the green with the piper leading us.”

She said the parade is sort of a silly but traditional part of the ceremony. As for the tradition of wearing white for special occasions, Warren said she wasn’t sure where it came from.

“It’s an old-fashioned reason. All other sports used to be white. Tennis used to be white, baseball used to be white. I guess for our official day that’s just what we do. As for where it originated, I couldn’t tell you.”

Warren said 36 members bowled on six greens. The group finished the day with tea and snacks. “It was a really nice afternoon.”

The club began in 1877 and Warren said it has been a vital part of the community since its inception. New members are always welcome, she added.

Karen Balcom’s 44 tops in Business Ladies League

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

Karen Balcom won low gross honours by shooting 44 in Monday Business Ladies League play at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club on May 6.

Other winners were: low net score Petra Brown with 33, closest to the line, #1, Charlotte Kainola; closest to the pin, on #4, Paulene Holmes, on #7, Chris Yakymishen, on #9, Sheila Gayman; closest to the barrel, #6, Judy Obec; longest drive, #2, Julie Hunter, #8, Sally Miller; longest putt, #3, Ria Rosenberg, #5, Suzanne Watson.

The rainy weather so far this month has forced cancellation of most of the club’s league play in the past two weeks.

WOOFs league results: Some members of the Tuesday men’s WOOFs league braved the soggy elements this week.

Don Allen, Jim Macken and Peter Falcetor shared low gross honours, shooting 40. Low net was won by Bill Garrow with a score of 32.

Earl Shore was closest to the pin on #4 and Allen won the hidden hole prize (#7). “Downtown” Jimmy Brown scooped the $33 proceeds from the 50/50 draw.
Sunday  Monday  Tuesday  Wednesday

COMMUNITY FAVOURITES:

Legion Fish Fry every Thursday - 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Duplicate Bridge at the Community Centre, Tuesdays and Fridays at 1 p.m.

Plein Air Then & Now Workshop at Fort George - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Fort George
Ghost Tours of Fort George - 8:30 p.m. - Fort George
Virgil Stampepe - 1567 Niagara Stone Road

Victoris Day
Virgil Stampepe - 1567 Niagara Stone Road
Fun Duplicate Bridge - 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre
Plein Air Then & Now Workshop at Fort George - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Fort George
Monday Night Teen Hang Out - 6 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. - NOTL Public Library/Regional Native Centre

NOTL Rotary Club - Noon - St. Mark’s Anglican Church
Duplecate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
Niagara Golden Age Club: Seniors Euchre - 1:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
Pizza Garden - 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
German Conversation Group - 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre

Simply STEAM Story Time - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
Tinker Thinker Thursdays - 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
Simply STEAM Story Time - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library

MARK’S ANGLICAN CHURCH

Artillery Day at Fort George - 10 a.m.

Six (6th Annual Spring into Bravo Niagara! Presents Piano)

NOTL Rotary Club - Noon - NOTL Community Centre
Niagara Golden Age Club: Seniors Euchre - 1:30 p.m.
NOTL Community Centre
Pizza Garden - 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.
German Conversation Group - 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
NOTL Community Centre

Simply STEAM Story Time - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
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Tinker Thinker Thursdays - 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Simply STEAM Story Time - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.

NOTL Rotary Club - Noon - NOTL Community Centre
Niagara Golden Age Club: Seniors Euchre - 1:30 p.m.
NOTL Community Centre
NOTL Horticultural Society: Climate Change and Gardening - 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
NOTL Community Centre

Simply STEAM Story Time - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Tinker Thinker Thursdays - 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Simply STEAM Story Time - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.

NOTL Toastmasters - 9 p.m. - Niagara College Campus

Know of a local event? Tell us. Submit it directly to www.niagaranow.com or send us an email at events@niagaranow.com
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<td>4 p.m. to 5 p.m.</td>
<td>1 p.m. to 4 p.m.</td>
<td>1567 Niagara Stone Road</td>
<td>every Thursday - 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Art &amp; Fashion Lecture Series: &quot;Exposed&quot; A Brief History of Underwear with Rita Brown</td>
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Flower power

Richard Harley
Editor

Saturday was filled with plant sales in Niagara-on-the-Lake, just in time for Mother’s Day.

In Virgil, the NOTL Horticultural Society held its annual plant sale fundraiser at the Meridian Credit Union Arena, drawing a lineup of about 60 people before it even started. Plants were advertised at a fraction of nursery prices, however similar-sized tomato plants were selling at Horbach’s on Concession 2 for $1.35.

VanNoort Florists also had a coffee vendor outside for those looking for a high-quality brew on their travels.

In Old Town, St. Mark’s held a spring gardening sale, which offered a variety of gardening tools and a selection of plants for a fraction of store prices. A high-quality hose on a spindle sold for $12.50. The sale was helped out by students from the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture.

Also in Old Town, residents on Mary Street held their own sale in front of their yard with plants from their nursery. They said they do it every year on Mother’s Day weekend as a little gift to the community.

All around NOTL there were garage sales with people clearing out old tools for the spring, offering up deals for the keen gardener. All in all the smell of summer was in the air.

$ Tomato price investigation $

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>4-Pack</th>
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<tr>
<td>Horbach’s Farms</td>
<td>$1.35</td>
<td>$1.59</td>
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<td>Seaway Farms</td>
<td>$2.99</td>
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<td>Sunshine Express</td>
<td>$3.29</td>
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Stan Synowicki and wife MaryAnne lined up for the Horticultural Society sale Saturday.

Horticultural Society sale co-chair Sandy Bott, right, helps customers find the right plants for their gardens.

Dorothy, Brianna and Jessica Wiens shop for plants at the Horticultural Society fundraiser sale Saturday.
Families make unique hats for Mother’s Day

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Hat’s off to Mother’s Day. Families celebrated Mother’s Day with tea and crafts at the Niagara Pump-house Art’s Centre’s Tea and Hat-Making Workshop on Sunday.

Partnering with Niagara Parks and the Niagara Historical Society and Museum, the Pump-house launched a new project called Looking Back – Forging Forward. It’s a series of pop-up art workshops inspired by Niagara’s history.

On Mother’s Day, the series brought families together over the historical shako hat while they made contemporary fascinators, the decorative headpieces favoured by British royals, and enjoyed tea and snacks provided by the art centre.

Eileen, Rhannon and Kaius Zorko at the Pump-house for Mother’s Day. BRITTANY CARTER

Hannah Dobbie, children’s program instructor at the Pump-house, said the workshop was made possible thanks to the Niagara Region’s Niagara Investment in Culture program.

“We were given some funding to create events based on Niagara’s history. That’s why we have the shako hat. They have the option to create shako hats or fascinators.”

Dobbie noted shako hats are military hats that were worn during the War of 1812.

The Pump-house has two more workshops planned. One is a printmaking workshop in association with the Mackenzie Printery and Newspaper Museum. The other event hasn’t been announced yet, she said.

The dates for both upcoming events are yet to be determined.
Have some fun

Crossword Puzzle

Across
9. Cliff face (9)
10. South American ruminant (5)
11. One who shapes metal (5)
12. Rhizome (9)
13. Telegraph messages (9)
14. Government supremo in a specified policy area (4)
18. See (7)
20. Upcourageous (7)
21. Vex (4)
22. Caused by overexposure on a hot day (9)
26. Musical note (9)
28. Inexpensive (5)
29. Type of male (5)
30. Cut off (9)

Down
1. Sudden convulsion (5)
2. Type of military flag (10)
3. Made more restrictive (9)
4. Reflecting surface (6)
5. Progressive (8)
6. Utter joy (5)
7. Western pact (1,1,1,1)
8. Cold weather personified (4,5)
14. Retailer (10)
16. Fencer (9)
17. Eighty (9)
19. Memento (8)
23. Perspiring (6)
24. German submarine (1-4)
25. Malice (5)

Last issue’s answers

Across
1. Take in (10)
2. Any building (5)
3. Our (5)
4. Daydream (9)
5. A material that tends to flare (5)
6. A type of race (5)
7. A large ocean (5)
8. Tea (5)
9. A movie opening (10)
10. The end (5)
11. A line (5)
12. A mammal that lives in the ocean (5)
13. A form of dance (5)
14. A type of hotel (5)
15. A large ocean (5)
16. A bird that sings in the early morning (5)
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Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake culture buffs can explore historical connections between Bermuda and NOTL on a fundraising trip organized by the Niagara Historical Society and Museum this November.

The trip will cost $4,100 per person based on double occupancy and $5,200 per person for single occupancy. Applications for the historical society’s excursion are being accepted until May 30.

Gail Lord, president and co-founder of Lord Cultural Resources, said it’s more than just a tour.

“It’s really about people with similar or related histories getting together. I think that’s what people ultimately like about travel. It’s not just about going to see a place. It’s about creating relationships with people,” she said.

Amy Klassen, acting managing director and historical society administrator, said she was inspired by Lord after her company did some work in Bermuda.

“She was down there for a project and she thought there were some real great connections between Bermuda and Niagara-on-the-Lake. There’s the War of 1812 history down there. There’s just a lot of history to the country and culture there that people might want to see,” Klassen said. “So, we decided to put together a package.”

The trip, which is planned for Nov. 14 to 19, will help the museum raise money to cover annual operating costs. The town funds a portion of the operational expenses, but Klassen said the society needs to come up with the rest of the budget.

“The historical society owns and operates the museum. We do get a chunk of money from the town, but the rest is done through admission, fundraising, donations – that sort of thing,” Klassen said.

From the cost of the trip, $500 will go toward operational costs.

Klassen said the trip is a great opportunity for museum members and residents to experience the similarities and differences between Bermuda and Bermuda, with exclusive benefits they wouldn’t find on their own.

“There’s really kind of exclusive things that you wouldn’t get if you went on your own. For example, having a candlelight dinner in the museum with members of the National Trust there and with a tour of the museum. There’s a lot of personal tours.”

The museum is about halfway to its goal of signing up 20 people for the trip, Klassen said.

Lord said she liked the idea of connecting Niagara-on-the-Lake with Bermuda, adding that there are many parallels between the culture, people and history of the two places.

“It’s about bridging the gap across the world, reaching out to another country that is steeped in the history of the War of 1812 as well as an extensive black history,” Lord said. “The trip, while also a fundraiser for the Niagara Historical Society and Museum, is about more than raising money.”

Lord said her company has been working on the expansion plan of the historical society for many years.

“At the same time and purely by coincidence, she said the company was also working on the cultural tourism plan for Bermuda. Lord Cultural Resources is the largest cultural planning company in the world, she said. Through the extensive reach of her company, she’s been involved with 2,600 museum projects in 57 countries around the world.

She said the Niagara Historical Society and Museum is the best overall mid-sized museum in Canada.

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ODE TO BRIAR  
(2009 – 2019)  
By Bill Hamilton

Her empty leash waves in the morning breeze  
Idle to the wind, an icon to our grief.  
A void fills my life, as purpose bows to futility,  
a realization, an empty corner you’re not there.  
Nearby, a Post Office awaits your morning plea  
For a biscuit, and a friendly paw shake.

But shattered news, quells the greeting  
Leaving remorse behind, with those who love you.  
The morning walk seems longer now  
Unnecessary as it were my gait, now slow.  
Like a pup of summer, you romped the fields  
Throwing down your body, on your back,  
You write in pleasure, hitting that spot  
Then, you sprint, tongue lagging in the sun.

In winter, your nose disappears in a white drift  
You look back with the freshness of cold air.  
You leap ahead through deeper snow  
Beckoning me with that look, to catch up.

Almost ten, your youth shines through  
And your summoning love for a welcome pet  
Encouraged those around you to say “hi”.  
As I stand proud, wallowing in your praise.

Oh I know, life does not go on forever but,  
I had hoped you could have stayed longer.  
I will honor your life, and never forget  
I had hoped you could have stayed longer.

I will honor your life, and never forget  
I had hoped you could have stayed longer.  
And your memory will live with me, always.

As I stand proud, wallowing in your praise.  
I will honor your life, and never forget  
I had hoped you could have stayed longer.

Participation in Communities in Bloom was initiated by council in 2015 to showcase the beauty of the town and to connect with the community, Turcotte said.  
The organizing committee covers all five areas of NOTL — connecting the entire town through floral arrangements, gardening initiatives and community participation.

Rene Berttschi, a Communities in Bloom board member, said residents all over town were happy to be involved in the program.  
“This community just jumped on board. This is an incredible community of people,” Berttschi said.

Since many residents have lived “such incredible lives” and have travelled the world, they have been able to bring back home the inspiration of beautiful places they’ve visited, he said.  
That adds to the quality of NOTL’s green spaces and gardens.

Other programs planned by the committee were announced Friday as well.  
The Horticultural Society’s Garden of the Week will run throughout summer.  
Nomination forms will be available through the town’s Join the Conversations page.

Tulips for Trees, which runs in partnership with the NOTL Rotary Club, will feature the sale of tulip bulbs from town displays.  
The proceeds will go toward the town’s tree fund.

A mobile app for the Voices of Freedom park is set to launch on July 9 to coincide with the 226th anniversary of the signing of the Act to Limit Slavery.

It will provide a walking tour of the black history landmarks around town.

The hydro box beautification project plans to turn three transformer boxes in the Historical District into art installations with decorative vinyl wraps.

The project is the result of a partnership between the Communities in Bloom committee, Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro and the Niagara Parkway Arts Centre.

This year will mark Communities in Bloom’s 25th year enhancing community green spaces across Canada.
Exploring Photos: with Jim Smith

**BASKET FACTORY FIRE**

It was the evening Friday the 13th, in January, 1961, when Niagara had one of its biggest fires. The old basket factory at the time was the Canadian Wood Products Ltd. warehouse. It was located at the foot of Melville Street, just inside the entrance to the present Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing Club. This photograph shows the back of the building taken in the 1950s as seen from what is today the Harbor House parking lot.

**SUPPLIED PHOTO/JIM SMITH**

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Managing our legacy

Brian Marshall

Featured

Contrary to any impression I may have given in the past, I wish to state categorically that I do not consider developers “the enemy.” Nor am I a Luddite who believes that anything old is good while all that is new must be viewed with suspicion and contempt.

I do believe, to quote from page 86 of our town’s draft official plan, that “Cultural heritage resources are not renewable resources. Once lost, they are gone forever.” It falls to the community, our elected officials and a town’s public servants to work in concert for protection of that heritage. That united effort requires a clearly articulated and thoroughly documented set of published guidelines which detail all the criteria for treatment of heritage resources and also provide the tools for its enforcement. This is proven best practice.

Further, I believe that heritage guidelines are far more effective when working in concert with overarching protocols for the entire town; the former protecting the past while the latter safeguards the future. Identified as “Community Design Guidelines” in the draft official plan, it is regulation with the express intent of ensuring all new development conforms to the formally adopted criteria/vision of the community. These non-negotiable requirements might variously include such items as “walkability” (pathways or sidewalks), a public greenspace formula (one square foot of greenspace per “Y” square feet of developed land), specifying acceptable architectural streetscape theme(s), and so on. Again, an approach internationally understood as best practice.

The benefits of such guidelines are far too many to detail here, however, consider these general statements:

1. Clear and defined protocols make the town planners’ decision-making process significantly more efficient while reducing the associated risk.
2. Detailed Guidelines provide developers a stable, predictable framework from which a reliable, low-risk project cost-benefit analysis can be conducted.
3. The town resulting from the uniform application of such guidelines is visually and functionally cohesive, quite simply a better place to live.

And isn’t that what we all want?

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The Lake Report’s printer sources 100 per cent of its paper fibre from industry leading paper mills, which use quick-growth, sustainable, renewable plots of land, rather than clear-cutting forests. The ink is also vegetable-based.

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Presented by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service and the Region’s West Health Team

**Thursday May 2:**
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with Natasha Shaw, Palliative Advisor and Niagara Management Consultant

**Thursday May 9:**
Caregiver Relief
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**Thursday May 16:**
Elder Care (Palliative Perspective) Alzheimer’s with Dr. Itshak Kabali

**Thursday June 6:**
MAID - Medical Assistance in Dying with Dr. Karen Dhillon

**Thursday June 13:**
The Importance of Palliative Care with Dr. Iris Adams

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**ALL WORKSHOPS ARE FREE and will take place from 1:00pm - 3:00pm at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre (Auditorium).**

Anyone is welcome to attend! No registration is required.

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“Light snacks and beverages will be served.”

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**The Lake Report**

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When you’re looking for a service or product, check the paper and try someone local first. There are a variety of great businesses inside to choose from — don’t forget to mention you saw them in the paper!

The Lake Report would also like to acknowledge and thank those who have made financial contributions to the paper, whether through our donate button online or by mailing us a check.

The paper encourages all residents to support the paper through a “voluntary subscription.” For those interested in supporting us, we suggest $1 per issue, per household, at $2 issues per year. That’s only $52 — less than most people spend on pizza and wings.

Larger donations are also greatly appreciated. For transparency, donations of more than $1,000 will be published in the paper (with a big thank you) and donors will receive an exclusive limited edition Lake Report mug, as well as a copy of the first edition of the paper signed by staff (Limited to 20 special mugs) to support The Lake Report, mail cheques to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Post Office, L0S1J0, PO Box 724. Please make cheques payable to Niagara News Ltd. and note it as a donation.

Thank you.

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**Exploring Photos: with Jim Smith**

Exclusive to The Lake Report

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**SUPPLIED PHOTO/JIM SMITH**
Virgil was once called Lawrenceville

Denise Ascenzo
Exclusive/The Lake Report

This story is one in a series about Virgil.

A name can mean so many different things to people and how names are chosen can be interesting. A good example is Niagara-on-the-Lake. It has had many different names over its life span: Butlersberg (after John Butler and his Rangers), Niagara (due to its location near the Niagara River), Newark (an English town favoured by Lt.-Gov. John Graves Simcoe), then back to Niagara (when Simcoe left town) and then Niagaran-the-Lake. Even now some people are referring to it as “Old Town,” just to differentiate it from the municipality of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Many towns have had a good reason for their particular name. Niagara originated from the Indigenous language of this region – Onhiara. St. Catharines was named after the wife of Robert Hamilton, a successful businessman and political figure in Upper Canada, and a respected judge. This is not the man that the city of Hamilton was named after though. It was named for Robert and Catharine’s son George Hamilton.

St. Davids was named after one of the founders of the area, David Secord. He was renowned for his service as an officer in the loyalist militia during the War of 1812, as well as being a politician, landowner, justice of the peace and, a brother-in-law of Laura Secord.

Two brothers, John and Colin McNab, received 1,900 acres in the 1790s for their services to the crown during the American Revolution (1765-1783). The town of McNab was named in honour of the two brothers as well as their father, Dr. James McNab, who died in a Loyalist refugee camp in Quebec in 1780.

The Queen’s Rangers used to be stationed in a small hamlet on the Niagara River just under the escarpment. The hamlet is now known as Queenston. Then we have the town of Virgil, a name that seems so out of context with the rest of the community. It has no Canadian historical meaning, no Indigenous meaning and no geographical meaning whatsoever. It is certainly a name designation that needs an explanation.

Loyalist families who had fled to Fort Niagara after the American Revolution were encouraged to move to the west side of the Niagara River to settle in Upper Canada and 16 families had made the move by 1782. They settled in the village of Niagara (now NOTL) and the small community of St. Davids. The St. Davids site was chosen for its water sources to build mills on Four Mile Creek. The Niagara River was never considered for this type of construction as the current was too strong for any mills to operate.

Several mills were built along Four Mile Creek from the foot of the escarpment north to Lake Ontario. The most northern mill was built at Palatine Hill.

In 1783, Black Swamp Road was built from the village of Niagara to the commercial road bridge over the easternmost S-bend in Ten Mile Creek, which was subsequently straightened when the 4th Welland Canal was installed. This road crossed an Indian trail that travelled from the escarpment north, following Four Mile Creek to Lake Ontario. As the name Black Swamp Road indicates, it was no more than a rutted dirt track built with fallen trees spread through marsh land, making the road surface like corduroy, especially after rain washed away the mud placed between the fallen trees in an attempt to make the ride smoother.

With the continued growth along Four Mile Creek, two former Butler’s Rangers, George Lawrence and John C. Ball, decided to settle another community where the two roads met. The village of Crossroads (Virgil) was founded at the junction of the Indian trail and Black Swamp Road.

Black Swamp Road was being travelled on more and the original design of logs over bogs and a rutted dirt track needed changing. Rocks, cleared from fields, were continuously dumped onto the dirt and bogggy road. Soon the name of the road was changed to Niagara Stone Road, which made logical sense at the time.

As the village of Cross Roads grew and became more prosperous, the town’s people renamed it Lawrenceville in honour of George Lawrence (1757-1848), the much admired principal, founder and lay preacher of the village. This name change happened before 1848 while Lawrence was still alive and the local community felt it fitting that the village be named after their leader.

But we have a quandary of how the name “Virgil” came to be assigned to the village of Lawrenceville. It was in 1862 when the postal service was first developed. The story of the name change of Niagara (NOTL) is well known. It was the post office that decided there were too many towns called Niagara. So they designated the town by the falls as Niagara Falls, whereas the other Niagara became known as Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Lawrenceville to Virgil makes no sense. In fact, it was noted that the town’s residents did not want a name change at all. It soon became known that some well-educated postal employee, with a passion for Greek and Roman poetry, had influenced the new name. Since the postal employee knew there was a town called Homer in the municipality, named for Greek and Roman poet Homer, it was an easy leap to renaming Lawrenceville to Virgil.

By the 1900s, the town of Virgil was still a small village of just over 100 residents. It wasn’t until the 1930s, with the arrival of the Mennonites from Ukraine via Vineland and points west, that the town saw any substantial growth. Their contribution to the Virgil community has made the village what it is today.

The name Virgil has no historical significance to the community but as we all understand, names can be changed. As author David Hemmings has stated, “It is never too late to return to the community its rightful heritage and name of Lawrenceville.”

I would like to thank David Hemmings for giving me permission to use his book, “The Cross Roads: Fortune Favours the Strong,” for much of the information in this story. The book can be purchased at the Niagara Historical Society and Museum in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

More Niagara’s History Unveiled articles about the past of Niagara-on-the-Lake are available at: www.niagarawow.com
COMMUNITY

We invite you to submit photos and stories for consideration in this section. Send your submissions to editor@niagararonw.com for a chance to be featured.

Artifact of the Week:
19th Century Penmanship Books

Answer: This week’s artifact is a set of Penmanship books, "Practical Penmanship" and "Mercantile Penmanship," published in 1877 by Adam Miller & Company and Copp, Clark & Company. The books contain exercises for practicing suitable writing skills which would have assisted those wanting to enter the accounting and bookkeeping fields. Two of these books belonged to John Morten Cryder and were geared toward children in public and high school. Well into the 20th century, penmanship was a major subject in public schools with children learning to write with ink, straight pens with steel or brass nibs and specially designed exercise books. Many students who failed to follow instructions were often punished by the slap of a teachers’ ruler on their knuckles.

The Artifact of the Week column is submitted by the Niagara Historical Society & Museum, exclusive to The Lake Report.

Can you guess this artifact? >

Clue: There was no vacancy at the ______.

Betty & Jane: Plunger Patrol
Inspecting NOTL’s bathrooms:
Stagecoach

The Stagecoach accepts a 4/5 Golden Plunger award.

A longtime classic bathroom experience can be had in the heart of Old Town. The Stagecoach’s bathrooms are clean and utilitarian. Their claim to fame is more about familiarity. If you live in Niagara Region, you know the Stagecoach is a favoured breakfast hot spot. We’ve all parked on its porcelain at some time or another. We love the staff, who acknowledge regulars, locals and visitors alike with their friendly service. The smell of toast evokes memories from our youth of late-morning breakfasts after late nights. And by “youth” I mean last week. We ate at the Stagecoach, having slept in after watching the 10 o’clock news the night before. But I could have gone back as far as 1985 for memories. That’s how long the Stagecoach has been operating. This family-friendly diner sports a Diaper Genie. You can rub all you like on that container. We won’t tell you what’s in there but there is no Genie, that’s for sure!

3/5 Gold Plungers

RIDDLE ME THIS:
I fly without wings, I cry without eyes. What am I?

Last Week’s Riddle: I have many keys but can open no doors. What am I? Answer: Piano
Answered first by Margie Enns, as well as by Roger Marcos, Lynda Collet
Also accepted various other answers such as: Maple Tree - Elly Kopp, Sandra Gowans, Britiney Turasz
Typewriter - Dianne Arsenault
Email answers to editor@niagararonw.com for a chance to win a prize.

Artifact of the Week: 19th Century Penmanship Books

 Simply White Interiors

Simply White Interiors

Simply White Interiors

Simply White Interiors
Doug Garrett: A sporting warrior turns 92

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

Doug Garrett is a warrior. A proud former army reservist who still turns out for Remembrance Day every year. A Legion member for 64 years and a Mason for a half-century.

A man who was born in the Roaring Twenties, grew up in the Great Depression and was once a local milkman, making daily deliveries by horse-drawn wagon. A literal legend in the local sporting community where he has set records on the golf course that might never be matched.

A father, grandfather and husband. A cancer survivor who stepped up to be his wife Christine’s caretaker when she was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and dementia.

Garrett turns 92 on May 20, and when you get to be his age, all the numbers in your life are big ones.

Born and bred in Niagara-on-the-Lake, he would be a deserving candidate if there was such a title as “Mr. NOTL.”

At 5 foot 6 and 150 pounds in his prime, he has been a diminutive giant in his community and in sporting endeavours, including playing Senior B level competitive hockey. “I was small, but I was fast,” he recalls.

Growing up in NOTL, “There was very little to do, except get into a bit of trouble sometimes,” he laughs.

Not that they got up to anything really bad. But they all made sure not to be on the wrong side of the L.A.W. “That’s Lew A. Warner. He was the chief of police in town and he kept a tight lid on things.”

Fort Mississauga, the national historic site on the grounds beside the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club, was a favorite haunt for kids in the 1930s, he says.

“Through the para-pets at the fort, we used to play in the tunnels in the embankment around there. We’d crawl through them and every kid in town played there.”

“It was really silly when you think about it because, if they had collapsed nobody would have known where we were.”

“Our parents didn’t know we were doing this, of course,” he says with a laugh.

Eventually the tunnels were closed off. As for the mythical tunnels under what is now the Charles Inn, he says he never saw any evidence of them.

In 1944, when he was in Grade 11, his father John died and young Garrett dropped out and started working to help support his mom and two brothers.

He had been too young to fight in the Second World War, turning 18 just before it ended, but he did sign up for the reserves. He served five years, 1945-50 with the 44th Field Regiment in St. Catharines.

He worked various jobs over the next 15 or so years, including more than a decade as a meat cutter for area butchers and delivering milk the old-fashioned way for Avondale Dairies when his sons David and Paul were young. Garrett and his wife Dorothy were married in 1956, she died of cancer in the mid-1970s. He married Christine in 1979 and they’ve been together ever since. She nursed him through his bout with colon cancer and he cared for her at home until Christine’s daughter Kelly and Garrett made the decision to move her to Upper Canada Lodge.

Back in 1962, Garrett settled into a career with the LCBO, starting at the small store in Old Town. He spent 28 years with the LCBO, eventually as manager of various locations in St. Catharines.

Back in those days, having political connections could help you get hired at the liquor store, and Garrett recalls the last regional supervisor he worked for was someone he and others didn’t get along with.

“He was an appliance salesman from Toronto, a political appointment, and he came in trying to tell us how to run things.” It didn’t end well. Eventually, Garrett and six other managers all retired simultaneously, which caused head office to sit up and take notice, he says.

He’s loved his retirement years, always keeping busy. “Unfortunately, I was a pall-bearer at the funerals for all of six or those guys,” he says. They didn’t really have much to do once they stopped working. “That’s essential,” he says.

One of the things Garrett keeps busy at is golf. Like many young golfers, his first club was given to him by an older player – it was a cut-down, wooden-shafted iron. “For a long time, I only had one club.”

But matters were complicated somewhat by the fact Garrett plays left-handed. Even in the 1970s and ’80s it was tough to find clubs for lefties. In the ’80s and earlier, they were extremely rare. But didn’t deter him. He played and practised and competed. Jack Nicklaus’s record of 18 major golf tournament wins is something that might never be matched. But consider just some of Garrett’s amateur feats on the links in NOTL. He has won:

- Three open championship titles.
- Was runner-up six times.
- Twice seniors champ crowns.

One super senior title (for those 65 and up).

Five “Legends” titles (for those 80 and up – the only time, so far, anyone else has won it is when Garrett didn’t compete). One Champion of Champions seniors title for Niagara district. That tournament pits the club champions from around the area against one another. “I was the first lefty, and probably the only lefty, to have won that,” he says.

Also mixed in there were fivemilers titles at Queenston Golf Club.

In golf, anyone can get lucky and have a hole in one. Garrett has only done it once, in 1951. However, shooting an 18-hole score that is less than your age is a feat that few accomplish. Garrett can’t recall how many times he’s done it, because it has happened so often. And he’s still doing it. Likely his most spectacular course accomplishment occurred on Sept. 20, 1995.

Sometimes in sports, the stars are all just rightly aligned: Kawhi Leonard’s buzzer beater bounces four times on the rim and drops in, Joe Carter steps to the plate and knocks the ball over the fence for a walk-off World Series win.

On that cool, sunny fall Friday in NOTL, almost everything was going Garrett’s way. He shot a remarkable four-under 32 on the front nine – despite a bogey on the 9th hole. On the back nine, he kept it rolling, but somehow bogeyed the 15th, not one of the tougher holes on the course. “Two bogeys that day,” he exclaims. Heading to the final hole, a tough 225-yard par 3 that is difficult to reach in two, he wanted to finish well. “I didn’t hit a good tee shot. It was short of the green.”

So what did Garrett do? He stepped up and chipped into a birdie two.

And a seniors course record that still stands almost 24 years later. Garrett shot 66 that day. He was 68 years old.

That’s what a warrior does.