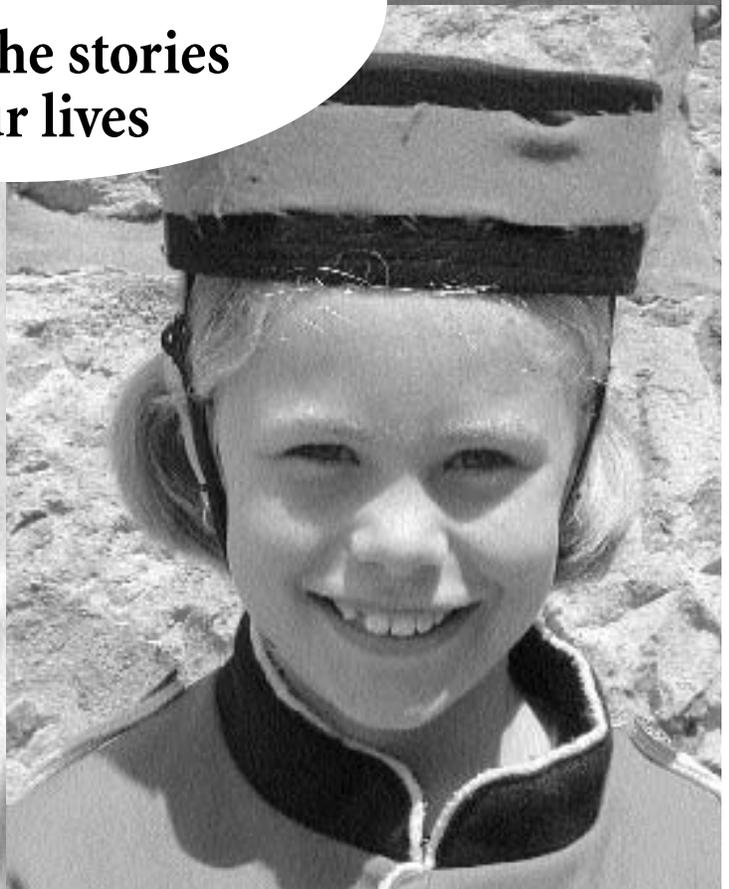
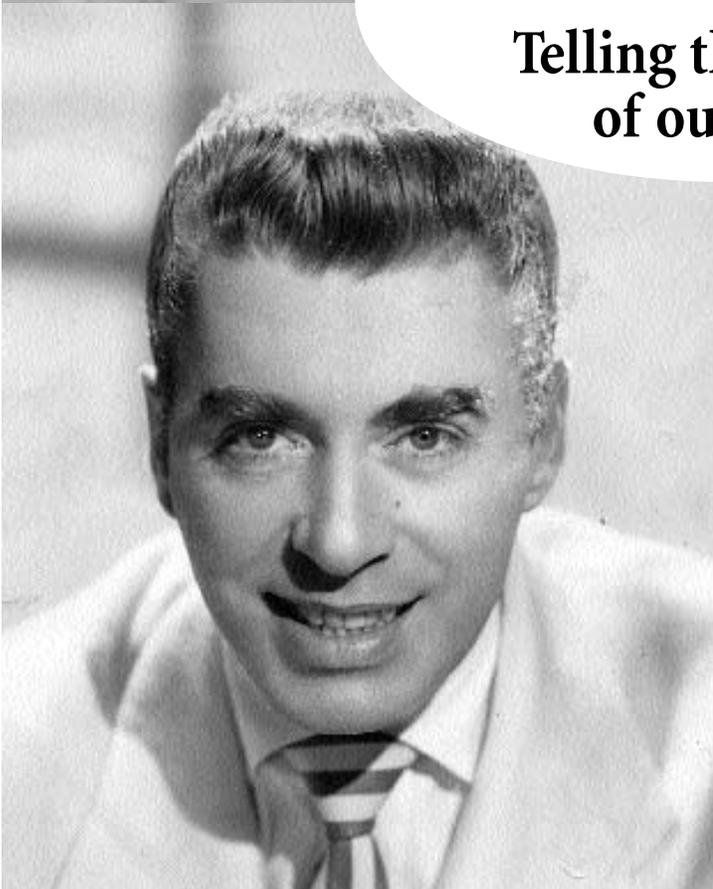




Museums

Telling the stories
of our lives



Newsletter • Summer 2004



Fleet Donation

The management of Fleet Industries is proud to announce that the collection of Fleet archives and historical memorabilia has been donated to the Fort Erie

Historical Museum. Spokesman for Fleet, Brian Oakley said "The Museum is the appropriate place for these local history items to be placed. The general public will have access to them, and we are confident that they will be preserved properly so they will last for generations to come." Oakley commented that "there is so much history in this plant and we want to make sure these photos, documents and items stay in Fort Erie." The Museum is honoured to care for this collection which is currently being catalogued by a group of Fleet retiree's. The Museum was also allowed to produce a video-tour of the plant in operation. Oakley conducted the tour outlining the various production capabilities. The Museum hopes to add memories from the retiree's to this tape in the future. These photos show the Fleet Tuck Shop (above) and Richard Eckert, right, who retired on March 1, 1996.



Fleet Retiree's Volunteer

A new volunteer group is helping the Historical Museum record the history of Fleet by identifying and cataloguing the archival materials recently donated. They meet every Tuesday afternoon at 402 Ridge Road and they encourage other Fleet enthusiasts to join them. Clockwise from top left are Tom

Mullarky, Ken Benner, George Sherck, and Marge Havill.

Newsletter

The Fort Erie Museums Newsletter is distributed once a year to every household and twice a year to those on our mailing list. To add your name to the list call 894-5322.

Written and designed by Jane Davies, Curator.

Cover Photos

Clockwise from top left: volunteers Joan McNeil and Tom Mullarky; visitor Danielle Beroud; and from the archives, Art Mooney.

Contact Us

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Visit Us

Historical: 402 Ridge Rd.
Open daily 9 -5 until Sept. 1
Open Mon.-Fri. 9-5 for the balance of the year
Railroad - Central Ave. at Gilmore Road, Fort Erie
Open daily 9-5 until Sept. 1

Mission Statement

- Fort Erie's Museums care for a base of knowledge that belongs to the future.
- Fort Erie's Museums help create a strong and proud community by celebrating our shared heritage.
- Fort Erie's Museums help satisfy the intellectual needs of the community.



Warren/Lewis/Wintemute Donation

Over 300 documents and photographs from the Warren, Lewis, Wintemute and Curtis families have been added to the museum's archives. This information was provided by Martha Clendening, great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Abraham Wintemute (builder of the oldest existing house in Fort Erie, shown at left). This home at 487 Niagara Blvd. was built



about 1792. Also shown above is the original St. Paul's Anglican Church on the Niagara Blvd. This building was built in 1824 and replaced by a stone building in 1881. The steam ferry International was built for the Buffalo and Lake Huron Railroad in 1857. It ferried trains across the river until 1873, and ran from the foot of Beatrice Street, just north of the Old Fort, to Porter Avenue in Buffalo.

We're Back!

The Historical Museum is open again at 402 Ridge Road. A monitor has been installed, similar to a carbon monoxide detector, but it measures the levels of a chemical called benzene. The source of the benzene, detected in the museum last fall, has yet to be determined, but the Town's Public Works Department continues to monitor the situation.

The Museum is open to the public every day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The photo above shows Museum Board Chairman Bill Kieffer examining the new monitor.





Coverlet Donation

Many residents will remember Billie Blackwood as a teacher at Ridgeway Public School. Before her move to Calgary this spring, she donated her family's coverlet to the Historical Museum. Her mother-in-law, Lillian (Babion) Blackwood, of Ridgeway, cared for this heirloom for years before passing it on to Billie. It is the Double Rose pattern, in green, red and white, and is identical to coverlets woven by the Graf family in Gasline during the mid to late 1800s.



A Moving Diary

It may be comforting to know that the sadness felt when moving is a timeless emotion. While filing the over 400-piece Cruikshank collection, donated by Lee Moore, we came across pictures of Julia Cruikshank and an excerpt from her book *Whirlpool Heights*. In it, she recounts how difficult it was to leave her Garrison Road home. This heritage home, currently owned by Lee Moore, stands on the north side of Garrison near Walmart.

"May 5, 1904

My visit to the old place was very sad. When I saw the placard, "For Sale," nailed upon a pear-tree, I felt it was a desecration...To have lived twenty-five years in a place until it is part of yourself, then to leave it is like death...We had supper in the dear dining-room; the same old scents and sounds; they were doubly dear now I knew I was leaving them for ever. I forgot the dreary days, remembered only the beauty of my life in the red-brick house on the Garrison Road."

"Aug. 9, 1904

When I reached the back part of the farm I began to cry... It broke my heart to see my garden overgrown with weeds...In the house it was still more desolate; I could not keep back the tears... When E. and the furniture had gone I sat down in the white room, and bade good-bye to the past... As I walked down the road every step was filled with memories — sad, now that I knew I would never come back to my beautiful home.

The next morning...as the train moved out of the station the tears filled my eyes, The sun shone upon a hundred fields, and all of them I knew."

A WILLIAMS WELCOME

Thank you to Larry Williams for giving the museums a presence in the Welcome Wagon baskets. Larry has purchased over 1,000 Fenian Raid art cards from the museum, as gifts to new residents compliments of the Williams Funeral Home. Larry has been a long-standing museum supporter. He will also be presenting to each family he serves a copy of our history book, *Many Voices II*.



Tropical Hut Display

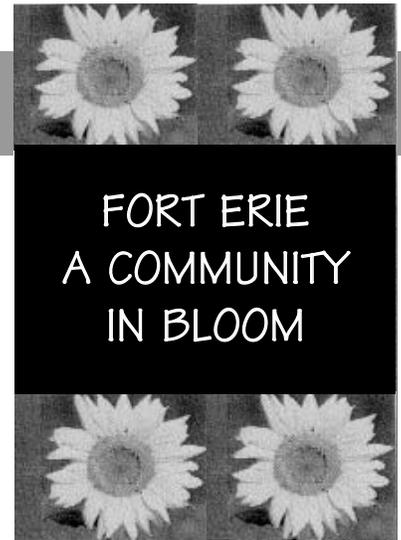
Some may remember it as Cronfelt's, some as the Tropical Hut, but all will remember the colourful signs that used to hang at this outdoor restaurant at the corner of Derby and Lincoln Roads in Crystal Beach. On display at the Historical Museum this summer, they will bring back memories of fruit drinks and sugar waffles!

Archaeology

Work has begun on new exhibits to showcase the 10,000 year-old archaeology collection. The Peace Bridge Authority has generously donated space in their new building and the Town has allocated \$150,000 for the gallery. The Museum is working with the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre and A.S.I. on this project.

Heritage in Bloom

As part of the Communities in Bloom competition, Fort Erie was judged on its heritage preservation and interpretation programs. The Museum provided the judges with 8 pages of illustrated write-ups on the Town's three museums, *Many Voices*, the Archaeological and Heritage Master Plans, Built Heritage Inventory, Archives, and Heritage Loop Tours. You can view this book at the Historical Museum or in the Planning Dept. at the Town Hall.



Hero of Ridgeway

Do you know on whose tombstone is engraved "The Hero of Ridgeway"? It is General John O'Neill, the commanding officer who led the Fenians during the Battle of Ridgeway. O'Neill died in 1878 and is buried in Omaha Nebraska.

Since the capital fundraising for the relocation of the Battlefield Museum exhibits to 283 Ridge Road has been put on hold, an interim Fenian exhibit has been set up at the Historical Museum. The display features weapons, medals, paintings, and maps depicting the famous invasion. A children's activity area and video of the re-enactment of the battle completes the display.



Ridgeway Summer Festival

546 people toured the Historical Museum during Ridgeway's annual Summer Festival which took place July 10 and 11.

Children decorated the Museum's sidewalks, like Josh Wood shown at left, and enjoyed the many free carnival games located on the grounds. The Museum offered free admission during the festival as our thanks for the community's continuing support. Many visitors came prepared this year with family history research questions.

How to Preserve a Wedding Dress

It may be your dress, fresh from that magical walk down the aisle; it may be your mother's, and you marvel at how tiny her waist was; or it may be your grandmother's, made with delicate fabric and tiny hand stitching...whoever wore it, a wedding dress holds treasured memories. For this special garment to be appreciated in the future, it needs special care right now.

Residue from sweat and dirt will darken over time and will leave stains which corrode the fabric. Follow these directions to help preserve your dress. Test the fabric in an inconspicuous spot with water to check for shrinkage, colourfastness and fragility. This is especially important when cleaning vintage clothing. If it passes the test, line a clean bathtub with a large white towel, fill the tub with lukewarm water and a small amount of soap for delicate fabrics. Gently submerge the fabric into the water, and soak. Gently swish. Replace the water as it becomes dirty, and continue to rinse with tubs of fresh water until all traces of soap are gone. When finished, drain the tub and gently roll the garment in the towel, pressing out the water. Using the towel as a support, lift the dress out of the tub, and place onto a dry towel to remove the excess water. Using this towel as a support, carry the dress outside and place on a clean white sheet spread out in a partly shady area of the lawn. When the garment is partially dry, turn it over onto a dry sheet and leave until completely dry.

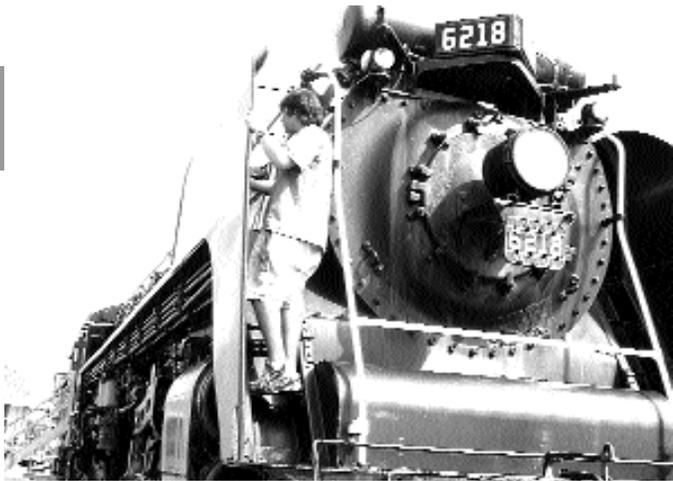
Fold the garment with lots of acid-free tissue, to keep the folds from creasing, and store in an acid-free box. Regular tissue and boxes will stain the fabric and plastic bags and boxes will create mildew.

The best place to store your dress is an area with stable temperature and humidity levels, like a closet or under a bed. The worst places to store items are the basement and attic.

The Historical Museum sells acid-free tissue and boxes. Call us if you have questions...894-5322.



Mr. & Mrs. Kuipers, Sept. 3, 1938.



A Facelift for the 6218

This summer the 6218 steam locomotive is getting painted. Summer students Zach General (at left), Ben Featherston, Amanda Longfellow, and Lindsey Williams have worked diligently scraping and painting. Many thanks to Peninsula Paint and Benjamin Moore for donating paint towards this project.

DONATIONS

Many thanks to Anthony Diina of Ontario Professional Security Services and the Crystal Beach Amusement Days/Crystal Beach Market for their recent financial donation to the Museum and for complimentary space at their event.

LOTTERY SUPPORT

A heartfelt thanks to the Bertie Historical Society and lottery co-chairs, Olive and Ron Bryant for raising funds to support Museum operations — such as this newsletter.



PROVINCIAL GRANT

The annual Ontario Ministry of Culture, Museum's Operating Grant was approved for the Fort Erie Museums, netting the Town a grant of \$18,444. This grant is awarded based on meeting a range of professional standards — which the Fort Erie Museums did!

Gibson Centre

The museum's off-site storage facility at the Gibson Centre is filling up. Many thanks to the Town for providing us with this building and to Ted and Larry Jewson for their moving services.

This building provides cold storage (no heat or air conditioning), and is not suitable for the majority of the collection. Under these conditions the metal artifacts would rust, fabric would rot, paper would mildew and wood would warp.

However, this site provides much needed storage for extra display props and cases. It also provides a fire-proof location for the oversize artifacts, many of which can only be moved by machinery.



Preserving Video Tapes

Do you have videos of important family events such as weddings, your child's activities and other memories you wish to preserve?

Unfortunately, videotapes have a limited life span - 10 to 30 years. In addition to re-recording the information onto a new tape every decade, proper handling and storage can help prolong their life.

Tapes should be handled by their plastic cases and stored upright like books. Think of the cardboard sleeve as a book jacket. Both of these enclosures help keep the tape inside safe from dust, dirt, food and drinks and tobacco smoke.

When at rest, a tape should be left at the end of the play position - not rewind. This will help prevent stretching of the tape. Also, a tape should not be paused for long periods or stored in the VCR.

Avoid storing near extreme heat and humidity (e.g., attics, basements, heat vents and sunshine). As a rule of thumb, cool and dry is the best. Keep tapes at least 3" away from magnetic fields, and not next to stereo speakers or under the TV.

Especially valuable tapes could be copied either onto your computer, another videotape, a CD or DVD. Separate storage for the back-up would ensure that at least one was preserved in case of fire, flood, theft or other disaster.

Source: CCI (Canadian Conservation Institute): Preserving My Heritage - How to Care For series.



Trees on the Beach?

An interesting collection of photos was recently acquired from the Beachcombers Senior Citizen's Association of Ridgeway. Many of the photos are labeled Crystal Beach /1913 and depict people on the beach when it was still partially covered with trees and vegetation. These unique images are now being catalogued and will

become part of the public archives at the Ridgeway site.

INTERESTING WEB SITE

A wonderful resource for people whose relatives served in World War I can be found at www.collectionsCanada.ca/02/020106_e.html

You can search on-line for the records of soldiers from the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF).

This CEF database contains the personnel files of over 600,000 Canadians. It is indexed with the soldier's name, regiment number, and Attestation (enlistment) papers.

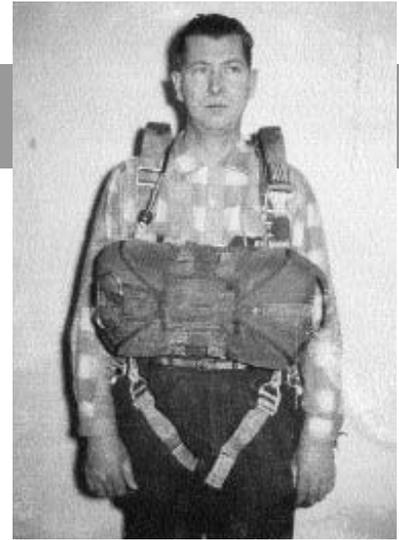
The Attestation papers contain valuable family history such as the soldier's birthdate, birthplace, religion and occupation as well as the names and addresses of their next-of-kin.

Just click on: *Search the database* and follow the prompts. Entering the last name will display a list of soldiers with that name and allow you to narrow your search by clicking on the symbol "A" for Attestation paper. Copies of these records can be ordered through this web site.



Irvin Donation

120 archival photographs and documents from Irvin Industries were donated to the Historical Museum by Robert Brost of Stevensville. The photo at left shows the manufacturing of a FIST Ribbon Parachute in 1958; and at right is an employee modeling a "Snap & U Ring Parachute with Reserve, RCAF C4".



In the summer of 1919, Leslie Leroy Irvin wowed crowds at Erie Beach with his new invention, the parachute. With help from the Curtiss Aircraft Company of Buffalo, he jumped out of their plane, ripped open a backpack and descended to safety. In fact, the first person to parachute from a plane in Canada did so at Crystal Beach. Frank Ellis jumped on July 5, 1919. Leslie Irvin was scheduled to make the jump, but he had to cancel due to a sprained ankle.

That same year Irvin established the Irving Air Chute Company (the extra 'g' due to a clerical error) in Buffalo to supply the U.S. military. A Fort Erie plant was opened in 1925 to meet the British and Canadian military needs.

Irvin's nickname was "Sky High", which he got from a 1914 film called *Sky High* which featured one of his descents from a balloon. Irvin saw the need to adapt the parachute for use by airplane pilots and passengers. He developed the backpack and ripcord parachute which, so far, has saved the lives of more than 100,000 people who have bailed out of a plane.

After 76 years of business, Irvin Industries closed their Fort Erie plant in 2001.

Sherk Reunion

The museum participated in the annual Schurch (Sherk, Shirk) reunion which was held this year in Ridgeway. Schurch's from as far away as Switzerland attended the three-day action-packed event. The museum displayed and offered copies of historical photographs.

Flower Donations

A special thanks to the Fort Erie Horticultural Society for donating and planting flowers at the Railroad Museum; especially Rose Petran, Dorothy McLeod, Maggie Golding, Emma Carpenter, Anne Knutson, Barb Woehl, Bob Stevenson, and Bonnie Gallagher.

Doors Open

Mark Oct. 16 and 17 on your calendar. The Historical and Railroad Museums will be featured in the annual Provincial Doors Open program. Free open houses will be offered at each site, with staff available to answer your antique conservation questions.



A Grand Summer Pic-Nic

A rare poster has found its way home — a gift from the Chatham-Kent Museum. Information found on the poster includes:

"PIC-NIC AND LECTURE

**A GRAND PIC-NIC WILL BE HELD IN CUTLER'S GROVE, RIDGEWAY
on WEDNESDAY, JULY 19th, 1876**

Under the Auspices of BERTIE LODGE, No. 150, I.O.O.F.

Proceedings to commence at 11 a.m.

In order to add to the pleasures of the day, the Committee have secured the services of the celebrated Young's Band of Buffalo

The Programme of the day will consist of A GRAND PROCESSION Of the Oddfellows headed by the Band.

Pic- Nic Dinner in the Grove on the basket system

After which, a large number of Valuable Prizes will be distributed among the successful competitors in Various Athletic Games, as Foot and Hurtle Races, Jumping, Throwing, Climbing Greasy Pole, &c., &c. Swings, Base Ball, Croquet, Quoits, and all kinds of games will be provided.

Lemonade, Ice Cream, and Refreshments of all kinds can be procured on the grounds.

A Collection will be taken up to defray the expenses of the Band.

FUN IN THE EVENING! The Committee have the pleasure to announce that they have made an engagement with the inimitable Cartoonist of "GRIP", J.W. BENGOUGH who will make rapid Crayon Sketches of well-known men in the TOWN HALL, RIDGEWAY

Tickets, 25 Cents, can be obtained at the Stores in Ridgeway, Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Stevensville Arrangements have been made with the Grand Trunk Railway for Special Trains and Greatly Reduced Fares"



The large iron sign that once graced the Fort Erie train station has returned to Fort Erie. An anonymous donor presented the sign to the Railroad Museum. It is now on display along with photographs of the old station. Many thanks to this "quiet" supporter!



New Cards

The gift shop at the Historical Museum is now carrying note cards from local artist Jean Tripp. These charcoal sketches of the Point Abino Lighthouse and Ridgeway Train Station are sold in packages of 5. The gift shops at both Museums carry unique local history and general interest items, with the Railroad site featuring wares for the "train buff". You can shop at the Museums with no admission fee.



Feeling Bilious?

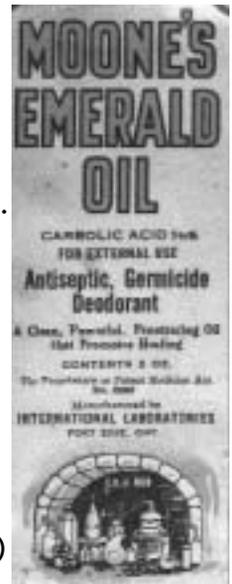
When reading through your ancestors diaries and other papers, you may have noticed peculiar references to their health and wondered what they were suffering from. People caught the ague, catarrh and felt bilious.

Ague was used in the same way in which we use the term flu. The symptoms of ague were fever, chills, aches and a cough.

Catarrh was used to describe a sore throat, cough, difficulty in breathing, laryngitis or an upset stomach.

The term bilious means having too much bile. It was believed that too much of this fluid caused headache, upset stomach, diarrhea and vomiting.

One popular remedy was Moone's Emerald Oil which was made at the International Laboratories in Fort Erie. The instructions included in this box read, "A clean, powerful, penetrating oil that promotes a healthy healing" and includes directions for its use to heal ulcers, burns, cuts, poison ivy, bites, eczema, chafing, neuralgia, gout, sore throats, bunions, hemorrhoids, ingrown nails, and sciatica, just to name a few. Please call us if you know where the International Laboratories was located (894-5322.)



The Museum Board thanks the following people and businesses for their generous support of this newsletter. Please support them!

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