

THE HERALD

THE HEAD-OF-THE-LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY - HAMILTON

NUMBER 68

ISSN 1480 - 0462

Winter - 2006

Reminiscences of John Peebles

I became a member of the Knights of Labor about 60 years ago when I was quite a young chap. I thought its programme would revolutionize the world, not only because of its programme which included co-operation and state ownership of all public utilities, "all means of transportation & communication. Lighting and mining etc., etc." and the purification of politics and of all law and State administration which also included the full belief in the honesty and sincerity of all members of the order.

In short it was a crusade for purity in life generally. Unfortunately that faith did not last out the order. I was a member of an "assembly." The local organizations were called "assemblies" composed almost entirely of employees of the Grand Trunk Railway shops then located in Hamilton and had a larger membership. They had suffered a reduction in wages sometime before and were trying to have it restored. At a meeting the wages committee were to report; the hall would be crowded but as soon as they reported there would be a general stampede for the door and a crush to get out first until only a baker's dozen would be left and it was soon evident that the most of them were only in the order for what they could get out of it.

A man by name of Rowe was proprietor of a labor paper, "weekly" called "The Palladium of Labor" which he issued with varying success for some years. He was editor, printer and reporter and with varying success the whole staff and rarely if ever out of financial trouble. Beginning with my experience with the K of L, and my experience since with men and women in

business, in social and fraternal organizations and in politics and in public office I have concluded men and women are much alike whether day laborer or high paid executive whether industrialist or scrub woman with comparatively few exceptions consider only their own interests and willing to turn a

sharp corner any time if they can get any advantage for themselves.

The K of L soon got into politics. About 1884 or thereabouts they decided to contest the Dominion Parliament and nominated Edward Williams who was a railway engineer. In ability above the average and with quite a gift as a speaker. There was a good deal of enthusiasm but very few funds. To my great disappointment he was hopelessly defeated.



Reproduced courtesy Hamilton Public Library, Special Collections Dept.

The second candidate for office was Hamilton Racey, an employee of the railway shops, a very fine young man. He ran for the Ontario Legislature and was badly defeated. He afterward went as a missionary in the China Inland mission. He died a few years after on the mission field.

The next candidate was Fred Walters, a moulder, a man of very considerable ability. The Liberal Party proposed they nominate one candidate and the K of L one. At that time for the Dominion Parliament the city elected two, the constituency being the whole city.

This was agreed to and the Liberal nominee was Dr. Burns. The Tories were too strong for them they were hopelessly defeated. Mr. Walters afterward became License inspector for this district appointed by the Ontario department....

The next labor candidate was for the Ontario Legislature a number of years after the Knights of Labor had disappeared. A meeting was called of those interested.

Alan Studholme was selected. He was a stove moulder by trade but was so active in labor unions that he was blacklisted and could not get employment at his trade. He was a very fluent speaker and very straight-forward and honest. He was elected for East Hamilton as a labor man and held the seat for a good many years until he died, the only labor member in the legislature....

The next Labor candidate was Samuel Landers for the Dominion house who was defeated in East Hamilton and afterward was manager of the Hamilton city cemeteries. In the election when the Drury Farmer Government carried the Ontario Legislature two labor men were elected. In West Hamilton Walter Rollo and I cannot remember the name of the one in East Hamilton... Rollo who was a broom maker by trade is now truant officer for the Board of

Sam Lawrence who is now Mayor was elected to the Legislature for two terms the only labor member during that period – a strong unionist and C.C. F. [the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the predecessor of the New Democratic Party] member who has been an Alderman and member of the Board of Control for about 25 years except during the terms he was in the Legislature. He is a Stone Cutter by trade but has not worked at it since being elected to the Board of Control about 20 years ago.

Humphrey Mitchell, the present Minister of Labor, was elected about 13 or 14 years ago, a labor candidate in East Hamilton. The Liberals did not put a candidate in the field. Mitchell was an engineer employed by the Hamilton Hydro in one of their substations and asked for leave of absence to attend Parliament. He was not a member of the C. C. F. but a union man and did not get along very well with the C. C. F. members of Parliament and when the next election occurred the Hamilton C. C. F. put a candidate in the field and they were both defeated. Mitchell has since swung over to the Liberals. Of course you remember the election for the Legislature when the C. C. F. almost carried the Province electing all of the Hamilton members but since, only one Hamilton C. C. F. [has been] re-elected for part of the city east of Ottawa and part of the Wentworth County. This brings my recollections of the political experiences of the Labor movement up to date.

The attempts of Co-operation have not been very successful. During the career of the Knights of Labor several group attempts were made in fuel and other household necessities. A grocery store was carried on for some years. Alan Studholme was manager of it most of the time but while it carried on for several years was not a

Reminiscences of John Peebles ...cont'd

success and eventually was sold out and proceeds distributed to those who subscribed to the original capital. They received a few cents on the dollar.

In later years the co-operative milk business has been carried on successfully. While under the auspices of the C.C.F., it is merely a joint Stock Co-op, the bulk of the capital subscribed by one or a few. What dividend they pay I am not informed. I also understand the Milk Producers received a dividend in proportion to the amount of milk they supply. The original idea was to pay a dividend to the consumers but the other companies got busy and the department passed an act or regulation making that illegal. A grocery business is I understand carried on by members of the C.C.F. who have a store in the East end.

There is also a number of these co-operative credit unions in many plants and groups, some of them with a large membership who loan mostly small sums of money to be repaid in installments at a reasonable rate of interest. At some of the larger ones they have a man who devotes his whole time to keeping their books, collecting, investigating applications for loans, etc. I was talking to one of them recently he said they had over 1,000 members and were doing quite a large business and paying him a very fair salary to look after it.

The C.C.F. co-operative I understand also deal in coal; whether it is successfully carrying on or not I am not informed.

Feb. 7, 1946.

Reproduced with permission, Hamilton Public Library, Special Collections Department

Who was John Peebles?

John Peebles was born at Albion Corners in 1872 and moved as a child to Hamilton with his family. In the 1880s, he joined the Knights of Labour and in 1894 opened a jewellery and watchmaking business on King Street East.

After a brief stint in municipal politics, Peebles unsuccessfully ran as the

Liberal candidate for Hamilton East in the 1911 federal election. He re-entered municipal politics in 1917, first as chair of the Cemetery Board (1917-1925), then as alderman for Ward Three (1925), then as a member of the Board of Control (1926-1929) and finally as mayor of Hamilton (1930-1934).

Hot Off The Press...

Picturesque Dundas, a 2005 reprint of the original 1896 publication, is now available for purchase at \$20 per copy at the Dundas Museum. The publication was originally reprinted by the Dundas Historical Society Museum in 1972. In this most recent reprint, modern day addresses have been updated and page numbers and an

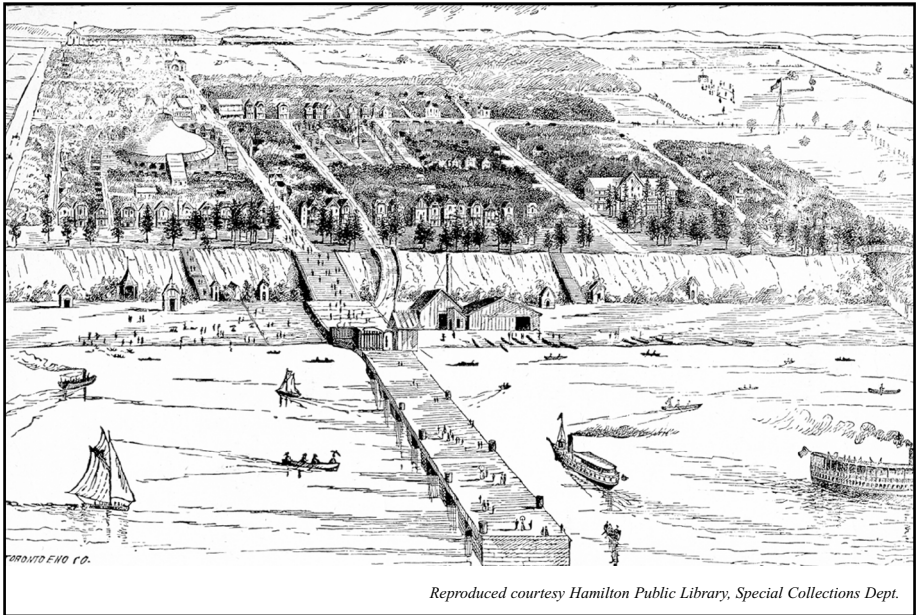
index have been added. The remainder of the book's contents, including the cover and style of binding, are reproductions of the original, "issued in order to put on record in enduring form some of the attractions of a historic Canadian town".

Grimsby Park Walking Tour

In 1859 John Beamer Bowslaugh offered the newly-formed Niagara District of the Methodist Church his property on Lake Ontario just east of Grimsby – the location of a large outdoor temperance meeting in 1846 – as a site for the church’s annual camp meeting. By 1874, it was decided that this location, now called Grimsby Park, would be the permanent site for a summer-long Methodist revival event, and the newly-formed Ontario Methodist Camp Group Company put the whole operation on a more formal and organized footing by purchasing the site from Bowslaugh.

By the 1880s Grimsby Park had become known as the “Chautauqua of Canada”, a reference to the movement originating in northern New York State in the late 1870s which aimed to foster a healthy mind, body and spirit through bible study, entertainment and recreation. Visitors from Hamilton and Toronto could travel to Grimsby Park by the Grand Trunk Railway or by ferry, or use the summer “bus” service from Grimsby or, after 1894, ride on a spur line of the Hamilton, Grimsby and Beamsville Electric Railway. Tents had been replaced by board and batten cottages resplendent with ornate gingerbread trim.

A host of services and amenities were available for visitors including electric lighting, a grocery store, a photography studio, two hotels, a bowling green, tennis courts, and athletic and picnic grounds. The Park’s programmes, focusing



Reproduced courtesy Hamilton Public Library, Special Collections Dept.

4
betterment, were geared to visitors of all ages and included the “School of Oratory”, classes in physical culture (including callisthenics and swimming) and domestic culture or homemaking, popular science lectures, Sunday School and bible study classes, and language classes. Worship services were held in the Grimsby Park Temple, an impressive domed structure constructed in 1888 which, it was said, could be seen from Toronto.

In 1909 the company operating the park went bankrupt, and in 1910 it was sold to Harry H. Wylie, a Cleveland businessman. He and the owners that followed him over time transformed Grimsby Park into an amusement park, with the addition of a midway, a dancehall, a movie theatre, a roller skating rink, a miniature train and other attractions. The Park, now known as Grimsby Beach, continued to be a popular summer destination for vacationers but gradually, with the development of the Queen Elizabeth Way, which cut into the park, residency increasingly became year round, not seasonal. Today, the area is inhabited by permanent

Grimsby Park Walking Tour...cont'd

residents, many of whom have or are in the process of restoring their cottages to their former glory.

The Grimsby Historical Society has recently released a *Historic Walking Tour of Grimsby Park, Grimsby, Ontario: The Chautauqua of Canada*. The walking tour brochure, printed in full colour, features a map of Grimsby Park marked with points of interest accompanied by

contemporary photographs and text. The brochure is available at:

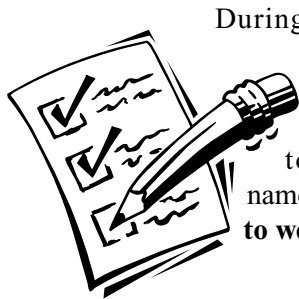
The Grimsby Archives,
Carnegie Building, 25 Adelaide St.,
Grimsby
905-309-0796

Membership News

Rita McEnaney

By the time you read this, spring should be upon us. **Volunteers are needed** for our coffee breaks at the April and May meetings. Anyone willing to volunteer should call me (Rita) at (905) 527-1527.

May I remind you once again to please **bring a cup to the meetings**, in order to help reduce the amount of garbage we produce and make a small contribution towards saving the environment.



During our social time after each meeting it seems friendlier when talking to each other if we get to know each other's names, so **please remember to wear your nametag**.

If you have not yet done so, **please renew your membership**, now is the time to do so.



Doors Open again will take place the first weekend in May. If you wish to **volunteer**, please contact Donna Reid at (905) 528-0136.

When we joined it, the Society was strong and flourishing. We owe that to the people who went before us. When our watch is over, we will try to leave it equally as sturdy. We look forward to 2006 and let us all try to make it as successful as 2005.

May we have a pleasant and good year and continue to live up to our mandate to **“Explore, Preserve and Relate”** the history of our community.

Heritage News

The Ontario Government has taken a major step in protecting the province's marine heritage. Under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, it is illegal to loot or intentionally damage any marine archaeological site. Violators risk fines of up to \$1 million.

A new provincial regulation was filed in January which gives added protection to two of the province's most significant marine sites, those of the Edmond Fitzgerald in Lake Superior and the Hamilton and the Scourge in Lake Ontario. Under O. Reg. 11/06, divers who wish to explore these famous shipwrecks can do so only under a special licence and only for the purposes of scientific and archaeological research. "With more than 500 shipwrecks discovered in Ontario's lakes, our province has some of the finest marine heritage resources in the world," said Culture Minister Madeleine Meilleur. "The sites we have chosen for special protection are unique. We want to ensure that

these fragile underwater sites – all of which contain human remains – are treated with care and respect." (Ministry of Culture news release, Jan. 27, 2006)

The Hamilton and the Scourge are owned by the City of Hamilton.

Resting under 100 metres of water in Lake Ontario north of Port Dalhousie, the Hamilton and the Scourge were merchant schooners pressed into naval service during the War of 1812. They sank in August 1813. Of the 72 crew aboard both ships, 53 perished — the single greatest loss of life on the Great Lakes during the war.

For more information on the regulation, visit: <http://www.culture.gov.on.ca/english/about/n012706.htm>.

For more information on the Hamilton and the Scourge Project, visit: <http://www.hamilton-scourge.city.hamilton.on.ca/>

Heritage Dinner

On February 17th, the Society held its 17th annual Heritage Dinner in partnership with the Workers Arts and Heritage Centre.

The theme for the evening was "*A Night for the Knights*"...and what a night it was! Over 140 attendees listened to Dr. Craig Heron of York University bring the history of the Knights of Labor to life through the eyes of John Peebles, an early Knights' member who later became mayor of Hamilton.

Our annual dinner is a great way to bring together those who share a love of and appreciation for Hamilton's rich history. This year's dinner, celebrating the 125th anniversary of

the Knights, attracted not only members of the

6 Head-of-the-Lake and other local heritage

groups but also representatives of many unions and labour organizations. Also in attendance were Councillors Bob Bratina, Tom Jackson, and Bernie Morelli, M.P.P. Andrea Horwath and M.P. David Christopherson.

Thanks to Gordon Birk and his committee of Dave Beland, Tracy Goegan, Carolyn Gray, Margaret Houghton, Paul Kuzyk and John Reid for organizing the dinner, to the staff of the Workers Arts and Heritage Centre for promoting the dinner among their stakeholders, to Bob Bratina for yet again emceeing the dinner, and especially to our speaker, Dr. Craig Heron, for bringing the Knights to life again.

Other Societies and Activities

❖ **Saturday May 6th & Sunday May 7th**

Doors Open Hamilton 2005 will take place, offering a wonderful opportunity to visit numerous historic Hamilton buildings and attractions, many of which are not normally open to the public. In 2005, 39 sites across the city were opened and over 12,000 site visits occurred! Guidebook and maps will be available through Tourism Hamilton in early April and at participating sites.

❖ **Dundurn Castle**, 610 York Blvd. Hamilton
Saturday, April 22nd: *Etiquette and Manners: Victorian Cooking Workshop*. Prepare a Victorian meal and learn the art of Victorian table setting. From 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Adults only. \$40 per person. Reservations required.

❖ **Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology**, 900 Woodward Ave. (at the QEW), Hamilton

Running until Saturday June 17th:

When Push Comes to Shove: Structure and Design in Buildings and Technology. An interactive look at how things stand up and why they fall down, with a special emphasis on buildings, bridges and working machines. Daily from noon until 4:00 p.m. Regular admission rates apply.

❖ The **Ancaster Historical Society** meets in Old Town Hall, Ancaster at 8:00 p.m.

Friday, March 31st: Ted Smith on *Hamilton Doctors, 1932-1982*

Friday April 28th: *Whistle Stop Dentist*: David C. Brownlow will give an illustrated talk about the experiences of his parents living on the first railroad dental car on the CPR in Northern Ontario, 1931-1935.

❖ The **Dundas Valley Historical Society** meets at the Dundas Museum, 139 Park Street West, at 7:30 p.m. There is a \$2 admission fee.

Wednesday April 19th: *Vanished Hamilton* by Margaret Houghton

❖ The **Grimsby Historical Society** meets in the Carnegie Building, 25 Adelaide St., Grimsby at 8:00 p.m. Admission is \$5.

Wednesday April 19th: *Canadians involved in the American Civil War 1861 - 1865, and the Fenian Raid, 1886* by Tim Warnick, living historian/re-enactor.

Wednesday May 17th: *Pot Luck Dinner* at 6:30 p.m. at St. Andrew's Parish Hall, followed by *the Annual Meeting*, and at 8 p.m. a Musical Treat by the Grimsby Knights of Harmony

❖ **United Empire Loyalist Association, Hamilton Branch** meets at Olivet United Church, corner of Empress and George Sts., Hamilton, lower level at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 23rd: David Beasley on *Canada's first novelist, author Major John Richardson and his connections among the Askin, Hamilton, Cartwright, Beasley and Springer families*

Thursday, April 27th: Dorothy Turcotte speaking on the *Loyalists in Brant's Block at Wellington Square (Burlington)*.

❖ The **Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society** meets in the Fellowship Hall at St. James United Church, Parkside Drive, Waterdown at 8:00 p.m.

Friday, March 24th: *History of Costume and Fashion*, fashion show

Friday, April 28th: *Annual General Meeting*

❖ **Westfield Heritage Village**, 1049 Kirkwall Road, Rockton

Saturday, April 15th: *Friends of Westfield Village Antique Appraisal*. Call for more information.

Saturday, May 6th: *Friends of Westfield Village Plant and Bake Sale*. 8:00 a.m. to noon. All proceeds towards restoration activities at the village.

Other Societies and Activities

Sunday, June 18th: *Father's Day Steam and Machine Day* featuring steam engines and antique machinery displays and demonstrations. Presented in part by the Rockton Antique Agricultural & Hobby Association. Adults \$8.50, Youth 6-12 yrs. \$4.50, children 5 and under are free. Vehicle pass allows the passengers of the vehicle in free.

For more information on these and other activities:

- Ancaster Historical Society: (905) 383-6084
- Doors Open Hamilton: (905) 528-0136 or doorsopenhamilton@sympatico.ca
- Dundas Valley Historical Society: (905) 627-7412 or www.dundasmuseum.ca

- Dundurn Castle: (905) 546-2872 or check the City of Hamilton's web site www.hamilton.ca
- Grimsby Historical Society: (905) 309-0796 or <http://westniagara.com/ghs/index.html>
- Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology: (905) 546-4797 or check the City of Hamilton's web site at www.hamilton.ca
- United Empire Loyalist Association, Hamilton Branch: www.uel-hamilton.com/
- Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society: (905) 689-4074 or www.wefhs.hamilton.ca/
- Westfield Heritage Village: (519) 621-8851 or www.westfieldheritage.ca

Forthcoming Society Meetings

Friday, April 7th: *Camelot in Canada: Why is Lancelot on Wellington Street?* Professor H. V. Nelles, award-winning author and the L.R. Wilson Professor in Canadian History at McMaster University, will address the society. 7:30 p.m. Location: Canadian Football Hall of Fame.

Friday, May 12th: *Museums Month: Dundas Historical Society Museum.* The Dundas Historical Society Museum and their new exhibits will be the focus of our annual look at some of Hamilton's noted museums hosted by curator Carolyn Westoby. 7:30 p.m. Location: Dundas Historical Society Museum, 139 Park St. W., Dundas



REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE OF THE HERALD:

Jim Auty, Gordon Birk, Carolyn Gray,
Margaret Houghton, Rita McEnaney.

Mailing Address:

The Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society
P.O. Box 896, Hamilton, ON L8N 3P6

Phone: 905-527-1527

Website: www.headofthelake.ca

