

## Our May 2021 Speaker - Dr. Robin McLachlan



Miles Canyon, en route to the Klondike (Courtesy Yukon Archives)

Our May speaker, **Dr Robin McLachlan** was born in Edmonton, Alberta, where he graduated from the University of Alberta with a BA Honours and an MA in History. Awarded a Canada Council Doctoral Fellowship, he continued his studies at the Australian National University in Canberra, graduating in 1976 with a Ph.D. in Far Eastern History. Having discovered that one could live in Australia without having to invest in snow tires (Aust: tyres), Robin and his wife opted to remain there.

Robin has taught widely in history, but over time gravitated to both teaching and working in the fields of public history and heritage studies.

Robin lives in Bathurst, New South Wales, which is the oldest European settlement in inland Australia, established in 1815. He is presently working on a history of the first twenty-five years of Bathurst – his third such history on the early settlement – which will be published by Bathurst Regional Council – when he gets it finished.

His interest in the experiences of *Australians and New Zealanders on the Klondike* began about ten years ago following a solitary “midnight sun” visit to a Dawson City cemetery. What he found that night set off an ongoing enquiry seeking the stories of these men and women far from home – and three metres of archive boxes. Robin will be presenting his paper on behalf of the Royal Australian Historical Society, who were invited to provide a speaker for the Burlington Historical Society.

### *May 2021 Speaker*

Join us on ZOOM

Monday 10 May 2021 at 7 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82038622369?pwd=TytJeFVNV09TdGEwMnZ0VW4vTjFidz09>

# President's Report *Joan Downey*

Here we are, heading into summer of 2021, which promises to be a repeat of summer 2020 with many restrictions in place to deal with the COVID19 pandemic. But, now that many of us have received our first vaccine shot there is a little less apprehension about our future.

Burlington has many parks and green spaces where we can get out and enjoy nature. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century LaSalle Park (before 1923 - Wabasso Park, and yes, the sheets were named for this park) was a major summer destination. Each year thousands of people were brought from Hamilton for a day of picnics, a swim and to enjoy the amusement park. The fact that Hamilton owns the park has never stopped us from considering it a Burlington park.



BHS Archives

Then, our Spencer Smith Park has been a central gathering point in Burlington for many years. It has been the venue for The Sound of Music and Ribfest among other events. Unfortunately, those events are postponed for another year but, oh how we will enjoy when they return.

As usual, we are taking a summer break in our programs. Our May Zoom meeting will be the last one until September. The Gazette will also take a summer break.

So, while we await the lifting of restrictions to our lives, enjoy the summer. While following the rules you can walk your neighbourhood or sit on a park bench and breathe some fresh air. Burlington in the summer – what a great city!



A quiet summer day from the Boniface Albums, Norton Collection, BHS Archives

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### **Burlington Historical Society Officers (Elected)**

President .....Joan Downey  
 Vice President .....Rebecca Keddy  
 Secretary .....Dobriila Kinn  
 Treasurer .....Vacant  
 Past President .....Jane Ann Newson

### **Directors (Appointed)**

Programs .....Alan Harrington  
 Bookkeeper .....Jane Ann Newson  
 Archivist .....Joan Downey  
 Webmaster .....Wayne Murphy  
 Membership .....Rebecca Keddy  
 Newsletter .....Joan Downey  
 Outreach .....Vacant  
 Event Planner .....Pat Taylor

### **Convenors (Appointed)**

Greeting Cards .....Anne Wingfield  
 Phone Committee ...Elizabeth Baldwin  
 Heritage Burlington Rick Wilson  
 .....Alan Harrington  
 Publicity .....Jennifer Kemp  
 50/50 Draw .....Frank Armstrong

# A disaster of the highest level

The Hamilton Spectator, Sat., Feb. 6, 2021, updated Feb. 10, 2021

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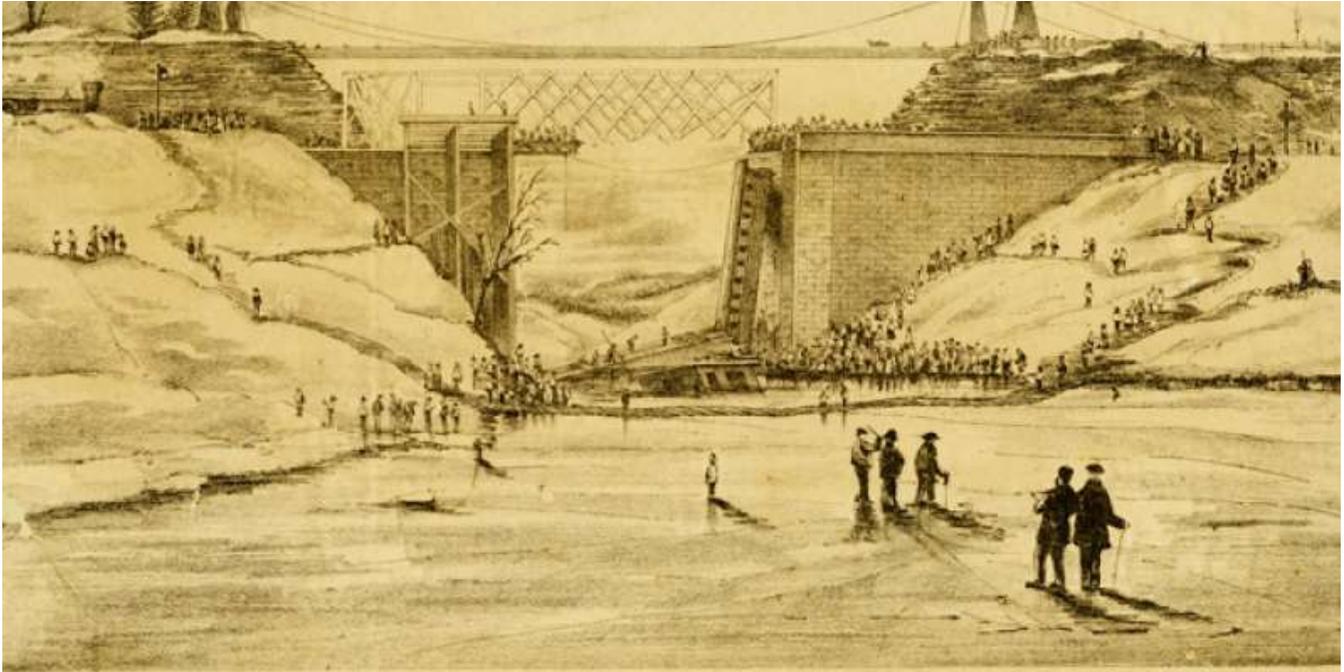


Photo: Hamilton Public Library

Fifty-nine passengers on board a Great Western Railway train from Toronto to Hamilton on March 12, 1857 were killed when an axle broke as the train was crossing the Desjardins Canal Bridge. The train left the tracks, pushed through the side railings, and crashed into the frozen waters below.

It was the worst accidental loss of life in the area's history. The tragedy left the community reeling and remains one of the worst railway disasters in Canadian history.



Several prominent people died, including Samuel Zimmerman, who was described by The Spectator at the time as a “renowned railway contractor and banker, whose name for years has been known as a household word in the mouth of almost every Canadian.”

The train was the most celebrated technology of the era. It was creating prosperity and laying the groundwork for nationhood. But the crash demonstrated that technology can sometimes have horrific consequences. An official day of mourning was held and a large public funeral was attended by an estimated 10,000 people.

A coroner's inquest began the next day. The tragedy — at a time when the canal and its bridges were major transportation routes — left Hamilton in shock. Investigations and official reports followed.

The inquest was among Canada's first to use forensics — by incorporating detailed photographs. It concluded a broken axle on the locomotive caused the train to jump the track, crash through the wooden swing bridge and plunge 18 metres (60 feet) into the icy canal below, killing 59 people.

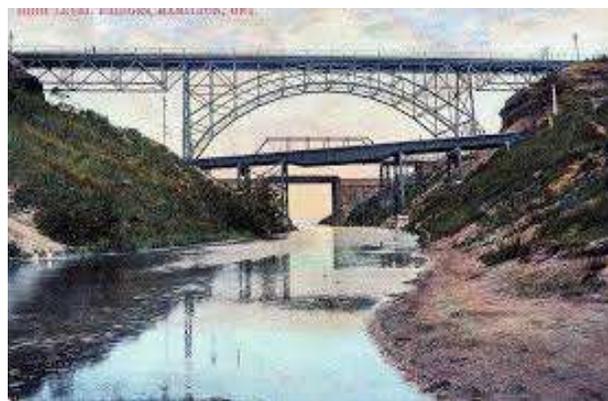
For a period of time, trains stopped before the bridge to allow passengers to walk across.

The permanent bridge built in its place no longer allowed ocean-going schooners to pass through. So the Great Western tragedy also killed the Desjardins Canal's vital role in Dundas' shipping trade and its connection to the Great Lakes.

In 1869, the Hamilton and Milton Toll Road Company built a new high level bridge for local traffic. That bridge, and the railway bridge, were both replaced again in 1897 by the T.H.&B. Railway.

In 1932, the city built a fourth High Level Bridge — part of its western entrance beautification scheme and unemployment relief measures. By 1962, Highway 403 was under construction close to the railway bridge and over part of the Cootes Paradise marsh. The High Level Bridge became a heritage landmark in 1986, received a major facelift in 1987, and was renamed the Thomas B. McQuesten High Level Bridge in 1988.

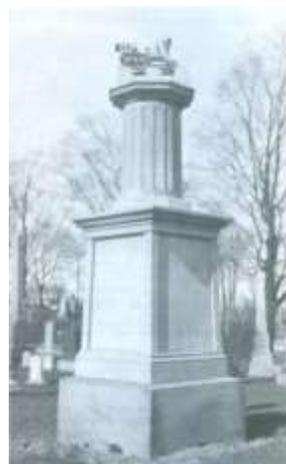
On July 1, 2000, the Hamilton Harbour Waterfront Trail opened with a floating walkway at the canal that parallels the boat channel. The canal, in which many drowned that fateful day in 1857, is now vital to preserving Cootes Paradise's fish spawning grounds by housing the Great Lakes' first two-way fishway that keeps out destructive carp.



Vintage Postcard BHS Archives

Each day, thousands of cars on Highway 403 pass over that canal, and hundreds of people walk, cycle and in-line skate near the spot where the train plunged into the icy waters.

A memorial for the disaster was erected at Hamilton Cemetery — only a kilometer away from the accident - with a tiny locomotive on top. Today, the locomotive is missing. It was stolen in the 1930s.



1927



2021

Want to learn more? Hamilton Public Library has the complete article which appeared in the April 4, 1857 issue of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. [Desjardins Canal Disaster](#).

There is also a book, available at BPL, *End of the Line* by Don McIver.

Thanks to Alan Harrington for submitting the article.

# From the Archives Joan Downey

## “What’s Behind the Name”

by Peggy and Les Armstrong

Published by The Burlington Historical Society

This month is a “triple whammy” of streets, all related to the apple industry.

### Baldwin Street

Baldwin Street was built on land purchased from H.H. Hurd, a fruit farmer in the 1800’s. Baldwin was one of the apple varieties grown on this land.



The street was laid out as part of the Apple Park Survey by John C. Smith, Maxwell Smith and members of the local school board.

### Hurd Avenue

Hiram H. Hurd (1826-1905) owned a fruit and nursery farm on Brant Street (between Ontario & Olga Streets), however he lived in Hamilton where he was in the marble business and an alderman. His name can be found on early stones on our cemeteries, Hurd & Roberts or H.H. Hurd & Co. Mr Hurd made a survey of his land along Caroline Street, but Hurd Avenue was not named until after his death when the farm was purchased and subdivided by J.C. and M.C. Smith.

Note: - Hiram H. Hurd is buried in Hamilton Cemetery on York Street, among many of the monuments which his company produced.

### Smith Avenue



Maxwell Smith in the floppy hat in one of Canada’s first motor cars. J.C. is leaning on the fence – BHS Archives

Maxwell Smith was Burlington’s first mayor. Smith Lane, later named Smith Avenue, ran through the orchard operated by Mr. Smith and his father J.C. Smith.

Legend has it that among Mr. Smith’s many accomplishments was that of inventing the white centre line markings used on North American roads.

Mr. Smith also established and operated Niagara Brand Spray and Chemical Company in Freeman.



Barrels of apples being loaded in a boxcar at Freeman Station, ca 1920. Photo – BHS Archives



Hamilton Cemetery, [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)

# Membership *Rebecca Keddy*



We'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support over the past 12 months; it has been trying time for all of us. Your financial contributions are used to further the research and outreach of Burlington History. Included in your membership is attendance to our monthly members meeting featuring guest speakers and our monthly newsletter.

Taking a look at our membership list, there are a few members who have not renewed for 2021. If you are not sure if you have renewed or not, send us an email and we can check our records. After this issue of the Gazette is published, we will be removing unpaid members from the distribution list.

We value your membership. We sincerely hope you will join us for another year.

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## Burlington Gazette, 11 May 1932

*The LePatourels Drug Store are celebrating their fiftieth anniversary in business in Burlington this week.*



BHS Archives  
Ca 1960  
East side of Lower Brant Street

# How times have changed

*Pat Taylor*

In the latest copy of 'Notes and Comments' by the Scarborough Historical Society (I am a member), I found this – to me- jaw dropping story.

William Cornell married Content Davis. She was 16 when she had their first child. She died, age 35, giving birth to their 12<sup>th</sup> child.

What was a widower with 11 children to do? Look for another wife!!!

He found Rhoda Skinner Terry. Her husband, Parshall Terry had recently drowned. She had 12 children of her own and was stepmother to 7 from Parshall's first marriage.

Rhoda and William had 6 children. She died at the age of 59.

Let's add these up:

Rhoda had	12
when she married William Cornell	
She was stepmother to	7
children of Parshall Terry	
She had	6
children with William Cornell	
She was stepmother to	11
children of William Cornell	

**Jaw dropping** - Rhoda was mother or stepmother to **36** children, most of who lived to adulthood.

As an aside – a few years ago I was reading some Niagara area history and came across the name of the 13<sup>th</sup> child in a family – Submission. In his first marriage Parshall Terry's 4<sup>th</sup> child was named Submission. Maybe I'm reading too much into this, but I'm **very glad** my first name isn't 'Submission.'

Editor's note: just imagine what Christmas dinner was like at that house!



## Outreach – Joan Downey

Over the past few months, the BHS executive have been working on a number of projects. This is a brief update on a few –

**Vimy Oaks Signage** – in 2018 the City was gifted with 2 oak saplings which were from the oaks planted from Vimy Ridge acorns. These trees are enclosed in wrought iron cages but there is no indication of their significance.

Spearheaded by Alan Harrington we attempted to have signage added. Alan had signs made and, with the support of The Vimy Foundation, we approached the City for permission to install these temporary, easily removeable signs.



Unfortunately, the decision was made to not install any temporary signs but rather to wait until the area can be renamed to Veteran Square and at that time have a large celebration.

**Edward VII Fountain maintenance** - you know - that fountain in City Hall Square – we have been attempting to convince City Hall to perform some maintenance. It is after all the oldest public monument in Burlington having been installed on 2 May 1912.



**Brant Inn DVD** – this DVD and the book *Brant Inn Memories* are our most popular items. Every year when WNED shows the DVD we get calls for copies. We have been out of stock for some time. When we recently received the original file for the video it was time to have new copies burned.



There is another showing of *Remembering the Brant Inn* scheduled for October at BPAC. As with previous shows, we are given a table in the lobby and permitted to sell the DVD and book. And, of course, since the show has regenerated interest, sales are brisk.

**Fisher Farms Plaque** – for a number of years there was a plaque commemorating the Fisher families' contributions to Burlington. The plaque was installed on a cairn made from fieldstone from the foundation of the original farmhouse.

Sometime in the past few years a developer demolished the cairn.

Members of the Fisher family contacted us to try to locate the plaque. It turned up in storage at City Hall. However, the original wording doesn't work now that the cairn is gone.

BHS is working with Burlington Centre and the Lion's Club (operators of the Farmer's Market in Burlington Centre) to get permission to install a new plaque. We were hoping to have it installed for this year's opening of the Farmer's Market but as time passes that is looking less likely.

**Lowville Park Storyboard** – we are working with the City on this initiative. It is presently on hold awaiting our access to the archives files so that photos can be rescanned at higher resolution.

**Also** in the works: new walking tours, more village brochures, a scholarship or bursary for local students, collaboration with the Aldershot Community to move the Applegarth millstones home to Hidden Valley Park, etc.



*The Burlington Historical Society*  
 Preserving Burlington's History for Today and Tomorrow

**Membership - 2021**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Dues**

New Member

Family: \$40.00

Senior: \$25.00

Renewal

Adult: \$30.00

Yes, as a **new** BHS member I wish to receive the Gazette newsletter and other e-communications and understand I can unsubscribe at any time.

**Volunteer**

Are you interested in volunteering with the Society? Would you like to help us in preserving the history of our City? Tell us a bit about your talents and interests – [info@burlingtonhistorical.ca](mailto:info@burlingtonhistorical.ca)

**Donation**

I wish to make a separate donation to the society in the sum of \_\_\_\_\_

A Tax Receipt will be issued for all donations totalling \$25.00 or more

The Burlington Historical Society is a registered charity # 119217693RR0001

**Mail completed form and remittance(s) to:**

The Burlington Historical Society  
 Membership Convenor  
 PO Box 93164  
 1450 Headon Road  
 Burlington, Ontario L7M 4A3

Make cheques payable to The Burlington Historical Society

**OR**

e-transfer funds to  
[info@burlingtonhistorical.ca](mailto:info@burlingtonhistorical.ca)



If you are a new member using e-transfer, please email the completed form to us at the above email

**OR**

Leave it at the Membership table at any General Meeting

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