



Lambton Musings

LAMBTON'S HISTORY AND HERITAGE NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2021

www.discoveriesthatmatter.ca

Blue Willow, The Legend

Sandy Burkhart, Forest-Lambton Museum

I have been helping an archaeologist, walking fields and cataloguing artifacts. Most municipalities require such a survey to determine whether there was historic settlement on a property before new development can take place. One of the most abundant artifacts is sherds of blue willow transferware. Not only are the fragments numerous, they are varied in shade of blue and the type of ceramic, from fine china to earthenware and ironstone. The variety is not surprising considering the history of Blue Willow.



An example of new willow and a circa 1900 Prussian plate.

Despite its Asian appearance the pattern originated in England around 1780. The design was inspired among other things by the popularity of expensive and fashionable hand painted blue and white imports from China. The credit for the design is usually given to Thomas Minton, an apprentice designer at Caughley China Works. By the early 19th century over 200 potteries in England were producing blue willow transferware. The pattern is easily recognized for its familiar symbols include a weeping willow, three figures on a bridge, a pagoda, an island, a boat, a fence, and a Chinese pine tree often referred to as a peach, orange or apple tree, and two birds flying overhead. All of these are printed in monochromatic blue on a white background. The images were etched onto a copper or steel plate then transferred to tissue paper and applied to the china, thus the name transferware. The pattern was also available in brown and pink and even multi-colour but these versions never gained the same popularity as the blue and white.

Blue Willow, The Legend Continued...

To explain the meaning of the symbols and promote sales, the 18th century potters made up a legend about star-crossed lovers. Long ago, in the days when China was ruled by emperors, the daughter of a Mandarin (or bureaucrat) fell in love with her father's secretary. But the father wanted her to marry a wealthy, older suitor and forbade the marriage.



*Platter with handwritten note on back.
Acquired in Hillsborough 1850.*



Detail of the Blue Willow pattern

The three figures on the bridge are the girl with a box of jewels, the lover with a distaff (tall tool used in spinning) and the Mandarin with a whip.

The lovers escaped and lived happily ever after on a distant island until many years later. The wealthy suitor who had lost the girl found them, burned the house and the lovers. From their ashes rose the two doves in the sky.

There are almost as many versions of the legend as there are manufacturers of the popular china.

The familiar blue and white pattern remains a desirable collectible. There are even groups and societies devoted to it. The pattern is still produced today by many companies including Churchill, Johnson Brothers and Spode. Watch for Blue Willow in some TV shows such as classics like *Murder She Wrote* and many westerns.

Sources include Needlecraft Magazine June 1928, Heritage Mint Ltd., China Classics by Serry Wood, 1959 and various websites.

Camlachie

Gordon MacKenzie, The Plympton-Wyoming Museum

The early backbone of settlement in Plympton was the Egremont Road. Camlachie is located at the junction of Egremont Road and Camlachie Sideroad.

It was originally called Truslers Corners after its first settler, John Trusler, who came from Sussex, England in 1833. That same year, Thomas Symington and his brother John settled on Concession 10 of Plympton Township. John Symington's daughter Isabella was the first child born in the area.

The village was quite small and isolated until the Grand Trunk Railway line went through in 1859.

The name was changed to Camlachie in 1863 by settler Duncan MacDonald in honour of the section of Glasgow where he was born.

In 1864 Camlachie was only a flag station but the Post Office opened that year and from then on the trains stopped regularly for mail.

Thomas Edison, the famous inventor, was one of the early telegraph operators at the Camlachie Station.

In 1877 Camlachie boasted three general stores; three butcher shops; three hotels; three blacksmiths; a grist mill; a saw mill; a furniture factory; a grain store; a boot and shoe factory; a bake shop; a millinery shop; a tailor shop; a doctor; and three churches.

One of the early buildings housed an evaporator. Apple peelings and cores were packed in barrels and shipped to Germany for the production of champagne.

Camlachie remained a thriving community until the end of the railway service. Today, there is a public library, a United Church, Camlachie Grain and Feed, and the Plympton-Wyoming Museum.

The Kettles of Kettle and Stony Point

Colleen Inglis, Lambton Heritage Museum



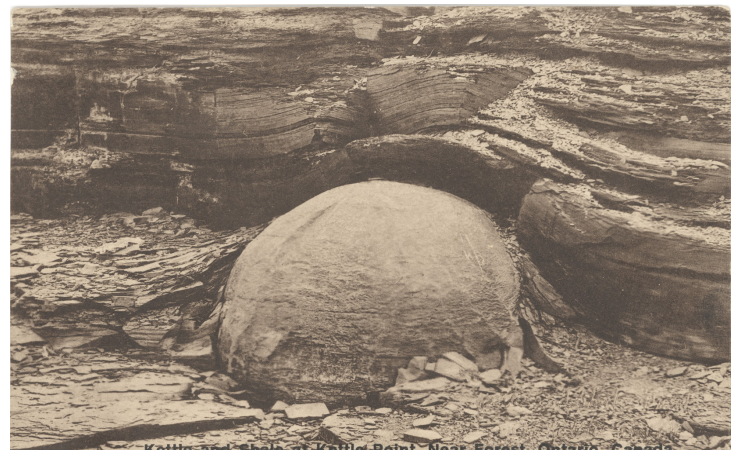
The unique concretions of Kettle Point rest like spherical statues along the Lake Huron shoreline. They are made of calcite and emerge from an outcrop of sedimentary rock. They stand out dramatically as the softer shale that surrounds them wears away. The concretions are called kettles because their shape and size is like a large cooking pot. They range in size from 0.3 - 1.5m across.

The kettles formed about 370 million years ago. Layers of muddy sediment settled at the bottom of a very deep sea. Bacteria in the mud caused tiny concretions to form. The concretions grew outwards in all directions in a radiating pattern.

Over time the mud hardened into sedimentary rock. Layers of rock warped around the spherical concretions. Alexander Murray, a member of the Geological Survey of Canada, described the phenomena of the kettles in the mid-1800s. He also recounted stories of fires burning for months along the shore due to the bituminous nature of the shale beds.



As a very unique geological formation, the kettles were a popular subject for postcards throughout the 1900s.



This postcard shows a kettle in situ. You can see how the layers of the surrounding shale bent around the spherical kettle as it grew.

The kettles have cultural and spiritual significance to the Anishinaabeg. Traditional knowledge keepers describe the Kettle Point beachfront as the nesting place of the Thunderbird. The kettles are the eggs. Thunderbirds (Animkiig) are powerful spirits. They offer protection and bring healing rains to communities in exchange for safekeeping of their sacred places. The site is believed to be the source of powerful energy that fades from the stones if they are removed.



This kettle from the Lambton Heritage Museum was collected by local businessman Arthur Newton Ovens, who scratched his name and the year 1908 into the stone.

Since kettles are so rare and interesting, they have been the targets of theft. Many tourists visited the shores of Lake Huron at Kettle Point and took home their own spherical rock as a souvenir. Kettles have decorated driveways and gardens for over 150 years. The thefts represent a significant loss for the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation.

There are kettles in the artifact collection at Lambton Heritage Museum. They were taken by private collectors and later donated to the museum. These kettles highlight a difficult and uncomfortable legacy. In the late 1980s, the Kettle and Stony Point government used a section of the Indian Act to ban the removal of stones and minerals.

In May 2017, Lambton Heritage Museum repatriated a kettle to the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. *Repatriation* is the return of items from institutions like museums to

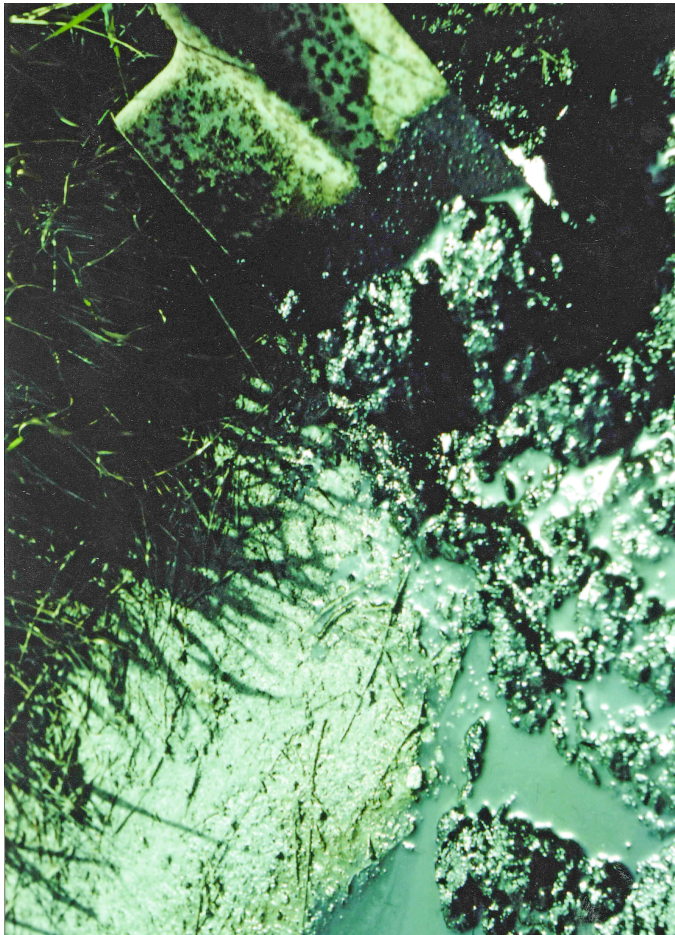
the community where the material originated. More museums are working with cultural groups to return items that were stolen or taken under false pretenses. This work helps promote healing and the journey of Truth and Reconciliation.



Elder Barry Milliken of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation accepts a kettle on behalf of his community at a repatriation ceremony at Hillside School in May 2017. Lambton County representatives, Andrew Meyer and Doug Cook, presented the kettle.

Indigenous Uses of Crude Oil Prior to Canada's Commercial Oil Boom

Alyssa Hall, Oil Museum of Canada



Gum bed

The historic narrative that has come to define the Canadian oil industry may be well overdue for a rewrite, as emerging archeological evidence has come to suggest that the Indigenous Peoples of North America were in the “oil business” long before European settlers came to colonize this land.

It is well known that the first commercially produced oil well was hand-dug in 1858 by James Miller Williams in what is now modern-day Oil Springs, Ontario. However, archeologists have since discovered a series of “mystery pits” found throughout the oil fields of Titusville, Pennsylvania dating back to as early as 1550. These pits were hand-dug and reinforced with timber and wooden cribbing and are believed to be oil wells belonging to early Indigenous oil miners. This is due to the discovery of various digging and mining tools, such as deer antlers and tree ladders, which have been found discarded in these pits. During the early days of the commercial oil industry, these pits, and their contents, were assumed to belong to “ancient diggers of an unknown origin” by the early oil pioneers. Similar pits to these have been

discovered in Lambton County where a deer’s antler and a rib were found by those excavating them, some of which were over 35 feet deep. What this means is that the Indigenous Peoples of North America were using and mining oil long before settler colonialists even knew of its existence. These discoveries also suggest that there is a period of Canadian oil history that we know very little about.



When European settlers learned of the many medicinal uses of crude oil some, including the Healy and Bigelow's Kickapoo Indian Oil Company, which this bottle belongs to, began to appropriate the Indigenous collection and use of oil. They marketed their products to settler consumers as a "remedy for a wide variety of ailments."

Oil was seen by the Indigenous Peoples as being a gift from the Creator, and it was therefore believed to have many healing qualities which would allow it to penetrate, purify, soothe and heal a wide variety of wounds and ailments. For external injuries, such as cuts, bruises, burns and sprains, oil was applied directly to the affected area. For internal ailments, such as digestive problems, small quantities of oil would be ingested by the affected individual to cure them. Oil was also used by the Indigenous Peoples to treat headaches, toothaches, coughs, cuts, sores and was also used as a mosquito and bug repellent.

In addition to its many medicinal qualities, the Indigenous Peoples used oil for a wide variety of practical purposes. These included turning the oil into a pitch, which was used to waterproof canoes and other containers or used as a "glue" to attach the handles and blades of tools and weapons. Oil was also used as an ingredient in war paint, which was then painted onto the bodies of Indigenous warriors and was supposed to give them a "hideous appearance" while allowing their paint to become water-resistant. Oil was also used for lighting the fires used in some religious ceremonies and traditions, and there is even evidence that some Indigenous nations believed that oil could scare away evil spirits from "tormented" individuals when applied to their bodies.

Oil has mystified and lured man for centuries, resulting in what can only be described as "oil fever". For the Indigenous Peoples, oil has been used for a variety of medicinal and practical purposes, and the extensive knowledge of oil mining, and its various uses, has been passed down within Indigenous communities from one generation to the next for centuries. Oil has traditionally been viewed as a valuable commodity within Indigenous nations, and as something that should be shared by all rather than be monopolized by one, a belief that was disregarded upon the arrival of European colonists.

¹ Paul Morden, "Were First Nations Mining Oil Here?" Sarnia Observer

² Earl Grey, *Ontario's Petroleum Legacy: The Birth, Evolution and Challenges of a Global Industry* (Edmonton, Alberta: Heritage Community Foundation, 2008), 6.

³ Earl Grey, *Ontario's Petroleum Legacy: The Birth, Evolution and Challenges of a Global Industry* (Edmonton, Alberta: Heritage Community Foundation, 2008), 15-16.

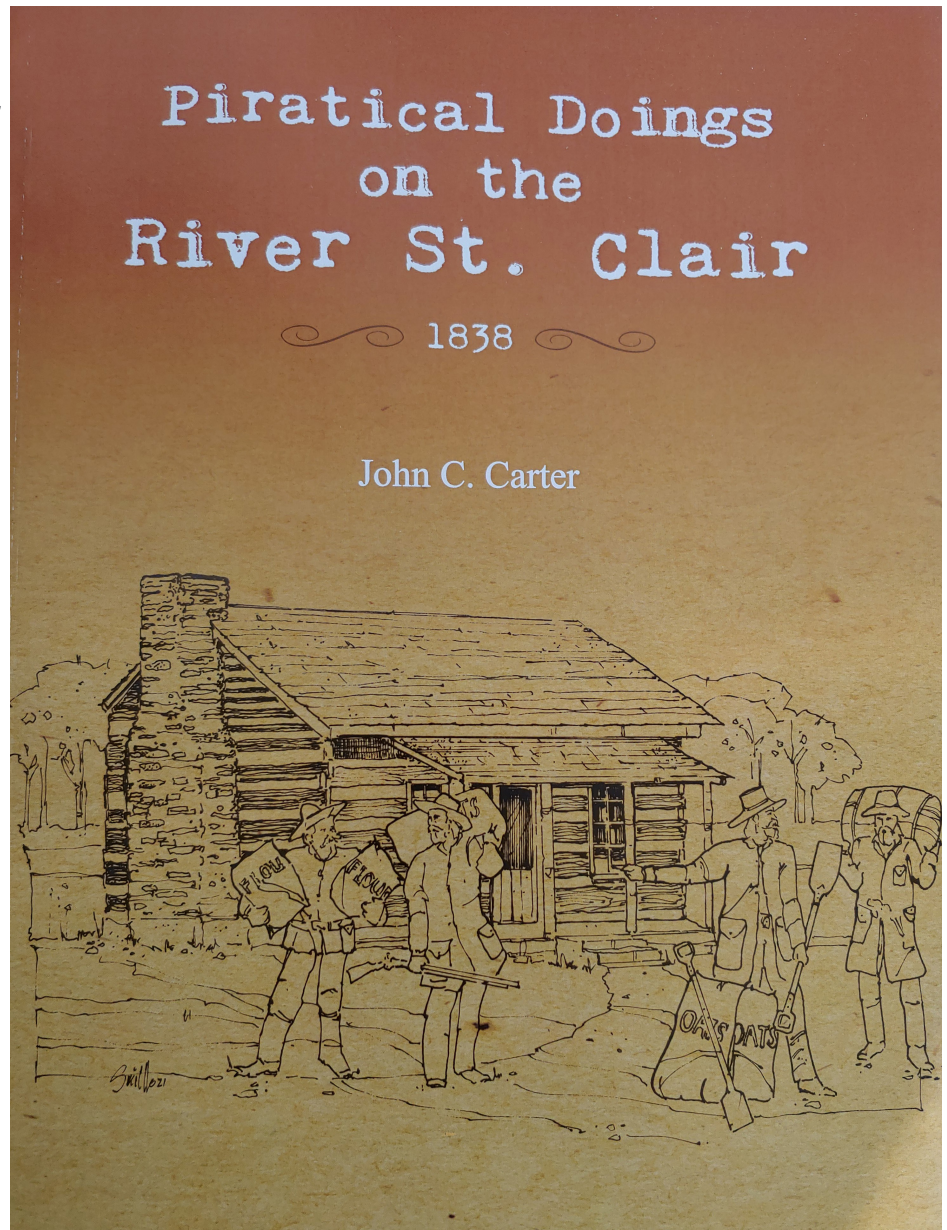
⁴ J.T. Henry, *Early and Later History of Petroleum* (Philadelphia: Jas. B. Rogers Co., 1873).

Piratical Doings on the River St. Clair

Dave Pattenden, Heritage St. Clair

Heritage St. Clair is about to release our long awaited book titled, *Piratical Doings on the River St. Clair: Some Reflections on the 1838 Upper Canadian Rebellion*. This book is a research based account of the raids of 1838. It is sometimes hard to imagine that the St. Clair River was the site of armed conflict. Today, the St. Clair River is a site of recreation where we sail, swim, fish, and boat. Back in 1838, those very same shores were the site of armed invaders from the United States.

The years 1837-38 were marred by the Upper Canadian Rebellion, also known as the Farmer's Rebellion, and the American Patriot Wars. Much has been written about this conflict, with the exception of the raids across our River St. Clair. This new book, both entertaining and factual, finally brings this story to print so everyone can read about this exciting time of tense conflict between the United States and Canada.



Book cover for Piratical Doings on the River St. Clair by John C. Carter

Dr. John Carter, East York historian and author, compiled this account. He felt this element of local history was under-researched and poorly documented. This story would soon be left to dusty old file cabinets. Dr. Carter, through his friendship with the late Al Anderson, one of the key volunteers with Sombra Museum, donated the book to Heritage St. Clair. HSC's mission was to put a little polish on it, add some exciting illustrations, publish and distribute it. For this donation, we are grateful to Dr. Carter.

You can now look forward to sitting back and enjoying the story of armed conflict on the shores of St. Clair Township.

The first edition is limited to 120 copies.

Copies are \$45.00, tax included, postage is extra. Payments will be processed through St. Clair Township Municipal Office. Local pick-ups will be arranged on an individual basis. These arrangements and limitations are due to Governmental COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions. Details for all orders, delivery methods and payment instructions can be arranged by contacting Heritage St. Clair at the email, secretaryheritagestclair@gmail.com.

There will be a book signing by author, Dr. John Carter, at Sombra Museum at a later date after all COVID-19 precautionary protocols have been lifted. However, anyone interested in obtaining a copy is strongly encouraged to purchase one as soon as possible due to the book's limited first edition run. Let us know when you order the book if you would like to be contacted when the date of the official book launch has been determined so that you can get Dr. Carter to sign your book for you.

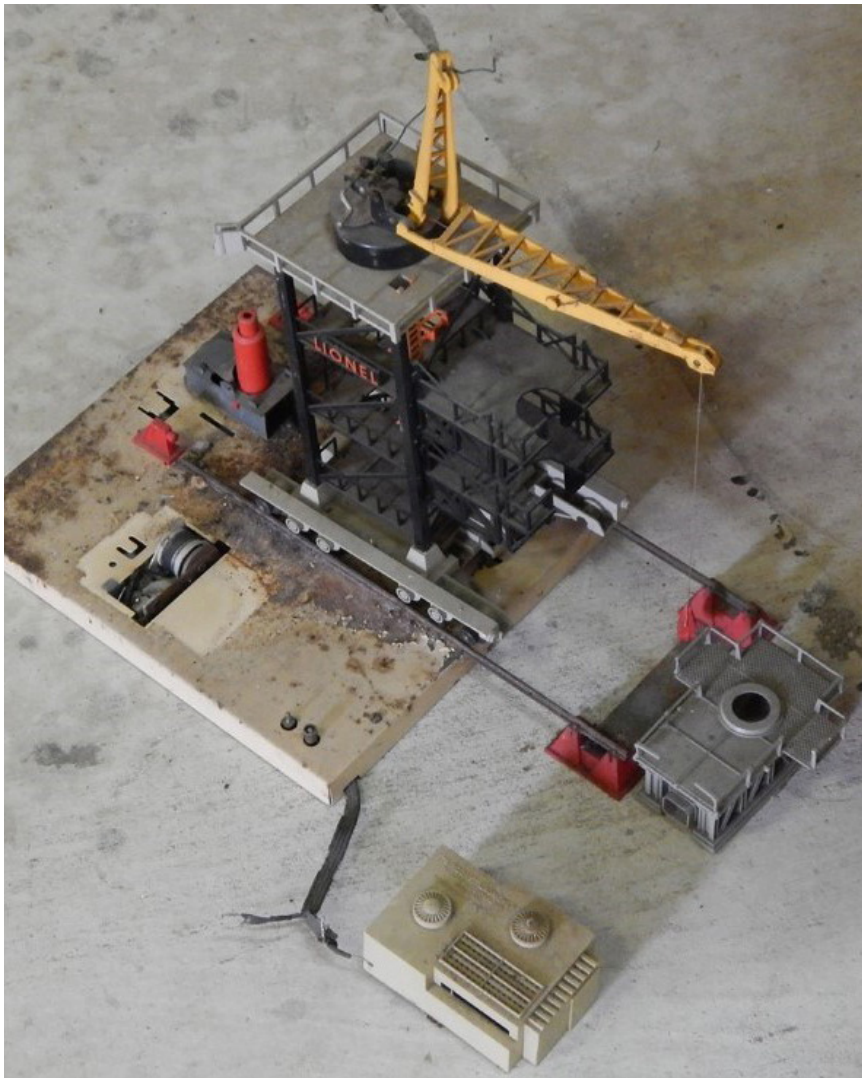
John C. Carter, *Piratical Doings on the River St. Clair*, St. Clair Township, ON. Heritage St. Clair, Corporation of the Township of St. Clair, 2020, 100 ills., 174 pgs. ISBN 978-1-7772622-0-4.

Adventures of a Model Train Room Volunteer

Tom Walter, Moore Museum volunteer

One of the perks of being a Model Train Room Volunteer is unpacking donations of trains and model railway structures that are donated to Moore Museum. Every time a donation shows up, it's like Christmas.

Over the last eight years, donations have come in many different forms and they are very much appreciated. Some of the trains arrive in their original boxes in like-new condition. More often though, they come in dusty old boxes that have been stored in an attic for decades. No problem! Even if the models are incomplete or broken, they can provide a valuable source of inspiration for further development of the train room.



Here's an example -- In the summer of 2019, the museum received a call about a possible donation of 6 boxes of old Lionel trains which needed a new home. Among these 50 year old toys was a #6650 missile launching car (minus its missile) and a rusty, broken Lionel #175 rocket gantry (minus its rocket). We didn't have anything like those items in the museum's collection, so we did a little research.

*Lionel #175 rocket gantry
(minus its rocket)*



Lionel #6650 missile launching car (minus its missile)

As many people are aware, the early 1950s were the Golden Age of Toy Trains in general and for Lionel in particular. 1953 was Lionel's best year for earnings. By the end of the decade, however, the toy train industry was losing market share, big time. Space exploration was in the headlines and record-breaking jet aircraft were attracting a lot of attention. Trains were becoming old hat. (Perish the thought!)

Lionel and competitors, American Flyer and Marx, didn't take these new realities lying down. To recapture kids' imaginations, they devised a whole range of train cars and accessories that would harness the popularity of these new areas. Missile launchers, rocket cars, space capsules, exploding boxcars and many other clever models were marketed to boost flagging toy train sales.

With our new/old missile car and rocket launcher as inspiration, we decided to rebuild our latest train layout to showcase the aerospace/aviation theme. The display will have track on 3 levels and the trains will be customized to reflect this exciting bias.

Although the pandemic has temporarily halted the rebuilding of the bench work on this layout, we have used the time away from the museum to build models that will highlight certain aspects of the Canadian aerospace and the Royal Canadian Air Force scene of the 1950s along with our trains.

Adventures of a Model Train Room Volunteer Continued...

Another donation, received in 2020, represented another direction in product development that Lionel used in the late 1950s. At the same time that the space related items were coming into the product line, the new phenomenon of TV was popularizing cowboy and western programs. Again, the toy train makers turned this new fad to their advantage by introducing Old Time trains. (The cover of the Lionel catalogue from 1959 featured an old wood burning locomotive with its old-time cars surrounded by modern diesel-powered trains firing rockets and missiles. Quite a contrast!)

Part of this donation included an Old Time train. Our plan at this point will be to run the 'Old Timers' on special occasions like Model Train Day and the Victorian Tea.

Although volunteers did not have access to the Lionel Model Train Room during the COVID-19 lockdowns, our modellers have been very busy working on projects at home. There are many volunteer hours represented in each layout, as it can take 20 hours to build a model water tower, 30 hours to build a missile from a kit, and over 100 hours for a scratch-built addition to a layout.

Once the pandemic is behind us, the model train displays at Moore Museum promise to be more exciting than ever!



Editor's note: Tom Walter is in his ninth year of volunteering at Moore Museum, creating model train layouts and leading the Model Train Event. Tom is always happy to introduce others to the fun of model railroading as a hobby so check [Moore Museum's website](#) for further articles on this topic.

Heritage Hour On the Lam in Lambton

Explore criminal accounts that have befallen our communities. From scofflaws to the downright illegal, explore Lambton's sensationalized dark underbelly.

Note that due to this subject there will be potentially disturbing content presented that might include graphic references to violence and sexual assault. Please be advised.



List of Panelists:

Nicole Aszalos, Lambton County Archives
Laurie Mason, Moore Museum
David McLean, Forest Museum

Kailyn Shepley, Sombra Museum
Greg Stott, Historian, University College of the North
Dana Thorne, Lambton Heritage Museum

This talk aired June 17, 2021.

**Watch the recorded presentation now on the
[Heritage Sarnia-Lambton webpage.](#)**



Diversity in Lambton County

The Ontario Genealogical Society

Alan Campbell, Ontario Genealogical Society, Lambton Branch
(lambtonnewsletters@ogs.on.ca)

What do John Jones, Richard Duncan, Simeon Highwarden, Barzilla Evans and Peter Pennington all have in common? They are all Blacks who came to Lambton County between 1857 and 1870. All but Barzilla remained in Lambton County. John was a painter and plasterer, Richard was a barber, Simeon was a businessman, Barzilla was a labourer and Peter Pennington was a fish merchant. I believe that John is the only one for whom some descendants still live in the Sarnia/Lambton area. My research into these men and their families is an attempt to help fill in a gap in the diverse "people" history of Lambton County. As an organization Ontario Ancestors is also trying to become more diverse in its membership to hopefully add Black, Indigenous, Asian and South American family histories to its collection.

The Branch is seeking volunteers who would like to take pictures of gravestones to help us update some of the cemetery transcripts that we have such as Mt. Carmel, Black Creek, Oil Springs and Oil City.

Contact Jane Teskey if you are interested. If you have a family history you would like to share with Lambton County Branch please contact Jane Teskey by [email](#) or via phone 519-882-0835. You can also call Alan Campbell at 519-542-3554.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, Sept. 16th, 2021 – 7:00 p.m. Mara Benjamin, Tweedsmuir Digitization Project
Mara is the curator at the Erland Lee (Museum) Home, Federated Women's Institutes Ontario. Register for this free webinar at the link [here](#).

Thursday, Oct. 14th, 2021 – Penny Walters, Searching for Ancestors When You are Adopted. Register for this free webinar at the link [here](#).

Thursday, Nov. 11th, 2021 – 7:00 p.m. Sheila Hewett, War Brides. Register for this free webinar at the link [here](#).



***Nnigiiwemin / We Are Going Home* (Summer 2021 – September 26, 2021)**

Co-curated by Summer Bressette and Monica Virtue, with illustrations by Bridget George.

Nnigiiwemin / We Are Going Home examines the relationship between colonialism and the loss of land by the Chippewas of Kettle & Stony Point First Nation. A response to the 25th anniversary of the “Ippeewash Crisis” of 1995, this exhibit introduces the concept of *Chi-Naakinigewin*, or Natural Law as a driving force for land and water protection. Using interviews, maps, moving images, soundscapes, and wampum, it illustrates the relationship between people, land, and Anishinaabeg Nationhood.

North Lambton Quilter’s Guild Show (Summer 2021)

The biannual North Lambton Quilter’s Guild Show is going to be a bit different in 2021! This show is usually presented over an extended weekend, but to accommodate physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, the quilt display will be extended in 2021. Join us to explore some antique quilts from the Lambton Heritage Museum collection as well as new creations from this talented guild.

Paint Ontario (September 3-26, 2021)

In partnership with the [Grand Bend Art Centre](#), we are proud to present the 25th annual *Paint Ontario Art Show & Sale*!

Over 200 original paintings will fill the exhibition hall at the museum. These paintings bring to life the beauty, character, and diversity of Ontario. There will be live artist demonstrations & live music on the museum grounds, with social distancing precautions in place for visitors. For more information, visit the [Paint Ontario website](#).

Heritage Sarnia-Lambton Members

Moore Museum

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519-867-2020

[Facebook Page](#)

Plympton-Wyoming Museum

6745 Camlachie Road,

Camlachie, ON N0N 1E0

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Lambton Heritage Museum

10035 Museum Road,

Grand Bend, ON N0M 1T0

519-243-2600

[Facebook Page](#)

Oil Museum of Canada

2423 Kelly Road, Oil Springs, ON N0N 1P0

519-834-2840

[Facebook Page](#)

Arkona Lions Museum and Information Centre

8685 Rock Glen Road, Arkona, ON N0M 1B0

519-828-3071

[Facebook Page](#)

Sombra Museum

3476 St. Clair Parkway, Sombra, ON N0P 2H0

519-892-3982

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Lambton County Archives

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