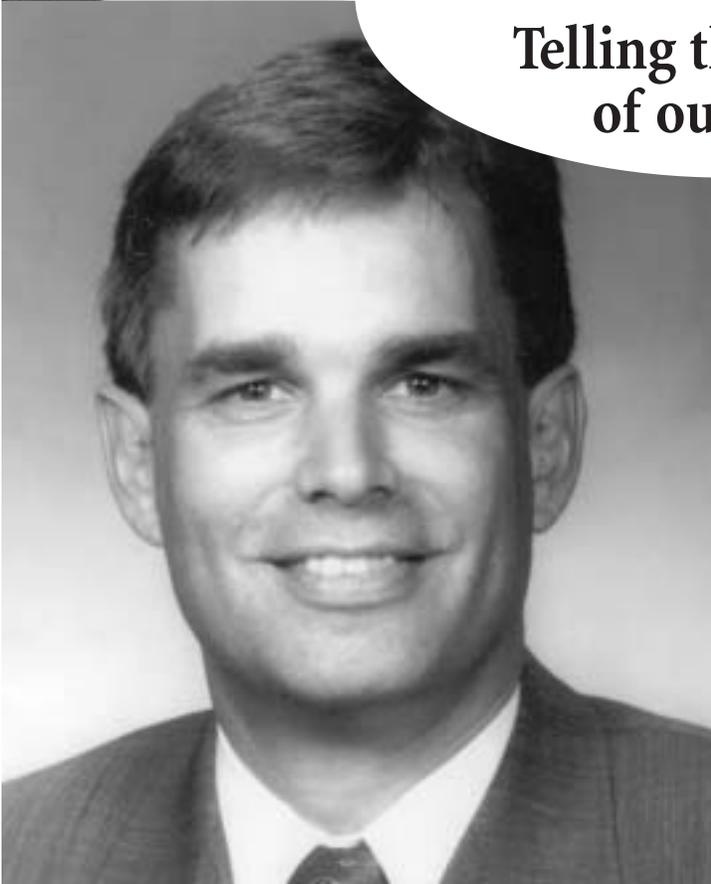




Museums

Telling the stories
of our lives



Newsletter • Summer 2006



Mewinzha

Grand opening
Sept. 29th!

“Mewinzha - A
Journey Back
In Time” will
open in the
lobby of the

new Peace Bridge Authority Building on Queen St. This project is a partnership between the PBA, the Town of Fort Erie, the Museum Board and the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre. Displays will feature tools and weapons dating back 11,000 years as well as contemporary Native artwork. Admission will be free. CAO of the PBA, Ron Reinas commented that “this gallery will celebrate a millennia of trade activities that have occurred on this site and honour the First Peoples who appreciated the resources and potential of this area. We are honoured to take the lead in this important project and hope that all residents will stop in the see the new gallery.” Opening ceremonies for the general public will be from 2-8 pm on Sept. 29 and from 12-4 pm on Sept. 30.



The Bridge that Peace Built

Grand opening Sept. 29th!
The Peace Bridge Authority will also be unveiling an exhibit on the second floor of their building on Queen St. The display “The Bridge that Peace Built” will feature the history of the bridge from 70 years of planning, to the world-record breaking build, to the international

focus of the grand opening. This exhibit is an outreach project of Fort Erie’s Museum Services and is sponsored by the PBA. Hundreds of never-seen-before photographs will be on display as well as a wall of “Milestones” showing how the bridge and plazas have been constantly evolving to meet market demands. This gallery will also be open free to the public.

Newsletter

The Fort Erie Museums Newsletter is distributed once a year to every household and as funds permit, 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:
summer student Ali Schofield;
Museum Board Chair David
Renshaw; volunteer Charlene
Haney (now Heckman); and
CAO of the PBA Ron Reinas.

Contact Us

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Visit Us

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



Community Photo Album

The Museum is still working on identifying the people, places and events from over 10,000 photographs from the Times-Review archives. We've been calling these pictures the "Community Photo Album" for they represent what Fort Erie residents have been doing for decades. Volunteers meet every Wednesday afternoon to catalogue these pictures and some-

times they invite friends to stop by the Museum to help with identifying people. The photo above is of one of these sessions. People are guaranteed to know someone within these photo albums, whether it be a relative, neighbour or sometimes even themselves! This happened to volunteer Charlene Heckman (nee Haney) who found a photo of herself and brother Donnie at the Iroquois Bowling Alley in the late 1940s. Her mother, Ruth, ran a Children's Athletic League in Fort Erie and took children to a different sporting activity each week. During "Bowling Week" Ruth brought her two children along instead of getting a babysitter! These photo albums are located in the Museum's archives and are available for viewing during regular Museum hours - Sunday to Friday from 9 to 5.



The Swing Inn

Do you remember the Swing Inn on Erie Road in Crystal Beach? It was owned and operated by Ang Carrie (far right) in 1950. He sold it to Al Knapp in 1953, but continued to manage it

until 1957. This was a popular dance spot with both indoor and outdoor facilities. Stop by the Museum to see the collection of photographs that Ang recently donated. You may be in one of them!





The Bikini Turns 60

The bikini was designed by Louis Reard in Paris France in 1946. Reard was considering what to call his bathing suit, when the U.S. exploded a nuclear device near Bikini Atoll island in the Pacific Ocean. Reard took advantage of all the publicity that the "Bikini" story was garnering and called his newest design the Bikini.

Parisian models refused to wear the tiny suit on the runway, and it was banned in Catholic countries such as Spain, Portugal and Italy. The changing culture of the 1960s led to the bikini's acceptance. Annette Funicello is known for endorsing the suit through her many Beach Party movies.

Reard may have been inspired by a 4th century mosaic located in the Piazza Armerina in Sicily, which shows Roman gymnasts wearing bandeaux tops and bikini-style bottoms.

The photo above shows the Miss Crystal Beach Park competition, circa 1980, and the finalist on the right wearing a peach coloured bikini. The winner however, was the contestant on the left.

Grants

The services provided by Fort Erie's Museums are made possible through the generous support of the Town of Fort Erie, the Province of Ontario, the Community Gaming Development Corporation, the Fort Erie Museum Board's Memorial Fund, admission and gift shop revenue and through donations from many local history supporters. On behalf of all the residents and visitors to Fort Erie who enjoy these services — THANK YOU!



Fort Erie turns 150

Watch for it....

2007 will be an exciting year in Fort Erie as the town celebrates its 150th anniversary. Plans are underway for this community-wide party. Next year is also the 80th anniversary of the Peace Bridge, the 110th anniversary of horseracing at the Race track, and the 80th anniversary of Fort

Erie Secondary School. Call 894-5322 if you want to be involved.

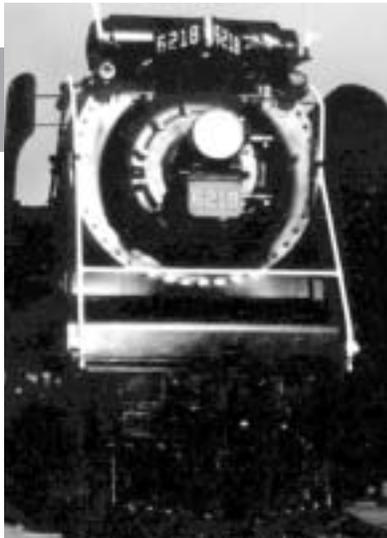
SUMMER STUDENTS

The Museums are lucky to have four talented students working this summer. Andrew Sinclair, Amanda Longfellow, Ali Schofield and Kaila Gorham are busy with cataloguing, researching, data entry and photo filing. Their work will further public access to our resources. Well done!

New in the Gift Shop



Looking for a unique gift? Check out these new gift shop items. Beautifully photographed full-colour art cards by Bob Chambers and Bill Helsdon depict local scenes. Artist prints of the Ridgeway Train Station and Holloway Memorial Chapel are rendered in black and white and are suitable for framing. A book of world-wide surfing stories includes a chapter on a Crystal Beach adventure written by Magilla Schaus. Other new books include: "Greatcoats and Glamour Boots - Canadian Women at War" and "Life on Quaker Road". A quote by novelist Alexander McCall Smith is found on this book's cover: "A life without stories would be no life at all." We agree... which is why the Museum's newsletter is called "Telling the stories of our lives" for it is these stories, centuries of them, which make Fort Erie so unique.

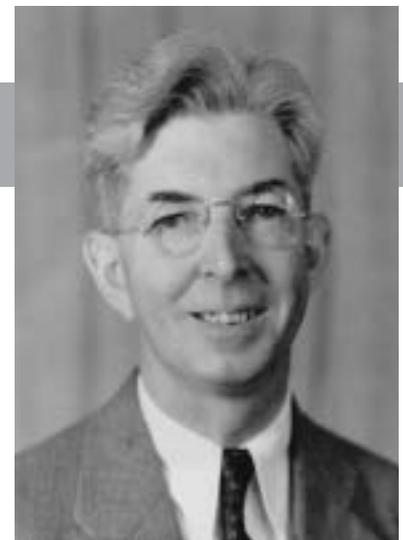


The Cure for Summer Boredom

Only a few weeks remain to visit the Fort Erie Railroad Museum. Children especially love climbing aboard the grand steam engine and touring through the caboose. Exhibits on railroading and hands-on activities for children are on display in the former Ridgeway Train Station and a gift shop is located in Fort Erie's B-1 Station. The Museum is located on Central Ave. and is open every-day from 9 am to 5 pm. It closes Labour Day until next May.

Sundays at the Museum

During one of the Historical Museum's Sunday open houses, Joy Winger MacDonald stopped by with the Winger family photo album. The Museum copied many pictures of old homes since Joy's grandfather, Ward Winger (right) developed the properties at Crescent Park, Point Abino Bay, Lake View, and Oakhill Forest. He also owned a barbershop, laundry, bicycle shop and bowling alley, all located in Ridgeway. As a sideline business he caught frogs in marshy areas and sold their legs to hotels in Buffalo. He acquired the Kraft farm at Crescent Beach, which in 1923 was the seed for the Crescent Park subdivision. He continued to acquire adjoining farms until he had over 460 acres which were used to build 200 homes. By sharing the Winger family history with the Museum it will now be preserved and used by researchers and historians. Thank you Joy!



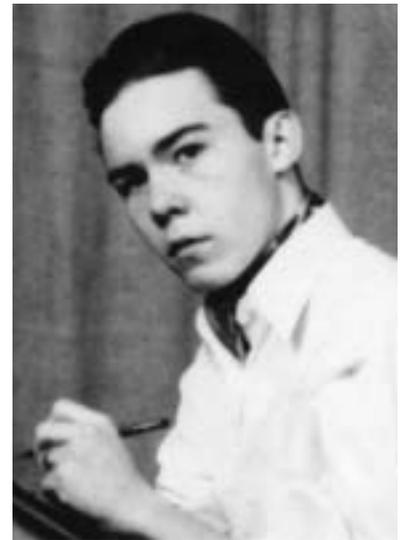


What Me Worry?

Did you know that a Ridgeway-Crystal Beach High School student was Mad Magazine's cover artist from 1956 to 1962 and illustrated the famous Alfred E. Neuman? Frank Kelly (below) lived in Crystal Beach and attended high school from 1935 - 1940. His mother married a Mr. Freas and the family then moved to Hornell N.Y. During his career he was known as Frank Kelly Freas. He won eleven Hugo awards for 'Best Professional Artist in World Science Fiction' and was illustrator for many of Mad's most memorable advertising

parodies. Frank was also the official mission artist for NASA and his posters now hang in the Smithsonian. He had a big crush on former museum volunteer J.B., of Ridgeway, and often sent her cartoon drawings with his letters. J.B. let the museum copy some of her pictures and stories about Frank.

"Neuman's" face first appeared as line drawings in the early 1900s on patent medicine labels, roadside signs for eateries and political propaganda. Mad Magazine first used this face on a 1954 cover and since 1955 he's been the magazine's official mascot. Artists like Norman Mingo and Frank Kelly Freas rendered the face as a three-dimensional character. It wasn't until 1956 that the name Alfred E. Neuman was connected to the face though. The name was "borrowed" from a comic skit on the Henry Morgan radio show, and Morgan "borrowed" it from Hollywood musical director, Alfred Neuman.



Hooking People Up

Volunteer Sharon Dell, far left, arranged for genealogist Patty Knickerbocker, far right, to share her wealth of information with other residents. Patty is now living in Pennsylvania and has an extensive computer data base on the Barnhart family, which also touches upon the Teals, Wingers and Shislars. A dozen people spent an afternoon

with Patty at the Museum to share research. Many "missing" family members were added to everyone's family trees and people left with each others e-mail addresses and promises to share future discoveries. The Museum keeps track of genealogists who use the archives and often puts long-lost family members in contact with each other. Sunday afternoons are the best time to do research at the Museum when staff can assist you. Thank you Patty for sharing your work!

Visiting Relatives



It is always heartening to learn when people plan a "Family Tree" vacation to Fort Erie. These are some of the people who have stopped by the Historical Museum to learn more about their ancestors. Top left are J.L Kraft's grandson James and his wife Diane DeiRossi. James works on the Kraftwood property in Wisconsin. The group on the bottom left are Kraft

siblings from Wisconsin: from the left are Lamont Kraft, Marlene Voight and Ken Kraft. Both groups spent time in the archives and stopped at the Kraft historical plaque on the Niagara Blvd.

Pictured top right are Kathy and Richard McKenzie, Kathy is the granddaughter of Edmund Zavitz,

who was born in Ridgeway and became the Province's first forester.

They came from Kelowna British Columbia to visit Edmund's birthplace.

Pictured bottom right is Marda McLean, descendant of Col. John Warren who was Collector of Customs from 1798-1812 and also ran a ferry landing on the Niagara River.

If you have relatives visiting this summer, please bring them by the Museum and show off your town's interesting past. These folks told us they were glad they made the trip!



Today in History Website

In September, the Museum will be launching its new website at www.museum.forterie.ca

One of the features will include a "Today in History" segment. Each day new information will appear on the web highlighting significant events that happened on that day in Fort Erie's history, such as:

Jan. 1, 1958 - Bertie Township forms its own police force and assumes OPP duties.

May 12, 1902 - Joe Gans kayos Frank Evne to win the lightweight championship of the world at the Peace Bridge Arena on Garrison Road.

June 1, 1916 - The U.S. Consulate closes its Fort Erie office.

Oct. 30, 1926 - Branch 71, Royal Canadian Legion forms in Fort Erie.

Dec. 1, 1985 - Violent storms cause high water levels rising over ten feet and flooding homes.

Adding "Life" to your Family Tree

Family Trees are usually comprised of names and dates. What makes them interesting, however, are the stories behind these names. Below are some questions that you might ask your relatives to add some "life" to your family tree. Don't wait for people to age before talking to them...everyone has a story to tell!

- How did your parents choose your name and do you have a nickname?
- What is your favourite family story?
- What did your grandparents do for a living? What did they like and dislike about their jobs?
- Did your parents and grandparents have any exceptional talents?
- What was the house like that you grew up in?
- What was your favourite toy as a youngster?
- Did you have a favourite musical group?
- Who was your favourite teacher and why?
 - Who was your best friend in grade school?
- Who was your hero as a youngster?
 - What did you want to be when you grew up?
 - Tell me about your favourite vacation.
- What were your happiest and saddest moments?

Gone but not Forgotten

Over the past year many old buildings have been demolished throughout town. The Museum receives every demolition



permit and then takes photographs of these buildings before they disappear. The following buildings now exist only in people's memories and in the Museum's archives:

80 Lavinia St., 314 Ridge Rd. N., 3663 Rebstock Rd., 159 Lincoln Rd.E., 488 Lakeshore Rd., 374 Ridgeway Rd., 515 Garrison Rd., 129 Albert St., 131 Albert St., 509 Niagara Blvd., 1351 Kam Rd., 354 Beechwood Ave., 1074 Walden Blvd., 121 Garrison Rd., 208 Nicholas Rd., 3234 Pine Ave., 3720 Graeber Ave., 2987 Portage Trail and the Royal Casino Bath House in Bay Beach.

A big thanks to the Town's Planning staff and to local contractors for making this record-keeping project possible.

Communities-in-Bloom

Doug Martin, owner of Gibson's Jewellers in Ridgeway, donated 7 flats of flowers to the Historical Museum just in time for the Communities-in-Bloom competition. Doug noticed that the Museum's flower beds needed sprucing-up and wanted to help downtown Ridgeway obtain a good score from the judges. On a historical note, Gibson's Jewellers is nearing its 80th anniversary and is located in the former Beeshy's store which began as a general store selling watches, jewellery and china in 1874. Thank you Doug for caring about tradition, the Museum and downtown Ridgeway!

The Fort Erie Railroad Museum's flowers were donated by the Fort Erie Horticultural Society...many thanks to you as well!



Outreach

Recent Museum outreach programs include: top, a display at the Fenian Raid re-enactment. Board member, Mary Papp, stopped by to chat with some of the "Fenians". The next photo shows the exhibit set up at the Niagara Antique Power Show in Sherkston. Below that, Board members Sandy and Bruce Wallace (Bruce is missing from the photo!) staff the display at the Holloway Memorial Chapel Strawberry Festival at Point Abino. The Chapel is an annual sponsor of the Museum drawing on their own historic ties to the community. The last photo shows Charlene Heckman manning the photo album tent at Ridgeway's Summer Festival. Hundreds of pictures were identified that day! The Museum also had exhibits at the Fort Erie Art Show featuring paintings from the collection; in the Town Hall atrium to educate visitors about what makes Fort Erie unique; a historical perspective at the Point Abino Lighthouse; and Ruby Smith & Adriana Jacobi, Art's Council members, featured museum artifacts at the Crystal Beach Art Show. Thanks for visiting the Museum's booths and to all of our volunteers!



VOLUNTEERING...

Railroad

Meet up with fellow enthusiasts Monday mornings at the Railroad Museum. Ken Cardwell and Allan McKay are organizing this group to restore equipment and identify and catalogue railway artifacts.
Call 894-5322

Fleet

Every Tuesday afternoon several former Fleet employees catalogue artifacts & photographs from the Fleet archives. They have finished over 1,800 items and welcome new members.
Call 894-5322

Archives

If you like reading about Fort Erie's past think about helping in the Archives. Every Wednesday afternoon these volunteers sort and file historical clippings and documents.
Call 894-5322

High School Co-op

If you are working on your 40 community service hours, consider spending some time at the Museum. You will gain experience with computer data entry.
Call 894-5322

School Programs

Over 500 children visited the museum for the Hometown Sacrifices school program last fall. They learned how local citizens participated in the war effort during the 20th century, making Remembrance Day ceremonies a little more relevant to them. The Fort Erie Legion has sponsored buses so that all the classes from one school will be able to view the exhibit this fall, and the museum hopes that other sponsors will come forward so that all students in Fort Erie will have the same experience.



A Remembrance Day School Program

Let the Fort Erie Museum help prepare your class for Remembrance Day.

Expose your students to Fort Erie's role in the war years, including the contributions of school children.

This 45-minute program includes 1940s film footage from local aircraft builder Fleet; excerpts from a recruitment film; an audio letter sent from a Vietnam soldier to his Mom in Ridgeway; letters from Ridgeway High School students to friends overseas; school issued war stamps; wall of 1,000 names of local service men and women; photographs, uniforms and many artifacts.

\$1 per student - Appropriate for Grades 3-12
Fort Erie Museum 402 Ridge Rd. Contact Jude Scott 894-5322

The Boys of Summer

The first official baseball uniform, a white flannel shirt, blue wool pantaloons and a straw hat, was adopted in 1849 by the Knickerbocker Baseball Club of New York City. "The blue and white colour scheme was not a random choice — early clubs wished to be associated with manly organizations such as military companies" according to the National Baseball Hall of Fame. While cotton would have made for less expensive and more comfortable uniforms, the fabric was at the time associated with work clothing, so by donning wool uniforms, baseballs clubs aligned themselves with organizations of a higher status. The picture above is of the Crystal Beach ball team circa 1950s. Back row from left: Bob Lahaye, Bob Thompson, Ken Barnhart, Don Huffman, Burt Szilagyi, Bob Sims, Chuck Neuman, and Chick Otto. Front row from left: Frank Arrowsmith, Bob Lehave Jr., Stan Cross, Bill Cross, Norm Davison and Donny Bright. They had a dual sponsors, the Imperial Hotel and the Beachcomber Restaurant, which explains the two different shirt logos and hats that say B-I. The team played their home games at the stadium in Crystal Beach Park.





Queen's Hotel

The Queen's Hotel was located on the corner of Niagara Blvd. and Queen St. in Fort Erie. Built in the early 1800s by Benjamin Hardison (who settled in Fort Erie following his service in the Revolutionary War) and married Mary Jane Warren. Her father was Col. John Warren, first commissary of the fort and Mary was the first child born at the fort. By 1850 the property was sold to William Wallace, builder of the Buffalo, Brantford and Goderich Railway who then renovated the lands into an estate 'fitting' his position. In the 1880s Mr. Dane converted the home into a hotel. In 1910 Harry Hawkins bought the hotel and the photo below shows it decorated for the Peace Week celebrations in 1913. Fort Erie and Buffalo were celebrating 100 years of peace between the two countries. In 1931 Harry converted the hotel into 8 apartments, then, back into a hotel following WW II. Old newspaper articles report that this building has served as the American Consul in Fort Erie; as a sanitorium for the cure of liquor addicts; and a hideout for a train robber. John Donohoe robbed the American Express Company of an estimated \$100,000 and fled to Canada where he could not be extradited. He continued to steal in Ontario where he was caught and sent to prison. It was rumoured that he buried a cache of money at the Queen's Hotel, but after several searches, no money was ever discovered. On Dec. 26, 1986 the Queen's was destroyed in a fire.

