



# 2024 HERITAGE EDITION



## Heritage of the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

Compiled by Stewart Grant

The first Tavistock Gazette was published on Sept. 25, 1895, by J. W. Green with operations based in the village's Loth block where the Commercial Hotel was located. The very first editions of The Gazette are not available, and reports indicated they were burned in the Square on Hallowe'en night. The earliest copy I have seen of the newspaper is dated June 3, 1897, by which time the operation was based out of Tavistock's Wildfang's Block. In 1897, a subscription could be purchased for \$1 per year, otherwise it was a cost of \$1.25. For those wishing to place advertisements, it was noted that sale bills could be printed in both English and German.

Frank H. Leslie was the newspaper's second publisher, acquiring the Gazette in 1900. In June 1904, Mr. Leslie sold the newspaper to Charles Fraser, who remained as publisher until 1908. Around this time, Gazette operations were published in the Staebler Block, in the area where Quehl's Restaurant now stands. From 1908 to 1910, the late N. E. Dopp was the publisher.

In June 1910, Frank Leslie again became the publisher with George Shipley and son as managers. In March 1912, Mr. Leslie moved the plant from the Staebler Block to the Opera Hall Block on Woodstock Street North, where the Gazette would remain for 50 years and nine months.

In August 1914, The Gazette was sold by Mr. Leslie to William Appel. Mr. Leslie had purchased the Niagara Falls newspaper and wished to devote his entire interest to the business there. On May 1, 1916, Mr. Appel sold the business to his son, Lorne W. "Chick" Appel.

Mr. Appel published The Gazette until October 1929, when the business was purchased by the late George K. Brown. In February 1930, K. Hartford Brown came to Tavistock to become associated with his father, and he was the editor-manager from April 1932 until January 1957 when he purchased the business.

The move of Gazette operations was necessary by the 1960s as heavier printing machinery on the building's second floor became too much for the original beams in the 100-year-old Opera Hall Block to burden. The old building would be torn down in 1966.

The new home for the Tavistock Gazette would be located at the familiar corner of William and Woodstock Street South, at the former home of Strahm Garage.

On Dec. 18, 1962, plant equipment was moved to the Gazette's new location, which boasted ample parking space, facilities for the receipt of paper stock at the side door (William St.) entrance as well as at a large door into the cellar, where some printing machinery was installed.

After 40 years of the newspaper and printing business being in the Brown family, a new era was entered into on July 1, 1969, when the Tavistock Gazette was



Stewart Grant, present owner of the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette, holds one of the oldest-preserved copies of the Tavistock Gazette from Thursday, June 3, 1897. Photo by Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

purchased by C. Robert "Bob" Gladding and his wife, Doris. A generation later, their son Bill and wife Sheri would buy the enterprise in March of 1988.

Robert and Doris Gladding continued to be instrumental in the publication of the family-run Gazette. During his eighties, Bob was celebrated as "the oldest working pressman in Canada". He passed away in 2012 at the age of 87.

The following was written in the pages of the Gazette in 1995:

"As we enter our 100th year of publication, we can look back to the time when the Gazette was printed on a Washington press one sheet at a time with each letter of each paragraph painstakingly set into a matrix of type. A Linotype machine was installed in 1923 to set the hot metal slugs and offset printing of the weekly editions was phased in late in 1974. Computerized typesetting workstations were installed in 1988 which not only set type, but scan photographs and artwork for each individual page. What will the next 100 years bring? The Gazette is already looking at an on-line service which would optimize the digital information already contained in the files each week. Digital cameras, sound and video access to local happenings are all possibilities as we look to the twenty-first century."

The new century brought massive changes to the newspaper industry. First, many small-town publications were bought up by conglomerates that, in the search for cost savings, began to reduce local journalism in favour of generalized content that could be spread across multiple papers. This fate never befell the Gazette, and each week Tavistock residents could look forward to dedicated local content from publisher Bill Gladding, including a cover story that featured a unique personality from within the village.

The local-first commitment shown by

the Gazette also helped stave off the next great challenge to the industry – that being competition from online platforms, including social media sites such as Facebook. While many newspapers in much-larger towns and cities throughout the country were closed, the Tavistock Gazette, amazingly, remained.

A third significant challenge facing newspapers in this century involves succession. There are not that many people interested in buying newspapers in an era that is increasingly moving online. As Bill and Sheri eyed retirement, the Gazette was advertised for sale locally, but without success.

It was during the spring of 2020 that I came to read the Tavistock Gazette when it was available to read online during the short period of time that printing had ceased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I sent a message to Bill in appreciation of his outstanding publication, and we developed a relationship. Later that year, Bill approached me about the idea of purchasing the Gazette, as he had seen the

same care that I took towards local journalism in my administration of the St. Marys Independent over the past number of years.

After exactly 51 years of the Tavistock Gazette being in the Gladding family, I became new owner of the newspaper and printing business on July 1, 2020. Though I did not have the resources to buy the iconic Gazette building, we continued to rent the office for another year until the building was sold. The business now operates out of our St. Marys office, but we maintain a drop-off and pickup kiosk within D&D's Homestyle Cuisine at Tavistock's five corner intersection.

As part of our regular weekly deliveries of the Tavistock Gazette to nearby communities, I stumbled upon the New Hamburg Independent and was very disappointed with the lack of community news within this once-proud newspaper which was now owned by Metroland Media. As a result, just four months after purchasing the Tavistock Gazette, our team decided to launch the Wilmot Post as a weekly newspaper serving Wilmot Township and Wellesley.

One year later, on October 21, 2021, the Wilmot Post was combined with the Tavistock Gazette, becoming the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette. At the same time, after 126 years of being a "paid newspaper", we switched the format to a free model so that as many people as possible could read the community news. Weekly circulation is now typically 4,000 copies available at pickup locations throughout Tavistock, New Hamburg and the surrounding areas, while others read each issue online from their homes wherever they are in the world. There are also a couple hundred subscribers who pay for the convenience of having the Gazette mailed to them each week through Canada Post.

After 129 years, there have been many changes to the Tavistock Gazette, but I believe the newspaper has successfully evolved with the times and is in a strong position to continue serving the community in the decades to follow.



Nearly every copy of the Gazette over its 129-year history has been preserved and bound. Above, the July 2, 1969, edition memorialized the sale of The Tavistock Gazette from K. Hart Brown to C. Robert Gladding. The Gladding family would go on to publish the Gazette for 51 consecutive years before selling the business to Stewart Grant in 2020. Photo by Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

# Tavistock and District Historical Society to celebrate 60-year-old student history of Tavistock

By Paul Bartlett, Tavistock and District Historical Society

In the fall of 1963, the Grade 7 and 8 students of the Tavistock Public School compiled and published a history of Tavistock. The school principal at the time, Mr. James Axtmann, had his students collect the information for a school project and the booklet that was completed is believed to be the first comprehensive history of the village.

More than 40 senior students contributed to the project. Several of the students spent untold hours going through old files of the Tavistock Gazette in their search for material in preparation for their contribution. Others interviewed older residents of the village, digging up little-known or forgotten facts. Some had access to old records and books that were used to their advantage. Many of the students were second or third generation relatives of the business owners.

Included in the booklet are histories of most of the businesses and organizations in town, including a number that have vanished. There are stories for instance of the railroad and the old train station, of the J. G. Field Woolen Mill, of the Zimmerman Box Factory, of the turnip-waxing plants, and of the distinctive Glasgow Warehouse in the centre of town. There is an article about how the streets of Tavistock got their names. The long and often humorous story of the Tavistock



The Tavistock Public School circa 1908. Contributed photo

Band is described and there is a biography of the founder of Tavistock, Captain Henry Eckstein.

The students, of course, were most familiar with their own Tavistock Public School. They produced a drawing of the school that showed where the classes were located and who was teaching in them. Two of the students, John Pletsch and Gary Bender, produced a history of the school in Tavistock. Until 1879, students attended a one-room school in Sebastopol, then for a few months they went to Loth's Hall behind the Commercial Hotel at the five

corners. Finally in 1879, a more permanent two-room school was built on William Street.

Valentine Stock, who would later become a Member of Provincial Parliament for Perth South, was one of the early teachers at the new Tavistock School. In 1898, a second storey with three new rooms was added to the building and then in 1916 two more rooms were added. The result was a fine, two-storey brick structure crowned by an impressive bell tower and situated on a beautiful lot with many trees.

The Tavistock Public School did include a continuation school (or high school) at first, but after 1955 the high-school students were bussed to Waterloo-Oxford High School. As Tavistock grew and the school population grew, it was decided to build a new school. In 1966 (after the student history was written), a new school was opened in Tavistock and the old school became part of the PeopleCare nursing home.

The Tavistock Gazette, in 1964, predicted "in years to come, the booklet will prove to be a most valuable source of information, and the students who took the time to work on their individual project are to be highly commended." Three years later, in time for Canada's Centennial, Carl Seltzer and the Tavistock Rotary Club produced "Fact and Fantasy", the definitive history of Tavistock and it is believed that the student history produced in 1963-64 formed the basis for many of the items in that book.

In recognition of the 60th anniversary of the publication of this student history, the Tavistock and District Historical Society will recognize those who wrote the booklet at the society's annual meeting in April (date and location to be announced). It will be like a class reunion and the students will be invited to share their memories of what it was like growing up in Tavistock in the 1960s. All are warmly invited to attend!

**Shirley Koehle, Realtor,**

a long time resident of New Hamburg

Is celebrating

**20 Years with Peak Realty Ltd.**

Assisting and guiding many families in their milestone venture of selling and buying their homes.

~Thank you to my wonderful clients ~ Shirley

"Are you looking for a realtor you can trust, who will work as hard for you as you do for yourself, who will leave no stone unturned to find you the perfect house or to sell yours? I would recommend Shirley Koehle. She sold my condo and assisted me buying a house when the market was not so hot. Shirley is dependable, hardworking, creative and very professional. She was very intuitive, sensitive to my needs and concerns...helped me with staging my home and with promotions. She is very pleasant and makes people feel at ease and important. For a stress-free and profitable sale of your home Call Shirley Koehle."

- N.J.



[www.peakrealestate.com](http://www.peakrealestate.com)

INDEPENDENTLY OWNED & OPERATED

90 - C Peel Street, New Hamburg, Ontario, N3A 1E3

Office: 519-662-4900 Cell: 519-635-3171

[shirley.koehle@gmail.com](mailto:shirley.koehle@gmail.com)

**RIVERSIDE BRASS**

& ALUMINUM FOUNDRY LIMITED

Riverside Brass continues to build on a tradition of casting excellence in New Hamburg

Family Owned by the Steinmann Family for 58 years.

In 1969 the Foundry was moved from Preston to the former Hahn Brass Works on Waterloo St., New Hamburg. In 1996 a 42,000 square foot foundry was built on Hamilton Road. A symbol of their success.



See Us for High Quality Custom Designed Plaques

Manufacturing industrial castings for fire protection, electrical & water related industries is the CORE business of Riverside Brass

55 Hamilton Road, New Hamburg

Phone: 519-662-2500

[www.riversidebrass.com](http://www.riversidebrass.com)



# Celebrating the 150th anniversary of Wilmot Lodge No.318

By Taylor Hynes, Museum Assistant Castle Kilbride

Freemasonry or Masons refers to one of the oldest fraternal charitable and social organizations in the world. Freemasonry finds its roots in the traditional medieval stonemasons of Europe who, similar to the Masons of today, distinguished themselves from others by choice of words, grips and signals. Today, Masons focus on steps to lead productive lives that benefit the communities in which they live.

When Masons meet, their organizational unit is referred to as a Masonic Lodge. Lodges meet regularly where they approve minutes, elect new members, appoint officers, take their reports, consider correspondence, bills and annual accounts, organize social and charitable events, and so on. In addition, their

meetings may also focus on ceremonies or lectures on Mason's history or teachings. Many of these ceremonies focus on Masonic degrees such as Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft (or Fellow Craft), and Master Mason.

One of the major cornerstones of the fraternity is charity in the form of helping other people. Charitable projects may differ from lodge to lodge, but examples of local Masons' involvement include supporting hearing research, a bursary program for university and college students, autism services, prostate cancer research, alcohol and drug awareness, and support of the Canadian Blood Services, to name a few.

Locally, 2024 marks a major milestone year for Wilmot's very own Masonic Lodge, No. 318 as members celebrate

150 years. In 1874, sufficient funds were collected so a Masonic Lodge could be formed in Baden. First Lodge meetings were held in a third-floor hall above Mr. E. Boye's general store in Baden. This building is still standing in the center of Baden. Masons paid a \$25 annual rent for the hall. Their meetings continued there until 1888 when they moved to a hall adjacent to the William Kraus Hotel – also known as The Baden Hotel. For 65 years, the lodge remained at this location before moving to its third location.

In 1951, the Lodge moved into a room on the top level of Livingston Presbyterian Church. The rental fee for this location was \$100 annually. This Lodge Hall was dedicated in 1954 by Rt. Wor. Bro. Allen Bennett D.D.G.M. for Wellington District with other Grand Lodge officers. In 1972, New Dominion Lodge No. 205 vacated their Lodge Hall in New Hamburg and were invited by the brethren of Wilmot Lodge to use their Lodge Hall in Baden.

In 2021, Wilmot's Masonic Lodge No. 318 moved from the Livingston Presbyterian Church as the property had gone up for sale. Wilmot Lodge No. 318 now meets in Cambridge.

In 1874, James Livingston, owner of Castle Kilbride, was a part of the first group of brethren to secure funding for the Lodge. At Castle Kilbride National Historic Site, various artifacts belonging and relating to James Livingston's time as a Mason are housed in the collection. One includes a Charter for the establishment



Letter of Intent for Masonic Lodge in Wilmot June 1874. Photo courtesy of Castle Kilbride Collection

of the Wilmot Masonic Lodge with signatures from petitioners, including James Livingston, for permission to establish a Lodge. Another is a silver medallion celebrating 100 years of Freemasonry in Canada from 1792 to 1892. The medallion was given out on Dec. 27, 1892, in Toronto.

To mark the 150th anniversary of Wilmot's Masonic Lodge No. 318, a small exhibit will be on display at Castle Kilbride from July to mid-November in the Belvedere Gallery. Please note, the gallery space is only accessible by stairs.



Masonic Centenary Medal 1892. Photo courtesy of Castle Kilbride Collection

## Growing to Support the Needs of Seniors in our Community



Tri-County Mennonite Homes



@TCMHomes



@TCM.Homes

www.tcmhomes.com

# Haysville Bridges Over the Nith River 1883-2000

By Al Junker

The Huron Road, constructed by the Canada Company from Guelph to Goderich, served as a colonization road enabling settlers to move into the Huron Tract. This road passed through the southern portion of Wilmot Township. Construction began in 1828 and was completed that year; though at that point, it was more of a path than a road.

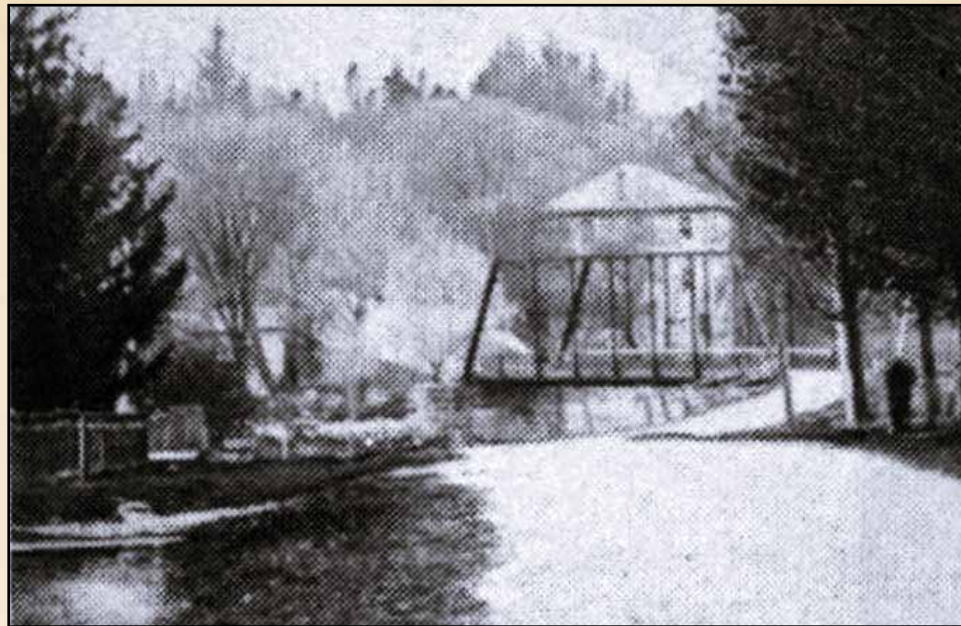
Work began in Wilmot near what today is Punkeydoodle's Corner under the direction of Dr. Wm. "Tiger" Dunlop. The survey work was led by John McDonald, the deputy provincial surveyor, and Samuel Smith. They were followed by a team of glazers who marked the trees, and then by woodman who cut the trees down. When they reached Lake Huron, the surveyors and some workers remained to lay out the site of Goderich. The rest of the crew returned to Wilmot, clearing off the fallen trees along the 60-mile route. In 1829, the road was improved to 12 feet wide, which was termed a "sleigh road." In 1830, the road was completed to a width of 66 feet.

A significant obstacle on the Wilmot portion of the Huron road was the crossing of the Nith River (also known as Smith's Creek) at what is now Haysville. Prior to the start of construction in June 1828, a preliminary group was sent out to examine the construction of a bridge over the river. The group consisted of Dr. Dunlop, Samuel Strickland, whose role with the Canada Company included overseeing the construction of roads and bridges, and Thomas Smith, the company's accountant.

Upon arriving at the Nith River, the expedition discovered that a previous traveler had created the first crossing by chopping down a tree across the river. While crossing this "bridge," Dunlop apparently stopped to enjoy a pinch of snuff and dropped his snuffbox into the water. He dove in and retrieved it, and a fire was lit to dry him off.

The crossing was described as a "stream in the centre of a narrow valley below the level of the surrounding country, bordered by trees which held, hanging from stem to stem, great trailers of wild grape – all pure wilderness not yet broken by a single farm." The first bridges built across the Nith at the Haysville location were constructed of wood. They were frequently damaged and sometimes swept away by floods, so they often had to be rebuilt.

Around 1883, an iron bridge was installed, which was considered to be flood proof. However, this was not to be the



1883 Haysville Bridge showing original road alignment. Photo courtesy of Waterloo Historical Society Annual Volume 1983

case. In August 1883, the worst flood in history occurred on the Nith River. Local newspaper accounts headlined: "The Nith Roaring," "Six Feet Above High Water Mark." Following a week of heavy rain, a downpour on Aug. 18 and 19 sent the river on a rampage. A dam broke in Wellesley sending a torrent of water through New Hamburg towards Haysville. A horse rider was sent from New Hamburg to warn the residents of Haysville of the approaching danger. The distance by road was three miles while, by the meandering Nith River, it was twelve miles. Despite the warning and the pleas of fellow villagers, three individuals stood on the bridge. Messrs. Blatchford, Plum and Forsyth had to be rescued by Ab Hayes, "a local athlete and swimmer," who pulled them to safety just before the iron bridge was swept off its abutments.

Local newspaper accounts stated "the Iron Bridge is lying in a broken state below the rapids" and "the quiet little village [Haysville] is nearly destroyed." Every bridge and culvert in Wilmot was damaged or swept away, including seven bridges on the Nith River. In the immediate aftermath of the flood, a footbridge was erected and a floating bridge for vehicles was installed shortly thereafter. Although no photos of the 1883 flood in Haysville appear to have survived, a sketch of the aftermath was made by Charles Davy Brown, a local artist.

Wilmot Township was faced with a

mammoth task in repairing and replacing bridges. At its first meeting after the flood on Aug. 20, the council voted that it would be "advisable to cancel all Grants" made at former sessions of the Council" for roadwork due to the "enormous expenses for rebuilding and repairing bridges, etc." At the same meeting, By-law 272 was passed appointing Isaac L. Bowman P.S.S. as Township engineer for ditches and watercourses.

Reeve Fred Holwell communicated with the Dominion Bridge Co. to see what could be done with the Haysville iron bridge. It was determined a new bridge would be required at Haysville. However, on Feb. 8, 1884, council approved an arrangement which Reeve Holwell had made with the Dominion Bridge Co. of Toronto "to work over and reerect [sic] the Haysville Iron Bridge at Rau's, Bleams Rd. (Oak Grove Cheese Factory today) for the sum of \$775."

On March 10, township clerk Henry Liersch was directed to advertise for tenders to build two stone abutments for the Haysville Bridge. The clerk was instructed to request the township engineer to meet council at Haysville on May 3, 1884 to locate the abutments for the new bridge. Over the course of the year, the temporary floating bridge at Haysville had to be repaired multiple times. At its meeting on

June 16, 1884, council directed the clerk to advertise in the New Hamburg papers, the Galt Reporter and Canadische Bauernfreund, calling for tenders for "an Iron Bridge also for a Union bridge at Haysville" and for mason work to construct abutments for the bridge.

The council was to supply the material for the abutments (stones from Acton). On June 28th, council decided, that since the tenders for the mason work were too high, the work would be done by "day labour" under the direction of a subcommittee of Reeve Holwell and Coun. Edwin Daniel. After opening the tenders for the bridge, council decided to go with an iron bridge rather than a combination bridge and accepted the tender of the Dominion Bridge Co. from Toronto for \$20.90 per lineal foot. The work was to be supervised by the above subcommittee, which was authorized to hire "a practical Man to see the work done in a first class manner."

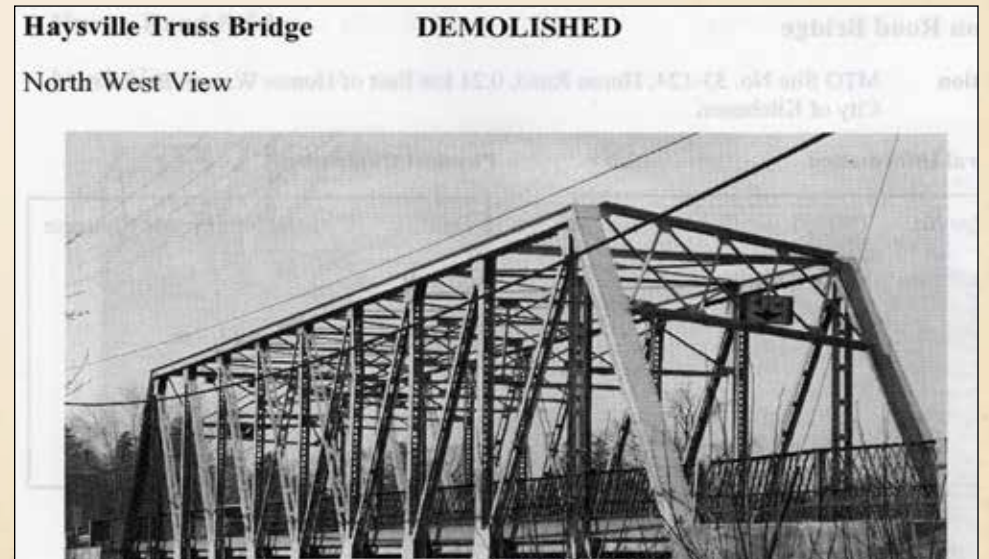
On July 14, 1884, council hired Mr. A.J. Mark, "a practical Builder" from Toronto to oversee the building of the Haysville bridge at a salary of \$4 per day. Final payment to the Dominion Bridge Co. for "constructing a Highway bridge at Haysville 128 ft by x 16 ft" of \$2,675 was approved on Dec. 15, 1884. This amount does not include the cost of constructing the abutments or the approaches to the bridge, or any other associated work or materials. This bridge remained in place until 1930 when it was replaced by the County of Waterloo.

Since bridges in the Township were such a large component of Wilmot's infrastructure, rules and regulations were put in place to protect them from damage, some of which were very interesting. On Nov. 22, 1888, a lengthy procedural bylaw was passed which amended and consolidated previously passed bylaws. Under the roads and bridges section, people were prohibited from riding or driving "at a faster rate than a walk" on any bridge with a span greater than twenty feet. Any individual driving cattle across a bridge could only take eight cattle at a time. A load restriction of five tons was placed on all culverts and bridges. It was necessary for anyone driving a steam fire engine or any other machine with steam power to have a team or span of horses, mules or oxen attached on front.

The Huron Road was improved in 1928



Kathleen Coxson in front of the 1883 Haysville Bridge c1928. Photo courtesy of Township of Wilmot



1930 Haysville Bridge c1998. Photo courtesy of "Region of Waterloo Spanning the Generations"



Haysville Bridge after the 1883 flood. Sketch by Charles Davy Brown of Nith Grove, Haysville. Photo courtesy of Waterloo Historical Society Annual Volume 1983

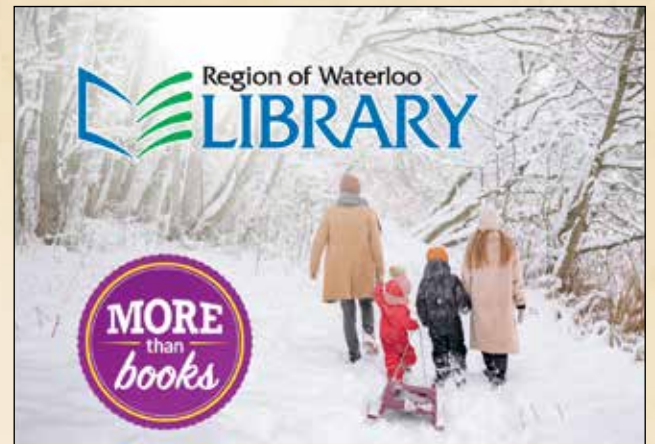
to accommodate motor vehicles. It was straightened and paved. In 1930, the 1883 iron bridge was removed and a new bridge installed on the realigned road. This bridge crossed the river at a much straighter angle than the previous one. It was located twenty feet south of the 1883 bridge. The 1925 photo of Haysville shows the angle of the earlier bridge. The construction of the 1930 bridge was undertaken by the County of Waterloo and was overseen by Herbert Johnstone, the county engineer. It was constructed of steel and the abutments were concrete as opposed to stone.

The stone abutments of the 1883 bridge were not removed. The tenders for the bridge were awarded on June 6, 1930 – the concrete work to Lichty Bros. for \$7,729 and the steel work to the Hamilton Bridge and Tool Company for \$15,989. The steel work began June 28 and was completed June 30. On July 11, the bridge was completed and it was opened to traffic Aug. 10. It had a “Class A” loading which enabled it to accommodate cars and snow removal equipment. The bridge was 164 feet long and 20 feet wide (longer and wider than the previous bridge)

and had a steel-latticed handrail. This type of bridge is referred to as a “single-span, single-lane, steel riveted through truss bridge.” It underwent repairs over the years to strengthen and extend its life.

In 1998, the Region of Waterloo commenced a study about what to do with the Haysville Bridge. Several options were looked at, ranging from full restoration of the existing bridge to the construction of a new two-lane, concrete bridge. Several open houses were held, and the community was divided. Despite a previous study of old bridges conducted by the Region (Spanning the Generations) that stated the Haysville Bridge was the seventh-most significant heritage bridge in the region, the decision was made by Wilmot Township council to construct a new, two-lane concrete bridge. The 1930 bridge was demolished in 2000 and the current bridge was constructed.

Since 1828 when the Huron Road was constructed, bridges were built over the Nith River in Haysville. Four of these bridges, starting in 1883, were iron or steel truss bridges. Prior to that, the bridges were made of wood.



**Explore the community for free with recreation and museum passes:**

- Ontario Parks
- Grand River Conservation Authority
- Waterloo Region Museums
- Hamilton Art Gallery

**New programs coming soon!**  
 March Break Program registration - February 23  
 Spring Program registration - March 22

Visit [RWLibrary.ca](http://RWLibrary.ca) to reserve passes or browse and register for programs  
 Ask a Librarian 226-748-8030

These bridges were examples of the technology that was available at the time. They provided a vital link on the Huron Road and served the transportation needs on this heritage highway that runs from Guelph to Goderich to this day.

**Community creates our sense of connection.  
 Our shared heritage depends on each other.  
 You belong here.**

As your Member of Parliament, I am proud to advocate for our Arts and Heritage sectors.

**TIM LOUIS**  
 Member of Parliament, Kitchener-Conestoga

519-578-3777 | [Tim.Louis@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Tim.Louis@parl.gc.ca) | [TimLouisMP.ca](http://TimLouisMP.ca) | [@TimLouisKitCon](#)

This 1872 hotel was totally restored from 2014-2016 and now contains 12 elegant one-bedroom apartments for seniors; the main floor features commercial space for A Portuguesa Bakery, Peel Street Beverages [Brewery], Imperial Market & Eatery and Stonetown Travel.

# Celebrating Castle Kilbride's 30th anniversary

By Sherri Gropp, Museum curator Castle Kilbride

The history of Castle Kilbride in the Township of Wilmot is one to celebrate. This year marks 30 years for Castle Kilbride as a museum. In honour of this milestone, we are looking at 30 things that have made Castle Kilbride an outstanding piece of Wilmot's heritage.

1. Castle Kilbride was built in 1877 by flax entrepreneur James Livingston for his family.
2. The Castle was home to the Livingston family for three generations from 1877 to 1988.
3. In 1988, a huge auction was held and the artifacts were scattered all across Canada.
4. Five years later, the Township of Wilmot purchased the Castle with the intention of finding a home for their administration and council needs.
5. Local carpenters at Herner Wood Products were tasked with replicating the detailed exterior wooden features.
6. On Sept. 25, 1994, the museum officially opened to public with much fanfare and excitement.
7. Chair of the museum's acquisitions subcommittee was successful in securing original Livingston artifacts. This included the Krug Library Set, Homer Watson's "Old Mill and Stream"



Castle Kilbride Museum Opening Day Sept. 25, 1994. Photo courtesy of Patty Clarke Collection

8. The Castle's most famous visitors: Wayne and Janet Gretzky checked out the museum in 1994.
9. Castle Kilbride is named a National Historic Site and the plaque is officially unveiled.
10. In 1999, the first Curator was hired for the museum. Until this point, it was led by a host of dedicated volunteers.
11. By 2000, many of the original

and the Livingston's floor lamp.

artifacts were returned to the Castle. All artifacts were numbered and catalogued to create the Castle Kilbride Collection.

12. In 2003, Parks Canada sends their experts to perform conservation work on the designated wall and ceiling murals.
13. A major donation of original artifacts including leather dining room chairs and original Livingston utensils returned to the museum.
14. Thousands of visitors descend on New Hamburg and Castle Kilbride for Harry Potterfest in July of 2007.
15. In August 2008, a "royal" wedding took place on the Castle Kilbride grounds when descendant Lindsay married Adam.
16. In 2010, the Livingston tradition of hosting music on the lawn was revived with the establishment of the Castle Concert Series.
17. Artist Lori LeMare is contracted for the first time to perform restoration work on the designated trompe l'oeil murals in 2013. Her first project is the conservation of the "statue".

18. In 2014, it was 150 years since James and John Livingston established the J&J Livingston business, manufacturers of flax and linseed oil.
19. The Castle Kilbride advisory committee publishes a new Castle Kilbride book in 2016.
20. The CBC/Netflix series Anne with an E turned Castle Kilbride into Aunt Josephine's mansion in 2017.
21. All of 2018 is dedicated to what would have been the 100th birthday of Laura Louise Livingston, who was born at Castle Kilbride May 24, 1918.
22. The second "royal" wedding for a Livingston descendant was held on the grounds when Laura wed Mike.
23. It was all about the Castle's silver anniversary in 2019.
24. A partnership with Ghost Walks offered new and unique tours of the Castle.
25. The museum was all set to open in March of 2020 when everything shut down at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
26. In the fall of 2020, an oilcloth floor was added to the hallway and main staircase of the home, replicating the material that James would have furnished it with in 1877.
27. A condensed mobile storage unit was installed to house the Castle Kilbride Collection in January 2022.
28. In 2023, the original Livingston grandfather clock was returned to the Castle.
29. Two film companies chose to feature Castle Kilbride: The Dickson & Bruce feature, "The Ghost and Castle Kilbride" and the CBC series, "Ghosting".
30. Castle Kilbride celebrates its 30th anniversary with a special exhibit co-curated with the Stratford Festival Archives called "Fabled."

Thank you for looking back at the past 30 years with Castle Kilbride. We are looking forward to the next major milestone in 2027, marking 150 years since the construction of Castle Kilbride.



Castle Kilbride's National Designation plaque unveiling in 1995. Photo courtesy of Castle Kilbride Collection

## 251 Huron Street, New Hamburg



This land was originally part of the Ray Baechler property (225 Huron Street) where his barn was located.

Ray sold the property to Ted Stock and in 1963 Ted built a new structure which housed a creamery to the rear and a Fattum's grocery store to the front..

During those years, Ray picked up and delivered eggs to Loblaw's and Dominion stores in Toronto.

In 1963, Ray sold his egg route and truck to Vernon Erb from a newspaper ad.

Later, Frank Erb and Merv Roth bought the property and turned it into an egg grading station, Erb's Eggs.

In 1987 fire destroyed the egg grading station and Erb's Eggs sold the business to LH Gray in Strathroy.

Merv Roth renovated the building and turned it into what it is now.

In 1993 Dr Betty Fretz remodeled the rear part to become an optometry office. And in 1994, Drs. Howard and Kim Dolman purchased the clinic.

Today, Drs. Howard & Kim Dolman continue to offer residents of the area "state of the art" eye care services.

**Dolman**  
Eyecare Centre

251 B (Back) Huron Street, New Hamburg

519-662-3340

www.dolmaneyecare.com

# Working Together, Building A Better Future.

## Affordable housing projects, medical buildings and plazas



Dominion Hotel  
1880  
(The Imperial)



Imperial Hotel  
1908  
(The Imperial)



Eddy's Tavern  
1986  
(The Imperial)



The Imperial  
2017

# Nith Valley Construction

Industrial ■ Commercial ■ Institutional



Murray's New Hamburg



165 King Street, Kitchener  
(former Budd's Department Store)



Mark Jutzi Funeral Home  
New Hamburg



Castle Kilbride Baden



Zehr Insurance



8 Queen – Kitchener  
Formerly Goudies

## Restoring the Past!

# The publications change, but the vision remains

By Paul Knowles

It's hard to believe, but it was almost four decades ago when I first walked into a crowded, smoke-filled newspaper office at 100 Huron St., New Hamburg. I arrived at the newspaper we affectionately called "The Indy" as interim editor – a short-term fill-in while the newspaper's owners, The Fairway Group, looked for a permanent editor.

They found one, and I went on my way until a few months later when the job again opened up and I was asked to fill in once again. I not only agreed, I applied for the full-time position and was hired as editor, soon adding the role of publisher. I spent the next decade in that job.

The late 1980s and 1990s were a time of great transition in the newspaper business – a transition that has continued right to this day. Those were the earliest days of computerization. The desks of the editorial staff held Sanyo computers, which used large, floppy disks. The evolution to Apple products had not yet happened.

Let's pause a moment and recall my introduction to the already experienced and talented staff at the Indy. There were three tasks covered by the team: front office (which was a lone receptionist/clerk/Jill-of-all-trades), editorial (editor and reporter/photographers) and advertising sales.

Ah, the advertising department. It was headed by a woman named Mary Riche, who detested me, her new boss, on sight.



The staff of the New Hamburg Independent circa 1993. Contributed photo

She thought I was an arrogant jerk. Fortunately, she changed her mind and a couple of years later, married me. Together, we led a fantastic team at the Indy until her untimely passing in November 1996. It's probably not surprising that I left the newspaper a few months later.

Mary and I were very proud of our enterprise. We were, in fact, a rogue entity in the Fairway Group world. The company, a subsidiary of The Record, owned and operated several city weeklies (Cambridge, Waterloo, Guelph and

eventually Kitchener), and three glossy magazines, including Exchange Magazine for Business. After leaving the Indy, I eventually became the part-time editor of Exchange, working with publisher Jon Rohr, for about 25 years!

The Independent was the only small-town publication and the only paid-subscription newspaper in the group. We were different.

But we were determined to thrive, and we did. Over the years, we created a number of additional products including a local phone book, a magazine originally known as "New Era" which eventually merged with Today's Seniors, and – appropriately enough considering the publication which includes this article – an annual Heritage Edition that won scads of national awards and, at its peak, numbered close to 100 pages. Eventually, between all our projects, our staff totalled 10 people, and our annual income topped seven figures. We had a great team, including some very fine reporters and a top-notch advertising staff that included Sharon Leis, now associated with the Gazette.

The day-to-day, week-to-week job was, quite simply, running as fine a local newspaper as we could. And no week was ever the same.

There were highs and lows, and both are seared into my memory. Perhaps the worst single moment, professionally, came the night when I managed to erase the entire newspaper just as we were finishing it.

In those early days, all the news stories, columns, obituaries and so on were stored on a floppy disk. The proposed layout of the newspaper was sketched out by hand on layout sheets, and I would drive the disk and the draft layouts to Fairway's head office in Kitchener. There, the production team would take over.

But one night, I hit the wrong button, or series of buttons, and managed to irrevocably erase all the editorial copy for that week's newspaper. I remember yelling very loud and impolite words as Mary and the others still in the office at that late hour rushed into my back office, wondering if I had suffered a horrendous injury. We had to rebuild the entire editorial section of the paper, and I am sure there

were potentially prize-winning articles lost in the disaster. But still, we published on schedule.

It was not many years later when the system completely changed – Mac computers, email and layout software programs meant the late-evening trip to Kitchener was no longer required, and the graphic artists who did our layout were relocated to the offices of the publications.

There were many memorable moments in my early years at the Indy. I have written a column of some kind or another for what feels like a century, starting at my first newspaper, The Tillsonburg News. So, when I came to the Indy, I immediately started writing a weekly opinion piece, often seasoned with what I saw as humour.

One week, I decided to employ irony – that particular column was a tongue-in-cheek comparison of the Mennonite Relief Sale and Oktoberfest. Now, you need to know that I really do not enjoy Oktoberfest, but I think the Relief Sale is a wonderful event, accomplishing all kinds of good things in terms of community spirit, relief and development funding.

But my ironic approach was to suggest that the Relief Sale would never be all it could be unless it took the same approach as Oktoberfest. I remember recommending the addition of a "Miss Third World Pageant" and a beer tent because, "You haven't really had a good time until someone has thrown up on your shoes."

I thought it was funny and it would be obvious I was dissing Oktoberfest and supporting the Relief Sale. Well, a fair number of local Relief Sale fans did not see it that way. Pastors arrived to sit in my office and chastise me, I was told there were prayer groups praying about this issue, my boss at Fairway was asked to remove me from my job, and I wrote a second column apologizing and trying to explain my attempt at humour.

Fortunately, the editor of a national publication called The Mennonite Reporter learned of the uproar, enjoyed the humorous slant of my original piece, and published an article about the whole thing, including my entire article. I felt somewhat vindicated – but I had also learned a lesson.

In those early days, letters to the editor did not arrive via email; they were on paper, delivered by snail mail, or dropped at our front desk. I have always loved letters to the editor. I think they are a strong indication of readership and interest in the newspaper. And if they disagreed with the paper, or with me as editor and publisher, that was fair game. But sometimes the writers crossed a line into slander, or they declined to sign their letters. One of my least-favourite duties was to decide which letters were unprintable for these reasons. There was one regular correspondent who was vicious in his comments about neighbours and was homophobic and profane. Most of his letters, which arrived scribbled in pencil on dirty scraps of paper, would never appear in print. But I kept them and others of that ilk, and when I eventually wrote two mystery novels involving a newspaper editor, I adapted them as excellent copy in my fictional accounts.

Continued on page 19

## Over 140 years and still here for you!

# Josslin Insurance

a Real Insurance™ broker

**JOSSLIN**  
INSURANCE  
BROKERS LIMITED

J.B. Josslin  
INSURANCE AGENCY

Hatter & Josslin Insurance Agency

GENERAL INSURANCE AGENTS

**LOUIS PEINE & SONS**

Louis Peine  
AGENT  
for Core District and Economical  
Mutual Fire Insurance Companies.

1880 1936 1955 1975 1984

www.josslin.com

519•662•1644





**More than half a million bucks!**

The people of Wilmot township – with a little help from their friends – have now donated \$508,000 to the Campaign for Castle Kilbride. The fundraising drive began only last October, with the ultimate goal of raising \$1 million to restore and refurbish the Castle in Baden, which has been designated as a National Historic Site. Castle Kilbride will open to the public with a giant celebration, Sunday, September 25. The Corporate Fundraising Committee of the Friends of Castle Kilbride celebrated the milestone last week; shown, from left, are Friends of Castle Kilbride chairperson Paul Knowles, Dave Seyler, Mike Schout, Corporate chairperson Don Wagler, Mayor Lynn Myers, Dorene Rudy and John Hanson. (Photo by Kelly Daynard)

A photo of the Castle Kilbride fundraising group published in the New Hamburg Independent. Contributed photo

Continued from page 18

There were more serious issues, too. Newspapers have to cover the bad stuff, and nothing could have been worse than the murder of a woman by her estranged husband in a New Hamburg donut shop. That shook the entire community including the newspaper staffers who had to cover it.

Also very serious were the tragic automobile accidents that were an all too frequent occurrence. I eventually decided to cease publishing photos of those crashes because it was starting to feel like a perverse kind of voyeurism. I still don't know if that was the right answer from a journalistic perspective.

One moment that seemed very serious occurred when Mary was making a sales call at the township office, at that time located across Huron Street from our quarters. She walked into the office of the then-clerk and found him apparently dead at his desk. In a panic she ran to the front desk and told them what had happened.

"Oh, no, he's just napping," she was told. "He does that sometimes."

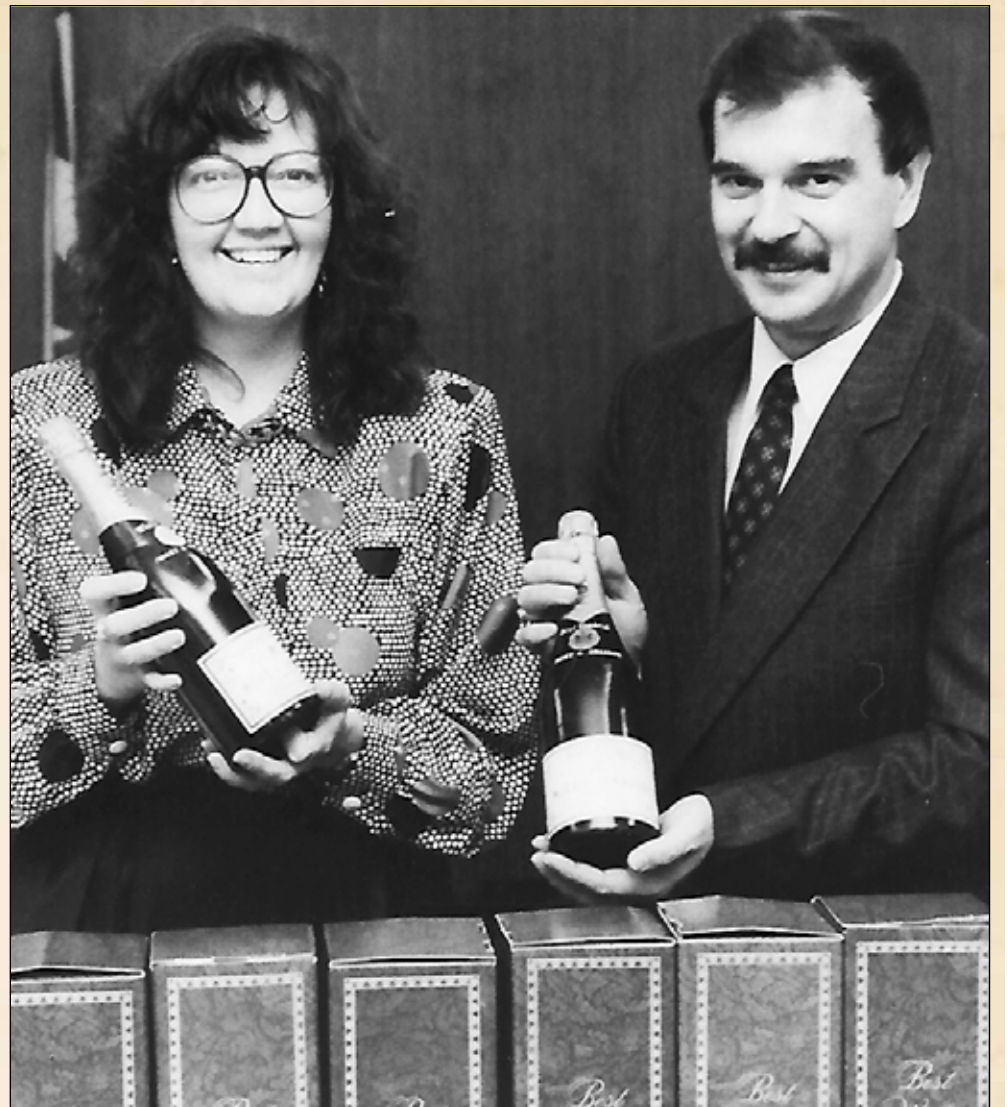
I have been grateful, from that time to this, that my stint at the Indy opened many doors to wonderful opportunities in this community. Because I was publisher of the local paper, I was part of the Board of Trade and was honoured to serve as

president for five years. I was invited to head the committee that raised funds to restore Castle Kilbride and, after working with a wonderful group of volunteers on that cause, became the founding chair of the board at the national historic site. Mary and I were invited to participate in a visit to Alsace, France, to celebrate that region's historic connections with Wilmot, and then we organized the return visit of about 30 folks from Alsace a year later.

As I mentioned, I left the Indy in 1997, though I continued to write a column (avoiding mention of the Relief Sale) for some years. I have lived in Wilmot from that day to this – and I have been saddened to see the decline of the newspaper I loved over the decades.

That's why I am thrilled Stewart Grant and his team have created this newspaper, the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette, and four other papers across southwestern Ontario. And I am even happier he invited me to write a weekly travel feature published in all the papers. I will soon reach a milestone – 150 consecutive travel features!

Stewart has the same vision that Mary and I shared to those many years ago. And through my travel stories – and an article like this – it feels so good to still be a part of a publication that carries this community close to its ink-stained heart.



A photo of Mary Knowles and New Hamburg Mayor Lynn Myers with champagne ready to greet the delegation from Alsace in 1992. Contributed photo

## Tavistock Reflections.... Preserving Our Past



Photo by Lemp Studio Collection



40 Woodstock Street, South Tavistock

The Oxford Hotel opened in 1906 and replaced the Union Hotel which was built in the mid 1850's.

Today, the Tavistock Library is the tenant.

After extensive renovations they moved to this location in 2010.

**Protecting Our Heritage  
for Generations**

# Ontario Heritage Day

Celebrating our roots,  
shaping our future

**ERNIE HARDEMAN**  
MPP - Oxford

12 Perry St., Woodstock, ON N4S 3C2  
 ☎ 519-537-5222 • 1-800-265-4046  
 ✉ ernie.hardemanco@pc.ola.org  
 🌐 erniehardemanmpp.com

**ARPAN KHANNA**  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT for OXFORD

519-421-7214 • ARPAN.KHANNA@PARL.GC.CA  
 208 HURON ST #4, WOODSTOCK, ON N4S 7A1  
 ARPANKHANNAMP.CA



## OUT WITH THE OLD & IN WITH THE NEW!



BEFORE



AFTER

*"They always go above and beyond to help out"*

- J. Dozert

## NO JOB TOO BIG OR TOO SMALL

- NEW INSTALLATIONS • RENOVATIONS • REPAIRS
- SEWER CAMERA • WATER SOFTENERS
- WATER HEATERS • A MINI EXCAVATOR FOR SEWER WATER AND HYDRO TRENCHING AND TILE REPAIRS

### BIN RENTAL

(14 yard bins for rent anything from yard clean up to a roof or renovation)



**Jeremy Berger**  
Owner  
519-274-0160

## Steinmann Mennonite Church Marks 200 Years of Worship and Service



The Steinmann Mennonite Church congregation is celebrating its 200th anniversary this year. Photo by Galen Simmons

By Galen Simmons

In many ways, the Steinmann Mennonite Church congregation laid the foundation on which New Hamburg, Baden and Wilmot Township as a whole was built.

This year, the congregation is marking a milestone many rural congregations don't see - 200 continuous years of worship, service to the community and fellowship.

"In 1824, (Amish settlers) established the church here," said Brandon Gingerich, the congregation's resident history expert whose family has been part of the church's history going back almost as far as the congregation itself. "The actual church building wasn't built for almost 60 years. Most settlers would have met (for worship) in houses for the first 60 years."

The congregation was first established by Christian Steinmann, who was previously ordained in Europe by Amish pastors from Pennsylvania. He brought his family from Bavaria to Canada as part of a significant Amish-Mennonite migration from Europe to what became Wilmot Township.

After 60 years of meeting in households, the congregation built its first meeting house - a simple, white frame structure with space for horse and buggies out front - in 1884.

"People would have come from as far as Punkydoodle's Corner and St. Agatha. They would have walked (or travelled by horse and buggy) here to this area before other congregations and churches were built in those areas," Gingerich said.

The current church building where it stands today at the corner of Snyder's Road West and Nafziger Road was built in 1947 on land donated by Daniel Steinmann that was originally settled by his ancestor, Christian Steinmann, after he and his family arrived in Canada. In 1975, the congregation added a new wing onto the church which initially housed Sunday school classes and today is home to church offices and meeting spaces. In 2007, the congregation built a second addition, a large fellowship hall for both church and community programming and

events.

"That was a big shift, I think, for our church to try and go beyond a building for the congregation to a building for the community," Gingerich said. "We envisioned it as a space we would use, but we didn't want it to sit still from Monday to Saturday. We wanted it used for blood-donor clinics, girls' camps, basketball practices, pickleball, you name it. It's always got something happening."

While today's Steinmann Mennonite Church congregation looks very different than the Amish settlers who established it in 1824, those values of putting community first and welcoming newcomers with open arms and a warm embrace are still very much at the heart of what the congregation holds dear.

"We were formed from refugees; people fleeing persecution in Europe coming here for freedom. That's always been something that we hold close to our heart," Gingerich said. "In 1979, welcomed our first Hmong refugees from southeast Asia, and they're now a growing community in Kitchener now. We've since sponsored refugees from Lebanon and most recently Syrian families in concert with other local communities."

Just as it has been for the last 200 years, the Steinmann's Mennonite Church congregation is dedicated to sharing its gifts of people, spaces and fellowship with all who need it. The congregation is celebrating that legacy of sharing gifts with a whole host of 200th anniversary events throughout 2024.

They include displays of historical church artifacts, and anabaptist history worship series, efforts to strengthen ties and understanding with local Indigenous communities, an Amish-beard-growing challenge and, to cap it all off, a massive Wilmot-area Mennonite church choral concert in December where Mennonite church choirs from far and wide will meet in Wilmot to make music together.

To keep up with the 200th anniversary events and happenings at Steinmann Mennonite Church, visit [smchurch.ca](http://smchurch.ca).

## Oak Grove Cheese

**Cheese Making a Family Tradition  
Since 1898 on Bleams Road**



Starting with Zito Baccarani (uncle)

Continuing with nephew Gottfried (Fred) Langenegger,

And his sons Tristano (Tootie) and Romano (Manny)

4th Generation Tristano's sons, Tony and Mark

Today, Mark & his wife, Pat, continue with the specialty production of cheese including parmesan, cheddars, brick, cook cheese, limburger, cheese curds and much more.

*Trivia: In Canada. Only one cheese producer makes Limburger Cheese,  
Oak Grove Cheese Factory in New Hamburg, Ontario,  
130 km west of Toronto. (from cheeselover.ca)*

**29 Bleams Road West, New Hamburg**

**519-662-1212**

**[www.oakgrovecheese.ca](http://www.oakgrovecheese.ca)**

# Ernie Ritz: A legend in local community news

By Galen Simmons

At the tail end of his 99th year, New Hamburg's Ernie Ritz remembers his career as a printing-savant-turned-newspaper man like it was yesterday.

Some might say Ritz was born into the business of community news. When he was young, the New Hamburg Independent – a once thriving community newspaper at the heart of local politics, sports and events – was owned and operated by Ritz's uncle, but the business had been in his family for generations before that.

"The newspaper started in 1855," Ritz told the Gazette in a recent interview. "It was sort of a rebuttal to an existing, little publication in New Hamburg at that time. It was called The Beobachter – that's a German word for The Observer. ... That May, my ancestors came from Bavaria and there was a 14-year-old Jacob in the family. He was looking for work and he was able to speak both German and English. They were looking for someone who could handle both languages and he started as a typesetter. That was our family's connection with the printing business."

The Beobachter was bought out four or five years later by a man who turned out to be a charlatan, ran the paper for several more years before skipping town overnight to escape the business debt he'd accrued. A prosperous local businessman, Samuel Merner, had guaranteed payment to the vendors of the newspaper and wound up taking ownership of it so he could get it back up and running to pay his vendors what they were owed.

In 1878, after a few decades running a successful German-language paper, Merner ran for a seat in Parliament as an independent.

"They needed a campaign newspaper and that's when the New Hamburg Independent started, and it was printed in my ancestors' print shop," Ritz said, smiling.

While Ritz was familiar with the printing side of the business as a young person when his uncles ran the newspaper and his father, before he passed, was their line type operator for a brief time, he didn't start his career as a printer until after he came home from his service with the Royal Canadian Airforce in the Second World War.

"I had decided, at the urging of my older brother, I should go into the printing business in order to become a printer and learn ... (to) run a printing press. And I did," Ritz said.

"When I came out of the air force, we had a process where ...

we had to have an interview with a personnel counsellor. The personnel counsellor that I had at the time was a flight lieutenant and I said, 'I want to do a printing course.' He said, 'I'm sorry to say there are not courses available in Canada at the moment.' ... But he said, 'I have a friend who's in the printing business here in Toronto. They are a very progressive firm, they do experimental work and they are more oriented toward technology than they are toward service. I want you to go and talk to them.'"

So that very same day, which happened to be Victory in Europe Day (May 8, 1945), Ritz made his way to that printing shop and launched a career that would set him on a path back to the newspaper his family helped establish so many decades prior.

Before he got there however, Ritz mastered the latest in printing technology during a two-year stint at the printing business in Toronto before eventually moving on to operate the hand-fed printing press at the Kitchener-Waterloo Record newspaper. While Ritz was working at the record, one of his uncles died suddenly in 1950 and Ritz found himself running the New Hamburg Independent with his other uncle and his brother.

"I made all the improvements I could over the years based on my (printing) experience and tried to get rid of some of the primitive practices. I also had to take over a portion of the business management," Ritz said, noting the business side of the Independent wasn't something he had much experience with. "You learn, you lose a few accounts receivable here and there."

Reporting the news was another part of the business Ritz hadn't done much of prior to taking ownership of the Independent. As an active member of and volunteer in the New Hamburg community, oftentimes Ritz found himself reporting on the activities of friends and neighbours and, in some cases, he became the story he was meant to report.

Around the time he took ownership of the paper, Ritz said he attended a local nomination meeting at which members of the community would nominate those they wished to serve on council. Though Ritz had only gone to the meeting to report on its results, he quickly found himself thrust into a political career that would ultimately see him elected as both Reeve of New Hamburg and then Mayor of Wilmot Township.

"The public was invited to come participate in their government and make their nominations for who they'd like to see on



About to turn 99 in April, Ernie Ritz recently sat down with the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette to recall his time as a local newsman at the helm of the New Hamburg Independent. Photo by Galen Simmons

council," Ritz said. " ... Members of the public would look around and fill out nomination papers. ... Sometimes they'd ask (nominees) and sometimes they wouldn't. Of course, I was sitting there and they were getting a little desperate one year. It was the first year I was home, actually, a few months after I'd come back to New Hamburg.

"I was nominated to council."

After he accepted the nomination, Ritz was acclaimed as a town councillor as there were only four candidates and four seats on council. Ritz was acclaimed again when it came time to elect a new council, but after that, he vowed that he wouldn't continue to sit on council unless there was an election. He needed to know whether the people wanted him to serve or not.

Apparently they did because he was elected for a third term.

"And that created problems," Ritz said of having to report on council while serving as a councillor. "I had to learn something about objectivity."

After serving a third year as councillor, Ritz opted to step back from political life for a time to focus on his work at the Independent.

Another instance when the people who write the news became the front-page story was when the New Hamburg Independent office burned down in July 1959, killing four people living in the apartment above it. At the time, Ritz was on vacation with his family in Cornwall and only heard news of the fire over the radio. He quickly drove home to assess the damage.

"The central part of building had been gutted up to the third floor, but our business was at the end, so we had no fire damage, but the smoke and water damage was horrible. It would have been better if the whole place had

been burned and we could start over," Ritz said.

"It turned out that our insurance wasn't up to what it should have been, but fortunately we had business-interruption insurance, and that helped save the day. We struggled through for two or three years, but we decided it was time not to operate in a rented (printing) facility. We built our own plant. My brother and I managed to get financial help and put up a building of our own on my brother's lot. I drew up the plans for a printing plant I thought would be adequate. The building is still there and it's still called Ritz Printing after several successive owners."

And while the commercial printing business continued, Ritz said the technology used to print newspapers was changing rapidly in the 1960s. While Ritz and a group of other weekly newspaper owners tried to secure financing to establish a central newspaper-printing plant with an offset press, they were unable to find the backing they needed, and Ritz ultimately took his newspaper-printing needs to the offset press at the Goderich Signal Star.

"We had all kinds of technical problems (in New Hamburg) with ancient equipment and stuff that had been resuscitated after the fire," Ritz said. "It turned out, we did the front-end stuff, we did the setup, I ran the darkroom among other things, and the platemaking, and we took the plates and drove them to Goderich. It turned out, rather unfortunately, that the time slot we had was 11:45 p.m. So, there I go. I put the plates in the car and head to Goderich. Fortunately, it only took a little over an hour from the time we put the plates on the press to when we could put the papers in the car and drive home.

" ... It was a bit of a challenge

on a wintery night. ... I remember coming home one night in a driving snowstorm. Nobody had been on the road and all I could see was the telephone poles."

That arrangement only lasted between eight and 12 weeks before an offer to purchase the Independent came in from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record in 1967. Exhausted from late nights driving to and from Goderich in blinding snowstorms, Ritz, his brother and his uncle accepted the offer.

That offer, however, came with a clause that Ritz could not work or write for any newspaper within 40 miles of New Hamburg for the next decade, so Ritz stepped away from the newspaper game and focused his efforts on building up his commercial-printing business.

But that departure from community news didn't last forever.

"There was a period of time when I was really happy that I didn't have to pick up the editorial pen, but you know, it gets into the system and you start reading stuff that other people have written. 'I think I could have done better than that,' Ritz laughed. " ... There was a time here a few years ago when we were not happy with the Independent content. We didn't feel like they were covering New Hamburg as well as they should, and they shut down their local office and operated remotely.

"There were two or three of us with some newspaper sensibility ... we got together and said, 'We should buy the Independent.'"

While that idea never came to fruition, Ritz and publisher Stewart Grant of Grant Haven Media launched the Wilmot Post, which was then merged with the Tavistock Gazette to become the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette.

Wanting to stay involved, Ritz started writing a column he dubbed "Perspectives" for the Gazette until, at age 97, he began experiencing symptoms macular degeneration, making it difficult to read text on the computer, so he made the difficult decision to write his last column.

"It was very dramatic. I started out by talking about the train coming into the station and the boat pulling up to the dock at the then of a journey; the aircraft pulling up to the terminal. So too, my writing comes to an end," Ritz recalled. " ... When I finally decided I just couldn't do this anymore, I felt it would impact my ability to meet deadlines, and I sure hated that. I was always wishing to be very punctual about that.

" ... I used to brag about being Canada's oldest, weekly columnist. I don't know if I was or not."

# WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED



## CELEBRATING 65 YEARS MAKING COOL MOVES TOGETHER

<https://shorturl.at/deKO5>



Read our blog to learn how we collaborate with clients to ensure success.



1(800) 665-COLD (2653)  
[recruitment@erbgroup.com](mailto:recruitment@erbgroup.com)  
[erbgroup.com](http://erbgroup.com)

# New Hamburg's historic Imperial Hotel finds new life as seniors' housing

By Galen Simmons and Marie Voisin

Once a thriving hotel that temporarily housed many of the workers who came to work in New Hamburg's factories and mills until they found homes for their families at the end of the 19th century, the historic Imperial Hotel has recently undergone a revival to become attractive housing for active seniors looking to live at the beating heart of their community.

Marie Voisin is the woman responsible for this recent transformation. Thanks to her love of history and experience restoring older homes, Voisin has managed to return the once-proud hotel to its former glory.

"I took on this project for a variety of reasons. I had come to know many widows and widowers who owned houses in the community. These individuals wanted to sell their homes and move into apartments, but there were no apartments in the downtown core. I thought The Imperial would be perfect for them because of its location," Voisin said.

"I wanted to create a beautiful living space so they could enjoy this chapter in their lives. I have restored over four houses to date and the potential to rejuvenate a large building seemed perfect. I tried my best to recapture the original elements of the building and preserve details that had been lost – both in the interior and exterior of the building. History is important to me. The finished building gave new life to this corner of downtown New Hamburg."

John and Fanny Jackson first built The Imperial Hotel in 1872. It was a two-storey-yellow brick structure with an attached livery. A third floor was added to the hotel in 1902 by its sixth owner, John Buckel Jr., who used a different shade of yellow brick. In 1907 and 1908, Buckel added a first-floor addition to the rear of the building and redecorated the entire hotel.

The hotel was used primarily for lodging of commercial travelers. New Hamburg had become a growing village with many industries and men came to town for jobs in the factories and mills, often staying in the hotel until they found a house they could rent for their family.

As the industrial boom began to wane, The Imperial Hotel's business also began to decline. The need for ammunition and



A photo of the Imperial Hotel circa 1908. This photo, restored by Mark Pfaff, was the basis of Marie Voisin's exterior restoration work. Contributed photo

wheat diminished after the First World War and prohibition in 1919 was the final blow. The third floor was closed off; a few lights on cords hung from ceilings and a rusty wood stove sat at the end of a hallway. There was never indoor plumbing or central heating on this floor.

The second floor of the hotel was used less often in the ensuing years. More electric lights were evident and quasi-central heating was added. The owners of the hotel lived on the second floor until the late 1980s. Prior to Voisin taking on ownership of the hotel in 2014, no tenants lived in the hotel after 1990. Only the tavern on the first floor was in operation and the name of the hotel was changed to Eddy's Tavern in 1982.

Aside from being a hotel and a tavern, the front portion of the hotel facing Huron Street housed a number of commercial businesses between 1872 and 1900 including a hardware store, a liquor store, a shoe store, a bank, a grocery store, a tailor shop, a printing shop, an early library, and a meat store and butcher shop. Additionally, from 1901 to 2014, the space housed another butcher shop, a barber shop and billiard hall, a millinery shop, a jewellery store, a men's clothing store, an electrical-appliance store and another grocery store.

In May 2014, Voisin became the 17th owner and changed the name back to The Imperial. She removed all the debris,

ceilings, walls and floors from the building and discovered the quality of workmanship was disturbingly poor.

She reinforced the existing structure through the addition of a new steel structure. The new structure of 13 columns was threaded through the building from the roof to the basement. Over 25 steel beams were welded to the columns throughout each floor. The former livery and an old kitchen were removed to make way for an addition. All windows were replaced with high-quality, aluminum-clad windows. Several layers of paint were chemically removed from the bricks, more than 10,000 bricks were replaced, all the bricks were repointed, and original rotted wood

sills were replaced with limestone sills.

The Imperial was transformed into apartments for active seniors who wanted to live downtown close to amenities. These seniors sold their large homes, moved into the centre of New Hamburg so they could walk to their favourite places.

Gone are the tiny hotel rooms on the second and third floors. They have been transformed into 12 luxury one-bedroom apartments with wood floors, high ceilings, crystal chandeliers, large windows and original trim. Each apartment is self-contained with a full kitchen, furnace, air conditioner, water heater, and washer and dryer. They range in size from 730 to 1,029 square feet. An all-season sunroom on the second floor and an outdoor terrace on the third floor were also added.

The main floor of the hotel was refurbished to accommodate The Imperial Market and Eatery, The Peel Street Brewery, a Portuguesa Bakery and Stonetown Travel.

"Community support was apparent during and after the restoration," Voisin said. "I provided tours during the rebuild and wrote a blog each week about what was occurring in the building. I had no trouble finding tenants. In fact, I always have a waiting list of 21 names when an apartment becomes available."

The Imperial is once again offering accommodation in the downtown core to its citizens, only this time to the seniors, some of whom are the descendants of New Hamburg's early residents who may have stayed in the building when it was a hotel.



A photo of the Imperial Hotel in its heyday in the 1880s. Contributed photo

## South Easthope's Evangelical United Church still standing since 1800s

By Gary West

The history of South Easthope Township in Perth County saw many churches and schools built on many corners that were accessible by horse and buggy since farmers and residents in the area didn't have automobiles or tractors until the 1930s and 1940s.

Like many smaller churches in the area, this church had a humble beginning with people in the area feeling a real need for a place to worship together.

It was noted in the church's history that in 1941, during a storm, the spire of the church was struck by lightning, and because of

extensive damage, the congregation decided to dismantle it. That's the reason for an absence of a spire to this day.

Taken from the History of South Easthope in the "Country Roads" history book, the congregation began as part of a circuit from Waterloo and Berlin. Bishop John Siebert had arrived from the United States to attend a camp meeting in 1839 near Waterloo, and Evangelism came to Canada.

The congregation became known as the South Easthope Evangelical Church. Some of the early family names included Herlick, Faulhafer and Otto, whose families still

remain in the area today.

This circuit included the Lingelbach congregation, located east of Shakespeare, where the church still stands today on Highway 7 and 8.

Both churches do not hold services any more, but families from both had their memberships transferred to Grace United Church in Tavistock, which still holds weekly services to this day.

Pictured is the South Easthope Evangelical United Church, which still stands today on Perth Line 33, also known as Pork Street, northwest of Tavistock. Photo by Gary West

