

## HERITAGE CORNER

### Pirates, scoundrels and war on the St. Clair River?

Bonnie Stevenson

When we look out at the St. Clair River any time of year, we may see grand freighters carrying vital goods and resources that keep our economy humming. We may see pleasure yachts, kayaks, tall ships, or Coast Guard vessels plowing through the ice, fishermen patiently waiting for “the big one”, and all manner of modern water craft in motion.

But in the 1800s, the view would have been vastly different and, perhaps, a lot less pleasant.



Dr. John C. Carter

Historian John C. Carter's book, *Piratical Doings on the River St. Clair*, conjures a much different picture of what we could expect to see, for those were the days when pirates and scoundrels plied the waters, and unrest across the border spilled over onto our shores.

Dr. Carter says he became fascinated with early life on the St. Clair River in 2012, when he was a guest speaker at the Sombra Museum's lecture series. His subject was the Rebellion of 1838, also known as the American Patriot War, the Upper Canadian Rebellion, and the Farmer's Rebellion.

“My talk was about the rebellion in a larger context, but I knew there were some events here (along the river), but when I asked folks at the meeting, no one knew anything about it,” he said. As word spread about John's presentation, it became clear some of the people were anxious to find out. His inquiries soon caught the attention of an avid local historian and member of the Sombra Museum, the late Al Anderson, and an immediate friendship ensued.

“I told Allan ‘I'm going to research more and whatever I get, I'm going to write it up and the historical committee can have it,’” said John. The seeds of John's future book had been sown.

John's academic background in Museum Studies and History, and his subsequent interest in the Rebellion of 1938, began in 1977 when he was appointed curator of the John R. Park Homestead in Colchester, Ontario. (The homestead had been a station on the Underground Railway prior to the U.S. Civil War.) The historical information he uncovered during that time piqued his curiosity as to what was going on along the St. Clair River during that turbulent era. “I had no idea that Pelee Island and Boblo Island had been captured,” he said. “I found 14 incursions from the United States between December, 1837 and December, 1838.”

The lack of record-keeping during the 1800s made fact-finding difficult during John's research and his ef-

forts didn't always bear fruit. “He felt the subject was under researched and poorly documented,” said HSC President Dave Pattenden. “He feared it would soon be forgotten in dusty old filing cabinets.” When he contacted a historical group in Michigan, they had nothing to contribute. “They tried to be helpful, but they knew nothing,” he said. “Much has been

But taking a page from the Indiana Jones play book, John remained determined to continue his inquiries. *Piratical Doings on the River St. Clair* is the result of his deep dive into historical archives, as well as conversations he had with those who are acquainted with rebellion lore. After all of the information had been assembled, John knew it couldn't just be recorded with entries in a notebook; he had enough material, including some photos and illustrations, to write a book.

When the book was complete, Heritage St. Clair (HSC) was tasked with editing and distributing it, and the book's cover art is done by HSC member Paul Smith. Upon completion of the project, John was as good as his word; he generously donated the book to Heritage St. Clair. “HSC is grateful to Dr. Carter for trusting the valuable result of his work to us,” said Dave Pattenden. “Much has been written about this conflict, with the exception of the raids across our St. Clair River.”

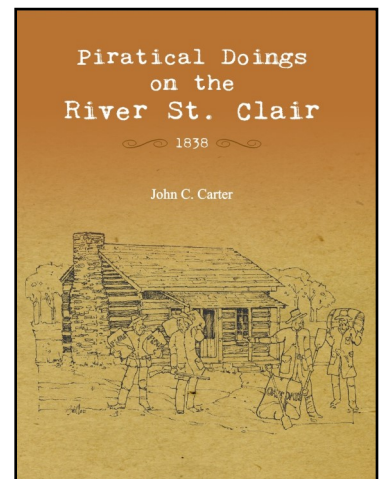
Since the publication of “*Piratical Doings*”, John says he has discovered two more incursions in the St. Clair region, including one on Walpole Island, and he continues to search for information. “I probably have another whole book of stuff I've found since the book was published,” he said.

A book signing by author Dr. John Carter will be held at the Sombra Museum when the COVID-19 pandemic precautionary protocols have been lifted, but books can be purchased ahead of time. A limited run of 120 books will sell for \$45 per copy, tax included. To arrange for delivery by mail or a local pick up, these can be done on an individual basis.

Details for all orders, delivery methods, and payment instructions can be arranged by contacting Heritage St. Clair by email at: [secretaryheritagestclair@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryheritagestclair@gmail.com).

*\*Heritage St. Clair (HSC) is a dedicated committee of serious local historians and history lovers committed to preserving the heritage of St. Clair Township. The committee reports to the township and its hard work can be seen in the many colourful, informative interpretive signs, plaques, and installations that have been erected throughout the township to raise public awareness of the community's past. New members are always welcome and the only qualification you need is a desire to help preserve the history of your community.*

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**Beacon  
Bits**

*“People who make history, know nothing about history.  
You can see that in the sort of history they make.”*

~G.K. Chesterton

## MORE HERITAGE CORNER

### Time to get reacquainted with the Moore and Sombra Museums

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The much-anticipated reopening of the Moore and Sombra Museums is at hand. Volunteers from both museums have been working hard to prepare the displays and individual exhibits for public viewing, as well as doing the behind-the-scenes work required to operate each facility.

At the Moore Museum, much of the work is related to the management and conservation of the artifact collection, such as cataloguing and inputting of pre-computerized artifact records into the database.

Work is also being done on the reserve collection storage areas.

Some new displays have also been created for our visitors to enjoy.

They include Great Lakes lighthouse art by local artist Phil Miller, a camera and photography equipment display, and a stunning Vaseline glass display featuring beautiful artifacts such as the elegant green koi, left.

There will be COVID-19 safety protocols in place, so please visit [www.mooremuseum.ca](http://www.mooremuseum.ca) for more information ahead of time.

Curator, Laurie Mason



Heritage furniture in reserve



Cameras without phones?



## See you soon!

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### Easing of COVID restrictions allows museums, gallery, and archives to reopen

The Moore and Sombra Museums aren't the only ones in the county preparing for visitors. The move to Ontario's Step 3 COVID restrictions will allow visitors back into Lambton's museums, gallery, and archives in person.

Lambton County Library locations currently offering contactless curbside pickup will open for in-person visits by scheduled appointments for public computer use, Wi-Fi use and academic research. In addition, these 16 locations will re-open for in-person browsing with no requirement for a scheduled appointment; however patrons are asked to limit their visits to once daily, for no longer than 45 minutes. Capacity limits to meet provincial legislation will be posted at entrances and other restrictions will remain in place, including a requirement to wear a face mask.

To book an appointment for public computer use, wi-fi use and academic research, cardholders can call the location they wish to visit, book online at [www.lclibrary.ca/appointments](http://www.lclibrary.ca/appointments) or call the central booking line at 519-337-3291 ext. 5900, toll free at 1-866-324-6912 ext. 5900.

All appointments will start on the hour and be limited to 45 minutes. This will provide adequate time to clean the space before the next appointment begins. Cardholders will also be limited to one appointment per day. Upon booking an appointment, all visitors are asked to self-monitor symptoms before entering any cultural facility, and must visit at another time if feeling unwell.

**St. Clair Township locations and public hours of operation for curbside, in-person browsing, public computer, and WIFI use, and in-person reference services by scheduled appointment are:**

**Brigden:** 4-7 p.m. Monday and Wednesday; 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Friday.

**Corunna:** 11 a.m.- 2p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday; 3-6 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday.

**Sombra:** 3-6 p.m. on Tuesday; 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday.

For more information on locations, services and hours of operation visit [www.lclibrary.ca](http://www.lclibrary.ca)

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### Lambton County Library passes for Ontario parks still available

The Lambton County Library still has seasonal day-use permits valid library cardholders can borrow to take in the natural beauty of provincial parks like Pinery Provincial Park near Grand Bend. The permit will allow unlimited daily entry for one vehicle plus all of its passengers. The permit will come with a \$5 day-use coupon for future regular day-use, as well as a park guide.

Ontario parks passes and other library materials can be reserved for contactless curbside pickup using the online catalogue at [lclibrary.ca](http://lclibrary.ca) or the Iguana Library mobile app, or by calling a participating curbside location during hours of operation.

If you haven't got a library card, call 519-845-3324,

ext. 5266 or 1-866-324-6912, ext. 5266, or email: [librarytechhelp@county-lambton.on.ca](mailto:librarytechhelp@county-lambton.on.ca). For more information on locations, services, and hours of operation, go online to: [www.lclibrary.ca](http://www.lclibrary.ca).



Above: The Ontario Parks pass, park guide and \$5 coupon.



## MORE HERITAGE CORNER

## Sombra Museum polishing up for much-anticipated reopening

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Sombra Museum volunteers and staff are happy to be able to welcome visitors back into the museum in person. Visitors will be able to drop in any time during open hours, but if demand increases, an appointment booking system will be ready to handle the demand. Everyone will be required to wear COVID safety masks and comply with 2m physical distancing and hand hygiene.



Here are samples of the new displays and exhibits you can expect to see when you visit the Sombra Museum.

**Top left:** Tourism Assistant Julie Grant puts together two sections of a 1927 sectional canoe. It's new to the museum collection and will be the centre-piece of a new display.

**Top right:** Curatorial Assistant Mara Garva holds a large fossil of trilobite burrows, part of a recent donation of mid-Devonian period fossils that are over 360 million years old. They were found in the Arkona area.

**Left:** This collection comes to us from Bob O'Donnell and the Arkona Lions Museum. We appreciate this important new addition to the museum, and are very excited to have this opportunity to expand our collection into new areas.

Kailyn Shepley  
Sombra Museum Curator

## MORE HERITAGE CORNER

### *Sombra Museum continues to seek information/photos of COVID era*

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The Sombra Museum continues to collect pandemic stories, photos, videos, art work, etc. (family friendly) from St. Clair Township residents to help record and preserve memories of the COVID experience for future generations.; day-to-day memories of life in Sombra, Wilkesport, Port Lambton, Mooretown, Lambton County, Canada, and elsewhere in the world.

Recollections and examples of how social media and technology has impacted life in social isolation (people using technology for the first time or using it differently; experiences when staying in touch with friends and loved ones via Zoom or working from home).

The vaccination process is now part of the story. Photos of the smiles upon receiving the second shot, recorded feelings of hope that we may finally be seeing the end of

the pandemic in sight or your first meeting with family and friends when masks and social distancing are no longer required.

The pandemic of 2020/2021 has affected the entire world; an epic chapter is being written in the book of human history and this project will allow us to make our own entry in that book.

**Submissions can be sent by email to:**  
[sombramuseum@hotmail.com](mailto:sombramuseum@hotmail.com) with the subject line "COVID-19 History Snapshot".

Please share this request for community life memories with as many people as possible. We encourage everyone to document this time, if not to share publicly, then for yourself and your family to look back and reflect on in years to come.

### **Moore Museum seeks information about history of old Moore Township schools**

Moore Museum is still accepting information for a virtual exhibit for the museum's website. It will feature brief histories and photos of the schools in the former Moore Township prior to centralization in 1963. There were 19 school sections in Moore, four of which were union schools - two shared with Sombra Township and two with Sarnia Township. To see the map that indicates where the schools were located, see the March or April 2021 Beacon. It can be accessed, along with further information, by going online the St. Clair Township website home page. Click on *The Beacon*, top right of the page.

~Laurie Mason, curator, Moore Museum

### **Brigden Fair quilt draw tickets on sale**

Tickets for the Brigden Fair Quilt Draw are on sale now and are available from any member of the Brigden Fair Homecraft Division or can be purchased through e-transfer.

Email: [quilttraffic@brigdenfair.ca](mailto:quilttraffic@brigdenfair.ca) to let the draw organizers know how many tickets you wish to purchase, and include names and contact information for the tickets.

The cost is \$2 per ticket or three for \$5. They can also be purchased in larger quantities.

**The draw will be held on Thanksgiving Monday, Oct. 11, 2021.**

**Right: This gorgeous quilt was lovingly created by members of the Homecraft Division.**



### **Riverside Cemetery**

Riverside Cemetery has submitted by-laws to the Registrar of the Funeral, Burial, and Cremation Services Act, 2002. Any interested parties may contact Dennis Robinson at: 519-892-3316 for information or to make copies. By-laws or amendments may be reviewed or copied at 3164 St. Clair Parkway, Sombra, Ontario. These by-laws are subject to the approval of the Registrar, Funeral, Burial, and Cremation Services Act, 2002. Contact can be made by telephone to: Bereavement Authority of Ontario, 647-483-2645 or 1-844-493-6356.

### **Bear Creek Cemetery Company**

Bear Creek Cemetery has submitted by-laws to the Registrar of the Funeral, Burial, and Cremation Services Act, 2002. Any interested parties may contact Russell Marsh at 519-331-1798 for information or to make copies. By-laws or amendments may be reviewed or copied at 3393 Telfer Road, Mooretown, Ontario. These by-laws are subject to the approval of the Registrar, Funeral, Burial, and Cremation Services Act, 2002. Contact can be made by telephone to: Bereavement Authority of Ontario, 647-483-2645 or 1-844-493-6356.