

**Submitted to The Dunnville Chronicle and The Tribune
Via E-mail;
For Publishing; June 22 ???, 2005
By William A. Warnick
180 Rosslyn Ave. South
HAMILTON, ON L8M 3J5
Phone 905 549-6086 E-mail wwarnick@cogeco.ca
(Word count 1,707)**

Historic Site will be feature of Flight during Port Maitland, Festival of History

As a teenager, I belonged to the Air Cadets Corp in Dunnville. During Easter break one year we were bused to Mt. Hope for a airplane ride. I believe the plane was referred to as a boxcar bomber. After what seemed an eternity, we finally were airborne. During the entire flight I never knew for one second where we were. I never recognized one landmark. Arriving back on the ground the other fellows were talking at length about this place and that place. I was so disappointed! All I got out of the flight was an upset queasy stomach! For years since I have wanted another opportunity to fly over the Dunnville, Port Maitland area.

Finally on Friday May 20, that flight came about. Eric McNaughton, a pilot instructor with the St. Catharines Flying Club arrived exactly as planned and took Ann Marie Flatt and myself on our flight in preparation for our 2005 Port Maitland, Festival of History. It was our job to put together a route for our guests who elect to take a plane ride on Festival Day. The St. Catharines Flying Club has offered to fly guests (for a small fee) on a twenty minute flight. The flight will take them over a route we determined during my long awaited flight.

They will see historic sites such as Port Maitland Lock, the McCallum Mansion, the Dunnville Dam, and Mohawk Island. Then the flight will take them along the Welland Feeder Canal to the Village of Wainfleet, formerly known as Marshville, and site of the Marshville Heritage Days held each year on Labour Day Weekend. After a circle of Wainfleet the flight then heads back along the Feeder Canal to Stromness, where you get yet another view of the McCallum Mansion. Turning south from here we get a great view of the Port Maitland Harbour and the remaining industries, as well as a view of all the ponds at once. Finally we pass over the historic Christ Church and its cemetery. In this twenty minute flight we take in a considerable amount of local history, seeing not only the past, but as we look down, we are able to pick out many familiar sites of interest to anyone who is at all familiar with the area. Depending on the weather conditions, our pilot will attempt to find just the correct height to allow us to see the sites, while not being so low that we pass over them so quickly as not to be able to get a photograph.

Our flight started with instructions from Eric about a few safety matters and how the intercom worked allowing the pilot and the passengers talk over the noise of the engine. We left the Dunnville Airport passing over the harbour at Port Maitland where we will be engrossed with the large settling ponds built to hold waste from earlier fertilizer factories. This it one of the best times during the flight to observe Port Maitland Lock. The short fall is, it is in the middle of what I found to be a lot of other interesting scenery. We have the Mosaic, Innophos, and the Talisman Energy yards below and of course the settling ponds. It is a lot to take in, in the few minutes you have, but there in the middle of all this is Port Maitland Lock. Recently, it has been suggested to me by a fellow who knows his canal history, I may have incorrectly named Port Maitland Lock; you see I have been calling it Lock 27. He suggested it was never numbered but was simply called the Port Maitland Lock.

Veering to the north we get a view of the McCallum mansion on the north side of the Feeder. Senator McCallum was a prominent Sherbrooke and Moulton Township business figure during the late 1800's before becoming a Member of Parliament in Canada's first parliament. He would later be named a Senator, serving until his death in 1903. His home was built in 1872 and was purchased from the estate of the Senator's daughter Georgina, in 1934. From 1947 the mansion remained empty and fell into des-repair. Then in 1968, Leslie and Florence Snively renovated it and moved in. After their death Leroy and Pat Snively the present owners took procession of this stately old home. The flight continues towards Dunnville with the Grand River and its marshes below. The boaters now look like dinky toys on an imaginary pond. Very shortly thereafter we are flying over the dam at Dunnville, where we also saw Byng Park below. Actually if one takes a few moments to look in both directions, you have a great view of all of the town of Dunnville. As we swing around to the

south and head for Mohawk Island we get a second look at the McCallum mansion. Waiting to approach the island we have time to look out the window and see much that is familiar to us; Stromness to our left, Port Maitland's pier and break wall sticking out into Lake Erie on our right. What is obvious from the sky is unseen while standing on the shore. The muddy water flowing from the Grand River does not go straight out into the lake, nor does it turn left towards Buffalo as you might expect. No, it heads right or westerly seemingly as if to head up the lake.

As we approached Mohawk Island, the view of it is spectacular. It is a couple acres of stark white circled by the blue greenness of the shallow clean water which surrounds it. It is the whiteness that is so striking; caused mostly by the bleached white zebra mussel remains that have washed ashore over the past decade. One suspects if they took more time to fly over on a calm day, and survey the water they might see the remains of lost ships resting below the surface. We head back inland towards Wainfleet. Here we hear another plane giving its location, but only after our pilot had already seen it off in the distance. Flying over the sometimes wet and sometimes dry remains of the Feeder Canal you can see the perfectly straight line it took from Stromness to east of Wainfleet where it veers slightly towards the north before reaching the Junction, now the city of Welland. It was interesting as we made a wide circle around the village of Wainfleet. I am not as familiar with this village as, say Port Maitland, but still I clearly found the historic buildings and home of the Marshville Heritage Days. From 1,400 ft it looked like a scene from TV series *The Campbell's*. And, I failed to take a picture!

We have turned, or should I say Eric has made the turn and we now head for home, with the Feeder Canal to our right. Again, I am taken by how straight it is, but also I see the potential for a semi-natural water corridor where a walking or canoeing route would be most welcomed. Soon the Village of Stromness is once again below us. It really is an interesting hamlet to see from the air. We see the former turning basin on the Feeder Canal where the ships of old made the bend to go to Dunnville or continue straight on to Welland. The turning basin was of course home of a shipyard for many years where many fine early ships and barges first tasted water. My old school is just a dot in the distance, and the road looks as if the village goes on for miles. In reality, I doubt if it is a half mile from one side of the village to the other! It is here, just as we pass Stromness when I get my best shots of the McCullum Mansion. One, two, and even three great photos! Old, but still majestic, the old mansion looks as if it could still be the Lords manor.

Ann Marie is now becoming excited as we approach Port Maitland and her home. Get a picture of that, no that! Get a picture of my home! There is Joe's (Joe Flatt's, her Father-in-law) home! Quick take a picture of it. We make what seemed like a very sharp circle around so I can get a couple shots of the Innophos pond and the Feeder Canal, before we head back over the piers, where I finally take those photos for Ann Marie. Her home was easy to spot with the pool cover still in place and of course Joe and Betty's home is next door.

A short distance west of the village we pass over Christ Church where I get a good shot of the old church and the cemetery. The old church yard is a must see when visiting Port Maitland. It holds the remains of sailors and civilians of an 1850 collision between the ships *Despatch* and *Commerce*, as well as the remains of early Dunn and Sherbrooke pioneers. Many local families will still find their ancestors buried there.

One last swing around and we find ourselves looking down the runway of the Dunnville Airport. Twenty minutes went by fast, but we saw so much history and I was finally able to say, "Did you see that place or that place?"

On July 23rd the Port Maitland, Festival of History will again be held at the Dunnville Airport. Along with some seventy plus historic displays, the St. Catharines Flying Club will offer this same twenty-minute flight for the small fee of \$25.00. This is the fifth festival which continues to grow in leaps and bounds. This year, for the first time there will be a \$2.00 admission. We will not discriminate against the older-folks. They too will be able to pay full admission.

Next month, just prior to the Festival I will write another article about the Festival and the rich history of the Southern Grand River area. For information about the growing Port Maitland, Festival of History, you can contact me at 905 549-6086 or email me at wwarnick@cogeco.ca