

**Submitted to The Dunnville Chronicle
Via E-mail; September 11, 2009
For Publishing; September 16, 2009
By William A. Warnick
180 Rosslyn Ave. South
HAMILTON, ON L8M 3J5
Phone 905 549-6086 E-mail wwarnick@cogeco.ca
(Word count 1110)
Four Photos**

Port Maitland, needs it Fog Horn Back???

A number of years ago while I was still publishing my newsletter *The Grand Dispatch* I ran into a conflict with one of my huge and vast number of readers! The matter of the conflict is of no importance to this article. What is; is his convincing me of what I was already convinced. We need a fog horn in the lighthouse at Port Maitland.

In conversations with Lakeshore residents; both permanent and summer, many questions came to light. Why do we want a fog horn? Will the Coast Guard or other marine authorities have a problem with a fog horn since it has already been removed? How loud will it be? How often will it sound? Great! Yes, do it! I'm not sure I want a horn blowing all day!

The Port Maitland, "On the Grand" Historical Association (PMHA) was formed by a few local history enthusiasts to assist with the Port Maitland Festival of History and to encourage and support the knowledge of local history. While incorporated a number of potential projects were placed on what we affectionately refer to as our *Wish List*. The fog horn is one of those wished for items.

Before we spend too much hard earned and donated money we must first find out from those who will be most effected if this is what they want. We also need to know much more than simply a Yes or a No. At this stage the cost though very important should not take up too much of our time.

The Dunnville District Heritage Association (DDHA) has offered to give us a forum to discuss these questions with anyone concerned. On Wednesday September 23rd at 7:00 p.m. we will hold a public meeting in the Disher Room at the Dunnville Library. All are welcome. Our intention is to have a brief introduction to the subject and then throw the floor open to the audience. It is only fair to tell you that DDHA have not to my knowledge had any discussion on this subject and have offered me no opinion on it. They have only been gracious enough to allow me a place to talk with you.

We have been fortunate enough to find locally owned, a 1920s former Port Maitland fog horn. The owner has agreed to permit a local sound studio digitally record its blast. From there the recording can be electronically sounded at set times each day. If all the t's can be crossed and i's dotted, and of course the money found we would like to know if this is something the residents of the lakeshore would like to pursue. Would they welcome and maybe even financially support this project?

In answer to one of the obvious questions; that being, when it will be used; here is what we are suggesting. First, it will not be, a navigational aid. Maybe this deserves repeating; it will not be a navigational aid. I am sure all of you are familiar with some time signal be it a noon hour ringing of church bells, or the hour chime of a clock in a public square. This is what we are proposing for the fog horn. As to how many blasts and when these blasts will occur is one reason we wish to meet with you. We particularly wish to meet with those living along the lakeshore on Connors or Splatts bay.

If time permits we have two other subjects which concern the people of West Port Maitland. We will be applying for a beautification grant from the County with the hope of installing a history information display and to re-install the top six feet of the former range light in Esplanade Park. In regard to the former range light, much research needs to be completed as to safety matters, location, height, and especially as this may concern boat traffic on the river.

Let me take a few minutes to tell you a bit about these projects. The early 1900s fog horn was once operated by James Grant a former Port Maitland lighthouse keeper from the late 1800s into the early 1900s who lived on Grant Point. During stormy or foggy weather he walked to the pier, and then carefully made his way along the catwalk to the lighthouse where he would light the light and man the fog horn. We know that this particular horn was a Lothrop Fog Horn # 1, made in Gloucester Massachusetts. Once the horn was no longer needed at Port Maitland, the family retained it and used it at Wardell Creek when on foggy days it would call in from the lake Stan Wardell, a commercial fisherman. It also came in useful for shiverrees. I am not going to explain what a shiverree is. In fact, I would love to hear from you about some of your more interesting shiverrees! Back to the fog horn! It currently is owned by Alma Waterworth formerly Alma Wardell, James's great great niece. I am hoping she will bring it to our meeting.

Bill Moyer was quick to grab hold of the top six feet of the range light while it was being removed from the pier on September 26, 2000. He has kindly offered it to PMHA with the wish that it be made available to the public. Ironically, the light was removed nearly sixty years to the day it was installed on the knee of the West Pier. I know of one fellow who had every intention of diving into the river from the top of it until he climbed the sixty feet and looked down. Wisdom rather than pride ruled the day!

In 2003 a group of interested citizens began a cleanup of the former Feeder Canal lock in East Port Maitland. This project and the Festival of History necessitated the need to formally organize, thus the Port Maitland, "On the Grand" Historical Association was founded on November 28, 2005. Another of the PMHAs' wish list items was the installation of a historical information kiosk on both sides of the river. Finally, this summer our first historical display project was finished. Though it did not take the form of a kiosk the new information board is well built and I believe attractive. I am told that many passersby stop daily to look it over and read the local history which is displayed both pictorially and in text. Our final design for our new hoped for sign for West Port Maitland, is not yet determined, but we hope to improve on what we have already learnt. We are also thinking of how we can incorporate the range light into this sign.

You may contact me by writing to 180 Rosslyn Ave. South Hamilton, ON L8M 3J5, or by phone at 905 549-6086 or email me at wwarnick@cogeco.ca.