

The Grand Dispatch



A brief social history of Port Maitland Ontario, and the surrounding area
Port Maitland, "On the Grand" Historical Association (PMHA) Price \$2.00 - Free to PMHA members

Port Maitland Cairn Dedicated August 29, 2015



See how you can share
in the cairn on page 11.

Successful Cairn Dedication at Port Maitland!

The year 2015, marks the two hundredth anniversary since the beginning of construction and habitation of the Grand River Naval Depot. It also serves as a date to observe a less auspicious occasion. The Port Maitland, “On the Grand” Historical Association will be ten years old on November 5, 2015.

The event started off with the playing of “God Save the Queen” Unfortunately search as I might I was unable to find an oral rendition of the British National Anthem, “**God Save the King**”, which would have been more appropriate as we were celebrating an event that began in 1815 under King George III of England. Following the British National Anthem, O Canada was played and sung with pride by all present. Yes, even an American or two was seen lip singing to our anthem.



Shaun Vary decorated the *Harry Purvis* for the occasion.

Approximately 200 guests came to celebrate the dedication of the cairn and to sample Rod Minor’s perch on a bun with french fries on the side. A give and take was arranged with Rod as he very generously donated the first one hundred and fifty meals in exchange for the Minor Fisheries paver. PMHA picked up the remaining cost. This was a dime or two well spent as the day was one to show off what a few good people can do when they set their minds to doing so!

What’s in the Dispatch?

All Articles in this issue are written by Bill Warnick

Successful Cairn Dedication at East Port Maitland	pg -1
Who Helped	pg -7
Recent finds of interest!	Pg -7
Where do we get our funding?	Pg - 10
Let’s revisit the Cairn – How you can share in our History	Pg - 11
I will not have properly completed this issue unless . . .	Pg - 12

Port Maitland, “On the Grand” Historical Association received considerable press and a great public relations coup d’état. As we move into 2016, we now must turn our attention to the Port Maitland Lock and promises made and not kept in 2015 – like the walking tour! With all that was going on with the cairn and the reopening of the lock there seemed to be no time to arrange a walking tour.

The weather was perfect; not too warm and only a slight but refreshing breeze came off the lake. If there was one disappointment it was the lack of boats that came for out blessing of the fleet. We are planning to do an annual blessing starting next spring. This time we will be sure to have better communications between the boaters and ourselves.

The Canadian, Union Jack, Ontario Ensign, Haldimand County and the Port Maitland, “On the Grand” Historical Association flags were all hung and flapping in the breeze for the day! Rod Minor placed his food truck beside the very boats that brought you the fish he prepared for you. At times the line up was considerable but Rod and his assistants kept the line moving along so no one had to stand too long.



Don Zynomirski addresses our guests.

Dignitaries - There were lots of dignitaries to bring greetings and to sing praise for the fine work that was done to create this marker that will in time take its’ place among the many other historic cairns that dot our country.

Our dedication began with words from **Fr. Ron Cote** who was representing the Beckley Beach Cottager’s Corporation. Fr. Cote was their President during the time the idea of the cairn was conceived. He first blessed

the fleet such as it was. In his usual light hearted and steady way he found words to offer those gathered a reminder of the importance of our history while paying tribute to those who have come before us. A quick prayer and he left the meeting to others!

Don Zynomirski, our Dedication Day Chairperson handled the job of emcee with all the grace and dignity that I am unable to bring to an event such as this. Thanks Don, for a great job!

Diane Finley brought greetings from the Federal Government praising the work of PMHA and the County of Haldimand in keeping alive our local history. **Toby Barrett** our local MPP who has been a supporter of PMHA brought greetings from the Province. I found one of his remarks interesting. He said: "I have seen many cairns in my travels but have never been to the dedication of a brand new cairn!" This remark made me realize that we were making history right now! His remark reminded me of the importance of our task. Below are the Objectives - Mandate PMHA set for ourselves when we incorporated in 2005.

PMHA'S Objective – Mandate

The purpose of the Association shall be to bring together those people interested in the diverse heritage of the former townships whose borders touched the Grand River between Port Maitland and its source. More specifically, its aim and objectives shall be:

- i. To encourage the citizens of this area to learn about their history by documenting and photographing, sketching, and writing about it
- ii. To undertake and promote the study of any phase of historical research within the area served by this association.
- iii. To operate as may seem necessary for the display of historical material and for the promotion of knowledge about any aspect of the history of former townships whose borders touched the Grand River between Port Maitland and its source.
- iv. To give full cooperation to the Port Maitland, Festival of History, held annually in the Port Maitland areas.



Mayor Ken Hewitt brought greetings from the County of Haldimand offering congratulations to both PMHA and **Katrina Schmitz** of the *Community Development and Partnership Division* for the County, for our cooperation in putting this cairn and event together and the successful dedication event.

Before I go any further, I must chastise Katrina just a bit. Katrina did not join with our Cairn committee in any photos nor did she make any speeches. Katrina sees her role as her department title states, and refuses to take her full credit for the enormous work and time she put into this project. Take it where you can get it Katrina!

Thank you Katrina!



Daniel Dishaw presents Bill Warnick with a ten year Certificate of incorporation of PMHA.

Daniel Dishaw, Communications Coordinator for the Ontario Historical Society (OHS) brought greetings and a certificate from OHS. PMHA celebrates its tenth year of incorporation and as a registered charitable organization. Daniel talked of the importance of being incorporated and the value of being a partner of OHS. He too, was pleased with the contribution PMHA has made to our acknowledgment of our history.



If there was one speech that told us PMHA was on target it was the offerings of our local councillor **Rob Shirton**. To paraphrase a bit; Rob talked of how when Sylvia Weaver approached him about the cairn and other projects that PMHA is interested in; he did not feel the magnitude. He said he had no idea of the extensive history of Port Maitland. After working with Sylvia on this cairn project and visiting our new cairn for the dedication he has come to realize that Port Maitland has a rich history worth preserving.

Councillor Rob Shirton addresses guests at dedication of Port Maitland Cairn.



Yours truly had my moment in the Sun. In all honesty, I had asked our committee to not have me speak. I am president of PMHA and I got to sign paperwork with the county and solicit donations, but that was my role; that's all. However, it was well explained that I am president of PMHA and as such had a responsibility to speak. Don't get me wrong; I love to talk! This day was about the volunteers who really put this cairn on the ground. They were our executive listed at the end of this Dispatch, but most of all Sylvia Weaver whom without her steady and patient skills this cairn would not exist today.

I took the opportunity to report my feeling on the importance of the cairn, especially on the plaque commemorating the Grand River Naval Depot. I received a letter chastising me a bit on our over stating the importance of the Depot as none of the sailors that were stationed here ever fought in the war of 1812. This is true; they arrived after the war was over! I wrote back to this gentleman, as I felt somewhat chastised; and he is a gentleman whom I am pleased to call a friend; I told those gathered that these young boys travelled what today would be like going to the moon. They all knew that if death befell them they would be buried in a strange country. Even today's peace keepers, who we honour, know that death will not cause their burial to take place in a foreign land. At least three of the Naval Depot sailors did die at Port Maitland and were buried somewhere likely on what today is Beckley Beach. They deserve this cairn which remembers them though not by name.

Our Keynote Speaker

Sylvia Weaver, spoke of the genesis of the cairn and the people who put the pieces together which made the cairn possible. She talked of the day (January 8, 2012), when we visited Beckley Beach in the hope her husband and friend, both dowzers, might find the remnants of her ancestral home. Suddenly the agenda changed as the dowzers found indications of numerous grave sites. This led to discussions with the Beckley Beach Cottager's Corporation who gave PMHA permission to do an archaeological assessment.



Diane Finley and Sylvia Weaver

Sylvia told us how she was aware of the Grand Naval Depot which was located on this site.

Continue on pg 7



Toby Barrett
MPP - Haldimand-Norfolk

39 Norfolk Street North
Simcoe, Ontario N3Y 3N6
Tel. (519) 428-0446 • (905) 765-8413
1-800-903-8629 • Fax (519) 428-0835
toby.barrett@pc.ola.org
www.TobyBarrett.com

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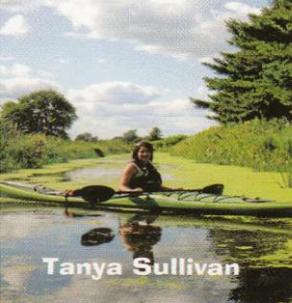
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BUY the
YARD
AND MORE

Continued from pg 4

She knew that graves had been found here in the early 20th century.

After putting together sufficient finances and donated time, the archaeological assessment went forward in October 2012. Unfortunately, the assessment did not yield any tangible findings. Sand and gravel had been removed from this site for many years, being used for building piers and provided traction for the railway.



Bill presents Sylvia with flowers for a job well done!

After the assessment, Father Ron Cote and Father Edward Jackman suggested a plaque be installed to keep alive the story of the Naval Depot and the cemetery. This became the inspiration for the cairn.

Sylvia talked about not knowing how to go about getting a cairn built. As the park where the cairn is built is owned by the County of Haldimand a meeting was arranged with Katrina Schmitz at the County. From there the rest is history! Well not quite. A design was needed, contractors had to be found and most importantly we needed to know what the cost of this project would be. Then how would the cairn be paid for became the real question. Unfortunately we were twice turned down for a Trillium grant. Funding was found from some very generous donations and the sale of paver stones which now surround the base of the cairn.

Sylvia made sure to thank our major sponsors and our volunteers. I must accept some blame here as I did read over her speech and I missed that she did not mention the Brick and Allied Craft Union of Canada. Mention was made of a number of cottagers and local residents who contributed time and effort.

Sylvia went on to say “this day of celebration was organized by the Cairn Committee. The dedicated work by the PMHA cairn team included Bill Warnick, Janet deVos, Barry Fraser, Bob Campbell, Don Zynomirski, Wendy and Bill Strong as well as our County Liaison Katrina, and is greatly appreciated. I also want to thank the wonderful volunteers from 611 Air Cadet Squadron for helping with parking”.

Who helped?

With so many people and groups to talk about it is impossible to mention all the donors, but there are some who deserved special mention. The list is longer than I am going to report here. I want to keep this list to include only the donors of \$5,000 or more and those who volunteered considerable labour in order to bring this day to fruition. Our major donors and volunteers are as follows:

- Fr. Ed Jackman Foundation
- County of Haldimand
- Innophos Canada Inc – Port Maitland
- The Mosaic Company
- Brick & Allied Craft Union of Canada (BACU)
- USW Local 6304 – Innophos Port Maitland

There were many more who contributed a few hundred dollars up to a couple thousand dollars. All donors were mentioned in our last Grand Dispatch There were many more who contributed time and equipment, but if I start the list, it will never end and I will still end up missing someone’s name!

Recent finds of interest!

A couple years ago before Peter Cote sold his cottage at Beckley Beach he found a unique coin-like object in an area of the property where the lilacs bushes grew for years. It is dated from a time when my grandparents Bill and Kate Warnick owned this property, yet it does not seem to have any connection to my grandparents. I believe the item is a keepsake for religious camp held at Port Maitland in 1926. I have no idea if this event was held in East or West Port Maitland, though I suspect it was in West Port Maitland as there is some history of religious camps and events taking place there in the early 1900’s.

Hotel Register

A more recent finding came from a phone call from James Kennedy of Michigan. James found my name and contact information from our website. His grandfather Edward Martin owned the Martin Hotel or later known as the Maitland Arms Hotel. More recently this property has been occupied by the Port Maitland Apartments in West Port Maitland. James contacted me and wondered if I would be interested in the Hotel registry from 1906 to 1917. Of course I was or should I say I am! James and his wife Beth soon made a visit to Dunnville staying at the Lalor Bed and Breakfast in Dunnville. Living so close to Dunnville, I never had the occasion to stay there, so I thought if Judy Brough would make me a breakfast, I would have a leisurely breakfast and meet Jim and Beth there. We sat on the porch on a warm sunny morning enjoying good food and introducing ourselves to each other. James had placed a large cardboard shipping type box near the table. It was easy for me to know what it was and it was a challenge to not just say "let's not worry about being social, just show me the book"! Fortunately I found my way into the pages of this old register very soon and immediately found names I had hoped to find. One surprise the register did release was that in the summer months the hotel was a tourist destination while in the colder months it was a boarding house for long-term boarders

Beer Stein

In early August, I received a phone call from Morris Leniew who lives in the former Canboro Township along number 3 highway west of Dunnville. Morris told me his partner's brother and some other children were digging in the sand at West Port Maitland some sixty years ago and discovered an intact beer stein. It was incrustated into the sand; so much so that the very wise children used water to soften the sand before removing it. Could it have come from the Grand River Naval Depot? From what I understand it may have been dug from land formerly held by the British Navy as part of this depot.



Research says no! However, research has indicated that there is a story that needs to be uncovered. The stein is in "on the shelf" condition, with one exception. The

handle has a slight fracture in the pewter where the handle is joined to the lid. Below is the information I received from Andrea Carswell



"This is what I have discovered about the beer stein thus far.

-The beer stein is made of stoneware with a clear salt glaze which we generally see in Canada post-1849.

-It was thrown on a potter's wheel. The marks on the bottom are from a wire that was used to remove it from the potter's wheel.

-The lid is most likely made from pewter and is known as a "flat" lid.

- The "1" and "L" are most likely an indicator of the stein's volume capacity. There was a period in time when they were marking the steins with this marker.

-The stein appears to be most similar to the "Regensburg" steins which were produced from ca. 1840-1905 (date from link below). These steins are most often identified by their capacity mark and the way in which the lid was attached to the handle. The lid attachment to the handle from this stein very closely matches the "Regensburg" steins, but the "J" is not known to be associated with these stein types.

-The image on the beer stein is a representation of King Gambrinus, whom is a European icon of beer, joviality, and brewing.

Overall based on the findings above, it is highly probable that the stein dates from the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The Stein Collectors International wrote an article on The Fritz Thenn Regensburg Steinzeug Factory:

<http://stein-collectors.org/library/articles/FThenn/ftthenn2.htm>

Regards,
 Andrea Carswell, BA Hons, D.CCM
 Laboratory Services Team Lead
 Archaeological Research Associates LTD.
 154 Otonabee Drive, Kitchener ON N2C 1L6”

Lock gate rack and pinion, or lock key?

On August 13th I received an email from Greg Burns whose family have the former Gallagher / Monsignor Cassidy cottage at Beckley Beach. Monsignor Cassidy’s cottage actually burnt to the ground and was rebuilt. Greg sent me a photo of a very heavy steel gear like item removed from the water in the Grand River in front of his cottage.



I thought it may have come from one of the few boats that went aground in that location in the nineteenth century. You may recall I have written that I attend a Tuesday night beer club at the Corktown tavern in Hamilton with a number of people who work in, or are interested in history. One such person is a marine archaeologist by the name of John Summers. I sent John the photo asking if it could have come from a ship. He replied as follows.

Hey, Bill Senior. - (There are two Bills at the beer club – I’m the old one!)

“Good to hear from you. Some quick thoughts:

Not maritime (at least not shipboard equipment); Looks like a rack from a rack and pinion mechanism; maybe from a sluice gate from a canal lock for e.g.?

*John Summers, MMSSt
 Manager and Curator Heritage Services
 The Regional Municipality of Halton”*

Then after cutting grass at the lock in mid August I went to Hippos in Lowbanks for some supper and asked Mike Walker’s, a fellow I knew would have some thoughts

about what the item could be; he immediately told me he felt it was from a lock gate.

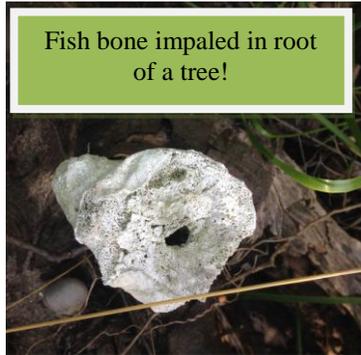
Many of the readers of The Grand Dispatch will remember Ed Boyle a cottager from Beckley Beach. Ed often told me he remembered the lock gate from the Port Maitland lock as it sat on the shore at the foot of the East pier. I recalled a structure sitting on the lake shore in the same location. I did not know then what it was, but I knew it could not have been the gate to the lock. Further to my doubt of Ed’s story was that I had understood the gates were removed to the water line for their steel during WWII. There are times when it is proper to revisit history to determine if you may have been going the wrong way. This is one of those times. Ed’s story now makes sense. Ed never told me which shore the lock was on. It could have just as easily been on the river side of the pier as on the lake side! I never asked but I assumed he meant the lake. Ed is in heaven now, so I hope he hears me when I say “Sorry for doubting you Ed!” It is hard to say if there would be any value in searching the waters in front of the Burns cottage for more of whatever this item came from to determine if it is from the Port Maitland Lock.

A side note:

While visiting Greg’s cottage his father took me to *this unknown item* for me to photograph. As I stood on the rocky shore of the Grand River, I noticed that the once low lying rocks that formed the shoreline were now being covered with a layer of drift sand. Not measuring it at the time I now estimate that the sand has reached a depth of about two and a half to three feet deep where it is caught up in brush. *It has, for some time been my belief that most of what is today Beckley Beach, laying only a couple feet above the lake level, was once several feet higher.* For years the sand and gravel were quarried. It is also my more recent belief that Mother Nature is taking back what she can. There are now a number of locations along the river where there is considerably more sand and even sand banks that were not there fifty or sixty years ago. Is Mother Nature trying to replace what man took from here during the quarrying process?

There was another discovery at the Burns cottage. Just beside the driveway are some old tree roots where there is a bone protruding from an overturned tree. The roots have surrounded the bone leaving it inside the tree root. There is also a rock that looks as if it was used as a hatchet and was driven into the root. After the Cairn dedication I

asked archaeologist Dean Knight to look at the bone. He said he could not be sure without further test, but he suspected it was a “vertebra from a large fish.” It must have been a very large fish!



Fish bone impaled in root of a tree!

Where do we get our funding?

As any of you will know who knows Port Maitland and the local area, we are a small community with a small population. That doesn't mean we do not have the same needs and wishes as larger communities. Once our citizens make their donations to what would seem to be more important needs and of course there are needs greater than ours there may be little left for history groups. This means we need to be creative and find niches of interest and be seen as doing local public promotion.

The initial place of funding and our longstanding support comes from the advertisers in The Grand Dispatch. I always approach these sponsors with candor informing them that I am aware they get little advertising for their buck. I encourage them to see their part as part advertising and part donation. Most have been with The Grand Dispatch from day one and that is greatly appreciated.

Then comes the begging! My sister Margo tells me that when she meets people they ask her if I am nearby. In this way they can get a head start before I ask them for something!

The cairn project seemed to be insurmountable when we heard the price. At first we had no idea where we would get the funding. A trillium grant was the first logical place to turn. We were surprised and very disappointed when they turned us down; not once but twice. It seems they felt we did not have enough people visiting our location to justify their donation. It is a bit like the

movie *Field of Dreams* when Ray Kinsella, played by Kevin Costner who built a baseball field in a corn field. Like Ray, we knew if we built it they would come. Ray was impractical and maybe even just a bit simple in the head. However, we took a lesson from him and decided to ask the County for some help. They came through with a substantial contribution. We then created the paver program. We did well with that program; earning a few extra dollars which is continuing to be spent at the cairn and at the Port Maitland Lock.

Last month I printed a list of our donors for the cairn project so I am not going to repeat that again. I do want you to know that it takes some audacity and a lot of nerve to beg, but we needed more this year than funds for the cairn.



Me and my dog Jake!

We needed a riding lawnmower this year as we finally acquired our lease to the lock from the CPR. Otto Bulk was approached and generously picked up the bill for a new John Deere lawn tractor. We also needed a second commercial grade brush and weed whacker. Ed Zynomirski, who donated one to us a number of years ago, came through with the second. Without Rainer Queckenstedt, the owner of Pete's Rental we would be in a fix. Rainer comes through with equipment and discounts almost weekly.

I am going to be approaching our executive, and if agreed, I will approach others, as I wish to install three flag poles at the lock with an information plaque built into their pedestal. I hope to fly the Union Jack, representing the time the lock was active, the Canadian flag for obvious reasons and finally our PMHA flag. This will cost money and once again we may need to be inventive.

Currently, we are putting together a lottery where the Grand Prize is a 6 to 9 day trip on a great lakes ship. Jim Siddall is involved with the Lower Lake Towing Ltd. They own a number of large lakers and have facilities to carry two guests. Jim has arranged this package which

we will raffle off as the first price. *If the executive agree!* We do receive some unsolicited and solicited donations, but those cannot by themselves cover our cost.



Equipment PMHA could never have afforded.
Thanks Mike Louden!

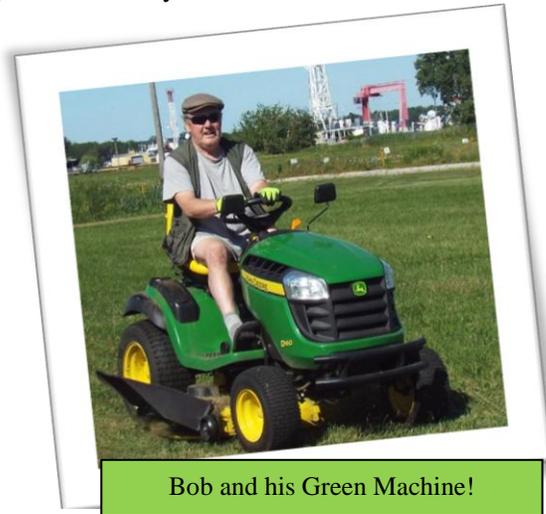
Volunteers assist with the many tasks it takes to run even a small history group who maintains property. These volunteers make it possible to do much work with little expenses. This summer, a fellow who until August, I had never heard of, volunteered his services. He happens to be a landscaper and brings along equipment that would cost us a fortune. All for free! Thanks Mike Louden.

Last winter the fellows at Innophos along with some help from a friend cut brush, trees and grass to improve the river front beside the cairn. We recently seeded it with grass donated by Hamilton Sod. See what I mean about begging!

PMHA has partnered up with Regal Gifts. This is a great relationship for us. We deliver four hundred of their catalogues in the Port Maitland, Lowbanks area and direct those recipients to our website at www.port-maitland.ca where they can order Regal products on line. We sit back and receive our commission. You can also order from Regal, if you do not receive the catalogue. Just go to our webpage and click on the Regal logo. It will take you to their site where you can search their online catalogue. Or simply go to www.pmotg.shopregal.ca, however we would much prefer you visit our webpage to see what we are up to!

It never ends! - Soon we are going to need to build a storage shed of some sort near the lock to store our equipment. This summer we depended on Bob Campbell and this winter Jim and Sandra Gill will store

our tractor. Bob Campbell is to be thanked for his many hours of work on the Green Machine as he cut the grass many times over the summer. We are grateful to him for his work at the lock and hope he is willing to do the same in 2016. By the spring of 2016, new grass will have grown at the cairn and on the Innophos property beside the cairn. It is our hope Innophos will permit us to maintain that property and put Bob to work for even longer hours next year.



Bob and his Green Machine!

I just know when I have sent this issue to the printer I will remember something or someone else I should have mentioned!

Let's revisit the Cairn and suggest how you can share in our history!

We knew when we began the paver program there would be others who would wish to purchase a paver once they saw the cairn. There is a base for approximately 40 more pavers around the cairn. We have received a number of requests for pavers that will be placed in the spring of 2016.

6x12 inch pavers are available for a minimum donation of \$150.00 until December 15, 2015. After then the price will be \$175.00. We still have the \$500.00 and \$5,000.00 pavers available as well. Please contact me at the email address at wwarnick@cogeco.ca. I will forward you an order form with all the details.

This is an opportunity to place a permanent reminder of your time here or that of a past relative. You might even place a paver with a sketch of your home or cottage on it, as was done for the Sacred Heart Chapel.

Some photos; from start to the dedication, and then some!



I will not have properly completed this issue unless I paid homage to a member of PMHA who has been with us since day one. She has always been there when needed and always sets me straight, or at least tries when I go a bit whacky. She keeps our books in balance to the penny while permitting your's truly to feel free to spend wisely when needed. She seldom misses a cleanup day or a meeting.

Thank you Janet deVos

PMHA'S EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTORS

President	Bill Warnick	905 549-6086 president@port-maitland.ca
Vice President	Barry Fraser	905-581-1941 jbarryfraser@hotmail.com
Financial Sec.	Janet deVos	(905) 701-5078 birdsandb@xplornet.ca
Recording Sec.	Bob Campbell	
Dir. (Unassigned)	Wendy Strong	905 774-7028 wendy@stronghorses.com
Dir. (Webmaster)	Bill Strong	905 774-7028 bill@stronghorses.com

Mailing Address

William A. Warnick
180 Rosslyn Ave. South
HAMILTON, ON L8M 3J5
Phone 905 549-6086 Skype [williamawarnick](https://www.skype.com/user/williamawarnick)
Email wwarnick@cogeco.ca
Web-page www.port-maitland.ca

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