

The Grand Despatch



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

"Bill Warnick Saves Abraham Lincoln!"

Bill Warnick pulls Local Boy from Icy Creek and Saves his Life!

Grand Despatch - Wire Service

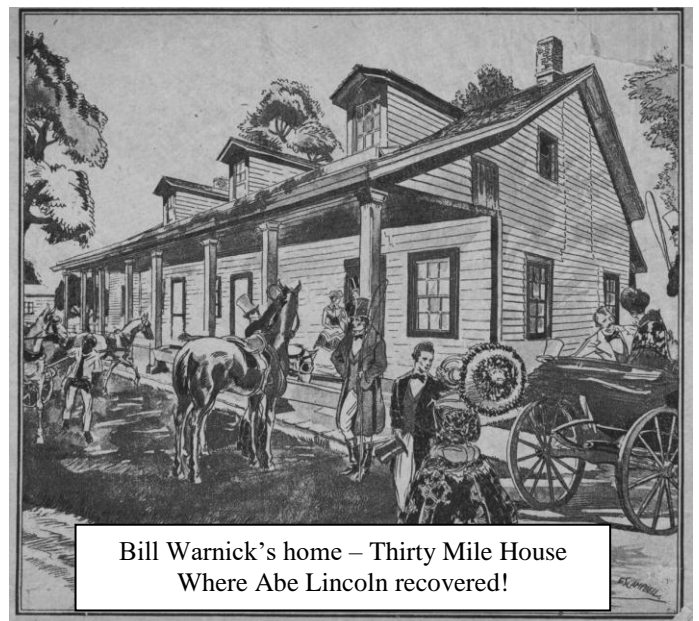
April 1831 – In a wire service report from Decatur Illinois - For the second time in his young life, a 21 year old rail-splitter by the name of Abraham Lincoln was saved from drowning in a creek. His first near death experience occurred as a young lad of 7 when he had to be rescued by Austin Gollaher from Knob Creek in Kentucky. His second near death experience occurred recently while crossing the Sangamon River west of Decatur Illinois when he slipped through the thin ice and nearly drowned. He was on the property of Bill Warnick the Sheriff of Macon County. Young Lincoln could have died had he not somehow dragged himself to the recently built log cabin of Sheriff Warnick where with the assistance of Mrs. Warnick, the former Miss Nancy Griffin they nursed Mr. Lincoln for several weeks. He had frozen his feet so badly he is lucky to still have them. He will likely have a limp for life!

Mr. Lincoln was known to the Warnicks as he and his cousin John Hanks had worked for Warnick splitting rail which were used to build Warnick's home called the Thirty Mile House.

Mr. Warnick age 46 recently served in the Black Hawk War where he acquired the rank of Captain. Mr. Warnick is an up and coming local entrepreneur and politician whom we are sure will someday make a national name for himself which is more than can be said for Mr. Lincoln! It is said that Mr. Lincoln has eyes for Mr. Warnick's young daughter Polly!

President sees it". Well the above is the truth as I would like to see it! (Well partly!) Yes, Bill Warnick did save Abraham Lincoln's life and he and his wife did give the yet to be famous President of the United States, care and comfort for several weeks as he recovered from his dip in the river. The home the Warnick's owned became a locally famous tavern and was the first court house in the region. However, my headline suggesting it might have been me who saved Abe Lincoln's Life is a slight exaggeration!

The information in the first three paragraphs is mostly true. Close enough to put it into a lighthearted introduction to this story but not verifiably historically correct. You will have to do your own reading if you want to know all the correct details.



Bill Warnick's home – Thirty Mile House
Where Abe Lincoln recovered!

The truth as Donald sees it!

Reporters on CNN and CNBC often refer to President Trump's words as the "truth as the

Port Maitland Cairn Park continues to draw visitors!

No, I have not renamed the park at east Port Maitland; I am just drawing attention to it in a different light! It remains “Port Maitland East Park!”

While doing some work at the park this summer I had the privilege of talking with some visitors who had found their way there and made themselves at home. On one occasion I found four young men and a young lady enjoying the shade of the old willow tree. If you look hard in the photo below you will see the young lady’s right arm!



On another occasion, I found a young couple with their baby and dog also taking in some shade under the old willow. In both cases I took their photo and gave them my card asking them to email me with their names. Unfortunately neither did that. Lesson learned; I need to keep a pen and paper handy and get that information there and then.

We could use more photos!

We could use more photos of people enjoying the park so please do take photos and please send them

to me with the pertinent information.



Recently, with the help of Jim Dickhout, Bob Campbell and a couple of fellows from Innophos, we moved some benches from the lock to the cairn. There are now lots of places to rest your weary legs or just sit and enjoy the best view of the Grand River there is anywhere!



A Butterfly Garden!

While killing weeds this summer in an area where there is only rocks and it is impossible to cut with a lawn mower a gentleman who is descendent of Six Nations ancestry questioned me, asking what I was

doing and what I intended to do with this spot. He suggested I plant clover as it would not require cutting and would help to hold the shoreline. That led to more consideration about the area and it was decided to not only plant clover but to also plant milkweed to encourage Monarch Butterflies to the area. Sometimes I actually do listen to others!

The Cairn Park does not just get beautiful; it takes volunteers like my granddaughter Cierrah and her two friends Vinny Oliveira and Nile Lederman, shown here on Saturday Sept 22nd planting red clover and milkweed for our new butterfly garden.



On Saturday Sept 22nd armed with fifty bags of soil, lots of red clover and other grass seed, a small section of the park had a sprinkling of soil added to the otherwise rocky area and seeded. Regular grass seed and fertilizer were spread on the remaining park area.

Facts about Grand River Mussels!

Reprinted with permission - Originally Published in GRANDAction - the newsletter of The Grand Watershed.
By Crystal Allan - Supervisor of Natural Heritage
Grand River Conservation Authority

Freshwater mussels lie hidden in the river and stream beds in the Grand River watershed, where they are not easy to spot. But they are important for healthy rivers, streams, lakes and ponds, because they help filter the water and make it cleaner.

These soft-bodied mollusks are animals that live

inside a two-part shell, and there are more than 20 species of mussels in the Grand River watershed.

Natural water filters

Mussels are natural water filters. They take in up to 40 liters of water each day, filtering it through their gills as they feed. They eat the algae and bacteria, and also filter sediment from the water.

20 mussel species in our watershed

Their names are as intriguing as their biology: flutedshell, elktote, fatmucket, creeper and giant floater, to name a few. They can live for decades in a single spot on the bed of the river, which makes them extremely sensitive to pollution and habitat changes as they can't move easily or quickly.

10 mussels are species at risk

The main stem of the Grand River and the southern Grand are hot spots for at-risk mussel species, but tributaries such as Mackenzie Creek and the Conestoga River are also home to endangered and threatened mussels, such as rainbow and wavy-rayed lamp mussel.


Mussels depend on fish

As part of their life cycle, tiny juvenile mussels (called glochidia) spend their first one to three months living on the gills of a host fish. The nutrients in the fish's blood develop the internal organs of the glochidia. The juvenile mussels also hitch a ride to habitat that they may not have reached if they were simply released into the water by an adult. When the juveniles fall off, they will grow into adults if they land in a suitable part of the river.

Mussels lure fish

There are several ways that a female mussel attracts fish close enough to her for the juvenile mussels to attach to the fish. Some mussels produce small

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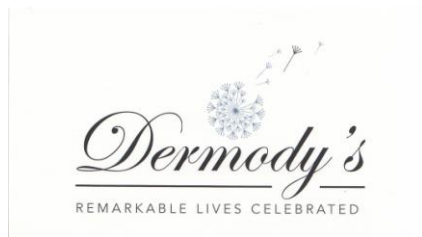
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Owner



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packets filled with glochidia that look like tasty insects. Others produce flaps that look like minnows or display lures that wave in the current behind them like fish bait. Regardless of how the fish is tricked, when it attempts to eat the bait, the packets break releasing the glochidia.

Mussel teeth aren't for chewing

They have two types of teeth — lateral teeth and pseudocardinal teeth (pseudo means false), which keep the two shells together. When the teeth align, they lock together like a puzzle piece and prevent the two shells from slipping. Biologists use presence and size of teeth to help identify the mussel species.

Shells used in button factories

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, freshwater mussels were harvested from the rivers with pitchforks and shipped by train to button factories. In the 1940s, the button industry started using plastic instead of freshwater mussel shells to make buttons.

Zebra mussels

This invasive species from Europe was first identified in Ontario waters in the late 1980s, and there are pockets of zebra mussels in our watershed. They don't need a host fish to reproduce and can quickly out compete native mussels for food and oxygen. Report a sighting to the [Invading Species Awareness](#) program online.

How to be a mussel scientist

There are many mysteries about freshwater mussels yet to be learned. Scientists are striving to increase our knowledge of the distribution, biology and behavior of local mussel species. This helps us to find strategies to conserve and recover them.

To learn more or report a sighting, try using the Clam Counter App developed by the Toronto Zoo and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. ♦

Clamshells were used for Buttons!

On October 8, 2003 an article I wrote about clamming on the Grand River appeared in the Dunnville Chronicle. Below is an edited and updated version of that article.

The late Estelle Pringle told me of a gentleman who had a photo of his mother Louise Teeter, taken in 1916 of some men clam fishing at Port Maitland. It turns out I knew the gentleman. He was the late Dr. Don Bell formerly of Binbrook. Dr. Bell loaned me the photo along with another and told me I could use them as needed.

After exhaustive questioning of old and older local fishermen I could find few who remembered clam fishing in the Grand River let alone at Port Maitland. Carroll Kenney was still alive so why not talk with him. That was a good move as he recalled that as a student attending elementary school at Stromness circa 1921 he and other students worked for these clam fishermen. At what today is McKeil Marine's Port Maitland dock the clams were placed in large vats of boiling water to open the shells. Once opened he and others would scrap the meat from the clams. While he was at it he would look for pearls. Some were found but were of very low quality and had no commercial use. He recalled having a small collection of these pearls.

The shells were shipped in freight cars to the Kitchener area where buttons were made from them. As many as seven car loads were shipped at a time, however Carroll did not tell me how often the trains were shipped.

Another old-timer who recalled clam fishing on the Grand was the late Bill McIntee who with his father Barney did some clamming below the dam at Dunnville. Bill recalls that though very young he drove a gas powered boat, towing clamming scows taking them from one location to another. The scows were flat bottomed square ended boats as shown in the included photo. They were usually pushed from location to location by long poles, but motors were becoming more popular and why not modernize!



Barney sold his clams to Harley Clark who operated from a location in Dunnville where InterCounty Concrete is today. Here he carried out the same tasks as were performed at Port Maitland. Youngsters were paid ten cents an hour to dig out the clam meat from the boiled clams and feel for pearls. The meat was thrown into piles and generally left to rot while the clam shells were hauled to nearby railway cars at the former TH&B station by Harold Chittley in a gravel wagon.

In an effort to solicit facts I sent letters to various Kitchener-Waterloo and Guelph newspapers, asking their readers for information. To my pleasant amazement a number of people contacted me. All offered different bits of wisdom, mostly about locations of various button factories in the K-W area.

Bill Limebeer, from Guelph wrote: "As a child growing up in Waterloo in the 1930s I was familiar with the Rauschman Button Factory which was located on Regina Street, a few blocks south of the

Erb Street East. I think I can remember that there were loaded box cars containing shells which I thought were from oysters delivered on a siding beside the building. I noted that there were holes in the used shells which I believe were where the buttons were cut out."

A phone call came from Dennis Bell in Cambridge. Dennis told me about a former button factory near Shantz Hill, where the Jerry Van Dyke Travel agency is presently located.

Then emails from Stan Hilborn, and Susan Kappler arrived confirming the details given by Dennis. Then came an email from April Eby, telling me her father's family's connection to a local button manufacture.

Along the way the way I learned of files stored at Doon Heritage Crossroads in Kitchener. With the assistance of Elizabeth Hardin the registrar/researcher (now retired), I was able to

review ledgers and other files pertaining to the Dominion Button Manufacturing Co. but was unable to find any connection to Port Maitland or Dunnville. I had hoped to find letters or invoices naming Port Maitland or Dunnville businesses that did business with factories in the area. But no Luck! I would encourage anyone with information regarding button manufacturing in the K-W area to contact Stacy McLennan, Collections Curator & Registrar at the Waterloo Region Museum at 519 748-1914 ext 3268 smclennan@regionofwaterloo.ca

As in Dunnville and Port Maitland children were used extensively in the manufacturing of buttons. I discovered a reference to the age of the children and found a number to be seven years and younger.

I even found one recorded as only “one year old!” I can’t explain that! There were a number of articles confirming Grand River clams were used in the manufacture of buttons.

It was generally felt that the fresh water clams from the Grand and the Thames, did not produce the quality of shell that well suited their use as buttons. It seemed they did poorly in the washing process prior to manufacture and the resulting buttons were too soft and flimsy to withstand washing once attached to clothing.

Sad Update to our Commemorative Ceremony at Christ Church!

We learned in early July that Fr. Duncan Lyons the Anglican priest who did such a superb job of dedicating the plaque for the soldiers who died off Port Maitland in 1850 suddenly passed away.

One thousand dollars was donated to Christ Church by PMHA for them to find and lift sunken stones in the cemetery and to level the lawn making it more comfortable to walk on. We have another five thousand dollars for them to use to straighten up some of the larger stones should they complete this job by the time the snow flies this season. If you would like to donate something toward this cause you can send a cheque addressed to “Dunn Anglican Parish” c/o Rhonda Shepherd at 113 Port Maitland

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Annual General Meeting

AGM to be held in Garfield Disher Room at Dunnville Library on Wednesday Nov. 14th at 7:00 p.m. Elections of Officers to take place. All are welcome.

MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE!!

We still have a number of members who have not renewed their membership. We need your support if we are going to continue mailing out the Despatch. You may not be aware but our sponsors are interested in how many Despatches we mail. The more we mail the more likely I am to find sponsors. Membership numbers are important! Please consider catching up and please join if you are not presently a member.

Please make payment to *Port Maitland, “On the Grand” Historical Association* and mail to Bill at address below or why not send it from your online banking!

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