

**BITS AND PIECES OF BRANTFORD'S HISTORY  
THE BOOM YEARS – BRANTFORD 1895-1900**

**BY  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **THE BIRMINGHAM OF CANADA**

The title the "Birmingham of Canada" was given to the city in 1899 by a newspaper called "The Monetary Times." (See resources 1). The comparison to the industrial heart of England at that time was not inappropriate. During the last five years of the nineteenth century, Brantford had found its way out of the economic slump of the early 90's, and was in fact "booming." The new wheat lands of the Canadian West cried out for farm machinery, and it was this product that Brantford could hand out in abundance.

Industry and population grew side by side. Apace with this came the recognition, and the problems that usually accompany such an occurrence. If some could say: "No place that I visited could impress me more favourably...than the city of Brantford," and "I can truly say that my impressions of Brantford, with its numerous attractions, and picturesque surroundings, will long live in my memory," still others could complain in letters to the editor, about the stench of the "dead waters along the canal bank," and the "irregular time, poor road-bed and rolling stack" of the street railway.

What was the city really like during this period of sudden blossoming? What were the problems that faced the city? What were its assets? How did its labour and industry respond to the increased demands? What features did it share with other cities in southern Ontario, and what factors gave it a unique quality? What follows is essentially an investigation into these questions.

## THE BICYCLE IS KING

*"With the advent of the low wheel, which can be so easily ridden by both sexes, bycycle riding has become one of the institutions of the day. It is one of those desirable inventions which has not served to displace but to create labour, and Brantford has a pleasing evidence of this fact in the busy factory, which is already employing many men here, and which seems liable ere long to increase its staff."*

This was part of an editorial that appeared in *The Courier* on April 25, 1895, and it points out to what degree the "bicycle fad" had hit Brantford at this time. Headlines in the papers such as "King Bicycle, Brantford Pays Court To The New Sporting Monarch" attest to its popularity.

The bicycle with the "high wheel" had appeared in Brantford in the late 1870's, and a 'bicycle club' was formed in 1880 with only 12 members."Lloyd Harris was the captain. He rode a 60 inch wheel and when the clouds hung low on a rainy day his head got caught away up among them." The price, \$150 - \$175, probably took away the enthusiasm of many, while the awkward nature of the bicycle discouraged many. Yet, a *Courier* article in April of 1895 reported that over fifty bicycles had been sold in Brantford over the past few weeks, and that there were now over 800 members in the thriving 'Brantford Bycycle Club'. The reasons given for this sudden surge in the popularity of the bicycle were the advent of the "low wheel" (lower front wheel as we know it today), and a significant drop in price because of mass production (It now cost around \$50.00).

Even the "fair sex" were taking to the bicycle. Whereas with the "high wheel", it was reported that ladies would just as soon go for a walk with a man-eating tiger as ride a high wheel, they now flocked to the low wheel. They did not learn to ride on the street however, but "started their bicycling" in the precincts of the drill hall, where beginners assemble every day."

The popularity of the bicycle was further attested to by the fact that in 1895, the number of hackmen in Brantford was reduced from 12 to 4. The drivers blamed the decrease in business on the electric street railway and the bicycle, and asked the city to cancel the \$5.00 license fee they paid annually. Some sports, such as tennis, were deserted in favour of the bicycle, and the stable-owners complained that "none of the boys look at a buggy ride; everything is the wheel."

However, by 1897, *The Expositor* was able to conclude:

*"The bycycle is in just as great and general use as formerly, but it is not crowding other sports and past times as it once did."*

*If the bycycle in Brantford brought hard times for some, it meant boom times for others. The Goold Bicycle Company of Brantford employed over 200 men in the manufacturing of their bycycle "The Red Bird," and this model won an international. reputation for reliability.*

The Massey-Harris Company also produced bicycles here for a time. In the early 90's Canadian bicyclists had felt that only imported bicycles were of any value, but by 1895, the Canadian-made bicycle was selling very well, and three American manufactures had set up branch factories in Canada.

Up to 1895, The Goold Bicycle Company had turned out two grades of bicycles, but in 1896 they decided to turn out only the better class product, using steel, "treated by their special hardening process which, experiment has shown, is capable of withstanding a strain that would smash the ordinary tubing to smithereens."

In 1899, a syndicate bought out the Goold Bicycle Company, the Massey-Harris Bicycle division, the Lozier Company of Toronto, and the Welland Vale Company of St. Catharines, and formed the Canada Cycle and Motor Company. Bicycles were still manufactured in Brantford however, as what had once been an extravagance now was a necessity.

There was another side to bicycling in Brantford in the 1890's. Just as automobile manufacturers today have racing teams, so the bicycle manufacturers in the 90's had teams of racers. There were of course, many meets during the year, and these teams would compete for prizes. According to the rules of the Canadian Wheelman's Association, (C.W.A.) there were 2 classes of riders. Class A consisted of bona fide amateurs who paid all their own travelling expenses. Class B consisted of riders employed by firms who sold bicycles, and they were allowed to accept remuneration but were not allowed to ride for cash prizes.

The Goold Bicycle Company employed a team of riders. This team did very well at meets, and when they won the C.W.A. meet at Quebec in 1896 they were given a royal welcome on their return. They were set at the train station by a crowd of people carrying congratulatory banners, and then escorted in horse-drawn cabs to the market square. The Mayor, Thomas Elliot, the local M.P.P., A.S. Hardy, and the former Federal M. P. for South Brant, all made speeches lauding the accomplishments of the team ,and praising the "Red Bird" from the Goold Company. Ironically, a month later the team was disbanded. The Company explained that this was due to the scarcity of professional races and the heavy expenses of the team.

Brantford was also very keen to hold bicycle meets. In August '95, the League of American Wheelmen included Brantford on their list, and a successful meet was held on the Parkdale Track in Eagle Place. But Mohawk Park was where the majority of meets were held, and in 1897 it was hoped that the C.W.A. meet would be held there.

To secure a C.W.A. meet, a great deal of lobbying had to be done by the city involved because the location was awarded by a vote of the cities and towns that had clubs in the C.W.A. In 1897 it looked as if Brantford would receive the nod over her nearest rival - Chatham.

The Brantford delegation made an excellent presentation, and even had a song that went to the tune of "The Maple Leaf Forever," to help them.

Our Canada's the bravest land,  
The summer's sun ere set on,  
Her sons have proved a gallant band  
On every field ere met on;  
Her lovely damsels will compare  
With any in creation,  
And Brantford has a goodly share  
Who send an invitation –

Chorus: Then loud and long shall be our song, of Brantford's many graces: Give us the meet - our joys complete - We'll give you splendid races.

However, when the vote was taken, Chatham had won out. Brantford's bitter disappointment was shown by *The Expositor* headlines announcing the defeat:

"Brantford Did Not Get The Meet, But She Got The Meat Axe.

Just how keen the competition was, and to what degree the manufacturers were involved, one has only to consider the reason given for Brantford's losing out. Apparently all the other bicycle companies moved against Brantford because they feared that a meet in this city would be "a boom for the Red Bird."

As much pleasure as the bicycle might have afforded, it also provided an ongoing headache for the City Council. The question was - where are the bicyclists to ride - on the sidewalk or on the roads? One has only to follow the editorials and letters to the editor during this period in order to see how much time and energy was expended on this issue.

The question arose primarily because of course, the streets of Brantford at this time were not paved, and in inclement weather the bicyclists preferred the plank sidewalks to the mud of the roads. There was a law that forbade riding on the sidewalks in Brantford, but in general this was ignored except for once or twice a year when offenders were corralled and fined \$1. (later this was increased to \$3.)

*The Expositor* recognized the problem in 1895, and in an editorial called for some immediate action through a meeting of the Council and the bicyclists. The bicyclists at the same time were asking for permission to ride on certain sidewalks. Some aldermen concurred with this, and were accused by some citizens of catering to the bicycle vote.

*"There is not an argument in defence of the movement to allow the bicyclists to ride on the sidewalks, nor is there an alderman whose conscientious convictions will justify an effort in defence of it on any other plea than expediency, and to gain a few votes at the ensuing election."*

The complaints carried on into the ensuing years. Letters to the editors complained of people being knocked down by "scorchers" (those who rode too fast), and of bicyclists making Victoria Park an unsafe haven for older people and children.

In general, the newspapers wanted the bicyclists off the sidewalks, but appreciated their problem. In August of 1896, *The Expositor* complained;

*"...It is a matter of regret that Brantford, which may fairly be called the home of the Canadian bicycle, has not a yard of properly-made bicycle track within its limits. We are far behind many less pretentious places in this respect, whereas we ought to be able to set the pace for others."*

In this regard, there was a Bicycle Good Roads Association in Brantford whose object was to aid the Brantford cyclist. To this end they met with the Board of Works in the matter of laying out cinder paths in the city for the bicycle. Promises were made but little was accomplished.

In its time, the low wheel or "safety bicycle" brought about a revolution of sorts in sporting activities, transportation, and special activities. Brantford, like most other cities in the country, was affected by this "revolution." The effects are best summed up in an article which appeared in *The Courier* on Aug. 26, 1895. Entitled "King Bicycle," the article made the following claims for the bicycle.

*"The bicycle is king. There can be no doubt at all about that. It has ridden into public favour, at a two minute gait. It has enabled man to outrace the fastest trotting horse. It has brought human endurance and speed to such a pitch that distances are daily accomplished with ease through its agency, which not long ago would have been laughed at as impossible except by means of steam, or some other powerful agency. It has freed woman from the thrall which hitherto debarred her from participation in any of the masculine sports. It has placed her on an equal footing with the lords of creation in the most popular diversion of the day. It has revolutionized dress. It enables human beings to become their own locomotives. It frees them from becoming tied down to catching certain trains or cars. It enables working men and businessmen to secure their dinners at the noon-hour in comfort without running the chance of ruining their digestion. It promotes cordiality and friendship between members of adjacent communities. It is a bustler. It has come to stay and it has not yet reached the end of its tether. - not by a very long shot."*

## POLITICS

Of politics in Brantford during the late 90's, Sarah Jeanette Duncan in her novel *The Imperialist* states:

*"The town of Elgin (Brantford) knew two controlling interests - the interests of politics and the interest of religion....Politics wore a complexion strictly local, provincial, or Dominion.... the theatre of European diplomacy had no absorbed spectators here."*

In fact, a large portion of the plot of her novel, stems from a federal election in Brantford in 1896.

Politics were important in Brantford during this period. Men took politics very seriously, and loyalty to one's political party was placed high on a man's priority list. The partisan nature of politics at that time - that is you were either Liberal or Conservative and there was nothing in between - is well-illustrated by the two newspapers in Brantford at that point. They were *The Courier*, a Conservative paper, and *The Expositor*, a Liberal paper. Not only did they regularly attack opposing candidates, but each other as well and there were very few issues on which they agreed.

In 1896, the Conservative party, floundering since the death of Sir John A. Macdonald, called a federal election for June 23. The candidates for both parties in South Brant had been nominated in 1895 in anticipation of the election. The Liberal party's candidate was Mr. William Paterson, who had held the seat for 24 years" and the Conservatives put forth Mr. Robert Henry, a former mayor of the city.

One of the key issues in this election was the tariff question. The Conservatives were trying to convince the country that a Liberal government would ruin the country's manufacturers by lifting trade barriers. The Liberals countered by saying that they would not do so, and that they were not free traders, but "freer traders" than the Conservatives. The issue had great relevance to Brantford because of the industrial nature of the city.

Meetings of both parties were well-attended by both men and women, although the latter could not yet vote. Allowing for *The Expositor's* bias, this is how that paper described the opening of one of Paterson's meetings:

*"It was indeed a rousing meeting in point of enthusiasm and interest, as well as in number. Long before the hour of opening the door, the longtime stalwarts began to assemble in front of the main entrance, and when the doors were open a helter-skelter rush was made to secure the best seats. Before 8 o'clock not a single empty seat was visible in the house, and already many were taking up positions in the rear of the building."*

The meetings were quite lively, with much satirical comment by the candidates, and heckling from the audience. It was customary to invite your opponent to share your meeting, and when the two candidates were present, it made the meeting that much livelier.



In the 1896 election, the Liberals swept the Conservatives out of Office, but in Brantford, *The Expositor*, in an editorial entitled, "South Brant's Great Blunder," had to report:

*"Mr. William Paterson who has represented South Brant in the House of Commons continuously since 1872, was yesterday defeated by a majority of 86 votes. ... Why Brantford which had for years past been almost singular in the fact that it kept itself in the Liberal column should have yesterday decided on a change when most of the other cities in Canada were going the other way, is one of the inexplicable things which every now and again occur in the domain of politics."*

*The Courier* is not available for all of 1896, but doubtless its headlines set out the victory as a glorious one.

However, hints of what were to come were present near the end of the above editorial.

*"It is possible that other and more sinister influences may have been at work, and accusations of this sort are already made with considerable positiveness, but at this time it is impossible to state whether or not they have any substantial ground to rest upon."*

Less than a month later the "accusations" were embodied in a formal charge of the Liberal Party of South Brant, that illegal methods were used in the election, and a protest was filed against the return of Robert Henry as member for South Brant. *The Expositor* lamented the reopening of the "turmoil incident to political contests" but almost self-righteously concluded, that "more important than the convenience of the electors is the purity of elections."

*The Courier*, as one would expect, (and as reported by *The Expositor*), was furious, claiming the protest was based on technicalities, and that any investigation would vindicate Mr. Henry.

The charges against him were formidable; there were 215 charges of alleged bribery, 16 charges of promise of position, 5 charges of alleged threats, 16 charges of personation, 41 cases of hiring of rigs, alleged payment of travelling expenses to outsiders, and 54 charges of alleged treating. (i.e. supplying drinks and meals).

During his trial, Mr. Henry managed to forget a great many details ("feeble memory," *The Expositor* said), claimed he was kept in ignorance by members of his organization, and on occasion refused to answer questions. However, when William Sugar, an Indian from the Six Nations Reserve, who could not speak English, swore that he had been paid \$4.00 for his vote, Henry gave up his seat, and based on Sugar's testimony (the judge said one charge was sufficient to unseat Henry, and Sugar's testimony established the validity of one charge,) the 1896 election was declared void. Henry was exonerated of any personal corruption, but *The Expositor* continued to suggest that Henry had given up the seat in order that the charges be dropped against him. *The Courier* headlines vented the Conservative feeling on the subject:

*Mr. Henry Unseated*

*On The Testimony Of A Pagan Indian Who Would Not Take The Oath But Affirmed That He Was Paid Money.*

A new election was called for February of 1897.

In this election, Mr. Robert Henry was again nominated by the Conservatives, while Mr. C.B. Heyd was nominated by the Liberals. (William Paterson had won a bye-election seat in North Grey, and had been made Ministers of Customs.) The main issue of this campaign was of course, the protest of the previous election. All other issues were submerged in this one. Henry continually defended his innocence, while the Liberals and *The Expositor* continually sought to prove him guilty. (notwithstanding the fact that the courts had declared Henry innocent.)

It is interesting to note the newspaper reports of a meeting on January 7, 1897 regarding a meeting in the Opera House, addressed by both candidates. *The Expositor* called Mr. Heyd's reception "magnificent", while *The Courier* stated:

*"Mr. Henry has never been seen to better advantage... and the cause of the Conservative nominee is the cause of victory."*

The Liberals were determined to win back South Brant. *The Expositor* had blamed Paterson's loss in 1896, in part, on his absence from the County during the campaign because of parliamentary and party interests elsewhere. No such mistake was to be made this time. Heyd toured the riding continually. On January 2, William Paterson spoke on behalf of Heyd, in "the greatest meeting ever held in Brantford Opera House." (*Expositor*). Then on February 2, Sir Wilfred Laurier came to Brantford to lend his support to the Liberal cause. *The Expositor* of course, was ecstatic.

*IT MEANS VICTORY*

*The Greatest Political Demonstration Ever Held In Western Ontario.*

Laurier's speech dealt with the broader issues of Liberal policy, including the tariff, which he said the Liberals wanted to reform, but not necessarily reduce, and he concluded by calling on the people of South Brant to redeem "the great blot upon the fair name of South Brant," and vote for the Liberal candidate.

*The Expositor's* prediction proved true, and on February 5, 1897, it was *The Courier's* turn to lament that the result "proves a keen disappointment to the friends of Mr. Robert Henry." South Brant, it would seem, had been redeemed.

However, not unlike *The Expositor* in another way, *The Courier* complained that "a greater amount of systematic corruption was never practised in any constituency than that which took place in this riding on the Reform side." It went on to list cases of personation, intimidation, and treating, and concluded:

*"What course may be decided on, this paper is not prepared to say, but it will be as everlasting disgrace to this riding, if the doings of the past few days are not suitably and thoroughly ventilated in the courts of the land."*

Robert Henry obviously agreed with *The Courier*, for on March 15, 1899, he entered a protest against the return of Mr. Heyd, but unlike the previous protest, this one was found to be invalid. This ended one of the most exciting and controversial election contests ever held in Brant County. These two men ran against each other again in the federal election of 1900, and again Mr. Heyd won: but compared to the campaign of '96 and '97, and in spite of the people still taking their politics seriously, the campaign was almost bland and insipid.

Provincially - speaking, Brantford was honoured during this period in having a native-son, the Hon. A.S. Hardy, as the premier of Ontario. He had been South Brant's representative in the provincial house since 1873, and had been elected eight times in succession. When Sir Oliver Mowat left provincial for federal politics in 1896, Hardy was elected premier by the caucus. He led the Liberals of Ontario to victory in a provincial election in 1898.

Locally the main issue in the 1898 provincial election was the removal of the Grand Trunk Railway shops from Brantford to London. *The Courier* moved to the attack, and accused Hardy of being responsible for the shops being moved to London. Under the banner "Whitney (the Conservative leader), Will Be Whipped," *The Expositor* rose to the challenge and defended Mr. Hardy. *The Expositor* editorial wondered why the charge was only then being brought to light, when in fact "the supposed fault occurred as far back as 1891....." the editorial concluded:

*"Mr. Hardy has no reason to shun giving an account of his stewardship before a Brantford audience, and we venture the prediction here and now that when election day comes round, as it must very soon do, no responsible man will be found ready to appear on a public platform in South Brant and insinuate, let alone charge, Mr. Hardy with either betrayal or neglect of the interests of his constituents in the car shops or any other matter."*

*The Expositor* again spoke true as Hardy was elected by a substantial margin over his opponent, Mr. Robert Henry.

Because of failing health, A.S. Hardy retired in 1899. In the by-election to fill his seat, Robert Henry again ran for the Conservatives against T.H. Preston, and Henry again lost. And again *The Courier* cried "foul."

*"It may be truthfully said of the new member (Mr. Preston) that his election represents the success of boodle and coercion, and he and his friends are welcome to all the satisfaction which they can get out of this fact."*

Civic politics were a concern to Brantford citizens during this period. Although not as strictly so, municipal elections also took on the guise of party politics. This was not openly stated in the election propaganda, but the politics of a man running for office were well known to the populace.

*The Expositor* deplored party politics at the municipal level, and in January of 1895 called upon the people to turn out of office the members of the Protestant Protection Association (an extreme pro-Protestant group), who had been returned in a majority the previous year. According to *The Expositor*, these men "set this community into a

religious ferment, and started fires of fanaticism that have with difficulty be allayed....Let the Great Blunder be thoroughly and effectively undone." It was. But in 1899, *The Expositor* was still bemoaning the existence of a "partisan spirit" in local politics, and was calling for the best men to be returned.

The concerns of the City Council at this time varied from the usual day to day running of the city, to more important issues such as, flood prevention, how to get the bonus back from the Grand Trunk Railway after it had removed its shops, the question of subsidies to manufacturers to keep them in Brantford, and the acquiring of direct rail service from the G.T.R. This last point was one on which members generally agreed, as most Brantfordites resented having to travel to Harrisburg to catch the main-line train. The following resolution was passed by City Council on October 13, 1899.

*"Whereas the marked growth and development of this city during recent years as a manufacturing and commercial centre have made it increasingly apparent that better and more convenient railway facilities would be to the great advantage of the city of Brantford and the travelling public as well as the railway company themselves and, whereas this result would undoubtedly be achieved if the through trains of the Western division of the Grand Trunk Railway were made to pass through Brantford. Therefore, be it resolved that this Council urges upon the attention of the G.T.R. authorities, the advisability of running their through trains through Brantford...."*

The meetings of the Council were usually lively, as attested to by a typical Expositor headline on March 14, 1899:

*A HOT TIME  
There Was A Hot Time In The Old Town Last. Night*

Personal rivalries and feuds generally entered into the discussion. At the above-headlined meeting, there were 4 instances of aldermen having to withdraw strong comments about other aldermen, and in each case it was done only at the Mayor's insistence.

Our peculiar occurrence in civic politics at this time, was the "muddle" that surrounded the resignation of Mayor W.G. Raymond in June of 1899. Mr. Raymond had been appointed Postmaster for the city, and feeling that he could not be both Mayor and Postmaster, resigned from the former. However, it was not such an easy step to take.

A private citizen, Joseph Bowes, had handed a letter to the City Clerk, protesting that Mr. Raymond's resignation was illegal. Mr. Bowes had sought legal advice, and informed the clerk that the Mayor had had no power to resign in such a manner as he did, nor could the Council accept the resignation in the manner in which they did. Therefore he argued, any ensuing election would be illegal. The Council sought legal opinion and asked Mr. Raymond to re-submit his resignation, but he refused. Legal opinion varied, but finally it was decided that the resignation would stand. An election was called, and the then young Harry Cockshutt, defeated Mr. Thomas Elliott, a former mayor.

Politics then, at whatever level, were followed with great interests by the people of Brantford at this time, and some of the unusual occurrences in politics here during the late 90's, gave Brantford's political status in Canada a rather unique twist.

## **THE RIVER IN THE 1890'S A SOURCE OF PLEASURE AND PAIN**

It is probably safe to say that no other geographical feature has been as instrumental in shaping the development of Brantford, and Brant County for that matter, as the Grand River. There is also no doubt that the river has been a source of both pleasure and pain for the people of the County. This was as true in the late 1890's as at any other time.

### THE FLOODS

It was customary for the residents of Brantford to expect a flood of some kind. It was an annual event-not a looked-forward to occurrence, but one that had to be accepted.

There had been a serious flood in 1894, and the dykes had been improved to help save the residents of Eagle Place and West Brant from their yearly soaking. In the years 1895, 96, and 97, the run-off was not serious, and the dyke did its job. However, the following three years from 1898 to 1900 saw a reoccurrence of serious floods, and during this time the people and the City Council struggled with how to cope with this annual inconvenience.

1898 - In November of 1897, the City Engineer, T. Harry Jones, reported: "I would say then that owing to the growth of willows and sod, that the dyke is in a better condition to-day than at the time of its completion." But on February 21 1898, several aldermen were warning of the possibility of a serious flood because of a large ice jam.

The headlines on March 14 in *The Courier*, - "An Awful Flood," and in *The Expositor*, "Grand River Outdoes Itself In Its Periodic Overflows," told the story. *The Expositor* called it, "the most destructive flood that Brantford has ever known," and *The Courier* reported that: "Old residents of West Brantford say they never experienced anything like this flood. It was 18 inches higher than that of four years ago..."

West Brant and Eagle Place, as usual, were particularly hard hit. People piled furniture on beds, and then climbed out windows and stood on roofs waiting to be rescued by the firehall life boat, "The Victoria." Alas, "The Victoria" itself was swamped, and found high and dry the next morning on Balfour Street. Not all citizens wanted to be rescued, as it was noted: "Another man in the same vicinity sat stoically in the second storey of his flooded domicile, and yelled lustily for whiskey."

Even allowing for some exaggeration on the part of the reporter, this next excerpt from *The Expositor* lets one see just how bad things were:

*"The scene at the corner of Oxford and Gilkinson streets at 5 o'clock this morning simply beggared description. A roaring torrent six or seven feet deep came tearing down Gilkinson St. southward. At the junction of Oxford St. , it tore away the whole of the roadway on Oxford street. The ground subsided and the water poured into the subsidence in such immense volumes that the scene resembled the falls of a river. It almost appeared as if a great dam had been suddenly thrust upon the scene, and the water danced and leapt over it with a mighty roar."*

In Eagle Place, the Massey-Harris whistle blew at about 2 o'clock in the morning, and many of the workers from Masseys and the Waterous Engine Works got out of bed, rushed to their respective factories, and built up a dyke to protect those two factories.

Nor did the town of Paris escape. The flood of '98 was described as "the greatest flood in its history." Houses and stores that had never had water in them before were flooded, and Penman's No. 2 mill had 2 feet of water in it, resulting in considerable damage to the machinery.

As the cleanup began there were arguments over goods that had been swept away, and in some cases these resulted in fights and court cases. In one instance a man from West Brantford was charged with assault for striking a man taking pictures. The latter had been photographing the man's house while it was under water. Little wonder that this happened, when prior to the flood *The Expositor* had advised: "Camera friends should be in readiness to obtain some very fine snapshots."

Naturally, people were upset. *The Expositor* called for early action by members of the City Council, "not only in the interests of the property-owners and householders of West Brantford and Eagle Place, but for the better protection of the manufacturing sites on the flats, and for the fair fame of the entire city."

Massey-Harris sent a rather pointed letter to the City Council demanding that "a permanent system of protection be carried into execution by your honourable body during the coming summer that will put it beyond a possibility of our factory again being inundated." Their conclusion had even a sharper point:

*"I might further say that our company have under consideration the adding of improvements to this factory that will cost not less than \$25,000, but unless they can be assured of some system of protection against damage by water will be afforded us before another spring freshet occurs, they will not go on with the work, and in the absence of nothing being done, it might result in losing the factory altogether to the city."*

As Massey-Harris employed over 20 percent of Brantford's working force, they felt justified in making the above "threat."

The citizens of West Brantford held a rather warm and emotional meeting, demanding action, and refusing to accept "charity" from the subscription list that had been set up by the Board of Trade to help flood victims. (It was later explained that this was not meant as relief, but as a means to provide funds to pay labourers for reconstruction.) A committee was set up to go before Council to ask that something be done. The Council, although giving a sympathetic hearing to this committee and arguing that something must be done immediately, moved slowly.

By the end of June, the Board of Works had prepared a by-law "raising by debentures the sum of \$45,000 for the prevention of floods by the Grand river," and a vote was called on this by-law for July 27. Of course, much of the best weather for dyke construction had by this time been lost.

One might have expected that the citizens of Brantford would gladly vote for the by-law. But this was not the case. A large number of tax payers, living in areas not affected by the flooding, objected to the by-law because of what it would add to their tax rate. They went so far as to lobby City Council to hire an outside engineer for a second opinion, and did manage to get the support of some aldermen. For once, *The Expositor*

and *The Courier* concurred. Both agreed that the by-law had to be passed. *The Courier* concluded:

*"Under the circumstances there should not be the slightest doubt as to the adoption of the by-law."*

and *The Expositor* even more emphatically stated:

*"Indeed, the fair name of Brantford requires that immediate steps be taken to remove the reproach that is heaped upon her in this connection, and we do not believe that any considerable portion of our citizens will suffer to continue a state of affairs that can only hurt our good name."*

The by-law did pass, but work progress was slow, so slow in fact that 2 of the major manufacturers in the city felt compelled to protest the delay, especially when it was rumoured that the Council was considering deferring part of the work until the next year. The letters pointed out that their factories had enlarged their premises on the basis of some action being taken on flood prevention, and that if the work was not completed, they would hold the City responsible for any damage. Their letters seem to have had little effect. In December, *The Courier* reported the flood prevention works as "still remaining in an unfinished state," and blamed this primarily on the incompetency of the 1898 Council, and the contractor to whom the contract had been awarded. *The Expositor* took issue with this, and defended both the contractor (blaming his failure on high water and severe weather), and the Council.

*"The Council of 1898 was not a perfect one, but under most adverse and trying circumstances, it undoubtedly did what it believed to be the best in the city's interest..."*

1899 - No matter who was at fault, the work was not completed, and on April 13, 1899, *The Courier* headlines announced "Yet Another Flood. The Grand River Again On The Rampage."

And so it was. To some degree it was a re-run of the previous year, with the dyke in West Brantford giving way, people being stranded, and the lifeboat being swamped. But in the flood of '99, West Brantford was completely cut off from the rest of the city when a temporary extension of the Lorne Bridge, on the western side of the river, was washed away. There was also concern that the "Iron Bridge" itself might be carried away. Wooden planks were laid across the G.T.R. bridge below the Lorne Bridge to allow communication between West Brantford and the rest of the city.

Floods are not without their amusing anecdotes. A well known physician who had a patient in West Brantford reached him in a rather unorthodox manner. He drove down to the G.T.R. bridge, left his horse and walked across the bridge. There he entered a canoe, and was paddled to his patients home which he entered by a second storey window. As well, Cope Stinson, who ran a hotel in West Brantford, and who also owned several prize race horses, is reputed to have taken the horses to an upstairs bedroom in the hotel to get them out of the way of the flood.

After the flood, recriminations flew. Citizens in West Brantford and Eagle Place threatened to sue the City for the damage caused by the flood. At the City Council meeting immediately following the flood, several aldermen charged the Board of Works with neglecting "to examine, repair and strengthen the West Brantford dyke." They claimed that too much money had been spent on reports rather than on repairs. The members of the Board of Works, in turn, blamed the Council who had originally repaired the dyke, and some even claimed that the dyke had not been properly constructed in the first place.

Again the Council moved slowly. On June 21, 1899, *The Expositor*, in an editorial, complained:

*"In plain English Brantford is no nearer a solution of the Flood Prevention problem today than it was 6 months ago...."*

An outside engineer was brought in to assess the situation, his recommendations were adopted, and another flood prevention bylaw was put before the rate-payers and passed. Again the manufacturers in the areas threatened by the flood showed their concern. Cockshutt Plow, the Waterous Engine Works, and Massey-Harris, pledged themselves to donate a total sum of \$2,500 in cash to the flood work provided certain conditions were met. But the conditions were not met and the manufacturers did not pay.

1900 - On April 2, 1900 *The Expositor* had to report:

*Grand River On The Rampage  
Great Mass of Ice Blocked on the Cockshutt Bridge ...West Brantford and Eagle Place Residents Suffer ...Water Has Never Been Higher.*

Broke Through The Dyke

*Water Burst Through Dyke At Market Street and at The Rear of Massey-Harris Works...Swept Over T.H & B. Tracks.*

This time it was the residents on either side of Erie Avenue, between the T.H.& B. station and the headgates of the canal, that suffered most. In fact, Eagle Place was only accessible through East Ward. The Massey-Harris factory was threatened, and the T.H.& B. railway yard was completely flooded. On the positive side, the dyke in West Brantford which had been breached the previous year, held, and only small sections of that area were flooded.

Massey-Harris wasted no time getting a letter off to the Council. Although admitting that their losses would not be as great as in previous floods, they complained bitterly about the inconvenience and the constant threat of floods, and made certain recommendations on how the situation could be improved. They also hinted that a move to Toronto by the firm might be in the offing if nothing was done.

The Council, for a change, acted promptly. A large and influential deputation including W.E.H. Massey of Massey-Harris, went to Toronto to ask The Provincial Government for aid "in the work of removing obstructions from the Grand River." They



were met by Premier Ross, but were only promised "careful consideration." A government commissioner was appointed to investigate, but realizing that his probings would take considerable time, and that even then there was no guarantee of aid, the Council arranged for another flood-prevention by-law. This one asked for \$25,000 to raise the dykes in West Brantford and Eagle Place. The usual wrangles among citizens and at Council ensued, with many people complaining that as the manufacturers would benefit most, they should pay. The counter-argument was, that without the manufacturers there would be no jobs, and then no one would have money.

In any case, the by-law was passed, work was begun on the dykes, and there were no more floods - at least until next time.

### THE RIVER AS RECREATION

Besides destroying property and making life uncomfortable for the citizens during flood times, the river did manage to "claim its annual victim" as the newspapers put it, through drowning. This was not an uncommon occurrence, and not really unexpected when one considers that there was no other place available for recreational bathing at this time. Great numbers of people did swim in the river.

During this period, canoeing on the river was a favourite pastime of many Brantfordites.

### THE CANOE

*"The annual run this year on the Grand River, from Elora to Brantford, was made by Messrs. J.Y. Morton, J.R. Thompson, L.E. Blachader, A.J. Wilkes, A.W. Johnson, and F.D. Reville. The start this year was made in the gorge, instead of lower down the river, and there was one upset as a result of the experiment but no damage done. The remaining 98 miles were run without mishap, the trip occupying three days, and the participants bringing back with them several square yards of sunburn."*

This "annual run" was one of the major events of the Canoe Club. Much more common were the "round the river" jaunts sponsored by the club. There were several of these each spring and summer, with some of them at night, and with up to 25 canoes participating. The trip would begin just below the dam by the Lorne Bridge, and follow the river around Tutela Heights, the Cockshutt Bridge, Bow Park Farm, and would enter the canal near Mohawk Lake, and then enter Mohawk Lake itself.

The number of members in any year is not readily available, but in 1895, \$201.50 was collected in fees from members, and this would seem to indicate a healthy interest in the sport. No wonder *The Courier*, in April of 1897 concluded:

*"Brantford is a lovely city and the proper place for the canoe."*

During the late 1890's the Grand River then, was something to be respected, feared, and enjoyed, and amply lived up to its reputation of "a lady in the summer, and a tiger in the spring."

## BUSINESS & INDUSTRY DURING THE LATE 90'S

On March 22, 1898, in an editorial, *The Courier* stated:

*"Factories are essential to the life of Brantford. On the other hand, there is not one factory whose existence depends on this city."*

and concluded:

*"As a matter of course in all their operations, they are trying to make money for themselves, and to earn good interest on their invested capital, but the fact remains that by so doing they incidentally confer very great benefits upon municipalities in which they are located...."*

There can be no doubt that factories were the life blood of Brantford in the late 90's. And there can also be no doubt that the Brantford working-man was the life blood of the factories. The relationship between the manufacturers and the men they employed could possibly be described as paternal, or in some cases a beneficent dictatorship. The employees did feel a certain loyalty to the men who ran the factories, and the latter, for the most part, felt an obligation to their employees in certain matters. It was doubtless to the advantage of the industrialists to foster such a feeling. Perhaps it might be mentioned here that there is an oft-repeated theory that Brantford used to be a "farm-implement" city, and that no one else had much chance of getting in here. This effectively eliminated competition, and kept wages low. This too was to the advantage of the manufacturers.

In a special Industrial Supplement issued in December 1898, *The Expositor* commented:

*"One feature of the industrial life in Brantford which must strike the observer forcibly is that there is apparently no dispute between employers and employees on the question of wages. Dissatisfaction may exist under the surface, but as far as the writer knows, it is very rarely indeed that the public ever learns of such dissatisfaction if, indeed, such feeling exists."*

and in an article in the following year it stated:

*"Considering that Brantford contributes one-twelfth of the manufacturers of the Dominion, it is very poorly represented in the union ranks. This is probably because the manufacturers here have a keen sense of justice and social equality, and there are very few cases on record of dissatisfied men."*

However, there were unions, and the above article had to agree that:

*"...there are several unions in the city, and these are very strong, and as contented as they are powerful."*

They were also strictly controlled if we are to believe what Thomas B. Costain has to say in his *Son Of A Hundred Kings*, a novel about Brantford in the 1890's. Ludar, the main character has just started work in a foundry. He is told by the boy he is succeeding:

*"I'd start learning you what there's to do, but it isn't allowed ahead of the bell. That's one thing you never do, start before the bell. Another thing, drop your tools when the quitting bell begins to ring, even if they land on your toes."*

The oldest of these trade unions was the cigarmaker's union, organized in 1886, followed by the moulder's union. Many other groups organized between 1886 and 1895 including the tailors, metal polishers, buffers, platers, and brass workers. The unions in Brantford were not overly-strong or active up to late 1898. In the winter of 1898-99 there was a sudden growth and revival of union interest in Brantford. The result was that the Trades and Labour Council received a new lease on life, an official union newspaper was begun, and three candidates of the labour party ran in the civic election. This new impetus to unions gave Brantford labour more political strength. In 1898, a contract between the City and The Goold, Shapley and Muir Co., contained a clause which stated:

*"The said company further agree to employ in connection with their said manufacturing business, not less than fifty adult workmen, resident in Brantford, for a period on an average of not less than ten months in each year..."*

In July of 1899, the City Council passed a resolution calling on the governors of the House of Refuge in the city to use only union labour in their proposed improvements, and recommended that they employ Brantford workingmen as far as possible. At the same time, in 1900 the Council defeated a motion that all city printing would be done by union printing offices, on the grounds that the smaller printing shops who had no union would be discriminated against.

In 1894, the federal government declared the first Monday in September as Labour Day. A celebration was held in Brantford in 1894, while in 1895, the workers went to Hamilton to help that city celebrate. In 1896, Hamilton returned the favour and "a grand demonstration" complete with a parade, sporting events, and entertainment, took place in Brantford. In the ensuing years of the century, celebrations of a similar nature were held. As to the workingman himself, "he earned his daily bread;

*"by the honest sweat of his brow, and if he takes advantage of every opportunity is usually in a position to live well, to own his own house, and lay aside something for a rainy day... There are other lines of business in which a man may wear a clean collar and a smart suit of clothes, but there is no business, ... in which the rank and file receive as good salaries as in the factories and shops of an industrial city."*

The conditions inside the factories varied. The following is a description from an *Expositor* article in December of 1898:

*"The scene inside one of the large city factories is most interesting. The prevailing feature seems to be noise, hammers are clanging, wheels and shafting revolving with more or less clamour, trucks rumbling hither and Thither, and machines whirring on every hand."*

But conditions were dangerous in many cases, as well as noisy. The annual report for 1896 of the inspectors of factories pointed out an increase in the number of industrial accidents in Ontario. Brantford had its share of industrial accidents in the waning years of the century - some of them fatal. These accidents were usually vividly reported in the newspapers. Take for example the following headlines:

*Torn To Pieces  
Horrible Accident At The Cotton Mill—  
Man Torn Limb From Limb-  
Caught In A Swiftly Revolving Shaft.—*

Or

*Horrible Fatality  
Engineer At Verity Plow Works Was Crushed To Death Beneath An Avalanche Of Oak  
Plow Handles This Morning  
Body Frightfully Crushed.*

As cordial as the relationship between management and labour might be, there were strikes in Brantford during this period. In June of 1899, the Grand Trunk Railway trackmen (those responsible for laying and maintaining the track,) went on strike over the question of wages. When the Grand Trunk engaged a number of non-union members from Brantford, these men were confronted by the strikers and advised "to leave the work alone," and the strikebreakers backed down. Two G.T.R. detectives were reported to be in town watching the movements of the strikers. A "rousing mass meeting of the citizens of Brantford" was held at the city hall, and gave its support to the trackmen in the following resolution:

*"Resolved that this meeting of citizens... pledge ourselves not to patronize the Grand Trunk Railway either travelling or shipping by it while the strike continues providing we have any other alternative...." "Also resolved that this meeting desires to express its decided conviction that 98 cents a day is utterly insufficient to provide decent food and clothing for the families of the trackmen..."*

The union workers in the weaving mills of the Dominion Cotton Mills went on strike in April of 1900. They were upset over having to work overtime (at regular pay), to make up for the time when machines broke down. As well, the president of their union had been dismissed. In this case nonunion members did not walk out.

However, the most bitter and long-lasting strike of the era began when the moulders from Massey-Harris Company walked off the job on February 3, 1900. The whole question of the labour unions was at stake here as the reason for the strike was the question of "whether the Massey-Harris shop should be manned by union or non-union workers." The strike was directly related to the strike at Massey-Harris in Toronto, as the Brantford men were in sympathy with their counterparts there.

The Massey-Harris Company was determined to break the strike, and had very little sympathy for the men who were out. The Mayor of Brantford, Harry Cockshutt, offered his services on behalf of a settlement. He met with the workers, and then took their proposals to the local manager at Massey-Harris. He was told that the company could not agree to the men's proposals and "in any case the company had decided to somewhat curtail their output for the season and would consequently not require so many men for the remainder of the year." At the same time, the Company did hire "outside men" to replace the, workers.

Generally, public sympathy in the city was with the strikers. *The Courier* commented that the men had "presented their side of the case in tolerant language and they have not resorted to either threats or force." A mass meeting was held in the opera house on March 1. It was well attended, and, was addressed by the Mayor, several leading citizens, and two clergymen, all of whom supported the strikers. The letters to the editor column of the newspapers were filled with comments on the strike, and again the majority of those letters sided with the strikers.

The strike gradually dissolved itself with neither the company nor the moulders giving in, and, most of the men finding employment elsewhere. However, before this happened, the City Council had to pass a resolution stating that:

*"Whereas it has come to the knowledge of this Council that certain moulders, who are filling the places of the strikers at Massey-Harris works, have been carrying firearms... ..be it resolved that the City Clerk be instructed to write the proper authorities, asking them to disarm them."*

In general, the City's attitude toward the manufacturers during this period was a very positive one. The various Councils realized just how valuable to Brantford these industries were. Special tax exemptions were given to companies like the Waterous Engine Works when that company decided to move its factory from Dalhousie street to lower Market Street. When the G.T.R. shops were moved to London, the city was very upset and went to great lengths to ensure that that company paid back the \$32,500 bonus paid to them for coming to Brantford in the first place. After a disastrous fire at the Verity Plow Company, the city offered certain financial inducements to ensure that the company would remain in Brantford, It should be pointed out that the manufacturers were not loathe to pressure the Council into granting concessions. Companies like Veritys, Massey-Harris, the Dominion Cotton Mills, and the Gould Bicycle Company, at various times threatened to leave the city unless certain conditions were met.

Needless to say, the Council usually concurred.

In addressing the annual meeting of the Board of Trade, in 1896 the President concluded:

*"Businessmen will have seen the year 1896 pass away without feeling any desire to recall it, and with the hope that its difficulties may not be repeated in 1897."*

In fact, these "difficulties" were not to be repeated in 1897. From this point on, Canada would shake off the economic slump that had been its lot since 1893. In November of 1896, an *Expositor* survey of local business found the owners predicting "brighter prospects" and "favourable outlooks." By the time the Presidential address to the Board of Trade in early 1899 was given, the whole attitude expressed in 1896 had changed.

*"We are in a "revival" period of trade and commerce. The year 1898 has not been inaccurately described as a jubilee year in our commercial history."*

During 1897, another *Expositor* survey showed that business for the city had been good. For example:

*"Our business has been going ahead," said Mr. Harry Cockshutt, "for the past five years, but the increase was greater this year than at any former period in the history of the company."*

and speaking for the Slingsby Mills, the Secretary - Treasurer stated:

*"The last twelve months are the best we have ever had in the history of this concern."*

During this period, Brantford stood third, behind Toronto and Montreal in the matter of exported manufactured goods in Canada. In 1896 the value of Brantford exported manufacturers amounted to \$396,000, while by 1899 this had jumped to \$891,354. The factories during this period were fully staffed, the companies were bringing in outside labour, and wages were up considerably.

*"The Cockshutt Plow Company has followed the example of the Massey-Harris company in granting their employees an increase in wages. This morning an arrangement went into effect at the Plow Works, whereby the employees of the moulding shop will receive in future a straight increase of 10 percent, while the remainder of the large staff receive a net increase which practically equals 10 percent. The Cockshutt Plow company have had a splendid season, and this increase means a large sum weekly added to the ordinary pay roll." (March, 1899).*

Just as a sidelight, it should be noted that Brantfordites invested their money in ventures outside Brantford. The gold mining "boon" in the Klondyke attracted capital from Brantford. In fact, it attracted so much that one local businessman complained:

*"I don't know what amount of money has been subscribed in Brantford for mining shares but it has all been ready cash, and this is having a most injurious effect on local business. Money is scarce and this mining craze is largely responsible for it."*

But Brantford during the last five years of the nineteenth century, was prospering, and because of its industrial output could well be considered the "Birmingham of Canada." In March 1899, *The Courier* announced - "Brantford is Booming, and No Mistake" - and indeed there was not.

## **BRANTFORD & THE BOER WAR**

(A study in loyalty and nationalism)

At the east end of the Lorne Bridge, in front of the Armouries, on what is known as Jubilee Terrace, stands a monument to those men from Brantford who fought in the Boer War. The names of the 3 men from Brantford who died in this conflict, John Osborne, Nelson Builder, and Alf Sherritt are inscribed there, along with the following dedication:

***FOR QUEEN AND EMPIRE  
KILLED IN ACTION  
ANGLO-BOER WAR  
1899-1903***

Under normal circumstances Brantford's citizens did not get terribly excited over foreign events, except where the British Empire was involved, and particularly when the honour of that Empire was threatened. Thomas B. Costain, a well-known Brantford writer, expressed a similar idea about Brantford's pre-occupation with local concerns in his novel *Son Of A Hundred Kings* (a novel about Brantford in the 1890's).

*"There was less suspicion perhaps in Balfour (Brantford) than in any other part. This busy Western Ontario City had a life so completely and passionately its own that a meeting of the Bicycling Club, or a fire on Holbrook St. (Colborne St.) was of much more concern than all the rumours circulating in all the chancelleries of Europe."*

As soon as the Laurier government gave approval to send Canadian troops, Major Wilkes of the Dufferin Rifles received a telegram on October 10, 1899, asking "How many crack shots of your battalion will be able to go to the Transvaal?" Immediately many men volunteered, but few were accepted. The men had to be unmarried, and pass a rigorous medical examination. It was the latter that stopped many of the volunteers. One of those chosen, Sgt. Dan Noble, at first contemplated not going unless certain others from Brantford were accepted. But *The Expositor* pointed out " ...the general feeling is that he would be foolish to refuse the honour." In the end a total of 24 men were chosen from Brantford.

The city itself was caught up in the war-fever. One volunteer, Pte. H. Burgar, had entered an apprenticeship at the Buck Stove Co. in 1898, agreeing not to join any body, through being a member of which, he might be called on to leave work. However, not only did the Company allow him to go, but informed him that the time during which he was absent would be counted in his apprenticeship, and also promised that his job would be available when he returned.

The city's enthusiasm displayed itself in the sendoffs the volunteers were given. When the first two volunteers left on October 23, 1899, three to four thousand people turned out in spite of threatening weather to cheer them along the parade route from the



armouries to the G.T.R. station, and the Mayor made an appropriate speech. *The Expositor* reported:

*"The men themselves were proud of the send-off, although they were unable to understand it. A small boy ventured to ask Sherritt (one of the volunteers) what he thought of it, and Sherritt made the characteristic reply 'Search Me'."*

Immediately following the departure, a "subscription list" to secure \$25.00 for each volunteer was opened for the Brantford contingent," to give some tangible souvenir from their local admirers", and to place them "in as good position as the representatives from other places."

While it lasted, the Boer War made front page headlines every evening in both Brantford newspapers of the time - *The Expositor*, and *The Courier*. Details of all the battles and troop movements were outlined in these stories. As well, both newspapers felt that interest in the war was keen enough to frequently publish letters from Brantford volunteers, passed on to the newspapers by proud parents.

A "Patriotic Concert" was held before 3,000 people in the Drill Hall on February 6, 1900. The money raised was to go to the welfare of the Canadian Troops. One of the highlights of the concert was the appearance of Pauline Johnson, the Indian poetess. Since leaving Brantford in 1894, she had seldom returned to the city. Of her performance, the Brantford Courier concluded:

*"Miss E. Pauline Johnson delighted everyone with the excellence of her work and her selections and style could not have been improved upon. "The Riders of The Plains" is a spirited poem dealing with that splendid body of men, the Northwest Mounted Police. It was rendered with great force and aroused unbounded enthusiasm."*

On February 27, 1900, the first of many "victory celebrations" for that year (4 in 4 months) was held in Brantford on the occasion of the surrender of the Boer General Cronje. This was followed by another two days later upon the receipt of the news of the relief of Ladysmith. Similar celebrations followed when Mafeking was relieved in May, and Pretoria surrendered in June, and each succeeding celebration seemed bigger than its predecessor.

For the most part, these celebrations were spontaneous and informal, but seemed to follow a definite pattern. Upon the receipt of the news, the fire bell was rung, followed by the blowing of factory whistles. In most cases, it seems that the men from the Buck Stove Works were the first to put down their tools and head for the streets to form a parade. They usually headed for the Cockshutt Plow Company, calling on the men there to join them, and on the Mayor, Harry Cockshutt, for a speech. Both normally complied, and then the men paraded to Massey-Harris. It seems that an employee of Massey-Harris had written a letter to the editor of *The Expositor* siding with the Boers, and on one occasion cries of "Where's the Boer letter writer?", "Where is that rope?", "We must hang the Boers", were shouted. At the same time, the children from the city schools were

dismissed to parade downtown. They would meet up with the workers, and both groups, with flags flying, would head for the Market Square or the Drill Hall for more speeches and songs, and invariably a holiday was proclaimed.

The speeches were always very patriotic and full of praise for the soldiers of the Empire. The following is an example of one of these speeches; this one was given by Mayor Harry Cockshutt on the occasion of the relief of Ladysmith.

*"This is not the first occasion upon which the citizens of Brantford have been called upon to celebrate in such an impromptu manner the glorious success of British arms in South Africa. (cheers). We have today to celebrate the relief of Ladysmith the brave defenders of which have been in siege for days and months. We have lost men and hundreds have sacrificed their lives for the flag and Empire. (cheers). We cannot but feel great satisfaction, and the people throughout the whole of the city of Brantford are celebrating at this time. I have proclaimed a holiday, and if we get further news of successes, just as great or greater, I can promise the children another holiday. (cheers). I might say that I have never delivered an address which was punctuated with such great cheering as the present one. I feel sure that it is from the bottom of our hearts that we are rejoicing. (cheers). The events of the past few days have been sufficient to make us feel proud of the British flag, and let me say that we are making history throughout the Empire. (Applause)... Let me say, in conclusion, that the Canadians are showing greater patriotism and loyalty than Canada has ever shown before."*

This speech, and headlines such as "The Entire City Is On A Hoot", and "Brantford Went Clean Wild", serve to show to what extent Brantford was concerned with the events in South Africa.

The send-offs to the volunteers, and the victory celebrations, were matched by the receptions given to welcome back the "heroes." Literally thousands of people turned out (*The Expositor* estimated 10,000 in one case), to cheer the returning volunteers. This is even more amazing when one realizes that these men came home one at a time. Comments from the newspapers such as,

*"It would be difficult to gather a larger crowd on the streets at one time than there was last evening."*

*"...And it was all over one man. What will the crowd be like when all the boys are home?"*

and,

*"There was nothing artificial about the reception; it was a spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm and patriotism and an exhibition of popular feeling."*

No other foreign event – not even the Queen's Jubilee in 1897 - received the prolonged attention and enthusiasm of Brantford People, that was engendered by the Boer War.

## SOCIAL GLIMPSES

### MOHAWK PARK

"It would be difficult to imagine a more ideal spot for a picnic. On the north a huge forest of tall trees shades the roadway. To the east is a magnificent football and athletic games ground, while on all the other sides beautiful shade trees crowd up to the open space." This was part of the description of Mohawk Park as described in *The Expositor* on the day of its formal opening on May 24th, 1895. They went even further in their editorial of May 25th, 1895.

*"It is not too much to say that the citizens of Brantford are under a deep debt of gratitude to the Brantford Street Railway Company for developing the great natural beauties of Lovejoy's grove, until in Mohawk Park and lake we have a resort second to none in Ontario ... A more healthy and picturesque recreation ground it would be hard to parallel."*

Many other people in the province, and Brantford, agreed wholeheartedly with this assessment. In the summer months, day excursions from all over Southern Ontario visited the park. The park's facilities went beyond just beautiful picnic grounds. There were many attractions. On the lake, one could canoe, or shoot the chutes (where you entered the water in a boat after going down a chute), and at one time there was even a double-decker steamboat on the lake.

In the park itself there were many attractions such as plays (run regularly every summer), and concerts. Adult park tickets were 10 cents and children's were 5, and these tickets included two rides on the Street Railway. The entertainment that was provided was free, and ranged from The Brantford Citizens' Band, to "Ermani, the Dainty Mirror Dancer." On the athletic side, there were lacrosse games, baseball games, and bicycle races, for those interested.

The assessment of the park manager on opening day, that the park "was destined to be in the near future a popular summer resort for one day's outings and indeed company parties, ... and would become widely known far beyond the limits of Brantford and Brant County," was a very accurate one.

## ENTERTAINMENT

De Wolf's Original  
Uncle Tom's Cabin  
as produced in 1858 at Chestnut St.  
Philadelphia Theatre  
2 Solo Brass Bands  
And Challenge Orchestra  
Grand Free Street Parade.

Thus ran the ad in *The Courier* on November 17, 1897. The play was to be at the Stratford Opera House on November 19th, and true to the advertisement, on the afternoon of the performance Uncle Tom, Simon Legree, bloodhounds and all, trooped through the streets of Brantford. This was not the first time that this play had been to Brantford, nor would it be the last. Stratford's was also advertising the "Guy Bros. High Class Minstrels." There was also live theatre and vaudeville in The Opera House, and for the more "cultured", there were frequent vocal and instrumental concerts at Wickcliffe Hall. Along this line, the Brantford Musical Society was very active, putting on such shows as the oratorio, Samson, and on the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee, The Messiah.

There were other types of entertainment which were more or less annual occurrences. Invariably, a circus found its way to Brantford, complete with the parade through town. On July 15 1897, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show arrived in town. Its advertising posters boasted that it was "all Genuine - All True And Honest," with "heroic Horsemen" and "100 Indian Warriors." At 10 a.m. on the morning of the show there was a parade through town - "A Free Street Cavalcade." There were interviews with Colonel Cody in the newspapers, and a detailed description of the show itself. The show also featured "The Only Herd Of Buffalo On Exhibition," and these Buffalo decided to see the town for themselves. They broke down their stalls at the Fair Grounds (Cockshutt Park), and wandered over to the eastern side of the river, across the Lorne Bridge. It took a real western roundup to get them back.

In September of 1896, the first Southern Fair was held at the Fair Grounds in West Brantford. This was a very successful agricultural fair, and became an annual event. As well, in 1897 and 1898, Brantford was able to secure the Provincial Fat Show, a prestigious livestock exhibition. This was held in the abandoned Grand Trunk Railway shops.

The Brantford Orange Lodge regularly celebrated the "glorious twelfths" of July by either visiting a neighbouring city to take part in their celebration, or by arranging for celebrations at home. Another almost annual event was the Mayor's Gala Day. In 1898, the Gala Day was combined with the International Fireman's Tournament to produce "one of the most memorable demonstrations" in the city's history. There was a parade, and then competitions among the various fire brigades representing Southern Ontario and New York State. In the evening the firemen put on a variety show, and the carousing went on until well into the morning hours.

Brantford also had its sporting teams, and they provided plenty of excitement for those who were satisfied with being spectators. In the winter, hockey was the main attraction, and Paris was Brantford's main rival. The headlines in *The Expositor*, January 6, 1900, show how seriously this sport was taken.

*"Paris 10, Brantford 2. These Are The Sorrowful Details Of Last Night's Match."*

In the summer, lacrosse and cycling were great crowd pleasers. In 1897, the Goold Bicycle Team from Brantford won the Canadian Championship at Quebec City. Although St. Catherines was Brantford's main lacrosse rival, Paris again was a force to be considered. As often as not, the fans got more involved in the game than the players, by either fighting among themselves, or with the players. In October of 1900, a game between Brantford and Paris was halted when "the grandstand was cleared and an all-round fight took place." This led *The Courier* to conclude:

*"Such events as this will kill the game, and the players on both sides should learn, if possible, the necessary art of keeping their temper."*

For the individual sport enthusiast there was canoeing on the Grand River, tennis at the local courts, and in the winter, skating on the Grand River at the east end of the Lorne Bridge.

## PROHIBITION

Prohibition societies, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, were very active in Ontario during the last five years of the century. Brantford had its groups which were actively involved in trying to stamp out "the demon rum", among other intoxicants.

In February 1895, The Women's Christian Temperance Union, The Royal Templars Of Temperance, The Citizens' Plebiscite Committee, and The Brantford Ministerial Alliance presented a petition to the Brantford City Council asking for reduction in the number of tavern and shop licenses. They pointed out that with 24 hotels, Brantford had one drinking place for every 700 inhabitants, as compared to Toronto where the ratio was 1:1208.

In 1897, both the Brantford W.C.T.U. and a society from Burford complained to the Provincial government, "that the temperance measure now before the Provincial Legislature falls far short of what the interests of temperance demand, and of public sentiment in favour of the suppression of the liquor traffic, as evidenced by the recent plebiscite."

A Dominion-wide prohibition plebiscite (Canada's first national plebiscite) was held in September of 1898. Immediately on the announcement of this intended vote, the Brantford societies began to organize for the vote. Temperance rallies, marches, and

picnics were held to drum up enthusiasm to vote for prohibition. Besides decrying the evil social effects of alcohol, they took a more positive tack and argued that "Prohibition Pays", and their ads in the paper coupled "Prohibition and Prosperity." In the actual vote, Brantford voted "for" prohibition by a majority of 440 votes, while Paris had a 43 majority "against" prohibition. The vote throughout Canada was narrowly in favour of prohibition, but *The Courier*, with a political bias not in favour of the government, editorialized:

*"The one fact that stands out with greater prominence than any other in connection with the plebiscite of yesterday is that the prohibition cause has lost ground."*

This was an issue that was not born in the 90's - nor was it to die in the 90's.

## RELIGION

In her novel, *The Imperialist*, Sarah Jeanette Duncan makes the following comment about religion in Elgin (Brantford) in the 1890's.

*"In wholesome fear of mistake, one would hesitate to put church matters either before or after politics among the preoccupations of Elgin. It would be safer and more indisputable to say that nothing compared with religion but politics/ and nothing compared with politics but religion.... In Elgin, religious fervour was not beautiful or dramatic, or self immolating - it was reasonable... The habit of church attendance was not only a basis of respectability, but practically the only one."*

Certainly Brantford was well-represented by the various religious denominations and beliefs of the Christian religion at this time. Church attendance was expected, for whatever reason, and most citizens complied with little complaint.

Some people in Brantford, as elsewhere, tended to assign "class" identification to certain denominations, and as this time the Baptists were considered to be at the bottom of the scale, while the Presbyterians were ranked in first place. Thomas B. Costain, in *Son Of A Hundred Kings*, a novel about Brantford in the 90's, gives us a glimpse into this attitude.

*"The Salvation Army!" Mrs. Craven, it was evident, was surprised and even horrified. She looked at William as though he were some curious and new type of heathen. Then she frowned and said, 'I feel it my duty as you are connected with our church...'"*

There can be no doubt that the pre-eminent clergyman in Brantford during this period was the Rev. Dr. Cochrane, minister of Zion Presbyterian Church. Described as a "peppery fellow", he was minister of Zion from 1862 until his sudden death in 1898. His activities extended far beyond Brantford, and beyond strictly church matters. He was not afraid to get involved in what many would consider non-church matters, politics included. His biographer R.N. Grant states –

*"He had a feeling of utter contempt for a theory that a minister of the Gospel should not take part in public affairs."*

He took an active interest in the affairs of the city, and was not afraid to use his influence to advance what he considered to be the interests of the city.

## CRIME

*"Brantford Morals During The Past Year Have Been Fairly Good"*

These were the headlines for The Brantford Courier's account of Police Chief Vaughn's annual report to the City Council in March of 1897. It pointed out that 790 charges had been tried at the police court in 1896, and they ranged from 148 people summoned for a breach of the dog by-law, to 3 being charged with "keeping houses of ill-fame."

The phrase "fairly good" in the above headline was relative to the standards of the day, but it would seem as the century drew to a close that Brantford was not plagued with crime. Some events did get wide publicity. In 1895, a man was charged with attempting to shoot the matron of The Widow's Home for her refusal to accept his "attentions" to her. However, the charge was dismissed when it was pointed out that the man's attentions were not altogether unwelcome. In 1897, 4 men were arrested for being involved in the counterfeiting of 25¢ and 10¢ pieces. The evidence included "a piece of lead on the end of an iron pipe, a piece of brass pipe, a couple of old pewter spoons, a file, a mould in plaster of paris, and a long handled small dipper, or saucepan, which evidently did duty for a crucible, and a bicycle monkey wrench." The capture included a wild chase on foot in the bush near Mohawk Park, a "desperate fight for liberty" by the suspect who was finally subdued by two policemen.

In May of 1899, Brantford was the scene of the "Great Cigar Store Robbery." Four men robbed T.J. Fair and Company's Cigar Factory of over 13,000 cigars. The men were arrested shortly after in Lynden, and the Brantford police went there and arrested them without first consulting authorities in Wentworth County. But as *The Expositor* explained: "Action had to be made at the minute, and in addition there was a reward of \$50.00 hung up as a tempter. That fifty was needed at home."

An almost annual problem in Brantford during the late 90's was the City's counterpart to London England's infamous "Jack The Ripper." In Brantford he was called "Jack The Hugger." It seems that "Jack" used to like to hide behind buildings and in alleyways in the evening, and when young ladies passed they would be attacked by the "indefatigable hugger" who would jump out and embrace them, and then retire into the shadows. He was never caught, and there is good reason to believe that "he" could well have been "they." In any case *The Courier* had to complain: *"Attacks upon women alone on the street at night are getting altogether too frequent."*

In general though, Brantford citizens did obey the law, and the police, when needed, did an effective job.

## FIRES

Besides accidents, and floods (see section on The River), another ever-present problem facing manufacturers was fire. Most factories had wooden interiors, and this coupled with limited fire protection service, led to serious fires in many of the major factories during the last five years of the century.

Fire insurance as well as fires were also a concern, and in May of 1895, a deputation of citizens from the Board of Trade and the City Council journeyed to Toronto to demand better terms in fire insurance for the city's businesses from the Underwriter's Associations. Brantford wanted to be given a class "A" rating, and thus achieve lower insurance rates. Although the delegates argued that improvements had been made in the city's fire-fighting potential, and although the Underwriters had been suitably impressed by the improvements, the Brantford representatives would get nothing more than a promise to take their claims "into serious consideration."

In October of 1897, a disastrous fire hit the Verity Plow Company. This came just after they had announced a planned expansion and had been given certain tax concessions by the city. Verity's, which had been contemplating leaving Brantford for Toronto earlier in the year, again considered the move after the fire. But the aid given by other manufacturers, and the further concessions of the Council, prompted the company to stay here. This fire was sufficient to prompt other factories in Eagle Place to urge the City Council to give better fire protection by installing more hydrants. The problem was set forth by Harry Cockshutt of Cockshutt Plow.

*"Our works are protected by one hydrant only, and we will ask the City Council to place another hydrant at the rear of our works. The Scarfe Varnish Works have no protection whatever, and something should be done for them. I presume the Massey-Harris and Waterous Engine Works Companies are in the same position as ourselves."*

Further fires occurred at other major industries during the next eight months. These occurred at the Goold, Shapley and Muir plant, the Bixel Brewery, and Buck's Stove Works. After the Goold, Shapley, and Muir fire, *The Expositor* called for more adequate fire protection.

*"With the appliances and men at his command, no one doubts that Mr. Calder does all that any chief could possibly accomplish, but there are limitations, even to skill and daring. Since the present equipment was established, there has been an immense increase to the large manufacturing properties of the city, with a consequent increase of the fire risk. To restore a proper equilibrium the chief has made a request that the force should be increased to the extent of one hose wagon, with accompanying team of horses, and two men.... The aldermen are necessarily sensitive about increasing the existing rate of taxation, and feel that the situation is more stringent this year than it will be next*



*year....At the same time more fire protection is a thing that, if required cannot be postponed, and if we err at all, it must be on the side of safety."*

However, fire did continue to plague Brantford industry; but the major fire of the era belonged to the town of Paris, and *The Courier* had to report on September 12, 1900.

### *PARIS IS DEVASTATED BY FIRE*

*Forty-Three Buildings Destroyed and \$300,000 Worth Of Damage Done.*

### THE MARKET SQUARE

The question of the Market Square and its facilities is one that has always been to the forefront during the development of Brantford. Opinions on its value have varied. *The Expositor* bragged during this period that it could be compared with any market, anywhere. Perhaps Sara Jeanette Duncan, in *The Imperialist*, came closer to reality.

*"During four days in the week, the market square was empty... the town hall rose in the middle and defied you to take your mind off the ugliness of municipal institutions. On other days it was a scene of activity....it was a scene of activity but not of excitement, or in any sense of joy.... Elgin (Brantford) Market Square, indeed, was the biography of Fox County (Brant), and, in little, the history of the whole province."*

Controversy has reared its head over any number of things in regard to the square. The late 90's were no exception to this trend. In 1895, the question of abolishing market fees was put forward, but the public in general, if letters to the editor are of any consequence, felt that the rent charged was a source of income for the city, and therefore indirectly lessened their taxes.

In 1897, the merchants on the market were complaining about the primitive conditions of the market. They pointed out that in inclement weather there was no place for them to take shelter and sell their goods. The result was, in time, that a covered section was added to the market.

### SCHOOLS

When asked about school in Brantford in the 1890's, most people from that era agree on 2 main points. "Readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic" made up the core of the curriculum, and discipline was much stricter.

The method of "'ritin'" that they followed was termed "vertical writing." A report in *The Expositor* in 1896 explained the reasons for its introduction.

*"The reform originated on the continent of Europe some twelve or fifteen years ago, as the result of expert investigation" of the causes of the increasing prevalence of spinal curvature, and short-sightedness, these physical defects being finally attributed in a very*

*large measure, to the sloping writing, and the required position at school and writing desks."*

The advantages given, were that vertical writing was vastly more legible than the slanting hand, more hygienic, "favouring a much better writing posture, and being much easier for the eyes of both pupils and teachers," more easily learned, and more rapid than slanted writing.

Not all was well in the Brantford school system during this period. In 1899, the principal of the collegiate complained that students reaching high school were lacking in certain basic skills (was it ever thus?), and a "public school inquiry" was ordered. *The Courier* suggested that perhaps some of the older teachers needed to be replaced, but also pointed out that it could be the system itself that was at fault. In any case it concluded:

*"The residents of this community want a square and fair finding on the merits of the case, and nothing less than this will satisfy them."*

On the positive side, the Board of Education, after much soul-searching, decided in 1899 to introduce a three year course in technical education at the collegiate - a great innovation for the time.

Meanwhile Brantford's only private school, the Brantford Young Ladies College, established in 1874 by the Presbyterian Church at the urgings of Rev. William Cochrane (minister of Zion Church), was winding down its operations. Operating costs were increasing, and interest was waning. These factors, coupled with the death of its driving force, Dr. Cochrane, led to its final closure in June of 1900.

During the late 1890's, people in Brantford enjoyed the pleasures and evils of the time, just as people in any other Ontario city did. There were some features that made Brantford society rather unique, but, in general, Brantford was a miniature of what was happening throughout the province.

## CONCLUSION

Brantford from 1895-1900 was in a period of emergent growth. The depression of the early 90's was abating, and Brantford prospered with the increasing prosperity of the country as a whole.

As a city that ranked third in the Dominion in the production of manufactured exports, Brantford was looked upon by many as a very progressive city. People visited Brantford socially, and for business reasons. In January of 1898, *The Courier* bragged that:

*"Outside of Toronto there is no city that has been so favoured with notable gatherings as the Telephone City. Within the past nine months...there have been no fewer than eight large conventions held in Brantford, comprising two or three hundred delegates."*

*The Expositor* shouted out in September of 1899.

### *BRANTFORD IS GROWING*

*A Research Into Building Statistics Shows There Has Been No Stay In The Work Since The First Of The Year.*

### *AWAY AHEAD OF LAST YEAR*

*For Residences Alone Nearly \$150,000 Has Been Expended In The Last Months...About One Hundred Dwellings Erected.*

But with expansion and recognition came problems, and as the one century closed and another began, Brantford had to face those problems and come to grips with them. Perhaps the situation is best summed up by quoting from Thomas B. Costain's *Son Of A Hundred Kings*, where he describes Balfour (Brantford) at the turn of the century.

*"But the world was already changing, and it was as noticeable in Balfour as elsewhere. There were more smokestacks against the sky line, more red brick houses with towers and blue glassed conservatories, more private carriages and expensive fur coats on the street. The city had been growing. And with growth was coming a shifting of values and a change of thought trends. Life was becoming different - freer perhaps, louder certainly. There was a new feeling in the air, a new sense of freedom, and this was both good and bad; for whereas it cleared minds of inhibitions and scattered bogies to the winds, which was good, it swept aside at the same time the restraints of moderation and good taste, and paved the way for open indulgences and coarseness and the first manifestations of rowdiness and violence, which was very bad."*