

# Betsy's book discovers several claim records

*Authors, Cambrian - Bel - Biog*

By Jack Evans

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Hastings — hardly a hotbed of insurrection. That's what many people thought in terms of the Mackenzie Rebellion of 1837. (Many still regard Hastings County as a quiet, conservative community.)

But Belleville author Betsy Boyce has proved "them" wrong.

Her first book-length work *The Rebels of Hastings* was formally launched as the program for the April meeting of the Hastings County Historical Society.

Not only is her work receiving acclaim from history fans and readers, but from scholars, who rate her research well enough to be published by the staid University of Toronto Press.

Press officials told the meeting that Boyce's work was a rare exception which was approved on the strength of its merit — both literary and scholarly.

It was a gala evening of society members, dignitaries and most of all for Boyce and her family.

Boyce credited long-time Belleville historian Gerry Boyce (no relation) for inspiration. Researching with him she discovered some 123 records of claims from that anti-establishment rebellion. "That aroused my curiosity," she said. "I wondered why there were so many claims in an area so far removed from the activities."

Her further research led her to a wealth of information — ammunition depots, secretive movement of weapons on hay wagons on back roads late at night, accusations back and forth between prominent area, in fact provincial, officials, meetings and organizations of anti-establishment nature, verging on outright rebellion.

In short, Hastings County and the Quinte area were in the thick of things moreso than many people believed then and now. Boyce has the facts, the names, the dates and the places, such as Simpson's Tavern (formerly near Front and Dundas streets) and Hayden's Tavern, Corbyville.

Her research exhausted the materials available in the



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## Rebels reading

Grandchildren of Belleville's latest history writer, Betsy Boyce (centre), eight-year-old twins Sara (left) and Ruth (right), get a different type of bedtime story from their grandmother as she reads from her recently-published book: *The Rebels of Hastings*. Close to 90 people attended the April meeting of the Hastings County Historical Society in the Quinte Living Centre for an official "book launch" of the new work.

Belleville Public Library, then went on to Toronto libraries, United Church and Anglican records, National Archives, and even some libraries and archives in England.

Issues of the rebellion she reminded the book-launch ceremony, included responsible government, economics, religion, relations with the United States and, perhaps most 1992-related of all, "a constitutional crisis at a time of deep economic depression," she said. "Does that sound familiar?"

Speakers and presentations following included a "good citizen" certificate presented on behalf of the society by president Bernard Wright, some comments from Hastings County Warden Owen Ketcheson, whose ancestors were among those profiled in the book, letters of commendation from Lyle

Vanclief, MP; Hugh O'Neil, MPP; Agriculture Minister and Hastings-Peterborough MPP Elmer Buchanan and Sidney Reeve Jack Arthur (immediate past president of the society) as well as Mayor Shirley Langer.

Former Intelligencer City Editor Bill Whitelaw noted that just as Boyce had used newspaper files from 100-plus years ago for part of her research, today's news stories may form the basis of history publications years from now. "Thank you for making sense out of our work," he said.

Copies of the work are now on sale at Greenley Book Sellers and other outlets for \$16.95 plus tax, although those attending the meeting and book launch were offered a deal for \$16 including GST.