

Bradford, Jack

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Researching Belleville's history a labor of love

By Jack Evans

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Jack (Brad) Bradford has a special reason why one of his favorite pastimes involves delving into local history. He simply loves Belleville.

He comes by it honestly. His father, a former regimental sergeant-major, came to Belleville from England in 1912. He had planned to stay only three months, but fell in love with the still-young city and decided to stay.

Bradford himself and his wife, Catherine (nee Moher), are both Belleville-raised, and after a career in commercial finance which took them away from here for about 30 years, they are determined to make their original hometown their retirement home.

Although Bradford was assigned to Belleville for a few years in the early 1950s — during which time he served two years as alderman — he didn't settle here permanently until 1978.

Since then, and especially after his retirement in 1980, Bradford became active in many community activities. Those included involvement with the fledgling credit counselling agency, The Hastings County Historical Society, and chairman and board member of the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

The massive changes in the city he has seen over the years leave him a bit sad. "Saturdays in downtown Belleville used to be the grandest day in anyone's life," he said. "Now it is

like a morgue."

He and his wife lament the tearing down of the old King George School on North Front Street and the massive modernized renovations to City Hall.

But he still likes to do historical research, both on his own family history and the area generally. A few years ago, he assisted in the research of a book, written by his son Robert, called *Historic Forts of Ontario*.

Bradford, with the assistance of other family members, has also traced his roots back to the 1600s, to an area of England, north of London.

"The Bradford name shows up in the *Doomsday Book*," he said with pride, referring to the first complete census of England after the Norman conquest in 1066. "There are a lot of Bradfords around, mostly in the United States now."

Bradford admits he is not as active in the community as he was a few years ago, but his interest is still there — and there's no place he'd rather be.

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