

Who was William Halton?

Area author John McDonald
brings to life the man
Halton Region is named after

By Kathy Yanchus
Milton Canadian Champion
with files from Ted Brown
Photos by Graham Paine and Ted Brown

John McDonald has completed the formidable task of bringing to life a man dead almost 200 years.

His insatiable curiosity for the origin of names led the Milton author on a five-year quest to uncover details about the man for whom our region is named, William Halton.

Halton is not a significant historical figure, but a man who was undoubtedly involved in Ontario's early development.

Family records showed the man existed but it was McDonald's research that linked him to Halton Region.

What McDonald discovered was that in 1806, Halton served as private secretary to the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, Francis Gore, who appointed Halton Provincial Agent for Upper Canada 10 years later. In this role, Halton lobbied for compensation for citizens of Upper Canada who had fought in the War of 1812.

To accommodate an influx of settlers from the British Isles following the war, the Gore District was created, and was subsequently divided into the counties of Halton (for William Halton) and Wentworth (for Sir John Wentworth).



It was a daunting, yet fascinating task to unearth the life and times of Halton said McDonald, who has chronicled them in a beautifully-illustrated, 296-page book, *Halton's Heritage: William Halton and Halton County*.

"We all live in this place called Halton, yet virtually no one knows the man existed," said McDonald.

His meticulous exploratory research took McDonald to England, Bermuda and several Ontario locations, where he unearthed copious documents to facilitate his investigation.

"He was very well-respected, very compassionate," said McDonald, who developed a great deal of respect for the man he came to know solely through archival writings.

A second component to McDonald's book details how Halton County transitioned into a thriving regional municipality, as well as the origin of the names of more than 80-area settlements, some no longer in existence.

The book also features a Halton chronology, the intertwining of both family history and Halton County/Region history, the first time the two have been combined, says McDonald.

Growing up in the Limehouse area, McDonald always felt "a presence of the past". As a youngster, he would bike through the "lovely old ruins" of the Limehouse kilns where his great grandparents worked—he is a sixth generation Haltonian—and eventually began collecting information about the kilns.

Always interested in writing, the historian and author has published two other books entitled *Halton Sketch-*



At John McDonald's recent book launch, McDonald, (right) presented Halton Region (represented by Milton Mayor Gord Krantz) with a hand-painted copy of Halton's original coat of arms. It was painted by former Georgetown dentist Ken McCauley.

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