

Halton turns 200 years old

By **Melanie Hennessey**
Metroland Media Group

While most local residents are familiar with the word Halton, many won't know the region is actually named after a person who was here two centuries ago when the municipality first took shape.

With no pictures in existence to put a face to a name, William Halton is a figure who has remained a mystery for decades. That is, until a local historian took an interest in uncovering the story behind the man.

In fact, John McDonald even wrote a book on the subject titled Halton's Heritage. William Halton and Halton County, culminating four and a half years of work on the subject. As March 22, 2016 marks Halton Region's 200th anniversary, the Milton resident is sharing his knowledge of the municipality's unique history.

When I go around and tell the story of William Halton the man, I find it interesting that even though there are half a million people that live in Halton, very few people realize there was a man named Halton, he remarked. Even the Halton family in England didn't know there was a place in Canada named after one of their ancestors.

So who was Halton, the man?

William Halton was born in England in October 1769 to a privileged family. As a young man, he was well educated and went on to join the British army.

He served time in Ireland during the Napoleonic Wars, and that's where he met Francis Gore. That's where their friendship started, said McDonald.

The two men carried on to Bermuda in 1805 and then arrived in York, ON, the following year. Halton was granted 1,200 acres of land scattered across the province, with plots in York, Burlington beach and Welland.

Three days after the Gore district and Halton County were created in March 1816, Halton was named as a provincial agent for Upper Canada. This led to his departure in May, when he went back to England and became the liaison at the colonial office.

He then went out of his way to support the veterans of the War of 1812. He had a great passion for these people and tried to get funding for them at a time when England was struggling, said McDonald. He went to great lengths to raise funds, and money was sent here to Upper Canada all because of his efforts.

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