

The history of William Halton and Halton County revealed

The life and times of Major William Matthew Halton – the man Halton County/Region was named after – is revealed in a new book by local historian/author John McDonald, who will launch *Halton's Heritage* on October 20 at the Halton Region Museum at Kelso in Milton.

Known for his earlier works – *Halton Sketches* and *Halton Sketches Revisited* – McDonald's latest work details Halton's life and his courage on behalf of early Ontario settlers. McDonald said he reviewed 180 of Halton's letters in archives in Ottawa, England and Bermuda, and said some of the research was "hard



slogging."

"There were disappointing dead-ends, but I found descendents

of Halton's sister who had eight children," McDonald said on Friday, adding Halton's great-great-great

niece from Australia is currently visiting Halton's great-great nephew, who lives in Toronto, and both will be at the book launch.

In 1805, Halton County was named for Halton, who was the secretary

to Francis Gore, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada from 1806 to 1811 and 1815 to 1816. Halton arrived in Canada in 1806, and stayed for five years before returning to England. He came back to Canada in 1915, and the next year was named Provincial Agent, a position he held while living in England until his death in 1821.

McDonald said one surprise in his research was how well Halton was thought of because his boss, the Lieutenant-Governor Gore was not well liked. "Halton was a very compassionate man – he went out on limb for the farmers, who were loyal to Canada during the War of 1812 against the Americans," McDonald said, adding Halton pushed for compensation or land grants for those who



Author John McDonald

defended the province. From A to Z – that's Acton to Zimmerman – *Halton's Heritage* also devotes a page, with photographs, and a story about each of Halton's 80 settlements, and how they got their names. (Zimmerman is on Appleby Line, north of the 407).

McDonald's love of history began 40 years ago when he started collecting postcards. In 1973, then local editor, the late Hartley Coles, was looking for a photograph to accompany a story, and when he saw McDonald's cache of information, suggested that he write a series of articles about the local history. Those articles became *Halton Sketches*, and then *Halton Sketches Revisited*.

McDonald hopes that *Halton's Heritage* will be available in Acton at the *What the Dickens* book shop, and through Heritage Acton. He will attend a book signing at the Acton library on November 23.

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