

# A journey to Niagara

By Thomas Van Dusen

Niagara-on-the-Lake is a dream community, with its Shaw Festival, antique shops, turn-of-the-century ice cream emporiums, splendid old luxury hotels and general air of a face-lifted dowager.

Thither my wife and I hastened, I to gather the spirit and splendour of the War of 1812; and Shirley to see the festival and the shops.

To begin with, 1812 is everywhere. This war, most forgotten of all wars, neglected in Canadian history teaching, omitted in American, lives, breathes and flourishes in the Niagara peninsula.

As a matter of fact, you don't have to wait until Niagara. Already at Prescott there is a fort, there are accoutrements, there are ramparts worth visiting. Here we sent forces across the ice and, all things, captured Oswego. The Americans have been retaliating ever since. Our fate has been that of conquerors, to be taken over by the vanquished.

I wanted to find out about 1812. I wanted to see where Brock slept, where Brock and Tecumseh shook hands, where Brock fell. Above all, I wanted to see stout Macdonnell's resting place; he led 1,500 Glengarrigans to Chateauguay and with the help of DeSallaberry and the French, drove back the Americans.

I had long held the feeling that

this sturdy Highlander, raised in the very shadow of St. Raphael's old tower, had not received the honour that was his due. Lieut. Colonel John Macdonnell was attorney general of Ontario when the war broke out, a function that doesn't often entail taking up arms against the enemy. Brock speedily made him his aide de camp; and when Brock fell on Queenston Heights, Macdonnell led the attack on the Americans. He was wounded and died within 24 hours of the general. They were buried side by side at Fort George.

Standing at the foot of Brock's impressive monument, erected, mind you, not by the people of Canada, but those of old Ontario, one has a feeling of inescapable grandeur. The eye follows down the cliff, through the mase of foliage and climbing vines to the gleam of the river. How, one wonders, could men have clambered up here, weighed down with rifles and packs? They did and it cost agony and death to dislodge them. The Americans were driven out but Canada lost her two greatest soldiers, Brock and Macdonnell.

At Niagara-on-the-Lake, which at the time of these events was known as Newark, we saw the Field house, where Brock set up headquarters; we saw the village library, where a plaque complains rather petulantly, about the Americans vandalizing the books. Future generations of Americans

have more than made up for these peccadilloes; and without them, Niagara on the Lake and the Shaw Festival would dwindle to a mole on the cheek of time.

Niagara Falls is all to the contrary. No memory of the War there. (The last war which Canada fought on her own soil and won, hands down). Niagara Falls, as one approaches the area of scenic and hydraulic wonder, is a vast honky tonk with the Falls a background hurdy gurdy.

There is the Houdini Museum, the Believe It Or Not Museum, the Old Movie Museum, Madame Tussaud's and so on, through an infinity of tasteless honky-tonk come-ons, whose lurid fronts bid fair to outdo the most celebrated attraction of all. The best thing in Niagara Falls, next to the great Horseshoe itself, is Tony's Place, a fine family restaurant at the entrance to the falls, where the proprietor, who bears a distinct resemblance to Archie Bunker, parades his young grandson up and down on his shoulder.

The falls themselves are one vast, cataclysmic outpouring of nature's power, like a volcano in reverse. The water, smooth, irresistible, lime-green, smothered in misty foam which rises to half the height of the drop, appears like a solid thing. Adding to the feeling of unreality, one stands on the lip of the rock, looking down, on this mighty cauldron of nature's power, feeling rather apologetic about not looking up.

This can be accomplished, either by riding the Maid of the Mist boats or going down through a tunnel in the rock and emerging at the foot of the falls. Neither of these, in view of the imminent collapse of the rock, predicted by a psychic, appealed to Shirley or myself. She pressed close to the wall, shooting down with her camera to get the Maid of the Mist, whose passengers, attired in long waterproofs, appeared from above like so many Bavarian monks. Such is Niagara, a land of spectacle, showmanship and history.

## Kenmore Reunion

### Attracts 500

By Hazel Rombough

They came from Brights' Cove, Texas, Chicago, Detroit, Exeter, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, and the Ottawa Valley, more than 500 strong.

They were the graduates, teachers, and friends of Kenmore, Continuation School, reunited July 21 for the first time since the institution's closing in 1954.

Unfortunately, there were no suitable facilities in Kenmore and the reunion was held at Metcalfe Community Centre. The school itself now serves as a private home.

Staging the event at Metcalfe didn't dampen enthusiasm in any way and all found time to travel down the familiar paths of their youth.

KCS, like hundreds of other small schools across Ontario, faded into history many years ago when the Ministry of Education decided in its wisdom to bus students to huge central schools.

Someday, history may prove that the ministry was right and that students receive a better education at regional schools. But to do so will not be easy considering the accomplishments of the little Kenmore hall of learning.

Names that appear in the school's early records include many who left indelible imprints as they travelled down the road of life; names like Judge Duncan McTavish, Rev. M. Fraser, Rev. J.D. McNab, Rev. Milton Little, Dr. Glen McLaughlin, Dr. Claude Hall, and Dr. Dean McEwen are only a few.

During the reunion, Rev. Grant L. Mills, Stewart Crozier, Etta Hill, Esther Takalo, Jean Wilson, the Christies, all former teachers, brought greetings and reminisced.

As the afternoon waned, there were no strangers. All were remembering former teachers, boy friends, girl friends, romantic haunts, the busy corner store, Ken's barber shop, the "temperance" house, and of course the mill on the banks of the Castor.

The day drifted by all too fast for many who travelled far to remember those all too wonderful days of youth. And one guessed most would have cherished an opportunity to carry home those old photo albums, scrapbooks, and other memorabilia.

The beautifully-bound history of the old school was the result of many hours of research and study by Alice McKeown and Etta Hill. Members of the organizing committee were Margaret (Park) Duval, Hazel (Waddell) Rombough, Cecil and Charlotte Reaney, Ormond and Ruth Craig, Archie Sheldrick, Ray and Jean Wilson.

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