

FOCUS



ONTARIO'S HERITAGE
TAKE IT TO HEART

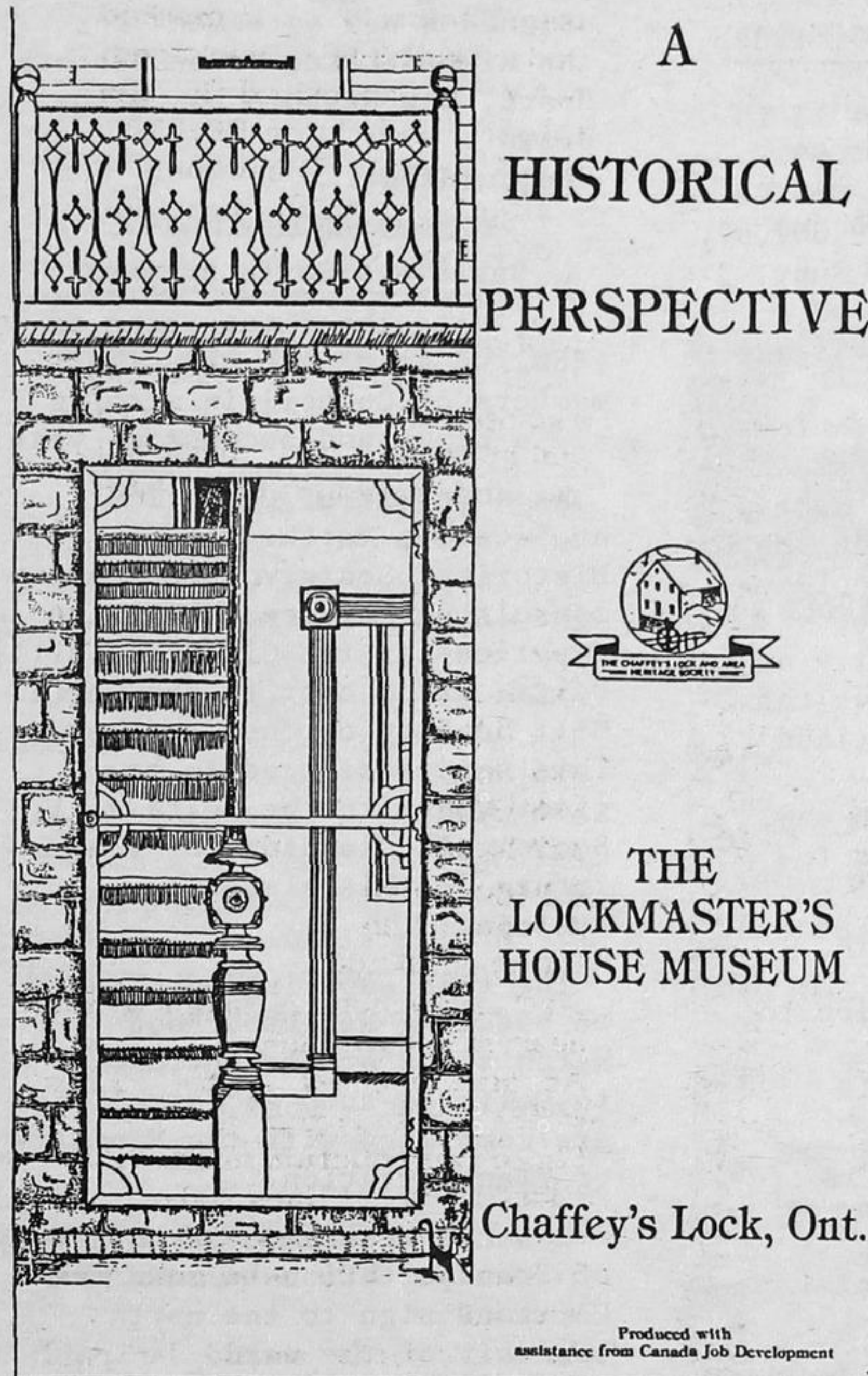


LE PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO
PRENEZ-LE À COEUR

ON

Ontario Heritage Week
February 15-21, 1988

Semaine du patrimoine ontarien
du février 15-21, 1988



A
HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE

THE
LOCKMASTER'S
HOUSE MUSEUM

Chaffey's Lock, Ont.

Produced with
assistance from Canada Job Development

The week of February 15 - 21, 1988 is Ontario Heritage Week and Chaffey's Lock is starting a day early with Winter Heritage Day February 14 at the Community Hall in Chaffey's.

The Lockmaster's House Museum is South Crosby Township's only community-operated museum. The building was originally constructed as a defensible lockmaster's house in 1844 during the construction of the Rideau Canal. The military era of the system was short-lived and by 1894 an upper storey, kitchen and wood shed were added to accommodate Henry Fleming, the current lockmaster who had a large family.

Occupied by several lockmasters and their families until 1967, it was finally vacated along with other defensible houses on the canal. The Chaffey's house remained vacant until 1982 at which time the Heritage Society rented the building for use as a museum. Its aim was and is to protect and promote, through interpretive programs, the history and heritage of the area.

February 14, the Heritage Society is convening a "fun day" for Winter Heritage starting with a skating party on Opinicon Lake in front of Franklin's Marina followed by a chili supper at the Community Hall with a program featuring the rural post office (after supper).

Support Ontario's Heritage. Come to Chaffey's for the day. Bring the kids and your skates and have some fun. Starts at 3 p.m. Supper at 5:30. Please bring along old post cards of the area.

For more information call 359-5986.

THE LOCKMASTER'S HOUSE



We lived in the old stone house until my husband (Herm) retired... my thoughts still turn back to the dear old house as it was more my home than any other house.
Alice Warren, 1977

Prompted by the 1837-38 Rebellion of Upper Canada, the British decided to build a series of defensible lockmaster's houses along the Rideau Canal. The one in Chaffey's was built in 1844 and was a one-story stone house with a tin roof and gunslits. However, it was never used for military purposes and in 1894, it was enlarged by adding a clapboard upper story, kitchen, woodshed and ice house.

The first four lockmasters to occupy the house were all related: William Fleming, James Simmons, Henry Fleming and Herman Warren. The following lockmaster was William MacIntyre who resided there until 1964, when it was boarded up and most additions were removed. In 1982, thanks to the joint efforts of the Chaffey's Lock and Area Heritage Society and Parks Canada, the lockmaster's house was restored to the turn of the century and was reopened as a museum.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Black and green bass are as plentiful here as pollywogs in a rainbarrel...
James Swift steamer brochure, 1898

Chaffey's Lock followed the evolution of the Rideau Canal itself and went through three different phases: the military, the commercial and the recreational. The military was in name only and it was then the construction of the lockmaster's house took place. The commercial phase included for Chaffey's the building of the old mill as well as the sprouting of various resorts; area industries flourished and the great luxury passenger steamboats made their appearance. With the recreational phase, the Rideau Canal was transformed into a vacationer's paradise and Chaffey's Lock followed suit with its fishing guides and lakeside cottages. Today, Chaffey's Lock is still a major tourist attraction for, in the words of Captain Edward Fleming:

"the wooded slopes, the green isles, the waters sparkling sheen in beauty shine today, as they did in days pristine".

EARLY BEGINNINGS



And silence - awful silence broods
Profoundly o'er these solitudes
Not but the lapsing of the floods
Breaks the deep stillness of the woods...
Susanna Moodie, Roughing it in the Bush



In this shadowy world of wilderness, abounding with virgin forests, gleaming lakes and rushing streams, Woodland Indians settled as early as the 13th century. It took another five centuries for white settlers to come to this area and what they encountered were roaming parties of Missasaguas, a sub-tribe of the great Algonquins. The Missasaguas were a nomadic people, well versed in the arts of basket weaving and beadwork; they would journey down south to hunt and fish and would later become involved in the fur trade. It was they who discovered Lake Opinicon, named after the wild potatoes found growing on its shores. Their contacts with our ancestors were in the end pernicious as they resulted in impoverishment and disease. In October 1783, Mynass, Head Chief of the Missasaguas sold the British a large piece of Eastern Ontario for clothing for his family; this vast tract of land extended from Ottawa to Picton and included the Leeds and Grenville area.

After the American Revolution, the British suddenly became interested in our part of the world and established nine areas to be colonized. Loyalists were given land grants and surveyors were sent forth. The first surveyor to explore the Rideau waterway was Gersham French, who found the area suitable for agriculture but was daunted by the number of swamps and stoney edges. However the dye had been cast and in 1791, the Province of Upper Canada had been established with John Groves Simcoe as its first Lieutenant Governor.

Ads began to appear in American newspapers and by 1815, there were 126 people in the township: some were Loyalists, others simply land-hungry; the new country was indeed appealing at \$2 an acre. In the aftermath of the U.S. declaration of war on Britain in 1812 and at the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, the British decided loyal stock should settle our vast, empty spaces; this stock would be made up largely of unemployed soldiers and the early casualties of the industrial revolution. Thus began an era of rapid colonization and Joshua Jebb, of the Royal Engineers, was sent to do a study on the feasibility of establishing a defensible waterway other than the St. Lawrence and this, as early as 1816, as directed by the Duke of Wellington.

CHAFFEY'S LOCK



You may seek the famous mountains
You may climb the heights sublime
You may wander to the northland
Or explore in southern clime
But you ne'er will see such beauty
Be it lake, or hill, or rock
As we find among the islands
And the shores of Chaffey's Lock...
Jennie Moulton, Women's Institute, 1937

Samuel Chaffey and his wife, Mary Ann Poole, of Somerset, England, came to Upper Canada around 1816, and were first established in the Perth Military Settlement. The Chaffey brothers were pioneer entrepreneurs who built mills and opened a shipyard in Buttermilk Falls (Bedford Mills) and a boatyard in Old Landing (Portland). Samuel and his brother Ben also ran a distillery in Brockville; however, Ben fled to the U.S. when the business failed and Samuel and his wife moved to the area that was to bear his name. The farmers of South Crosby desperately needed a mill and Samuel, having obtained the water rights from the government, built a vast mill complex which included carding, grist and saw mills as well as a distillery.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Wellington's plans for the Rideau Canal were still under way despite strong opposition to what was termed "a remote and worthless province such as Upper Canada". However, Colonel John By was finally appointed as superintendent of the works and in 1827 was empowered to explore, enter and expropriate lands under the "Rideau Canal Act". Chaffey was later informed his mills would have to be destroyed and was offered a compensation of 2000 pounds.

The lock and bywash took five years to build and John Haggart was awarded the tender; Samuel got the logging contract. Sandstone was hauled to the site by oxen and the gates were built from local oak by carpenters employed at the location. In 1828-29, swamp fever (malaria) struck the workers and Samuel became one of its unfortunate victims; he died before having received any compensation for his mills and Mary Ann and her baby were left destitute. Eventually, after much grief and bitterness, Mary Ann was paid the promised amount. She remarried, was widowed once more due to a tragic canoeing accident and left the lockstation to reside in Newboro with her brother. The lock was completed in 1832.



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