

Escarpment Views

❄ DECEMBER 2008

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Seana McKenna Brings Back Medea

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"Moving Beyond Expectations"

Escarpment Views

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PHOTO BY ALAN MCCORD



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View From the Editor's Desk: Necessary Hopeful Changes

The news has been full of frightening predictions for a bad economy. Some companies are near bankruptcy, some people are losing jobs. People with stock portfolios are seeing them decline in value. If you are personally hurt by these developments, I sympathize with you. Yet I believe that the news media are generating excitement that is doing more harm than good. We know that a rocky economy can be made worse if everyone is too frightened to act as usual. Provided that your usual lifestyle is sensible, there should be no reason to change your habits.

If you aren't in a financially precarious situation, you can actually help the economy by behaving normally. Make necessary purchases. Spend fun money if you've saved it for the purpose. Buy some Christmas gifts. Support our advertisers. Don't let fear of the future paralyze you, or we can bring the worst upon ourselves.

There is even opportunity during economic shifts. We will always need food, transportation, clothing, housing, furnishings, recreation. Those who succeed become better at providing the forms these take. As employees and business owners, we may have to become better, more competitive, more effective and provide better service. Don't we naturally reward those who do?

Surely we need a shift in our economy now, to sustainability, energy efficiency, waste reduction. We couldn't go on the way we were, forever. Maybe the time is ripe to make necessary, hopeful changes that will benefit us all. What's your view? Write me or email me, or share your opinion on our new online blog. We've added a public blog to our *Escarpment Views* site because there is simply so much going on that we need the new medium to keep up. Look under "Escarpment Blog" at www.EscarpmentViews.ca.

Another new development with this issue is that we have an intern working with us, Johanna Bailey of Orangeville. A graduate of York University's Bachelor of Arts program in professional writing, Johanna approached us in order to gain some experience in the editing and publishing field. If Johanna contacts you, please make her welcome. Getting started with a career is a challenge.

In this issue, Deborah Palmer highlights some food products developed by passionate individuals who are close to the Escarpment. Eating locally in winter is more of a challenge, but these goodies would be special treats for Christmas and the following months.

Dan O'Reilly takes us inside the restoration in progress of Devereaux House in Georgetown. Dedicated people are saving this Victorian farmhouse, trying to preserve as many of the original elements as possible, but incorporating current green technologies in its systems.

We also take you deep inside the Escarpment itself, with words and photographs of a beginners' caving trip organized by the Toronto Caving Group. Would you be able to stomach such an adventure?

Linda Lee reports on the second concert to benefit Burlington's community group Protecting Escarpment Rural Land (PERL), which this summer, featured Sarah Harmer, Bruce Cockburn, Derek Miller and Leslie Feist.

Our theatre columnist Seana McKenna writes about bringing her performance of Medea to the impressive Canon Theatre in Toronto. Friends who saw her act this in Winnipeg in 1992 still talk about it. I saw it in Stratford in 2000 and can still have tears come to my eyes when remembering it. This is one of the most memorable performances in this award-winning actor's life. Do yourself a favour: book tickets to see this show. It will be a life-changing experience.

Gloria

Gloria Hildebrandt
Editor

Events Along the Rock

Selected snapshots by Mike Davis show where *Escarpment Views* has been in recent months. If you have an event you'd like us to feature next time, just send us an invitation!



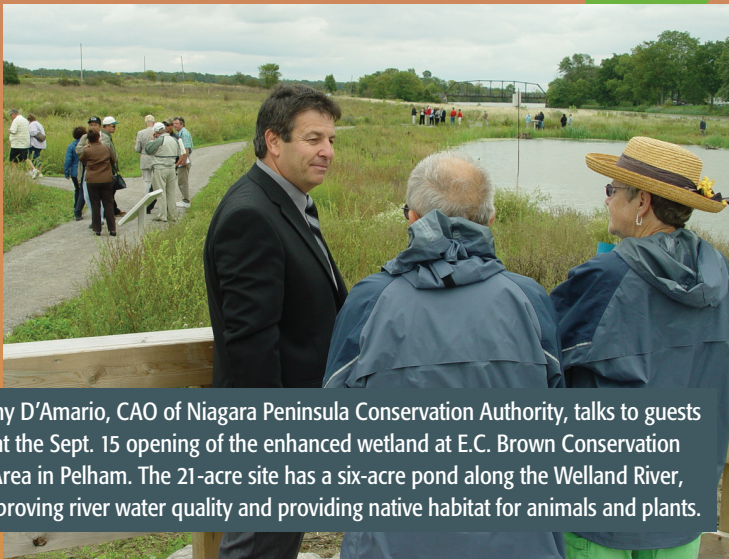
Rock'n Roll'n Classics filled downtown Georgetown's Main St. on Aug. 22 for a juried car show.



After the rain stopped on Sept. 7, Gloria Hildebrandt, right, editor of *Escarpment Views*, enjoyed the Eden Mills Writers Festival, as did Trudi Down, contributor to the magazine.



More than 3,600 children enjoyed Halton Children's Water Festival, Sept. 23-26 at Kelso Conservation Area, Milton, with the Escarpment as background.



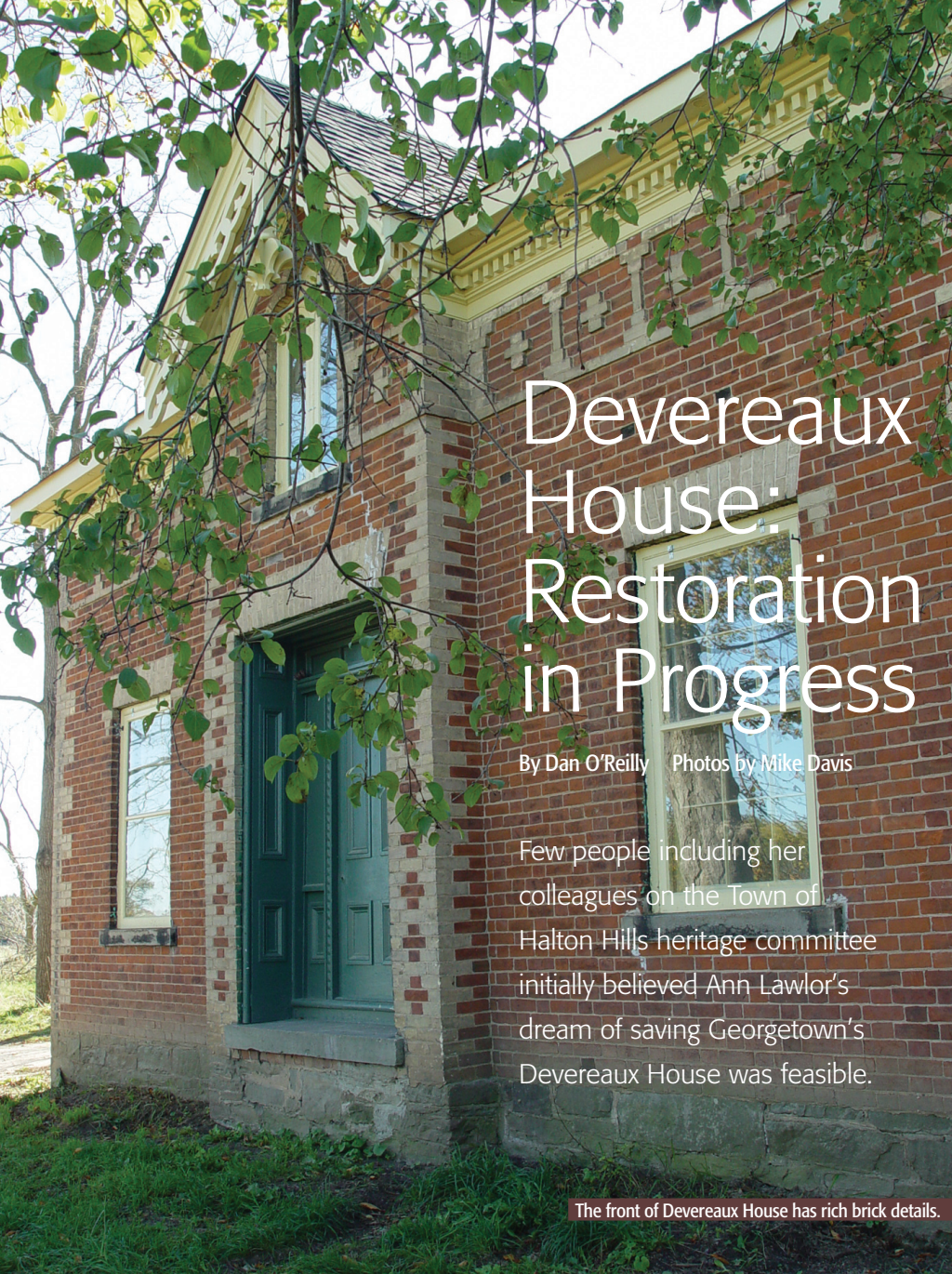
Tony D'Amario, CAO of Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, talks to guests at the Sept. 15 opening of the enhanced wetland at E.C. Brown Conservation Area in Pelham. The 21-acre site has a six-acre pond along the Welland River, improving river water quality and providing native habitat for animals and plants.



Charles Hildebrandt of Georgetown, front left, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Ian McCombe, president of the Outing Club of East York, on Oct. 16. Family members from left, rear: Gloria Hildebrandt, Brit Jennings, Barbara Jennings, Grant Jennings.



Bob Barnett of Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy gave a presentation on Manitoulin Island's Escarpment Trail at the Niagara Escarpment Commission's Leading Edge 2008 conference in Orangeville on Oct. 1.



Devereaux House: Restoration in Progress

By Dan O'Reilly Photos by Mike Davis

Few people including her colleagues on the Town of Halton Hills heritage committee initially believed Ann Lawlor's dream of saving Georgetown's Devereaux House was feasible.

The front of Devereaux House has rich brick details.



Elaborate gingerbread trim and brick embellishments decorate the roof line.



A house abandoned.

Now, however, after a Herculean crusade encompassing hundreds of volunteer hours, massive fundraising and painstaking restoration, this historic Victorian farmhouse is being transformed into a community facility and the headquarters of the Georgetown Soccer Club.

Located on the west side of Trafalgar Road just north of Maple Avenue, the 1½-storey building is an almost postcard-perfect remnant of early rural Ontario and is considered an excellent example of a 19th century farmhouse with its brick and gingerbread detailing.

It was constructed in the 1850s by Elijah Devereaux, a member of the local Sedentary Militia. His descendants owned and farmed the land for more than 100 years until the death of the last family member, John Devereaux, in 1972.



The interior in need of massive repair.



Employees from Pratt & Whitney Canada volunteered their time to paint and tame the wild front yard.



The curved window on the restored second storey shows what the finished house may look like.



Central stairs with the bannister vandalized.



A volunteer carpenter restored the missing bannister.

It was far from perfect when Lawlor drove past the forlorn, boarded-up structure one afternoon in 2005. “Why is it sitting there?” the real estate marketing executive asked herself, discovering later it was owned by the Town of Halton Hills and the adjacent lands slated for redevelopment as soccer fields and a municipal cemetery.

Those plans did not include preserving the building, which had been massively vandalized by tenants before they were evicted. It was in fact on the edge of being knocked down, with a demolition permit already issued when Lawlor learned of its fate.

As a newly appointed member to the heritage committee, she raised the issue only to be told that while the committee appreciated the building, the deterioration was too extensive

and nothing could be done to save it.

Undaunted she pressed ahead and contacted people she knew shared her passion. That led to the founding of the Friends of Devereaux House, the small but dedicated committee of volunteers which has shepherded the building’s survival and renaissance. Lawlor is the chair person.

While some are long-time Georgetown residents others are fairly newcomers. What they had in common was the belief the house could be saved despite the seemingly overwhelming odds.

“It was an absolute disaster. You really had to have vision to see what could be done with the house,” says Lawlor, citing devastation that included damaged banisters and stairs, smashed windows, doors ripped off their hinges and structural damage such as a bowed wall.

The first milestone on the committee’s long journey to save the house was the organization of a dinner event that raised \$22,000 through ticket sales and auctions of donated goods. It also obtained a \$100,000 Trillium grant and was one of only 19 recipients to obtain a green municipal grant in 2007.

As those fund-raising efforts were progressing, a heritage assessment and condition report on the house was conducted by an Architectural Conservancy of Ontario architect and the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts, a pri-

Devereaux House: Restoration in Progress

vate school dedicated to preserving Canadian heritage sites.

"The reports confirmed the house had heritage value and was worth saving and strengthened our cause," says Lawlor. "We took the reports to the town which was a good partner and provided a letter of support for the Trilium application."

With the heritage reports, town support and funding in hand, the Friends issued a tender for architects, ultimately selecting Green Propeller Design, a Milton-based firm specializing in sustainable design. The committed appreciated architect-in-charge Marina Huissoon's philosophy of conservation and preservation which has been its objective from day one.

"This is one of the first times in the province a heritage house has been restored and upgraded to green principles," says Lawlor, citing present-day technological features that include a biofilter system, a geothermal (ground source) heating and cooling system, zone heating, an on-demand hot water system and LED lighting fixtures.

In relation to the windows, though, 19th century practices won the day. Devereaux House's original, multi-pane windows are a significant architectural feature and were retained,

although some repair work was necessary. With the addition of new custom-built storm windows, the R-value is almost equal to the insulating capacity of contemporary windows, says Lawlor.

"Our goal is to recreate the atmosphere of a farmhouse in the 1870 to 1880 period," says Lawlor of the restoration and repair which got underway in the fall of 2007.

Acting as its own project manager and general contractor, the Friends have been striving towards that goal using a combination of some paid construction workers and volunteers, including a handful of retired specialty carpenters who have been diligently restoring the stairs and the woodwork in the heritage kitchen. A small out-of-view modern kitchen is being built for community events.

"These are the people who are really interested in this house. They appreciate the craftsmanship that is evident in the house and are enthusiastic about restoring it," Lawlor explains.

This past summer a high point was reached when the Georgetown Soccer Club, which had provided a temporary \$40,000 loan in return for reduced rent, moved into its new second floor offices. The Friends will be renting out

the rest of the building to community events and functions under a five-year renewable lease with the town.

However, there is still considerable work left including extensive brick repointing which can only be accomplished by a specialist in antique brick work, Lawlor says.

None of the committee members ever became discouraged during the now three-year-old project. "We were and are determined to preserve our rural roots in the face of suburbia and the geography of nowhere," says Lawlor, in reference to the issues raised in *The Geography of Nowhere*, the James Howard Kunstler book which examines the impact of urban sprawl on once-distinct communities.

Although there is a strong movement to preserve Ontario's rapidly disappearing inventory of heritage buildings, they're often either moved or new unsympathetic buildings such as condominiums are built around them, says Lawlor.

What's truly outstanding about the Devereaux House is that it will stand alone in its original site overlooking the cemetery and sports fields on land once farmed by the Devereaux family, says Lawlor. "It will be a signature property of Halton Hills." ■



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Locally Made Treats

By Deborah Palmer Photos by Mike Davis

We support the wisdom of shopping for foods grown locally and in season as much as possible. Time was when oranges and figs were exotic treats to have only around Christmas. If you wanted fruit through the winter you were looking at cans or preserves. Although we enjoy the wide variety of fresh produce available all year, it's great to seek out dedicated producers of food close to home. In the cooler months, we focus on bottles, jars and packages of prepared products. Here is a collection of goodies, in alphabetical order, that we found fairly close to the Escarpment. We had fun sharing and enjoying them with family, friends and neighbours. We taste-tested and sampled and now share our findings with you, believing that we're introducing some very special creations of rare quality. And please let us know of the local treats that you love.

Dutchman's Gold Natural Honey and Products, Carlisle

John and Annie Van Alten and family must be supremely happy people with

very contented bees. Just a flight through their entertaining and enlightening Web site should make you happy. After taking their online quiz, you may feel so hungry that you'll need to make toast with honey. Unlike some other blends of honey, these homegrown and homefed bees make honey bursting with flavour. Their Ancaster Flower Honey is particularly enjoyable. Pancakes are a good choice for tasting the flowery nuances these Canadian bees provide. Their own beautiful store offers a rich treasure of products, but their honey may also be available close to your home.

LOCATIONS INCLUDE: Horn of Plenty, Dundas; Foodstuffs, Georgetown; Stone Store, Guelph; Denningers, Hamilton & Burlington; Andrews Scenic Acres, Milton; Natural Choice, Orangeville; Longo's; most Sobeys and IGA.

MORE INFORMATION: www.DutchmansGold.com

From These Roots, Fergus

Krista Harrington describes her work as tearing up her parents' property for gardens, and having years of culinary adventure and misadventure. This sounds like happy employment for an imaginative and creative foodie! From These Roots jams and salsas are richly flavoured and lusciously exotic. It takes a master palate to create new flavours so unusual and satisfying. A delicious pairing of soft Goat's Cheese with Rosemary Biscuits makes a wonderful partner with Raspberry Rosemary Jam, matching sweet and tart with savoury and soft flavours. A glass of wine or a cup of tea makes a perfectly lovely accompaniment. My true love though, is the Blackcurrant and Violet Jam. So Victorian! Occasionally a little sweet can take subtle flavours much further. To this end cut a tiny morsel of very decadent brownie, top with a small dollop of Blackcurrant Violet Jam ... now we all have very good reason to keep these two together in bliss. These jams are so heady and original, you need to give your mouth a moment to enjoy the experience.



Locally Made Treats



Dutchman's Gold Natural Honey and Products



From These Roots



Lovely Bites Specialty Cookies



Tracy's Wine Jellies



The Ultimate Bean Coffee

LOCATIONS INCLUDE: MacMillan's, Acton; Royal Botanical Gardens, Burlington; Busy Liz's, Campbellville; Elora General Store, Elora; Fraberts Fresh Foods, Fergus; Foodstuffs, Georgetown; Creative Edge, Guelph; Oakville Gift Shop, Oakville.

MORE INFORMATION: www.FromTheseRoots.ca

Lakeview Cellars, Vineland

Loving these exceptional private-label wine jellies was easy. The two we sampled were a little spicy, just my flavour. Trying these was a case of my favourite and my other favourite.

The Cracked Black Pepper Cabernet Jelly was striking in its peppery scent and flavour. This jelly was so delicious, a spoon was my favourite accompaniment, though both robust and more delicate cheeses were very happy in its company. Toasted walnuts, red grapes, and plain crackers were perfect too.

Those tiny tarts we all love around Christmas time would be more lovely with Cracked Black Pepper Cabernet Jelly, or get a little reckless and use this jelly when making appetizer meatballs for instant fame. Your guests will know the kind of longing for meatballs only you can quench. A glass of wine is in perfect company with the Cracked Black Pepper Cabernet Jelly too. The Red Pepper Icewine Jelly is deliciously exciting. A room-temperature Goat's Cheese Brie would be a superb partner served with warmed

Red Pepper Icewine Jelly spooned over. Very good baguette with soft crumb would complete this enjoyably decadent mixture. Serving with two soft textures showcases the bite of pepper, and the clean ice wine taste is only highlighted by it.

LOCATIONS INCLUDE: Lakeview Cellars, Vineland.

MORE INFORMATION: www.lakeviewcellars.ca

Lovely Bites Specialty Cookies, Georgetown

Midnight Snacks, Mapples, and Leftovers are the names of three of the best cookies you may ever try. Only a few very high-quality ingredients, most of them organic, go into Kim Falls' original-recipe cookies. Made in small batches, the cookies are wheat-free and use organic butter and eggs as well as maple syrup and apple butter to sweeten. Most impressive are the Giant Cookies she prepares, often at special request. With a fun designer label, the cookies come in clear bags of six or 12.

LOCATION: Foodstuffs, Georgetown

MORE INFORMATION: 905 877 6569

Tracy's Wine Jellies, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Tracy Hanson uses Pillitteri wines in her exceptionally clean and fresh tasting jellies. With the chance to sample several of her jellies, and share

them with delighted friends, we tried a different approach. The test food was a Dutch Baby, or Giant Puffy Pancake, which is oven baked and looks like an oversized Yorkshire Pudding. Filled with sautéed local pears, and added to a luxurious helping of Tracy's Apple Cinnamon Chardonnay Jelly, it was worth savouring. An uplifting aroma assailed us, and with every bite of our Dutch Baby, we tasted those clear and lovely flavours all the way through. The flavour of the jellies alone are first and foremost of the wines.

Adding Tracy's Saucy Sangria Jelly to a Black Bean and Beef Chili just before serving gave a subtle scent and flavour which enhanced that chili right into double-diamond approval.

LOCATIONS INCLUDE: Mickey McGuire's Cheese, Dundas; Kittling Ridge, Grimsby; Upper Canada Cheese Company, Jordan; several outlets in Niagara-on-the-Lake, including Greaves; Harvest Barn, St. Catharines; Punch Bowl, Stoney Creek; Sunshine on a Cloudy Day, Wasaga Beach.

MORE INFORMATION: www.tracyswinejellies.com

The Ultimate Bean Coffee Roasting Company, Georgetown

The Ultimate Bean roasts and distributes guaranteed Fair Trade coffee from Latin America, Africa and Asia. They also provide a roast-your-own option. Fondly famous to their fans, Grant and Virna always display that love and passion great producers have for their work. They are always conscious of the good that Fair Trade can do for growers and their employees.

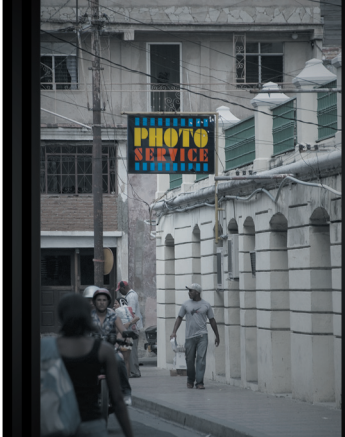
Here is Virna's description: "Grant takes the green beans that farmers in coffee-growing regions work so hard to produce and through skilful roasting delivers the uniqueness that each origin bean has to offer. If you close your eyes and take in the aroma of a fresh-roasted, fresh-ground and fresh-brewed cup of Ultimate Bean coffee, you can smell the air, the fruit and the fragrances of the land from where it comes."

In my opinion, theirs is the best coffee you can find. I suggest that you try strong brewed coffee in your marinades and basting sauces next barbeque season.

LOCATIONS INCLUDE: Penhaligan's of Elora, Elora; Foodstuffs, Georgetown; Guelph Farmer's Market, Guelph; Kerr Frames & Gallery, Oakville; Terra Cotta General Store, Terra Cotta.

MORE INFORMATION: www.theultimatebean.com

Deborah Palmer of A Movable Feast at Foodstuffs' 87 Up, Georgetown, has more than 20 years of experience as a chef, caterer and cooking teacher, drawing on first-hand experiences from her extensive travels around the world.



Steven Moran

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Scotsdale Farm north of Georgetown, looking south from the barn onto Escarpment land
Photograph by Alan McCord.





Steve Baksa performs the "magic trick" of lighting his lamp.



Jason Czarnecki follows Dawn Hill down into the first cave at Rattlesnake Point.



Dawn, looks up at Jason on the rock wedged in the chimney space at the end of Cave 1.

Beginner Caves on the Escarpment

By Gloria Hildebrandt Photos by Mike Davis

When Steve Baksa leads a beginner's caving trip, he likes to start things off with a bang. A research chemist in his day job, he enjoys demonstrating how he lights his caver's head lamp. He uses the traditional miner's light, an actual flame that burns at the front of the helmet, even though he admits that LED lights are becoming standard.

When lighting his lamp, Steve Baksa explains that "water is poured into an upper chamber and allowed to drip into a lower chamber containing calcium carbide pellets. Acetylene gas is produced by a chemical reaction. It is quite effective as one kg of

carbide generates about 300 litres of acetylene gas. The gas exits through a small nozzle at the centre of a reflector. Now comes the fun part. I place my hand over the reflector to trap a pocket of acetylene gas. Then I strike a flint mounted on the reflector to make a spark. It ignites the acetylene gas with a very loud pop. Acetylene burns very hot and produces a bright white flame."

People who have crowded close during this demonstration,

gas and instinctively pull their heads back when the flame flares. It's the first of many moments in the caving trip that will test people's instincts.

Steve is a member of the Toronto Caving Group (TCG). "I started caving about 30 years ago during hikes along the Bruce Trail," he recalls. "We kept finding these crevasses and started to explore them. Being young and invincible, we climbed while holding flashlights in our mouths. Not recommended! Eventually, some of us joined the Toronto Caving Group and learned to enjoy the sport safely."

This day, he's leading a trip organized by the TCG, to some of the caves at Rattlesnake Point and Kelso Conservation Area near Milton. "The first two caves at Rattlesnake Point are small and an easy introduction," he says. "Afterwards, beginners can bail out if caving is not for them, and a few do."



Steve squeezes out of a tight exit from the





Wanda Prochazka explores Cave 1.



Wanda chimneys up onto the wedged rock.



Steve prepares to lead Dawn, left, and Wanda into the second cave at Rattlesnake Point.



Wanda enjoying Cave 2.

second cave at Rattlesnake Point.



Indeed, Mike Davis, also a member of TCG who went on Steve's trip to take photographs, vividly remembers a beginners' trip to Rattlesnake's first cave, in which a woman in front of him and others in single file, was crawling through the low, narrow, winding entrance. Suddenly the woman stopped and cried out "Let me out!" Everyone behind her had to back out of the dark, rocky passage as quickly as they could to liberate the panicked woman. Afterward, she told Mike "I want to be cremated, not buried."

Those who continue exploring this first cave end in a narrow crevice that is so high that it seems spacious in comparison to the entrance tunnel. You can stand up and see the roots of a tree growing on the surface above. You may even want to "chimney" up the crevice to perch on top of a rock that is wedged between the cave walls.

There is a second easy cave at Rattlesnake Point and a third one at Kelso. Steve describes that one

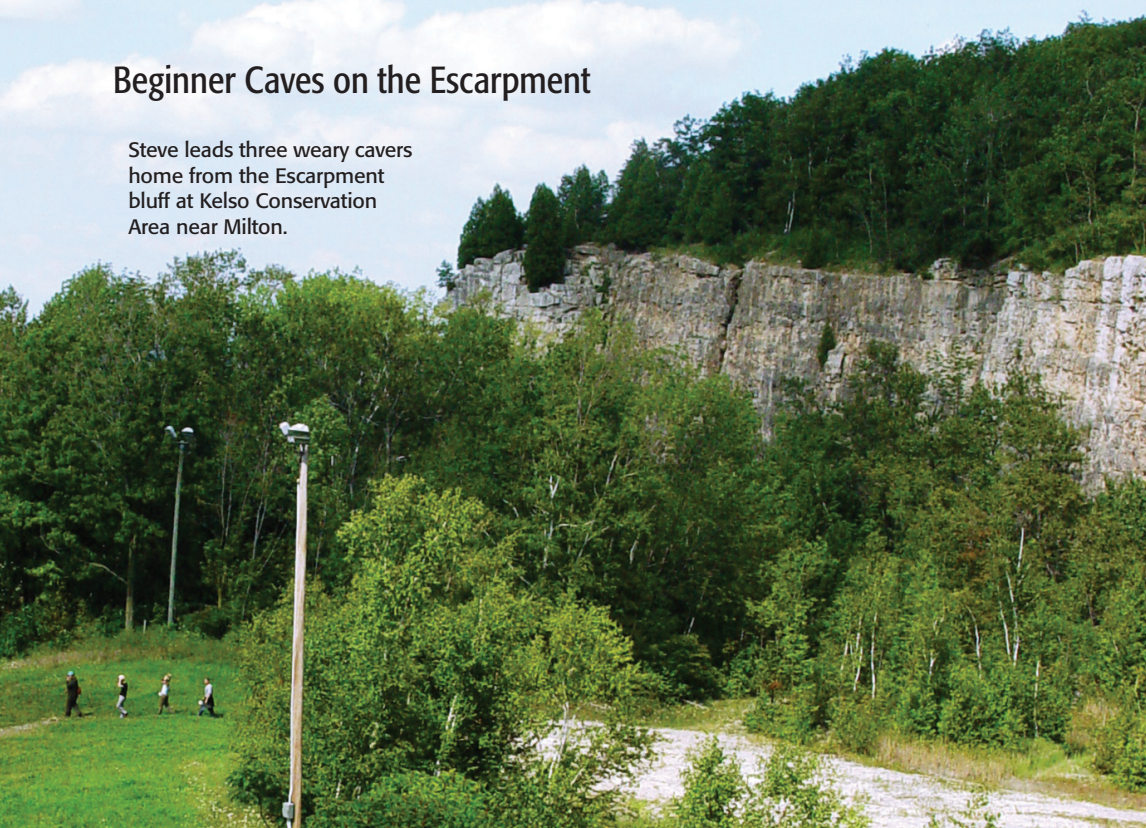
as "longer and more difficult, with multiple levels, passages and three entrances, two at the top of the Escarpment and one at the bottom." On the day that these photographs were taken, Steve's group ended their trip here.

"The last cave depends on the objectives of the group," Steve continues. "There is a cave at Mount Nemo, which is the longest, and really, really tough. A highlight is an underground lake between two vertical walls. Going forward involves a long strenuous climb over the water. Participants are usually exhausted after this cave, but also very satisfied."

Wanda Prochazka of Toronto was pleased with her first caving trip, saying "It was really fun, with great and encouraging instructors." Although she considered herself to be claustrophobic, she thought caving would help her. Her only challenge turned out to be managing an open drop in a cave, where she says she "would have liked a rope for security." She

Beginner Caves on the Escarpment

Steve leads three weary cavers home from the Escarpment bluff at Kelso Conservation Area near Milton.



A Little Brown Bat noticed in one of the caves by a second TCG trip on the same day.

PHOTO BY PIOTR SCIEZKA

says she would definitely go caving again.

Dawn Hill of Toronto had a different experience. She had been interested in trying caving

as a new adventure and greatly enjoyed parts of the trip. "In the first cave when we were all safely positioned, Steve had us turn off our headlights and just take it in,"

she says. "It's incredibly dark and quiet. Also at one point we had a bat sleeping a hand's distance away from our heads. You don't see something like that even in a zoo, at least not that close." Yet things changed for her.

"My least favourite part was probably when I let my mind get the better of me," she continues. "The thought of being many, many metres below rock. Becoming squeamish over the thought of slithering between slates of rock on my belly. I'm not claustrophobic but I did let it overcome me. I pushed through in each cave and got a few levels down but by the end of the day, only wanted to go so far, then waited for the others to return. Steve was great about encouraging us to try to go just a bit further, without making you feel pressured or guilty when you finally came to your threshold."

She praises TCG for providing a great experience, but explains "I've had my adventure and learned I'm not too keen on small, cramped spaces so it will be some time before I try it again."

Jason Czarnecki of Mississauga heard about caving from colleagues at work, one of whom led another group on the same

day. "The caving trip was a perfect intro to the sport," says Jason. "My favourite part was climbing out of the last cave of the day in Kelso using an alternate exit which forced me to scale a V-shaped wall and dangle over a jutting rock in order to pull myself through a small opening. Steve told me I was the largest person he has ever seen make it through the opening. It was both the most challenging part and the most fun. I hope to go caving again. I am a convert."

TCG organizes trips to other caves in Ontario and the U.S. Information about activities, membership and their newsletter is available at www.trigger.net/~tcg.

What Steve loves about caving is "the adventure of exploring a unique environment. Typical caves are formed by water erosion. You can follow stream passages deep into the earth and observe how the rock is dissolved away. The water flow can disappear in places, only to reappear further into the cave. Waterfalls are always a highlight. Some are small enough to walk through, while others are huge and require rope and rappelling equipment to navigate. Every cave is an adventure." ■

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Misty's View of Christmas Dinner

with two chefs at the helm, we do turkey on Boxing Day when we can putter luxuriously around the house during the day and get all the accoutrements ready over a lazy period of seven to eight hours. We **eat when the food is ready**, not when the guests arrive. Zero stress. Christmas Day can be a nightmare. Once you have opened presents, calmed down over-excited children, attended a

free-range chickens and even duck or goose, which are not actually greasy. With these smaller roasts you will not have to monitor cooking for seven hours! Another Christmas we served a medley of birds: an orange and sage stuffed duck, four or five Cornish game hens packed with shallots and thyme, and a large capon stuffed with traditional bread stuffing.

your basic stuffing recipe a day ahead of time and then transforming it into a variety of stuffing flavours by adding dried cranberries and roasted pecans; preserved oranges and North African spices; even child-friendly cheddar cheese. If you bake these stuffing blends in well-buttered muffin tins for about 15 minutes you can offer your guests an interesting range of stuffing flavours.

As Christmas approaches, many families start to dream about a perfect blanket of white snow; a cozy, fire-lit house; an evergreen decorated with heirlooms and handmade items from their children. This picture of domestic bliss reaches deep into the senses and we long for our Christmas to look beautiful, to smell of spices and roasts, and glow with harmony and contentment.

Then we **remember the turkey and the stress it induces year after year**. In many households, roasting the Christmas turkey is tantamount to war. Grandmother says she raised a generation on her method, Auntie says she knows best, and you, who are stuck with the task, have consulted stacks of magazines, and even called a turkey hotline for advice.

Let's be frank. **Turkeys are tough, both literally and figuratively**. At holiday time, most are purchased as a solid frozen mass that can weigh up to 25 lbs and take three days to defrost in your fridge, a monopoly of space that creates issues before you even begin to tackle its mythical transformation into the Christmas Dinner.

Armed with the haunting advice from generations of family members you pray for a miracle or an intervention. Here is a suggestion to **allay your fears and create a new tradition** in the host home: don't do turkey. Find another wonderful meat to roast or braise the day before and leave the extremely complex timing and *a la minute* cooking that turkey dinners require for a quieter family gathering.

In our household, for example,

A stack of citrus-stuffed Cornish game hens towers over stuffing ideas: cranberry stuffing in a muffin pan and child-inspired cheddar cheese stuffing, right



service, and returned home to be a celebrity chef, you are already in big trouble in the kitchen.

If you are thinking "Yes, yes, yes!" my suggestion is to **build Christmas dinner around special dishes you do well**. One Christmas, for example, we had a menu of our favourites: roasted beef tenderloin, 30 minutes in the oven, a big crock of mussels with white wine, garlic, herbs and diced tomatoes, a last-minute affair that takes 15 minutes, a chicken casserole from a relative, stuffed-baked potatoes for the kids, and a medley of vegetables. We had time to talk and appreciate the special dinner without trying to prepare a meal that may no longer be the best choice for Christmas Day owing to its lengthy and sometimes contentious preparation.

Making new traditions for the table can be exciting and ultimately liberating. If you still want to roast on the 25th, consider trying smaller birds: capon, Cornish game hens,

Consult a few good cookbooks to give you the guidelines for roasting times, since they vary from bird to bird. You'll want to know the cooking ratio per pound as well as the suggested oven temperatures. Ducks, for instance, are better when roasted at a high temperature to allow the skin to crisp up and for the fat to be rendered.

You might also consider making

Whatever meal you tackle on Christmas Day, remember that being the host is demanding. The traditional turkey meal may present you with too much trouble and too little time on Christmas Day. If so, save it for later and enjoy the slow roast experience without the stress.

Misty Ingraham is a chef and co-owner of the catering business The Portable Feast at Home, in Ancaster.



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Seana's View: How do you solve a problem like Medea?

I first did Euripedes' play "Medea", freely adapted by the American poet, Robinson Jeffers, at the Manitoba Theatre Centre (MTC) in 1992. I played the role again at Stratford's Tom Patterson Theatre in 2000. Now, I have returned to Winnipeg to mount a new production, which travels to Toronto's Canon Theatre in January, for MTC and Mirvish Productions. It seems I feel the need to brush up on my Medea every eight years.

Why? And will it be the same production?

Fortunately, we still have the same talented director, Miles Potter, who is also my husband. The extraordinary designer Peter Hartwell is on board again, as is the original composer, Michael Becker. From the Stratford production, we have stage manager Brian Scott and the wonderful Scott Wentworth reprising Jason. But the rest of the cast and crew are new. So although certain elements will be similar, this cannot possibly be the "same" production.

At the first read-through, it was so exciting to hear all the imagined voices finally come together. Actors with new interpretations and different energies. Some actors are friends, some I have never worked with before. I have been waiting 20 years to work with one actress again, the amazing Patricia Conolly. It is a gifted cast, giving fresh and valued input. After our first week of rehearsal, I already sensed that there will be no such thing as a "repeat" performance.

Also, the two previous productions were in small 200-to-500-seat theatres: the Canon seats 2,273. The previous sets were in a "thrust" configuration, with the audience on three sides. Both MTC's John Hirsch Theatre and the Canon are proscenium houses, with all the audience out front. Consequently, the set has been re-designed and built anew.

A different set requires different staging, and a proscenium theatre requires slightly different acting. You must share "out front," be aware of sight lines, and not block or upstage the important action.

That being said, it is astonishing how old movements re-assert themselves. I will find that as I am saying a line, my body is already in motion, without my knowing why. The sense memory is so deep, even after eight years. Acknowledging, and even following old patterns is fine, as long as I am listening afresh and rediscovering why I made those original choices. Sometimes I will think, why on earth did I do that? But more often I will think, "Ah yes, that feels right."

What else is different?

The first time I played Medea, I did not have a son. People have asked if being a mom radically changed my performance. Although motherhood gave me new personal experiences to draw upon, I don't think it changed my interpretation. The most recognizable difference for me was that I was much more comfortable in the company of children, especially little ones. The second performance was deeper, more detailed, but then, eight years more experience, in life and onstage, will do that.

Any time I have played a role again, I have enjoyed it tremendously. Having survived once, I found myself less tentative, less afraid of making a "wrong" choice. I felt emboldened to "push the envelope", to risk more, to trust my instincts, to "play" more. And you never exhaust the great roles; there is always something more to discover.

Medea is one of the great roles. In the past 18 years, people want to talk to me about this role more than any other. I recently met a young actress in New York who was astounded to realize I was the Medea she had seen as an 11-year-old ballet student in Winnipeg: she said she remembered the play as if it were yesterday, it had had such an effect on her.

Of course, plays and characters speak to us differently at different times in our lives. As a young girl,

I identified totally with Romeo and Juliet. Now I empathize with their parents. As an older Medea, my desperation and sense of betrayal may be heightened. Many of us know women who supported their husbands through medical or law school, or while their husbands built up a business, and after years of struggling and raising families, find themselves forsaken for a younger woman just when the rewards start coming in. Sometimes the first-marriage children are neglected in favour of the new, younger family. It is a common story, it is not new. It is an ancient story.

And Euripedes, and Jeffers, tell it in such a way that it is shockingly contemporary: the language is accessible, the passions are primal. The world of the Greek plays is not interested in repressed emotions. Grief, love, jealousy, hatred - must be confronted head on. Audience members must face their worst fears, their unruly passions, in the safe sanctuary of the theatre, witnessing the horrors of war, incest, or infanticide, and leave, hopefully purged of those feelings and ready to reenter the world.

Perhaps the most frightening thing about Medea is not that she is an alien monster, but that she is a human being we understand. A foreigner, a woman, helpless in the face of a male-dominated society, she behaves as a male Greek hero would have: she avenges her enemies. She destroys what is most dear to her, and in doing so, annihilates her self. This ancient tale is told in today's newspapers.

Medea is mythological, yes, but psychologically real. The worst nightmares are the ones that seem so real, we're not quite sure we were dreaming.

Medea - perhaps a recurring nightmare, but for me, a dream to play.

Seana McKenna stars in Medea at the Canon Theatre in Toronto from Jan. 7 to Feb. 8.

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PHOTO OF SEANA MCKENNA BY BRUCE MONK

Singing for the Escarpment

Article and photographs by Linda Lee

For many, it just isn't summer without an outdoor music festival or concert. For supporters of the citizens' group Protecting Escarpment Rural Land (PERL), it isn't summer without a new tradition, a benefit concert atop Burlington's Mount Nemo.

What began in September 2007 as a small outdoor benefit concert featuring PERL co-founder and two-time Juno winner Sarah Harmer and Grammy-nominated Barenaked Ladies, the "I Love The Escarpment" concert drew a sold-out crowd to the Johnston farm and raised funds for PERL. Gathering a year later on Sept. 20 at the same Mount Nemo farm, a larger crowd of nearly 800 music lovers tried to squeeze under a white tent for an unforgettable afternoon with Sarah Harmer and some of the nation's most respected musicians and vocalists.

Sharing the intimate stage with Harmer was a talented group of friends and industry peers that included Juno winner Derek Miller, music icon Bruce Cockburn and Grammy nominated Leslie Feist.



Down at Johnston's farm: the audience overflowed out of the tent.



From left: Juno award-winner and PERL co-founder Sarah Harmer at the second benefit concert, "I Love the Escarpment, Too!" was joint by Bruce Cockburn, Leslie Feist and Derek Miller. Below, Harmer with her band, Cockburn and far right, Feist.



The supportive audience enjoying the show.



Obvious concert highlights for the audience included Harmer's performance of "Escarpment Blues," a song penned about a proposed quarry, and witnessing music history when Harmer, Cockburn, Feist, Miller and friends took to the stage for the finale. For Harmer, PERL's executive committee and small army of volunteers, however, the event highlight most likely was the raising of funds and awareness.

Proceeds from the second annual "I Love The Escarpment, Too" benefit concert, raffle and auctions support PERL's ongoing campaign to stop Nelson Aggregates' 2004 application for a new 82-hectare quarry in the heart of Mount Nemo.

Located on the Niagara Escarpment and in Ontario's Greenbelt, the Mount Nemo area was once inhabited by Neutral Indians and is part of a designated UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. It is habitat to such species as the threatened Jefferson Salamander, the pileated woodpecker and the endangered butternut tree. The Mount Nemo plateau is also a point of origin for more than 20 tributaries.

The proposed quarry would be south of its existing one on No. 2 Sideroad and close to Harmer's childhood Mount Nemo home, a farm where her parents still reside. Limestone mined from the proposed quarry would be used in asphalt,

buildings, concrete and roads, all required to support development of the region. PERL proposes an alternative to the new quarry: increase asphalt reuse and recycling and take aggregate from places close to but not on the Escarpment.

PERL believes the proposed quarry threatens the Niagara Escarpment. It could remove significant wetlands, groundwater and disrupt the headwaters of the Grindstone Creek's two tributaries. Some key concerns include blasting, rehabilitation, wildlife displacement and the water supply.

PERL has more information at www.perlofburlington.org. In a re-

cent community forum organized by PERL, renowned architect Douglas Cardinal spoke of a vision for the Niagara Escarpment based on a cultural and natural heritage. Sharing this vision, PERL requested funding from the Burlington Mayor's Future Green Fund to carry out a scenario planning process that would transform and rehabilitate the existing 600-acre quarry and to form the development of a Natural Heritage System.

Linda Lee is a Burlington-based freelance writer who supports PERL and enjoys photographing and exploring the Bruce Trail and the Niagara Escarpment.

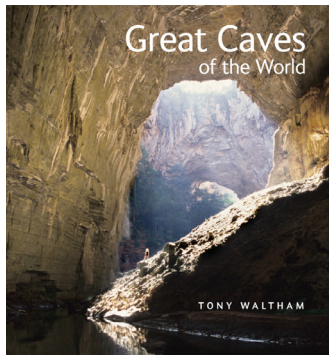
Book Views for December

Great Caves of the World

by Tony Waltham

One Canadian cave appears in this book, Castleguard Cave of B.C. The only safe time to visit it is in winter when meltwater stops flowing through it. Large, with varying and difficult passages, it takes at least **three days of caving to make a return trip** to the end.

Sterkfontein Cave of South Af-



rica is one of a few caves west of Johannesburg that have been called "the Cradle of Humankind" for being the site of one third of the world's known fossils of the **ancestors of humans**. The bones are thought to have been dropped by carnivores

around the open cave shafts, meaning that these early upright hominids probably came to a violent end.

Kentucky is home to Mammoth Cave, at nearly 370 miles, the **longest cave system in the world**. The passages are layered on four main levels, each one younger than the one above. The oldest, highest levels are at least 2.3 to 3.5 million years old.

The book contains many full-page, full-colour photographs of people exploring the caves, which provides needed perspectives to show the massive size of these underground environments. Some scenes look like they may have been shot on other planets.

Cavers are sure to feel restless when studying the book, but **anyone will be impressed by it**. GH

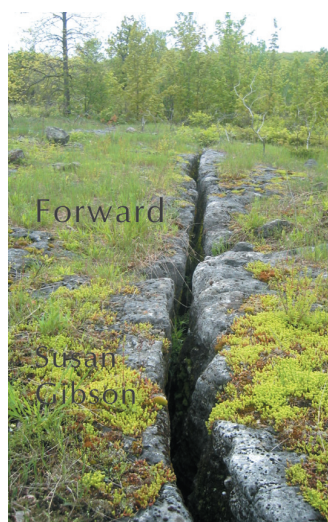
Firefly Books, 2008, hardcover, \$29.95

Forward

By Susan Gibson

With great force, Susan Gibson weaves her words through the his-

tory and the future of Ontario's landscape. Born in Toronto, this poet fled the city in the late '80s in search of her next "earthy adventure." Gibson spent the next **20 years in Grey-Bruce counties** where she watched the full moon "hold



hands with the shy, night air," and waited for "great drifting songs rising from limestone cliffs." Over her time there she developed a distinct voice for herself as a Canadian poet.

Gibson crafts her poetry into two sections using mostly free verse. The first section, "Georgian Bay," explores the necessity of reflection as well as **reverence for our natural world**. Here, Gibson's curiosity for all life forms becomes immediately evident, from her admiration of the ant's communal wisdom to the healing arms of an evergreen.

The second section, "Community," examines the many layers of communal membership, be it family, friends, situational, or otherwise. Gibson details the events of a **communal battle against Niagara Escarpment land developers** (which she won!) and reveals memories of fiery women and personal victories. Using Ontario's natural environment as a backdrop, Gibson discovers how belonging can often be as challenging as it is rewarding.

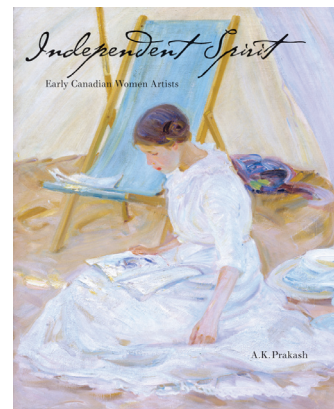
At a time when the environment has simply become a term that is riddled with pessimism, Gibson gives us a gentle reminder of our "rolling hills" and "enduring escarp-

ment." *Forward* is a quick and lovely read with thoughtful insight about "This, our only land." JB

The Ginger Press, 2008, softcover, \$13.95

Independent Spirit: Early Canadian Women Artists

By A.K. Prakash



What **a wonderful book**. An oversized full-colour collection of some of the work of women artists from 1834 to the present, this is both a useful reference and an entertaining book to browse and read through.

While some of the artists, Maud Lewis, Paraskeva Clark and of course Emily Carr may be familiar, many more are likely to be unknown by most people. This volume may change that. Colour plates of the works, many from private collections, introduce us to **the wealth of talent Canada can claim**.

Notes by A.K. Prakash, a prestigious art advisor and consultant, highlight each artist's career and explains what to appreciate in each featured work.

In addition, a separate section of the book summarizes the lives of each artist and includes quotations by or about them. Of particular delight is a remark by Ethel Seath, who lived from 1879 to 1963: **"Don't be shy, fill the pages, make a mess."**

Artists, collectors and those who enjoy paintings and sculpture will treasure this book. GH

Firefly Books, 2008, hardcover, \$75.00



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Guelph Organic Conference Guelph University Centre (Jan. 24-25)

Hamilton:

Downtown Hamilton BIA 20 Hughson St. S., Ste. 807

Hamilton Conservation Authority

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Milton:

Green Propeller Designs 251 Main St. E., Ste. 203

Royal LePage Meadowntowne Realty for Inge Winther 475 Main St. E.

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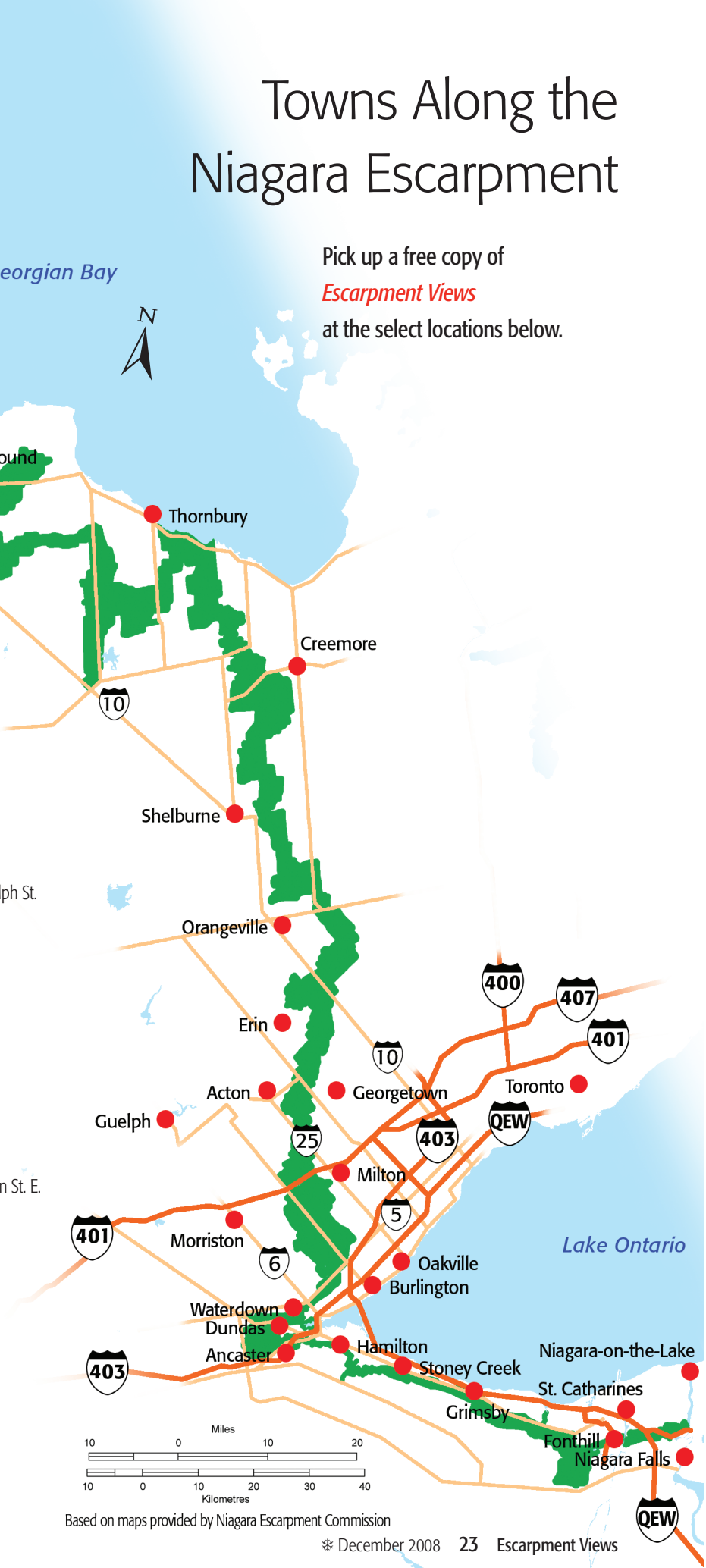
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Based on maps provided by Niagara Escarpment Commission

* December 2008 23 Escarpment Views

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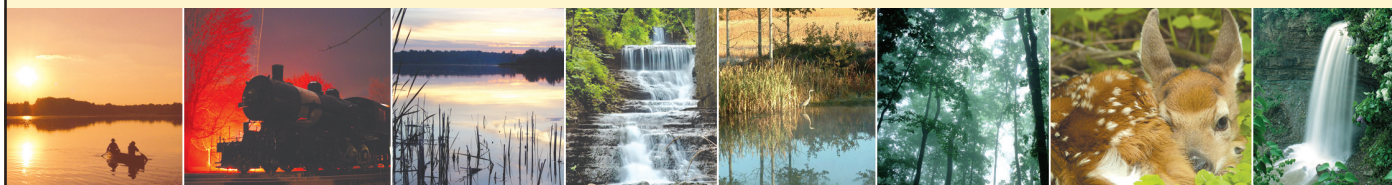


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