

Escarpment Views



Winter 2011

(December, January 2012, February)

**Special
Homes &
Holidays
Issue**

Reflecting
Niagara Escarpment
lifestyles & values

**Dundas Holiday House Tour:
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Escarpment Views

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Photo by Mike Davis



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View From the Editor's Desk: WINTER BEGINS OUR FIFTH YEAR

Our launch of the Autumn issue on Sept. 4 in partnership with the City of St. Catharines in Lakeside Park, Port Dalhousie, was a success despite threatening weather. We met many people who were delighted with the Carousel that we hope we've made a little more famous. We certainly heard from a lot of people about how much they've enjoyed it over the years.

We've now completed our fourth year of publishing, quite an accomplishment for any business in these uncertain economic times. To celebrate, we hosted a Customer Appreciation

Day in early October for advertisers and subscribers and were happy to lead a group in a hike along the Niagara Escarpment, with many people taking photos. This was followed by a hot buffet supper with beverages, and a draw for an Escarpment Views gift basket, which was won by Steve Baksa of Oakville. We're looking forward to hosting our fifth anniversary celebration next fall.

This winter is a time to dress warmly, get out in the bright sunshine and enjoy some traditional or new outdoor activities in the Escarpment area. With skiing, snowshoeing, tobogganing, snowboarding or simply hiking quiet forest trails, there's no need to hibernate. Until you want to warm back up and relax. There are saunas, steam baths and perhaps spas to toast yourself in. Perhaps you want to snuggle up near a fire and indulge in some delicious food.

We know of shops, big and small, all along the Niagara Escarpment, that are dedicated to offering the very best to eat and drink.

If you like to stay inside and putter around your home, or love to see how other people live, this issue has plenty to offer. **Our Special Homes & Holidays issue** takes you inside the long-running Dundas Holiday House Tour, and shows how some people decorate their own homes for Christmas. We've highlighted some of the most delightful ideas to replicate in your own space. Our Niagara Region contributor, writer-photographer Chris Mills, has a jaw-dropping feature article about a renovation that is almost unbelievable. This may be the most amazing before-and-after story I've ever seen! I still shake my head when I look at the photos. And in this issue we present our

first War of 1812-related article with a story by Adam Shoalts, about the stone house that John DeCou built near Thorold, and the historic role it played in the conflict with our U.S. neighbours.

With this winter issue that begins our fifth year of bringing you the wonders along the Niagara Escarpment, we wish you Merry Christmas or whatever holiday you observe, Happy New Year, and even a loving Valentine's Day! Look for us again in the Spring, if you don't see us out and about before then.

Gloria

Gloria
editor@EscarpmentViews.ca

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We just accidentally discovered *Escarpment Views* and are really impressed by it. The article "Soaring Turkey Vultures" is very informative, with the superb photography. We live near the edge of the Escarpment in Hamilton and love watching the vultures fly overhead or sitting in trees or cliffs. I looked through the whole publication and am impressed. When was this first published? Are back orders possible?

Marianne Schroeder, Hamilton

Editor's response: Thanks, Marianne! Our first issue was published early in 2008. Back issues are available for \$5.65 each, which includes HST. To order, email editor@EscarpmentViews.ca, write to Escarpment Views, 50 Ann St., Georgetown ON L7G 2V2 or go to www.EscarpmentViews.ca and the bottom of the page "Where to Get Copies of Escarpment Views."



Your article [Touring for Beauty and Creativity, Autumn 2011] was fantastic. For decades, artists have been the ones to discover undervalued real estate gems in both urban and rural areas, and turn them into trendy locations. Today, farms along the Niagara Escarpment, with their affordable land and inspirational vistas of sky, hills and lakes make the area ideal for creative endeavours. Once the studios are opened, the artists are benefitting from rubber-tire tourists who enjoy a day of discovering and buying unique

works directly from the artists. A proliferation of studio tours as well as articles, such as the one in your magazine help point the way. Then the excitement of return visits and commissions are making it possible for artists to ride out the current economic squeeze. I very much appreciate your excellent writing and Mike's photographs. I know David was delighted as well.

Eleanor Brownridge, Nottawa

The PC Party did not respond to the election questions and should have but, sometimes we lose sight of the facts and need to give credit where credit is due. The PC Party, while in office, created the Niagara Escarpment Commission, without which, we wouldn't be discussing this nor would the Bruce Trail likely exist.

Don Sargent, Caledon

The recent issues have been especially interesting and Mike - your photos are first rate. Gloria, I really enjoyed your Collingwood tour. Too bad you had to do it!

Tom Yarmon, Toronto



Enjoyed the article on the antique Lakeside Park carousel but your list of other antique carousels left out the heritage train and carousel located in North Bay.

Fred Kennedy, Meaford

Editor's response: For his article, we asked author Patrick Wentzel to focus on the carousels in southern Ontario that are relatively close to the Niagara Escarpment.

Peace of Mind

With all the talk of mega quarries, landowners legitimately worry about their own land. After decades of care, they want to ensure the next owner will have the same respect for the nature they've protected which is part of a much larger ecosystem.

One thing a landowner can do which will bind future generations is called a "conservation" agreement. Signed and registered on title, the agreement gives a land trust like Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC) the right to ensure all future landowners follow the rules. Ontario's Conservation Land Act sets out the legal authority for such agreements and allows the Minister of Natural Resources to back up the land trust if a future landowner breaks the rules.

Often landowners select rules which prohibit commercial extraction of gravel or water or the construction of additional dwellings. The agreement usually allows existing uses like farming and woodlot management to continue, but limits development to a specified "residential" zone on the property.

An appraiser will determine the value of the property before and after such an agreement. The value is often reduced by about \$1,000 per acre, allowing EBC to issue an income tax receipt for \$100,000. Such a receipt saves \$40,000 to \$46,000 at tax time. By reducing spousal taxes, RRSP taxes or capital gains over five years, most landowners see income tax savings. It often allows the next generation to take over a property without prohibitive taxes. The 30 landowners who have given EBC a conservation agreement consider it a WIN-WIN.

**Bob Barnett, executive director
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Events Along the Rock



On Aug. 27, David Migwans of M'Chigeeng, Manitoulin Island, danced at a powwow at Zhiibaahaasing First Nation. His regalia includes eagle feathers, porcupine fur, and horsehair to honour his father who served with horses in W.W.II.



Patrick Wentzel of the National Carousel Association, Bonnie Cameron of the Friends of the Carousel and Gloria Hildebrandt, editor of *Escarpment Views* at the launch of the Autumn issue celebrating the Lakeside Park Carousel, Port Dalhousie, Sept. 4. Patrick wrote the Carousel article.



Brigitte Schreyer of Burlington was the first artist to have a solo exhibition at the new Holcim Gallery in the Milton Centre for the Arts. Her show "Travels of the Heart" was held Sept. 6 to 25. Schreyer was the subject of a feature article in the Winter 2008, premier issue of *Escarpment Views*.



Jackie Jennings with daughters Breeana and Brooklyn, and Barbara Tonelli with son Blake, all of Georgetown, enjoyed the antique Lakeside Park Carousel at the launch of the Autumn issue on Sept. 4.



NDP leader Andrea Horwath campaigned at the Locke Street Festival in Hamilton on Sept. 10. Note the copy of *Escarpment Views* in her hand.



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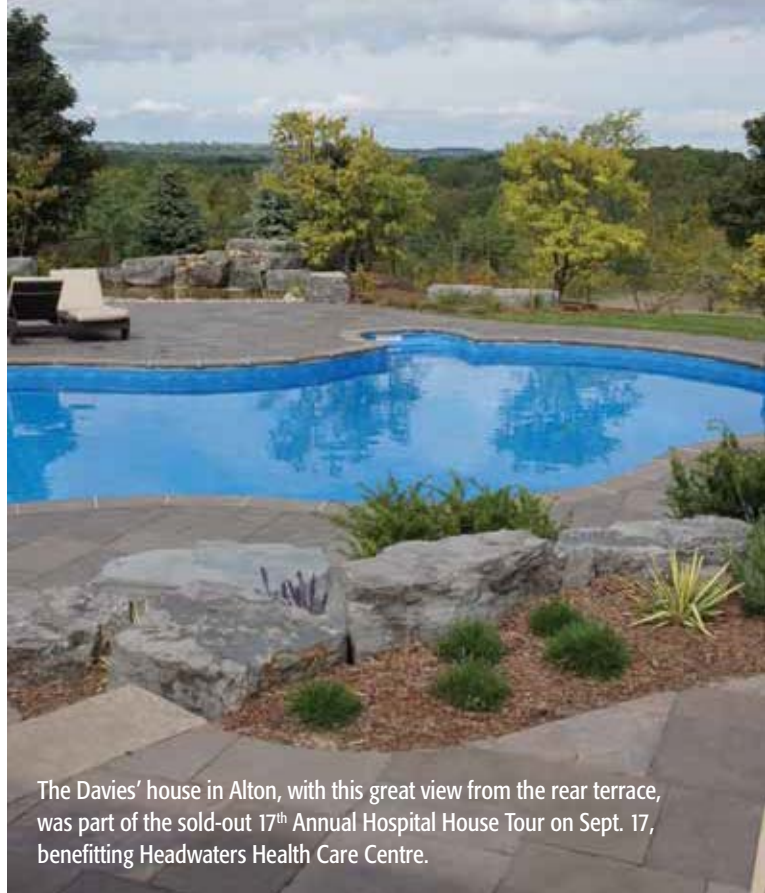
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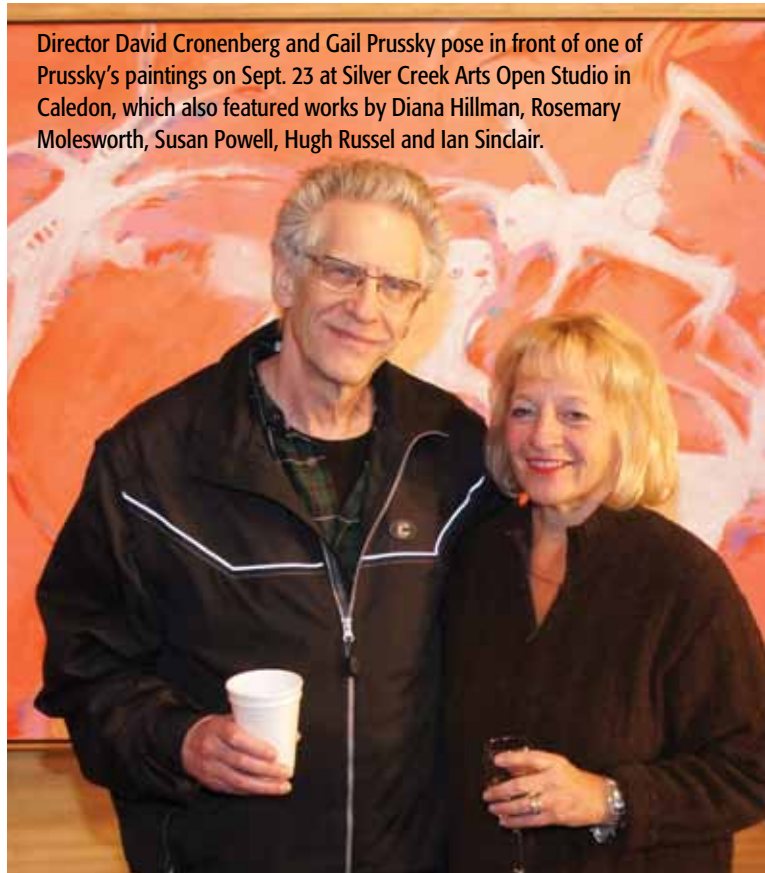
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The Davies' house in Alton, with this great view from the rear terrace, was part of the sold-out 17th Annual Hospital House Tour on Sept. 17, benefitting Headwaters Health Care Centre.

Director David Cronenberg and Gail Prussky pose in front of one of Prussky's paintings on Sept. 23 at Silver Creek Arts Open Studio in Caledon, which also featured works by Diana Hillman, Rosemary Molesworth, Susan Powell, Hugh Russel and Ian Sinclair.





Telling Tales Festival at Westfield Heritage Village on Sept. 18 featured more than 25 children's authors, illustrators, storytellers and musicians entertaining crowds and raising funds for Hamilton-area literacy programs.



Hamilton mayor Bob Bratina toasted the crowd at the Downtown Hamilton Localicious Experience launch party on Sept. 20 at the Art Gallery of Hamilton. Participating restaurants were Acclamation, Bistro Parisien, Boo's Bistro, Capri, Dalina's, The Flavour of Himalaya, Incognito, La Cantina, La Piazza, One Duke, Nino's Ristorante, Tailgate Charlies. Puddicombe Estate wines, Nickel Brook beer and Hero Mobile Café hot beverages were offered.

Holiday Tradition: Dundas House Tour

Photographs by Mike Davis Words by Gloria Hildebrandt





A Georgian landmark house in the heart of old Dundas, this heritage house has a Mission interior that David Smith and Brenda Copps-Smith complement with cherished antiques and traditional décor. A few ornaments and seasonal linen napkins set the table for Christmas feasts.



The vast living room of "the Mushroom House" invites a party for Christmas. An unusual 12-sided house built on a central supporting "stem," it is now owned by Hugh Clark and Carolyn Williamson, art lovers and award-winning gardeners.

St. James' Anglican Church in Dundas has organized a Christmas house tour for more than 35 years. Claimed as the original "holiday house tour," the annual event raises funds for charity while giving visitors access to lovely, interesting Dundas houses decked out for Christmas entertaining.

Houses on the tour are not canvases for professional decorators, however. They are decorated by their owners, although skilful friends might help. The tour has become such a popular community tradition that homeowners ask to take part. Relative newcomer to Dundas, John Janisse jokes that he and his partner moved there in order to become part of the tour. Their house was included last year and is featured in the following pages. Here are views of the interiors of most of the houses that participated in last year's tour. One of the six houses on the tour was unfortunately not available for us to photograph.

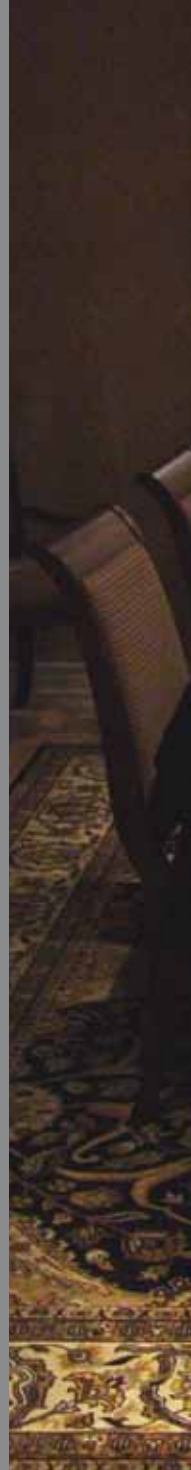
In addition to touring the houses, you can enjoy refreshments, music, an art display, and purchase special home-made food and gift items, all at St. James' Anglican Church, 137 Melville St., Dundas. Proceeds of the tour support Dundas Community Services, the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, and St. Matthew's House.



The fine elegance of the master bathroom in Arlene and John Drysdale's house plays up a small Christmas tree. The Drysdales completely renovated and expanded a 1958 bungalow into an open-plan luxurious home, doing most of the work themselves.

**THIS YEAR'S TOUR WILL TAKE PLACE SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, FROM NOON TO 5 P.M.
TICKETS ARE \$20 AND ARE AVAILABLE BY CALLING ST. JAMES' AT 905 627 1424.**

The great room of Scott and Marg Garner's house has 22-foot ceilings, a wood-burning fireplace and views from the Niagara Escarpment onto Dundas. Warren Booth of Booth Furniture in Dundas decorated the mantel, playing up the bronze colours in the room.





Black magic in the Garner house. A dark dining room lets the guests and the dishes shine.

A favourite twig stag, in the lit-up back yard of Chris Grabiec and John Janisse's house, looks at the festive patio table. John is happy to report seeing real deer in their front garden on occasion, even though they eat some plants.

Traffic-stopping gift boxes!
Plexiglass cubes wrapped in ribbons and glowing with seasonal lights brighten up Chris and John's front garden.



Sibling English cocker spaniels Cody and Cailey perfectly match the décor of a bedroom in the Drysdale house.



Continued on page 26

The Ultimate Antique: An 1830 Whitby House Relocated to Queenston

Words & Photos by Chris Mills

In October 1812, the British army under Major General Isaac Brock lobbed cannon balls and mortar from Queenston Heights on the Niagara Escarpment in an orderly attempt to dissuade U.S. invaders from landing on Canadian soil.

He got shot for his troubles.

Today, Bev and Doug consider it the perfect baptism of fire for their home.





The house before. Almost 25 years ago, this wreck in Whitby was surrounded by a new development and destined to be eliminated. Doug and Bev of Queenston bought it with the help of Mel Shakespeare, who brokers heritage houses, and it was moved for restoration.

The old house renewed, restored, and renovated. The rear of the house in spring, overlooking the Niagara River and the Queenston Docks.

If you step into Bev and Doug's home in this southeast corner of Niagara-on-the-Lake, a sense emerges of having stepped back a century. But you've actually stepped back almost 180 years.

More than 20 years ago, the Queenston couple found the house in Whitby, surrounded by new development and up for sale by the developer.

"I hate to see these old houses just torn down, so it's great to actually save one of them from the bulldozers," says Bev, an antique dealer specializing in vintage textiles and quilts.

They purchased it in its entirety through Mel Shakespeare, a broker of recycled historic houses, numbered every brick and beam, packed it into a

couple of 45-foot trailers, and tucked it all into a warehouse while they sought a place to rebuild.

They eventually bought a plot of almost 1.5 acres that overlooks the Niagara River in the Village of Queenston, and reassembled the house with the skills of local millworkers, masons and carpenters.

The Ultimate Antique



The front sitting room with one of the several fireplaces in the house.



Something new: the sunroom addition has walls of windows, a ceramic tile floor and a walkout to the slate patio.

"We took our time with it, so it was definitely a labour of love," says Doug, who contracted the workmen and finishers to ensure the authenticity of every aspect of the reconstruction. Bev researched and conducted the decoration, including a full year painting.

"We've always been great admirers of antiques and old houses, and we liked the idea of restoring one," she says. "After all, a house has to be the ultimate antique."

Constructed originally in 1830 by a prosperous Pennsylvanian, Robert Schooley, the house saw its share of history, including as a sanctuary for Robert Schooley Jr. who hid from the British following his activities in the unsuccessful McKenzie Rebellion of 1837.

On the Escarpment

Relocated to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1989, the house now overlooks Queenston Landing, the riverside docks where in the 18th and 19th centuries the site provided the staging location for everything that moved down the St. Lawrence into central North America. It's situated a few hundred yards from the Bruce Trail, from the site of Brock's death, from the redan platform where a mortar fought the American invaders, and from William Lyon MacKenzie's original printery, home of one of the seven oldest working printers in the world.

The property bears all the benefits of the northern reaches of the Carolinian forest, replete with pin oak, Kentucky coffee tree, sweet gumwood, sycamore, beech, maple, spruce and white pine mixed with gardens of wild flowers and a patch of apple, peach and pear trees.

Starting with the wreck they faced, it's difficult to fathom how they accomplished what stands today. But perusing such sources as heritage home magazines, Doug unquestionably knows his house.

"The Wilderness Georgian design (called Federal in the



The master bedroom has a side door to the huge balcony that overlooks the expansive back yard and the Niagara River.



The authentic kitchen was entirely restored except for the original floor, which was too worn to be retained. The owners did, however, reclaim all its original nails.

Continued on page 28



Rattlesnake Point, Milton
Photograph by Branimir Zlamalik

DeCou's House of Heroes

By Adam Shoalts

Photos by Mike Davis except where noted

In the heart of the Niagara Peninsula lie the half-forgotten stone ruins of an ancient farmhouse. The ruins sit nestled among some grand old hardwoods and not far from a picturesque waterfall. This once proud home was built some two centuries ago in what was still by and large a trackless wilderness. The location was ideal: the rushing waters of the nearby creek promised to be good for industry. Just to the north was the imposing Niagara Escarpment, and beyond that in the distance were the waters of Lake Ontario.



The DeCou House monument with commemorative plaques. The large bronze plaque gives the story of John DeCou.

Visitors to the stone ruins today would likely not imagine it to be the setting of some of the most dramatic encounters in Canadian history. The ruins may not be as grand as those of ancient Greece or Rome, but the story they tell is every bit as full of glory, romance, and adventure. For it was here, on this very spot, that some of the most heroic figures in the incredible War of 1812 crossed paths.

The house belonged to the intrepid pioneer John DeCou. DeCou had been born in Vermont in 1766, and like most of Upper Canada's early European settlers, arrived here as a Loyalist refugee after the American Revolution ended with British defeat in 1783. The young DeCou explored the forested Niagara Peninsula and worked with a surveying crew before deciding upon a location for his new home, a home that would

become the stage on which history would unfold.

In his journal, DeCou recorded some of the adventures he faced while exploring the area and clearing the land for his homestead. Black bears, elk, wolves, cougars, bobcats, and vast numbers of snakes were just some of the wildlife lurking in the forest. DeCou wrote that one day while working near his homestead, he killed a huge black snake that had

startled him in the woods. Later, after he had finished his cabin, to his horror he found that dozens of venomous rattlesnakes moved into it. The rattlesnakes were so numerous that DeCou resorted to sleeping in a hammock strung up inside the cabin.

Snakes aside, DeCou selected an excellent spot for his homestead just above the limestone cliffs of the Niagara Escarpment, and a short distance from a scenic



The remains of the DeCou House, shown at almost the same angle as the historical photos.



The DeCou house before it was destroyed by fire in 1950. PHOTO BY C. P. MEREDITH, COURTESY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA.

waterfall that now bears his name. However, DeCou's decision to select this locale was less driven by aesthetics than practicality: the creek was a perfect site for the construction of a sawmill. DeCou's mills flourished in the 1790s, enabling him to discard his original log cabin and construct an elegant two-storey stone house. This new home, a mansion by the standards of pioneer farmers, may also have been a wedding gift to DeCou's young bride, Catherine Docksteder, whom he married in 1798. In building their home, DeCou



DeCou House monument from the rear.

made use of the area's abundant limestone found along the nearby Escarpment. Inside the thick walls of their new house, the DeCous would raise 11 children.

DeCou and the War of 1812

But all was not to be tranquil in DeCou's life after the travails of the American Revolution. War loomed on the horizon again: in June of 1812 the American government looked upon Canada as ripe for conquest and declared war on England. For the next 2 1/2 years, Canada would endure numerous American invasions, with the Niagara Peninsula becoming a key battleground in the war.

DeCou's prominence as a local leader and his stone house's strategic location led to its use as a makeshift British army storehouse. DeCou, himself a captain, commanded a company of the 2nd Lincoln Militia. In the spring of 1813, events took a turn for the worse when invad-

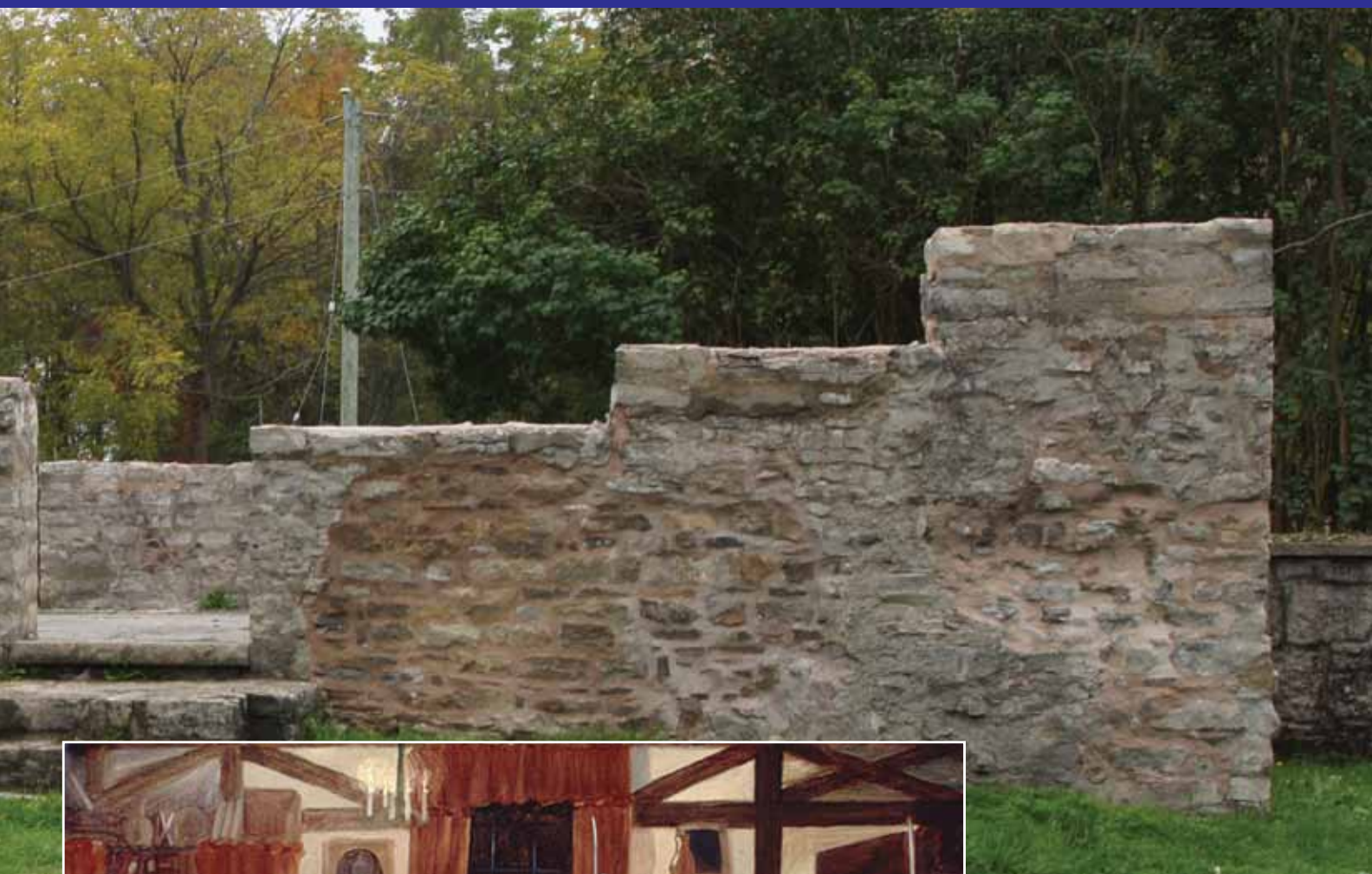


Spring at the DeCou House in 1925, before the plants are out in full leaf. Note the person on the balcony. PHOTO COURTESY NIAGARA FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY.

ing American armies succeeded in driving the British from Niagara. In this retreat DeCou was captured and his prized house apparently looted by American troops. Now a prisoner of war, he was sent to the United States and incarcerated in Philadelphia. But not content to sit

out the remainder of the war as a spectator, DeCou daringly escaped from prison. Suffering from a broken foot, he somehow managed to elude guards, and aided by Quakers, eventually made his way back to Canada, where he rejoined his regiment for the remainder of the war.

While DeCou was a prisoner, his stone house had returned to British hands to be put to use in the defence of Upper Canada. The British officer and skilled guerrilla commander James Fitzgibbon, whom it was said had been personally promoted from the ranks by Sir Isaac Brock



This oil painting by Lorne Kidd Smith depicts the meeting in DeCou's house, between Laura Secord and British commander James Fitzgibbon. Secord walked from Queenston to DeCou's house at Beaver Dams to warn of a surprise attack. Photo courtesy Library and Archives Canada.

himself, utilized the house as his base of operations throughout 1813. He commanded an elite unit known as the "Bloody Boys." They discarded the traditional scarlet red uniforms of the Brit-

ish and wore subdued colourings to better blend in with the surrounding countryside. From their base at DeCou's house, Fitzgibbon and his troops harassed the larger occupying American forces

with hit-and-run tactics.

Fitzgibbon was not the only local hero using DeCou's house during this tumultuous time. The young cavalry officer and commander of the Niagara Light Dra-

goons, William Hamilton Merritt, also used DeCou's house as a rendezvous point. Merritt would later gain fame as the builder of the first Welland Canal. Another famous visitor to the property was the enigmatic half-Scottish, half-Cherokee Mohawk leader John Norton. Norton fought in almost every major battle that occurred along the Niagara frontier, and would subsequently pen one of the best first-hand accounts of the War of 1812.

Laura Secord's Destination

Most famously of all, DeCou's house was Laura Secord's destination on her epic hike through the fields and backwoods of Niagara. She fled her home in American-occupied Queenston, some 28 kilometres away, in order to warn Fitzgibbon of a planned surprise attack on his headquarters at DeCou House. With the intelligence

Continued on page 30

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Attack



The fine woodwork of the Smith house is highlighted by simple evergreens and key decorations.

Does your community hold a Christmas house tour we should know about? Write to us at editor@EscarpmentViews.ca or 50 Ann St., Georgetown ON L7G 2V2, with some details. Perhaps we'll feature your tour next time!



In the Garners' kitchen, a cabinet that stores silver and black party ware year-round, only needs a few glorious baubles to become festive.

Continued from
page 15

Ideas Worth Copying!

These Dundas homeowners abound in creativity. Here are some delightful ideas, both simple and elaborate, that are worth considering for your home.

Very special Christmas teddy bears curl up to read *The Night Before Christmas* in the Smith house. The tag explains that the bears were created from the mink fur coat of a great grandmother. Initials on the feet commemorate Nora Louise, who passed away in 1992. "If she knew what happened to her fur coat, she'd roll in her grave!" fears her grandson David. Yet most would see this as a fine example of loving reuse.

Every year, Brenda Copps-Smith makes a unique set of Christmas tree ornaments by hand. Always searching for new ideas, each October she starts crafting about 10 pieces. The sets often represent something that happened during the year.

Fine cheese under glass, nestled among winter greens, invites nibbling and sipping wine in Chris Grabiec and John Janisse's elegant kitchen.

As the Drysdale family did, invite Mrs. Claus to bake a batch of cookies by preparing a counter for her. **EV**



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Continued from page 19

U.S.), has a very symmetrical ordered look about it with Greek Revival touches in the entry, plus heavy soffits and frieze on the outer trim," he says, reciting details with evident pride. "That frieze has 14 separate layers of wood to create the look."

Accurate Restoration

Original beams, four original brick fireplaces and wood mantels, doors, panels and trim, survived, as did much of the original pine flooring.

"We weren't able to use the original kitchen floor because it was so worn, but we managed to harvest all of the original nails from it," says Doug.

Original windows were also replaced, but they found a Menonite manufacturer in St. Jacobs that specializes in vintage windows and replicated everything except the original transom over the front entry that required re-blown glass.

"The biggest challenge was the amount of time spent finding historic reproductions wherever we could," says Doug. For instance, a local blacksmith manufactured all the window locks and railing hangers.

"Because of all the historic homes in Niagara-on-the-Lake, we were able to find tradesmen familiar with the work done back then. Our mason had worked on the restoration of Fort George, so he knew exactly what to expect.

"We were very particular about making an accurate restoration, but at the same time worked to make it warm and livable. The fabulous location makes the two work well into one."

"We were fortunate in that the home's only ever had three owners so it's never been detrimentally renovated," says Doug.

One concession to modernity was the bathrooms that underwent serious updating, although they managed to find



It is a great magazine. I gave subscriptions to friends when it launched and they just love it! And they in turn gave subscriptions to their family members. It's a great idea for a stocking stuffer.

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This is the view of the Niagara River from the balcony off the master bedroom. Eagles fly along the river.

a wood and brass overhead pull-chain toilet.

Lighting also had to be updated with potlights in the kitchen. However, the rest of the electrical lights are converted gas lamps. The basement is finished, but original posts, beams and floorboard stand out.

During the reconstruction phase, Bev and Doug needed a place to store everything on the property, so they constructed a 24-by-36-foot coach house prior to the move that now doubles as a garage and skylighted studio.

The only other addition is the back sunroom and slate patio deck -- a nod to the architectural influence of Niagara-on-the-Lake -- that overlooks the river. Four months of the year they can watch bald eagles moving up and down the waterway.

The story goes that during the 1812 battle to gain a foothold in Queenston, the Americans sent a team to scale the heavily treed cliffs that overlook the river in order to attack the British mortar bombarding them. Once the mortar was turned on them, the British were forced to mount a comparable force up the cliff to recapture it.

Looking out over Queenston Docks from Bev and Doug's property, you can envision it all almost in their backyard, although the riverbank now houses their boathouse, and flowers occupy their garden, not cannon.

But in Queenston, history lives in the backyards and streets. It's hard to turn a corner without a building from 1795 or church from 1879 crossing your view.

Doug says, "It's been a great experience and we feel really privileged to have been here." **EV**

Chris Mills is a writer/photographer in the Niagara region. He can be found at chrismills.ca.

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DeCou's House of Heroes



Upper DeCew Falls, named after John DeCou who used the water in the 1790s to power a sawmill, is difficult to access and photograph from below. Morningstar Mill is perched at the top of the falls.

Continued from page 25

she provided, FitzGibbon and his Native allies were able to pull off an unlikely victory over a larger American force at the Battle of Beaver Dams. The encounter between Secord and FitzGibbon became the stuff of legend, and their meeting inside DeCou's home has since been depicted in several idealized paintings.

After the war, DeCou continued to serve in the militia,

and was one of the original promoters of the Welland Canal. However, the eventual construction of the same canal contributed to the partial drying up of the streams that powered DeCou's mills. Embittered, in 1834 he moved away from his stone house and resettled near the Grand River. He died there in 1855.

Sadly, DeCou's house was destroyed by fire in 1950, and has lain in ruins ever since. The



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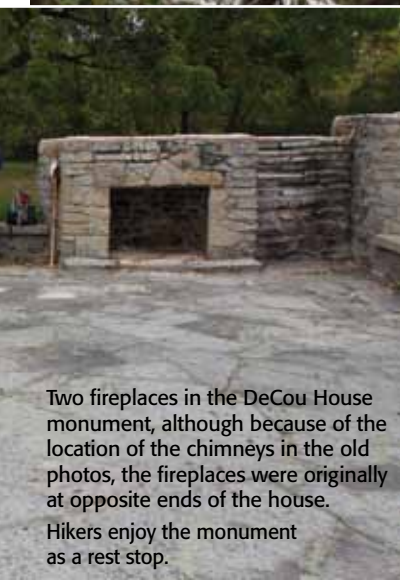
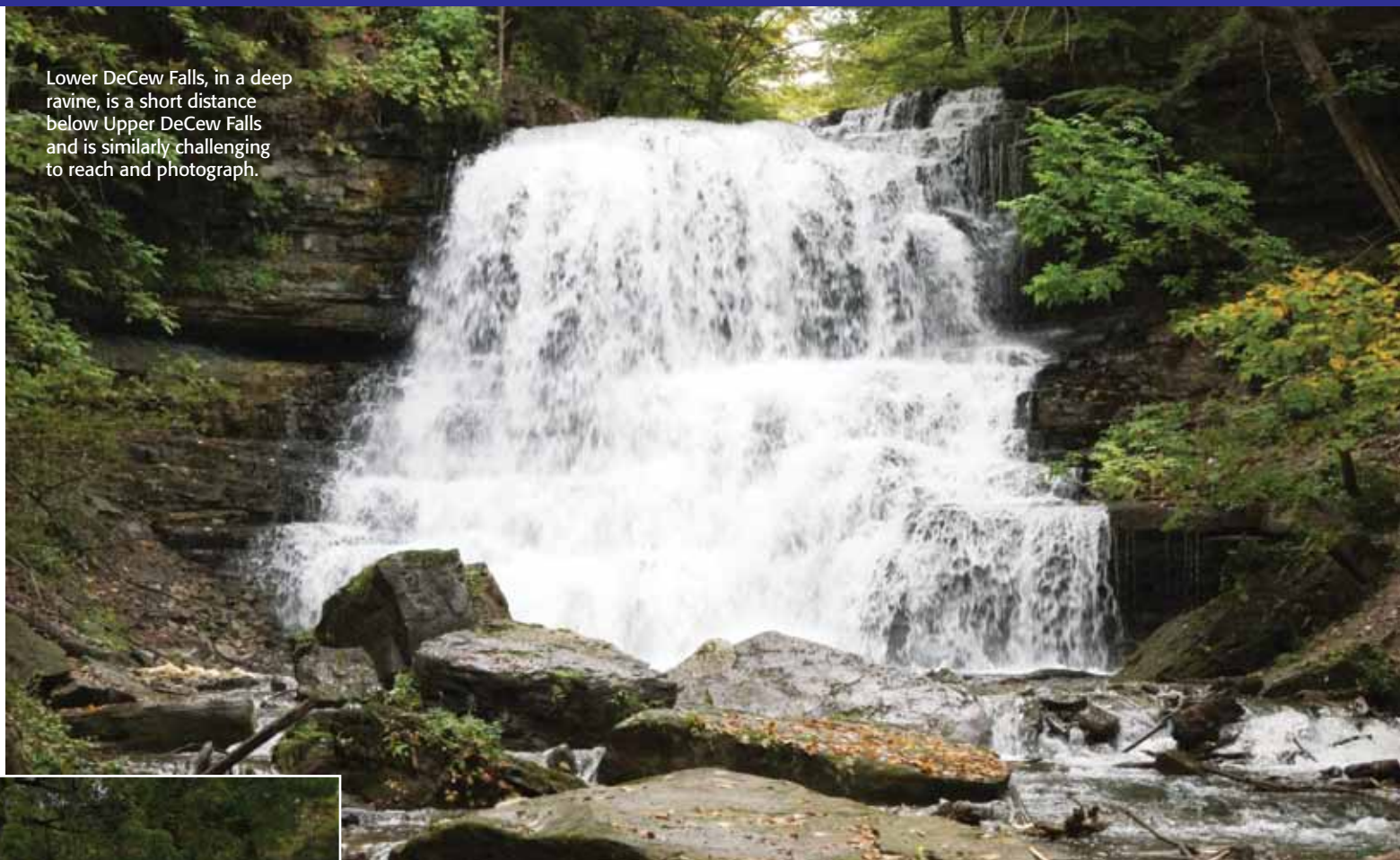
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Lower DeCew Falls, in a deep ravine, is a short distance below Upper DeCew Falls and is similarly challenging to reach and photograph.



Two fireplaces in the DeCew House monument, although because of the location of the chimneys in the old photos, the fireplaces were originally at opposite ends of the house. Hikers enjoy the monument as a rest stop.

area around the site is now a city park that is accessible to the public at no charge and is a great place for a hike, family picnic, or to just silently contemplate the storied history of DeCew's ruined house. **EV**

Adam Shoalts, an accomplished explorer and a contributor to Canadian Geographic magazine, is pursuing a Ph.D. in the history of explorers. His website is www.adamshoalts.com.

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Misty's View of PERFECT MASHED POT



While at my local supermarket, deciding between using yellow fleshed or white fleshed potatoes for a recent Thanksgiving catering, I ran into a stranger who remembered me from last year – same pile

of potatoes, same conundrum – how to make the best mashed potatoes to anchor the traditional family feast. She tapped me on the shoulder enthusiastically and reminded me that I was the “mashed potato expert” she spoke to the last time she made turkey.

Though produce-department fame made me blush, I was interested in learning how well my advice had actually panned out. Triumph was the answer. I had solved her problem. She no longer feared her relatives picking through the mash for lumps, leaving cold clods on the side of the plate, or waving a soupy bowl of spuds onto the next diner.

I was happy to help, remembering with all honesty how many disasters I'd experienced as a novice cook. One time during a prolonged visit to my sister and brother-in-law's place in France, we used a blender to whip up our potatoes thinking that the aeration would make them fluffy. The wall-paper paste that resulted from this innovation horrified us! How was it that we could make exquisite soufflés, but not a basic potato dish?

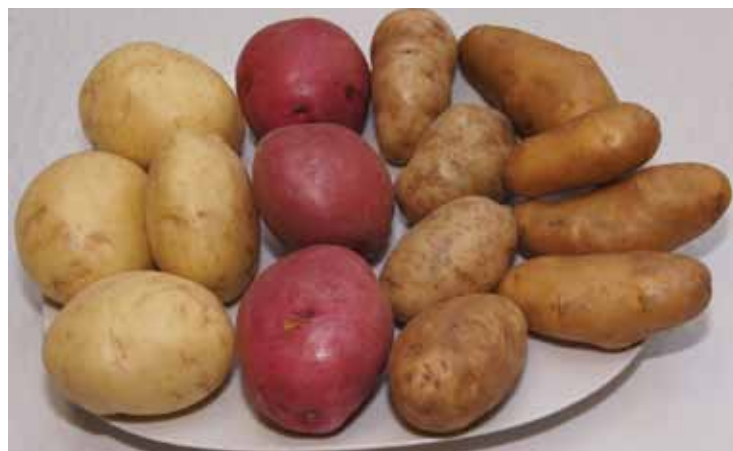
The answer lies on the home front. My mother, whose wedding photo shows her 20-inch waist, was likely one of the earliest

“anti-carb” fanatics alive; we rarely saw potatoes in our house, and if we did they came from a box. She always insisted that as a contemporary of Princess Grace of Monaco, she

was proud to have mostly Metrecal, Diet Fresca and Chanel #5 in the fridge, like Grace apparently did during the early days of her marriage. Low-cal dressing and broiled filet



Misty Ingraham's mother Mary in her wedding gown in 1953, with her 20-inch waist, partly the result of avoiding potatoes. The wedding reception was at the Tamahaac Club in Ancaster.



Yukon Gold, Russet and White potatoes, sourced from Foodland. At right, very local food: Long German Yellow potatoes, exact name unknown, from seed potatoes harvested annually by Charles Hildebrandt from his Escarpment garden.

PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

mignon yes; pasta, potatoes and pie no.

So I get it. Assuming that everyone is genetically disposed to mashed-potato-making is very much like assuming that all girls play with dolls and all boys play with action figures. Also, people have gaps in knowledge for all sorts of reasons and for all sorts of things...don't get me started on the acquisition of computer knowledge...

Anyway, here are the life lessons in mashed-potato-making that I learned from my chef husband, the most consistent, reliable and tuber-sensitive expert to whom I owe all of my current knowledge.

How to Make Perfect Mashed Potatoes

- Start with good potatoes containing few 'eyes' and little exterior damage.
- Yukon Gold potatoes are popular now, but white potatoes have their merits too.
- Peel or carve away (also called turning) the exterior skin, eyes, bruises etc.
- **Equal-sized potatoes are key – aim to create medium-large pieces.**
- Store in cold water prior to cooking to prevent oxidization.
- When ready to cook, place potatoes in a large, heavy-based pot with lid.
- Cover with cold water.
- Add salt until the water tastes like the sea - swish it around and get the taste right.
- Bring to a boil and then turn down the heat to achieve a medium-low boil. Partially cover with the lid.
- Keep an eye on your potatoes, particularly after about 20 minutes. Make sure they are gently boiling not simmering. Test for doneness with the tip of a sharp paring knife.
- The potatoes are done when the knife falls easily from the center of the largest potatoes. Test about five potatoes before deciding to drain them.

Here comes the crucial part!

- **Drain and return to the pot immediately.** Then mash the potatoes using a good masher and elbow grease. This is the phase where you can prevent lumps. **Get all of the potatoes evenly and thoroughly crushed before adding any liquid ingredients,** since crushing a lump in solution is virtually impossible.
- Pre-heat your milk, butter and seasonings so that they do not cool down your potatoes- a brilliant, yet simple idea.
- Add your liquid mixture a little at a time and wait until the potatoes absorb it before adding any more.
- Don't flood your spuds.
- Taste your mash a few times before deciding whether to adjust the seasoning. Ask a family member to verify the taste too.
- Finely ground white pepper creates an invisible, delicious zip to your mash.
- Freshly-cracked black pepper should be added by the guests themselves as a topping. Adding it to the mash can make it gray or dirty looking.
- Consider adding sour cream to a drier mash for a tangy flavour.
- Be careful to cut your hot liquid ratio down if adding sour cream to finish your potatoes.
- Finally, add fresh herbs like chives, parsley, or tarragon at the last minute since they will quickly become a khaki colour.



The colour inside: both yellow- and white-fleshed potatoes can become perfect mashed potatoes. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

Once you have nailed making memorable mashed potatoes a few times you can stress less about formal family roasts. So, focus on your spuds at the most crucial moments since everyone loves a tender spoonful of perfect mashed potatoes. Your cooking will become unforgettable too.

Misty Ingraham and Bill Sharpe, an instructor at Liaison College Hamilton, own the catering business The Portable Feast at Home.

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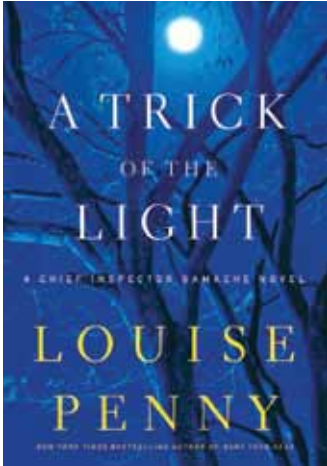
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A Trick of the Light

By Louise Penny

Picture it: a crackling fire, the winter winds blowing, a favourite libation at your side, and you, curled up with Chief Inspector Armand Gamache of the Sûreté du Québec. In *A Trick of the Light* the Inspector investigates the murder of Lillian Dyson, an art critic, whose caustic reviews have ruined many promising careers. Gamache and his assistant Jean Guy Beauvoir sift through the secrets of the art community while facing their own personal demons. Louise Penny's strength is her ability to engage your senses: you can taste the food in the corner bistro and feel the warmth of the fire in the local inn. This is the seventh in the series, however it can be read as a stand-alone novel. Just make sure you read the whole series; it's goodness and evil that is visceral!

Minotaur Books, 2011, \$27.99

Reviewed by Nancy Frater
BookLore, Orangeville



Hot Art

by Joshua Knelman

Who knew that art theft is the fourth largest criminal activity in the world after drugs, weapons and money laundering? Joshua Knelman has written a fascinating work of investigative journalism into art theft around the world. This kind of theft comprises not only paintings but furniture, sculpture, antiquities, silver, china, chandeliers and other museum-quality pieces. Knelman travels to the U.S., Egypt, England, Montreal and Toronto to interview art dealers, museum curators, lawyers, detectives and of course, criminals.

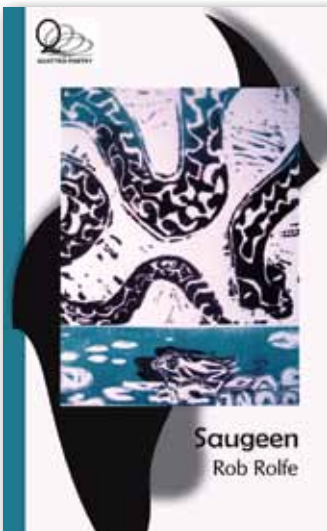
There are few resources worldwide dedicated to art theft – Interpol, Scotland Yard, the FBI, detec-

tives in Los Angeles and Montreal and a few other individuals. Knelman connects the thieves to art dealers and auction houses where stolen pieces are “laundered” and might not reappear for generations. One of the most colourful characters is Paul, a criminal from England who is now “retired.” He says that art theft of famous paintings is “headache art,” not smart and not what the majority of art theft is about. Most art theft involves stolen items under \$10,000 that are easily passed into the market without being traced.

This is really an exciting, well written and informative read.

Douglas & McIntyre, 2011, \$29.95

Reviewed by Catherine Randall
Curiosity House Books & Gallery, Creemore



Saugeen

by Rob Rolfe

Rob Rolfe, who divides his time between Toronto and Wiarton, has published a third collection of poetry, fittingly entitled *Saugeen* as in it he pays tribute to the area.

The Saugeen Territory once comprised the traditional lands of the first nations Saugeen Ojibwa. These lands extended from the base of the Saugeen Peninsula to the area now known as the Bruce Peninsula. But from 1836, through government coercion and a series of bad-faith treaties, the Saugeen Ojibwa were confined to the present-day reserves of Cape Croker and Saugeen Chief's Point. The Saugeen people were also ceded the entirety of the Manitoulin Island “in perpetuity.”

Never shying away from dark moments, Rolfe's collection is a

haunting combination of beautiful prose-poems and short verse poems that are akin to extended haiku. The prose poems are often exquisite character sketches, bringing to mind Victorian miniature portraits. They tend to honour individuals who at first glance may not seem worthy of notice, yet whose essence is so

vividly evoked, both in youth and old age, in just a few words, that you may think of them for days. Look too for the beautiful pen and ink drawings by Patti Wakefield that stand as gateways to each section of the book.

Quattro Books, 2011, \$16.95

Reviewed by Hazel Lyder
The Downtown Bookstore, Owen Sound



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Dec. 3, 10, 17 **'Twas the Night Before Christmas**

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Dec. 10 **40 Years – A Glorious Candlelight Christmas**

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Dec. 18 **A Christmas Day in the Country**

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Dec. 24 **Christmas Eve 5-course menu**

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Dec. 31 **New Year's Eve Gala Dinner and Dance**

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Dec. 31 **New Year's Eve Tasting Menu in 'cabin,'**

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Jan. 1 **New Year's Day Brunch, restaurant85**

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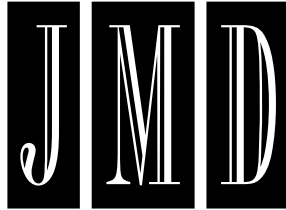
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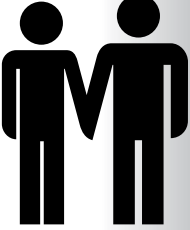


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The seeds of our future are taking root right now, for better or worse. This page shares better, forward-thinking ideas and celebrates significant environmental achievements that can help us lead the way in creating the Niagara Escarpment as a healthy, sustainable example of a thriving World Biosphere Reserve.

Ancient Wisdom Matters

"To define **perpetual growth on a finite planet** as the sole measure of economic well-being is to engage in a form of slow collective suicide."

Wade Davis, *The Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World*, House of Anansi Press, 2009

Hamilton & Town of Blue Mountains: Bicycle Friendly

Share the Road Cycling Coalition awarded the Niagara Escarpment centres Hamilton and Town of Blue Mountains with Ontario Bicycle Friendly Communities Awards in August. Hamilton won silver; Blue Mountains won bronze. London and Oshawa also won awards. "**Municipal leaders recognize that their citizens want to ride their bicycles**, and walk more often – for reasons related to improved physical health and well-being, a desire to lower their impact on the environment and because of rising fuel costs," states the Share the Road Cycling Coalition.

Hamilton Conservation Recognized for Environmental Excellence

Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) and partners in the Healthy Hamilton Watersheds Action Plan have been awarded a recognition certificate for environmental excellence by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. The Plan works toward healthy ecological communities and sustainable, healthy human activities in all HCA's watersheds. Activities include **enhancing habitat for species at risk and protecting drinking water.**

Planners Honour Niagara Escarpment Plan with Award of Distinction

In Oct., the Ontario Institute of Planners honoured the Niagara Escarpment Plan with the Len Gertler Award of Distinction. The Plan "is intended to **balance protection, conservation and sustainable development** to ensure that the Niagara Escarpment will remain substantially a continuous natural landscape for future generations," according to the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

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Westcliffe Home Hardware	Westcliffe Mall, 632 Mohawk Road West, Hamilton	905 388-6268
E & R Lawn Equipment	4374 Drummond Road, Niagara Falls	905 358-0729
Skyway Lawn Equipment Limited	154 Upper Centennial Pkwy. (Hwy 20), Stoney Creek	1 800 263-8606

See dealer or toro.ca for warranty details. Product availability, pricing & special promotions are subject to dealer option.

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Tea Boutique

Collingwood
(Town of Blue Mountains)
Scandinave Spa
Scenic Caves Nature Adventures

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Curiosity House Books & Gallery

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Highland Supply

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Dundas Valley Conservation
Area, Trail Centre

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Pic's Motor Clinic

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Feet in Motion
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Georgetown Marketplace
Georgetown Stereo & Television
McGibbon Hotel
Niagara Escarpment Commission
Young's Pharmacy

Grimsby
Gateway Niagara Information Centre
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