

# Hamilton's Waterfalls in Winter: Then & Now

BY JOSEPH HOLLICK

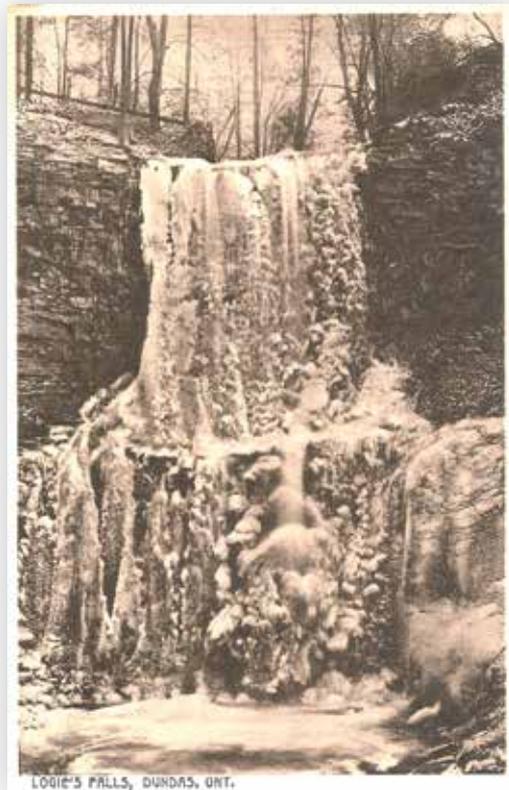
**T**hanks to the Niagara Escarpment that runs through the entire length of Hamilton, more than 100 waterfalls have been counted in the city, although many of them are small. A few years ago, this led to the nickname “The City of Waterfalls.” Many of these waterfalls were known and photographed over a century ago. To date, 18 Hamilton waterfalls have been found featured on postcards dating back to the early 1900s. Seven of those waterfalls were photographed in winter. Here are those winter waterfall scenes displayed near my own photographs showing how those falls look now. As a bonus, an eighth winter waterfall in St. Catharines is included as it had a connection to Hamilton a century ago.

## Logie's Falls/Upper Sydenham Falls

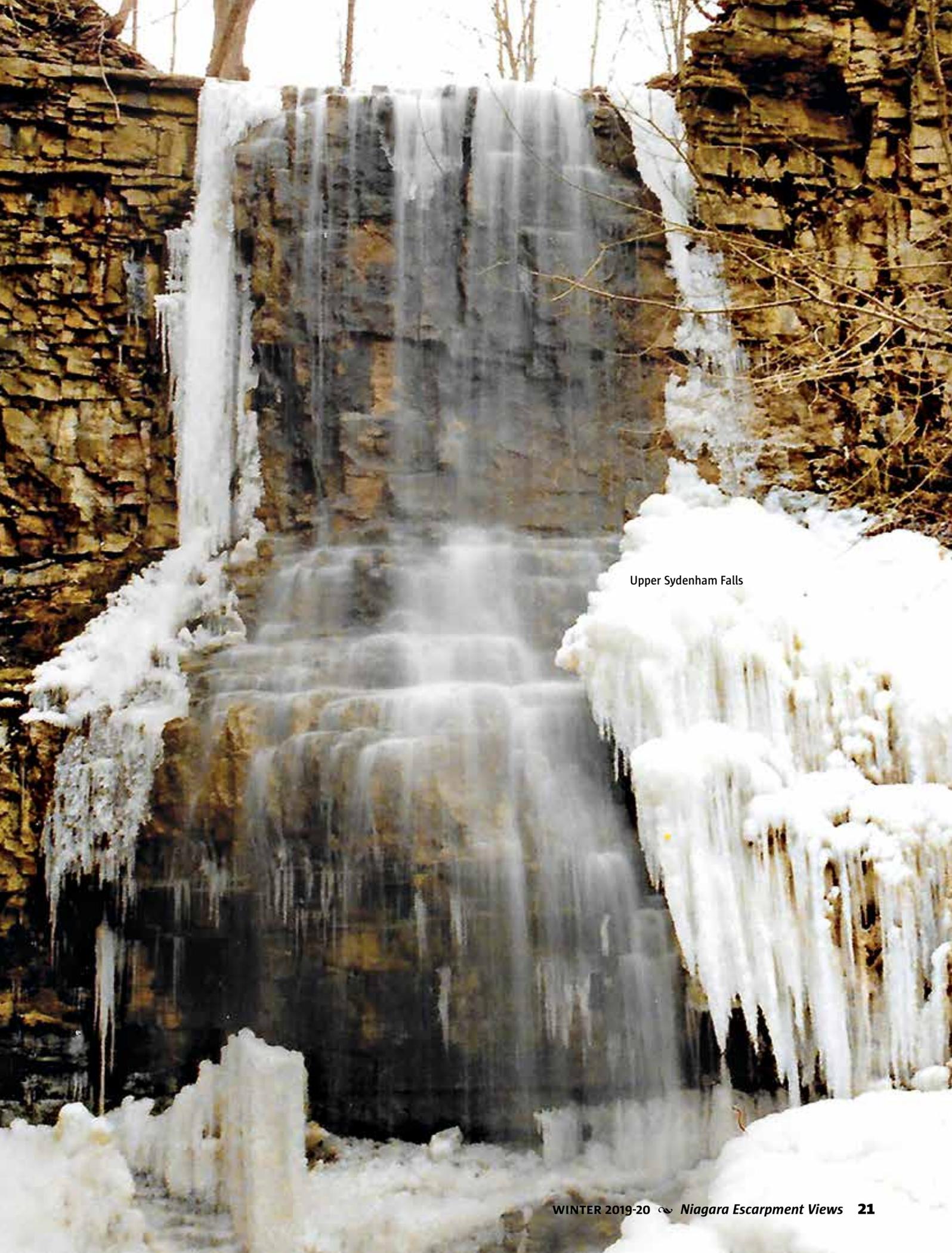
My collection contains a vintage postcard, of Logie's Falls in winter from the early 1900s. It states that Logie's Falls is in Dundas, which now is part of Hamilton. In the early 1900s, the Logie family owned this land, thus the name.

Beside it is a current picture of this waterfall which I took in March 2007, on 35mm film. The name now has been changed to Upper Sydenham

Falls, because this waterfall is located on the Sydenham Creek, which runs through the Dundas section of Hamilton, where there actually are three waterfalls. This waterfall is the uppermost. Both pictures were taken from the same location in winter and it appears that not too much has changed over a century on the actual waterfall, however in the postcard at the top on the left side, there appears to be a fence which is not present in the current photo.



► Logie's Falls



Upper Sydenham Falls

It's very important to emphasize safety regarding waterfalls, which can be dangerous at any time, but more so in winter, with snow and ice. Therefore, if you plan to visit some of Hamilton's waterfalls, please stay on the marked trails, dress accordingly and be aware of your surroundings, as numerous accidents and rope rescues have occurred at Hamilton's waterfalls every year. There have even been fatalities. No one wants the statistics to increase.



Chedoke Falls, near Hamilton, Ont.

### Chedoke Falls

The vintage postcard showing Chedoke Falls in winter from the early 1900s is courtesy of Janet Forjan-Freedman. In this picture the creek above the waterfall originates from a natural creek; there is no man-made structure.

The photo that I took on February 20, 2003 using 35mm print film, is from nearly the same position as the postcard. The big change is at the top of the waterfall

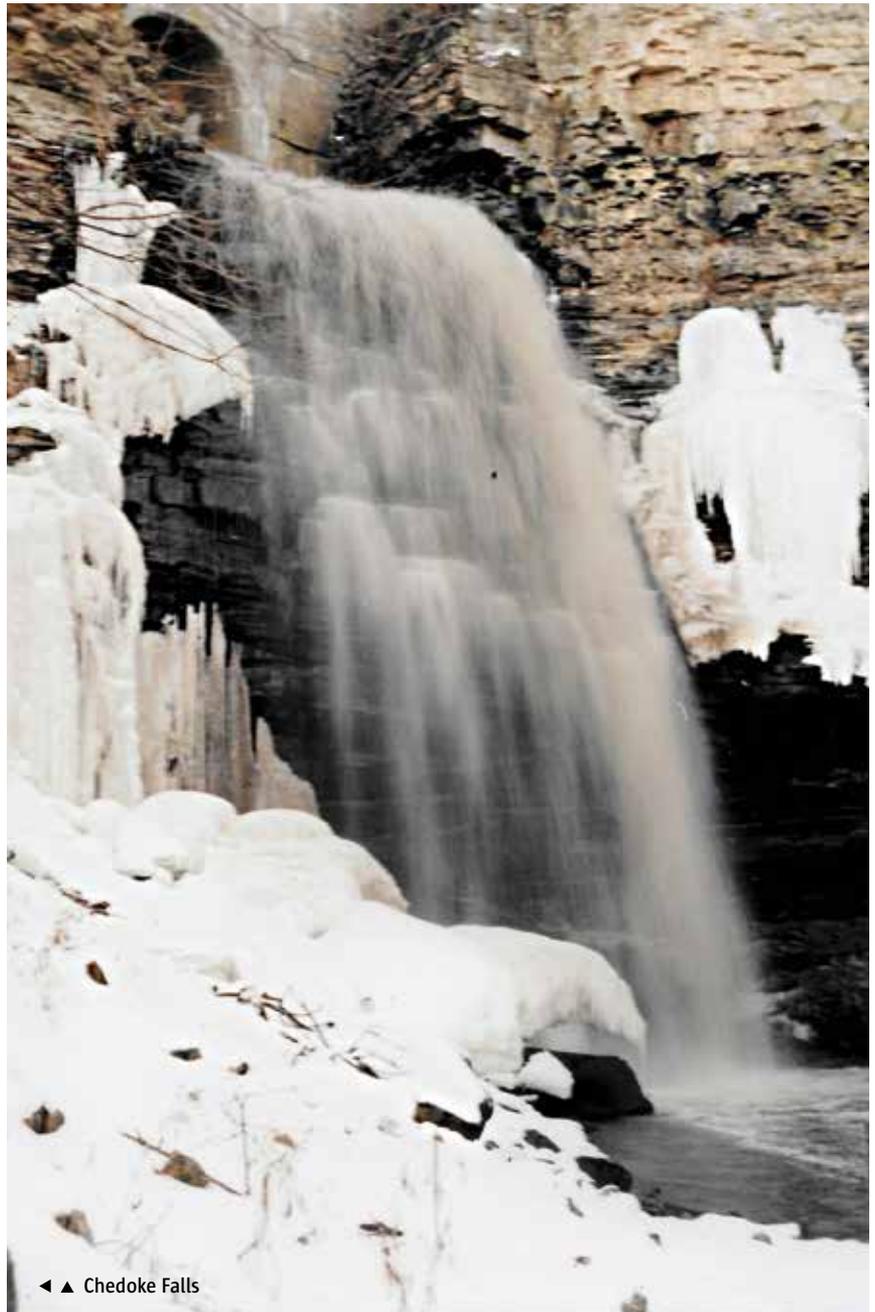
where the creek has been enclosed into a large concrete storm sewer and the water flows out of this large pipe. As the "mountain" or Niagara Escarpment area of Hamilton was being developed into roads and housing, the creek above the waterfall had been entirely enclosed into a large storm sewer system collecting rainwater from the new roads in the area, which then flowed into this large concrete pipe. In

addition, a road and bridge have been built over this pipe near the top of the waterfall, just out of the picture. Thus, in this case and many other Hamilton waterfalls, I have coined the term "Urban Waterfall" whereby a portion of the natural creek, either above or below that particular waterfall, has been channelled into a man-made structure, due to urbanization. In this case and most of the other "Urban

Waterfalls" in Hamilton, however, the waterfall itself remains natural.

### Sanatorium Falls

Sanatorium Falls is also known as Upper Sanatorium Falls. Again courtesy of Janet Forjan-Freedman, is the vintage postcard showing Sanatorium Ravine in winter from the early 1900s. This postcard is very interesting from a few standpoints. First, the name of the creek or ravine



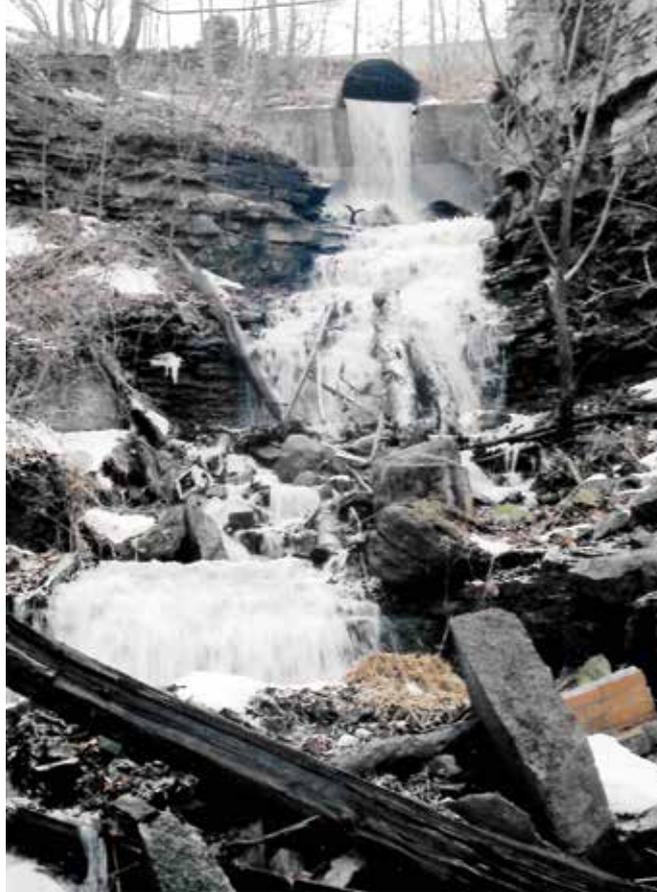
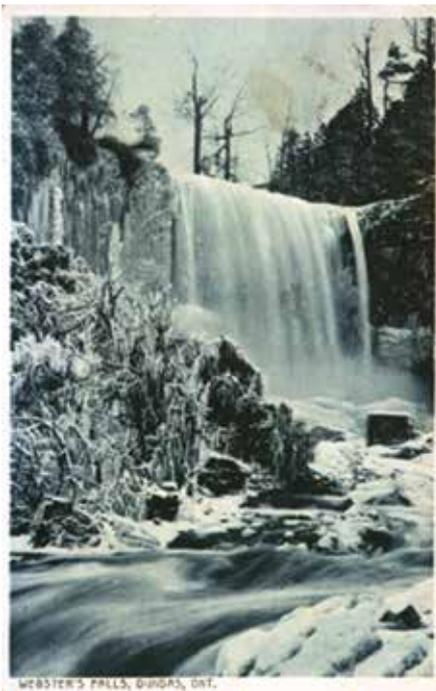
◀ ▲ Chedoke Falls



▲ ► Sanatorium Falls

is taken from the Mountain Sanatorium which was built on top of Hamilton's mountain at this location. Second, why would there be a new staircase built beside a ravine? Well, the Hamilton Brantford Electric Railway opened in June 1908 and it ran along what is now known as the Chedoke Radial Trail which is situated part way down the Niagara Escarpment. One of the stops was the Hamilton Sanatorium and a staircase had to be built for people to climb up the top section of the Niagara Escarpment to reach the hospital. Thus, I am guessing that this postcard is from the winter of 1909 or 1910. Third, the creek or ravine appears to be natural with no visible storm sewer pipes.

My photo of Sanatorium Falls was taken in winter on January 1, 2005 on 35mm colour film. It is not exactly the same location as the postcard, as my photo only shows the top of the ravine beside the staircase. There are obvious changes between the two pictures.



from an ugly storm sewer pipe. In addition, the entire ravine has much debris and garbage in it. Not a pretty sight.

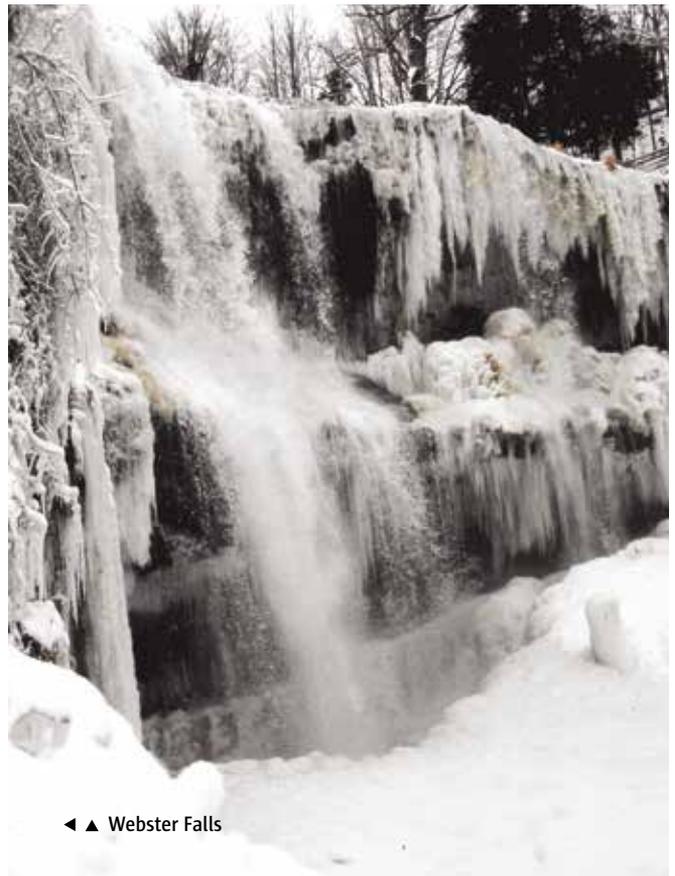
### Webster's Falls

Janet Forjan-Freedman's postcard showing Webster's Falls in winter from the early 1900s, taken from the bottom of the falls, is quite beautiful. It is amazing that someone a century ago was able to reach the bottom of the waterfall to take this picture. Nowadays it is very difficult to reach the bottom of Webster's Falls as the staircase beside the falls has been closed and it is a long journey up the creek to this location. The staircase to the bottom was still open in 2002, thus I was able to reach the bottom and take my photograph on Dec. 27, on 35mm

First, the name still uses "sanatorium," however the upper section now is called Upper Sanatorium Falls with a lower section farther down the ravine, not shown in either picture, known as Lower Sanatorium Cascade. Second, the staircase is gone because the electric railway is gone and the hospital also is gone. Thus there is no need for people

to climb up the Escarpment at this location. Third, the water flowing at the top into the ravine which forms the waterfall, now emanates

colour film. Although not from the exact location as the postcard, it shows the base of the waterfall, some ice build-up and the low water flow.



◀ ▲ Webster Falls



▲ ► Tews Falls



### Tews Falls

In the early 1900s this waterfall near Dundas was called Hopkins Falls because this land was owned by the Hopkins family. This vintage postcard from 1907 is courtesy of Russ Powers. It shows the ice build-up at the waterfall which is significant as this waterfall is 41m in height, the highest waterfall in Hamilton. Also impressive is that the photo was taken from the bottom of the falls which would have required a hike up the creek in winter. Some time afterwards, the land was acquired by the Tew

family and now is known as Tews Falls or Tew's Falls.

My photo of Tews Falls, reflecting the name change, was taken in winter on March 9, 2011 from a viewing platform at the top. Again, it shows the massive ice build-up on this tall waterfall. Other than the name change, this waterfall has not changed much over a century except for two new viewing platforms located across the gorge from the actual falls.

### Lower Sydenham Falls

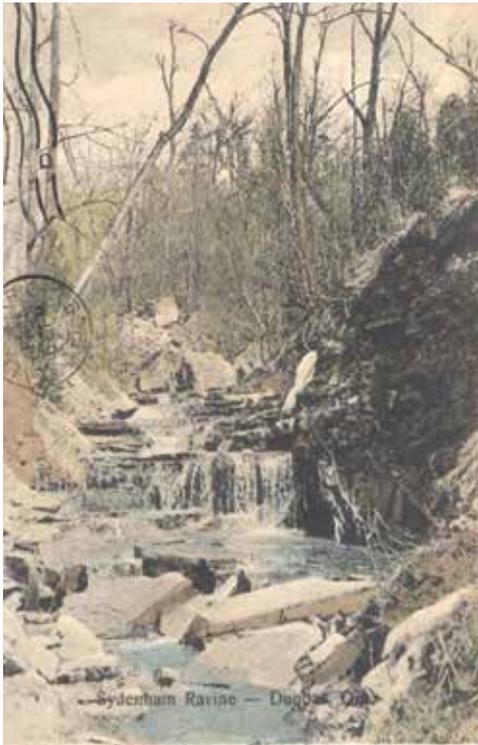
The vintage postcard showing Sydenham Ravine

in late winter, showing some snow still on the sides of the ravine, dated 1909, is also courtesy of Russ Powers. This postcard photo was taken from an old wooden bridge used by the railway to cross this creek. This bridge is still there, but much has changed in the ravine since 1909.

My photo from January 23, 2012, was taken from the same wooden bridge, which now is used by the Bruce Trail to cross the same creek. However, a new railway bridge, for two railway tracks, has been

built in front of the old wooden bridge as seen by the graffitied bridge columns. In addition, the creek bottom was reconstructed with concrete to slow the flow of water beside the columns, and then a manmade stone wall was constructed to rejoin the natural creek elevation. This is a totally urban waterfall as the water flow in the creek is still natural, but almost everything has been urbanized.

This is the third and lowest waterfall on Sydenham Creek, which has Upper Sydenham Falls further upstream.



▼ ► Lower  
Sydenham Falls

Sydenham Ravine — Dogan, Ont.



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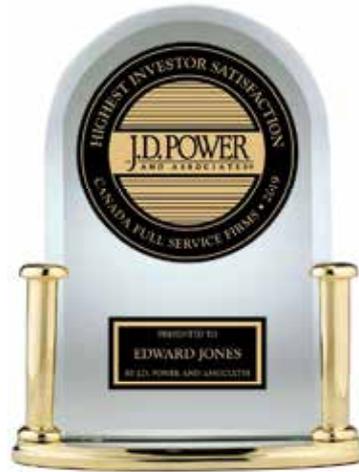
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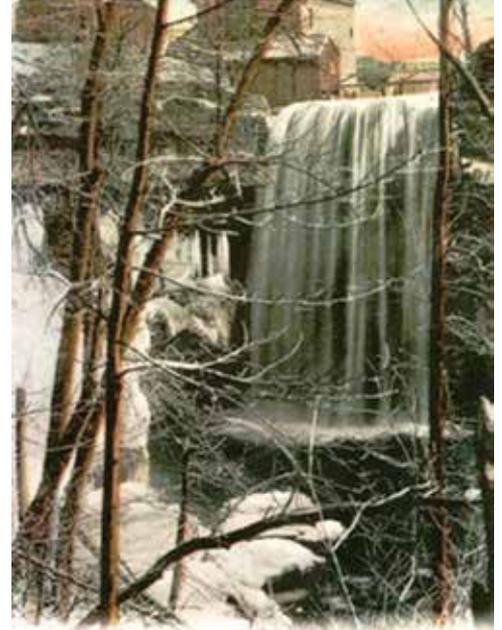
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◀ Spring Falls

▼ Upper Grindstone Falls



De Cew's Falls St. Catharines Ont.

▲ ► Decew's Falls

### Spring Falls/ Upper Grindstone Falls

The vintage postcard showing Arnolds Falls in winter, dated 1926, is courtesy of Sylvia Wray of Flamborough Archives. If you look closely in this postcard, you can see two people standing on a wooden bridge above the falls. We are not sure why this is called Arnolds Falls, but an earlier postcard from 1910 also calls this Arnolds Falls.

This waterfall now is called Spring Falls, or Upper Grindstone Falls, and my winter photo was taken from a similar location as the postcard on January 10, 2015. I prefer the name of Spring Falls as it is on a branch of the Grindstone Creek called Spring Creek. It is located above the larger waterfall in Waterdown, known as Great Falls or Smokey Hollow Falls

or Grindstone Falls, and thus has the alternate name of Upper Grindstone Falls. In my photo a bridge is still located above the falls, however it was rebuilt to accommodate vehicular traffic, due to a few homes that were built on the other side. The bridge is on a private road and still does not appear to meet current roadway bridge code.

### Upper Decew Falls

The vintage postcard showing De Cew's Falls in winter, dated 1907, is courtesy of Janet Forjan-Freedman. In this and other vintage postcards, this waterfall is called De Cew Falls or De Cew's Falls. This waterfall is located in St. Catharines, however a hydroelectric power generating station was built there in 1898 to supply electricity to Hamilton.



It is still operating, making it the oldest continually running hydroelectric power generating station in Canada. This image was taken from the top of the bank on the other side of the ravine.

My winter photo of DeCew Falls was taken on March 14, 2015 from the bottom of the gorge. Not too much has changed in over a century as both then and now, this waterfall is producing electricity, although not directly to Hamilton anymore. **NEV**

*Joseph Hollick of Dundas is a professional engineer whose*

*hobby is photography. He was a director of The Giant's Rib Discovery Centre and produced four posters of photographs of the waterfalls of Hamilton through the seasons. In 2009 he received the Via Rail Canada Tourism Award for Volunteer of the Year for his 10 years involvement in locating, photographing and promoting Hamilton's waterfalls.*

*Janet Forjan-Freedman has a large collection of postcards of Hamilton. Russ Powers of Dundas is interested in historical postcards of Dundas.*

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