

# Gala Dinner Was A Raging Success!



by **Jim Abernethy**, Editor

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Last Friday evening more than 290 people were on hand to hear General (Ret'd) Rick Hillier speak at the "A River Runs Through Us" Gala Dinner supporting the Valleys2000 Fish By-Pass Channel project.

The General's speaking topic "Leadership in your Community" was appropriate for the event and his high profile helped to increase the awareness of the importance of this long overdue project.

Support from all corners of our community has been overwhelming and with the success of more than \$50,000 raised at last Friday's Gala Dinner we are on track to blow the top off the fund raising thermometer.....

Many thanks to TD Bank Financial Group for sponsoring guest speaker General Hillier, St. Marys Cement for sponsorship of the dinner, and Canadian Tire Corp which sponsored the Fish Pond, where many attendees won a prize every time. Additional major sponsors were Metropia, OPG, Veridian, Gay Company Ltd. And IA Clarington Investments.

Our hats are off to the Gala Dinner Organizing Committee consisting of: Erin O'Toole, Tori & Steven Kay, Kevin Anyan, Jenny Knox, Amy Logan-Holmes and Tyler Smith.

The Campaign got an even bigger boost when it was announced at the dinner that our Fund Raising Committee was

successful with our Trillium Fund Grant Application.

Penny Smith, the Trillium Grant Review Team Member presented \$150,000 to Valleys2000 President - Frank Lockhart, along with the Fund Raising Co-Chairmen Al Strike and Harold Hammond.

So the future does look bright and the project could get underway this summer. However we still have a ways to go to reach our goal. Remember it is not too late to make a donation. You can make online donations at [www.valleys2000.ca](http://www.valleys2000.ca) otherwise call 905-261-7448 or drop by the Valleys2000 Office located in the Veltri Complex at 68 King Street East, Bowmanville.

Thank you to those who followed up on my request last month to submit ideas about how to spend the \$10,000,000 our Municipality of Clarington will receive sometime this year.

We have had suggestions varying from investing into the World Class Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail which bisects our community, expansion of garden allotments, improving our Older Adults Centre facilities, planting numerous indigenous trees and making a major investment into the Save Camp 30 movement.

Next month, we will expand on these and other ideas as they continue to be received. Please send your thoughts.

Send emails to: [Jim@ClaringtonPromoter.ca](mailto:Jim@ClaringtonPromoter.ca)

Send letters to: Jim Abernethy, Editor Clarington Promoter 23 Lowe Street Bowmanville, Ont L1C 1X4  
Or just pick up the phone and call me at 905-261-7788 Remember this is your community, so get involved and voice your opinion.

# Clarington in the War of 1812

by Charles Taws

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2012 marks the Bi-Centennial of the War of 1812. The federal and provincial Governments have pledged millions to celebrate it. This important conflict was among the first episodes towards Canada's journey to nationhood. The conflict was part of the Napoleonic Wars of Europe, but it also embroiled most of the settled parts of North America. One of the main theatres of war was Upper Canada (present day Ontario) with major action occurring in the east near Cornwall and in the west by Niagara and Windsor. Clarington was removed from these events and perusal of the history books will produce few Darlington and Clarke Township references.

It is true that Clarington was not at the forefront of the war, but being on the periphery it would have been exposed to these events. Also, local settlers would have been greatly affected by the War. So while scholars may claim the War had little impact on Clarington this would be in direct contrast to the view of the few settlers who were living in this area at this time.

In 1794 the first settlers came to Clarington. They were the Burk, Trull and Conant families. They had all come from the United States, fleeing the American Revolution, and all played a major part in the development of modern day Clarington. It is from the Conant's, who settled on the western boundary of Clarington and became an important Os-



This image of hauling cannons during the War of 1812 is from an 1898 history book by Thomas Conant. This is likely the military cargo Roger Conant had to take to York.

hawa family, that we have the most information on the War of 1812. In 1898 and 1903 Thomas Conant, grandson of the original settler Roger Conant, penned two local history books: "Upper Canada Sketches" and "Life in Canada". Although the author has perhaps romanticized his family stories and traditions I have no doubt they are based on real events.

One has to remember that Clarington would have been largely an unbroken wilderness in 1812. There would be only a handful of settlers and they would be concentrated along the lakeshore. A few roads had been built but Highway # 2, the first main east-west link, wasn't constructed until after the war. Settlement to the area had been slow and it stopped altogether during the war. Population statistics are few and far between at this early time but J.B. Fairbairn records in 1827 the total population for Darlington Township (western half of Clarington) at 666 and I would think Clarke Town-

ship (the eastern half of Clarington) would be much the same. Not a lot of people for such a huge area and this was recorded 12 years after the War ended. The Militia Roll Call from 1812 only shows 123. Among them: the Burks, Trulls and Conants as well as Barber, Powers, Odell, Bates, Soper, Borland and other familiar pioneer names.

Another factor to remember is that many of our early settlers came from the United States and others had family connections with Americans. It is true that many Loyalists, like our three founding families, left because they wished to remain under the crown. Others came because of free land. Many American men had been attracted by the offer of 200 free acres of land for each male settler. For these reasons the Government was concerned over the loyalty of its population. However, it was felt only right that if these people were to keep their land they should be willing to defend

their adopted country. Men who had been given land grants were required to take an Oath of Allegiance. Failure to do so would result in the forfeiture of their land and to face harassment from their neighbours. In Clarington, some sources say that all came willingly and dutifully to the defence of their country. However, it is known that some Canadians felt Canada shouldn't become involved in a conflict between Great Britain and the United States and others would just not have wanted to leave their struggling farms and families. J. T. Coleman recorded in 1875 that some men tried to shirk their responsibility by hiding in swamps under the pretext that they were there to make shingles and baskets. However, these men were brought back, heartily laughed at, joined their friends in the defence of their country and afterwards remained honoured and re-

# Clarington's role in the War of 1812

Continued from Page 1

spected citizens. Thomas Conant writes, "Our peaceably disposed and struggling Canadians, trying to subdue the forest and to procure a livelihood, were horrified to have a war on their hands. They could ill afford to leave their small clearings in the forest, where they garnered their crops, to go and fight."

The Chief Magistrate for this area was Richard Lovekin (1770-1840) who had been one of the earliest settlers in Clarke Township in 1796. He had come from Ireland. He was a personal friend of Col. William W. Baldwin. Col. Baldwin had also been a Clarke pioneer but his family did not remain long in the backwoods and moved to the growing Town of York (Toronto). Col. Baldwin along with his father Robert Baldwin Sr. and son Robert Baldwin Jr. all played an important role in the development of Canada particularly with the formation of responsible government. Col. Baldwin urged Richard Lovekin to administer the oath and he complied. Here is what each man had to say:

"I do sincerely promise and swear, that I will be

faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George, and him will defend to the utmost of my power, against all traitorous conspiracies and attempts whatever which shall be made against his person, crown, or dignity, and I will do my utmost endeavour to disclose and make known to His Majesty, his heirs and successors, all treasons and traitorous conspiracies and attempts, which I shall know to be against him or them. So help me God."

It was recorded when each man said the oath. Among other details collected were: age, height, colour of eyes and hair. This has proved to be a unique resource for historians and genealogists. With this formality done the men would be expected to leave home to defend their country.

As mentioned earlier Thomas Conant has preserved some colourful incidents from this time involving his grandfather Roger Conant. Roger was 62 years old when the War started, but he was still expected to do his part. He was requisitioned by British officers to take an ox-cart load of material to York. He travelled by the lakeshore as there were no roads. Upon

discharging his cargo he stopped at a hotel for refreshments and became involved in a discussion about the War. He stated to all there that in his opinion Britain should not involve Canada in its War with the United States. He was duly arrested and fined 80 pounds. Such high handed treatment by the Government was not unusual and would eventually lead to the Rebellion of 1837. Roger continued to serve loyally in the local militia throughout the War.

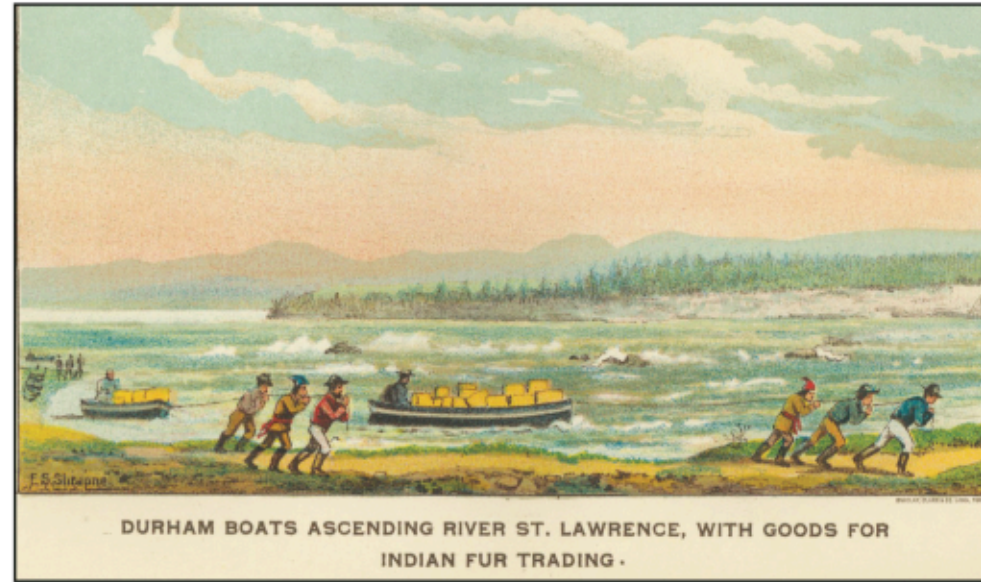
Roger could remember other militia groups passing through the area. None had uniforms and he described their appearance as a "motley throng". One group passed through and a farmer noticed a pig missing. He complained to the officer and a search was conducted. No pig was found. Later another farmer came complaining of a stolen goose. A search yielded no goose. At a safe distance away the animals appeared and were cooked over an open fire for a feast. The pig had been killed and cut and placed spread-eagled along the keel of the boat underwater. The goose had been hidden inside a drum. Roger even recorded a few verses of a song

they had sung:

"Oh, now the time has come, my boys, to cross the

Americans were captured at Detroit. They were transported to Quebec to be im-

The meal was served with buttermilk and the guards (who were outnumbered by



This image, also from 1898, shows the durham boats which were the main mode of transportation at the time. With no roads the lake was the best way to travel. Some of the captured American soldiers that Roger Conant saw on their way to Quebec would have travelled in boats just like these.

Yankee line,

We remember they were rebels once, and conquered old Burgoyne;

We'll subdue those mighty democrats, and pull their dwellings down,

And we'll have the States inhabited with subjects of the Crown."

In the fall of 1812 many

prisoned. Some travelled by foot; others by durham boat or canoe. Along the way they stopped at homes to be fed. They arrived at Roger Conant's home unannounced and a large pot of potatoes was quickly put on to boil. Luckily butter had been churned and a ham smoked a few days before.

the prisoners 10 to 1) fared the same as the prisoners. In fact he saw no ill-feeling or rancour among them and noticed only that good nature and good humour prevailed.

Other things Roger Conant talked about were his money. There were few

Continued on Page 9

# Clarington in the War of 1812

☞ Continued from Page 4

banks at this time and Roger's entire fortune, about \$16,000, was kept hidden at his house. He went to his brother-in-law Levi Annis, who ran an inn in Scarborough. There he secured his money inside a hollow log that was part of one wall of the inn. A pine knot was taken out, the money placed in, and the knot replaced. There it safely stayed for the duration of the War. Another story shows the darker side of the war when neighbour turned against neighbour. Someone living near Roger told some natives that they could rob him as he was an American. Roger had been involved in the fur trade and he had a stock of goods that the natives would have wanted. Three came with knives in the night, but Roger quickly surmised what was up and sent his family to the nearest neighbours a mile away along the lakeshore and grabbed his rifle. He kept the three by his fireside until dawn when he let them go one by one.

John Johnson, Sher and Roger Leetooze have uncovered information on local people who participated in the War of 1812. Edward Pethick, who is buried in the old churchyard by St. John's Anglican Church in Bowmanville, saw service in Europe. Thomas Henry, buried in the Bowmanville Cemetery, is said to have fought at the Battle of Waterloo. Alexander Fletcher an early and influential Bowmanville settler held the rank of Captain during the War of 1812. William Borland Sr. and his son Will Borland Jr. are both

believed to have served in this conflict. Leonard Soper and John Carr (Karr) are other Bowmanville area settlers known to have taken part. Johnson and the Leetoozes have done the first survey of known War of 1812 participants for this area. No doubt more will be discovered in the future. Helen Schmid and Sid Rutherford note in their book "Out of the Mists: A History of Clarke Township" that Sophia Shaw, reputed to be the fiancée of Sir Isaac Brock held large land grants in the Newtonville area. They also record the childhood memories of Samuel Billings who came to Clarke Township from Brockville in 1829. He remembered, as a young boy, "...he heard the roar of the cannon, and at the taking of Ogdensburg betook himself with his friends to the shelter and safety of the woods. He saw the galleys with the Yankee soldiers passing down the St. Lawrence, 16 men in a galley and a reported total of 22,000 men." They noted an incident of hauling cannons over the Roseberry Hill just east of Clarke Township in Hope Township. Local farmers were expected to provide the transport and one wonders if this was the load Roger Conant took from his home in Darlington to York?

The War of 1812 was a long time ago and it occurred when Canada was a young country. Records are rare and sketchy, but I hope I have given a clear picture that the War of 1812 did greatly impact the lives of the few settlers who were here and that this area loyally served and suffered as well during the War of 1812.