



TOWN of FORT ERIE  
*Inaugural Program*

January 2, 1970

### OFFICIAL FLAG

Fort Erie Town's official flag, originally conceived in 1967, is pictured on the front cover, and attractively depicts the location of the enlarged town.

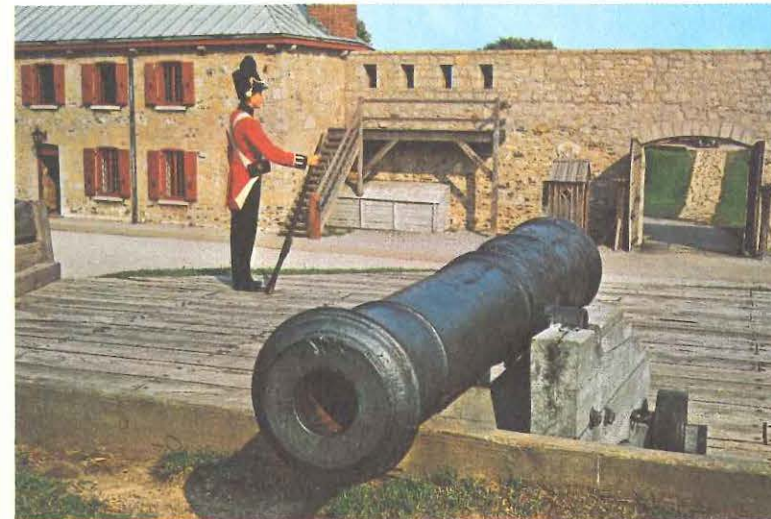
Incorporated into the flag is the Peace Bridge, known as the Gateway to Canada, and denoting more than 100 years of peace where we as Canadians cherish the neighbourhood spirit that has been developed with our friends across the border.

The historic Niagara River flows along three of the municipalities' boundaries, while beautiful Lake Erie also identifies itself with three of our municipalities.

And the historic old Fort Erie identifies itself to the new Town's name.

Our own official Canadian flag compliments the colorful and lofty banner!

# Inaugural Meeting of the Council of the TOWN of FORT ERIE



January 2, 1970 Fort Erie, Ontario

TOWN OF FORT ERIE COUNCIL

MAYOR  
JOHN M. TEAL

ALDERMEN

EARL BEAM

JOHN M. DALY

BRUCE W. FINCH

ARCHIE MACDONALD

ALBERT OPATOVSKY, JR.

JOHN B. WILLMOTT

ROBERT O. CAMPBELL

MADELINE E. FAIAZZA

JOHN L. GIBSON

L. VICTOR MILLER

ROBERT P. POTTS

DOUGLAS J. YOUNG

CLERK: JAMES A. SAUER  
DEPUTY: LORNE E. KENDRICK

TREASURER: DOUGLAS A. EILER  
DEPUTY: MARGARET CLARK

REGIONAL COUNCILLOR: GORDON J. TAYLOR

*Program*

Inaugural Meeting of the Council

of the

TOWN of FORT ERIE

Organ Preludes . . . . .	Frank Olsen
Invocation . . . . .	Father Leo J. Murray
Oath of Office . . . . .	Judge Harold E. Fuller
Inaugural Address . . . . .	Mayor John M. Teal
Motions & By-Laws	
Motion to Adjourn	
Benediction . . . . .	Rev. Walter Ohrt

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF MUNICIPALITIES IN THE ENLARGED TOWN OF FORT ERIE

### FORT ERIE

Fort Erie has always been the Meeting of the Ways, from the earliest days of the Indian canoe on the waterway, to the present day of the motor car.

In ages past, the Indian tribes came from faraway camps to quarry the prized chert, or flint, on the Niagara shore (near the Peace Bridge) for their tomahawk and arrowheads and the place came to be known as **The Quarry of the Neutrals**, and Indians also raised corn and tobacco in the nearby fertile soil for food and trade.

In the early 1600's **Father Hennepin** was the first white man to visit the area around Fort Erie, and also Rene Robert La Salle, the great French explorer. La Salle built **The Griffon** on the east bank of the river for the lucrative fur trade to the West on the upper lakes-the first ship to sail the Great Lakes, setting sail in September 1679.

**Old Fort Erie** dates in history to 1764 when it was established as a military and trading post, built by a Scots army engineer, Capt. John Montessor, under orders of General Bradstreet, to be used primarily as a stopover on the line march to quell the western tribes of Indians, notably Chief Pontiac at Detroit, and as an outpost fortification and wharf. It was named **Fort Erie** because of its strategic position on Lake Erie.

The first fortifications went down in a terrific winter gale in 1779, were rebuilt and again destroyed by wind and ice; then erected in 1805 on its present site above the water's edge, where it encountered the vicissitudes of war in 1812, taken by the Americans, blown up and recaptured shortly after by the British, when it fell to the ravages of time until restored by the Niagara Parks Commission in 1939. A stone monument erected in 1904 in memory of those who fell in the **Seige of Fort Erie** in 1814, stands guard at the entrance.

The first settlement of a few scattered rough-hewn houses grew up around the Fort. With the building of a grist mill by Robert Hamilton in 1789, a mile down the river at "the rapids" and a ferry of sorts across the river to Black Rock, then a wilderness route to Albany, families began to settle around the lower site, called variously **Fort Erie Mills**, **Fort Erie Rapids** and later, after the Napoleonic War, **Waterloo**. It was incorporated as **The Village of Fort Erie** on July 13th, 1857, with a population of 900, and extended two and a half miles along the riverfront.

In the early days it was the terminus of a stage coach route, carrying passengers and mail from Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake) and Montreal, and passengers on their way to Albany and New York, crossing by the **Fort Erie** and **Black Rock Ferry**. Later in the 1850's it became the Canadian terminal of the Great Western and Buffalo and Lake Huron Railroads, and the railroad cars were ferried across the river from about the end of the Garrison Road (No. 3 Highway) in Canada to Porter Avenue, in Buffalo, with yards and repair shops at the riverfront (near the Peace Bridge). In the early 1900's the famous **Red Jacket Stagecoach**, or **Tally-ho**, had its scenic route through Fort Erie from Buffalo to Niagara Falls.

After the influx of the United Empire Loyalists and the Peace-loving "Pennsylvania Dutch" following the revolutionary War in the States, and the War of 1812, **Fort Erie** again felt the alarms of war during the Mackenzie and Riel Rebellions and the abortive Fenian Raid, especially so, when the ill-fated Fenians landed at Frenchmen's Creek, June 1st, 1866, to take "Canada."

Bridgeburg (Fort Erie North) opened its history book when in 1873 the International Railway Bridge, engineered by Col. Sir Casimir Gzowski, was under construction. The place boomed with activity, and in 1895, was incorporated as the Village of Bridgeburg.

Bridgeburg grew steadily through the years as a railroad and customs port, while Fort Erie with its ferry service abandoned with the opening of the Peace Bridge, became a Port of Entry for vehicular traffic. Many industries came to each town, but with services and facilities duplication, amalgamation seemed inevitable. Thus Bridgeburg and Fort Erie became the **Town of Fort Erie** on January 1st, 1932.

The Peace Bridge, to link the American and Canadian shores as a memorial to the century of peace existing between the two countries, was dedicated on August 7th, 1927, by the Prince of Wales and Charles G. Dawes, the Vice-President of The United States, and has since become the Gateway to Canada with its present 5 million motor vehicles annually.

At the entrance to the Peace Bridge is found Mather Park and Arch donated by Alonzo C. Mather, a wealthy inventor and manufacturer from Chicago.

### TOURIST

Leaving the ramparts of the Old Fort with its many curios and driving the beautiful scenic boulevard down the Niagara River, the road runs through landscaped Mather Park with its architecturally lovely arch, housing the **Museum of the Fort Erie Historical Society**. A short distance beyond the International Railway Bridge and Jarvis Street is white pillared Bertie Hall, built in 1830's and purported to have been a refuge for escaped slaves from the Civil War in the States.

### OLD FORT ERIE

In 1764 the site was chosen and 500 men were dispatched to start work on the new fort. The first Fort Erie was a rectangular enclosure composed of four bastions with connecting walls or curtains, as they were called. Adjacent to the lake the two demi-bastions with their curtains were of rubble masonry of moderate height. The remaining bastions and curtains consisted merely of upright timbers in the form of a loopholed stockade. There was no ditch of any kind. Log barracks, officers' quarters and a large storehouse were built within the enclosure, and the ground was levelled for a parade. The Fort was officially named "Fort Erie" on August 4, 1764. In 1779 Fort Erie was badly damaged during a storm and was later rebuilt some distance to the south by members of the 8th and 47th Regiments of the British Army. A violent storm again destroyed most of the Fort on February 5, 1803.

Approval came on January 9, 1804, to rebuild the Fort farther back from the river. It was to consist of four bastions connected with curtains in the form

of a simple square with all works and buildings constructed of solid masonry. It was attacked by a force of 4,500 Americans on July 3, 1814 under the command of General Brown. The 180 British soldiers holding the fort surrendered after offering little resistance. On August 14 a British force under Lieut. Colonel Drummond attempted to retake the fort. They occupied the north-east bastion but were obliterated when a store of powder exploded accidentally. The Americans destroyed the fort when they left in November of that year. In 1825 a commission sent out by Lord Wellington reported "The remains of an old fort, and a range of barracks perfectly in ruins and abandoned".

Restoration of the fort was carried on jointly by the Ontario and Federal governments, starting in 1937, and was officially opened July 1, 1939. Fort Erie represents early 19th century fortifications such as were used by the British and Americans.

## BERTIE TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SKETCH

by Margaret E. Teal

Historic Bertie Township is one of the oldest and largest Townships in Canada. Situated at the very tip of the beautiful Niagara Peninsula, where the blue waters of Lake Erie flow into the mighty Niagara River the land is fertile with many wooded areas and scenic spots. Located along two International boundaries it is one of the gateways of Canada and in the early days to the vast lands of the west.

Bertie was first known as "The Township of Fort Erie" so named for the Fort built by the French in 1750 at the mouth of the Niagara River. At first the Township was very large including the area now known as Willoughby. In 1789 the area was surveyed and divided into two Townships, known as Bertie, and Willoughby. The names were in honour of Sir Peregrine Bertie, 3rd Duke of Ancaster, 19th Baron of Willoughby. Little is known about this man, who gave his name to three Townships but he did support the passage of the Canada Bill very firmly in a speech in the House of Lords May 30th, 1791.

A map of the First Plan of Bertie Township was made by Amos Chapman in 1789, a quartermaster in Colonel Tarleton's British Legion who was sent to complete the survey of the Townships south of the Chippawa Creek. In his report he writes quote: "Survey of the Quaker Township as made by Mr. Chapman in 1789, Fort Erie Township". It was known and referred to in early writings, reports etc. by this name because such a large number of the early settlers were of this faith, and were also referred to as Friends, or "The Plain People". The Society of Friends originated in England at the time of the Puritan Revolution (about 1628 to 1660).

Many of the Quakers first came here before the American Revolution in 1776 out of their sympathy and loyalty to England, and their appreciation to Queen Anne for her generosity to them in arranging for safe passage, and a place to live in the American Colonies and where they could enjoy freedom of worship, and an opportunity to carry on their social reforms.

Thrifty and industrious, these gentle people with their principles of peace and justice introduced a new era into Bertie Township. Most had capital which they invested liberally in their new homeland, buying up, and developing huge tracts of land. They built houses, schools, churches and factories, mills etc. There were three Churches or meeting houses as they were called - always very plain, of white clapboard, and with two entrances - one for the men, and one for the women and children, erected in the Township. Near Cosy Dell, just past the limits of Fort Erie a Quaker Church once stood. Built in 1784, it was destroyed by the Americans during the War of 1812. Another Church was built at Mulgrave, an early thriving settlement on Beaver Creek where there was a Post Office, a mill, and a cheese factory, possibly one of the first in Canada. The other Church was located in Ridgeway and was removed at the time The Dominion Road was built. Along this road in Ridgeway is a part of the old original cemetery - which by petition will never be disturbed - a quiet tribute to a people who gave their name to the area and who contributed so much to the development of this area.

Most of the settlers in this township were of Scotch, English, Irish, German and Alsace Lorraine descent and came here to escape the terror of the Revolution in the Colonies. Most of them left vast property and homes that were confiscated, behind them. Later these people were called United Empire Loyalists and were each given 200 acres of land to compensate for their loss. This resulted in families receiving large grants of Crown Land, the first being taken up along the Lakeshore and the River starting at Point Abino, a busy industrial area with a lumber mill, sand hopper, shipping port, to the old shipyards near Millers Creek, where the work provided there, building boats, helped the economy of the Township.

Many of those receiving Crown Lands were military men serving in Butler's Rangers, but some others such as the Brethren from Pennsylvania and some of the Quakers also received Crown Lands. Many of these lands are still in the same family and Bertie has a wealth of stately old homes, churches, schools, public buildings, for all the pioneers brought with them skills, and their various faiths and a willingness to work. There are twelve Century Farms located in Bertie Township. One of the great pioneers was Silas Carter who built a Mill for grinding grain on the Lakeshore at Windmill Point in 1832 and for forty years this served the farmers from as far away as Cayuga. Many are the exciting stories woven around this perhaps most interesting and romantic spot in the whole of Bertie. The miller could only grind the grain when the wind blew and this at times meant a long wait for the farmers. To while away the time they would have wrestling matches and endurance tests and occasionally a real fight, with everybody punching and hitting, and having a general brawl. The sixty foot stone tower which once stood as a mighty landmark to the sailors on the Lake is now almost in total ruins.

Another great pioneer was Andrew Miller who was the sole survivor when his family was wiped out by Indians when he was a boy. It was in his log cabin, built near the River at Millers Creek that the first town meeting was held in 1808. Bertie had its own "Ponderosa" - no one knows just how it got its name but many of the inhabitants remember it well. It was located on the old Riselay farm, corner of Bowen and Petit Roads where one of the first schools in the Township was built by Crammer Riselay an early pioneer and Reeve of Bertie.

## CRYSTAL BEACH

by Madeline Faiazza

Crystal Beach, recognized as one of Canada's finest summer resorts, was founded by the late J. E. Rebstock, father of George Rebstock, Sr. As he watched the sparkling sand trickling from his hand, the name "Crystal" was born! Mr. Rebstock came to Crystal Beach in 1889, looking for sand to use in the construction business, and purchased a 30-acre farm with beautiful orchards, the finest in Welland County.

Oldtimers refer to the early days as a sort of combination camp meeting ground, Chautauqua assembly and continuous circuit. The acreage was originally laid out by Mr. Rebstock as an assembly ground for the spiritual and mental uplift of the common people, relieved by a few choice sideshow attractions. It was modelled after Cottage City, Martha's Vineyard, Chautauqua and such with plenty of small hotels of the "Bowl and Pitcher" type, tents, lunchrooms, an auditorium, and a big amphitheatre, just under the ridge, for the assemblies themselves.

The "Assembly House" on the beachfront was the largest of all the hotels, and was used for housing entertainers. Later named the Royal, it was destroyed by fire in 1923.

The late J. E. Rebstock operated a combination post office, real estate agency and insurance office back behind the ridge, facing what is now Derby Road. He plunged into the religious project with all his savings and enthusiasm, but after two trying years was forced to give it up. "Oil and water don't mix", remarked the grand old daddy, "Even the ministers and Sunday School teachers in the crowds seemed to be more interested in the side-shows than they were in the services, concerts and lectures which formed the chief program".

He settled down to creating a recreational resort, wired to Detroit for the "Dove", the first passenger boat, an old style sidewheeler, replaced a year later by the "Pearl". For 46 years, the famous "Canadiana" the grand old lady of Lake Erie, cruised the eastern end of the lake, carrying commuters to and from Buffalo and featuring enjoyable weekly lakerides.

The earliest concessions were the "Merry-go-round", the "Ferris Wheel" and the "Scenic Railway". A little mission with Mass was conducted every Sunday morning in the old roller rink until 1905 when the first St. George's Church was built on Ridge Road. Bathhouses were erected on the beach with strict bathing regulations. Today the beach costumes would provide a shock for the Lotharios of the early 1900's! In August, 1926, Mr. Rebstock opened Bay Beach park with many new homes springing up along the beach.

It was not until 1921 that Crystal Beach was incorporated as a village, in order to instal many improvements such as sewers and waterworks.

The Village has grown extensively since its early days, now boasting millions of visitors, an international mecca for holiday seekers.

## WILLOUGHBY TOWNSHIP

by Z. May Miller

Bertie and Willoughby Townships were both named after Sir Peregrine Bertie the Duke of Ancaster, and 9th Baron of Willoughby and the name Black Creek was derived from the color of the water, which it is related was black.

In 1787, Willoughby Township was first surveyed, and the first survey of Bertie, known as the "Quaker Township" was made two years later by Mr. Chapman in 1789, and this survey included a small portion of our present Willoughby Twp. near the mouth of Black Creek, and bore this endorsement, "This part of the Township is so very wet, that it will scarce ever be fit for cultivation."

One of the earliest families of this district was the Boehm (Beam) family, Abraham Boehm, who is the great, great grandfather of the new Fort Erie Alderman Robert Campbell, was granted by George 111 Sept. 15th, 1797, 850 acres of land in Willoughby Township, County of Lincoln and Home District. This deed called for his heirs and assigns to erect within three years on some part of the land a good dwelling house, which he built just north of the mouth of the creek. He was later granted 450 acres adjoining this. It is interesting to know that he was sixty years old, when he acquired all this land, and also his son Martin Beam received a grant of six hundred acres in his own name, at the age of seventeen.

In the early days there was only a tow path along the bank of the River and the mail was carried by horse back from Chippawa to Fort Erie twice a week. The Black Creek Post Office was established in 1854. (The first postage stamp was issued in Canada in 1851, but before this letters were marked postage paid 3 cents or ten cents in the corner of the envelope. The quill pen made out of a goose feather was common then. Shillings and pence were used until 1860.)

The earliest homes were built of logs with a fireplace, and they usually built a bake oven out of doors. The cruize and later tallow candles were used, before the coal oil lamps. These early settlers helped each other with logging bees, threshing, barn and house raising.

Jacob Morgenstein (Mornigstar) received a Crown Deed in 1805. The Ganders, Bakers and Waits were among the earliest settlers at Black Creek. The very earliest records show three places of worship in Welland County. A community Church built in 1815 on the McAfee property, River Side Church was built in 1824, and a Sunday School was organized here in 1826, and the church was also used as the Willoughby Library. The United Brethren Church just above the creek was organized in 1855. Michael Barnhart gave the land, and Menno Beam gave the lumber for this church.

It is reported there were three Taverns, one at Palmer's Point, one at Black Creek and one at Willow Bay.

About a mile above the mouth on Black Creek the soil was used for making brick. The Morningstar Brothers had a brickyard here, and at the upper end of the bridge stood a blacksmith shop and wagon shop on the river bank. This was operated by Michael Barnhart. He was Reeve of Willoughby from 1883-1895.

There was quite a village here. Teams drawing wagons laden with wheat would be lined up in a long procession waiting to unload the grain, which was shipped by boat to Black Rock, and the banks of the river would be lined for several miles with logs, which were boomed together and drawn by stream by oxen to I. H. Allen's lumber mill at Black Creek, and even towed to Fort Erie, as many as ten or twelve teams at once. Mr. Allen got out one and a half million feet of lumber in one winter. At this time timber rafts navigated Black Creek for two miles from its mouth.

Mr. I. H. Allen bought the General Store from Mr. Ingram in 1849 and he and his descendants operated it and the post office until rural mail delivery, and also the station of the Canada Southern Railway, which ran between Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The McKenzie Rebellion of 1837-38 aroused excitement, as well as the Fenian Raid of 1866.

Willoughby Township S.S. No. 1 school which stood just a short distance above the creek, was demolished as well as the United Brethren and River Side Churches, when the Niagara Parkway was put through. Black Creek now boasts a four room modern school on the Baker Road, and the children have bus transportation.

## REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IS CONCEIVED IN NIAGARA

A new concept in municipal government has been created, and the new enlarged town of Fort Erie is now part of the Regional Municipality of Niagara.

Fort Erie now encompasses historic Fort Erie Town (The Meeting of the Ways), and known as Ward One; Bertie Township, Ward Two, with its pages in history marking the Fenian Raid of June 2, 1866; Crystal Beach, Ward Three, one of Canada's finest summer resorts, originally planned as a religious centre; and part of Willoughby Township, Ward Four, with its historical points of interest bordering along the river.

The enlarged town's population has grown to 23,000, and the new council is chaired by a mayor, with twelve representatives, four elected from Fort Erie, four from Bertie Township, two from Crystal Beach, one from Willoughby Township and an alderman elected at large.

On Thursday, January 23, 1969, a plan for regional government in Niagara was unveiled at Niagara-on-the-Lake, by the Hon. Darcy McKeough, Minister of Municipal Affairs for Ontario. This meant reducing 26 municipalities in combined Welland and Lincoln Counties to 12.

On Friday, June 27, 1969, Bill 174, establishing the Regional Municipality of Niagara, was given Royal Assent in the Ontario Legislature, by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario.

On July 1, 1969, Bill 174 became law.

On July 8, 1969, John Ellwyn Campbell, Reeve of Niagara-on-the-Lake was appointed the first regional chairman.

On October 6th, 1969, voters reduced the number of municipalities to 12 by electing a total of 136 candidates in the new region.

On October 15th, 1969, Bill 174 officially gave birth to the new region, incorporating the two counties of Lincoln and Welland.

On October 22nd, 1969, the chairman and 28 members of the Regional Council of Niagara, were administered their declarations of office in world-famous Niagara Falls, Ontario.

And this evening, a mayor and twelve aldermen are making history once again along this historic frontier, as they are officially declared part of the regional government, the first members of the new Town of Fort Erie Council.

Members of the 1969 councils from the four municipalities which now form Fort Erie, cannot be forgotten for their untiring efforts since last April, 1969, when they served as members of inter-municipal steering committees. These committees met conscientiously over the summer months, preparing data and recommendations into capsule form for the new council's use. A wealth of invaluable information has been made available to the thirteen members of council who were elected last October 6th, 1969. To these members of council and to their staff, we salute you !

## FORT ERIE COUNCIL



Left to right seated: Earl Beam, L. Victor Miller, Madeline Faiazza, Robert O. Campbell, Robert P. Potts, Bruce W. Finch, Albert Opatovsky, Jr., John M. Daly, Douglas J. Young, John B. Willmott, Archie Macdonald. Standing: Douglas A. Eiler, Margaret Clark, James A. Sauer, Lorne E. Kendrick. Absent when photo was taken: John L. Gibson.

Seated at Center: Mayor John M. Teal, First Mayor of the enlarged Town of Fort Erie.



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Mayor and Council wish to express their sincerest appreciation to the following persons for the large part played by them, without whose help this particular ceremonial would have been impossible:

Niagara Parks Commission

Consumers Gas Company

Canadian Niagara Power Company

Jockey Club

Frank Olsen - F.L.C.M., L.T.C.L., L.R.A.M., A.R.C.M., A.R.C.O.,  
R.C.O., C.H.M.

Many individuals too numerous to mention