

Heritage Gazette of the Trent Valley

ISSN 1206-4394

The Official Publication of Trent Valley Archives and Trent Valley Ancestral Research
Fairview Heritage Centre 567 Carnegie Avenue Peterborough ON K9L 1N1

© 2000 - 2001 - 2002 - 2003 Trent Valley Archives
From Volume 6, number 4

Reviews

“Ashburnham in 1874”, panoramic photo by James Little from the tower of St John’s Church.

Ken Brown persuaded Louis Taylor to merge two well-known photos from the Jim English collection, and housed in the Peterborough Centennial Museum and Archives. Because Little had overlapped his shots, the result was an exciting panoramic view of Ashburnham. He then consulted, Martha Kidd and Elwood Jones, two Ashburnham historians, both connected with the Trent Valley Archives and the Peterborough Historical Society. Ken then produced a key to the photograph, and arranged for the printing of a limited edition of 120 numbered photos. The key and the panorama sold as a package for only \$20, and after meeting out-of-pocket expenses, the entire edition was given to the PCMA. All subsequent sales will assist the great project of preserving, cataloguing and exhibiting the Balsillie Collection of Roy Studio Images. Ken deserves a bouquet for his imagination and his generosity.

Producing the key for the photo turned out to be quite educational, and perhaps somewhat risky. It is amazing how much has changed since 1874! Except for some houses in Ashburnham and a couple on Queen Street, there are no 1874 buildings remaining. Even the river, which dominates the picture and even then seems to define Ashburnham as an island, has changed: the building of the Trent Canal in the 1890s raised water levels some six feet, which was partly compensated in this area by extensive dredging operations. The panorama, surprisingly, shows very little of Hunter Street East: there must be a third stereograph for surely James Little would not have cut off Elizabeth Street (as it was then known) just past the mill. Seeing the picture at large scale did permit us to identify some important features: the Murray Street Bible Christian Church, George Allen’s gunsmith factory, the former British Methodist school, the huge industrial complex that covered what is now Riverside Park. The defining feature that permits the dating of the photo is the rare picture of the Bowstring Hunter Street Bridge, which only survived three winters from 1872.

We hope that the photo becomes the subject of research in our schools, and that it will soon adorn the waiting rooms of the city. This is a first-class production.

Barbara Young, *Chasing Grandma*, St Anne de Bellevue, QC, Shoreline, 2001. Pp 134. Illustrations. ISBN 1-896754-15-5 \$18.95

Barbara Young applied her instincts as a genealogist to track down what was possible about her grandmother who had died in 1971, when the author was 40. She knew a great deal, and had had many shared experiences. However, it was only in retrospect that she realized how little she really knew. There were large silences in the stories her grandmother had shared. The major silence was that she had emigrated as a child through the Glasgow-based Quarriers. With documents from the Quarriers, she was able to piece together other aspects of her grandmother’s youth.

The book will appeal and inspire. Barbara Young succeeds both in piecing together the story of her grandmother, and in demonstrating the importance of research driven by asking questions. However, there are many parts of the story that she may have gotten wrong. When research depends on comparative books, one should read for the questions they raise, not the answers they yield. When one has details, one should not assume motivations are also known. Barbara Young’s grandmother seems to have told quite a bit; that raises the question of whether the silences in her life relate to her own misunderstandings of her past rather than a deliberate effort to mislead. In the end, the biggest mystery in the book is never addressed. Why is it important to explore the silences of her grandmother’s life?