

TRENT VALLEY ARCHIVES
567 Carnegie Avenue
Peterborough Ontario K9L 1N1
705-745-4404
www.trentvalleyarchives.com

Elwood H. Jones, Archivist
Ejones55@coqeco.ca

6 October 2007
Ken East
Project Manager
Panel on the Future of the Trent Severn Waterway
185 King Street, Unit 100
Peterborough Ontario K9J 2R8

Dear Ken East:

Trent Valley Archives Brief

The Trent Valley Archives has followed the events related to the Panel of the Future of the Trent Severn Waterway with interest. Some of the matters that seemed important to us have not been mentioned in media coverage and it was felt that we should put together some of our ideas.

The attached brief argues that the waterway has been central to understanding east-central Ontario since time immemorial. We believe this history needs to be celebrated and studied in its own right, and we would advocate steps to improve the infrastructure and documents of archives in this region. Archives already are tourist destinations, places for preserving and disseminating history and centres for teaching and training at all levels.

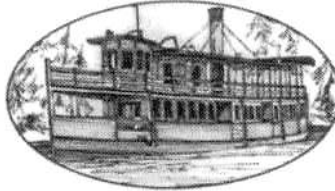
However, we believe that collectively we should be seeking better ways to improve the network of archives, and to make them even more central to tourism, even more effective in presenting information to the general public, and in extending the opportunities for research and education at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels.

Thank you very much for giving consideration to these ideas and let us know if there is any way in which we can be of assistance in the work of the Panel, or for clarifying any of the arguments or possibilities suggested in our brief.

Yours sincerely,



Elwood H. Jones



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**BRIEF TO THE
PANEL OF THE FUTURE OF THE TRENT SEVERN WATERWAY
OCTOBER 2007**

The Trent Valley Archives believes the Panel of the Future of the Trent Severn Waterway has the opportunity to open doors to a more solid interpretation of the Trent Severn Waterways. This will be an asset both to tourism and to education, broadly understood.

The Trent Valley Archives was founded in 1989 with a view to promoting archives in the area defined by the watershed of the Trent Valley. The earliest political divisions reflected the importance of the valley, and the interconnections between the parts remains imbedded in the regional culture. The District of Newcastle included the area that became the counties of Durham, Northumberland, Peterborough, Victoria and Haliburton. The importance of the waterway elevated Peterborough to the most important place of population and administration in the region.

The waterway dominated the area's economy in ways not always well understood. The waterway was successively the vector of the timber trade, the lumbering industry, the electrical networks that prefigured Niagara, the opening of cottage country, and the development of tourism, education and recreation. Places and people along the waterways developed differently because of the proximity of the waterways.

For an entire generation, the counties of Peterborough and Victoria elected Members of Parliament who were effectively charged with getting improvements along the waterway. Of those improvements, the most significant was the Trent Canal. People understood, correctly, that the economic growth in this area was dependent on the canal. Several industries, for example, were attracted to Peterborough directly because of the importance of the waterway. Canadian General Electric harnessed the power of the river directly from Nassau Mills. Quaker Oats wanted a direct water connection to Chicago, at a time when water was the cheapest way to transport heavy goods. Vermont Marble wanted to move marble from Vermont to Peterborough, and the Trent Canal was key to making that work. Several industries were established here precisely because electric power was pioneered in this region.

Peterborough was a significant rail centre precisely because railways were extensions of major water ways, and because George A. Cox crafted a credible alternative to the Canadian Pacific that

built on the Grand Trunk Railway and Peterborough's links to Lake Ontario and Georgian Bay. The earliest initiatives to promote tourism built upon the "Iroquois Trail," more precisely the ancient canoe traveling route of the First Nations and of Champlain and others, in part.

When Trent University was founded in the 1960s, it looked to the Trent Canal for its name, its logo, its architecture, and ultimately its community interaction by doing research related in some way to the Trent. The importance of the region was defined by the Trent Canal.

The history of the area has been understood by reference to the waterway, explicit and implicit, in countless works. Titles that evoked the importance of the Otonabee River and the Trent Canal include Edwin Guillet's *The Valley of the Trent* or my own *Peterborough: the Electric City*. The historical journal, published four times a year since 1997, *Heritage Gazette of the Trent Valley*. Other book titles include Peterborough and the *Kawarthas*, *Peterborough Land of Shining Waters*, and *Steamboating on the Trent Severn*. Even books such as *Up the Burleigh Road* and the *Peterborough Golf and Country Club* are framed by the importance of the Trent Canal. It is the lodestone of all local history in this area.

The area's history has not been well-known outside the region, largely because it is part of Ontario and never established even in Ontario the fame it deserves. This is partly because too little is known about the importance of the Trent Severn Waterway and its impact on the people in a wide area.

The Trent Valley Archives believes that "Without archives there is no history." It has archival holdings that can tell us much about the history of the Trent Canal. Our largest and most important collection is the Peterborough County Land Records. This collection includes over 200 ledger books containing the abstract history of each piece of land in the county. As well, we have the land instruments related to those transactions for the years 1867 to 1953. There are many land records for the region that have not gone to the archives and we fear the province will destroy many of these records as part of its ongoing digitization project. However, the records are rich sources for understanding the importance of the waterway. Many surveys are defined with reference to the water, and to mill sites, and to the canal. The canal has affected water levels throughout its length, and redefined our geography.

We also have the research notes of several historians who have made clear the importance of the relationship of the water. One historian surveyed the history of canoeing and uncovered the roots of canoeing in this region, arguably crucible of canoeing culture. Several of our fonds relate directly to cottage country, and to the lakes and the industries. One historian has documented the houses of Peterborough. Another has looked at different institutions within Peterborough and area including the Peterborough exhibition, a golf club and a home for the aged. A couple of historians have looked at the history of Victoria County. Several historians have studied small towns in our area. We have a rich collection of maps over time, and of photographs, many of which can tell much about the impact of the Trent Canal. We have some newspapers, but we are hoping to acquire the microfilm copies of available newspapers in the Trent Valley. Many of the newspapers and scrapbooks that we have make it clear that the Trent Canal was a defining characteristic of the area. We also have a rich research library, much of it a legacy of local historians and genealogists, which makes it possible to learn much about the people and the places of the immediate area and its wider connections.

There are other archives and libraries in our county which also have fonds that related to the importance of the Trent Canal. The Trent University Archives, the Peterborough Centennial Museum and Archives and the Lang Pioneer Village Archives have much that is revealing. Still we know that some of the most important archival collections lie outside our region. The Archives of Ontario has significant holdings related to the Kawarthas. The Library and Archives of Canada has the huge fonds of the Mossom Boyd papers that would be better used if they were accessible in our region. As well, the archives of federal departments whose work impacted in this area are located in Ottawa, Gatineau or Cornwall. This would be a good time to consider whether such archives

should be moved to a federal facility in the Peterborough area. The Library and Archives of Canada has regional record centres outside of the Ottawa region. Maybe it is time to follow the American example which has many regional archives operating under the National Archives or other federal agencies. Since 1989, the Trent Valley Archives has supported the principle of a regional archives in the Peterborough area which would house records of countless institutions in a single facility or interconnected facilities.

The Trent Severn Waterways has an exceptional archival record of the building of the Trent Canal, and we hope the Panel recommends ways to make those records more accessible. Indeed, there may be other archival records in the possession of the Trent Severn Waterways, and others being created by the current Panel. We hope these, too, are made accessible.

The waterway has been central to understanding east-central Ontario since time immemorial. We believe this history needs to be celebrated and studied in its own right, and we hope the Panel will advocate steps to improve the infrastructure of archives, both buildings and documents, in this region.

1. Promote archives as tourist destinations and as resources for history

Archives already are tourist destinations, but they are not promoted in the regional tourist literature nearly enough. Most archival tourists are seeking information on their families. At the Trent Valley Archives we have found a strong interest to know more about the world in which their ancestors lived, and so many keep the connection by subscribing to our *Heritage Gazette of the Trent Valley*. We featured the centennial of the Kirkfield Lift Lock in our most recent issue, and several articles have referred explicitly to the Trent Canal. We did special issues for the centennial of the Peterborough Lift Lock and for the International Plowing Match held in Otonabee in 2006. It is a rare issue that does not have something explicit relating to the Trent Canal. We think it is very important to promote the historical writing related to the region, and we regretted the decision to close the book room of the Friends of the Trent Severn Waterways in 2006. We need, though, more writing, more publishing of documents, and more public and government awareness of archives, and their symbolic and real importance.

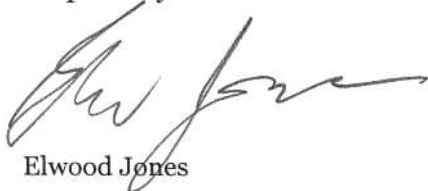
2. Promote archives as universal places of learning, from elementary schools to university

Archives are places for preserving and disseminating history and we need to place more incentives on developing ways for students at all levels to experience archives and to understand how knowledge of our past unlocks keys to our regional culture, to our sense of pride of place.

3. Promote greater awareness and networking of archives

Archives are not just held in public archives and in government institutions. Large businesses, arts organizations and private individuals hold documents that are often not recognized as archival. So we need to raise a wider public awareness of the importance of archives, current as well as ancient. Collectively we should be seeking better ways to improve the co-operative network of archives, and to make them even more central to tourism, even more effective in presenting information to the general public, and in extending the opportunities for research and education at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elwood Jones', written in a cursive style.

Elwood Jones