



The Friends of Laura Secord Newsletter

August 2012

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WAR!

Two hundred years ago on June 18, 1812, the United States declared war against Britain – and within weeks had invaded Canada. It was to be an easy defeat. **Thomas Jefferson** predicted “the acquisition of Canada this year... a mere matter of marching.” **Henry Clay** said he believed it could be accomplished in less than four weeks. Well, the battles raged on for nearly three brutal years. It was hard fought...but Canada kept her ground. The Americans retreated, and for nearly 200 years we have shared peace – with now our closest ally.

The War of 1812 bicentennial celebrations will be a time to honour this peace, and commemorate all those who sacrificed and contributed so much on our behalf.

The Niagara region was at the forefront of the war, and over the next three years, it will come alive with spectacular battle re-enactments, wonderful musical performances and plays, impressive historical displays, workshops, lectures – and, of course the **Laura Secord Commemorative Walk**.

Laura Secord will be among the four remarkable individuals acknowledged by the Canadian Government during these bicentennial years – along with **Isaac Brock**, **Tecumseh**, and **Charles De Salaberry** – all of whom exhibited exemplary strength, determination and courage; and who many feel are metaphors for all those who contributed so significantly to the war that defined Canada.

Laura Secord is one of the few historic
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Walk into history with us on June 22, 2013!

figures to have been recognized and officially designated as a “Person of National Historical Significance.” Laura Secord made a difference. Without her bold contribution, Canada may not have existed as it does today.

The plans to commemorate Laura Secord are well underway and we hope you will join in honouring Canada’s most famous heroine on June 22, 2013. The Laura Secord Commemorative Walk and additional events planned at the Laura Secord Homestead, the DeCew House site area in Thorold, and with the many trail options available, will be a community-minded educational, cultural, recreational opportunity to honour Canada’s most famous heroine on the 200th anniversary of her historic walk.

Did You Know?

Courtesy of Alun Hughes



Did you know that Laura Secord met the Prince of Wales?

In 1860, **Prince Albert**, eldest son of Queen Victoria visited the Niagara Region of Canada. At a ceremony in Queenston Heights, while commemorating the spot where Isaac Brock died, Prince Albert was presented with an address of welcome signed by 1193 veterans of

1812-1814 war – all male except for one female, Laura Secord. A few days later, at a church service in Chippawa, Laura met the Prince of Wales.

Caroline McCormick, a direct descendant of Laura Secord, was invited by The Prime Minister of Canada Right Honourable **Stephen Harper** and Mrs. **Laureen Harper** to a Military Muster in Commemoration of the War of 1812 in the presence of Their Royal Highnesses, The **Prince of Wales** and The **Duchess of Cornwall**, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty **Queen Elizabeth II**. Caroline provided a copy of Laura Secord’s 1860 letter to The Canadian Equerry to HRH

The Prince of Wales, and recently received a wonderful letter of thanks from HRH.

The connection to The Prince of Wales further adds to the already remarkable and inspirational story of Laura Secord.

The Laura Secord Papercuts

Barbara Klunder



Sourced from Rodman Hall Arts Centre Announcements

Canadian artist and illustrator **Barbara Klunder** is well known internationally for her bold graphic style, political messages and provocative imagery. In this exhibition called *The Laura Secord Papercuts*, Klunder turns her talents and deft hand at papercutting, to the task of illustrating the inspiring story of Canadian heroine Laura Secord, one of her familial ancestors. This summer, as the Niagara region commemorates the bicentennial of the War of 1812, Klunder’s exhibition prompts a fresh telling of this fascinating woman’s place in Canada’s history.

Until September 9th – a must see interpretation of the Laura Secord story!

Walk into history with us on June 22, 2013!

Commemorative Walk – Preparations

A Signature Event of the Bicentennial

Since our last newsletter, considerable research has been undertaken to identify the route Laura took during her epic journey. The FLS has drafted a modern-day approximation of the route that can be negotiated safely by hikers of average abilities. The five-stage route follows everything from ancient forested Indian trails to modern city sidewalks. It can be followed continuously or broken into shorter segments. Participants can hike the entire route or choose a shorter “Laura Secord Experience” route.

The **Laura Secord Legacy Trail** will combine interpretive education with outdoor physical exercise and recreation, help link existing trails into a unified and accessible regional network for recreation, and serve as a significant tourism destination in its own right.



On June 20, **Unilever Canada** executives from across the country joined representatives from **Habitat Niagara**, **Diamond Estates Wines**, the **City of Niagara Falls** and the **Friends of Laura Secord** to build and enhance the Niagara Falls section of the Laura Secord Legacy Trail, near the end of Mewburn Road. This segment of trail is also co-marked as the Bruce Trail, whose club members pioneered annual walks to celebrate Laura Secord more than 20 years ago. We are pleased to be working with the **Niagara Bruce Trail Club** to make the Laura Secord Legacy Trail a reality.

Friends of Laura Secord Plans for the Bicentennial

1. **Commemorate** – to commemorate Canada’s most famous heroine on the 200th anniversary of her historic walk in the defence of Canada and to establish an enduring annual Laura Secord Walk event to honour, celebrate and preserve Laura Secord’s legacy
2. **Designate** – to establish and designate the Laura Secord Legacy Trail which approximates Laura’s actual route from the Laura Secord Homestead in Queenston to the DeCew House in Thorold
3. **Educate** – to encourage, locally and across the country, an interest in Canada’s origins, history, and the people involved in its defence, in an active and interactive way, with innovative interpretive educational resources, online and along the trail, that will celebrate the Laura Secord legacy, and emphasize the important role that women and Native Nations peoples played in the founding of our nation.

We hope to use Laura Secord’s story to draw Canadians and visitors from all walks of life together in a series of celebratory events, educational initiatives, and legacy projects – in recognition, reflection and celebration of our shared heritage.



Centennial Park, St. Catharines

Walk into history with us on June 22, 2013!

DeCew House Designation



On Friday June 22, 2013, nearly 100 people gathered in Thorold to officially open the DeCew House Heritage Park.

The Thorold War of 1812 Committee has worked hard for this designation and Chair **John Burtniak** said it will ensure a lasting legacy for Secord.

Thorold regional councillor **Henry D'Angela**, who was mayor when the local 1812 committee was formed, singled out former city councillor **Fred Neale's** perseverance in getting the city to purchase the DeCew House property for a nominal price from a provincial hydro agency. "I know this is going to be cherished not just by us, but by future generations," he said.

"It's a national treasure that needed to be preserved," said **Brian Merrett**, CEO, 1812 Legacy Council. "The work that's been done here is truly magnificent."

Caroline McCormick, President of the Friends of Laura Secord, acknowledged the impressive efforts undertaken by the City of Thorold and the Thorold War of 1812 Committee for the improvements at the terminus of the Laura Secord Commemorative Walk. "Today is the 199th anniversary of Laura Secord's epic journey in the defence of Canada. On this day, at this time, in 1813, Laura Secord was *out there*, somewhere, in the bush, alone,

exhausted, afraid, and wondering if she would make it... wondering if she would make it *in time*." And she did. This is hallowed ground where soldiers, a woman, and Native Nations peoples came together and made history."

Town Crier, **Tony Vandermaas**, proclaimed the opening of the DeCew House Heritage Park and **Maja Bannerman**, known for her portrayal of Laura Secord, delighted the audience with an original performance.

Some of the quotes and portions of this article were sourced from **Niagara This Week**. **Paul Forsyth**



Maja Bannerman as Laura Secord

Music Niagara Laura Secord Opera

Members of the Friends of Laura Secord attended a special preview of the Music Niagara performance "*Laura Secord: The Opera*" by **Mark Richards**.

Very impressive!

Walk into history with us on June 22, 2013!

Myths around Laura Secord

by *David Hemmings*,

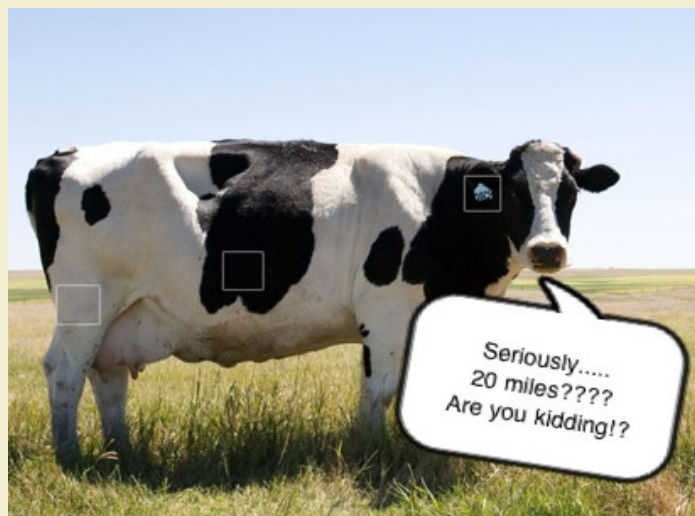
Friends of Laura Secord Historian

William F. Coffin wrote the book *1812: The War, And Its Moral, A Canadian Chronicle*, 2 Jan 1864. In Chapter 14, p.146-7,

Laura Secord “at the age of 88, still lives in the village of Chippewa, to tell the story, and wakes up into young life as she does so...The husband in his crippled state could not move, and moreover no man could pass the line of American sentries. She spoke out, she would go herself, would he let her? She could get past the sentries; she knew the way to St. David’s, and there she could get guidance. She would go, and put her trust in God. He consented. At three in the morning she was up...started after day break. To have left earlier would have aroused suspicion. Her first difficulty was the American advanced sentry. He was hard to deal with, but she pointed to her own farm buildings a little in advance of his post, insisted that she was going for milk; told him he could watch her, and was allowed to pass on. She did milk a cow, which was very contrary, and would persist in moving onwards to the edge of the opposite bushes, into which she and the cow disappeared. Once out of sight, she pushed on rapidly. She knew the way for miles... At length she reached a brook. It was very hot, and the water refreshed her, but she had some difficulty in crossing.

At last she found a log, and shortly after got to the mill. The miller’s wife was an old friend, and tried to dissuade her from going on... having rested and refreshed, proceeded on. Her next trouble was the British outlying sentry, but she soon re-assured him and he sent her on, with a kind word, warning her to beware of the Indians...”

Coffin described several important facts and, although the cow may have been a fable, his description of the action with the cow is plausible – unlike accounts of subsequent writers who ascribed her leading a cow in front of her during her walk, which was false and improperly referenced! She left at the crack of dawn, crossed 4 Mile Creek, visited Hannah DeFrest Secord (her sister-in-law, the miller) in St. David’s and met both American and British sentries.



Friends of Laura Secord Membership

The Friends of Laura Secord is a non-profit community group established in October 2010 to preserve, strengthen and perpetuate the legacy of Canadian heroine Laura Secord, a Person of National Significance famous for her courageous and dangerous 32 kilometre walk from Queenston to the British outpost at DeCew House on June 22, 1813 to warn the British forces of an impending American attack.

The Friends of Laura Secord brings together individuals and groups from all walks of life who share an interest in the Laura Secord story. The group fosters collaborative relationships amongst community members,

institutions, organizations, service clubs, municipalities, and the public and private sector. Its members exchange expertise and information, conduct original research, and promote public awareness and appreciation of the legacy of Laura Secord and her contemporaries.

For more information, to volunteer, or to join the **Friends of Laura Secord**, please contact:

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