



September 13, 2024 Newsletter

Temperance and Taverns in Pelham Township, Saturday, September 21, 2024, 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm. At Kirk on the Hill.

Pelham Historical Society members Geoff Bowden and Graham Segger will co-present on the closely related topics of Taverns and the Temperance Movement in early Pelham Township.

They will explore the evolution of taverns as an outgrowth of the developing road network in Niagara and their decline after the coming of the railroads and the ascendance of a fervent temperance movement.

The churches and women in Pelham were passionate crusaders for reform and initiated efforts to limit access to "intoxicating drink". As in the present day, the legislation enacted did not necessarily mean the end of alcohol production and consumption, although at least in theory, Pelham was dry for close to 100 years from 1874 to 1970.

I will be looking forward to hearing about the Pelham "experience." I was recently helping a grandson with a school project about the suffragists in Western Canada namely the "Famous Five" in Alberta and "progressive reform."

In Western Canada, the most conspicuous settlers were single, young men. Unhampered by families or deep roots in the community, they were free to head West. Between 1891 and 1911, there were never fewer than 118 men for every 100 women in the Prairie provinces.

The imbalance was much greater in the booming new cities with Saskatoon having 151 men for every 100 women: Calgary, 155: and Regina 189. In contrast Ontario had 106 men for every 100 women. The West also had younger men.

The preponderance of young, unattached males resulted in wide-open drinking, prostitution and gambling which served as social substitutes for family life and relief from overcrowded boarding houses.

Is it any wonder that the West was more sinful than the East? Apparently, it was common for young men to wake up feeling as if their hats were a couple of sizes too small and a head like a beehive.

It has been said that the average Manitoban drank three times as much as the average Quebecker and was convicted of drunkenness twice as often as the average Ontarian.

In the West, 'parlours' had one purpose: men went there to drink. There were no tables and chairs. It was not a place of relaxation.

Not everybody was happy with the state of social life in Western Canada. The primary victims were married women. They soon became crusaders for moral reform and directed their reform energy against liquor.

Liquor was attacked as new medical studies uncovered its physical effects and social studies revealed its economic and societal impacts. Progressive farmers, in particular, were very scientific and understood the physical effects of liquor.

Western farmers were extraordinarily staunch supporters of prohibition. There was a belief in rural communities that city life was conducive to immorality. Support for prohibition grew out of the farm protest movement.

It promises to be a fun Saturday afternoon. Remember: "Lips that touch liquor, will never touch mine."

Respectfully submitted by Wayne Olson

Future Presentations:

Oct. 19, 2024 – Exploring Early Black History in Lincoln and Welland Counties – Rochelle Bush

Nov. 23, 2024 – Faces of Pelham Before and After WW2, Videos of Life in our Town – Carolyn Botari

Feb. 22, 2025 – Members' Interests Presentations

Mar. 22, 2025 – Historical Fires of Welland – Lisa Mooney

Apr. 26, 2025 – A Brief History of Rails in Pelham Township – David Sherlock

May 24, 2025 – The Story of the Brown Homestead