

## New book celebrates 'extraordinary' history of Flamborough

*Mac Christie*

Flamborough Review | Mar 14, 2017

Waterdown District High School History teacher and author Nathan Tidridge has a new book on the shelves.

*The Extraordinary History of Flamborough* was published as a Canada 150 project by the Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society at the beginning of February. However, the work began as a handout in his Grade 12 history class.

Tidridge, whose best-known book is probably

*Canada's Constitutional Monarchy*

, noted the real genesis of the project was Allan Parker and Diane Woods's book,

*Exploring the Past: Waterdown.*

"Mr. Parker was my Grade 6 teacher and Diane Woods and her husband Don are historians in the community," he said. "They did this little workbook ... and I remember learning out of that workbook when I was in Grade 5 or 6.

"When I started teaching history here, basically I had a handout of that history," he continued. "Every year I would add to that handout.

"It's been 10 years and that handout turned into a 100-page booklet, just of collected stories."

Tidridge added that Flamborough archivist Lyn Lunsted was a great help with the project and noted the book is one of the textbooks for his Grade 12 Canadian History, Identity and Culture class.

Tidridge said the work focuses on stories from East Flamborough and West Flamborough; Beverly Township will be covered in a later, separate book.

"The old townships of East Flamborough, West Flamborough, Freelon, Greenville – even little bits of Dundas because they used to be part of West Flamborough – and Aldershot, too," he said. "Every five years we'll add to it."

The book now encompasses 154 pages and features many images, including old pictures of the town, and maps.

In addition, the book includes a lot of Indigenous history.

"That's important to me," he said, "and it's part of the Canada 150 thing of reconciliation – and it's not like it's just Chapter One, it's woven throughout."

From a story standpoint, Tidridge said the book touches on the area's first settlers, through industrialization and village founder Ebenezer Griffin.

Tidridge noted there are about three stories about how Waterdown was named. Perhaps the most famous one features the smashing of a bottle of water and a joke about alcohol at the christening of a mill that Griffin – a prohibitionist – owned.

"We recently found one ... apparently Waterdown is the name of a forest in England that's existed for centuries," he explained. "That's where Ebenezer Griffin's father-in-law was from.

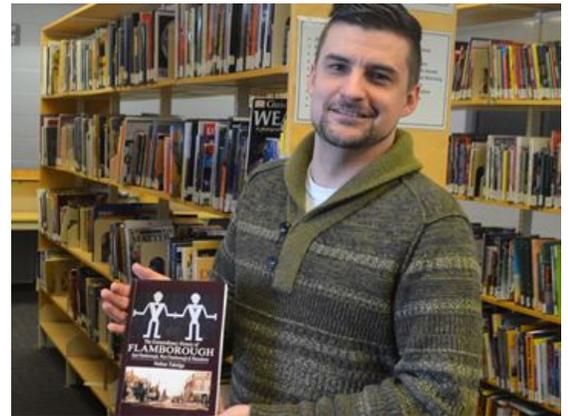
"That's probably it, but I like teaching the, 'Throw the water down' version – that's a better story."

He said the book includes contemporary history and quirks of Waterdown – including modern traditions like leaving lawn chairs on the side of the street in preparation for the Santa Claus Parade.

"We get up to the founding of the Souharissen Natural Area in 2014-15," he said. "The Ribfest is in here, the ice loop, so there's a lot of contemporary stuff – including the bluegrass festival that used to be in Carlisle, where I think a lot of people were probably conceived.

"Quirky stuff like that – the quirky history is more fun, it sticks out to people."

One story featured in the book, said Tidridge, is the one about the blue alligator of Flamborough. He explained that someone placed a blue alligator lawn ornament in a wetland, along with proper signage bearing an alligator warning.



Waterdown District High School teacher Nathan Tidridge holds his latest book, *The Extraordinary History of Flamborough*, in the WDHS library. It began as a project for his history class, grew to more than 100 pages, and now encompasses a 150-page book. March 10, 2017.

Tidridge has lived in Flamborough for most of his life, at different times calling Flamborough Centre, Carlisle and Waterdown home. But he didn't know much about local history growing up.

"When I learned about it, I just fell in love with the place a little more," he said. "The shootouts at the Royal Coachman – stuff like that."

"When the kids learn about it, they get more invested in it and then you can expand it out into Canada," he continued. "Because the story of Waterdown, it's a microcosm of Canada."

The WDHS graduate noted the answer to the question of what Canada is, is rooted in stories about small communities, like those in the book.

"That's especially true in Ontario," he said. "Ontario doesn't have a unified identity, especially southern Ontario. We find ourselves more invested in our communities, than the province as a whole."

He noted few Ontarians identify as such, something vastly different than in other provinces, such as Prince Edward Island.

"It's showing them that Canada is this vast, diverse place and getting them to ask, 'Where does their identity come from?'" he said of the stories. "And to make them feel more invested in their home – Waterdown is more than a suburb and big box stores.

"Because that's what it looks like and when I grew up that's what I thought it was, but then when I learned this stuff, you start seeing it as something more than that."

*The Extraordinary History of Flamborough*

is available in Waterdown at the Flamborough Archives at a cost of \$25. All proceeds from the sale of the book support the Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society.

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