

Morrisburg circa 1908

By Ian Bowering

Over the last month I have been reviewing history found in an industrial and commercial booklet of SD and G circa 1908. Visiting various towns, the authors always provide a short historic introduction, sometimes original and sometimes taken from J. Smyth Carter's Story of Dundas. As the editorialist quoted Carter when describing Morrisburg I will leave all but the statistics in this introduction out.

Founded largely due to the completion of the canal around 1844, by 1908 the village boasted a population of between 1,600 and 1,700, was connected by land to the rest of Ontario by the Grand Trunk Railway, by water with steamboats and to Waddington in the south with a ferry.

A typical thriving river community, the village owned its own waterworks and electric light plant. It had telegraph, telephone and express facilities and two banks, It also had five churches, a collegiate institute, two public schools, a public library, a public hall and two weekly newspapers.

Of particular pride to the community was St. Lawrence Hall taken down in 1958 as part of the Seaway work.

The authors noted, "All citizens and most visitors to Morrisburg are more or less familiar with the popular St. Lawrence Hall. Mr. W.H. McGannon, proprietor, located on Main St., in the centre of the business section of the town. It is a three-storey and basement building and contains 40 comfortably furnished sleeping apartments, the interior being arranged with a view to convenience and the home-like entertainment of guests. This is the leading hotel in Morrisburg and is equipped with all the latest modern improvements. The house has been entirely refurnished... The rooms are all clean, tidy and well furnished, as are the parlour, waiting room and office. Several commercial sample rooms are in use here. A well stocked bar is maintained where the choicest of wines, liquors, ales lager and cigars can be had at all times... The hotel was opened 35 years ago, "and is under the proprietorship of W.H. McGannon, who also sold soft coal and wood, plaster and cements; tickets for the GTR and various steamships.

The Windsor Hotel, located on Lock St., was operated by Reuben McDonnell and offered the traveler reasonable rates along with a dining-room "liberally supplied with the best the market affords."

The Canada Tin Plate and Sheet Steel Co. Ltd., started production under the direction of J. Wesley Allison in 1907. Producing black plate, Canada plate, steel sheets, etc. "This is the only mill of its kind in the Dominion." Employing some 150 to 175 men year round, the company sold its products across Canada.

Finally, locals could bank at the Molsons Bank. Opened around 1858, the branch was managed by W.S. Connolly. "This institution does a general banking business, farming and commercial, buying and selling exchange, receiving deposits, etc. In the saving department amounts are received on deposit of \$1 upwards, and interest allowed at the highest current rates."