

ALBION IS A POPULAR PLACE

By Robert Williamson

Although this 2017 series of Mountain Memories features a Canadian confederation theme, I can't resist reviewing some heritage associated with Albion Falls, given its sudden popularity.

Hamilton's "laid back" lack of appreciation for our outstanding locale has sent us a wake-up call. People want to see what we've got! And Albion has got "IT".

To begin with, **it** is one of the most attractive waterfalls along the edge of our spectacular Niagara escarpment. **Its** rich heritage dates back to the arrival of United Empire Loyalist, William Davis in 1792. Millwright, Henry Van Wagner of local beach reputation, built a large combined grist and saw mill for Davis beside the waterfalls in 1794. (See Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society Website, Mountain Memories July 10 2014, **Albion Falls: 220 Years of Mountain History**). In addition, **it** is very accessible. Located adjacent to the Red Hill and Lincoln M. Alexander Parkway interchanges, **it** is easy to find and unlike Webster Falls has a large free parking area. Not only that, but until recently, **it** also had a convenient, if incomplete, stair access.

Albion Falls has always had an inviting atmosphere and offers good potential for entrepreneurial interests. In the 1880s Quarrymen Waddel and Carpenter operated a toll booth on the north side of the bridge over the waterfalls. The photo below shows Carpenter's Lunch restaurant on the south side of the millpond circa 1940. Oliver Carpenter and his family lived in the building and operated a food service on the ground floor. It was a popular destination for Sunday drives and May 24th hikers. The waterfalls is on the extreme left beyond the bridge abutment.



Carpenter's Lunch, Albion Falls, 1940s (Frank Field).

The barn-like building was built in the 1867 confederation era as a hop-kiln to dry out hops grown in the vicinity. Bales of hops were sold to brewers for making beer. Carpenter's Lunch was destroyed by fire in 1947 and replaced by a cinder block dance and banquet hall called Club Albion. It too disappeared in the 1970s when the site was taken over by the Hamilton-Wentworth Conservation Authority. It presently is the focal point and parking area for a network of attractive hiking trails in the Red Hill Valley, but incredibly now, not the waterfall.



Photo by Robert Williamson

The photo above shows the exact same area where Carpenter's Lunch once stood on the bank beside the bridge abutment on the extreme left. The Red Hill Creek now flows through an empty mill pond. Beyond the bridge, Mountain Brow Boulevard swings sharply left and branches past the parking area onto Arbour Road which dead ends at a pedestrian bridge across the Parkway.

Albion Falls is a popular place to visit. Hamilton should enhance that attraction so that visitors to the Red Hill Valley won't be discouraged by a political and neighbourhood "stay away" attitude as has happened to waterfalls in the Dundas Valley.

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