

MOUNTAIN RESIDENT RECEIVES RARE AWARD FOR PROMOTING LOCAL HISTORY

Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society's president, David Lindeman, reports that the society's longest serving executive member, Robert Williamson, has been awarded a very rare heritage medal in recognition of over two decades of voluntary research presenting obscure local naval and general history to the Hamilton community. One of his primary media outlets has been a monthly Mountain Memories column since 2013.

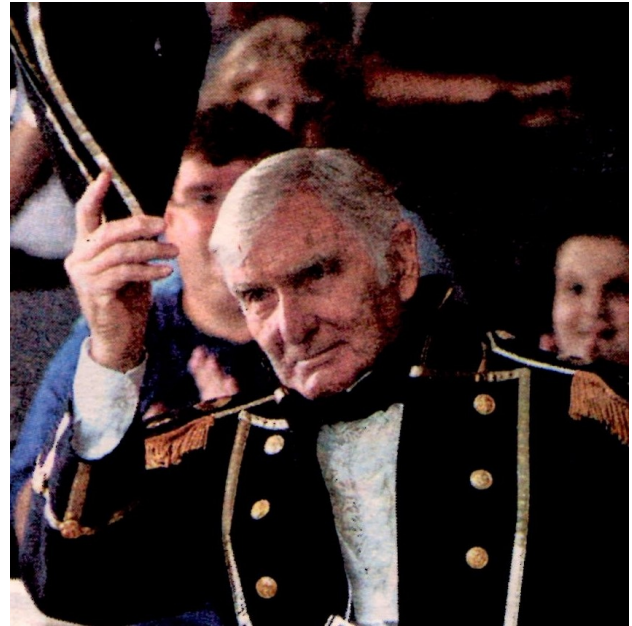
A fellow naval colleague, Robert DeWolfe, nominated Williamson for the Naval Establishment of the Crown Forces of North America heritage award. The Naval Establishment's objective in association with the Canadian

Maritime Heritage Society is, "to portray with accuracy and fidelity the Royal Navy and Provincial Marine during the War of 1812". Having met these requirements, Commander Williamson was awarded an honorary replica of the Naval General Service Medal (NGSM) approved in 1847 by Queen Victoria.



Although obsolete as a gazetted medal it recognizes his noteworthy service in promoting the mandate of the aforementioned Naval Establishment. For over two decades he has been a naval spokesman at the Hamilton and Scourge 1813 Naval Memorial Services which take place at Confederation Park as well as many other historical occasions including hundreds of school visits, community lectures, written articles and historic plaque presentations.

Commander Williamson credited his wife, Eileen, for her seamstress skill, providing him with an 1812 re-enactors naval officer's uniform. He says it contributes greatly to gaining publicity for Canada's forgotten naval role in North American history. He plans to wear the NGSM with pride on his re-enactors uniform because it represents the FIRST British campaign medal issued to ALL RANKS for service between 1793 and 1840. It was a prominent period during which the Royal Navy fought in the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the Anglo-American War of 1812. Although 20,933 NGSMs were awarded 170 years ago, very few exist today. An original medal would be worth \$8500.00.



Commander Williamson in naval re-enactor uniform acknowledges his introduction at Hamilton City Hall during Heritage Day. *Family photo*

Despite the fact that many naval engagements took place on Lake Ontario during the War of 1812, there were very few NGSMs awarded. This was due to the belated nature of the award, 40 years after the fact, as well as a combination of isolation, illiteracy and limited publicity in the backwater frontier of Upper Canada during that period. Consequently the NGSM is a truly rare award on the Great Lakes.

Although the NGSM played a prominent role in naval history with its 231 authorized campaign identity clasps including Egypt 1798, Copenhagen 1801 and Trafalgar 1805, Williamson was surprised to discover some rather curious circumstances related to the medal's award history. Britain's greatest naval hero, Admiral Lord Nelson did not receive the medal because it was not issued posthumously. On the other hand, a baby boy born on board HMS TREMENDOUS during a battle on June 1, 1794 was eligible and was awarded the NGSM with the 1794 clasp when he applied, later in life. The child's mother however, did not apply because, even though sanctioned by Queen Victoria, women were not eligible.

Mountain Memories by award winning local historians appears monthly for the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society.

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