

#23 Mountain Memories by Robert Williamson  
**Canada Day - Hamilton's Connection**

We have just celebrated Canada's 148th birthday and the 50th anniversary of the creation of a distinctive Canadian Maple Leaf flag. Nevertheless, there is still a related Hamilton event that will follow later this year in connection with this national revelry.

Through an excellent three-part series in the Hamilton Community News by Mark Newman in February, we learned how Prime Minister Lester Pearson's minority government, supported by the NDP and Creditiste Party was able to prevail in the great flag debate for the now-iconic version of our flag that flies proudly in Canadian skies.

However, there is a part of the Lester Pearson story that few people know and is seldom promoted. He once lived and went to school in Hamilton. Therefore, in recognition of Pearson's great achievements, the Hamilton Historical Board hopes to unveil a city plaque later this year at his former Hamilton home (Oakwood), 137 Catharine Street North. The text will read:

***"Oakwood was built in 1890 as the parsonage for Wesley Methodist Church. From 1910 to 1914, this two-story red brick Victorian Style house was home to the Reverend Edwin Pearson and his wife, Annie Bowles Pearson. The significance of this property lies in the political career of their son, Lester Bowles Pearson, who graduated from Hamilton Central Collegiate Institute at the age of 16."***

***"Lester B. Pearson was one of Canada's foremost statesmen. In a distinguished 20-year career with the Department of External Affairs he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the creation of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force during the 1956 Suez Crisis. He served as Canada's 14th Prime Minister and introduced the Maple Leaf Flag in 1965."***



Oakwood c. 1973 former Hamilton home of Lester Pearson. Photo courtesy HPL, LACAC

There is a story behind this story. I found a student photo of Pearson while working on a book project,

**"150 Years of Excellence"** in the Hamilton Board of Education Archives. The discovery of the 1913 uncatalogued Student Council photograph was accidental, a pure Eureka moment.



Lester Pearson (lower right), his brothers, parents and grandfather who is seated c. 1913. Pearson family album photo.



Lester Pearson as student council member with HCCI Principal Dr. Thompson. HWDSB Archives photo

*Mountain Memories*, written by historian **Robert Williamson** on behalf of HMHS, generally appears monthly.