

## ~Media Release~

### Completion of Digitization Project – Daily British Whig 1902-26

Each year the Frontenac Heritage Foundation undertakes a special project to highlight the heritage and history of the Kingston region. This year, the Foundation negotiated a contract to digitize 24 years of the *Daily British Whig*, from 1902 to 1926. This involved digitizing 89 reels of microfilm, which included 7,532 issues of the newspaper, for a total of 89,413 pages of newsprint.

This project has moved the historical microfilm records into the digital age, and will benefit students, researchers, and genealogists. Two sources of funding assisted with the project, as well as a donation from the Frontenac Heritage Foundation.

- The Davies Foundation generously donated to the project, and this is fitting as the Michael Davies family took over the publication of the *Kingston Whig Standard*, as it became in 1926.
- The Foundation also received a City of Kingston Heritage Fund Project Grant with the assistance of the Kingston Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites and the City of Kingston.

President of the FHF, Shirley Bailey states “The Foundation is very grateful to agencies which donate funds towards the betterment of our community each year.”

Local libraries hold microfilm of the newspapers, but anyone who has attempted to research on microfilm knows that it is tedious flipping the pages on microfilm, and it is a challenge to look for material without a good search function. Digitizing this daily newspaper now makes it easy to research on your own computer screen. The materials will be of particular interest to those who wish to research people and events relating to World War I, at a time when there was a special insert in the *Daily British Whig* describing life in the Barriefield Camp. Anyone looking for material about relatives who were involved with the Great War will be interested in this information.

"Newspapers, especially historic newspapers, are dense with local and international current events, and the 1902-1926 *Daily British Whig* has significant historic value as primary materials for students, genealogists and researchers. OurDigitalWorld is very proud to have worked with the Frontenac Heritage Foundation to make these newspapers available online and ensure that one of Ontario's oldest community newspapers is globally discoverable, fully searchable and freely available to everyone!" says Jess Posgate, Projects Coordinator, OurDigitalWorld.

One of the Foundation's longstanding members and supporters, John Grenville, had the chance to look at some of the early newspaper material that was digitized, and he reported success with researching Ernest Beckwith, an architect who was City Engineer/Architect from 1906-08, followed by nearly a decade in Kingston as an architect from 1908 to 1917.

Beckwith designed many brick houses and other structures such as the Orpheum Theatre (now James Reid's at Sydenham Street on Princess), and the Orange Hall (south side of Princess, between Barrie and Division which is no longer standing). As a result of the searchable newspapers, Grenville found a description of the Orpheum Theatre's opening in October 1909. The article offers many insights into the interior of the new vaudeville theatre, and described its dimensions, the fact that it was constructed as a fireproof building having a seating capacity of 700 people and a large reception hall on the second floor, and so on. While many of the 'Beckwith' hits in the digital information are advertisements, there are other references to houses that Beckwith designed on Victoria, Albert, Aberdeen, Stuart, Couper Streets etc., and Kensington Avenue. (See the attached Whig article dated October 9, 1909)

The materials can be accessed online at this time at the following link: <http://vitacollections.ca/digital-kingston/search> In the future, the materials will also reside on the Our Digital Kingston area of the website for the Kingston Frontenac Public Library.

The Foundation had hoped to hold a public information session so people could learn more about using the *Daily British Whig* materials, but the pandemic precludes this. Instead, researchers are directed to look at an informative guide produced by the Waterloo Public Library which explains how to access a digital newspaper collection: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5aeqMPc2KP8>

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Attachment

