

CAPTAIN'S WALKING TOUR



MIDLAND HERITAGE COMMITTEE

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The Town of Midland

575, Dominion Avenue, Midland ON





Midland's Marine Heritage

Known to the Huron/Ouendat people as “Ouendaronk”, to the French as “La Mer Douce,” and to the British as Georgian Bay, the waters of the so-called “Sixth Great Lake” have had a profound effect upon those who inhabited its shores.

The protected, deep-water harbour of Midland Bay is pertinent to the Town's growth and development. Without its harbour, Midland would not be the same today if it even existed at all. The presence of the harbour not only influenced the selection of Midland as the terminus of the Midland Railway in 1871, but it also attracted many early settlers to the area. Commercial fishermen, lumbermen and shipbuilders alike flocked to Midland and prospered in the community. Generations of Midlanders were involved in the shipping industry. This walking tour of their homes briefly explores only a handful of the sailors, captains and ship-owners that once called Midland their home.



Contact Us

Looking for more information about Midland's historic past?
We can help!

Town of Midland

757 Dominion Ave
Midland, ON
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(705) 526 4275

Huronia Museum

549 Little Lake Park
P.O. box 638
Midland, ON
L4R 4P4
(705) 526-2844

Simcoe Archives

1149 ON-26
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L0L 1Y2
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Archie A. Hudson

401 Elizabeth Street

A.A. Hudson sailed Glenlyon and many other ships for James Playfair. He also formed and managed Northwest Steamships for James Playfair. He and his brother D'Alton took over the company in the 1930s. This home is accentuated by the white stucco façade and contrasting black gingerbread trim and roof.



Please Note

Properties listed in this pamphlet are privately owned and are not accessible to the public without permission from the owner.

Please respect their privacy



Frederick John Burke

435 Hugel Avenue

Frederick Burke (known as “Tatey Bug” because of a speech impediment as a child that prevented him from saying his own name, Teddy Burke, correctly) was born in 1888 and died in 1940. His first command was the *Metamora* in 1907 followed by the *Wahnapitae*, the *Chamberlain*, *Jas B. Eases* and *Ralph Budd*. Burke drowned in Lake Superior while captain of the *Arlington* on April 30, 1940 during a violent storm. It is believed that Burke heroically kept the freighter upright until the lifeboat was launched, ensuring the survival of all his crew members. However, by staying at the helm too long Burke was unable to board the lifeboat before the ship overturned, causing his death.

His former home is reminiscent of Queen Anne style architecture, with a large gable end on the front of the home. This home has several verandas and porches under the gables and eaves. An octagonal window is situated in the front end gable and a plaque commemorating Burke is located at the front entrance.



A. Lavigne

302 Manly Street

A. Lavigne was a noted tug skipper and barge captain and brother of W.A. Lavigne. This home has a stained glass fanlight above the living room window, an L-shaped front porch and a cut stone retaining wall on the south side of the property.



William A. Lavigne

298 Manley Street

W.A. Lavigne was skipper of the Gleneagles, one of the largest vessels on the Great Lakes since 1927. He was given his first command in 1909 on the Midland Queen, was captaining of the Gleniffer and Glenshee and commanded the Lemoyne on its maiden voyage. The Lemoyne was at one time the largest ship on the Great Lakes. The home he once resided in has interesting Edwardian colonettes on the front porch and an inset second storey balcony. He was killed in 1931 in Thunder Bay when his car was struck by a train.



David James Burke

423 Hugel Avenue

Considered one of the best tug men on Georgian Bay, David Burke was born in 1877 and died in 1941. It was said that he died of a broken heart upon the death of his brother Fred. He sailed numerous vessels in his four-decade career on the Great Lakes, including the Waubic, Minnie Hall, Cherokee, Superior, Susan C. Doty, Turner, Reginald and Charlton. He worked for the Victoria Harbour Lumber Company and for Penetang lumber baron, Carl Beck, on the Shawanaga. He was also part owner of Burke Towing and Salvage along with his brothers.

This home is similar to Edwardian Classicism style architecture, having a low, gabled roof line, siding and brick façade, numerous windows and stone foundation.



D.L. White

422 Hugel Avenue

Douglas Leland White once resided in this one and one-half storey bungalow which is highlighted by the lattice-type porch posts and contrasting white siding with black roof and trim façade. White was born in 1858 in Albany, New York and died in 1945. He was a partner of James Playfair from 1888 to 1937 and became Director of Midland Coal Dock Company in 1901. White Loveland and Company was the first mill at Byng Inlet. He lived for a time at “Edgehill” before he sold it to James Playfair. After a fire, the home was rebuilt to resemble the original structure. He was Mayor of Midland in 1904.



James Playfair

Huronion Park/ Edgehill Drive

the skipper of the first commercial ship into Midland Harbour. His home was once situated on the lands now known as Huronia Park overlooking Georgian Bay.

James Playfair died in 1937 at his home. Upon the death of his wife Mrs. Playfair, the estate was willed to the Town. Their home became the site of Midland’s first museum for 20 years until its demolition in 1967.





James Playfair

Huronion Park/ Edgehill Drive

James Playfair was born on July 8, 1860 in a village called St. Andrew's-by-the-Sea in Scotland. He came to Midland in 1883 at 23 years of age and made his fortune in the shipping and lumber business. One of Midland's most prominent citizens, he owned approximately 50 to 60 vessels. He enjoyed his ships so much that he would stand on the second storey balcony of his home with a megaphone so he could talk to his Captains entering the Harbour.

No name in Canada was more closely linked to lumbering and shipping as was Playfair's. In 1886, he formed a lumbering business partnership with D.L. White and in 1900 began the Midland Navigation Company with the St. Andrew, later adding the Midland Queen which was one of the first vessels sunk by a German submarine in the English Channel during the First World War. They also owned Midland King, Midland Prince, Emperor and Empress of Midland.

Playfair began what is now a Midland tradition. In order to create a competitive element in his fleet, he offered a black, silk top hat to the first ship into the Harbour each season. Today, his own black, silk top hat is ceremoniously given to



John Bruce Hanly

434 Hugel Avenue

J.B. Hanly was born on November 5, 1865 and died April 22, 1937. He was the husband of Eliza Adele Burke, sister of the Burke Captains. He co-owned Midland Engine Works (founded 1901) with his brother Samuel "Bert" Hanly, which produced the Hanly Marine Engine, a quality boat motor. He was president of the Trent Waterway Association c. 1928 and came to Midland in 1895 to open a machine and blacksmith shop.

He contributed considerably to the prosperity of the Town and was Harbour Master for many years. His home was built by William Hope in 1897. Interesting architectural elements of the home include the decorative gable ends, gingerbread trim on the front porch and bay windows.



Cecil Clark

258 Queen Street

Clark was a life-long sailor and captain with the Paterson Steamship Company for many years. The Georgian style architecture of this home is highlighted by the stained glass window adjacent to the doorway and the crescent-shaped window and cedar shakes on the front gable end. This house was moved from its original location on Yonge Street.



Manley Chew

Corner of Charles and Bay Streets

Manley Chew was the son of George Chew, born August 11, 1874. He was a Member of Parliament and Town Council. He and his father owned the Chew and Son Mill and he also purchased a mill with Edward Leatherby in 1900. Shipping magnate James Playfair bought this mansion from him and later deeded it to the Town for a hospital, St. Andrew's Manor which is now part of the Hillcrest Village Square Centre.



Edward Francis Burke

236 Manly Street

Edward Burke sailed the large tugs Minitage and Metamora for James Playfair as well as the ship Mount Stephen and the lumber hooker, Chamberlain. Born on July 13, 1873 in Penetanguishene, he moved to Midland in the fall of 1879 and died in 1958. He became Captain at age 19 and officially received his Captain's papers at 21. He lived at 236 Manly Street which he built in 1903 during the first year of his marriage.

He was the last male in the Burke lineage, but the name is perpetuated as a second name by three generations of Burke-Smiths. His grandfather, David Burke, was a sergeant in the British army and was transferred to Penetanguishene where he was the last Commanding Officer at the military garrison. Edward Burke was manager of Burke Towing and Salvage Co. which was owned by the three brothers, being one of the principal salvage companies in this part of the Great Lakes in the early decades of the century.



George Chew

251 Queen Street

George Chew was born in England in 1866 and arrived in Midland in the early 1880s. He opened a flour and shingle mill in 1866, a grist mill with his brother Thomas known as the Chew Brothers Mill in 1876, and established the George Chew and Sons lumber manufacturing company in 1900. His home is accentuated by its wrap-around porch, pressed glass gable ends and stone retaining wall along the property frontage.





Captain's Walking Tour Map Legend

Frederick John Burke
David James Burke
D.L. White
John Bruce Hanly
Cecil Clark
George Chew
Edward Francis Burke
Manley Chew
James Playfair
William A. Lavigne
A. Lavigne
Archie A. Hudson

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Captain's Walking Tour Map

