

The Hamilton Spectator – [Paul Morse](#) - August 03, 2010

WHAT A CIVIC HOLIDAY FOR DAVID RICKETTS.

Yesterday, Ricketts watched with pleasure as the city proclaimed George Hamilton Day, 174 years after the death of his great-great-great-grandfather, the man who founded Hamilton. "It's fantastic to have George recognized in this way," Ricketts said.

"I came to Dundas 25 years ago and married a Hamilton girl, and all I'd hear was Sir Allan MacNab this and Sir Allan MacNab that.

"Isn't it great that we now have some official recognition for the founder of our city?"

Born in 1788 in Queenston the son of a United Empire Loyalist mother and Scottish entrepreneur, Hamilton bought 257 acres of land from James Durand in 1814, which ended up in the heart of the county of Wentworth in the District of Gore. The land stretched from King to the Escarpment and James to Mary.

With help from Durand and Nathaniel Hughson, Hamilton was able to convince the government that he would pay to develop a town that would be the judicial seat of Wentworth County.

In 1816, the town was officially born when legislation was passed to recognize it.

Two plots Hamilton ceded back to the government were used to build a county courthouse and a jail.

Hamilton died in 1836, three years after his town was officially incorporated.

In Ontario, municipalities can use the August civic holiday to honour significant local historic figures. Toronto named it Simcoe Day, Burlington Joseph Brant Day, and Brantford Founders' Day.

The Hamilton Historical Board proposed to Hamilton council that, starting this year, the holiday become George Hamilton Day, said HHB chair Pat Saunders.

"We further propose that, each year after 2010, on George Hamilton Day, the city will celebrate the contribution to Hamilton's history and heritage of a new historical figure."

"This makes one extra proud," said Mayor Fred Eisenberger. "There have been many iterations of this city going back the hundreds of years it's been in existence.

"Today we're dealing with our own unique challenges but we survive and persevere, and we've become a spectacular, diverse and welcoming city."

The Hamilton Spectator - Lee Prokaska - Aug 03, 2010

A MONUMENT, BY GEORGE!

We live in the city that bears his name. We just enjoyed his holiday.

But we have little to mark the contributions of one of the founders -- and, for a time, one of the movers and shakers -- of early Hamilton.

Hamilton's city has many statues and significant pieces of sculpture. Included in a by no-means-complete list are Queen Victoria and Sir John A. Macdonald, who grace Gore Park. The Football Hall of Fame is marked by a statue of a touchdown. The library has a bust of Andrew Carnegie. United Empire Loyalists stand before the former courthouse on Main Street East, an immigrant family is near LIUNA Station. There is a monument at City Hall to workers injured and killed on the job and sculptured sailors at Pier 8. Heck, even turtles (Gage Park) and lions (Gore Park, Smith's Knoll across from Battlefield National Historic Site) are carved into Hamilton's visual history.

Whither George Hamilton?

Granted, the city erected a headstone at Hamilton Cemetery to commemorate Hamilton, the man, for his contributions to Hamilton, the city. But what about a real monument?

Part of the problem might be that we don't know what Hamilton looked like. His death predated photography. He apparently did not sit for any artists who might have rendered his image in oils. That does make it a challenge to create a statue of the man who created our city.



But surely we can do better than just a headstone in a cemetery, where too few people will see and appreciate it.

A monument to Hamilton's achievements in planting the seeds of our city is not required to bear his likeness. Perhaps a public competition would be the best way to find a fitting memorial for Hamilton. Regardless, it should be prominently placed and respectful of the man whose 1815 deal with James Durand for 257 acres of land helped launch our city's development.

Hamilton divided his land -- which stretched from King to the Escarpment, James to Mary -- into 80 lots, each facing a broad street and backing onto a lane. He donated a parcel of land for public structures - - the first, on the northeast corner of John and Jackson streets was a simple building with a jail on the first floor and a courthouse upstairs.

His plans didn't move as quickly as he hoped; most of the growth was in the North End. But it's clear Hamilton's legacy to our city is a significant one. And that's why he deserves a significant monument.

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