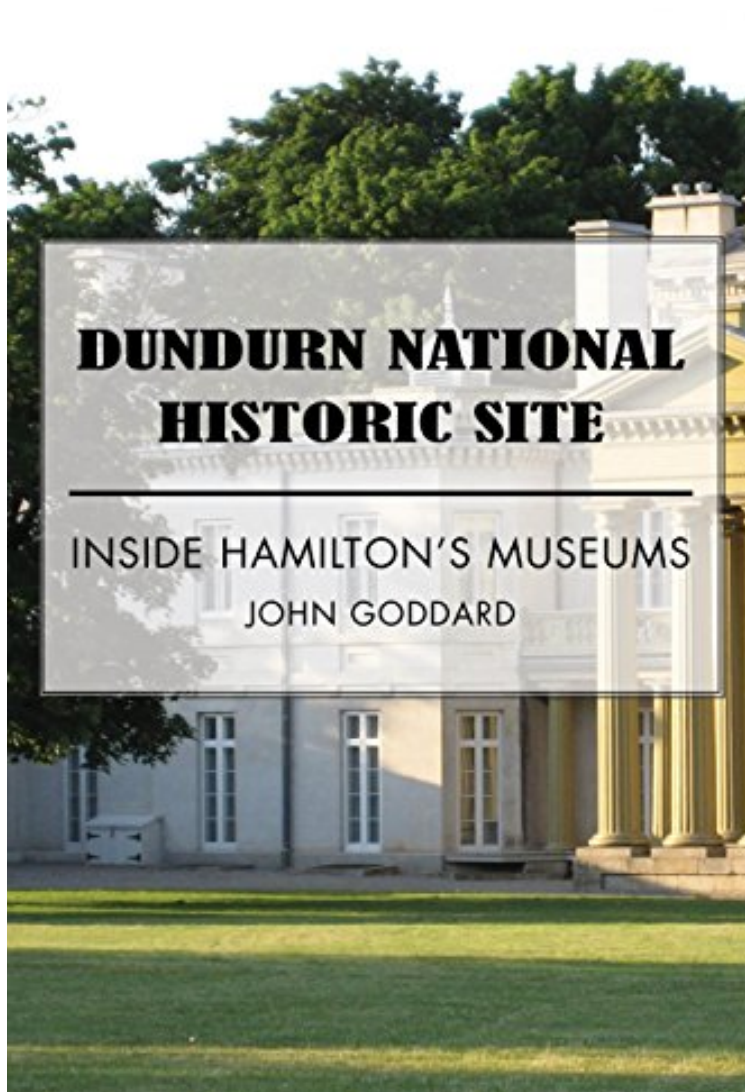


Battlefield House Museum and Park: Inside Hamilton's Museums

John Goddard

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John Goddard : Battlefield House Museum and Park: Inside Hamilton's Museums before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Battlefield House Museum and Park: Inside Hamilton's Museums:

Take a journey through Hamilton's past by way of the Battlefield House Museum and Park. Learn about founders, families, wars, and politics through tours of the grounds and houses and a discussion of some of the most prized possessions contained therein.

Inside Hamilton's Museums ... seeks to expand and develop the wonderful stories housed at that city's institutions ... If you want to learn more about them, Goddard's book has you covered. (Canada's History) Eminently readable, informative and accessible, [Inside Hamilton's Museums] fills an important niche in Hamilton literature. (Niagara Escarpment Views) About the Author John Goddard is a former magazine writer and Toronto Star reporter with a curiosity for little-known Ontario wonders. His books include Inside the Museums: Toronto's Heritage Sites and Their Most Prized Objects and, with TV's Richard Crouse, Rock and Roll Toronto, a cheeky guide to the city's rock and roll historic sites. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Three Canadian Heroes: Keefer, Hartshore, McFarlane Hamilton needed fresh, clean running water. In the mid-1800s, residents still drew water from five community wells for drinking, cooking, and washing. They hauled it by hand in buckets or paid to have it delivered by horse-drawn cart. With no handy water supply, they could not dampen the city's unpaved streets. Every passing carriage tossed up swirls of dust that settled again over furniture, clothing, and fruit and vegetable stalls, and got drawn into the throat and lungs. Fire posed a chronic threat. Wooden shops and houses periodically went up in flames, and all that firemen could do was pump water by hand from horse-drawn trucks, or form people into lines with pails to toss water at the blaze. Worst of all, when immigrant ships docked in the busy port, infectious diseases spread to the harbour's outhouses and into the city's groundwater. The wells turned into transmission sites for deadly diseases, including dysentery, typhoid, and especially cholera. During a single eight-week period in 1854, cholera killed 552 people out of a population of twenty thousand – one in forty residents. Nobody knew about germs and microbes, but they knew that their wells were tainted and that they needed a clean water source. They knew that to transform Hamilton from a disease-ridden firetrap into a city with a future they needed a means to pump water from a nearby river or lake. A waterworks would be expensive to build at a time when the city was overextended with railway construction. It would also be technologically daunting at a time when nobody in North America had ever tried to forge castings as massive as those needed for water-pumping steam engines. But civic leaders persevered. They had to. They gathered the brightest talents they could find and set them to work, and in 1860 Queen Victoria's eldest son turned a handle to start two of the biggest steam engines ever built to that time in North America.

“They move with great smoothness, and are very well finished,” one reporter said of the machinery in 1860. “The best engine house in the country,” John A. Macdonald, attorney general for Canada West and future Canadian prime minister, said on a tour of the works in 1859. “The best piece of hydraulic masonry to be seen anywhere,” the Canadian Illustrated News said of the building in 1863. Credit fell mostly to three genuine Canadian heroes. In their drive for technical precision and civic beauty, they not only built a waterworks but also set a national standard for industrialization. Chief engineer Thomas Keefer designed the system and oversaw its construction. Foundry owner John Gartshore oversaw the forging of the giant boilers and engines. James McFarlane helped forge the machines, took charge of installing them, and for the next fifty-one years kept them running.