



Historically Speaking

VOLUME 3

SPRING 2024

NO. 2

ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY AND POWER PROJECT HOW IT CHANGED THE WADDINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

Our last newsletter began revisiting the changes the village and town of Waddington experienced with the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway more than 70 years ago. The community faced some major issues and decisions. This newsletter expands on issues the Waddington school district faced. It also includes a story about the Waddington-Morrisburg Ferry service that ended just before the Seaway construction began.

Since the end of World War II, there had been talk of consolidation with the Madrid school district. The Seaway project compounded the issue and brought the discussion to the forefront. This Ogdensburg Journal article from January 1955 details some of these issues.

WADDINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT FACES LOSS OF TAX PROPERTY

Ogdensburg Journal

Jan. 15, 1955

Waddington -

Acquisition of property by the New York State Power Authority will cut the taxable property of the Waddington School District by about 10 percent, members of a Board of Education Advisory Committee learned at a meeting Thursday night.

Property which will be flooded or taken over by the new park system in Waddington amounted to about \$100,000, will be exempt from taxes even though the Power Authority is financially divorced from the state.

A subcommittee reported last night that the total assessed valuation for all the school districts in the Town which have not centralized with Madrid is \$1,235,259. The loss of revenue will add to the squeeze on the Waddington Union Free district finances. Waddington has been faced with increasing enrollment without a corresponding increase in property values and the district has not received increases in the amount of per pupil state aid.

Inquiries have been made to the State Education Department and to the federal government for special emergency aid. So far all these inquiries have been fruitless. Federal aid, given for some federal projects such as the Seaway, would lag two years behind the boom.

Deserves Consideration

Those present at the meeting felt that the Waddington area deserved some special consideration from the State Education Department other than the Rapp plan for Centralization, which was prepared before World War II. Members indicated their feeling that the growth of the community, expected to be greater than any other in New York State, qualified as a special emergency area.

Tax rates in the 13 districts vary from \$5 per thousand to \$35 per thousand in the village of Waddington itself. the so-called Master plan of centralization, the Waddington Union Free District is scheduled to be centralized with Madrid.

The premium held out by the state education department for centralization is an additional 12 percent state aid, special aid for building and an allowance for transporting pupils.

Enrollment in the Waddington school is now 269, according to Principal Dallas K. Martin, as compared with the building's rated capacity of 220. "New" children are already enrolling in the school, Joel Howard, chairman of the advisory committee added.

Costs of new schools in the area are: 1952 addition to Morristown central school, \$465,000 — one-third of the total assessed valuation of Waddington; Hammond Central School built in 1951, \$698,000 — over half Waddington's total valuation; Lisbon Central School, just completed, \$790,000.

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The Waddington High School was built in 1929.

Waddington School District Faces Loss of Tax Property Continued ...

Teachers Salaries

Another sub-committee reported on the teachers salaries in the Waddington Schools, finding that they compared favorably with the salaries in some of the surrounding area. Mandatory increase in teachers salaries result in an annual increase of 80 cents per \$1,000 in the tax rate of the village, a member of the Board of Education stated.

William White presented the report of the group of 19 members of the committee who visited the St. Lawrence Central School in Brasher. The trip was made with the idea of obtaining information which would help solve the Waddington problem. The trip was reported as being "a showplace, showing what can be done with tax money."

Two new sub-committees were appointed, one to study the pros and cons of the union free district and the other to explore centralization. They will report and discuss at the next meeting Jan. 27. Included in the discussion will be building costs, housing of pupils and curriculum.

Present at the meeting beside 21 members of the committee led by Joel M. Howard were Wesley D. Ehle, district superintendent; James Desmond, board clerk; Dallas K. Martin, principal; and William Yolton and Lawson R. Thompson, of the Board of Education. Mrs. Howard C. Fay was secretary of the meeting.

Next, this June 1955 Ogdensburg Journal article provides more specific information about the conditions inside the school building and what was being required to remain accredited as a school district.

WADDINGTON: A POSITIVE APPROACH TO A NEGATIVE SITUATION

By Grace Lowe

It was a positive approach to a negative situation that has been taken by Waddington schoolmen, the Board of Education, and laymen. The negative situation is a growing school that has no place to grow in and a tax rate so high as to curb flexibility in curriculum or any idea of expansion.

"We've made the most of what we have. There is no more to make of," was the way Dallas K. Martin, principal, put it.

The positive approach has been a study made by board members and laymen through an advisory committee. The committee has visited other schools; studied the Waddington educational program and

compared it with those of other schools; and studied the financial set up of their and other districts. It has reached a point where, as one member put it, "In another week or two we all ought to know what we are for and what we are against."

The committee is expecting a report from Albany on a study of possible annexation to the Madrid Central School district. When talking with members of the Citizen's Committee one feels that they have begun to form opinions — but only just begun. They are waiting for all the facts. They recognize the need for some sort of action. They feel we can't maintain the status quo," Martin said.

THE FIRST PROBLEM with the status quo is the limited curriculum. The high school student has only two choices — college preparatory or commercial course — no industrial arts, no agriculture, no homemaking, no art. The junior high school will be faced with cutting its state aid to the elementary level since the school is unable to provide the enriched program with homemaking, shop and art. The school also lacks a kindergarten. The last expansion in the curriculum was in the late 1940's when 14 typewriters were bought and the commercial course put in. Seniors in the commercial department also have "solo time" on the electrical typewriter and calculator which was bought for the school's clerical work. Even the bright new typewriters are a problem though, for the typing room is also used for social studies. They occupy needed desk space.

The science room was once a coal bin. The music room was made from the locker room off the gymnasium. The small library is well stocked with books but it is in use all day as a classroom. The school does not employ a school course.

The guidance officer is also the vice-principal, physical education director and citizenship education teacher. What time he has left over is spent on guidance. Students do receive guidance from individual teachers. "They probably get individual attention they wouldn't get in a larger school," Martin pointed out.

The school has no lockers for wraps which are hung in classrooms or on racks in the halls. The cafeteria is a converted store room and the school's not lunch program is a bottle of milk.

The milk program is new, having been introduced only this spring. Before that children who brought lunches drank pop. The school has a large hot plate and there is a possibility that hot lunches might be provided in future years.

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Paul K. Martin, Principal

A POSITIVE APPROACH TO A NEGATIVE SITUATION - Continued

THE EXTRA-CURRICULAR activities program has expanded in the last year. In addition to band, chorus and inter school sports, a photo club and rifle club have been started. The photo club works in the janitor's shop room, selected because it has running water.

WHEN YOU DON'T have much in the way of facilities you try to concentrate on something else. In Waddington, principal Martin said, they try to teach "Living", to teach the children in all grades to be citizens of the community, to be a little more than just good neighbors.

"It's an intangible," Martin said, "You can't measure it on tests."

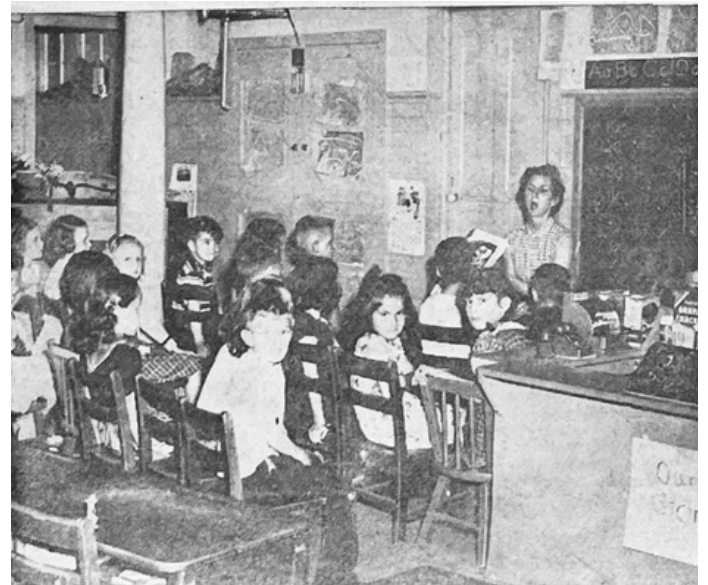
One thing does show on the books. Waddington, with a small student body has taken state scholarships for two consecutive years.

Although the school system offers both school diploma and Regents diploma, the majority take Regents and they are used as final examinations by some of the teachers.

The elementary classes are grouped for reading which is taught as part of a language arts program by both phonetics and sight reading. Children are promoted on an individual basis with the principal and teacher and sometimes the parents going over the child's record when necessary.

WHEN BUILT IN 1929, the school building was one of the finest in the state. The trouble is the school system has outgrown it. Things like art, science and band have come to be a standard part of secondary education.

The number of pupils has increased too. There are 268 in the system now and the building was intended for only 200. Already one class uses the basement of the Methodist Church. Next year the student population with just normal growth will top 280. And growth will not be normal. Waddington is feeling the impact of the construction on the power project. Martin said that the school has been getting 5 to 6 children a week from new families moving into the area. In spite of this the teacher load has been kept low, 26 in the primary grades and 25 from grades 4 to 6.



Teacher reads a story in the Waddington classroom in the Methodist Church basement.

THE POPULATION growth is the second break in the status quo. The third is the financial set up. The tax rate of the district presents graphically the reason the district can not, financially, stand pat. Its tax rate this year is \$35.31 and next year, is expected to hike to about \$40. The increase has been sharp in the last few years. Ten years ago the rate was \$21.47. In the next five years it rose only \$4.50, to \$25.99 in 1950-51. By last year it had risen only another \$1 to \$27.18. Between the 1953-54 budget and the 1954-55 the rate jumped \$8. The district's budget this year is \$88,152. It has increased three-fold in the last ten years. State aid to the district has kept the same ratio, \$17, 967 in 1945-46 it is \$53,154 now. Waddington, a union free district, receives 12 percent less state aid than a central district. It receives no special building quota.

As a union free district it is forbidden by state law to participate in boards of co-operative services, which split the cost and services of special teachers between schools that could not hire such a teacher full time. Yet with its tight budget, Waddington needs the advantages of the cooperative board more than many central districts.

WADDINGTON'S FUTURE, financial and otherwise, is tightly bound to the rural districts around it. There are seven districts which contract with Waddington to do all or part of their educating. Some send all children, others only send senior high or junior and senior high school students to the village school. Waddington takes in about \$2800 in tuition from the 60 children who come from rural districts.

The district charges \$40 tuition to elementary students and \$60 to secondary students. The elementary tuition added to the state aid of \$220 annually per child falls way short of the \$300 per year it costs the union free district to educate the child. On the secondary level, increased state aid per child lets the district come out even, but it comes nowhere near making up for the elementary group.

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A POSITIVE APPROACH TO A NEGATIVE SITUATION - Wrap Up

RURAL DISTRICTS find it cheaper to send their students to Waddington. Waddington Dist. 8, the Meigs district on the new River Road, closed its school completely in 1943. It sends the 17 or 18 children to Waddington schools, paying tuition and transportation, on a tax rate of only \$12 per thousand. Waddington Dist. 4, on the road to Chipman, has voted to close its one-room school and send all its children to Madrid next year. This year the school had 15 pupils in grades 2 through 7. The high school group attended Waddington High School. Here the tax rate was \$18 per thousand, which covered the cost of the rural school, transportation to Waddington, tuition there, and incidentals.

Glenn Lawrence, one of the trustees of Dist. 4, looks with reluctance on the closing of all the rural schools. It seems like they're closer." He also admitted that the school meetings were about the only time all the people in the district got together.

Waddington District 7 sends 8 students to high school this year, one of whom is the valedictorian. The district school on the Massena road has a magnificent view of the St. Lawrence and houses 24 students in grade 1 through 8. Next year the 7th and 8th grade will go to Waddington with the senior high students.

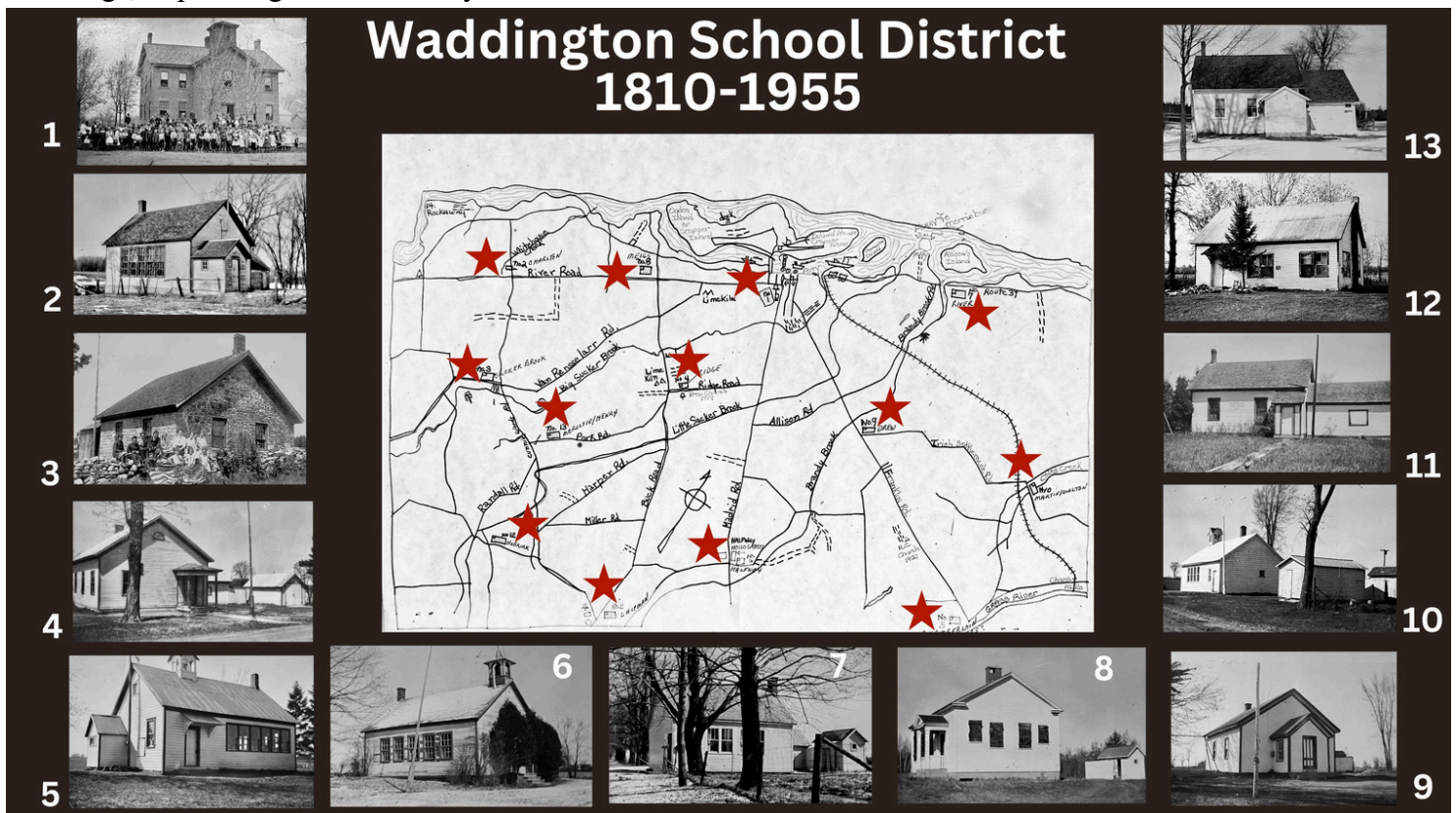
Trustees of rural district feel that education is good at Waddington, but some of them deserve more variety. People from the rural districts are members of Waddington's citizens committee. The committee is the first group to study education that Waddington has had in a long time. The school has no PTA.

AMONG THE POSSIBILITIES that the citizens group considered were centralization with both Madrid and Lisbon, excluding rural school children from the Union Free School and then building a few rooms over the gym of the Waddington school.

Under the Rapp plan of centralization the entire area comes under the Madrid School District. It is economically unfeasible for the Union Free district and the surrounding rural area to centralize by themselves. In addition they would need the approval of the State commissioner of education, which would not likely be forthcoming. The committee will probably make its report this month and some action may be taken by the Board of Education during the summer.

Members of the Board of Education are William Yolton, president; Miriam McNulty, Lawson Thompson, Paul A. Rutherford and Donald T. Logan.

The photo below shows just how extensive the Waddington School District was prior to the discussions that were mentioned in the articles you just read. All of the one-room school houses were closed and many sold off prior to the start of Seaway construction. Students then sent to either the Waddington or Madrid school buildings, depending on where they lived.



FERRY SERVICE BETWEEN WADDINGTON, NY AND MORRISBURG, ONT.

Once upon a time, you could easily travel by ferry between Waddington and Morrisburg, Ontario. That ended when the Seaway was constructed.

When perusing old documents and articles, as far back as the 1860's there was mention of a regular and hourly ferry service between Waddington and Morrisburg. The 1873-74 Child's Gazetteer of St. Lawrence County mentions the ferry boat makes five trips per day. As time went on the Waddington-Morrisburg and the Ogdensburg-Prescott ferries were the only operating services along the 100-mile stretch of the St. Lawrence River between the Thousand Islands and the Roosevelt Bridge (near Massena).

In the US Commerce Department's November 10, 1915 publication entitled "Commerce Reports" there was a comparison made between the two ferry lines. It was stated the St. Lawrence River between Prescott and Ogdensburg is unobstructed by islands and at and near Ogdensburg are some of the good roads for which New York State is noted. It also stated the New York town across from Morrisburg, Ontario, is Waddington, much smaller than Ogdensburg; and while Waddington is also connected with good New York roads, the river there is obstructed by islands, and the ferry service consequently is not very good.

According to an Ogdensburg Journal article, on Oct. 2, 1911, the U.S. Immigration Bureau designated Waddington as a legal port of entry for aliens and Immigrant Inspector Weaver was assigned to duty here. The fact that there was a year-round ferry service between Waddington and Morrisburg on the opposite side of the river, led the department to come to this decision.

For many years the ferry dock and customs house were located near the railroad depot and milk condensary plant by what is now the end of James Street. It was a congested area and the water levels at the dock were often questionable. Because of this, a proposal was made for a new dock to be built off Dry Island (also known as Corrigan's Island), approximately 1 mile down river, near the current Brandy Brook boat ramp. As you will read in the November 1931 Ogdensburg Republican Journal article below, the managing director of the Ferry Company came with a well-prepared plan and multiple reasons for moving the ferry dock to a new location. Ultimately the dock was moved and ferry service continued until 1943 when it was halted for financial reasons. Operations were resumed again in 1946 and continued until 1953 when Seaway construction was looming.



For many years the ferry dock and customs house (shown on the left) were located near the railroad depot and milk condensary plant by what is now the end of James Street.



The Immigration and Customs House was moved to Dry Island in 1931 and remained until 1953 when the ferry permanently ceased operation.

20-MINUTE FERRY SERVICE WITH ALL YEAR OPERATION PROMISED TO WADDINGTON

Present Ferry Dock in Waddington Village To Be Moved One-Mile Down the River.

Howith Claims Move Necessary If Ferry to Continue Operation
Waddington, Nov. 5 - Waddington will have an all year round ferry service and 20 minute service during the summer months, was the promise of George D. Howith, vice-president and managing director for the Morrisburg-Waddington Ferry Company. Mr. Howith spoke Wednesday night before members of the Chamber of Commerce and townspeople of Waddington and stated the plans of his company for moving their present Waddington dock one mile down the river to Little Sucker Brook, shortening the run across the river by half, and improving and increasing service.

According to Mr. Howith the Waddington ferry can give the fastest service on the St. Lawrence River when the new dock is built. It is expected to increase the annual business of the ferry from 15,000 cars to at least 40,000 cars and to get much of the Ottawa traffic which now crosses at Prescott and Ogdensburg. Mr. Howith stated that Waddington is only 47 miles from Ottawa, while Ogdensburg is 62 miles.

The meeting Wednesday night was to give the people of Waddington an opportunity to express their opinion regarding the moving of the dock from the village a mile down the river.

Continued on next page

20-MINUTE FERRY SERVICE WITH ALL YEAR OPERATION CONTINUED

Petitions presented at the meeting indicated that most of the Waddington citizens were not in favor of removal of the dock. present, however, voted 10 to 8 in favor of the removal following the talk of Mr. Howith.

Frederick H. Martin, president of the Chamber of Commerce presided. Roy H. Wilson, secretary, was present. Several spoke in favor of the removal of the dock and in favor of cooperating with the ferry company which was faced with steady deficits and had to make the change to continue in business. Ross H. Thompson and Ray W. Thompson also spoke in favor of the removal. Charles A. Creighton spoke at length in opposition.

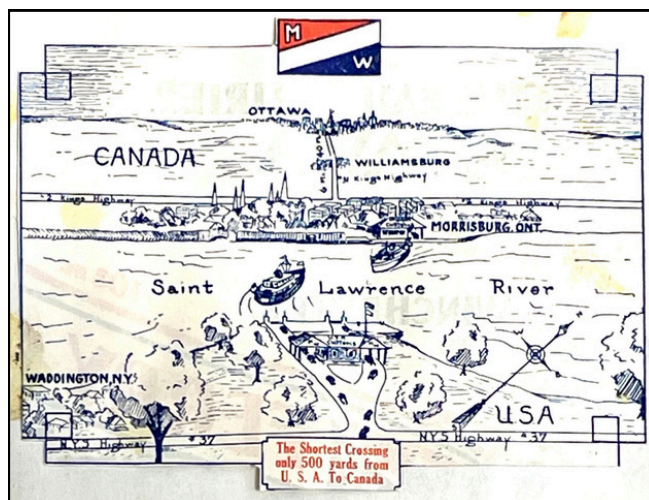
Mr. Howith explained that the present dock in the village of Waddington can be used only eight months of the year, that the crossing is so long - 12,000 feet, that the best service possible is 45 minutes between boats in the summer. In the winter the harbor is frozen solid, that the schedule is the slowest between Ogdensburg and Louisville. That deficits to date of the mortgages whom he represents and for whom he operates the Ferry company amount to \$22,000, and will exceed \$5,000 this year. Mr. Howith said he had bought another boat and put it in service, and had increased business 61 per-cent this year, but not enough to pay expenses. The change in dock is necessary if the company is to continue in business. He expects the change to make the ferry profitable.

"Navigation of the present dock is impossible," said Mr. Howith. The low water caused the ferry "Waddington" to be grounded at Waddington Sept. 30, causing \$850 damages. The "Morrisburg" grounded on the same shoal Oct. 7, damaging plates. She was pulled off by her sister ship. The "Morrisburg" grounded at the present dock on Oct. 11. The Waddington Condensed Milk Company's truck towed the boat off the bottom with the aid of crew and officials using implements such as pipes and crowbars. The Marine Insurance companies have notified us that they will no longer insure our boats because of the low water and danger of the Waddington dock and harbor."

"At the new dock a mile below Waddington 12 months' service can be maintained, 20 minute service in the summer, 30 minute in the spring and fall, 60 minute in the winter. In fact we can give the fastest service on the St. Lawrence. We will have no ice at this crossing at any time in the winter and can give continuous all year around service."

"A very formidable claim will be made for 90% of the traffic. The new population to draw on will be approximately 200,000 people and 40,000 cars. This additional traffic will flow through the town of Waddington whereas at the present time they do not travel by this port as the port is considered too slow and only a fair-weather Summer port, giving service eight months of the year only."

"The Ferry Company will operate a jitney service from



"THE FASTEST"

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AUTOMOBILE **5 EVERY 4 MINUTES** PASSENGER

FERRY

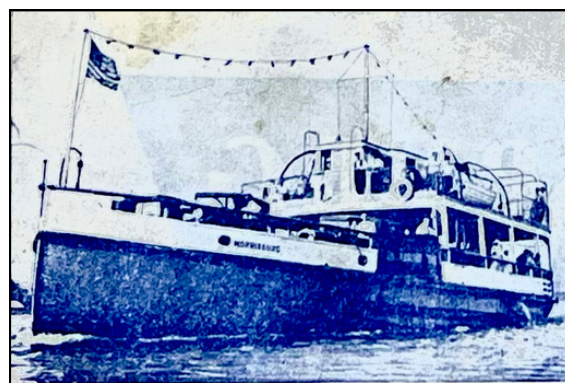
ON THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER IS BETWEEN
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MORRISBURG, ONTARIO CANADA

Rates—Motor Car, \$1.00; passengers, 25c each; return free on the same day. No extra charge Saturdays, Sundays or Holidays.

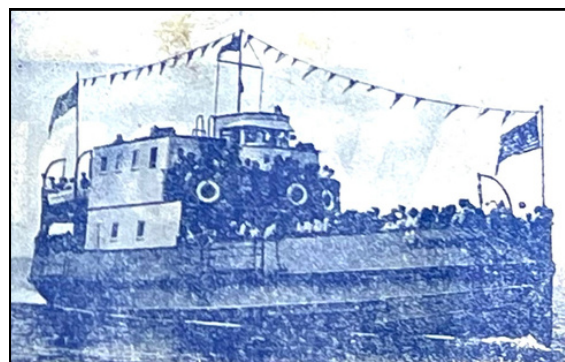
GEORGE D. HOWITH
 Vice-President and Managing Director
 Morrisburg-Waddington Ferry Line

Permanent Schedule

Starting from Six A. M. to Twelve Midnight, the boats operate continuously from each port every five minutes. It is the only All-Year Five Minute Ferry Service and 500-yard crossing on the St. Lawrence River. This Time-Table is incomparable as it can be easily remembered "Every Five Minutes, from 6 A. M. to 12 Midnight, Daily All-Year."



THE "M.S. MORRISBURG"



THE "M.S. WADDINGTON"

the new port to the theater and business section of Waddington, accommodating foot passenger traffic, whereas at the present time the foot passengers are obliged to walk.

Continued on the next page...

20-MINUTE FERRY SERVICE WITH ALL YEAR OPERATION CONTINUED

Deep Water, Visible Approach and Modern Building:

"Reasonably fast deep water, free from ice, assures absolute and unhampered service the year round."

"The approach to the new dock will be wide and open with - no railroad crossing or buildings obstructing the view. A modern Immigration and Customs House, which will have proper conveniences for the public and officials, will be built, and the canopy as proposed, will allow the examination of cars, protected from inclement weather."

"Then the parking area will be spacious and the loading and unloading of cars will be made on a straight drive, giving motorists the least difficulty with going on or off the boats."

"Those who are acquainted with the present building and yards will agree readily that the conditions now existing are obsolete and that the foregoing comparative statements of the old and new dock show distinctly that with the new dock this Ferry Company will be in a position to continue with its two boats; whereas at the old dock it will have difficulty in securing money to cover annual deficits, and in time the company will be obliged to re-trench to its original schedule, of one boat leaving each port four times daily, during the navigable season. This can only be averted by the new facilities at the Little Sucker Brook, where with an energetic advertising program, the success will be of virtual benefit to the public - the town of Waddington and District."

Mr. Howith stated that the Ferry Company had obtained permission of the War Department of the U.S. Government to proceed with building the dock below Waddington and that the Immigration and Customs Services had agreed to put their officials at the new dock to check incoming commerce and passengers. The company would proceed at once with the new dock and hoped to have it in operation within the next few months.



The M.S. MORRISBURG is shown moored at the dock on Dry Island.

WADDINGTON

FERRY TO CANADA

— WINTER SCHEDULE —

8:00 A. M. to 8:00 P. M. EFFECTIVE to APRIL 26th

— SPRING SCHEDULE —

6:00 A. M. to MIDNITE EFFECTIVE to MAY 14th

— SUMMER SCHEDULE —

6:00 A. M. to 1:00 A. M. THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER

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LOWEST RETURN RATES ON THE RIVER

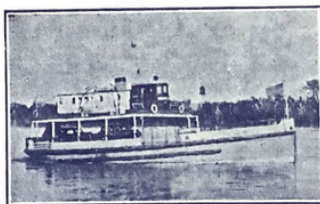
An ad for the Waddington Ferry that appeared in a 1949 edition of the Ogdensburg Journal.

Morrisburg - Waddington Ferry Line

**THE SHORTEST ROUTE
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ON THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER**

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New York City	386
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Utica	141
Rochester	208
Buffalo	280
Erie	365
Springfield, Mass.	346
Boston, Mass.	425
Ottawa	46
Callander	282
Montreal	103
Toronto	243



THE M. S. MORRISBURG

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GEORGE D. HOWITH

Vice President and Managing Director

"THE BLUE RIBBON LINE"

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1946

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**OCT. 16th to DEC. 1st INCLUSIVE
MORRISBURG - ON THE HOUR**

From 9 a.m. until 8 p.m.

Daily Except Saturdays, Sundays & Holidays

From 9 a.m. until 11 p.m.

WADDINGTON - ON THE HALF HOUR

From 9.30 a.m. until 8.30 p.m.

Daily Except Saturdays, Sundays & Holidays

From 9.30 a.m. to 11.30 p.m.

"Weather and all uncontrollable
circumstances excepted and all schedules
are subject to change without notice."

"Historically Speaking" is our way of sharing information about Waddington's rich history with those who have supported us with annual memberships. In addition to quarterly newsletters members also receive early notice of upcoming events and an invitation to our Celebration of History in October.

WHA's MISSION:

"To be the caretakers of our community's history for present and future generations"

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Email: waddhistorian@gmail.com

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WHA Committee Members and Helpers: Bobbie Davis, Patty VanPatten, Katelyn Bernard, Tracey Putney, Jean Denison, Mary Loomis, April Sharlow

WHA Meetings: 4th Tuesdays
6:30 PM - Town Hall Museum
on Main Street
All are welcome!

Thanks for Your Support...

We are thankful for the support of the following PATRONS and SPONSORS whose generous membership donations allow us to continue to support the Waddington Museum as well as work to bring the Historic Waterfront Walkway to fruition in time for 'America 250' in 2026.

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preserve Waddington History.

Or you can fill out the form below and mail it in:

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Need additional information or have questions?
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City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Email Address _____ Phone _____

Please check the membership level you are interested in:

_____ \$12 Junior (18 and under = \$1 a month)
_____ \$24 Individual (= \$2 a month)
_____ \$30 Couple (= \$2.50 a month)

_____ \$36 Family (= \$3 a month)
_____ \$60 Sponsor (= \$5 month)
_____ \$120 Patron (= \$10 month)

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