

# THE BUFFALO NEWS

## Small-town feel is reminiscent of a time gone by

By MARIA CERAULO  
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS  
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Photo by Maria Ceraulo Rides on the colorful carousel in Old Port Dalhousie are still only a nickel.



Directions (from Buffalo) Take the QEW to Exit 47-Ontario Street Go north to Lakefront Street Turn left onto Lakeport Road and follow it in to Old Port Dalhousie

LD PORT DALHOUSIE, Ont. - It's easy to fall in love with Old Port Dalhousie, a charming town with one street light, a bustling waterfront, top-rated theater and restaurants and historic homes galore - all a quick 45 minutes from Buffalo.

The town's Lakeport Road is alive with foot traffic as visitors stroll the shops located in buildings dating from the early 1800s, board the Dalhousie Princess for a harbor cruise, walk through the park, take in a play or enjoy a gourmet meal.

The St. Catharines Craft Guild Gift Shoppe, 12 Lock St., offers locally made handcrafts, pottery, glass and wood work. The Leather Bazaar, 50 Lakeport Road, sells an appealing range of coats, jackets, handbags, wallets and accessories at reasonable prices. Avondale Dairy, 48 Lakeport Road, has delicious homemade ice cream including kahlua espresso fudge and chocolate peanut butter.

Lakeside Park is also popular. The walkway continues along the harbor, the former entrance point to the first, second and third Welland Canal, and winds its way toward the downtown core of Old Port Dalhousie. There is a swimming beach, playground and two lighthouses (both are a unique eight-sided design). Plenty of picnic spots and benches are available for public use.

And then there is the carousel. Built between 1898 and 1905 by Coney Island carousel designer Charles I.D. Loof, it was privately operated until 1970 when Disneyland and others were interested in buying it. Concerned citizens, led by Dorothy Crabtree, raised \$20,000 to keep the carousel in Old Port Dalhousie with the stipulation that the cost would always remain 5 cents a ride.

On the menu

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The Old Port Mansion, 12 Lakeport Road, was once a hotel. A century ago, the Port Mansion began its reputation for fine food and drink, providing service for the sailors and crews working the Welland Canal.

It now houses Tremolo, a popular restaurant serving lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch, with an outdoor patio featuring reggae music and additional seating. Award-winning chef and new managing partner Patrick Hogan creates a tender prime rib. Dinner or Sunday brunch (including eggs Benedict and an omelet station) combined with theater makes an excellent value. The water view from table two will make you want to linger.

The Brights Barrel Wood Smoked Scallops appetizer, though not included in the theater menu, is a must try. It is smoked with wood from aged wine barrels Hogan obtained from the old Brights Winery in Niagara Falls, Ont. This is a treat sure to please seafood lovers.

The building also houses the 88-seat Theatre in Port where no seat is farther than 15 feet from the stage.

Season ticket subscribers Marybeth and Tom Thompson come all the way from Newport News, Va., five times a year, while staying with their friends, the Sextons, who live in Amherst.

"I came up once and haven't stopped since," recalls Marybeth. "We love the beautiful location, the professional actors, small theater and the brunch. It's very easy to get here from Buffalo."

The Old Port Mansion is currently under new management. Another of the four managing partners, Scott Furtney, owns a home in Allentown and is eager for more Buffalonians to discover Old Port Dalhousie. "Everyone loves a small town on the water," he acknowledges. The partners are currently working on the 2005 theater season schedule, which runs January to December.

The Old Port Mansion was constructed in 1860 by Squire Nathan Pawling who was responsible for developing the settlement named in honor of the Earl of

Dalhousie. England had deeded Pawling's grandfather 800 acres of land in 1796, along the south shore of Lake Ontario, for services rendered during the American Revolution.

Other waterfront dining options include the newly opened Twelve, a waterfront grill at 61 Lakeport Road, with the same management as the Inn on the Twenty's restaurant in Jordan, Ont. For a quick bite, try the tasty pizza pies (or slices) at Da Pizza Joint, 14 Lakeport Road, next to the Port Mansion. Order the bianco (white) pizza for something different. Marie's Seafood Dining, One Lock St., is known for its seafood, ribs and steaks. All are walking distance to the theater.

The opening of the Welland Canal, in 1829, allowed oceangoing vessels to sail on the upper Great Lakes, and generated a shipbuilding industry to bolster Old Port Dalhousie's economy. That prosperity can be seen in its architecture and the friendly, small-town feel that it has today.

### Historic homes

In Old Port Dalhousie, historic residences also abound, including the Alexander Muir House, 43 Dalhousie Ave., dating from 1840. Muir, was a prosperous local merchant who built the dry docks for ships for the Welland Canal. He bought the land for \$60.

The last house listed in the Old Port Dalhousie Walking Tour brochure, it was the 13th home built in Old Port Dalhousie. It is now a charming bed and breakfast run by Mary Ann and Dude deBoer who bought the home five years ago and performed structural and design updates in an historical restoration.

The deBoers' purchase of the home spurred the area's historic preservation movement. When the "For Sale" sign went up in 1999, neighbor Carlos Garcia was worried. "I was concerned that the historic home of

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Alexander Muir could be torn down and a building not in keeping with the neighborhood could be built," he says.

Garcia, not knowing of the deBoers' restoration plans, formed PROUD (Port Realizing Our Unique Distinction). Four years later, Old Port Dalhousie and about 600 of its residences and commercial buildings have been named a heritage conservation district of Ontario. Some residents left big cities like Toronto to live in Old Port Dalhousie.

"We came to a wine and grape festival in the area, and we fell in love with the town," explains Darlene Roos, during a recent cruise on the Dalhousie Princess.

Darlene and her husband, Arend, were eager to leave behind the rat race of living in Toronto and wanted to be on the water. She asked residents if they were selling their homes or if they knew someone who was.

They don't mind the hour-long commute against traffic to Toronto three times a week where they run Vision 2000, a travel agency.

"There is a wonderful waterfront and entertainment here and it's a small town as Ontario use to be," boasts Darlene. "Our friends are jealous. Two of them have sold (homes) and moved here, too."

### Directions

(from Buffalo)

- Take the QEW to Exit 47-

Ontario Street

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Dalhousie

Mapping it out

Theater:

The Port Mansion's acclaimed Theatre in Port runs year around. Remaining plays are "Shirley Valentine," Friday-Oct. 31 and "Eight to the Bar," Nov. 5-Jan. 2. The 2005 season will be announced shortly. Info: (866) 452-7678, (905)-934-0575; [www.portmansion.com](http://www.portmansion.com)

Dining:

- Twelve, 61 Lakeport Road, (905) 934-9797

- Marie's Seafood Dining, One Lock St., (905) 934-1677, [www.mariesseafood.ca](http://www.mariesseafood.ca)

Both recommend reservations for weekends and holidays.

Things to do:

- The History on the Harbourfront/Taste of Port Restaurant Walking Tour, a Niagara Grape and Wine Festival event, takes place Sept. 21 and 23. Groups of 18 people each will be led by a guide to sample food and wine at seven restaurants (including Tremelo, Twelve and Marie's). The cost is \$40 per person. For reservations, call Ruth Barclay at the Port Dalhousie Business Development Association at (905) 935-7555.

- The Dalhousie Princess offers a picturesque, guided sightseeing cruise of Port Dalhousie Harbor, the Welland Canal and the northern shores of Niagara. Upcoming themed cruises include a Brunch Cruise on Sept. 19 (\$45.99) and Grape & Wine Festival Dinner Cruise on Sept. 25, including an elite five-course/five-wine meal

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and entertainment (\$100). Info: (905) 937-2628,  
[www.dalhousieprincess.com](http://www.dalhousieprincess.com).

More information:

To request tourist information, including brochures such as Old Port Dalhousie Walking Tour and Port Dalhousie 2004, contact the City of St. Catharines Economic Development and Tourism Office at (905) 688-5601, Ext. 1722 or visit [www.portdalhousie.com](http://www.portdalhousie.com).

Maria Ceraulo

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Photo by Maria Ceraulo Take a picturesque harbor cruise aboard the Dalhousie Princess.

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