



DUNDAS
MUSEUM &
ARCHIVES

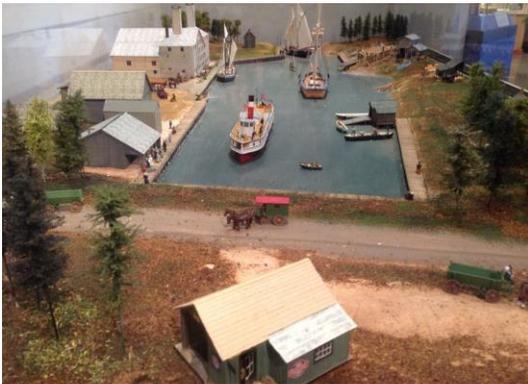
DISCO

“I learn!”

GRADE 6 SOCIAL STUDIES

The Desjardins Canal: Connecting Dundas to the World

*This education module complements Strand A:
Heritage And Identity: Communities In Canada, Past And Present*



1 *Museum model depicts the Desjardins Canal in its heyday: The Golden Age of Dundas*

Take a leap back in time and business is booming in 19th Century Dundas! The new Desjardins Canal allows the import of goods from all over to reach the citizens of Dundas, and Dundas’ industry can be shared through export with the rest of the world. The Dundas Museum and Archives re-creates this exciting chapter in our history for your grade 6 students. How was the Desjardins Canal significant in contributing to the *identity* of Dundas? Incorporation would happen just a little over a decade after the canal opened. Was the canal the decisive factor on the road to Dundas becoming a town with political independence?

This education module will acquaint students with famous – and important – canals around the world and invite them to inquire about their importance. They will learn what an “isthmus” is as well as a “peninsula” (and that the Niagara peninsula is really an isthmus!).

To better understand the role of the canal in the larger geographical context of the Valley Town, your students will have the opportunity to explore a large wooden diorama of Dundas, labelling local landmarks such as: Spencer’s Creek, Webster’s and Tew’s Falls, The Dundas Peak, King Street, Hatt Street, The Museum, their school and any other places students can identify. This exploration will also help your students appreciate one of the early settlers’ most important assets: water power! How did this important resource shape the



2 *Wooden diorama showing the valley, waterfalls and route of the Desjardins Canal to Burlington Bay.*

industry of the early settlers? What were the many products they were so eager to sell through the business lifeline that was the Desjardins Canal?

Mr. Peter Desjardins himself will introduce your students to a large reconstructed model of the Desjardins Canal in its heyday. Inspired by the vision of a waterway from Dundas to Burlington Bay first put forth by his business partner, Richard Hatt, why was building the canal so important to Desjardins? Even to the point of selling his house and land to finance it! What were the obstacles to bringing his dream to fruition? Why did another canal in Hamilton lend such urgency to this Dundas project?



3 Retaining wall of the Desjardins Canal, 1/4 scale.



4 Poster of August, 1837 announcing the grand opening of The Desjardins Canal

all its 19th Century glory as well as images of the Desjardins Canal today. The presentation will also acquaint the students with The Desjardins Recreational Trail by which they will appreciate the rich history of the canal even more.

From *The Ontario Curriculum, Grade 1-8, Social Studies, 2013*, this Education Module offered by the DMA addresses the following expectations: A1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 (pp. 120-122).

The opening of the canal in August of 1837 was to be the beginning of The Golden Age of Dundas! Students will discover how the canal gave birth to many diverse industries all associated with Dundas' connection to the world: cooperages, ship building, foundries, furniture manufacturing and more. The Valley Town would become a city – the most important city in the district! Indeed, Dundas would become the capital city of all of Upper Canada. But as lovely as the dream was while it lasted, it was short-lived. Why was the life of the Desjardins Canal so short? What role did the railway – and the horrible tragedy of 1857 - play in its demise?

This Grade 6 Social Studies module will present pictures of the canal in



5 Large scale model of The Desjardins Canal. Also exhibited are skates used on the canal, and a huge mallet for pounding in pilings.