

# Did You Know...

## Part I...

The 1930s were a challenging time in Canada with the fallout of the great depression and the looming threat of another world war. Prescott was one of those communities affected by economic loss from the stock market crash, with the town losing its brewing/distilling sector by the mid-1930s. Although other former brewing and distilling properties were redeveloped to be used for factory work and training for merchant marines as the war broke out, the former lot owned by J.P. Wiser on King Street remained vacant.

With the buildings on the property in disrepair by the late 1930s, townsfolk were becoming more concerned about the lack of development in the area and along the entire waterfront which was littered with old coal yards and oil tanks from its days as an industrial area. These concerns caught the attention of the then-councilor, Mrs. Joseph Burke. Mrs. Burke, who had just won re-election in 1939 to the town council was the first and only woman to hold a seat on a municipal council in Eastern Ontario since women were granted the right to hold seats in 1919. A longtime member of the Prescott's Women's Institute, Mrs. Burke, and other women from the organization were major advocates for creating a public parkland for the town, similarly to the redevelopment Brockville had done to its waterfront in previous years.

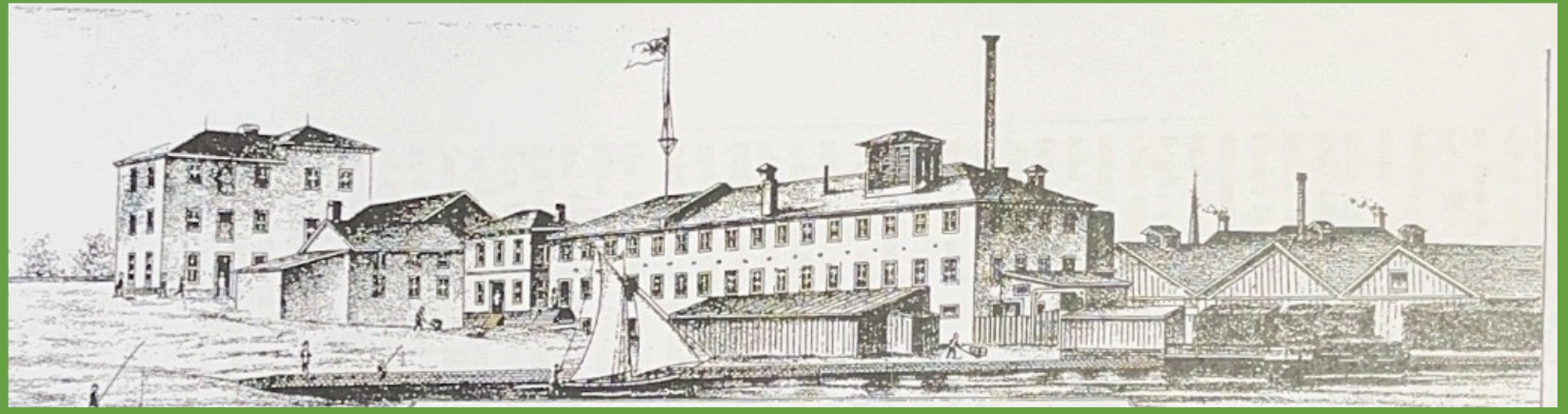
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## Part 2...

The efforts spearheaded by Mrs. Burke resulted in the creation of the Public Park Commission and the first set of by-laws setting out regulations for future public parklands and recreational facilities. Although plans to redevelop the land stalled as the war efforts increased, other smaller temporary parks and recreational facilities were created in the following decade. During Mayor W.A. (Pat) Kingston's first term in office, plans to develop the western portion of the waterfront finally came to fruition. That parkland, known as Centennial Park, was officially opened to the public in 1967 and was the first multi-purpose outdoor facility to be constructed within Prescott, the second being the development of the eastern portion of the waterfront of the Sandra S. Lawn Harbor and Marina which opened to the public in 1988.

In 2025 the Town of Prescott is home to five public parks and a plethora of public facilities relating to sports, theater and leisure activities which are in no small part due to the ideas and advocacy for public spaces Mrs. Burke invoked for Prescott in the 1930s.

You can learn more about Prescott's history at the Prescott Museum & Visitor Centre located at 202 King Street West.  
Open Wednesday - Saturday, 11am - 5pm



**Illustration of Wiser Property on King Street**



**Photo of Modern Day Centennial Park**