NIAGARA PEOPLE • PLACES • EXPERIENCE

# TOO GROOVY

ISSUE 2

## LOCAL STORIES. BIG IMPACT.




THE BROWN HOMESTEAD



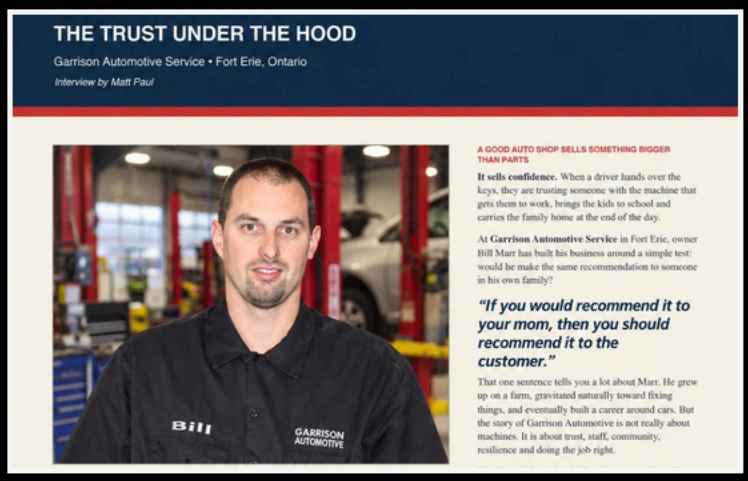

BOB DICK

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Style. Drive. Grit.

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A House with a Thousand Stories

3 **BILL MARR**
The Trust Under the Hood


BILL MARR

## REAL PEOPLE. REAL STORIES.

## REAL NIAGARA.

# FROM
# THE EDITOR

**LOCAL STORIES. BIG IMPACT. REAL NIAGARA.**

Welcome to Issue 2 of Too Groovy.

This edition is built around a simple idea: the most interesting stories are often the ones already happening around us. Niagara is full of people who keep moving, places that carry memory, and local businesses that become part of the communities they serve.

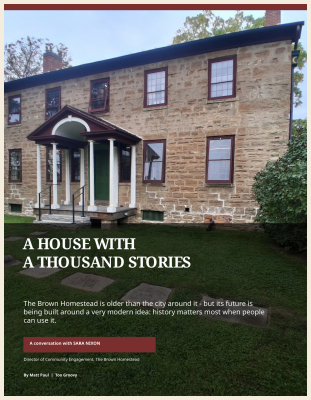
Bob Dick brings style, resilience and decades of transportation experience to a profile about refusing to coast. At The Brown Homestead, history is not treated as something sealed behind glass; it is a living place shaped by conservation, workshops, gatherings and the stories of the people who have passed through it. In Fort Erie, Bill Marr and Garrison Automotive show how trust is built one repair, one customer and one community relationship at a time.

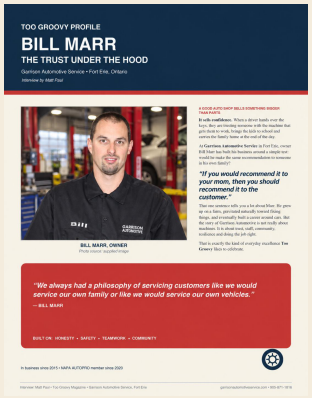
Those stories are different, but they share something important: they are grounded here. Too Groovy exists to celebrate that kind of local character - the people, places and experiences that make Niagara feel like Niagara.

Thank you to the people who opened their doors, shared their time and trusted us with their stories, and to the advertisers whose support helps us keep telling them.

Enjoy the issue - and keep it groovy.




**Matt Paul**
Editor, Too Groovy Magazine

**PEOPLE • PLACES • EXPERIENCES**

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Niagara people • heritage • transportation • community • local business

**Real people. Real stories. Real Niagara.**

# BOB DICK

## STYLE. DRIVE. GRIT.

### THE COVENTRY TRANSPORTATION VETERAN WHO REFUSES TO COAST



**“This isn’t a job. This is what I do. This is my life.”**

INTERVIEWED BY MATT PAUL | TOO GROOVY MAGAZINE

# CALL BOBBY D.

**Thirty years in transportation. A lifetime in Niagara. Zero interest in blending in.**




## THE GROOVY FACTOR

Bob Dick does not enter a room quietly - even when he is saying nothing. The clothes are sharp, the glasses are deliberate, and the energy arrives before the introduction. But the style is not costume. In conversation with Too Groovy, Bob makes it clear that presentation is part of how he approaches work, life and the people around him.

For more than 30 years, Bob has worked in the transportation business. He describes the industry less as employment than as identity. Retirement? His answer is almost immediate: retire to what? When you genuinely love the work, he says, walking away simply because a calendar says you can does not make much sense.

That attitude has helped make him a familiar name across Niagara. Bob calls himself a kind of "concierge of Niagara" - someone with a Rolodex built over decades of relationships with hotels, business people, clients and community contacts. In transportation circles, he says the shorthand has become simple: "Call Bobby D."

## STYLE IS PART OF THE MESSAGE

Bob says he is not the guy you are likely to catch in public wearing track pants and a T-shirt. The attention to fashion became even more important in recent years because looking good became connected to feeling good. His morning test is uncomplicated: get dressed, look in the mirror and be able to say, "I like what I see."

At 62, Bob says he feels closer to 40. That confidence is not about pretending life has been easy. It comes from knowing exactly how difficult it can become - and choosing to show up anyway. His mix of professionalism, humour and unapologetic individuality is precisely what Too Groovy looks for: somebody who has built a recognizable way of moving through the world and has no desire to become the average bear.

# DON’T STOP BELIEVING

**A cancer diagnosis changed the pace - not the destination.**



About six years ago, Bob Dick’s life hit what he calls a "hiccup": prostate cancer. It is the kind of word that can divide a life into before and after. Bob’s response was not to disappear from himself. It was to double down on living.

He lost 120 pounds. He dramatically reduced alcohol. He committed to looking after himself. Hormone therapy, he says, was difficult, and the experience forced him to confront vulnerability in a way that had nothing to do with business or image. Through it, colleagues, friends and the people around him stepped up. Bob singles out company president Mark André and his longtime friend Angela among those who gave him support when he needed it.

Today, he talks about his health without turning the conversation into tragedy. His PSA levels are where his doctors want them, he says, and his focus is forward: take care of yourself, enjoy life and keep going.

> **“I don’t want to give up, and I won’t give up.”**
>
> **- BOB DICK**



## KARMA, CONFIDENCE & THE MIRROR

Bob’s philosophy is built around positivity and karma. If somebody treats you poorly, he says, that is not permission to become the same person. Social media has made criticism constant and effortless; Bob’s answer is not to let the keyboard warriors decide who you are.

His favourite song is Journey’s "Don’t Stop Believin’." It fits. Bob’s advice to someone struggling is to keep moving - even if the first progress comes in very small steps. Make every day your best day. Believe in yourself. Look in the mirror and notice the change.

His bucket list still has miles on it too: Ireland and Scotland are next. And yes, if you are wondering, Bobby D is a Sabres and Bills guy. Different? Absolutely. That, he says, is probably the word his friends would choose. Too Groovy would call it the whole point.




# THE RIDE MATTERS

**Coventry Transportation turns getting there into part of the experience.**

Coventry Connections describes itself as one of Ontario's major ground-transportation operators, with services spanning business travel, airport transfers, executive black cars, group transportation, accessible transportation and leisure travel. In Niagara, Coventry Transportation offers executive sedans and SUVs, limousines, passenger vans, mini-coaches, airport transportation and private travel experiences. The company's pitch is exactly the territory Bob Dick lives in: reliability, discretion, presentation and service.



## COVENTRY TRANSPORTATION

### NIAGARA / EXECUTIVE TRANSPORTATION

- Airport transfers
- Executive black car & SUV
- Limousine service
- Group transportation
- Accessible transportation
- Niagara wine & leisure travel

### BOOK / CONNECT

Niagara: 905-468-7727 | 905-685-5463
Email: info@coventrytransportation.com
Niagara office: 25 Seapark Drive, St. Catharines, ON L2M 6S5
Website: www.coventryconnections.com
Corporate: 613-746-8740 | info@coventryconnections.com

**TOO GROOVY VERDICT: SHOW UP. LOOK SHARP. KEEP MOVING. DON'T STOP BELIEVING.**



# Discover The Brown Homestead

*Every place has a story. This is ours.*

Step into nearly 240 years of rural Niagara history at one of St. Catharines' oldest homes. Explore the John Brown House, heritage landscapes, community stories, and programs that bring the past into the present.

BOOK A GUIDED TOUR

Guided Tours • Programs & Events • Oral History • Heritage Conservation





**Tours by appointment · Holidays@ the Homestead**

**DEC 5**
**Festive Family Christmas**

**DEC 8-11**
**Candlelit Tours**

**DEC 12**
**Journey Through Christmases Past**

1317 Pelham Road, St. Catharines, ON L2R 6P7

thebrownhomestead.ca/holidays-2026

**VISIT • VOLUNTEER • DONATE**



# A HOUSE WITH A THOUSAND STORIES

The Brown Homestead is older than the city around it - but its future is being built around a very modern idea: history matters most when people can use it.

**A conversation with SARA NIXON**

Director of Community Engagement, The Brown Homestead

**By Matt Paul | Too Groovy**

THE PLACE

# History in layers

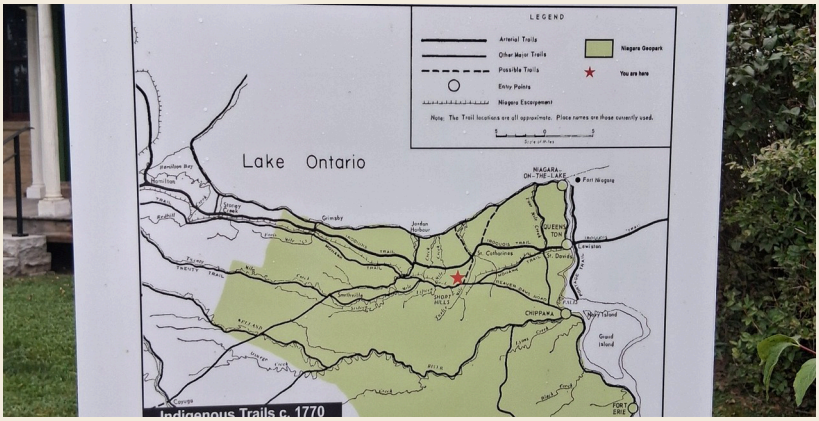


*At 1317 Pelham Road, the story begins long before the stone walls.*

The Brown Homestead sits on a landscape shaped by Indigenous travel, agriculture, settlement, war, family life and constant adaptation. The organization dates the Brown family's settlement here to the late 1780s. The earliest portion of the John Brown House was underway by about 1796; the larger two-storey stone house followed in the early 1800s. Today it is recognized as the oldest surviving home in St. Catharines.

The site also holds the Norton Cabin, built around 1817 by Teyoninhokarawen (John Norton), the Mohawk leader and interpreter whose life crossed Indigenous and colonial worlds. The cabin was moved to the property in 1997 to save it from demolition - another reminder that heritage survives because someone decides it is worth carrying forward.






> *The Homestead's story is not one straight line. It is a set of overlapping routes - Indigenous, agricultural, military, domestic and community.*

## A quick timeline

- **c. 1796** — earliest section of the house
- **1802-04** — stone house expanded
- **c. 1817** — Norton Cabin built
- **1997** — Norton Cabin moved here
- **2015** — charity begins a new chapter

History facts cross-checked with The Brown Homestead website. Photography: Matt Paul.

THE INTERVIEW

# Not a museum frozen in time

## In our interview, Sara Nixon kept returning to a practical question: what is a historic place for?




Nixon's work as Director of Community Engagement sits at the intersection of history and people. Her background in public history and museum work helps explain the Homestead's tone: the goal is not simply to protect old buildings, but to turn the site into a setting where people can meet each other, encounter stories and make new memories.

That distinction matters. Traditional house museums can sometimes ask visitors to stand back and admire. The Brown Homestead is trying to do something warmer and more participatory. Visitors can walk the property, picnic under the trees, take a self-guided digital tour, join a program, watch conservation work unfold, or come for an event that may begin with history and end with neighbours talking to one another.






> *The preservation strategy is social as much as architectural: give people a reason to care about the place, and the place has a better chance of lasting.*

**SARA NIXON**

Growing up in Grimsby, Nixon traces her fascination with local history to a childhood book about street names. She later earned an MA in Public History at Carleton University, spent more than six years at the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre, and joined The Brown Homestead to use local history as a platform for conversation and connection.

Profile background: The Brown Homestead "Our Team." Interview: Sara Nixon with Matt Paul, Oct. 1, 2026.

CONSERVATION

# The work of keeping a place alive

*Preservation here is deliberately visible. The cracks, layers, repairs and odd details are not inconveniences; they are evidence.*





The Brown Homestead has used its restoration work as public education. The site shares how traditional materials and techniques - masonry, plaster, oakum, carpentry and conservation coatings - can extend the life of old structures without erasing their character. The house itself rewards close looking: original painted stencilwork survives in places, while researchers have documented layer upon layer of wallpaper that recorded changing tastes across generations.







> *Conservation is not about making everything look new. It is about deciding what evidence to keep, what to repair, and what stories a material can still tell.*

**DETAILS WORTH NOTICING**

• hand-finished floors and painted patterns • stone and brick repairs • cellar access and service spaces • changing outbuildings • contemporary stained glass inside a historic shell

Conservation context cross-checked with The Brown Homestead heritage-conservation resources.

MORE VOICES

# Whose stories get told?




**The most interesting part of the Homestead's current direction may be its willingness to complicate the familiar "old stone house" story.**

The property sits on the historic Mohawk Trail and within the traditional territory of Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The site's interpretation now gives that landscape a longer timeline than Loyalist settlement alone. Its Indigenous Trail Network signage encourages visitors to see the roads and recreational paths around Niagara as part of a much older geography of movement.

The same broadening is visible in the Oral History Project. Rather than treating family history as a list of owners and dates, the project records memories from people with deep ties to the farmstead and rural Niagara. These interviews preserve the texture of everyday life - work, weather, food, childhood, family rituals and the feeling of belonging to a place.







> *A historic site becomes more useful when it can hold more than one memory at a time.*

Indigenous and oral-history context: The Brown Homestead website. Photography: Matt Paul.

THE NEXT CHAPTER

# Niagara’s Homestead



**A heritage site survives when it becomes part of people’s present - not only their past.**

The Brown Homestead has spent the last decade moving from rescue to relevance. The house and outbuildings still demand patient conservation, but the larger project is now about use: tours, educational programs, hands-on learning, oral history, nature, partnerships and gatherings. The ambition is not to make the site less historic. It is to make that history easier to enter.

In the conversation with Too Groovy, Nixon’s emphasis on community made the strongest impression. Heritage is often discussed as if it were a debate about old versus new. Here, the more productive question is whether an old place can keep doing useful work. At the Homestead, the answer is being tested every time someone comes for a tour, sits at a picnic table, notices an old floor pattern, learns whose trail passed nearby, or adds a family memory to the record.

## PLAN A VISIT

The Brown Homestead
1317 Pelham Road
St. Catharines, Ontario

TOURS BY APPOINTMENT
The regular tour season has ended, but guided tours remain available by appointment.

HOLIDAYS@ THE HOMESTEAD
Dec 5 - Festive Family Christmas
Dec 8-11 - Candlelit Tours
Dec 12 - Journey Through Christmases Past

thebrownhomestead.ca

> *The best reason to preserve a place may be the simplest one: people still have something to do there.*

**TOO GROOVY**

Interview and photography by Matt Paul. Historical and program information cross-checked against The Brown Homestead’s official website. Some passages paraphrase themes from the recorded interview rather than reproduce quotations verbatim.

HANDS-ON HERITAGE

# The skills behind the stories



**CRAFT AS CONSERVATION**

A timber-framing workshop turns traditional building knowledge into a shared experience.

Hands-on programs make preservation legible. A tool, a pigment, a joint or a painted surface can reveal how historic buildings were made, altered and repaired. That approach fits the Homestead's larger philosophy: the site is most meaningful when people are invited into the work of understanding it.



**NORTON CABIN PIGMENT WORKSHOP**

Participants explore colour, material and interpretation through making.



**A ROOM BECOMES A RECORD**

The dining-room floor cloth shows how conservation can restore atmosphere as well as fabric.

> *The most durable heritage work is often the work people are allowed to understand with their own hands.*

New workshop photography supplied for this updated feature.

THE HOMESTEAD IN USE

# A place that keeps making memories

*The Homestead's newest chapter is not limited to restoration. Food, art, gathering and seasonal programming keep the property connected to contemporary Niagara life.*



**TASTES OF THE TAVERN**

A social program brings people together around flavour, conversation and place.



**CONTEMPORARY CRAFT IN A HISTORIC SETTING**

Stained glass in the dairy adds a present-day layer to a building shaped by many eras.

The formal tour season has now ended, but The Brown Homestead continues to welcome visitors for guided tours by appointment. The next invitation is seasonal: Holidays@ the Homestead returns in December with three programs that move through family celebration, atmosphere and the changing traditions of Christmas across generations.

## HOLIDAYS@ THE HOMESTEAD - DECEMBER 2026

### DEC 5

**Festive Family Christmas**

A family-focused day of seasonal celebration.

### DEC 8-11

**Candlelit Tours**

Experience the historic property in an intimate evening atmosphere.

### DEC 12

**Journey Through Christmases Past**

Explore how holiday traditions changed across generations.

**Tours by appointment | thebrownhomestead.ca/holidays-2026**

> *A historic place stays alive by giving people new reasons to cross the threshold.*

Updated October 2026 with programming information provided by Sara Nixon.

# Garrison AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE

TRUSTED SERVICE. STRONGER TOGETHER.

# FORT ERIE TRUSTS GARRISON

Service done right.
People treated like family.




*Your Neighbourhood Auto Care Experts*

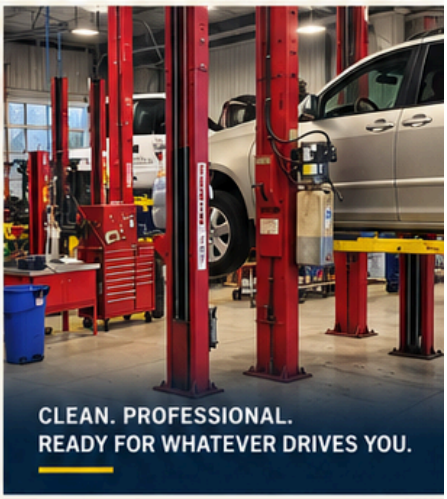
LOCAL PEOPLE. STRONGER COMMUNITY.




*"If you would recommend it to your mom, then you should recommend it to the customer."*
— BILL MARR, OWNER




A WELCOMING EXPERIENCE FROM START TO FINISH.



CLEAN. PROFESSIONAL. READY FOR WHATEVER DRIVES YOU.

## MORE THAN AUTO REPAIR. A HIGHER STANDARD.

At Garrison Automotive Service in Fort Erie, we believe great auto care is about more than fixing vehicles — it's about people. We provide honest advice, safety-first repairs, premium parts and experienced technicians, all in a clean, professional shop. Our customer-first approach and community values drive everything we do.

**When you bring your vehicle to Garrison, you're part of our family.**

### COMPLETE AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE

- Diagnostics
- Brakes
- Oil Changes
- Tires
- Scheduled Maintenance
- Steering & Suspension
- General Auto Repair

EXPERIENCED TECHNICIANS • PREMIUM PARTS
HONEST ADVICE • CUSTOMER FIRST

NAPA | AUTOPRO

**36 MONTH / 60,000 KM WARRANTY**
ON QUALIFYING PARTS AND LABOUR.

*Proud to support Fort Erie.*
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SERVICE BUILDS COMMUNITY.

TOO GROOVY PROFILE

# BILL MARR

## THE TRUST UNDER THE HOOD

Garrison Automotive Service • Fort Erie, Ontario

*Interview by Matt Paul*




**BILL MARR, OWNER**

*Photo source: supplied image*

### A GOOD AUTO SHOP SELLS SOMETHING BIGGER THAN PARTS

**It sells confidence.** When a driver hands over the keys, they are trusting someone with the machine that gets them to work, brings the kids to school and carries the family home at the end of the day.

At **Garrison Automotive Service** in Fort Erie, owner Bill Marr has built his business around a simple test: would he make the same recommendation to someone in his own family?

***"If you would recommend it to your mom, then you should recommend it to the customer."***

That one sentence tells you a lot about Marr. He grew up on a farm, gravitated naturally toward fixing things, and eventually built a career around cars. But the story of Garrison Automotive is not really about machines. It is about trust, staff, community, resilience and doing the job right.

That is exactly the kind of everyday excellence **Too Groovy** likes to celebrate.

***"We always had a philosophy of servicing customers like we would service our own family or like we would service our own vehicles."***

— BILL MARR

**BUILT ON: HONESTY • SAFETY • TEAMWORK • COMMUNITY**

In business since 2015 • NAPA AUTOPRO member since 2020

# FIX THE RIGHT THING FIRST

How Bill turns a repair list into a plan customers can actually use

## SAFETY BEFORE THE SALES PITCH

One of the hardest moments in automotive service is not finding what is wrong; it is explaining a list of repairs to a customer who may not be able to tackle everything at once. Marr says his team starts with a complete inspection, then separates the urgent from the routine.

"We can break it down into what would be considered **safety-related or highly important,** and then what would be factory-scheduled maintenance or regular repairs."

If the bill is still too much, the shop tries to sequence the work. The first priority is the component most likely to fail or create a safety problem; the rest can be scheduled into future visits. It is a practical approach built around the reality that households have budgets.

The jobs people postpone most often, Marr says, are the ones that are not yet making noise: spark plugs, transmission-fluid service and other scheduled maintenance. Because the vehicle still feels fine, the temptation is to wait. The problem is that maintenance is what helps keep "fine" from becoming "broken."

## A WARRANTY THAT TRAVELS

Garrison Automotive is part of the **NAPA AUTOPRO** network. Marr values the partnership for premium parts and warranty support. NAPA currently describes its Peace of Mind Limited Warranty as **36 months / 60,000 km** on qualifying parts and labour, honoured at participating warranty centres across North America.




**GARRISON AUTOMOTIVE EXTERIOR**

*Photo source: supplied image*

## THE ROAD TO GARRISON

**Age 18:** starts part-time in Canadian Tire parts.
**21:** promoted to service manager; later runs a 17-bay shop and earns his technician licence.
**2011:** leaves Canadian Tire to lead a struggling Midas location.
**2014:** company bio says that shop ranked #2 in Canada and #8 in North America among Midas stores.
**2015:** Garrison Automotive Service begins under Marr.
**2020:** joins NAPA AUTOPRO.

## ONE RATTLE. ZERO BRAKES.

One customer arrived complaining about a rattle in the front end. The shop found something far more serious: the brakes had been driven so long that a seized caliper had broken the brake rotor.

***"The car had no brakes, and they weren't complaining about the fact that it had no brakes — the rattle was the problem they were looking for."***

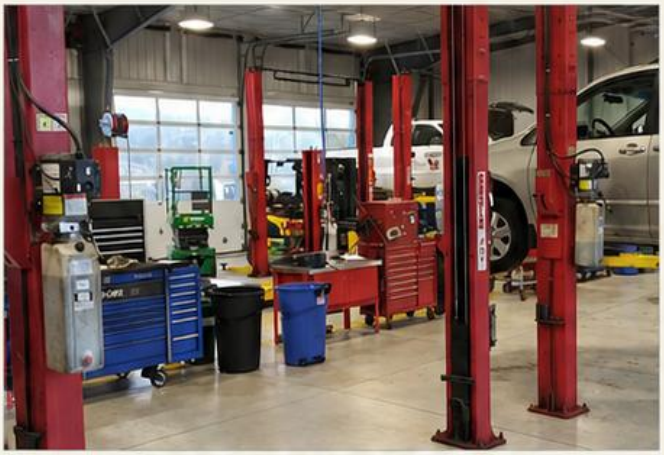
It is a funny shop story only because the car made it safely into a bay. For Marr, it is also a reminder of why inspection, clear advice and prioritizing safety matter.



**SAFETY FIRST**

# A SHOP BUILT FOR THE PEOPLE DOING THE WORK

Comfort, training and teamwork are part of the repair strategy too



**TECHNICIAN / SERVICE BAY**

*Photo source: supplied image*

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE SHOP

Marr is proud of the team at Garrison Automotive, but he is just as interested in the environment they work in. When the shop was built out, he invested in things mechanics do not always get: **air conditioning, heated floors and a clean, organized workspace.**

He even heated the exterior sidewalks so employees are not starting a winter morning by shovelling snow before they start repairing cars.

"It is definitely easier to focus on what you are working on when you are not in 90-degree temperatures ... or freezing."

Marr connects comfort to productivity, safety and longevity. Cold concrete, heat stress and clutter all take a toll. A better shop, in his view, helps good people stay good at what they do for longer.

***"We need the whole team pulling in the same direction. If you go out on the ice as a goaltender, you're not going to do too well."***

## THE ELECTRIC FUTURE — WHEN IT IS ACTUALLY HERE

Electric and hybrid vehicles have not yet transformed the day-to-day workload at Garrison Automotive, Marr says, largely because many are still under manufacturer warranty and local volumes remain modest.

He is watching the shift closely, but he does not believe in buying expensive equipment or sending technicians for training years before the shop will use it. EV technology itself is still changing quickly. Marr expects the more serious investment in EV repair capability to come closer to the end of the decade.

That measured approach is classic Marr: prepare, but spend when the need is real.

## THE TRADES STILL MATTER

For young people wondering what comes next, Marr is emphatic: look at the skilled trades. Automotive technicians were deemed essential during COVID-era shutdowns, he notes, and vehicles still require people who can diagnose, reason and work with their hands.

"Our industry is one of those industries that's **not going to be replaced by AI**."

## BILL'S GARAGE

**First car**
1992 Dodge Shadow
**Wish he still had it?**
"No."
**Favourite classic**
1967–68 Mustang
**Dream car**
He says he already has it: a 1994 Mustang convertible, 5.0-litre, 5-speed.
**Business lesson**
Resilience and adaptability.
**Family reset button**
Hunting, fishing, camping and time outdoors.

# FULL CIRCLE

## FORT ERIE SUPPORTS THE SHOP. THE SHOP SUPPORTS FORT ERIE.




**CUSTOMER RECEPTION AREA**
*Photo source: supplied image*

> ***"If you are good to the community, the community is good to you."***
>
> **— BILL MARR**

### MORE THAN A BUSINESS ADDRESS

Fort Erie is small enough that a business owner does not disappear when the workday ends. Customers see you at the grocery store, at community events and around town. Reputation travels fast — but so does goodwill.

Marr says Garrison Automotive supports causes connected to **homelessness, food security, Community Living and youth sports**. He estimates the shop gives roughly **$6,000 a year to the food bank**, organizes a toy drive in November and contributes to other local sponsorships throughout the year.

"It's all about giving back to what gives to us too ... I'm happy and proud to be able to do that stuff."

That community mindset mirrors the way he describes customer service: make the circle work. When the business is doing well, use some of that success to strengthen the place that made the business possible.

### WHEN THE GARAGE DOOR CLOSES

For Marr, the antidote to being "on" all week is getting outside. Hunting, fishing and camping give him, his wife and their son the chance to step away from public-facing work and enjoy quiet time together. His son is already drawn to machines too, with an interest in equipment operation.

### THE LEGACY TEST

Asked what he hopes people will say about Garrison Automotive 20 years from now, Marr does not talk about expansion, awards or revenue. He talks about **doing service right**. Taking care of customers. Treating people like family. Giving back. Being the kind of shop residents are proud to have in town — and proud to recommend to friends and family.

**"The number one thing I just want to leave as that kind of a legacy is that we were a shop that performed service right and took care of our customers, treated them like family, and gave back to the community."**

## THE TOO GROOVY VERDICT

**TRUST THE WORK. LOOK AFTER THE TEAM. GIVE BACK. KEEP MOVING.**

1300 Garrison Rd, Fort Erie • 905-871-1816

Sources: Matt Paul interview with Bill Marr, Sept. 2026; Garrison Automotive Service website; NAPA AUTOPRO location/warranty information.

# TOO GROOVY

**NIAGARA PEOPLE • PLACES • EXPERIENCES**

## REAL PEOPLE.
## REAL STORIES.
## REAL NIAGARA.

Thank you for reading Issue 2.
Keep supporting local stories, local places
and the people who make Niagara move.

**TOO GROOVY MAGAZINE**

People who move the world a little.

**ISSUE 2**
**2026**