

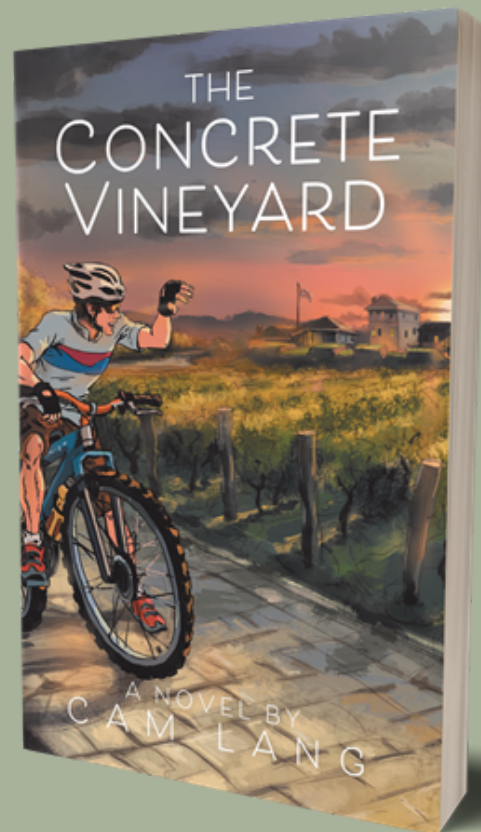
# THE CONCRETE VINEYARD

## BY CAM LANG

As the townsfolk of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the 'First Capital of Upper Canada', gather on the hallowed grounds of Fort George to celebrate the nation's 150th birthday, Edward Mitchell, the town's modern-day patriarch, lies dying in a nearby vineyard. The old man, a retired history professor, was clearly murdered ... but by who?

A revered man with no apparent enemies, the only potential clue to his death is a 'for sale' sign that was erected earlier that day at the front of his grand, historic estate—the most valuable and coveted property in town. But as the murder investigation unfolds, it seems that real estate is perhaps not the only motive for Edward Mitchell's murder.

Over 200 years after the War of 1812, Detective Bryan Dee and his boyhood friend, urban planner Kris Gage, begin to wonder whether a different battle is being waged ... and whether Niagara-on-the-lake is now on-the-take.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Cam Lang is a professional planner, urban designer and development manager. He has practiced in both urban and rural settings across Canada on projects ranging from master planned communities and municipal sustainability plans to rural strategic and official plans.

He grew up working in the fruit orchards and vineyards of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario – a setting which confirmed how poor a farmer he was but which also piqued his interest in architecture, culturally significant landscapes, built heritage, tourism planning, sustainability, and design. He is an avid runner and cyclist; a planner who practices what he preaches.

# A LOOK INSIDE



I passed by roadside fruit stands, some pleasantly more ‘mom and pop’ than others. Though a number of the original dwellings along the Parkway had been demolished in recent years to make way for upscale mansions, a few original World War II era bungalows remained. I rounded a small bend and spotted one such house. I recalled glimpsing it ‘for sale’ in a real estate brochure earlier that week. Knowing prospective buyers would care little for the existing single-storey home, the real estate ad focused solely on the location of the lot instead, trumpeting its address as being along ‘the prettiest drive in the world’. It was an unofficial slogan for this route; Prime Minister Winston Churchill apparently uttered this phrase while on his way by car from Queenston Heights to Old Town, six miles north, on August 12, 1943. However, I recently learned there was a more interesting history associated with the road. At one time, it was a muddy wagon trail upon which Major General Isaac Brock rode his horse when he tore off from Fort George alone in the early hours of October 13, 1812 in an effort to prevent the Americans from securing a stronghold at Queenston Heights. Looking around, I thought, although the result of Brock’s journey wasn’t nearly as fortunate as Churchill’s, at least he caught a hell of a lot more scenery along the way.



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