

THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Oakville's Lighthouses

June 2016

Volume 50 Number 2

Mayor's Picnic

June 12th Noon - 4:30
Lakeside Park, foot of Navy Street, by the lake

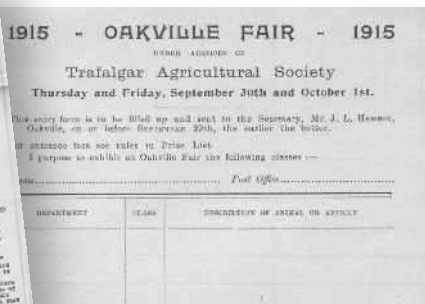
Fun for the Whole Family Dancing and Bands

Contest for Kids, Kingergarten to Grade 8

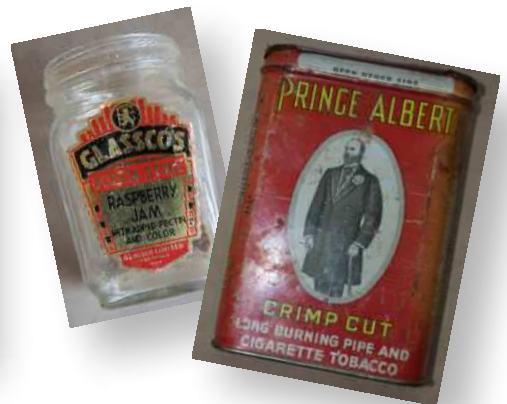
Do you know your boating topics?

Rigging Communications Weather Navigation

Bring your lunch and a lawn chair



Shown here are two recent acquisitions to our collection.



Shown above are a few gems donated to our annual **Yard Sale**.



Proudly putting quality images on paper!
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's office renovation time – again! Last year the Society received a Trillium Grant to help us purchase equipment for scanning and presenting our collection. We promptly renovated the room in the southeast corner of the building and bought some of the equipment. We were hoping to have a practicum student from the University of Toronto to help us get sorted out on digitizing our records and the collection – a project that's moved from front burner to back burner to off the stove to back burner over the past 15 years or so but with a deadline for spending the funds, it's back on the front burner. Things tend to accumulate around the office and any unused space tends to fill up. I'm sure others amongst us have the same problem at home. We have also found that we have file cabinets in 4 different rooms and many of the drawers haven't been opened in quite a while so we've embarked on a significant rearrangement of space.

- The bathroom off the boardroom has been turned into a file room. The cast iron tub found a new home. The walls and ceiling have been repaired and painted. Two lateral cabinets, courtesy of St John's Church, and two other cabinets from the boardroom and back room have been moved in there. Shelves have been installed to hold supplies and items we sell to the public. The remaining four cabinets in the boardroom have been emptied and will be moved to storage. This will free up some desk space. The library book shelves will be extended as we've run out of room in the library.
- Two cabinets in the office will be culled and emptied and moved to storage. A stationery cabinet donated by Harry Barrett will replace them so that all (or most) of our stationery will be in one place in the office. The wall and ceiling are being painted and the tile floor at the south end of the room will be replaced.
- Cheap shelving in the back room has been disposed of and better quality shelving (2 or 3 units) will be moved there from the tech room.
- In the tech room, a new secure cabinet has been purchased to hold our tech equipment – projector, scanners, camera equipment etc. Other changes are planned for this room.
- Still to be painted – the boardroom, the office, the entryway and the archives storage room.

I'm very happy to report that another successful yard sale was held in late May which added over \$2200 to our revenue for the year. Thanks to **Jim Young** and his hardworking crew.

Oakville and the Sixteen was originally published in 1953 and was reprinted twice in hardcover. The most recent reprinting was of 1000 copies in the early 90s. As we're down to 20 or so copies it was decided to have it printed a fourth time, this time in softcover to cut down on costs. It is now available for a member price of \$30 and a non-member price of \$40.

On behalf of the board, I'd like to congratulate **Greg Munz** on receiving the Oakville Community Spirit Award in the Heritage category. Greg has worked very hard as Treasurer (he's passed on that torch), planning and mounting exhibits and on planning for the digitization of the collection and records. He's involved in many other jobs as well. He tells me the new **Pleasure Boating** exhibit is almost complete.

The Thomas House is now open for its 63rd season and it's still a favourite with visitors to Lakeside Park. If you haven't visited in a while, why not awaken old memories. *George Chisholm*

The History of Oakville's Lighthouses

William Chisholm began developing the harbour at the mouth of the Sixteen Mile Creek in 1827. Over the next nine years the east and west piers were erected, a warehouse was built on the east bank of the Sixteen just below the Lake Shore Road (formerly Colborne Street), and a shipyard was built at the top of Navy Street on the south bank of the Sixteen. By 1836 cargo schooner traffic using the Port of Oakville had increased sufficiently as to warrant constructing a lighthouse at the entrance to the creek.



1837 First Lighthouse, photo c1876

A petition was therefore drawn up to which 96 names were attached. The petition, addressed to the Assembly of Upper Canada at Toronto, requested financial assistance for the construction of Oakville's first lighthouse. A loan of £500 was granted by the House to William Chisholm. On April 6, 1836 it was announced that the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada would appoint William Chisholm, George Chalmers and Merrick Thomas as commissioners for the erection of the new lighthouse. The commissioners consulted a number of masters of cargo schooners and passenger steamers, then using Oakville as a port of call, respecting the most appropriate location at which to erect the lighthouse. After due consideration it was

decided to locate the structure at the southern end of the east pier. To make the foundation sufficient it was deemed necessary to sink three additional cribs in order to support the new structure.

The work commenced in August 1836. By November 1837, the lighthouse was completed at a total cost of £852.

The new lighthouse was constructed of wood and was octagonal in shape. This was quite standard for lighthouses on Lake Ontario in those early days. The structure stood 36 feet from the level of the piers to its top. The light was a fixed oil lamp and the reflector with colourless glass and reflector on the "Calopteric Principle" had a visibility of "eleven miles in clear weather."

A number of local businessmen provided material and labour for the project. Edward Anderson provided timber, sawn lumber, and lumber planks. Jacob Randall supplied labour for 486 days at a cost of £158 7s 6d, and stone was provided by John Moore. Another provision of labour came from David Patterson. His charge was £84 10s 7d for 260 days of labour.

Lighthouses continued

From John L. Biggar came assorted metalware, spikes, nails, hinges, 3 kegs of white paint, 6 gallons of boiled oil, glass and putty. John Frampton was paid for the tasks of painting and installing glass. Henry Piper supplied one large lantern, 3 lamps, a weather cock, plus four day's labour. James Anderson made the lamp and frame. There's no question that the lighthouse was well-built as it lasted until the Great Storm of April 1886 broke up the east pier sending the lighthouse tumbling into Lake Ontario. This event proved a delight to the local schoolchildren who ran down to the harbour from the Common School up Navy Street when classes had concluded for the day, just in time to see the lighthouse topple over. Chief Sumner wrote in his diary, "The water is the highest I have ever seen it." Some claimed that the waves rolling in from the southeast were 30 feet high! The old timbers in the east pier, which had been patched and reinforced for over 50 years, had given way. Once breached at the inner end, the east pier quickly disintegrated. When the wind subsided the east pier had disappeared completely and Chief Sumner set red buoys to mark the positions of the submerged cribs. The harbour was filled with gravel and floating debris and Sumner spent several days salvaging timber from the lake. A temporary scaffolding, erected so that the passenger/freight steamer "Southern Belle" could take aboard and deliver passengers and cargo, lasted only a few weeks and thereafter steamer service to Oakville from places like Toronto and Hamilton was suspended. The Oakville Council quickly decided to send representatives to Ottawa to secure a grant from the Government of Canada to rebuild the harbour at an estimated cost of \$20,000.

The work commenced in the spring of 1887 and continued through the year until the close of navigation in December. The new east pier was constructed in the same manner as the original pier. The cribs were built on the Sixteen Mile Creek above the curve at the north end of Dunn Street and floated down the creek to the harbour entrance.

When the passenger/freight steamers of the Hamilton Steamboat Company, "Mazeppa", "Macassa" and "Modjeska" began entering Oakville Harbour once again after the reconstruction, it became necessary to construct a new lighthouse to ensure the safety of the ships. In the summer of 1889 a new lighthouse was erected at the southern end of the east pier by Henry George, a contractor from Port Elgin, Ontario. Construction began on April 2, 1889 and the new lighthouse was lit for the first time on June 4, 1889.



1889 Second Lighthouse, photo c1908

Lighthouses continued

The top storey of the hexagonal lighthouse was glassed in on all sides and the light, with a 270 degree beveled lens, was situated in the centre of the room at the top. The new lighthouse was three storeys high, constructed of wood and covered in wooden shingles. It had a door on the ground floor and three windows in the lower section, all capped with classical pediments. The structure stood 25 feet high. The light could be seen for 11 miles out into Lake Ontario. By the 1940's the light was electrically operated. The glass enclosure housing the light from the second lighthouse is currently

on permanent display at our offices of the Oakville Historical Society on King Street.



In 1947 the Federal Department of Transport moved the lighthouse 6 feet south of its original position on the east pier. At that time a Port Credit man, William Halton, started and stopped the Oakville light by pushing a button in Port Credit, far different from the hand-lit oil light of the first lighthouse! In the same year in a fierce southeasterly storm the second Oakville lighthouse became detached from the east pier which had been washed away by the massive waves. The east pier was subsequently rebuilt.

The East Pier was extended in 1903 to form an L- shape to allow passenger steamers to call at Oakville without venturing into the silted-up harbour. Photo c1903

Photo below, second Lighthouse c1950



In 1960 the second lighthouse was deactivated and moved to its present location beside the Oakville Yacht Squadron on the west bank of Oakville Harbour. It was replaced by the present utilitarian steel and concrete structure. The second lighthouse was then threatened with demolition by the Federal Government. Fortunately, a number of civic-minded Oakville citizens rallied to preserve this historic landmark. A plaque on the second lighthouse commemorates the community effort to preserve the building.

Lighthouses continued

Currently the property is owned by the Town of Oakville and is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. In 2016, only four 19th Century lighthouses still stand on the northwest shore of Lake Ontario between Toronto and Hamilton. They are the Gibraltar Point Lighthouse on the Toronto Islands, the Queen's Wharf Lighthouse at the foot of Bathurst Street in Toronto, the second Oakville lighthouse and the Burlington Canal Lighthouse. The other two that stood at the entrances to the harbours at Port Credit and Bronte were replaced by concrete structures many years ago.

Philip Brimacombe

Cover photo is of the second lighthouse, 2016

The Hamilton and the Scourge Schooners under Lake Ontario since 1813

Pop quiz. Name the four jurisdictions involved with the study and preservation of these two-hundred-year-old ship wrecks.

Michael McAllister entertained us, with flair, telling us the story of the Hamilton (originally American, named Diana) and the Scourge (originally Canadian, named Lord Nelson), schooners that capsized and sank on August 8th, 1813 and were not discovered until 1973.

They were built not for war use but were merchant ships meant to last fewer than 10 years. Taken by the American Navy for the 1812 war, they were armed with cannons, carronades and guns. They were hit by a squall and sank 300 feet under Lake Ontario, roughly west of Hamilton and north of St. Catharines.



Today, difficult decisions must be made by the City of Hamilton, managed through the Hamilton-Scourge Project, to determine the best way to preserve and study the two schooners. They could be lifted and reconstructed or left sunk with underwater visits allowed. Within these two broad solutions are many other variables: how should preservation take place, where should the artifacts be held, who should be allowed to visit and how this is to be controlled, to name just a few of the many decisions required.

To give us an idea of how difficult this project is to manage, Mr. McAllister informed us that there are four jurisdictions that have to be consulted when dealing with the future of the schooners. The Federal Government of Canada controls the surface of the lake, the Province of Ontario the bottom, the remains of men the USA and the ships, the City of Hamilton.

AROUND THE SOCIETY

The Lorne Scots

Our April speaker was **Dr. Richard Ruggle**, Chair of the Lorne Scots Museum Committee.

(The Lorne Scots have a proud history going back one hundred and fifty years and are an amalgamation of two regiments, the 36th Peel Battalion, authorised on the 14 September 1866 and the Halton Battalion of Infantry, formed on the 28 September the same year. These two regiments, some 70 years later, were to be reorganised to form The Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment)).

Dr. Ruggle's presentation focused on The Lorne Scots' service in World War 1, from 1914 until 1917, and named many of the local people who served there. He pointed out a number of surprising inconsistencies in the names and facts depicted on our local cenotaphs. He discussed some of the high-profile officers including the controversial Sir Sam Hughes whose leadership capabilities remain the subject of much debate.

More information is available at <http://lornesmuseum.blogspot.ca>. or you can Google Sam Hughes or Lorne Scots.

Dr. Ruggle has served as the incumbent at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Norval, and Chaplain of the Lorne Scots. His doctoral thesis was about church life in Esquesing Township during the 1800s. He is currently the publican of the Shepherd's Crook in Georgetown.

Doors Open

Averil Jany and I are working closely with the Erchless Museum staff to help organize Oakville's participation in **Doors Open** to take place **October 1** as part of **Doors Open Halton**. We are looking forward to presenting some new sites in Oakville. If you are able to volunteer to help with one of our sites on October 1 we would love to hear from you. For further details you may access the **Doors Open Halton** website. It will be updated as new sites to visit are identified. *Andrea Stewart*



Dr. Ruggle holds a Memorial Plaque (Dead Man's Penny) awarded for Mr. Boocock's (r) ancestor Pte. R. Boocock. They were issued after the First World War to the next-of-kin of all British and Empire service personnel who were killed as a result of the war.

Andrea Stewart

Membership Reminder

There are still some forty members who have not yet renewed for 2016. If you have forgotten or do not wish to renew, please contact me at the office (905-844-2694).

*Thanks, Andrea Stewart,
Memberships.*

AROUND THE SOCIETY



The Town recently moved the stone bank at left, away from the Thomas House and paved the space to help keep moisture away from the building.

We recently had visitors (below) to our King St office. They were just passing through and did not stay.



Looming on the Horizon

Woven textiles have been around for thousands of years and it was not uncommon for settlers to own a loom for weaving items such as blankets, table linens and assorted fabrics for clothes. Susan Wells has kindly provided a miniature loom which will be set up at the Thomas House to demonstrate the art of weaving. *Marie Descent*



Thanks to Averil Jany, Baby Thomas has a lovely warm blanket knitted with yarns that would have been available in 1850, the period represented at the Thomas House Museum.



Marie Descent (above) demonstrates her weaving techniques at the Thomas House.

Volunteer Leah Foster (l) uses her Girl Guide training to light the Thomas House fire.

AROUND THE SOCIETY



Wendy Belcher was recognized April 14th 2016 with a **June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism**.

Wendy (at left in front of a photo of June Callwood) spearheaded her church's Committee for Social Justice, which supports the local women's shelter, food bank, youth detention centre and settlement organizations for new immigrants. She is also a long-standing volunteer with the **Oakville Historical Society**, Chair and co-founder of the Oakville chapter of Amnesty International and Chair of Bronte Grandmothers for Africa.

Wendy has conducted **Ghost Tours** for your Society every October for many years and continues to do so.

Congratulations and thank you Wendy for giving your valuable time to our very worthy cause.

Digitization – The Way to Go

In keeping up with the times, the Society is undertaking a digitization project. This will enable online access to our collection of documents and photographs. In order to better plan this endeavor, in March, several members of the Society participated in a three-part webinar held by the Ontario Historical Society, featuring speakers from Our Digital World, a company which offers tools, technology, expertise and services to help other organizations create and display their digital collections online. The webinar covered topics such as establishing policies, procedures and workflow, copyright issues, storage, project evaluation and documentation, discovery and access, as well as capturing information from the community once the collection is online. This comprehensive information will be invaluable to get our project underway. *Marie Descent*

AROUND THE TOWN



Who Is Halton? commemorates the 200th anniversary of the founding of **Halton County** in 1816. The exhibit will explore the history and culture of the area that would become Halton Region by focusing on the personal stories of its residents, from Aboriginal peoples and early settlers to its namesake **Major William Halton** to long-time residents and recent arrivals. The exhibition will be a story of the county told through the experiences of people (such as yourself) who have lived and are living here. Tell your story here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GB2LVYD>

WHAT IS THE TALE OF A TOWN – CANADA?

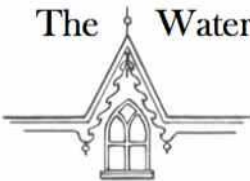
Touring across the Canada in our storymobile (a.k.a recording booth on wheels) we're gathering stories in small towns and big cities alike by means of scheduled and impromptu interviews with independent business owners, local heroes, community stakeholders, and neighbourhood residents. These stories inspire performance installations that take place in site-specific downtown locations created in collaboration with local artists and in partnership with presenting partners from across the country.

This national venture will culminate in a multi-platform celebration of the country's main street culture, in commemoration of Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017.

**Downtown Oakville
June 6th - 20th**

The Way Things Were in March featured a photo of the intersection of Navy and Randall Streets looking northeast c1961. Edward's Hardware is at the right. A highrise, parking lot and two-storey office building are there now. The triangle of concrete is still there.

The Waterdown - East Flamborough Heritage Society



P.O. BOX 1044, WATERDOWN, ONTARIO L0R 2H0

You are invited to the first annual Heritage Group Workshop on Saturday September 24th 2016 from 9 AM to 1 PM at St. James United Church in Waterdown.

We have seen a lot of heritage groups in the Hamilton and Halton area doing many great things but we might not always be aware of what each other are doing. We want to change all that with this workshop. During the workshop, we will discuss the issues each group is having and what the other groups are doing to overcome them. In order to offset the costs, we will need to charge \$10 per attendee with a maximum of 3 attendees per group. Please let **Oakville Historical Society** know by July 28th 2016, if you will be attending.

THE WAY THINGS WERE



Where is this?

What year?

What is there now?

Archive Hours:

**Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm
Third Sun. of the month 12:30 to 4:00 pm**

(905) 844-2695 www.oakvillehistory.org



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