

Oakville Historical
Society
since 1953

www.oakvillehistory.org

The White Oak

News from the Oakville Historical Society



a
*Personal
Narrative*
by
Alexandre
Nahdee

Volume 51 Number 3

September 2017

Mayor's Picnic

This year's Mayor's Picnic had record attendance and a number of new attractions. We were entertained by a short play, *Rebel Talk*, by our own "Theatrical Nomads", recounting the Mackenzie Rebellion of 1837 and how it was received here in Oakville.

To recognize Canada's 150th birthday, we opened a new exhibit at the offices, depicting both Canada's and Oakville's history. This major effort, led by Greg Munz, involved many of our OHS volunteers as well as the expert work of Heritage Halton.

Mayor Burton presented congratulatory letters to six couples from our membership who celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversaries in this sesquicentennial year. Another new feature this year was the Picnic Passport Game whose winners each received a year's complimentary membership and \$150 to spend on our books and publications.

Thank you to Councillor Roger Lapworth who volunteers each year to provide the sound system for the event and a big thank you to Mayor Burton and the volunteers from Parks and Open Spaces who cheerfully came up with the props for the day including tents and hay bales.

Our event co-ordinator, Marianne Hawthorne, deserves our appreciation for the challenge of co-ordinating all these diverse events. Lastly, thank you to our tireless volunteers who arrive each year at 8 am to set up and stay until all is cleared away in the evening.

Picnic Style

Marianne Hawthorne (l) and Averil Jany (r) sported period costume and enjoyed the picnic.



Doors Open Halton

Saturday, 30 September. New sites this year in Oakville include the Al Fatah Islamic Centre and the newly-reopened Iroquois Ridge Library. Don't miss the sesquicentennial historical exhibits at Erchless Museum and at the Society offices. Further details of all Oakville and Halton Hills sites are at www.doorsopenontario.on.ca

Speakers

Wednesday, 15 November. Our speaker is Mr. David Hobden on the subject of "Opening Up Halton County – Mails and Posts of Halton from 1775 – 1918" St. John's Church, 7:30. Donations welcome. Refreshments served.

The *White Oak* in June had Julie Thomson and Stan Smurlick spelled incorrectly.

A note from the Society President

As the summer season winds down, so does the activity at the office – a bit. We have far exceeded our expectations in the digitization project. Our summer help has done a great job. We had hoped to have about 3000 photo records created and available on line by the end of the summer. As of mid-August, over 4000 have been done out of 8-9000. By September, the transcription and digitization of the Munro Collection of First World War letters should be complete.

The collection continues to grow. As the public can access more and more of our photos both through our website and through reposts of photos on Facebook pages, more members of the public are contacting us to offer their photos. Membership is also up as a result. We're considering hosting some scanning days so the public can bring their photos to scan, giving both of us copies. While we prefer to have the originals, a scan is better than nothing. The Ghost Walk season is coming soon. If you're interested in helping out, please let us know by phone or by email. Last year we came close to hitting maximum capacity on the walks and the income has become a major part of our budget.

Congratulations are due to Greg Munz and his assistants on a great new exhibit. The Society worked very closely with Halton Heritage Services to prepare what is really two exhibits – one by them using our material and the other by us. Using our 24" printer purchased with Trillium money, we were able to print all the posters in house. The exhibits were officially opened by MP John Oliver who also took the opportunity to meet our summer students and the summer student employed by the Bronte Historical Society and to present scrolls to Greg and Lois Munz as they celebrated their 50th anniversary.

Mark Verlinden has spent some of the summer working on the Thomas House. He has repainted the old oval sign to the south of the building and has been scraping and painting under the verandah. Our beautiful gardens, thanks to Averil and Joe Jany, have been enhanced with all the rain. George Chisholm, President

Cover Image. Oshawana (John Nahdee) is dressed in a suit presented to him by the missionary Andrew Jamieson. His suit is adorned with strings of wampum beads and a variety of silver ornaments. The original Daguerrotype was taken in 1836 by order of Lord Herschell. Courtesy of Public Archives of Canada.

A Personal Narrative and the Town of Oakville

My name is Alexandre Nahdee. My family ancestry is Portuguese and Shawnee First Nation with band registry to Walpole Island Ontario. My Mother and her family immigrated to Canada from Portugal in 1976. Through my father's lineage, we are direct hereditary chiefs from our ancestor, Chief John Oshawana Dkamse Nahdee, who fought in the War of 1812. I am his seventh generation. I was born in Toronto and when I was five my family moved to Oakville, the place that I have called home for over 20 years.

“...we are direct hereditary chiefs from our ancestor, Chief John Oshawana Dkamse Nahdee, who fought in the War of 1812.”

While I was growing up, my parents would take me to libraries, museums, art galleries and historical sites in the area on weekends. Throughout my upbringing, learning was important and supported. Not only in the classroom but also learning my Portuguese and Shawnee family histories, cultures, traditions and languages. These moments of sharing conversations, experiences, meeting people and growing up knowing family friends has really fostered the importance of community for me. The Indigenous narrative is not always seen in a positive light in Canadian history. Much of our history is seen through a European viewpoint. It is time for Native people to present their narrative from their perspective.

Despite the complexities and difficulties that arise from engaging in courageous conversations, a relationship exists. There is an interconnection between each of us, whether we personally know each other or not. By having these courageous conversations, a new perspective is revealed in an historical context.

This conversation metaphorically is like mending a blanket. A blanket used by family members for generations that has been stored away. The blanket needs to be used to remind us of our past and keep history alive with care and respect, like giving a blanket to a child to stay warm on a cold day. Each of the woven threads represent the narratives of each family member's life, the people that they met, and the places they called home. Over time the continued use of the blanket causes the woven threads to fray like the stories being lost or forgotten. The mending of the blanket is like bringing back together threads of memories and rebuilding the connection and narrative. Looking back at our history through historical documents, gives us a new perspective of how communities were built and how our narratives are connected.

This new perspective of relationship building through research is what I have been doing. I grew up learning about my Shawnee ancestry and history through oral tradition, which I have committed to memory. This produces verbal preservation and recording of history. The narratives of family members and the interconnection between Indigenous and Non-indigenous narratives have been emphasized.

A Personal Narrative and the Town of Oakville *cont'd*

Historically and presently there has not always been an attitude of taking this methodology of recording histories seriously. How can information be reliable if it is not documented? Because of my experiences growing up and going to university, I am always open to research, seeking further answers to bringing the frayed woven threads back together. Over the years I have found written documentation from sources that were written contemporary to the time periods of the historical narratives of what I learned. This is not only the case for more recent history but also for far older historical events and reference points. Specifically, my practice of researching became more focused because of the 200 year anniversary of the War of 1812.

I grew up hearing family members talking about my ancestor Chief John Oshawana Dkamse Nahdee, and how his belongings were taken and ended up in the collection at the Royal Ontario Museum. Not only were these his belongings but they are culturally, traditionally, spiritually, and historically significant to the narrative of Indigenous and Non-indigenous peoples. In 2012 while studying at OCAD University, I heard that the ROM had an exhibit on the War of 1812, so I decided to visit and see what they had on display. It was the first time that I saw my ancestor's belongings, my family's narrative alongside other Indigenous family's narratives associated with that period of time. Seeing my ancestor's personal effects on display at a museum I grew up visiting was a profound moment.

Continuing the research into written documentation of how my ancestor's belongings came to be in the ROM's collection, the narratives of the Chief Ranger of the Independent Order of Foresters in Canada, Dr Oronhyatekha, and lawyer George Mills McClurg, became evermore connected to the historical narratives I learned from family.

From the Indigenous perspective, there is a teaching that I learned as a child: one day there will be children who will grow up and follow the paths their ancestors traveled before them, and find what was left behind for them, that will help them and others. Since 2012, I have been traveling and researching when I can, following the information being found. Research has brought me to places I have seen and visited before, with a new perspective and understanding in a renewed light. I found information in cities and towns across Southwestern Ontario, revisited museums in other provinces, and discovered new archive sources and places to visit. It is like the feeling of visiting family and being home, visiting family friends and being welcome.

My family historical research revealed many threads that led to locating further details of the interconnections of narrative that were to a certain extent unexpected. This was the case when I found information in towns, cities, countries and geographic locations across Ontario and the United States, that reflect my Indigenous and European personal narrative.

A Personal Narrative and the Town of Oakville *cont'd*

Places such as Oakville, Toronto, Oshawa, Mississauga, Leamington, and Kingsville. Through historical research I discovered a specific thread of information pertaining to the interconnection of my family to a shared narrative with the area around Oakville. Through the study of the Mississaugas I found written references to my verbal history of George Henry Maungwundus translating for Father Pier Chazelle and Chief John Oshawana Dkamse Nahdee.

Another connection to Oakville is The Historical Plaque in Lakeside Park that mentions Colonel William Chisholm serving with distinction in the War of 1812. Through further research I found that William was present at the capture of Fort Detroit.

Chief John Oshawana Dkamse Nahdee was awarded a medal from the Crown for the capture; this medal is currently on display at the ROM. To learn that the founder of Oakville was one of many who stood in the same moment as my ancestor in a war 200 years ago, resulting in the establishment of Canada as a country, has added another layer to Oakville, for me.

The interconnections between individuals, places, and narratives, exist in historical documents that are long forgotten over time. We need to take out the blanket and reconnect the threads of our shared narratives, have courageous conversations of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous perspectives to renew our relationship of a shared history. It is vital that we honour and respect our common history and mend the blankets for our children. WO



Alexandre Nahdee has a Bachelors of Fine Art with a Minor in Indigenous Visual Culture from OCAD University, and a Masters of Professional Education Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Western Ontario.

Historical Tours

I made a presentation at Knox Presbyterian Church between the morning service and the annual bar-b-que. In July I took out a group from Clarkson who were interested in our history. In August I visited Churchill Residence to talk about the history (A Glimpse Into Our Past) and am going back in September to present the "Walking Tour - Without Walking." I have the same two programs booked for Trafalgar Lodge in August/September. Sheridan College is bringing a busload of potential international students in August to walk through the old town and hear about our history.

And I have a new dress and hat!! T. Sinclair

Laurel Hill House

This beautiful 160 year old heritage house is somewhat of a hidden gem, situated in the midst of a modern subdivision in the Falgarwood area. The house was built by James Robertson, Farmer, on a farm that had been owned, variously, by several people, going back to 1807, whose names appear prominently in the history of Trafalgar and Oakville townships. However, the present house was not built until 1857. The heritage designation describes the house as "Victorian style with strong Gothic Revival elements. Notable features include decorative bargeboard, high pitched multi-gabled roof, doorway with flat transom and multiple lights, and decorative trim and sidelights." The back of the house faces the street since the original approach was a long driveway from what is now Iroquois Shore Road.

The current owner, Mr. Rae Charters and his late wife, Brenda, purchased the house in 1970 and have, over the past forty-seven years, lovingly maintained its historic features.



In 2014, at great expense, they rebuilt the garage brick by brick to restore its original character and charm. Mr. Charters recalled how the bricks had to be carefully chiseled when the original structure was torn down, then washed and cleaned for the rebuild. The heritage planner praised Mr. and Mrs. Charters for going "above and beyond" to retain the original elements of the garage and said they "showed amazing commitment to the restoration of this significant heritage property."

The rear of the property, which features the front of the house, is so peaceful and quiet that it seems isolated from the hustle and bustle of the town. We enjoyed our visit with Mr. Charters and thank him for his friendly welcome. Andrea Stewart and Greg Munz



Howard's Second Generation

WOODWORKING
FURNITURE REPAIR
ANTIQUE RESTORATION

620 Fourth Line Unit 7

Oakville, ON

905 844-2584

info@howardssecondgeneration.com

www.howardssecondgeneration.com/

Robertson Pump Company

Ron Logan at the Muskoka Pioneer Power Association contacted us to see if we had information about a pump found there. We gave him some basic facts about the Oakville foundry and Mr. Logan and his fellow volunteers did the rest of the work restoring it. Here is his report:

Wall Mounted Force Cistern Pump Manufactured by Robertson Pump Co. Oakville Foundry (1877-1887)

Proprietor - Robertson Manager/Foreman - Dayer

Restored - Spring 2016 to Spring 2017

By Ron Logan & Don Pickles

Needed some internal welding done to the pump plunger/
basket, cost - \$300/\$400

Pump is mounted on the Granary Wall of the Peake Barn,
J.D. Lang Activity Park, Bracebridge.



TERRY C. COOKE
Managing Director

TEL: (905) 844-2600 FAX: (905) 842-2966
kopriva@eol.ca

64 LAKESHORE ROAD WEST, OAKVILLE, ONTARIO L6K 1E1

MACRAE & ASSOCIATES

RENOVATIONS
RESTORATIONS

JAMIE MACRAE

65 NAVY ST.
OAKVILLE, ON
L6J 2Z1

cell 905 399 6066

TCA

TURNER CHAPEL ANTIQUES

JED GARDNER

www.turnerchapelantiques.com

905.338.3252

37 Lakeshore Rd. W, Oakville, ON, L6K 1C8
turnerchapelantiques@bellnet.ca



DISCOUNT FOR OHS MEMBERS

**FOR ALL YOUR
REAL ESTATE NEEDS**

JIM YOUNG

SALES REP
REALTY EXECUTIVES PLUS LTD
BROKERAGE

cell 289 259-0955
office 905 337-7000

jimbobmba2000@gmail.com

Summer at the Thomas House

You may have seen a rather elegantly dressed interpreter at the Thomas House this summer. Our talented member Marie Descent herself made the beautiful gown and incredibly detailed bonnet that you see in the picture here! She goes by the name of Mrs. Urquhart (the Pharmacist's wife).

We are hoping to obtain more outfits of the period and give visitors a real feel for the times.

*"When my Granny was little,
she didn't have wifi!"*

On this topic, anyone out there who can help with sewing is welcome to get in touch and we can work something out for future seasons and for "Ghost Walks" costumes which can be very simply put together.

It has been a great year for visitors. So far to the end of July we have had 2,822.

Comments left by visitors: "Keep it!" "Thanks for sharing" "Just like my Granny's" "Smells Great!" and "When my Granny was little she didn't have wifi!"

Marie Descent as Mrs. Urquhart demonstrates the use of the butter churn.



Spinners on Thomas House porch Pavla Barbaric (l) and Friedl Ballaban (r) instruct Claudette Shaw.

**WINDOW
CRAFT
INDUSTRIES**

24 Ronson Drive, Unit 4
Toronto, ON, M9W 1B4
Tel: (416) 535-4499
Fax: (416) 535-3369

Visit our web site at www.windowcraft.com

I'd like to thank our interpreters for their excellent work in sharing this piece of our history with the many grateful visitors - Wendy Belcher, Heather Davis, Marie Descent, Carol Gall, Madlyn Kayer, Pat Mack, Linda North, Shona Rochefort, Stewart Sherriff, Andrea Stewart, Hilary Speed, Lindsay Thompson, Susan Wells, Eileen Za and student Leah Foster.
Mary Davidson

The *Haunting* Begins?

Do ghosts scare you or intrigue you? Ghosts are often thought to be residual, leftover energy that is simply re-playing an event in time. Others feel that ghosts and spirits are souls that did not pass over into the next dimension - into the light - when their physical bodies died on Earth. Perhaps this is because they have unfinished business here on Earth with a loved one, friend or even business partner. Some souls may be afraid to move on to that next dimension because they fear what awaits them. Some may be unusually attached to their home or to an object that was of great importance to them while they were alive. Some may still retain the anger or sorrow that they took with them when they died. Perhaps they do not realize they are dead like the character in the movie, *The Sixth Sense*. And some, like Rebecca Chisholm, like it here and just cannot bear to move on.

Many apparitions are viewed repeating the same motions or scenes. Usually these ghosts pay little or no attention to the observer (such as the butler at Erchliss who is heard and seen going up and down the front stairs. Sometimes a haunting will consist entirely of the sound of footsteps, ghostly music or specific smells. The captain of a wrecked ship has been seen walking at the bottom of Chisholm Street between the marsh and graveyard still smoking his pipe and that smell of tobacco lingers. According to the late Joyce Burnell, long-time member of the Oakville Historical Society and author of *Ghosts of Oakville* and *Boo Too*, Oakville has only the nicest ghosts, not scary and not threatening.

In 2016, 170 seniors, 486 adults and 253 children attended our walks.

Our revenue was over \$7000. We had 9 ghost leaders, 18 students who wandered the streets as characters from the 1850's and 25 society members assisted in opening/closing and catering. We would welcome any members who would like to be ghost leaders as well as anyone who would like to be roaming ghosts - characters who stroll along the streets in costume once or twice during a designated walk to greet the Walk participants. And we also encourage members to volunteer to help with refreshments that are served after each Walk. Contact Mary Davidson or Wendy Belcher if you are interested.

Summer Students

Kristin Hardy, Archivist Intern (below). I have a BA from Laurentian University, majoring in Classical Studies. I decided I wanted to work in the museum field so I am taking Museum and Gallery Studies at Georgian College. The third and final semester for the program is an internship which I am fulfilling here at the OHS.



Summer Students

Meghan Headrick, Archival Assistant (below l) I am digitising photos and documents and redesigning the website. An Oakville native, I am going into third year of a History degree at Dalhousie and University of King's College, Early Modern Studies. I hope to obtain a Master's Degree in Museum and Library Studies .



Sherry Snider, Archivist Intern (above r) I am studying Library & Information Technology at Mohawk College and am very much enjoying my time at OHS transcribing the (WWI) Gordon Munro letters. I hope to work in a library or information setting, working with the public.

Justin Meakes intern (r). I am learning a lot about Oakville's history while developing new skills archiving the Society's resources and meeting like-minded people. My dream job would be working for a movie production company making sure movie sets and details reflect historical accuracy or working in a museum utilizing my knowledge of history.



Members and Donors

We have 201 paid up members and twenty members who have not renewed in 2017. If you think you may have forgotten to renew your 2017 membership, please phone the office at 905 844-2695. We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

Ms Christina Barnes Mr John Canham
 Ms Katrina Foster Ms Janet Godber
 Ms Suzana Grozavescu Ms Andrea Juricic
 Ms Karren Laratei Ms Cathy McNulty
 Ms Dawn McCowan Ms Christine Yardley
 Ms Louise McCabe and Mr Brian O'Heare
 Mr Alexandre Nahdee Ms Kim Smeyers
 Mr John Sosniak Mr and Mrs Jerry Mayer
 Ms Larisa Varfluseva Mr Lou Smeyers

We would also like to acknowledge three generous gifts to the Society. One of our summer students needed a place to live so a member provided room and board, a member donated funds to support another student and a member sold her mother-in-law's loom and donated the proceeds. Andrea Stewart and Marie Descent, Memberships

Please
 visit our
 advertisers

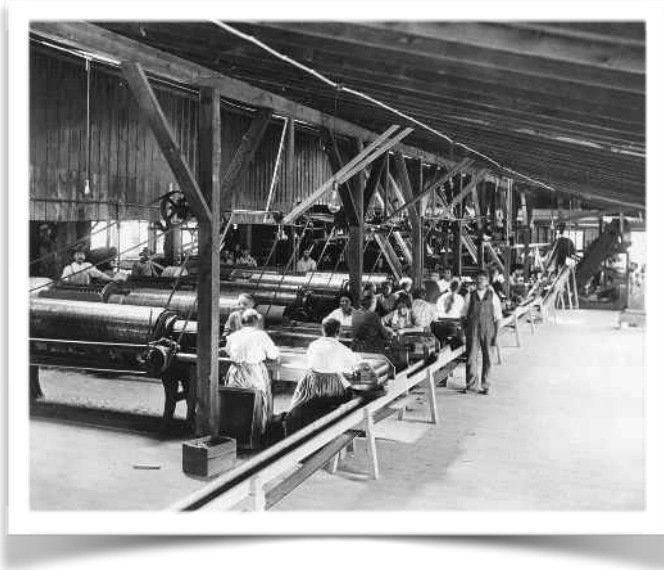


**BLACK FOREST
 PASTRY SHOP**

184 Lakeshore Rd. East
 Oakville, ON L6J 1H6
 T 905.337.1671

www.blackforestpastryshop.ca
john@blackforestpastryshop.ca

The *way* things were...



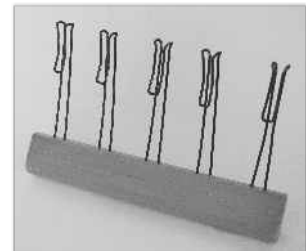
Do you know:

Where this is?

What happened here?

Look out for the answer in our next issue!

The metal and wood artefact shown in our June 2017 edition was missing 5 objects that would have shown its purpose. By Inserting blackboard chalk in the metal holders a teacher could draw five parallel lines on the board to write music or to print the alphabet, showing which parts of letters go above or below the line.



Archive Hours:

Tuesday & Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm
Third Sunday of the month 12:30 to 4:00 pm

905 844-2695

www.oakvillehistory.org

**110 King Street
Oakville, ON.
L6J 1B1**

information@oakvillehistory.org