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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**JUNE 2006**

**Volume 40: Number 2**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

- September 24, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. - Harvest Festival, Thomas House
- December 1, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. - Members Wine & Cheese, OHS Office,  
110 King Street

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

- September 20, 7:30 p.m. - *Tracing the History of Your Home*  
By Mathew Wilkinson
- November 15, 7:30pm - *Inside Camp X*  
By Lyn Philip Hodgson

## HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS\*

Month	Main Street	Heritage House	Trafalgar Rd.
<b>June</b>	Sun 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm	Sun 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm Sun 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm	Sun 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm
<b>July</b>	Wed 26 <sup>th</sup> , 7 pm	Wed 12 <sup>th</sup> , 7 pm	----
<b>August</b>	-----	Wed 9 <sup>th</sup> , 7 pm	Wed 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 7 pm
<b>September</b>	Sun 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm	Sun 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2 pm	Mon 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm
<b>October</b>	Sun 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 pm	Sun 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm	----

\* Two-hour duration

## GHOST WALKS+

Month	Thursday 7:00 & 8:30 P.M.	Saturday 6:00, 7:00 & 8:30 P.M.
<b>September</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup>	-----
<b>October</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> , 12 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup> and 26 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup>

+ One-hour duration



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In late March, the Society held its Annual General Meeting at Knox Church. The meeting was well attended partly, because of the now-traditional potluck dinner. To those of you who attended, thank you both for attending and for providing the makings of a wonderful meal. For those who couldn't make it, you missed out. Harry Buxton and Mary Noad have both retired from the board and both will be very much missed. In appreciation of his many years of dedicated service to the board, the members were very pleased to appoint Harry as a Honorary Director. Harry Barrett, Evelyn Bullied and Jim Young have all volunteered to serve for another three-year term and I would like to welcome **Andrea Stewart** as a newcomer to the board.

At our board meeting in April the officers of the society were reappointed for the usual one-year term. I remain as President; Barb Savage remains as Vice-president; Jim Young as Secretary; and, Walter Jennings as Treasurer.

The Society is busy preparing for another summer. The **Thomas House** is ready to go. Pat Mack has taken over the job of scheduling Thomas House volunteers from Joyce Burnell. You don't have to be female to work at the Thomas House. I enjoy the afternoons I spend there and explain to visitors that Mrs. Thomas is out doing her chores.

Our ever-popular walks are set for this year as well. We are introducing our new **Trafalgar Road Walk** this year. It will start at St John's United Church; proceed up Trafalgar Road to Spruce, down Reynolds, through George's Square, along Dunn to Randall and back to St John's, where the usual tea will be served. This year we will also be trying some evening walks.

Preparations are underway for two important anniversaries. In 2007, the Town will be celebrating its **Sesquicentennial**. I have been appointed the Society's representative on the Citizen Task Force. In 2008, **Oakville Trafalgar High School** will be celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. If you are interested in serving on the steering committee or helping out, visit the school's website <http://oth.hdsb.ca/> or call the school at 905-845-2875

George Chisholm  
905 842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

### ***COVER PICTURE:***

*Interior of 'Medical Hall' and Dr. John Urquhart, Jr. in the 1920's*

## *Health Care in Early Oakville*

Like many other port towns that were entry points for immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Oakville suffered periodic epidemics of virulent infectious diseases. Two doctors, who were father and son, served the community for a century by looking after the sick, operating a business and, participating in civic affairs.

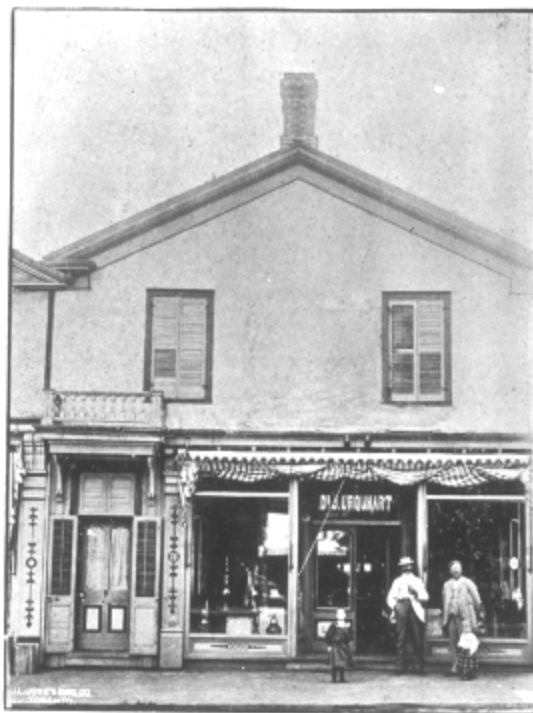
**John Urquhart** came to Canada from Scotland in 1830. He taught school in the Lake Simcoe area, but when the cholera outbreak occurred in 1832, he gave up teaching to help out in the hospital in Toronto. It was this event that prompted him to turn to medicine. In that period, those who were interested in a medical career apprenticed themselves to a licensed medical practitioner. John Urquhart followed this path. He studied at home using books provided by his mentor, and received on the job training while accompanying the doctor on his rounds, visiting patients in their homes and in hospitals. Traveling time between visits gave him ample opportunity to ask questions and to discuss cases. After two years experience among cholera patients, he applied to the Licensing Board and obtained his license to practice medicine.

The experience he gained while serving in Toronto was just the right background needed in Oakville, which was badly affected when the second outbreak of **cholera** occurred in the summer of 1834. It was the year of a large migration from Ireland and within a few weeks there were twenty-five cases. A group of residents formed a committee and adopted measures to prevent the spread of the disease. They appointed a group to inspect houses and outhouses, and recommended that homes be cleaned, fumigated and whitewashed with lime. They petitioned Lt. Governor Sir John Colborne for assistance and he declared Oakville an official Port of Entry. This meant that all passengers were checked for disease before being permitted to land and ships were to be quarantined if necessary. The Lt. Governor acted quickly to contain the disease and established Boards of Health in every port town, while providing financial help where necessary.

**The Oakville Board of Health** set up an isolation hospital on the west side of The Sixteen Mile Creek and appointed John Urquhart to be in charge. Newly arrived immigrants from Scotland and Ireland, who developed the disease on the ships that brought them to Canada, needed urgent medical care. They traveled in badly overcrowded and filthy conditions and were mostly confined in the hold of the ship for days without ventilation or hygienic facilities, an environment that fostered the spread of

infection. These same conditions were responsible for an epidemic of typhus, known as ‘ship’s fever’, a decade later when thousands escaped famine conditions in Ireland. Cholera returned again in the 1850’s and many deaths resulted in Oakville.

When the 1834 outbreak subsided, John Urquhart decided to stay in Oakville. In 1835, he opened the ‘**Medical Hall**’ on the south side of Lakeshore Road, which was then known as Colborne Street. It was a combination drug, grocery store, surgery, and residence. The drug store was large and lined with shelves and had stools for waiting customers. A business directory in 1851 listed him as, ‘chemist, druggist, and dealer in paints, oils, groceries, perfumery, etc.’ A newspaper advertisement in 1857 described his business as supplying doctors with ‘English, French, American drugs and chemicals and live leaches.’ He also imported dried fruits and nuts, pickles, sauces, and tinned delicacies.



**Dr. John Urquhart's Medical Hall**

It was here that his son **John, Jr.** was born in 1844 and who eventually followed in his footsteps. As a young man, he was trained by his father in the preparation of prescriptions and the manufacture of pills and tinctures. He measured powders and liquids on a brass scale and the ingredients would be bottled or wrapped in small white papers. His ambition was to study medicine and, in 1864, he attended Dr. Rolph’s Medical College, which was affiliated with Victoria College.

When his father died in 1867, he succeeded in the business at the age of 23 and put his medical education on hold for twelve years. He returned to medical school and obtained his degree from the University of Toronto, followed by post-graduate work at Edinburgh. In addition to his medical practice, he carried on with the operation of his drug store. He served the Town of Oakville in another capacity as Mayor (1888-1891 and 1898-1899).

His daughter, Mrs. McCleary, wrote about her father's part in the serious smallpox epidemic of 1907:

“Father was the one who recognized the first case of smallpox, and soon it had spread all over town. He had a ‘camp’ set up on the west side of the river, on the lakefront near **Holyrood**, and everyone who developed the disease had to be taken there until they were better. The patients were picked up one by one and driven through town by horse and wagon (resembling a ‘lumber-wagon’) to the camp where they were looked after. When people saw one of these wagons they knew it was a case of smallpox and took care not to go near. I do not know how many contracted the disease, nor how long the camp was necessary, because Father decided to take the precaution of sending me away, and I was out of Oakville when the epidemic was at its worst.”

Dr. John Urquhart, Jr. died at the age of 90 in the house where he was born. He was believed to be the oldest practicing physician in Ontario. ‘Medical Hall’ had carried on in business for almost a century and was one of the two oldest concerns in the town. The lifetimes of the two Dr. Urquharts had spanned a period of 131 years.

### **The Sunflower Solution**

Another public health problem was malaria, or ague, as it was known then. The disease was very prevalent in Oakville. A common treatment was a medicine made of brandy, alum, sugar, nutmeg, oil of lemon and Peruvian bark, all of which was grated and steeped in boiling water. It was to be taken every four hours until the patient fully recovered.



**Dr. John Urquhart Jr.**

In an attempt to control the disease, the Oakville Council created a special committee in 1870 to make recommendations ‘on the sanitary condition of the marsh’. Although the disease was known to be associated with swamps and marshes, no one understood the connection with mosquitoes.

After studying the matter, the committee reported that it would be too expensive to fill in the marsh on both sides of the Sixteen Mile Creek. It did not believe that the planting of willow trees would have any effect and that it would be difficult to protect them from cattle and, from ice jams in the spring. The committee’s conclusion was, “that the most available plant as a preventative to malaria is the sunflower. It is of thrifty growth and easily cultivated for sanitary purposes in many places in the United States and invariably with most satisfactory results”.

When the problem was being discussed, it was noted that other towns had found that pouring kerosene on marshes was effective. One councilor killed this suggestion by objecting that the procedure would advertise the fact that the disease existed in Oakville.

Council accepted the committee’s recommendation and the Mayor issued a proclamation requesting that sunflower seeds be planted in gardens and all places on both sides of The Sixteen not frequented by cattle. An advertisement in the press announced the arrival of, “a supply of sunflower seeds for gratuitous distribution. The Sanitary Committee urges upon people of this town the importance of at once sowing these seeds extensively, as a remedy for malaria”. By the end of the century, the disease diminished and eventually disappeared.

May Isaac and Ernle Carroll

## MEDICAL REMEDY FOR AGUE (Malaria)

R<sub>x</sub>

½ pint fourth proof brandy  
1 piece alum as large as a walnut  
½ or ¾ lb sugar  
3 nutmegs  
2 oz Peruvian bark  
¼ oz oil of lemon

Grate and mix together then add 2 quarts boiling water and let stand till cool.  
Take ¾ gill once every four hours until the ague is off.



## **AROUND THE SOCIETY**



### **White Elephant Sale**

**H**ATS OFF! to so many members who helped with the White Elephant and Bake Sale. Grace Schroeder did all the telephoning while Midge Philbrook, Maggie Leaver, May Isaac and, Ernle Carroll helped with pricing. Evelyn Bullied polished brass and, cleaned and sorted the jewellery for the sale. Unfortunately, we do not have space to mention everybody. It is a big project and successful only because of the many “*helpers*”.

Thanks also to Anne Hetherington for her baking and, Maggie Leaver for helping to clear up at the **Knox Meeting**.

Barbara Savage

### **Afternoon Teas**

**S**ummer is almost here and our program and dates of **Heritage Walks** are planned. The afternoon teas that follow are, an integral and delightful finale to these walks. A member of the board, who needs one or two extra pairs of hands, organizes each tea. If you can spare 2 ½ to 3 hours on a Sunday afternoon to help at one of the teas, we would be very, very grateful.

No baking is required (unless you want to). Help is needed to set up tables, serve the refreshments and wash up. Our visitors are always appreciative and your Board really does need your help. Please call me for further details at **905-337-3209** or, the office at **905-844-2695**.

Ann Reynolds

### **Finding Your Way Through The Maze:** **Historical Property Research**

**H**ave you ever been curious about your property's history? Who lived there before? What did they do? The clues are all around us -- if we know how to look.

This presentation (**Sept 20**) offers an introduction to conducting property research in our community: how and where to begin, what resources are available, and how to access information. Property research is, in a sense, a genealogy of bricks and mortar and land.

Matthew Wilkinson

### [Adopt-A-Park/Trail Program](#)

**W**ith a personal note at the bottom wishing the Society well in 2006, Mayor Ann Mulvale sent a letter of appreciation to express her “sincere thanks” to Ms. Ann Reynolds and the Historical Society **“for participating in the Adopt-A-Park/Trail Program.”**

This referred specifically to the Society adopting **Lakeside Park** (Old Post Office & Thomas House) and the “attention given to the area through the collection of litter and debris”. The Mayor appreciates the Society’s commitment and noted that, “Your efforts, multiplied by similar volunteer empowerment, result in a town-wide endeavour that succeeds with the resources of dedicated people like those in the Historical Society. My thanks, and those of the entire town, go to each member of The Oakville Historical Society”.

The Editor

### [The Thomas House](#)

**T**he Thomas House was re-opened on Sunday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, the Victoria Day weekend. Under Ann Reynold’s supervision, the house has been swept and dusted to perfection in readiness for our wonderful interpreters, who have volunteered their time for May and June, with a few already committed for July and August. **A big thank-you from your new co-coordinator.**

As always happens, some people will not be returning due to various circumstances. We really appreciate all their contributions in the past and now we look to any new people with a love of Oakville history who might wish to become an interpreter. If you know of anyone in this capacity, have them call me. \* **905-842-6977.**

Pat Mack



## Artist in Residence

Fellow member, **Rod Adam**, our own “Artist in Residence”, has been spending a lot of time at the OHS these days. The result is a showing of his **watercolours**, some of which are based on records available from archived material.

The showing takes place at Season’s Restaurant on Lakeshore Road between May 20<sup>th</sup> and September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006. **Everyone is welcome to drop by.**

The Editor

## Treasures in an Old Chocolate Box

The Acquisition Committee has been given an interesting collection of documents by a Morden family member. The items were neatly folded into a chocolate box and, when opened, it was found that they mostly related to land acquisitions and mortgages -- between thirty and forty assorted documents. The earliest document was dated 1845.

In 1913 **Captain E.A. Morden** took a step to improve his milking stock by acquiring a pedigree cow of 1911 named “Abigail Beels”, a Holstein-Freisian, but she was transferred shortly.

In 1934 the Guardian Insurance Company of Canada issued an insurance policy for Captain Morden on April 26<sup>th</sup> for an “Automobile” at a premium of \$25.00.

But, perhaps the most unusual document was undated and headed, “Specifications of a dwelling house to be built by E.A. Morden, Esq. Oakville”. Pinned together were five typewritten papers with the most thorough details of construction and finish.

Where the house was built we do not know or, if it was ever put up. The collection of documents should make interesting reading and study, with materials perhaps figuring in a future Newsletter.

Margaret Buxton

## [Solution to "The Way Things Were – March 2006](#)

From the March article, the 1940 picture showed **Mrs. T.R. Jarvis** in the “Broxstowe House”. She and her husband lived initially at Oakville, where Mr. Jarvis was employed in a partnership with a Mr. Ryrie, in a Real Estate and Insurance Business.

Harry Buxton

## [The Secret Garden](#)

Planting will be well underway when you read this and, for those who have helped, your assistance is very much appreciated. There is still work to be done and we can certainly use the help of everyone to ensure this garden is ready to greet our visitors, whether or not you have a “green thumb”. Please contact me at **905-842-1977** if you can assist.

Jo Kleimeyer

## [Talk on Ontario Architecture](#)

Those who attended the Public Meeting at Knox Church on April 19 were treated to an exceptionally interesting and well-presented talk on Ontario Architecture, illustrated extensively with slides. Our speaker was **Shannon Kyles**, a member of the faculty of Mohawk College in Hamilton.

Shannon has devoted much of her career to research on the styles and terms of Architecture. This research has included extensive travel viewing and photographing buildings and their features. The result is an exceptional fund of information on the architecture of Western Civilization, coupled with an entertaining presentation style and delightful sense of humour.

During a sabbatical leave from the College, Shannon developed a very comprehensive website to provide viewers with an appreciation of architecture both in Ontario and in the rest of the world. The website is in two parts and covers Building Styles and Building terms in a very detailed and interesting manner. Photographs on the website were taken by Shannon during her travels. If you missed the talk you will enjoy catching up via the Internet at [www.OntarioArchitecture.com](http://www.OntarioArchitecture.com).

Walter Jennings

## ***THE WAY THINGS WERE***



- 1: Where is this house located?
  - 2: What was it used for and when?
  - 3: What changes were made to the building?
- 

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**SEPTEMBER 2006**

**Volume 40: Number 3**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

September 24, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. - Harvest Festival, Thomas House

December 1, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. - Members Wine & Cheese,  
OHS Office, 110 King Street



## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

September 20, 7:30 p.m. - *Tracing the History of Your Home*  
By Mathew Wilkinson

November 15, 7:30pm - *Inside Camp X*  
By Lyn Philip Hodgson

## HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS \*\*\*

Month	Main Street	Heritage House	Trafalgar Rd.
September	Sun 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm	Sun 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2 pm	Mon 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm
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\* Two-hour duration

## GHOST WALKS +++

Month	Thursday 7:00 & 8:30 P.M.	Saturday 6:00, 7:00 & 8:30 P.M.
September	14 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup>	-----
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+ One-hour duration

\*\*\*CALL 905-844-2695 FOR MORE INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As the summer winds down and your Society prepares for the fall season of Harvest Festival, Speakers Nights and Ghost Walks, I would like to report on some of the goings on that affect us.

The next time you visit the office you may notice some changes. A few months ago a **renovation committee** was formed which included Harry Barrett, Walter Jennings and I. In June, we presented a plan to the board. The office and boardroom are now much more usable and feature new areas for research. We continue to expand our use of technology.

Thanks primarily to the work of Mary Noad, Harry Barrett and Jamie Macrae we finally seem to be making some progress with the installation of our **Volunteer Memorial**. Under Mary's leadership a fountain was purchased a couple of years ago but several hurdles have slowed down the project.

The Town has hired a consultant to prepare an overall site plan for the **Erchless Estate**. At the time of writing we have not yet met with the consultant but Harry Barrett and I will be in the near future. A priority for us is the replacement of the dilapidated chain link fence on the north side of the property.

When the Town and the Society came to agreement on their roles in the protection of the Town's history, a **Museum Advisory Board** was created on which the Society had one seat. This board ceased to operate a few years ago but a new citizen's committee is being formed which will include a representative from the Society.

Work on the **Town's sesquicentennial celebrations** continues. In June, the Society and the Town's task force for the events hosted a brainstorming session at the office. This event was well attended by interested people from the community and several projects are now in the planning stages.

If you have comments or concerns about your Society, please contact me.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

**COVER PICTURE:** Temperance Hall was built in 1843 and was the first Temperance Hall in Ontario. It was located at the corner of Trafalgar and Randal Streets, where Tim Horton's is now located.

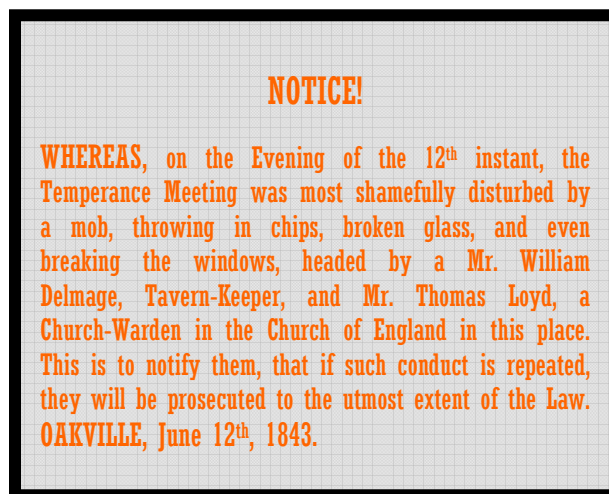


## *Temperance Hall*

In the early days of Oakville, liquor was cheap and plentiful - consumed in large quantities. Life was hard and people depended on alcohol to get through the day. Drunkenness was common. After a while, there was a reaction and the **Temperance Movement** spread from the United States to Canada. In 1830 a Society was formed in the Township of Trafalgar. By 1834, the **Oakville Temperance Reformation Society** had been formed. The President was Justus Williams and the meetings were held in his store. The idea was to promote temperance rather than abstinence. Whisky, brandy and rum were the main targets of the movement.

There was a need for a hall where the regular meetings of the Society could be held. Justus Williams and Thomas Leach procured a lot on the southeast corner of Trafalgar and Randall Streets, where Tim Horton's now stands. The Hall, finished in 1843, was the first Temperance Hall in the province. R. D. Wadsworth, Secretary of the Montreal Society, attended the official opening. His purpose was to respond to a pamphlet against temperance that had recently been published. He especially recommended that there should be a "**cold water army**" for children that would encourage them to enjoy the taste of fresh water and avoid alcohol all their lives. This suggestion was not taken very seriously.

The following notice was published as a result of a public disturbance when the Hall opened:





The Hall was used for many meetings other than those of the Temperance Society. The Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church conducted some of their services in the Hall as they did not have buildings of their own until 1850-1851. The Salvation Army also had meetings as well as the **Town Band**, which used the Hall for rehearsals.

The first meeting of the Township of Trafalgar Council was held on January 31, 1850 in Temperance Hall. The Oakville Temperance Reformation Society had agreed 'to present the Councilors with the gratuitous use of the Hall', and it continued as the Township Hall for the next six years. When Oakville was incorporated as a municipality in 1857, the Society offered the Hall to the Town Council of Oakville.



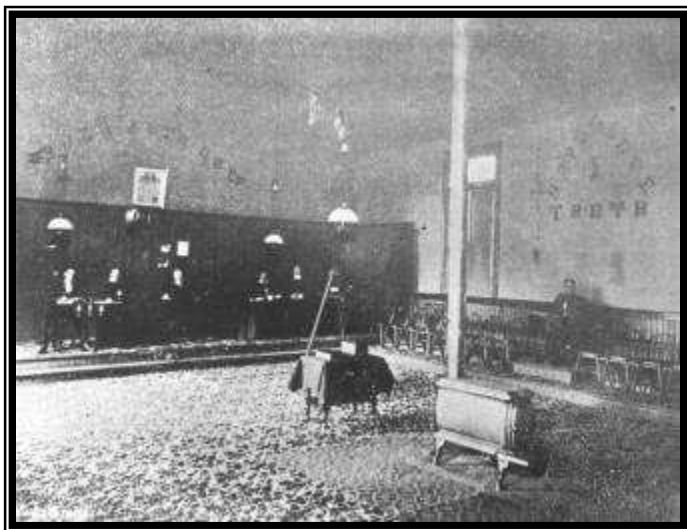
Mason & Hamlin reed organ built in 1874

It became known as '**the Town Hall**'. Some of the meetings may have benefited from a 'sober second thought'.

The Temperance Society was reorganized in 1869 as the **Royal Oak Temple**, No. 216. The members then called themselves **Royal Templars**.

On June 3, 1869, Queen Victoria's Jubilee was celebrated in Oakville. One of the features of the day was a temperance excursion from Toronto on board the *Rothsay Castle*, a famous steamer of the day. There were about five hundred Good Templars on board, who were met at the wharf by about one hundred Royal Templars from Oakville. A news item of the day reported that "it was a splendid sight to see a procession of over six hundred persons, composed almost entirely of young people, who declared themselves against the use of intoxicating drinks". The day was spent at **Beardsley's Grove**, where there were swings, games and all manner of amusements provided by the Town. This was a happy time for the Temperance Society of Oakville as people felt that they were gaining support in their drive against alcohol.

From the time that Oakville became a municipality, the licensing of taverns was a subject of much concern. In 1865, The **Dunkin Act** gave the counties the option of prohibiting the sale, but not the importation or possession of intoxicants. Halton County voted in favour of this by-law, but it was eventually thrown out on a technicality and licenses were again issued. There was a rising feeling throughout the province in favour of prohibition. The **‘Canada Temperance Act’**, passed in 1878 by the Ontario Legislature, was more generally known as the ‘Scott Act’. Liquor could be purchased only from a licensed purveyor for home consumption, but could not be sold in taverns or hotels. Halton County was the first county to support prohibition and became known as the “banner county”.



Interior of Temperance Hall  
The ‘motto’ on the right wall reads ‘Hope, Love, Truth’

For three years, Oakville held back, but on April 19, 1881, the new law was passed by a majority of 87. This decision may have been influenced by events at the Canadian Hotel that year. The two women, who were the proprietors, seemed unable to cope with the brawls that took place in the hotel, which disturbed the entire neighbourhood. Chief Constable George Sumner remarked “that it was pretty poor, as they are supposed to be ladies”.

When the Scott Act came into force, all the taverns and hotels were closed. People who came into town said that they would not come again. Peel, Wellington and Wentworth stayed ‘wet’ and pointed to Oakville and Milton as examples of the failure of prohibition. In 1888, the Oakville electorate voted to repeal the Scott Act by a majority of 179. After this was passed, the hotels gradually reopened and life in Oakville returned to normal. It had been a bitter time and it took a while for the different factions, pro and anti prohibition, to settle their differences.

On April 17, 1883, a fire broke out in the office of the **Standard newspaper**. When first discovered, it was fairly small. The fire brigade had difficulty in getting one

of the pumps to work and soon the fire was out of control. By 4 a.m. the whole block was in ashes. A request was sent to Toronto for help and a special train with a fire engine and a brigade of firemen were sent to Oakville. But, when it arrived, it was not needed. The accounts of this fire in the newspapers were greatly exaggerated and the fire department in Oakville was blamed for part of the trouble. The reason for this was that at the time of the fire, prohibition reigned in Oakville and those who were against it seized every opportunity to blame prohibition for any unexpected disaster. Because many offices were destroyed in the fire, the Temperance Hall was used as an alternative until they could be replaced.

**Electric light** was first used in Oakville on the occasion of the Royal Templar’s ‘camp’. This took place at Harbour Grove and was the largest temperance gathering held in Canada up to 1889. It lasted for ten days. All the provinces attended, with the exception of Nova Scotia. There were forty speakers and three Royal Revival Bands. The large dining hall held 1,200 people and the ladies of the WCTU served the meals. The lighting system, set up by the Kay Company of Hamilton, was the first time electric light was seen in Oakville.

With the defeat of the Scott Act, the influence of the Temperance Movement gradually faded. Temperance Hall was bought by the **Salvation Army** and was their headquarters in Oakville for many years. In 1970, the building was demolished and Tim Horton’s took over the site. Although Temperance Hall is gone, it had a covenant, which said that no alcohol could ever be consumed or sold on that property, so the aims of the Royal Templars have not disappeared completely.

Ernle Carroll

### **Board of Directors - 2006**

The following are your elected Board of Directors for the Oakville Historical Society for 2006. Although they are elected to oversee the challenging task of leading our Society, they depend on our volunteers and others to fulfill their mandate. This newsletter is one method of letting the members know of the work being done. Any concerns you have regarding the Society should be directed to the directors for their attention.

Harry Barrett	Ev Bullied	Harry Buxton – Honourary
Margaret Buxton	George Chisholm - President	Jeff Jarvis - Past President
Walter Jennings - Treasurer	June Hitchcox	Andrea Stewart
Barbara Savage - Vice President	Jim Young - Secretary	Karen Wooley



## **AROUND THE SOCIETY**



### **More on Researching Your Property**

**M**any people are curious about their home and property – who used to live there, their occupation, when did they live there? We invite you to hear *Matthew Wilkinson*, our Knox Church Speaker on this topic. He will give clues on how and where to begin, what resources are available and, how to access information on **Wednesday, September 20 – 7:30 P.M.**

Our Society and the Oakville Main Library may hold information on your property and/or the people who have lived there. We are currently compiling individual file cards by street, then street number, on all available information on each area building - information that is found in books such as “Oakville and the Sixteen”, wills, marriage certificates, historical maps, photos of houses and individuals and, much more.

If your house proves to be 100+ years old, you are eligible for a **house plaque** and may wish to order one from the Society.

June Hitchcox

### **Historical Presentation**

**S**ecret warriors were trained to work behind enemy lines at **Camp X**, which was located on the boundary of Oshawa and Whitby. Dropped by parachute, they trained and organized resistance groups, who would sabotage and destroy enemy supply lines during WW II.

Mark your calendars to attend the Knox Presbyterian Church for a fascinating evening on **Wednesday, November 15<sup>th</sup> 2006**, when *Lyn Philip Hodgson*, the author of “Camp X”, will be telling us the true story of our secret warriors.

Barbara Savage

## Chills Down Your Spine

Come and join **Francine Landry Smith** as she leads a Ghost Walk through Old Oakville. It's spooky, spine tingling and lots of fun. Book early as last year we had to unfortunately turn people away. Call **905-844-2695** to reserve your place for this walk on the dark side of Oakville.

Bring along a flashlight and wear good walking shoes. And, remember to wear appropriate fall apparel for a evening jaunt into this offbeat look into Oakville's scarier past.

Refer to **Page Two** for dates.



Cost: Adults: \$12. Children Under 12: \$6.  
Sorry, the spirits demand cash only. **No credit cards.**

Barbara Savage

## The Thomas House – Summer 2006

The Thomas House opened on the May 24<sup>th</sup> weekend and, from then until our Harvest Festival on September 26<sup>th</sup>, our interpreters will delight the public with the history of the house and welcome visitors from all over the world.

A heartfelt thank-you to all our Mrs. Thomas' and Mr. Thomas', our spinners who shared their talents and, Ernie Carroll who hosted a group of youngsters from the summer programme. Once again the Thomas House had a most successful summer.

Congratulations.

Pat Mack

## The Secret Garden

The garden has been coming along but, unfortunately, Jo Kleimeyer fell and broke her hip, somewhat limiting her participation and leadership in the development of this beautiful asset of the Society. She is on the mend but her mobility is

restricted at this time. If there are any **volunteers** that can step into the breach and assist with the fall garden duties, it would be much appreciated. Please **contact** one of the directors or, Jo Kleimeyer (905-842-1977) if you can help.

Lance Naismith

### **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – June 2006**

**T**he photograph in the June issue is a residence at 72 First Street. It was built in 1855 and called ‘**Mapledene**’ by its owner, W. E. Hagaman, one of Oakville’s early grain merchants. In 1945, the Lion’s Club purchased the building, installed an elevator, and it became a temporary hospital, accommodating fourteen patients. The property was donated to the Hospital Association who operated the hospital until the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was opened in 1950. Its new owner removed the verandah and elevator in the early 1970’s. The current owners have recently restored the verandah.

May Isaac

### **Harvest Festival**

**D**on’t forget to come to the Harvest Festival on **Sunday, September 24th** at the Thomas House in Lakeside Park between 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. The many Mr. and Mrs. Thomas’ will be there as well as baked goods, preserves, **crafts for the children** and, free apple cider. The weather is usually sunny, a little cool but very enjoyable.

Barbara Savage

### **Between the Covers**

**A**mong our recent acquisitions are the book, “Royal Navy Wives, Widows, Sisters, Aunts and Daughters” and, a group of books called, “The Albertsons, Forsters, Sniders, Henney and Shains”.

The first one is the story of **Amelia Mary Haswell** who married Lt. William Pullen in the early 1800's and the subsequent "Navy women" until the current time.

The second group of books consists of stories about the **pioneer families** in the area of Sniders Corners and Wesley United Church, the area we know as Burnhamthorpe and Ninth Line.

If anyone with **library experience** could volunteer even one hour a month, it would be gratefully appreciated.

Ev Bullied

### Preserving the Present

**M**ost who are involved in the Society, in addition to their own personal reasons, are there due to a love of the past - specifically Oakville. Not only preserving but being able to enjoy the **unearthing of Oakville's history** from diaries, old books, fading photos and crumbling documents and, sharing these discoveries with each other and the public.

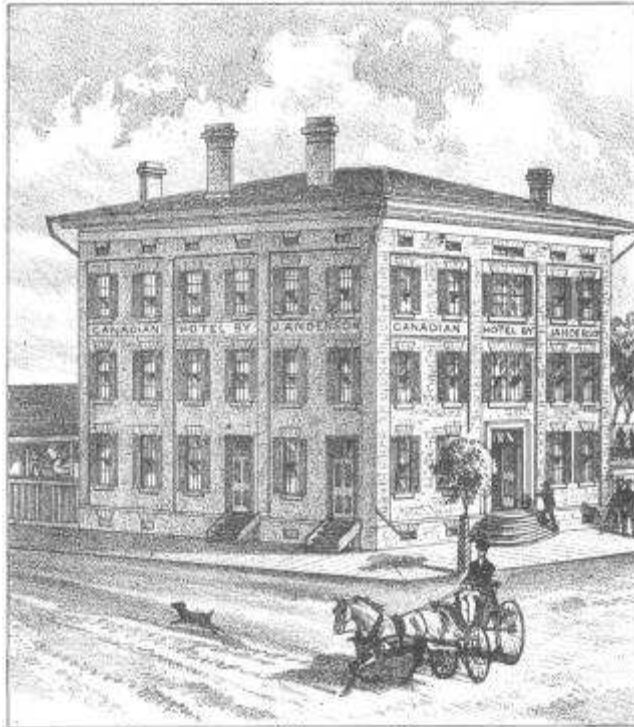
It is nice to view our history through not only the eyes of the official historians, and politicians but reading it from the perspective of the average person who left a diary or old photo album. Remember though, these people lived the history just as you are doing now.

Unfortunately, all the **traditional physical methods** of gathering history are dying away with text messaging, email, digital cameras and, the storing of photos on computers that get dumped with every new hardware upgrade. The history of the average person will not be preserved. Maybe we should be trying to work out how to preserve this history and promote the preservation of everyday life, which is a window into life separate from the politically cleansed official histories. It is the history that you are **experiencing today** and, although you may not think it important in the grand scheme of things, people a few hundred years from now may want to see how you handled daily living.

Lance Naismith



## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



CANADIAN HOTEL OAKVILLE  
JOHN ANDERSON PROP

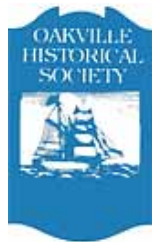
- 1: Where is this building located?
- 2: When was it built?
- 3: What is its current name?

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**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
~~~~~

**G**reetings  
With Kind Remembrance  
Hearty and Sincere  
Good Wishes for your  
Christmas  
and your New Year.



## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**DECEMBER 2006**

**Volume 40: Number 4**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

December 1<sup>st</sup> 2006  
6:00P.M. – 9:00 P.M.

Members Wine & Cheese,  
OHS Office, 110 King Street  
*All Members are very welcome*

March 28<sup>th</sup> 2007

Annual Meeting & Pot Luck Supper

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

2007

February 21<sup>st</sup>

*“Major General James Murray – 1<sup>st</sup> Governor of Quebec”* – Portrayed by John Rutherford.

May 16<sup>th</sup>

*“The effects of British History on the settlement of Oakville”* by Professor Neville Thompson – Retired Professor of History, University of Western Ontario.

October 17<sup>th</sup>

*“Oakville Heritage Committee”* – a panel discussion with Harry Barrett and friends.

November 21<sup>st</sup>

*“Remembering Trafalgar Township”* – Ruth Blair Archival Research.

Note: All presentations held at Knox Presbyterian Church @ 7:30 P.M., unless otherwise noted.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Congratulations are due to **Mary Noad** for all her hard work on making the Volunteer Memorial Fountain a reality. Mary has worked hard on this project over the past three years and at last the fountain is in and the water has been running. Our sincere thanks to **Jamie Macrae** and his staff for all their hard work digging the hole, hauling the gravel and pouring the concrete. Town staff have been hard at work on the landscaping.

Last month I was asked to meet with **Ms Claire Loughheed**, who is the new Manager of Culture and Heritage at Town Hall. She had a tour of our office and we talked for some time about the role and work of the Society. She has pledged to assist us in any way she can and is very keen on bringing all the heritage organizations in the town together to speak with a common voice.

In September and October respectively **Ann Reynolds** and I spoke at the monthly meeting of the Etobicoke Historical Society at Montgomery's Inn at Islington and Dundas. It was interesting to compare notes with their president, **Greg Wowchuk**, and find that we share some concerns, a major one being aging and declining membership. This will be a focus of discussion at future board meetings. Suggestions are welcome.

Our **Ghost Walks** this fall have been very well attended and some have been overbooked. Our volunteers, including **Francine Landry, Barb Savage, Wendy Belcher** and the refreshment ladies, have put in many hours to make these walks a success. Attendance on our other three walks was down significantly this year primarily due to poor weather – rain and/or heat.

Our **Annual Christmas Wine and Cheese** is coming up soon and I hope to see many of our members there. It is always a fun evening and a good start to the Christmas Season.

As always, if you have comments or concerns about your society, please contact me.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
info@oakvillehistory.org

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

**COVER PICTURE:** Christmas card from “The Society's” collection of greeting cards, 1914-1930.

## *The House Detective*

Although a house can be just considered something with four walls and a roof that keeps you warm in the winter and cool in the summer, for those interested in their town's history, these buildings tell a story. They reflect the hardship and effort that went into making our town the viable place it is today. Part of the task that those within the **Oakville Historical Society** have taken on is the research of a home's past, partly for the benefit of the society but also to satisfy the curiosity of those who live within the home. Although there are professionals that do this daily, if you are so inclined, you also can research a home. Hopefully, after reading this article by **May Isaac**, you will see how it can be accomplished and be inspired to further your knowledge about your own home.

Lance Naismith

### **Historic House Plaques in Oakville**

Owners of historic houses can apply to the Oakville Historical Society for an exterior house plaque. Plaques show the name of the original owner, his occupation, and the year that the house was built. Houses eligible for plaques can be anywhere in the Oakville area and must be **100+ years old**. They do not hold the owner to any rules or regulations but are simply a recognition of our history. (See example on Page 7)

### **Amos Biggar House / The Cork House**

Dundas Street, originally known as '**The Governor's Road**', was the inland route proposed by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe in 1793, for military purposes. It was intended to provide the safe transport of supplies and troops as a protection against a possible invasion from the south. The road was little more than a trail and needed constant maintenance.

To encourage new settlement and to maintain the road, the Crown acquired a tract of land from the **Mississauga Indians** in 1806. Deputy Provincial Surveyor Samuel Wilmot surveyed the area into three townships, one of which was Trafalgar Township. Using Dundas Street as a baseline, the land was divided into concessions 1¼ miles apart and into 200-acre lots, with a regulation sixty-six foot wide roadway. Settlers were obliged to clear five acres, fence in their lots, and build a house, usually a log cabin made of the

trees that were cut down. If the lot bordered the road, trees had to be cleared within one hundred feet of the road, and landowners were responsible for making improvements to the road.

The 1806 Wilmot Survey shows the early settlers who signed a Condition of Settlement. **Daniel Shannon** signed for Lot 20, 1st Concession, South Side of Dundas Street. Acquisition of the lot was completed in 1808, presumably on meeting all of the conditions. At this time, there were a total of thirty-three landowners.

In 1815 the property was sold to **Amos Biggar**, whose family were **United Empire Loyalists**. His father, John Biggar and mother Jemima Pettit, moved from Bethlehem, New Jersey to Upper Canada and settled in Saltfleet Township in 1791. John was active in local affairs and like other Loyalists, he and his sons served in the War of 1812 with the West Lincoln Regiments. Amos is listed on the roll of the 5<sup>th</sup> Lincoln Militia when it was first established. In April 1816, Justice of the Peace, Robert Nelles, married him to Margaret Pettit.

It is believed that he built the central portion of the house at **502 Dundas Street West**. The house is considered to be a fine example of a Loyalist farmstead. The original section is a 1½ storey and features narrow weatherboard siding, multi-paned windows, and a classically inspired doorway. The house was enlarged with additions to both sides of the house, possibly made by the next owner, **Phillip L. Box** who purchased the farm in 1843.



**Amos Biggar House – seen as Cork House**

Charles and James, Amos Biggar's two brothers, also owned nearby lots in the township. In the 1817 statistical survey by **Robert Gourlay**, the three brothers were among landowners who responded to the survey. As an indication of the growth of the area, they reported that the population totaled 548 and that there were 97 houses, 3

schools, 4 taverns, 1 grist mill and 4 saw mills. There were no stores or medical practitioners or churches. They were very candid in their appraisal of what improvements were needed which alarmed government authorities. Robert Gourlay was arrested and the survey was suppressed until 1822.

By the 1820s, Dundas Street was the main east west route between Toronto and Dundas. Traffic had increased considerably and there were links to the lake ports to expedite the export of farmers' produce. By this time there was a regular stagecoach service providing mail delivery and, the opening of many taverns and inns to accommodate travelers.

Amos Biggar was included in the first census in Ontario in 1841, taken at a time when Upper Canada became **Canada West**. He is listed as a "farmer, proprietor of Lot 20, 1<sup>st</sup> Concession, S.D.S., self, wife and eight children born in Canada".

The house and the area had two associations with the **Rebellion of 1837** and is one of the few homes that remain in Trafalgar Township from that period. After the failure of the uprising at Montgomery's Tavern in Toronto, **William Lyon Mackenzie** used Dundas Street as his escape route to Niagara. He would have passed directly by the house. There are several colourful accounts of his travel through Trafalgar Township, but it is believed that he stayed in the nearby village of "**Sixteen Hollow**" before continuing his flight and may have hid out at a neighbouring farm.

**William Young Pettit**, who owned the neighbouring farm and would purchase the Biggar house in 1853, was the brother of Jonathan Smith Pettit, also of United Empire Loyalist heritage. Following the Rebellion, as a prominent Tory, William chaired a meeting of local farmers gathered to protest a bill to compensate losses in Lower Canada. With Loyalist sympathies, they were outraged at the prospect of people being compensated who may have participated in the Rebellion against the Crown. The unruly meeting was reported in the press.

In 1903, **George King**, an area farmer who lived on the north side of Dundas Street, purchased the property. He was British born and immigrated to Canada with his family when he was 18. He moved with his wife from Toronto to Trafalgar Township around 1890. They had nine children, all of whom lived on the farm at one time. The King family sold the farm to **Harriet Pierce Bunting** in 1936, who sold the property in 1949 to Taymouth Industries Limited.



## Recent History:

In 1995, the house was designated by the Town of Oakville as a 'property of historical, architectural and contextual value and interest' under the Ontario Heritage Act. For some time after 1996, the house stood vacant and was subjected to vandalism and vagrants living in the house. **Gail Cherrington**, a granddaughter of George King, kept a close eye on the house and advised the Town as problems occurred. Without this monitoring, the house may have been lost.



The land was purchased for a shopping mall by a development company which was required by the Town to move the house to a nearby location and to board up the windows and doors. In 2000, the house was moved from its original location to 2441 Neyagawa Blvd. The house was acquired by **Jelinek Cork Group**

who restored the building with great care to preserve the spirit of the house. This is a wonderful example of how history can combine with commerce in the interests of the community. '**The Cork House**' as it is now known, is used as a product showroom.

In September 2006, Jelinek Cork Group had a public unveiling of the historical plaque provided by the Oakville Historical Society. Invited guests included the Mayor of Oakville, friends, and members of the King family and others who had connections to the house. The Jelinek Cork Group are to be congratulated for their dedication in the restoration of this heritage building which is believed to be the oldest house in Halton.

May Isaac



## **Do it yourself researching of your house:**

Listed below are useful sources for researching a historic house in Oakville. Many of the sources were used for the articles in this newsletter.

Oakville Historical Society - housing inventory files may contain photographs, Parks Canada 1971 heritage inventory data, and biographical details of owners.

Assessment Office at the Town of Oakville - to get your pin # and print out associated with your property. Take this information to the Halton Land Registry Office in Milton.

Ontario Census Data - some census data include occupation. Available at the Oakville Public Library

Historical maps - The Wilmot Survey, 1806; Map of Town of Oakville, 1837; Tremaine Map, 1858; Historical Atlas of Halton County, 1877

### **Books:**

Ahern, Frances Robin. Oakville: A Small Town 1900-1930. Oakville Historical Society, 1981

Byers, Mary and McBurney, Margaret. The Governor's Road, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.

Mathews, Hazel C. Oakville and the Sixteen, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition contains an addendum listing the changes in street names and street numbering.

Peacock, David & Suzanne. Old Oakville - a character study of the town's early buildings and of the men who built them. Toronto: Hounslow Press, 1979

### **Internet:**

Knoll, Michelle - History of Ward 5 Communities (Trafalgar Township). [www.jeffknoll.ca/history.html](http://www.jeffknoll.ca/history.html)

Oakville Public Library - Genealogy and Local History. [www.opl.on.ca/history.php](http://www.opl.on.ca/history.php)



## *AROUND THE SOCIETY*



### **The Volunteer Memorial Fountain**

It seemed to be a simple programme to complete. We had purchased an antique fountain, a pool for it and its location had been established. The Town had designed a pool and had set its location, but the price was too high to erect the system with Town labour, etc. The **Fountain Committee** enlisted the help and talents of Jamie Macrae to design and build a less expensive arrangement.

Finally, numerous approvals were obtained. The location, selected by the Society, and agreed to by the Town, was suitable.

This could not be!! We were advised by the Provincial Ministry of Culture that an archaeological study around the Erchless Estate had identified a number – we were told eight – of sensitive locations which would require archaeological investigation, including excavation, before any of the sites were cleared for use. The location we had selected for our Fountain was one of these sites.

Our Committee chose an alternative site, which would not impinge on the “sensitive” locations. The installation problem was again its expected cost. We were pleased to obtain **Jamie Macrae** as contractor for the fountain and pool, and the costs set by an arrangement satisfactory to the Society and to Jamie.

As we write, the stonework surrounding the pool is underway. In the spring of 2007 the site will finally be finished with landscaping. An identifying plaque is being made and will be placed adjacent to the Fountain. A Memorial Book has been started and names will be added as appropriate. It will be placed on a shelf, designed for its use, at the Offices of the Society.

A modest “Sod Turning” was held on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006 – a celebration of the start of pool work. The Fountain and Pool will be ready for formal Opening Ceremonies, which the Board will plan and execute, early in 2007.

The Society owes a vote of gratitude to Committee members **Harry Barrett, Harry Buxton and Mary Noad, as well as to Jamie Macrae.**

## Outreach

In October **Ann Reynolds** visited the Etobicoke Historical Society at Montgomery’s Inn and spoke to their members re Canadian Pioneer Women in the 1800s. **George Chisholm** spoke to their members re the history of Old Oakville in November.

**Wendy Belcher** told Ghost Stories during October at Kerr Street Senior Centre, Post Inn and Northridge nursing homes while **Barbara Savage** spoke at Captain Robert Wilson School to 63 grade 8 students and to the Kerr Street Camera Club re Oakville’s history.

**Pat Mack** welcomed 50 visitors from the Royal Ontario Museum to the Thomas House.

Barbara Savage

## Membership Renewal

Your membership renewal for 2007 is now due. To renew your membership, please complete and return the enclosed renewal form - together with your cheque, to the address on the form. Thank you for your continued support.

As a member we know that you appreciate the benefits of membership. You and your family have access to a rich record of Oakville’s past, in the form of old diaries, letters, photographs, wonderful historical artifacts and period clothing, which delight young and old alike. You may want to consider giving a **gift of membership** to someone on your Christmas list.

If you haven't yet become a member you may want to consider joining. Just drop by our office at 110 King Street any Tuesday or Thursday afternoon, or contact us by phone at any time at 905-842-8066.

Andrea Stewart

### Presentations

Come meet, and hear **Major General James Murray**, the first Governor of Quebec, who had assumed command on the Plains of Abraham after General Wolf was killed. The Major General has agreed to come in uniform. Please be seated by 7.30 pm to greet him on February 21st 2007 at Knox Church.

Barbara Savage

### Solution to “The Way Things Were” – Sept 2006

The image on the back page of the September newsletter was found in the Historical Atlas of Halton County, 1877. The **Canadian Hotel** was built in 1857 by John Williams. It had twenty-one bedrooms and four public rooms to accommodate the increasing number of travelers and local events. Ownership of the hotel changed numerous times, including John Anderson who became the owner in 1875. In 1896, Murray Williams, nephew of the original owner, purchased the hotel and renamed it The Murray House Hotel. The building, located at the corner of Navy and Robinson Streets, is now used for business offices and is known as **The Murray House**.

May Isaac

### The Newsletter

If you have an interest in history and have always wanted to be published, why not write an article for this newsletter and share your interest with our readers - even if you have written something in the past. If you're interested, contact the editor at [lanceoak@hotmail.com](mailto:lanceoak@hotmail.com) or leave a snail mail at the office and we will let you know what is required from an editorial point of view.

Lance Naismith

## *THE WAY THINGS WERE*



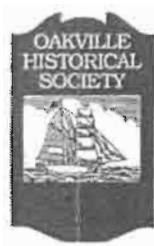
1. Where is this house located?
2. Who built it and when?
3. What family had the longest association with the house?

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 2007**

**Volume 41: Number 1**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007

**Annual Meeting & Pot Luck Supper**  
Knox Presbyterian Church @ 6:30 P.M.

The Pot Luck dinners at our Annual Meetings have turned out to be one of the highlights of our evening meetings. Plan to attend and enjoy the evening.

June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007

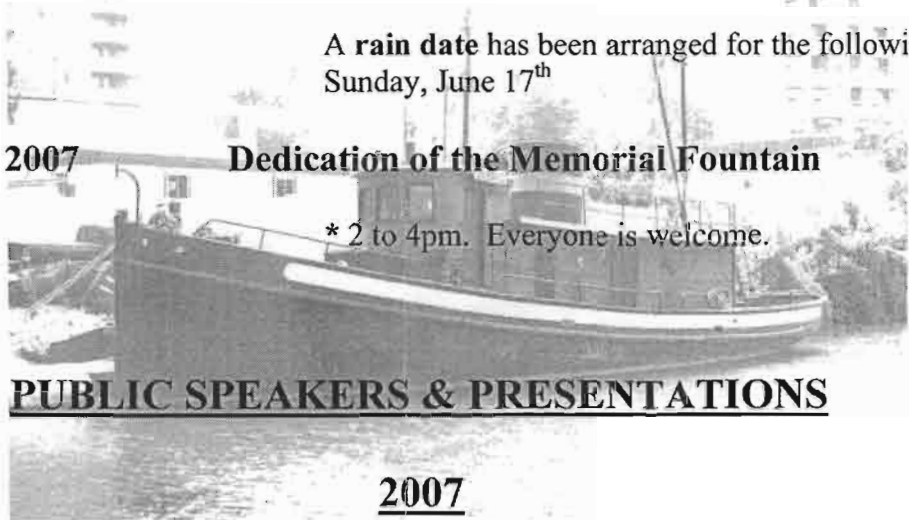
**Band Concert – Lakeside Park – 12 to 4 P.M.**

A **rain date** has been arranged for the following Sunday, June 17<sup>th</sup>

June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007

**Dedication of the Memorial Fountain**

\* 2 to 4pm. Everyone is welcome.



**PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS**

**2007**

May 16<sup>th</sup>

***“The effects of British History on the settlement of Oakville”*** by Professor Neville Thompson – Retired Professor of History, University of Western Ontario.

October 17<sup>th</sup>

***“Oakville Heritage Committee”*** – a panel discussion with Harry Barrett and friends.

November 21<sup>st</sup>

***“Remembering Trafalgar Township”*** – Ruth Blair Archival Research.

Note: All presentations held at Knox Presbyterian Church @ 7:30 P.M., unless otherwise noted.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Last week several members of the Society attended the official launch of the **new Oakville Images** website. It was quite an event and the website is a huge step in making our archival information available to anyone interested in the history of Oakville. **Walter Jennings, Barb Savage** and **Margaret and Harry Buxton** have been working feverishly with **Elise Cole** and her colleagues at the Library to make our part of this a success in time for the launch. Visit <http://images.oakville.halinet.on.ca/>. (Note there is no www in the address) There is still much more work to be done but, it's a great start.

Your society hosts four speakers nights each year. They are held at Knox Presbyterian Church and the topics are varied and always interesting. If you haven't attended one, check out the upcoming evenings on our website [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org). If you have any suggestions for speakers or topics, please let me know and we'll see what we can do. May's speaker will be **Professor Neville Thompson** of the University of Western Ontario who will speak on the effects of British History on the Settlement of Oakville.

Mark your calendar for the official dedication of our **Volunteer Memorial Fountain**. It's been a long time coming, but now the date is set for **24 June** at the office.

Our **Annual General Meeting** will be held on **Wednesday 28 March** at Knox Presbyterian Church. The AGM of the Friends of the Oakville Historical Society will follow the Society's meeting. If you are a member of the Society, you're a member of the Friends. The meeting will be preceded by our now-usual pot luck supper. Plan to attend – I promise we'll keep the meeting part as short as possible.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

**COVER PICTURE:** Lithograph showing the inner end of the Pier, looking up Oakville Harbour, 1878.

## *The Track of a Tract*

Immediately after the “Mississauga Purchase” of 1805 the new Townships were surveyed into settler lots in 1806. **Samuel Wilmot** surveyed Trafalgar Township in that year. He used Dundas Street as his reference line (it had been surveyed in 1793) and created two Concessions north of Dundas Street (N.D.S.), and four Concessions south of Dundas Street (S.D.S.)

The Concessions were divided into Lots, numbered 1 to 35, each one-quarter mile wide. The Concession Lines were one and one quarter mile apart to give settler Lots of 200 acres, except Concession 4, where Lake Ontario left a broken line. Scattered through the lands were Crown and Church reserved Lots.

The beginning of our story relates to a portion of a Lot, specifically fifty acres, as deeds describe “be the same more or less”, a north westerly quarter of **Lot 22**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Concession S.D.S., of Trafalgar Township.

This Lot was a “**Clergy reserve**”. In 1845 under “Clergy Sale”, James Hislop received the land etc. on paying the Commission thirty seven pounds and ten shillings (though mines of gold and silver were excepted). This sale was conducted “under the Great Seal of our Province of Canada..... Charles Theophilus, Baron Metcalfe..... Governor General of British North America.”

James Hislop did not retain his land for very long. The next Indenture of Sale is dated September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1853, though he, with his wife Mary, turned a comfortable profit, selling the land to **William Wright** at the price of five hundred pounds. William is described as “Yeoman” and signed the deed with his mark.

The next of the series of documents is a deed of sale, with William Wright, farmer, and his wife Mary, as Vendors, with the purchaser named **Joseph Brethour**, also described as a farmer. The document is dated January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1856.

It is surprising to find that the purchase price is given as One Hundred Pounds, signed by William and Mary Wright by their marks, but signed by Joseph Brethour, with the two witnesses Brethours, Henry and Edward.

There are several script notations on the deed itself, but the document is not recorded as voided. Nevertheless, you will see by the next deed, 1858, that the sale of Lot 22 proceeds and, that William Wright continues as its owner.

The deed is dated April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1858 and records the fifty acres of Lot 22, the sale price 500 pounds. The Indenture of Sale was between William Wright as vendor and Thomas Wright, the purchaser. Mary, William's wife, is not mentioned.

This is clarified by a later Deed dated February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1867, between William and Mary, his wife, with **Thomas Wright** the purchaser. Thomas is identified as a "Yeoman". It is tempting to believe that he is a relative of William and Mary, possibly their son, but deeds don't give that sort of information on such documents. The sale price of 500 pounds in 1858 moved to \$2000. in 1867.

It is likely that the sale to Thomas Wright on February 25<sup>th</sup> was completed on that day, so the sale of Lot 22 etc. could be processed properly. On that day a further Deed of Land sale was executed between Thomas Wright and his wife, Mary, to Robert Smith. **Robert Smith** would have been a professional man, perhaps a lawyer, for he is described as "Esquire". He paid \$1200. Thomas and Mary both continued to sign the documents by his and her mark.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, 1878, Robert Smith and his wife Mary Ann Smith, disposed of his land to **Cyrus Utter**, Yeoman. For the consideration of \$5200, "All and Singular that certain parcel or tract of land and premises, situate lying and being etc., etc.", became the property of Cyrus Utter.

In 1897 Mr. Utter intended to sell the property, but in the meantime his wife died. It was necessary to process a "Statuary Declaration" that Jane Utter died at Trafalgar Township "on or about" March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1882.

With this done, an Indenture of Sale was executed between William Utter and his son, Cyrus William Utter to, **George Andrew**, and the land conveyed on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1897.

To ensure the validity of the sale to George Andrew, we have a further Indenture for the same date, July 14<sup>th</sup> 1897, between Cyrus W. Utter and his wife, Margaret Utter, and George Andrew. It is of interest to note that the deed enters the name of the first party as Cyrus Utter, with the W insert between the names. It appears that both Cyrus and William were used by him, using William more commonly. Margaret Utter, it seems, was Cyrus William's second wife.

Finally we have reached **G.H. Morden** as purchaser of the part of Lot 22. Lake Captain George Hardy Morden – in the deed he is identified as “Master Mariner” – buying the land at \$3500 from George Andrew on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1900, to become a farmer.

Or have we reached our destination?

Let us move back in time and consider another parcel of land, the south-westerly quarter of Lot 19, 3<sup>rd</sup> Concession, south of Dundas Street (SDS).

There is a document in our Collection, which identifies **William McCraney** as holder of that land.

Hazel Mathews in “Oakville and the Sixteen” tells that McCraney leased Lot 18, 3<sup>rd</sup> Concession SDS from the Church (or Clergy Reserve), and purchased Lot 20, 3<sup>rd</sup> Concession SDS, but does not mention Lot 19, until she notes the south-easterly quarter. The **Rev. George Washington**, giving up his calling as a Methodist Circuit Rider to take up farming, bought that part of Lot 19 in 1853. Rev. Washington built on the land a single storey cottage, calling the home “The Retreat”.

We have a Deed of Crown Sale Grant, dated March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1875, by which the 50 acres of Lot 19 were sold to **John Triller Howell**, a farmer, selling the land for \$350, by the Lieutenant Governor in Council of the Province of Ontario. We have a date problem here.



John Triller Howell, on or about 1859, already built a house on that property. Ownership of the land was not kept up to date between the Crown and real ownership.

The Howell home was built at the northern side of Lakeshore Road West. It is number 491 Lakeshore Road West, its location, of course, near the boundary between

Concession 3 and Concession 4, on the north side of the Concession line. The line follows the Lakeshore Road until 4<sup>th</sup> Line, the Concession Line from thence following Rebecca Street.

A couple of years after the Crown sale to Howell, an Indenture of Sale was arranged between John Triller Howell and his wife, Hannah, to **George de Warrenne Greene**. The sale price was \$5500 on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1877, realizing a good profit over the 1877 Crown Sale.

In 1879 Greene arranged to enact that without actually dividing the quarter Lot 19 land, the interest on the holding would be shared, one third each for George de Warrenne Greene, Francis Greene, and Knethell Greene.



Another Deed of Sale, on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1885, the Greens collectively enacted the sale of the land to **George Bunbury**, price \$7100.

George Bunbury was a military man, identified as "Captain of Her Majesty's Ninth Foot". He and his wife, Beatrice, lived at the Lakeshore Road West, near the Pullens and the Lloyds ("Oakville a Small Town"). The family returned to England before the sale of the part of Lot 19.

The Indenture of Sale of the south-west 50 acres of Lot 19 3<sup>rd</sup> Concession SDS was dated February 1900. On that Indenture George Bunbury is described "..... formerly of the Town of Oakville ..... but now of the City of London in England".

With the February Indenture was a letter to W.H. Morden dated March 25<sup>th</sup> 1900, headed the Bunbury Farm, stating the terms of the sale. Among the terms was the payment of \$5500 by Morden.

The purchaser of the part of Lot 19 in 1900, George Hardy Morden, was born in 1837 and in his earlier years lived on property by the intersection of Reynolds Street and

Lakeshore Road. Trained as a sailor, Captain George Hardy Morden and his son, Captain Edward Morden, owned and operated several Lake schooners. He converted to steam in the later years and pursued the lumber trade along Lake Erie, founding the Morden Line of steamers.

Captain George Hardy Morden served as Reeve of Trafalgar Township. One of his sons said of his father he “was a great one to buy land”.

The Captain acquired Lot 19 with south-western 50 acres and the house standing on it, number 491 Lakeshore Road West, but did not live in that house. Later in the year of 1900 he gave the land to his son, Edward. He himself looked for a home and decided to buy the Washington house, 417 Lakeshore Road West.

The original 50 acres of the Washington farm had been whittled down, so only three quarters of an acre of land remained with “The Retreat”.

As to what happened to the part of Lot 22? It joined the assets of the “great one to buy land”. When Captain George Hardy Morden died in 1908, he had accumulated some one thousand acres of land.

Harry Buxton



*Ed. Note: “The Retreat” at 417 Lakeshore Rd. E. is presently being restored by Moldenhauer Developments, under the guidance of the Heritage Committee of Oakville. This picture represents the progress as of January 25, 2007.*

# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## Tracing the History of your Home

At our Public Meeting on September 20th last, Mississauga Heritage Foundation Historian, Matthew Wilkinson, gave a very interesting and informative talk on how to trace the history of old homes and the people who have lived in them over the years,. He explained how to find this information in places such as the Oakville Historical Society, Oakville Public Library and the Land Registry at Milton, which all hold a great deal on this topic.

With Matthew's offer of help, our area Historical Societies and Oakville Public Library hope to adapt his "**How -To Guide For Property Research In Mississauga**" to an Oakville-area Guide, in order to assist those interested in researching their properties.

June Hitchcox

## Camp X Presentation

On November 15th, 2006, a truly informative trip back into the murky days of spies and WWII infiltrations to enemy territory was given by Lynn Philip Hodgson - historian and author of "Inside Camp X". His in-depth talk, accompanied with historical visuals, was enhanced by the attendance in the audience by some who actually had some personal knowledge of this secretive area.



Lance Naismith

**Picture:** Lynn Philip Hodgson (left) and George Chisholm, President of the OHS.

## Oakville's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

This year, Oakville is celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its founding. Within the Town of Oakville, during 2007, there will be many events celebrating this anniversary, down to the ward level. Planned events will be announced in the Oakville Beaver newspaper.

In honour of Oakville's 150 Anniversary, our Society is sponsoring a Band Concert in Lakeside Park. Mark your calendar for **Sunday June 10th 2007**.

The St. Pauls Dixie Land Band will be playing from 12noon to 2pm, and the Oakville Wind Orchestra will be playing from 2:30pm to 4pm.

Bring along your picnic hamper full of goodies and lawn chairs. Everyone is welcome and **admission is free**. Those who come in **pioneer costume may win a prize!**

Barbara Savage

### Society Assistance

Members at the Society have been very busy assisting other organizations with their contributions to the celebration. We assisted **Central Library staff** with selecting and loaning many of our pictures from the archival collection for their image presentations.

The **Kerr Street B.I.A.** is holding a fair on **Sunday May 27th** at Westwood Park - 12 to 5pm, during which time the Society will have a booth.

We are also planning **historical displays in store windows**, both on Lakeshore and Kerr Street, during the month of May.

Barbara Savage

### Solution to "The Way Things Were" – December 2006

This house is located at **205 Trafalgar Road**. The land was purchased in 1839 as an investment and changed ownership several times, until **Robert Farlay** purchased it in 1857 and built the house. The property was sold to George Rutherford in 1864, who then sold it in 1867 to **Dr. Charles Lusk**, physician and educator.

Beginning in 1900, Dr. Lusk began building a frame house next door on Palmer Avenue. He and his wife moved here around 1910. No. 205 was rented until 1920, when



**Dr. Morley Wilkinson** acquired the house, which he used as his residence and medical office. The **Bramall** family purchased it in 1954 and made a few additions, including a studio in keeping with the character of the house. They have had the longest association with the house, which is now referred to as the **Bramall House**.

May Isaac

### The Collection at Work

The displays in the several cabinets are quite frequently replaced by Volunteer workers. Currently it presents, “Hair, in profession or in its control.”

The **Barber** is featured, with his modest tools. The **Hairdresser** is working to improve – if this were possible – the look of the ladies. Drop into the offices and see this fine display.

A more elaborate “display” has been prepared as a co-operative and continuing programme between the Society and the Oakville Public Library. “**Oakville Images**” marks 150 years of the Town’s life since it became a Municipality. Using the Society’s photograph collection, it presents to a WEB user, the highlights of life in Oakville within 12 themes. (<http://images.oakville.halinet.on.ca/>) “Oakville Images was **launched February 8th**.”

Harry Buxton

### **Membership Renewal**

#### ***Reminder***

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2007, we ask you to do so soon, preferably before the Annual General Meeting, March 28<sup>th</sup> - particularly if you wish to vote at that meeting. A renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter.

If you know of anyone who would enjoy learning about Oakville and its people in days gone by, perhaps you would encourage them to join. Membership is important to our continued work.

Thank you.

Andrea Stewart

## *THE WAY THINGS WERE*



1. Can you name this gentleman?
  2. Who was he associated with?
  3. What was his occupation?
- 

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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**THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER**

**JUNE 2007**

**Volume 41: Number 2**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**Band Concert – Lakeside Park, 12 to 4:30 P.M.**

A **rain date** has been arranged for the following Sunday, June 17<sup>th</sup>

**June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**Dedication of the Memorial Fountain**

\* 2 to 4pm. Everyone is welcome.

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

2007

**May 16<sup>th</sup>**

***“The effects of British History on the settlement of Oakville”*** by Professor Neville Thompson – Retired Professor of History, University of Western Ontario.

**October 17<sup>th</sup>**

***“Oakville Heritage Committee”*** – a panel discussion with Harry Barrett and friends.

**November 21<sup>st</sup>**

***“Remembering Trafalgar Township”*** – Ruth Blair Archival Research.

Note: All presentations held at Knox Presbyterian Church @ 7:30 P.M., unless otherwise noted.

## HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS

| MONTH | MAIN ST.                                      | HERITAGE HOUSE                                | TRAFALGAR RD.               |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| JUN   | Sun 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm                   | Sun 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm | Sun 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm |
| JUL   | Wed 25 <sup>th</sup> , 7 pm                   | Wed 11 <sup>th</sup> , 7 pm                   | ----                        |
| AUG   | ----                                          | Wed 8 <sup>th</sup> , 7 pm                    | Sun 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm |
| SEP   | Sun 9 <sup>th</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm | Sun 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm | Mon 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2 pm  |
| OCT   | ----                                          | Sun 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm                   | Mon 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm  |

- **NOTE:** Main Street and Heritage House walks start at 110 King Street, while the Trafalgar Road walks start from St. John’s United Church, 262 Randall Street. **Tours take 2 hours.** All walks cost **\$12.00/ person** and light refreshments are served for the Main St. and Heritage House walks. **RESERVATIONS REQUIRED** – please call (905) 844-2695 to book tour. Special groups may arrange other scheduled times.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As you read this, the Society's busy season will have already started. The Thomas House will be open for the season, walks will be about to start, the last speaker's night of the season will be over and many special events are lined up. You will find further information on these events elsewhere in this newsletter.

We are very pleased that work on the Volunteer Memorial Fountain is just about complete. The water was turned on this past week and, one of the first admirers was a bluejay, which had a very exuberant bath. The official dedication will be held in June.

After having vacancies for the past couple of years I am happy to report that the board now has a full complement. We welcome back to the board, Lance Naismith who, has taken over this newsletter with help from a committee. Drew Bucknall, is new to the board, but is already proving to be a valuable addition. Drew is also a citizen appointee to Heritage Oakville.

I am also pleased to report that membership seems to be on a bit of an increase with several new members this year. Interest in the Society is growing and more people contact us for information online.

As always, if you have any questions, comments or, suggestions concerning the Society, please contact me.



George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
info@oakvillehistory.org

**COVER PICTURE:** Juliet Chisholm – graduating from McGill University Medical School.

## *Pioneering Women of Ontario*

**T**wo of the dictionary definitions of a pioneer are: **A**, an initiator of an enterprise or **B**, an originator of an action to be followed later by others. However, the most common use of the word pioneer is that referring to a settler and it is fair to say that as settlers in Upper Canada, the **Strickland sisters** are probably the best known. **Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Trail** arrived in Canada, with their husbands in 1832, both eventually settling in the Peterborough area. Coming from a genteel but impoverished literary family, neither they nor their ex-army husbands were equipped to cope with the privations of the Canadian wilderness in which they had to settle. Through hard work, determination and incredible fortitude they survived, raised large families, and became acknowledged in the literary world in both Canada and Britain.

From the 1880's onwards, Ontario was developing rapidly; factories of all kinds were requiring workers and large numbers of immigrant women came to work in them. The conditions were usually appalling, with long hours and low wages. In 1895, a **Miss Margaret Carlyle** was appointed as the first female factory inspector, shortly to be joined by a **Mrs. James Brown**. It took many years, but these two ladies were responsible through their reports and recommendations to the Governor, for many improvements in the workplace - such as separate lunch rooms for women, regular breaks, good ventilation and clean washrooms to mention just some of the changes they were responsible for.

In the field of medicine, the names of **Jennie Trout** and **Emily Stowe** spring to mind. However, a remarkable young woman named **Leonora Howard King** is an unsung medical hero. Her home was in Farmerville, Ontario, now called Athens. Unable to train in Canada, she went to Michigan and, on completion of her studies at the age of twenty-six, she went out to China as a Methodist medical missionary. In 1879 she opened a hospital for Women and Children. A few years later she founded the first medical school for women. She lived in China for 47 years, where she was awarded the highest honour. She was made a Mandarin by the Empress Dowager, the first western woman to receive this honour.

**Elizabeth McMaster** of Hamilton, who moved to Toronto with her family in the early 1880's, was responsible with a group of friends, for establishing the first hospital for sick children. These ladies finally raised enough money to purchase a small house, No. 21 Avenue Road, where they were able to care for six little patients. In the late

1880's, larger premises were needed and with the support of John Ross Robertson, then editor of the Toronto Telegram, funds were raised and the new hospital on College Street opened its doors in May, 1892. It was felt that Mrs. McMaster should be the first Superintendent and she went down to Illinois to train as a nurse for two years, prior to the opening of the hospital. Elizabeth McMaster was also responsible for running the first First Aid classes in Toronto.

Two women who became exceptional in the business world were **Martha Matilda Harper**, born in 1857, whose hair restorative lotions and treatments were eventually marketed internationally and, **Florence Nightingale Graham**, born in 1882, better known to us as **Elizabeth Arden**. Both women, the former from Oakville, the other from Etobicoke, came to their careers from unlikely BEGINNINGS. Martha was in domestic service for 25 years, begging at the age of seven. Elizabeth had been a secretary/bookkeeper before finally opening her first salon on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York. Alas, Martha Harper's name is not well known today, but she was without doubt, one of the first and foremost franchise pioneers in Canada, whereas Elizabeth Arden's name and products continue to be known world wide. In her lifetime, she gave generous financial support to many organizations. On her death in 1965, she left a fortune of some \$400,000,000. U.S.. Her great love of horses and the connection with Kentucky gave the name 'Blue Grass' to one of her most popular cosmetic lines.

In the field of education we have many remarkable women. **Agnus McFail** became a founding member of the Women Teachers Association of Ontario and later was elected to parliament in 1921, a post she held for 19 years. She was the first woman to be elected as a member of the Canadian delegation to the League of Nations and was also a founding member of the Elizabeth Fry Foundation. **Kate Morris** became the first woman on the Toronto Board of Education in 1919. She held the post for 21 years and was largely responsible for the development of school playgrounds and swimming pools in the city.

**Lilian Smith**, a pioneer within the Toronto Library system, started the first girl's and boy's department, as it was then called, in the Toronto library on St. Georges Street in the early 1920's,. Lilian Smith became President of the Ontario Library Association and founded the Canadian Association of Children's Libraries. Today, the Lilian Smith Library houses the Osbourn Collection of 1,800 children's books written since 1700. The collection was presented to the Toronto Library in recognition of her work and was donated by **Edgar Osbourn** from the county library in Derby, England. The Lilian Smith library is on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the library at 239 College Street and is well worth a

visit. Lilian Smith died in 1983. It is said that she made a larger contribution to the personal enjoyment of many human beings than any other Canadian.

It is thought that the first Canadian children's book was written by **Catherine Parr Traill** in 1852 and it was published in London. The book was called *Canadian Crusoe's* and tells the story of several children lost in the forest for 3 years.

Another Oakville lady whose contribution to the Town should not be forgotten is **Juliet Chisholm**. In 1949, Juliet Chisholm had bought a 70 acre parcel of land in the Sixteen Valley. Her idea was to leave the flood plain in its natural state and farm the table-land. However, this proved unsuccessful and Dr. Chisholm approached both the Department of Lands and Forests and the Trafalgar Township with an offer to donate the land with the proviso that the area was not opened up to the public as parkland. As neither organization would accept this condition the land remained the property of Dr. Chisholm until in 1961 she was approached by members of the newly formed Sixteen Mile Creek Conservation Authority, who agreed to her conditions. The Authority wanted to erect a cairn in honour of Dr. Chisholm but she vetoed this idea and as a result few people know how or why the Authority obtained this small but important piece of land. Correct management of the flood plain has minimized the severe flooding to which the Sixteen was often prone.

Among the activists of the 1890's were two women whose activities were to have a profound effect on the women of Canada. These were **Ishbel, Lady Aberdeen**, the wife of Lord Aberdeen, Canada's Governor General from 1893 to 1898 and, **Adelaide Hunter Hoodless** of Hamilton.

Their contribution has had a lasting effect on women, resulting in such organizations as the Women's Institute, the National Council of Women and the Victorian Order of Nurses.



*Adelaide Hunter Hoodless*



Adelaide Hunter Hoodless was born in Brant County, the youngest of twelve children. In due course she married a Hamilton man, John Hoodless, and settled down to domestic life. However, her life changed in 1888 when her youngest child, John Harold, died at the age of eighteen months. On learning that his death had been caused by drinking impure milk, she vowed to do everything in her power to educate other women in order to prevent other tragedies.

She was also a founding member of the National Council of Women in 1893 and, through that body, was responsible for domestic science courses being introduced in Ontario schools. In response to an increased demand for domestic science teachers, Macdonald College in Guelph was founded, with Mrs. Hoodless spearheading the drive for funds. Also, she was active in the establishment of Macdonald College near Montreal.

In the beginning the idea of home economics being taught in schools was dismissed as a fad. Fortunately for us, Mrs. Hoodless carried on despite these criticisms.



**Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Cairn**

Adelaide Hoodless died in 1910 on the evening before her fifty-second birthday, collapsing while speaking in Toronto at a meeting of the Federation of Women's Clubs. During her short life she had done a great deal to improve the lives of Canadian women.

A plaque outside the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless homestead reads as follows:

### **Adelaide Hoodless**

To the Homestead will come women from Canada, the United States, and many parts of the world, from all walks and all races and creeds; the Young Women's Christian Association, the national Council of Women; the Home Economics Associations; the Victorian Order of Nurses; the Associated Country Women of the World; all interested in a Canadian woman of vision, Adelaide Hunter Hoodless

In co-operation with Lady Aberdeen she worked to promote the formation of the Victorian order of Nurses and, in 1897, founded the Women’s Institute.

The **May Court Club of Oakville** is a service organization that was founded by Lady Aberdeen, VON’s founder, in 1898.

*“In the towns they will go to those who cannot now afford the care of trained nurses and often die for lack of it; on the prairies, in the forests, in the mining districts, everywhere through the country they will go hither and thither amongst our brave pioneers and bring help to those heroic people who are building up the future of this beautiful country amidst many hardships and privations.”*

*Lady Aberdeen, Founder VON Canada 1897*

In politics, the sciences, engineering, sports and the arts, there are countless names of women who were instigators and originators - some better known than others but all who have improved, enriched and advanced the lives of our communities both near and far.

*Pioneers*

*Is not one joy on us alone bestowed?  
For us, the master joy – O Pioneers  
We shall not travel – but we make the Road.  
(Anon.)*

Ann Reynolds

**The OHS Annual Ghost Walks (2007)**

| <b>SEPTEMBER</b>                 | <b>THURSDAYS</b>                                                             | <b>SATURDAYS</b>                               |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 7:00 P.M. & 8:30 P.M             | .                                                                            | 22 <sup>nd</sup> and 29th                      |
| <b>OCTOBER</b>                   |                                                                              |                                                |
| 7:00 P.M. & 8:30 P.M             | 4 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> , and 25 <sup>th</sup> |                                                |
| 6:00 P.M., 7:00 P.M. & 8:30 P.M. |                                                                              | 13 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup> , and 27th |
|                                  |                                                                              |                                                |
| <b>COST</b>                      | <b>\$12.00 PER ADULT</b>                                                     | <b>\$6.00 PER CHILD</b>                        |

- **Please note:** Begins and Ends at the Society, 110 King Street. Following the Walks, refreshments will be served. **Length of Walk:** 1 Hour. Wear good walking shoes. **Register** early as there is limited enrollment. **(905) 844-2695**
- **CASH ONLY – NO CREDIT CARDS.**

# *AROUND THE SOCIETY*



## Meeting Major General James Murray

The February public meeting was a very special occasion when we were honoured with a visit from **Major General James Murray**, 1<sup>st</sup> Governor of Quebec, who was making his first public appearance in well over 200 years. The General entered to the strains of “**Rule Britannia**” and the assembly was invited to sing the chorus.



Anne Reynolds, John Rutherford, Barb Savage

In his address to the gathering, the General spoke of his military responsibility after the death of General Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham and of his liberal governorship of Quebec. History came alive that evening. Thank you **John Rutherford**, we hope you will come again.

Ann Reynolds

## Special Note of Thanks

June Hitchcox, May Issacs, Ernie Carroll and Joy Sanders are a special team of ladies who have provided delicious refreshments at our public meetings this past season. Their efforts are much appreciated by all those who have attended.

Barb Savage

## **Outreach During the Month of May**

A request from the New Toronto Historical Society was met by a presentation outlining the history of Oakville and, Grade 8 students at St Mathews School were given a lecture concerning the ups and downs of Oakville's economy during the past and present years.

During the month of May your Society is celebrating Oakville's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by reaching out into the Community and decorating store windows with items and pictures of early Oakville.

Barb Savage

## **Solution to "The Way Things Were" – March 2007**

The portrait is of Merrick Thomas, 1806-1856. He had a long association with William Chisholm. He was employed by Chisholm as general manager in charge of the shipyard and sailing fleet in Burlington Bay. When Chisholm purchased land in Oakville in 1827, Thomas moved to Oakville. His main task was to supervise the building of the harbour, to lay out the new community of Oakville, and to act as steamship agent. He had a personal connection when he married Chisholm's sister-in-law, Esther Silverthorn.

May Isaac

## **The Secret Garden**

For those of you who have visited the Society lately, you will have noticed a number of people very busy around the outside of our building. We would like to thank the Town of Oakville for their efforts in not only refurbishing the garden but their fine work in the restoration of our grounds. This will certainly enhance the appearance of our building and present our visitors an attractive entrance.

Lance Naismith

~

**HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2007??**

~

### ***HISTORICAL***

Of or concerning History. A study of history based on its development over a period. Belonging to the past. Has to be factual, true, verifiable, real, documented.

### ***HISTORY***

A period of important or public events. The study of past events, especially human affairs. The accumulation of developments connected with a particular nation, person, or thing.

### ***HERITAGE***

Anything that is or may be inherited. Nation's historic buildings, monuments, countryside etc., especially when regarded as worthy of preservation.

## **Board of Directors – 2007**

The Society has elected the following for the Board of Directors – 2007. Although elected to manage the Society, they require the help of all members to ensure the future success of the Society and look forward to your help in regards to YOUR Society.

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| President      | George Chisholm |
| Vice-President | Barb Savage     |
| Secretary      | Jim Young       |
| Treasurer      | Walter Jennings |
| Honourary      | Harry Buxton    |

|            |                 |
|------------|-----------------|
| Directors: | Harry Barrett   |
|            | Drew Bucknall   |
|            | Ev Bullied      |
|            | Margaret Buxton |
|            | June Hitchcox   |
|            | Lance Naismith  |
|            | Andrea Stewart  |
|            | Karen Woolley   |

## *THE WAY THINGS WERE*



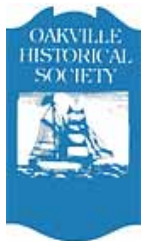
- 1: Where is this building located?
- 2: When was it built?
- 3: What purpose did it serve?

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



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Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**SEPTEMBER 2007**

**Volume 41: Number 3**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

September 30<sup>th</sup>

**HARVEST FESTIVAL** – Thomas House  
(Lakeside Park – 1:00pm – 4:00pm)

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

### 2007

October 17<sup>th</sup>

**“Oakville Heritage Committee”**

– a panel discussion with Harry Barrett and friends.

November 21<sup>st</sup>

**“Remembering Trafalgar Township”**

– Ruth Blair Archival Research.

Note: All presentations, which are free and open to the Public, are held at Knox Presbyterian Church @ 7:30 P.M., unless otherwise noted.

### 2008

February 20<sup>th</sup>

**“The History of Dr. Anderson Ruffin Abbott”**

– the first black doctor to graduate in Canada. Presented by his Great-granddaughter, Kathy Slaney.

March 26<sup>th</sup>

**Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper**

May 21<sup>st</sup>

**“Pioneer Cooking”** – Dorothy Duncan

October 15<sup>th</sup>

**“Gun boats on the Great Lakes”**

– Cheryl MacDonald

November 19<sup>th</sup>

**“An Evening with Mike Filey”** – Mike Filey

**Note:** Some have inquired about the tree in the background. Located on Bronte Road, north of the Queen Elizabeth Way, it is the tree saved by Joyce Burnell and friends and, the Oakville Historical Society was a partner in sponsoring the “Save the Tree” Fund.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Another busy summer season is almost over and there have been several noteworthy events in the life of the Society.

The **Concert in the Park**, put on by the Friends to honour Oakville's sesquicentennial, was an unqualified success. The turnout was great, the music was excellent and the weather was good. I sincerely hope that this will become an annual event. Barb Savage and her crew of volunteers did an amazing job.

Canada Day saw a new attendance record set for the Thomas House. Wendy Belcher had **370 visitors**. We've been seeing a renewed interest in Oakville's history in other ways as well. Our membership is up this year.

I would like to welcome **Bill Nesbitt** as the new supervisor at the Oakville Museum. Bill comes to Erchless with many years experience at Fort York, Dundurn Castle and several other museums. Don't forget that your membership in the Oakville Historical Society allows you into the Erchless Museum for free – just another benefit of membership.

You may have visited our website, [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) at some point. Under the leadership of **Norm Sadler**, we are making steady progress with the new, improved version which should go live soon. Norm has put a tremendous amount of work into the website.

Many of you will be aware of a programme called "**Doors Open**" and Oakville will finally be included in 2008. Our representative on this initiative is **Barb Savage**.

Barb is a very busy lady and has also arranged for some excellent speakers this year. Look for further information elsewhere in this newsletter.

As always, your board seeks your input. If you have suggestions or comments, please contact me.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

**COVER PICTURE:** *Turning over the Reins* – Joyce Burnell, long time Society member and volunteer Supervisor for the Thomas House, passes the baton to Pat Mack. Joyce's hard work on the Thomas House was appreciated.

As we celebrate Oakville's 150<sup>th</sup>, we see certain aspects of Oakville's history remembered and displayed for our interest. Some informs us of important dates and happenings within the Town. But what really is history? Traditionally we have recited the important dates and the people who have had an affect upon our lives but, what really is important and, reflects the true nature of history are the memories of day to day life. The kind of stuff we all lived. We are not all prime ministers, important scientists and business movers and shakers but, people who live out our lives, enjoying what we have before us. We are all living history and, although maybe not recorded in history books, it is still important history. The following are memories of a few of those who grew up in Oakville and hopefully some of you will share these memories. For the rest of us, I think we can relate to these memories a lot more than what we studied in school.

Lance Naismith

## Memories of Oakville during the 1930's

### Do you remember.....?

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Priestman would walk to Oakville from Toronto to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. We would all wait for him to arrive. He would then go to the **Gibson House** (later called The Halton Inn) for a free beer.

In December people would drive down the Lakeshore to look at Santa Claus, complete with sleigh on the rooftop of Ryland News.



GIBSON HOUSE

S/E Corner - Lakeshore & Thomas Sts.

Every spring and summer at dawn we would bait our hooks and fish between the piers at the harbour.

During the summer, we would swim in the cold waters of Lake Ontario and never think of pollution.

Every Wednesday afternoon all the stores on **Colborne Street** would close and you could shoot a cannon down the street and not hit a soul.

Every Sunday morning all the church bells in town would ring, beckoning people to church.

In winter, we would skate on the Sixteen from the harbour to the old mill and warm ourselves at bonfires along the way.

The horse from the **Gilbrea Dairy** (Bill), who was stabled behind the dairy at the corner of Trafalgar and Church, could always somehow escape his stall and take a midnight romp around the block on the sidewalk. He would then return home to his stall. A young policeman was sent to capture the horse; instead the horse chased him and bit him in the behind. The young officer resigned and said he hadn't joined the police force to be bitten by a horse!

On Saturday night, farmers, some in wagons, would come to town and shop at the stores that stayed open until 10 p.m.

All night a policeman would walk the main street, check all the store doors and keep us all safe.

Every day **Mr. Wayner** would collect the garbage by horse and wagon and when he retired it took five men to replace him.

Hourly, the Grey Coach bus would drive through town and stop at the **Gibson House** to take passengers to Toronto or Hamilton.

Every time the **Beardmore's Factory** was dehydrating onions, the whole town would smell of onions.

Every day at 12 noon, the **Basket Factory** whistle would blow to tell us all it was lunch time and again at 1 p.m. to tell us all to get back to work. The whistle would also blow when there was a fire. A system of short and long blasts would signal location of the fire



Watching VE Day Parade

L/R Mary Margaret Nicol (Marten), Beth Wilson (Milligan), Diane Gordon (Kent)

for the volunteer firemen. At every fire, **Art Tuck** would arrive in the fire truck with one hand steering and the other one turning a wheel to blow the siren. Every year the firemen would block off Church Street for a street dance.

Every election year, **Tom Blakelock** would throw a picnic over at the fairgrounds (located behind the Oakville Arena near Kerr St and Rebecca St.). Everyone would then listen to his long speech.

When a strong wind blew, there was a smell of garbage. It came from the dump that was located in the centre of town beside the 16 Mile Creek. It was overrun with rats.



**“The Little Rascals”**

L/R John Black, Bob Dynes,  
Harry Barrett, Bill Russell

Every summer, **First Nation** people would come to Oakville to pick strawberries and raspberries on the fruit farms. They would whoop it up every Saturday night at the Oakville House.

During the war years, the farmerettes came and lived in barracks to work the local farms.

All the local boys would date the farmerettes and ignore all the local girls until fall.

**Barnyard Bess** would come to town in her wagon and yell greetings to some of the Town’s most prominent citizens (much to their embarrassment)

Every Saturday, we would all go to the matinee at the **Gregory Theatre**. It cost 11 cents, 10 cents to get in and 1 cent for candy. While there, we would watch Tonto and the Lone Ranger lasso some more bandits or watch Flash Gordon fly his space ship.

On Monday nights we would all hurry and do our homework so that we could sit by the radio and listen to **Lux Theatre**.

Every September we would all rush to Guild’s Book Store, or Busby’s or, Grinham’s to purchase new pencils, rulers and books for school – another year had begun.

Every week our Latin teacher had different coloured hair. Sometimes it changed twice a week.

Through good and bad times, some things were very predictable in Oakville.

P.S. Members and friends, you probably have other memories of Oakville. If you do, please send them to us and they will be put in a future newsletter.

Harry Barrett, Beth Milligan, Bill Russell and Barbara Savage.

## *Heart of Oak*

*“Come, cheer up, my lads, 'tis to glory we steer,  
To add something more to this wonderful year;  
To honour we call you, as freemen not slaves,  
For who are as free as the sons of the waves?”*

Originally penned as an opera, the official march of the Royal Navy (and Canadian navy) is an oddity in that it has lyrics, something most marches do not have. It is a stirring march whose title refers to the oak hearts of the old wooden fighting ships of the Royal Navy. And Oakville had a part in the building of these ships, which ruled the waves.

When one discusses the history of Oakville, you must refer to the Oak tree, which has given its name to our fair town. Oak!!!! It certainly doesn't inspire one as the tall stature of the Redwood; the massiveness of the General Sherman Sequoia; the oldest like the Bristlecone pine; fastest growing such as the Albizia of Malaysia; or, the strongest such as Ebony and teak. No, this tree has gained fame because it never overspecialized, a tree that has made its mark in the temperate world. Its growth reflects mankind's spread and, it became the most useful of trees in human history. It taught humans forestry, its composition was easy to split and shape and, the making of planks and beams was only limited by its size. Oak was easily shaped by stone axes and subsequently with bronze and iron tools as it grew alongside mankind. It became a chief strategic material.

Oak has left a very impressive record through time - the old timbered houses show its strength and longevity; Leonardo da Vinci's drawings were executed in oak gall ink; Viking age oaken ships are still found; bronze age coffins are unearthed; ancient

barrels, casks vats and tubs still exist; and fossil leaves from 30 million years ago are found. The wood had its architectural and shipping uses while the lowly acorn was a source of food. While First Nation people flavoured acorns with maple syrup, the Kurds and Iranians used distillations of oak sap as a drink. The Apaches made flour from the acorn.

Oak has also been a strong symbol throughout mankind's history. In heraldry, it signifies strength, good character and stability and we know that the strong and faithful have "hearts of oak". The oak was the tree of the Greeks (Zeus), Romans (Jove), Norse (Thor), and the Celts (Dagda). Oak woods were a place of renewal and many a person was buried in their "suit of Oak". Because they were expected to last, surveyors used them to mark boundaries.

Until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the collier was a central act of human culture. Without the making of oak charcoal, there would be no plowshare, no pots, no making of beer, coins, cannons, hinges, swords, and glass for windows nor, the founding of wine bottles. The high heat content and steady burn of oak made this progress possible. The art of barrel making and tanning required oak as well.

And now we come to Oakville, a small port founded by Col. William Chisholm at the western extremity of Lake Ontario in 1830. The early traffic of this port centred around the wood industry, since much of the gristmill's produce was used for the settlers and farmers themselves in the early years.



*Two hull support pieces from the "White Oak" schooner, built in Oakville.*

*Recovered from Tobermory.*

*Made from Oak.*

The white and red pine were cleared from emerging farmland and sent to Britain to be used from everything from matches and Venetian blinds to ship masts (some on Royal Navy ships). Although white oak was also rafted as timber (dense wood supported by crossbars of pine), a large industry was built around barrel staves. These 3.5 to 5.5 foot lengths were cut in the winter and floated down "the Sixteen" in the spring runoff.

Oakville made a greater recovery after the economic and social turmoil of the late 1830's than other ports due to this established lumber trade and growing wheat economy. Although wheat and flour replaced lumber in the 1850's, the strong early lumber trade

established Oakville’s place in the Ontario economy. So much so, that shipbuilding was established in the port to transship the wheat and staves. Due to Chisholm’s stake in the lumber trade as well as his “reputation for truth and honesty of character and genuine soundness of heart, the local Indians gave him the name of ‘White Oak’”. He is quoted as stating that “at times the water was so thick with staves that a man could walk on them from the harbour to the dam, a distance of about a mile”.

Oakville’s name is grounded on a strong heritage that reflects the Oak’s honoured place in mankind’s history. Although oak is no longer an industry within its borders, it is nice to see the “Heritage Tree” on Bronte Road continues to grow along with a strong, prosperous and heritage rich Oakville. (Main source: William Bryant Logan’s book, “Oak, the Frame of Civilization – article suggested by Walter Jennings)

Lance Naismith

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**I**n May, Harry Barrett and I represented the Society at the Annual Inspection of **1188 Lorne Scots Oakville Cadet Corps**. The Society is the official sponsor of this cadet corps and Harry, my wife and I, as ex-cadets, were very pleased to see the return of one of our cadets as Reviewing Officer.

**LCol Geoff Parker, CD**, was a cadet in the 1980s. He is in the process of moving from the position of Chief of Staff for 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group at CFB Petawawa to CFB Gaquetown, New Brunswick, to take over as Commanding Officer of the Second Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment.



George Chisholm  
OHS President

*Capt Shane Crawford, CD,  
Commanding Officer of 1188 Lorne Scots  
Oakville Cadet Corps, presents a plaque to  
Reviewing Officer LCol Geoff Parker, CD at  
the 83rd annual inspection of the cadet corps*

There are still Historical Walks available for September and October. Please take advantage of the fall weather by exploring **YOUR** Oakville. And, don't forget to get everyone ready for the educational and scary Ghost Walks. What better way to teach your children and grandchildren some exciting and thrilling history about old Oakville, while bringing back some memories for yourself.

### Historical Walking Tours (2007)

MONTH	MAIN ST.	HERITAGE HOUSE	TRAFALGAR RD.
SEP	Sun 9 <sup>th</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm	Sun 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm	Mon 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2 pm
OCT	- - - -	Sun 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm	Mon 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm

- NOTE:** Main Street and Heritage House walks start at 110 King Street, while the Trafalgar Road walks start from St. John's United Church, 262 Randall Street. **Tours take 2 hours.** All walks cost **\$12.00/ person** and light refreshments are served for the Main St. and Heritage House walks. **RESERVATIONS REQUIRED** – please call (905) 844-2695 to book tour. Special groups may arrange other scheduled times.

### The OHS Annual Ghost Walks (2007)

SEPTEMBER	THURSDAYS	SATURDAYS
7:00 P.M. & 8:30 P.M.	.	22 <sup>nd</sup> and 29th
OCTOBER		
7:00 P.M. & 8:30 P.M.	4 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> , and 25 <sup>th</sup>	
6:00 P.M., 7:00 P.M. & 8:30 P.M.		13 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup> , and 27th
COST	\$12.00 PER ADULT	\$6.00 PER CHILD

- Please note:** Begins and Ends at the Society, 110 King Street. Following the Walks, refreshments will be served. **Length of Walk:** 1 Hour. Wear good walking shoes. **Register** early as there is limited enrollment. **(905) 844-2695**
- CASH ONLY – NO CREDIT CARDS.**



# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – March 2007

**T**he building is located at the southeast corner of Thomas and Randall Streets and was built circa 1904. It was the **Oakville station of the Hamilton Radial Railway** which ran an hourly service between Hamilton and Oakville until 1924. It made stops along the way and functioned as a commuter train. The tracks ran along Rebecca Street and when the bridge across the Sixteen Mile Creek was completed in 1906, it ran along Randall Street to the Station. The cars were run by electricity and the station contained a generator to supply the electric power.

May Isaac

## Concert in the Park

**W**ith a beautiful sunny day, the Concert in the Park was well received by all who attended. Entertained by the **St. Paul’s Dixie Land Band** and, the **Oakville Wind Orchestra**, the attendees - some of whom dressed in period costume for the event, relaxed in the warmth of the sun and music.

*Marianne Hawthorne arrived in style,  
driven by George Farrow in his Model T.*





*Piped in by James Sawyer, (L/R) Mayor Bob Burton, Marianne Hawthorne, Barbara Savage and OHS President George Chisholm began the festivities with a well received march through the crowd.*

It was a relaxing afternoon for all who attended and citizens of Oakville, casually visiting the park, were given an opportunity to enjoy our lovely waterfront, entertained with a backdrop of inspiring music. Our interpreter at the Thomas House

was kept busy with a steady flow of those that wished to learn more about our heritage. The Erchless House was also open to showcase Oakville's history.

Volunteers manned the information booths, offering memberships, information and advice concerning the Society. Their efforts were much appreciated.

*Getting into the spirit of the event, some dressed in period costumes, livening up the celebrations. The mayor's wife, Wendy Burton (Back Row/Right), made the presentation for the winners with the assistance of Marianne Hawthorne (Back Row/Left). The costume contest was won by: Joyce Stephenson – 1<sup>st</sup> place (Back Row/Middle), Gwyneth Lorimer – 2<sup>nd</sup> place (Front) and Pamela Rowley – 3<sup>rd</sup> place (not pictured).*



## Outreach

**W**endy Belcher, one of our Ghost Leaders, is doing a special presentation for patients at North Ridge Long Term Care Facility. September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007 between 2 and 4:00PM

Barbara Savage

## Memorial Fountain Dedication



(L/R) Harry Barrett, Mayor Bob  
Burton, Harry Buxton, Mary Noad

On Sunday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the **Memorial Fountain for Volunteers** was dedicated. Mayor Bob Burton attended, along with Councilors Roger Lapworth and, Mary Chapin. After the dedication speech by President George Chisholm, Harry Barrett read off the names of those volunteers who have passed on. It was a fitting tribute to those who had helped the Society in the past, in the presence of those who continue to build on their work.

Lance Naismith

## Contemporary History for Another Generation

Last fall, we were confronted with the little known history of Canada's part in the training of spies during World War II. Armed with images of the secret camp, guest speaker Lynn Philip Hodgson shared the results of his research into Camp X. Copies of his book Inside Camp X were available for further study and reflection.

As many members will agree, our generation is also faced with encouraging the younger generation to explore these little known facts of Canadian history. Aware of the amount of research that accompanies the development of historical fiction, I would like to recommend two books for the 8 to 12 year olds by Eric Walters. Both books are written as tales of adventure of the two brothers, Jack and George Braun, back in 1943.

In Camp X the boys are living in Whitby and become involved with the training grounds for allied spies under the leadership of Sir William Stephenson.

In the second book, Camp 30, the boys have been relocated to Bowmanville where their mother has been offered a job as a clerk in a prisoner of war camp holding the highest-ranking German officers. Curiosity and circumstance lead to the brothers' involvement with an attempted escape of the German prisoners from the camp. Both

novels are sure to encourage young readers to find out more about our contemporary history.

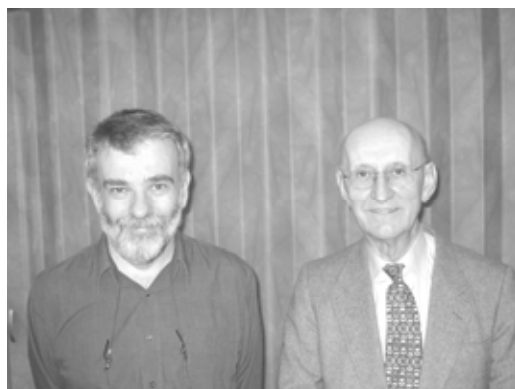
Look for Camp X (Penguin Group Canada 2002 ISBN 0-14-131325-5) and Camp 30 (Penguin Group Canada 2004 ISBN 0-14-301678-4)

Fred H. Hayward

## May Presentation

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, Professor Neville Thompson, a retired Professor of History at the University of Western Ontario, gave a very interesting and in-depth presentation on “the effects of British History on the settlement of Oakville”. Not just focusing on Oakville, his presentation gave the audience a very broad look at British History and some of the factors that had an effect on our town. Well received and enjoyed by all.

Lance Naismith



OHS President George Chisholm & Professor Neville Thompson (R)



*Ev Bullied (left), on behalf of the Oakville Historical Society, accepts a copy of Joyce Stevenson's newest publication, "Ever Faithful", a comprehensive history of St. John's United Church (1832-2007). The copy was donated in appreciation of the assistance Joyce received from the Society.*

## “Doors Open”

In 2002 The Ontario Heritage Trust launched Doors Open, Ontario. Over 2 million visitors have participated in Doors Open Ontario. Some of Oakville’s intriguing and charming sites will be open to the public. Admission will be free.

France was the first country to launch its Doors Open programme in 1984, followed by Glasgow, Scotland in 1990. The idea soon spread to neighbouring countries, including the Netherlands, Sweden, the Republic of Ireland and Belgium. In addition, Australia and some states have joined this highly successful phenomenon.

Planned for Oakville on Saturday and Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, **2008** is the “Doors Open” programme. There is already a committee working on it headed by Claire Loughheed, Manager of Culture and Heritage Services, Recreation and Culture.

So mark your **2008 calendars** for this future exciting event.

Barbara Savage

### **MEMBER BENEFITS**

*Free Access to:*

*Historical reference library*

*Marine reference library*

*Archival library*

*Quarterly newsletter & lectures*

*Discount on purchase of the book*

*“Oakville & The Sixteen”*

*No G.S.T. on “Oakville a Small Town” & “The Story of Oakville Harbour”*

*Openings and Special Events*

*Annual Christmas Event*

*Fellowship & Socializing with*

*Access to experts on our local history*

*Rental space available at reasonable rates*

*Free regular admission to The Oakville Museum*

*Discount on Walking Tours sponsored by the Oakville Historical Society*

## ***THE WAY THINGS WERE***



1. Can you identify this young girl?
  2. When was the photo taken and where?
  3. What is the uniform she is wearing?
- ~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1PM to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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# THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

**DECEMBER 2007**

**Volume 41: Number 4**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007

### **Annual Wine & Cheese Party**

- All members are invited to come out and enjoy this event at OHS Society Headquarters, 110 King Street from 6PM to 9PM..

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

2008

February 20<sup>th</sup>

### ***“The History of Dr. Anderson Ruffin Abbott”***

– The first black doctor to graduate in Canada, he practiced medicine in Oakville for one year. During the Civil War, he became a close friend of Abraham Lincoln. An interesting unknown Canadian hero whose history will be presented by his Great-granddaughter, Kathy Slaney.

March 26<sup>th</sup>

### **Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper**

May 21<sup>st</sup>

***“Pioneer Cooking”*** – Dorothy Duncan

October 15<sup>th</sup>

***“Gun Boats on the Great Lakes”***

– Cheryl MacDonald

November 19<sup>th</sup>

***“An Evening with Mike Filey”*** – Mike Filey

**Note: All presentations are free and open to the Public, and held at Knox Presbyterian Church @ 7:30 P.M., unless otherwise noted.**

**Background Picture:** Known as the Slacer Cabin, this 1830's era log cabin located on Burnamthorpe Rd. W. (Glenorchy) was originally settled by George and Frances (nee Cruise) Ludlow. One of their daughters married a Slacer. Info thanks to Jane Watt and Michelle Knoll.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**B**y the time you read this, Christmas will be fast approaching and events around the Society will, we hope, be slowing down a bit after a very busy summer and fall. Our **Volunteers' wine and cheese party** will have been its usual success.

Our **Ghost Walks** are now over for the season and have shown considerable growth. Several have sold out and some have been overbooked. Wendy Belcher, Francine Landry, Barb Savage and our newest leader, Carol Gall, have dealt with large groups. A different group of people from Oakville and beyond has visited our office. One visitor came from The Beaches in Toronto for a Ghost Walk and also attended our other three walks.

Your Society, through our representative Barb Savage, is the lead member of the new **Doors Open Committee** and is working very closely with Town staff and other committee members to prepare for Oakville's first Doors Open next September. For further information on this very interesting programme, visit [www.doorsopenontario.on.ca](http://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca). We will require a lot of volunteer assistance for the event next year. Stay tuned for further information.

The Society is also working toward the designation of the **Main Street** as Oakville's fourth heritage district. June Hitchcox and her group of volunteers have been gathering information on the history of individual buildings to assist with this designation. Our October Speaker's Night featured **Sean Fraser** from the Ontario Heritage Trust who spoke about some of the advantages of Heritage Designations. Further information can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

On behalf of the Board, I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy Hogmanay.

As always, your board seeks your input. If you have suggestions or comments, please contact me.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
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905-842-5385

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**COVER PICTURE:** The Christmas Card is representative of the 1920's and was sent to the "New" family of Oakville. It is part of our collection.

## *A Pioneer Christmas in Canada*

**L**ong before the town of Oakville celebrated its first Christmas in 1857, early explorers and fur traders have recorded in their journals that they paused on Dec. 25, remembering the religious significance of the day. Mention was also made, that whenever possible, on ships or in camps, they enjoyed the company of friends, and a special feast.

We continue these traditions, enriched over the years by many cultures, often without much thought of our earliest settlers' struggles to provide their families with some semblance of cheer at this time.

Faced with the monumental tasks of clearing the land, establishing farms and towns such as ours across the country, the thought of Christmas cheered them as they struggled to survive. After the harvest was in, and the root cellars stocked, preparations for the festive season could begin. Hams and pork shoulders were dried and hung by the fireplace, and apples were packed in straw or dried along with an assortment of herbs from the garden.

From 1850 when glass jars were first produced, it was possible to keep over other fruits and berries as well. Geese were fattened in the rice beds, and pigs foraged in the forest. Turkeys and beef cattle were only raised on the more established farms, and rarely on the menu, except for the more affluent. Fish were plentiful in the rivers and lakes, and most families kept a few chickens, and a cow for milk and butter.



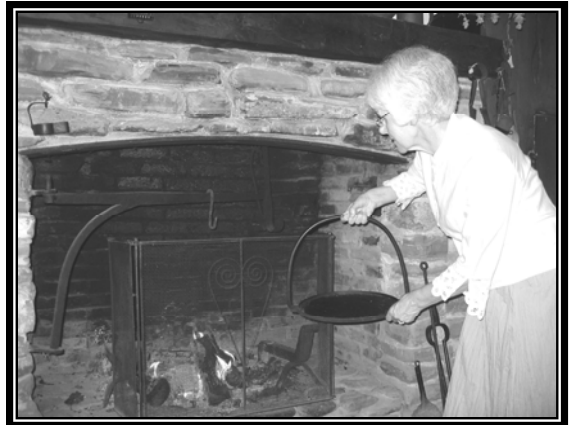
*Butter Churns*

The fall and early winter were relatively a time of plenty, for by late winter, with stores depleted, many survived on potatoes and grains. In this “waste not” society even rotting wheat that could not be milled for flour, was used to make whiskey, providing some comfort to some! It was cheap and readily available. Corn that could be ground at home was plentiful, and used extensively instead of other grains.

The settlers started collecting scarce items weeks before Christmas. Sugar was very expensive, available only in cones, so maple sugar, molasses and honey were set

aside for the sweet dishes. Raisins, oranges, spices and nuts were more available at this time, as the shopkeepers ordered these in especially for the holiday. By 1835, Oakville was a thriving little community and in 1846, records show 550 inhabitants and, shops of one and two stories were situated on the main street. Local women could bring their eggs and butter to barter for needed goods. Christmas puddings, cakes, and mincemeat were made well in advance and stored in a cool dry place.

The earliest settlers built stone fireplaces into their log cabins, and later into their more substantial frame houses. These not only kept them from freezing, but also provided a heat source for cooking. Some had small ovens on one side, and all were dangerously challenging. An iron crane with a long arm could be swung out in the room and then back over the fire. Kettles and pots were held on the arm with hooks. Sometimes the cooks of the day used flat bottom pans that sat right in the fire, or pans with long legs called spiders.



*Volunteer Margaret Bucknall*

The Industrial Revolution in the early eighteenth century resulted in the relatively cheap availability of iron stoves and pots. Ironically, this same revolution had cost many of these young workers their jobs and was part of the reason for the mass exodus from Britain at this time.



*Roaster, Griddle & Toaster*

In the weeks before Christmas industrious women knit mitts and hats for their children, after carding and spinning the wool. Gifts were mainly for the young people, and sometimes an orange or a few nuts left on the table would be all that was possible to provide. As they prospered, pin cushions, jet jewellery, imported china, and books were exchanged among the adults. Children were given sleds and wooden toys. By 1859 The Toronto Globe was advertising that skates, rocking horses and toy tea sets were available for gifts.

The image of Santa we recognize today had evolved by 1860. The tradition of

hanging a stocking to be filled with gifts, started with the poem “The Night Before Christmas”, which was published in 1823.

The Christmas many of us celebrate today, is based on the blending of our pioneer traditions. The Yule log and the Twelve Days of Christmas, mince pies and plum pudding came from the English. The candle in the window, lit by the youngest child or one named Mary, was to symbolically welcome Mary and Joseph or a Priest needing shelter and was said to be from the Irish. The German settlers lit candles in evergreen branches and trees. The Christmas Tree was introduced to England by Queen Victoria’s german Prince Albert and then, to North America. For the Scottish people it was a religious day. Attending church when possible, they reserved their celebrations for New Years, and on Hogmanay, enjoyed spiced ale, sweetened oak cakes and black bun.

By the mid eighteen hundreds, carols were sung in the churches and schools. Most are familiar to us still. Cards were first sent in England in 1843 and by 1880, production increased and they were in use in Canada.

From the earliest efforts to decorate their homes with evergreen boughs and berries, to the practice of making colourful paper chains, stringing popcorn with cranberries and making small baskets to fill with sweets, and hang on the tree, our forbearers tried in the true spirit of Christmas to keep their traditions’ alive and pass them on to their children.

Christmas Day in the middle of the nineteenth century was spent with family, going to church when possible, enjoying their dinner mid day with friends. After exchanging gifts, skating and sledding were popular pastimes, and in some cases, dancing in the evening ended the day.

Joy Sanders

The Oakville Historical Society has been going through exciting times in the last year, fortunately with support from our Volunteers. One area of special notice is our **new website** under development by our webmaster, Norm Sadler. I can tell you it is very exciting to look at and will offer a lot to those who wish to visit it and learn more about the Society. It should be on-line by years end. Please visit [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) and see the enlarged and colour **December version** of our Newsletter.

The Editor

## RECIPES

Many recipes still exist from these early days, but cannot be used without considerable altering. The refining process of sugar and grains has changed dramatically, as have heat sources for baking.

With this in mind, the following recipes have been adjusted to compensate for this.

### **Mrs. Savage's Pickles**

(Barbara Savage)

1870

One quart of raw cabbage chopped fine; one quart of boiled beets chopped fine; two cups of brown sugar, one teaspoon of salt, one half teaspoon pepper, and grated horseradish to taste, two cups of cold vinegar, and keep from the air.

### **J. Stewart's Cloud Biscuits**

(Nova Scotia)

Two cups flour, one tablespoon sugar, four teaspoons baking powder, one half teaspoon salt, one half cup shortening, two thirds cup of milk. Sift dry ingredients, cut in shortening, and add milk mixed with one egg. Turn

dough out on floured board; knead gently by hand twenty times. Roll three quarters of an inch thick. Place on baking sheet and bake at 450 degrees, 10-12 minutes.

### **B. Browns Butterscotch Squares**

(Irish immigrant from Sligo)

Sift together 1 ½ cups flour, 1 tsp. baking powder and 1/3 cup white sugar. Cut in 1/3 cup of butter, to coarse crumbs. Stir in 2 lightly beaten egg yolks. Pat mixture into greased 8X8 cake pan. Top with 2 egg whites beaten stiff, to which 1 cup of brown sugar has been gradually added. Fold in 1 cup chopped walnuts or 1 cup coconut or ½ & ½. Bake 20-25 min. in a 350 degree oven.



# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – September 2007

The young girl, Barbara Savage (nee Thornton), was born and raised in Oakville. Her father owned Thornton's Bakery on Lakeshore Road. Barbara is currently the Vice-President of the Oakville Historical Society.

The photo, taken in the early 1940's, shows Barbara standing in the sports field of **Oakville Trafalgar High School** while wearing a cadet uniform designed by the school during WW2. The hat was modeled after the Lorne Scots uniform. Cadets were given training in marching drills and were taken to the rifle range at the Armoury.

May Isaac

## Membership Renewal

Your membership fees for 2008 are becoming due. For your convenience a renewal form has been enclosed for this purpose. Thank you for your continued support.

Andrea Stewart



Another season has come to a close for the Thomas House. I suspect most who read this newsletter, have visited the Thomas House at one time or another and I know that some actually make a point of visiting yearly.

Our volunteers are much appreciated for their efforts to give to those that visit, some from foreign countries, some insight into pioneer Oakville life.



Too many to name here, I'd like point out two who added something to the tour. Phillip Brimacombe graphically showed the layout of old Oakville and Donalda Fordham gave a working display of rug hooking. Others have gone so far as to show pioneer cooking over the fireplace.

**Phillip Brimacombe & Donalda Fordham**





Another aspect of the Thomas House is the opportunity it gives students to accumulate required community hours in order to graduate. Spring cleanup, painting and, acting as one of the Thomas children are only a few chores that will earn these valuable hours.

As well, the Society can offer opportunities for students at events and other activities. Do you have a child or grandchild needing to build up some community hours?

**“You’re in the movies now”** - During the summer, the Thomas House was used as a setting in the award winning show “Instant Star”, produced by CTV and Epitome Pictures. See if you can recognize it this fall/winter on TV.



Lance Naismith



## Harvest Festival

This years Harvest Festival was blessed with beautiful weather - cool and sunny. The Thomas House was opened, with fire cooked scones being offered, along with some tasty apple cider.



**May Mack (L) and Joy Sanders baking the scones.**

In addition to this, visitors to Lakeside Park were able to purchase Society post cards and literature, Save the Tree T Shirts and other items. Victorian games were showcased for the kids (and those parents still enjoying their second childhood) and the ever popular bake sale was active. Along with a display highlighting the Society, bookmarks, information brochures and copies of the Newsletter were also available.









## Ghost Walks

Halloween was just around the corner and the ever popular Ghost Walks were being offered. Lead by Ghost Leaders Wendy Belcher, Carol Gall and Francine Landry, with support from Society Volunteers, these walks add a spooky side to our historical buildings.

The fog rolled in, on some nights - the Oakville Harbour foghorn moaning its welcome. Something to plan for in 2008 – *the ghosts will be waiting.*



Lance Naismith

**Foggy Night Ghost Walk led by  
Esther Silverthorn (Wendy  
Belcher)**



## Heritage Conservation Districts – October Presentation

On October 17, Sean Fraser made a very comprehensive presentation on how the Province of Ontario establishes Heritage Conservation Districts. Sean is the Manager of Conservation Services, Ontario Heritage Trust.

The procedure involved is quite different from the very detailed specific basis for designating individual heritage properties. The approximately 50 people who attended learned that many factors are taken into account in protecting a heritage district: historical background, the natural landscape and general ambience within the community, as well as heritage architectural attributes.

Not only interesting but, very relevant for Oakville.



**Sean Fraser & long time member, Marguerite Murphy**



Walter Jennings

## **Christmas?? Just around the corner!!**

**A**re you worried about what the history buff might want for Christmas? Why not visit the Society and purchase some of our books. Just the thing for that special gift. In addition to our regular offerings, we are now selling “**Our Oakville**”, whose Editor in Chief is our own Wendy Burton. A beautiful book well worth reading and only costs \$10. for members. A worthwhile keepsake.

Also available is a new book by Julika Winkler, also one of our members. Called “**Seven Sundays**”, this book is about churches and the history along #5 Highway (Dundas Street). It is available from Julika at 905-315-8916.

Don’t forget we also have note cards available for sale – **historic sketches by Don Sutherland**. These will be for sale at the Christmas Party and are always for sale Tuesday and Thursday afternoons at the Society.

Barbara Savage



## *THE WAY THINGS WERE*



- 1: What is the name of the store and its location?
- 2: What is covering the floor?
- 3: Can you guess the price of turkeys in the early 1900s?

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1PM to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**





~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

**MARCH 2008**

**Volume 42: Number 1**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

March 26<sup>th</sup>

**Annual General Meeting and Pot Luck Supper - Knox Presbyterian Church @ 6:30pm**

June 8<sup>th</sup>

**“*Concert in the Park*”** – Lakeside Park.  
Dixieland Band and the Oakville Wind Orchestra will be performing. Rain Date: June 22<sup>nd</sup>. More info will follow in the June Newsletter and on our webpage.

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

2008

May 21<sup>st</sup>

**“*Pioneer Cooking*”** – Dorothy Duncan

October 15<sup>th</sup>

**“*Gun boats on the Great Lakes*”**  
– Cheryl MacDonald

November 19<sup>th</sup>

**“*An Evening with Mike Filey*”** – Mike Filey

***Notable Event: The Underground Railroad, Next Stop Freedom!*** An exhibit which started February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at the **Erchless Museum** is well worth seeing. Created by Parks Canada in partnership with the Ontario Black Society and the ROM, it is an outstanding effort by Fred and Claudette Shaw.

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***For many years, Anne Reynolds took on the responsibility of ensuring that the grounds around the Thomas House and the Post Office were clean. Any garbage on the ground was picked up and placed in the bins that are provided by the Town. Alas, Anne has moved to Stratford. The Society has received a request from the Town that we continue this tradition. If we all do our part it is no big deal and it will keep Lakeside Park a beautiful place.***

*Barbara Savage*



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank **Norm Sadler** for all his work over the past several months in designing and bringing to life our new website. Norm has done excellent work for other organizations, including the Trafalgar Chartwell Residents' Association, which is where I "found" him. There has been much discussion around the board table over the role of the internet in furthering the aims of the society and the board firmly believes that we need to make more use of the web to get our message out. The improved website is a start, but it is a major step for the Society. Since the new website went "live", just after Christmas, we have received several requests for information, rental requests and offers of donations. If you haven't visited the new website yet, it can be found at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org).

We were delighted to hear (through the website) from **Dr Gerald Coleman**, a great great grandson of **Dr John Urquhart**, who practised in Oakville in the mid 1800s. Dr Urquhart built his Medical Hall on Lakeshore Road in 1835. It still stands at 182 Lakeshore Road East. Dr Coleman contacted me to offer the Society his ancestor's pharmacopoeia, signed and dated 1826. When it arrives, it will be an important addition to our collection. It's amazing what interesting items are out there. If you have an item, or hear of any items that would be appropriate for our collection, please let us know.

In mid February, Barb Savage, Ev Bullied and my wife and I attended the annual Heritage Dinner hosted by the **Head of the Lake Historical Society** in Hamilton. This year their partner organization was the Hamilton Regional Police in honour of their 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We came home from the dinner convinced that a similar event could prove popular in Oakville. Stay tuned for further information.

Barb Savage continues to represent us on the **Doors Open Oakville** committee and we are pleased to announce that we have received a grant from the Community Foundation of Oakville to assist with this project. We have also applied to the Trillium Foundation.

I hope to see many of our members at our **Annual General Meeting**, set for Wednesday, **26 March**, at Knox. As usual, the meeting will be preceded by a **pot luck dinner**.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

**COVER PICTURE:** Our cover shows the various methods of communication throughout history, culminating in our WEBSITE. Hopefully, all preserve our history for future generations. Cover artwork by Carolyn Naismith.

## *Unearthing Oakville's Loyalist Roots*

Finding Oakville's connection to the United Empire Loyalist period in Canada's history can be a challenge. Research shows that new homesteads established by UEL families were achieved at the end of rather circuitous routes. For these refugees of the **American Revolution**, 1775-1783, initial settlement in the British North American provinces related strongly to the point of departure in the Thirteen Colonies. If they had lived on the eastern seaboard or had sheltered in the New York City stronghold, they probably accepted the offer to settle in the Maritimes or what was known then as Nova Scotia. For instance, shortly after John Belyea of Philipsburg, Westchester County, New York, joined the British Army in 1776, his wife and family were forced from their farm and fled to New York City. When Sir Guy Carleton evacuated the Loyalists from NYC in 1783, the **Belyea** family settled in the Saint John River Valley in New Brunswick. From there it was a matter of time before they moved on to Upper Canada and eventually **Bronte** in search of better land.

If the Loyalist families had lived in upper New York province, chances were they fled northward through the Champlain/Richelieu corridor, to live in one of the refugee centres in Quebec, east of Montreal like Sorel or Machiche. Other families who supported the activities of Butler's Rangers along the Mohawk Valley and in upper Pennsylvania sought security at Fort Niagara. Late in the war itself, a few of those families were allowed to cross the Niagara River to farm the area for produce to support the war effort. However, full-scale settlement of the Niagara Peninsula, as well as the rest of present day Ontario, had to wait until ownership was settled and the land surveyed.

In those days, the area we now know as Oakville was owned by the Mississauga Indian Band. In 1805, the Assembly of Upper Canada purchased the land between Etobicoke and Hamilton, with the exception of the lands at the mouth of the Twelve Mile Creek (Bronte Creek), the Sixteen and the Credit River, which remained in the hands of the Mississauga. After lots were surveyed in 1806, settlers moved along the newly built Governor's Road (Highway Five) and a few settled on the shore of Lake Ontario. Family histories of those settlers sometimes indicate the United Empire Loyalist origins, but often over time, the link has been lost. Familiarity with family names on the UEL List, the **1805 Wilmot Survey** and land records, provide further possibilities of Loyalist heritage. Other sources, such as *Annals of the Forty*, reveal the patterns of the second and third generation Loyalists as they moved to newly surveyed areas.

Originally, Charles Anderson and his wife Ann, the only daughter of Loyalist **W. Henry Nelles**, had settled east of the Forty Mile Creek on 100 acres. When Trafalgar

Township was surveyed, he was granted Lot 13, 2<sup>nd</sup> Concession south of Dundas Street. This land borders the west side of the 7<sup>th</sup> Line and the ridge now called the Red Hill runs through its southern section.



**John Peter Inglehart**

**John Kaiting** settled on Lot 12 along Dundas. Through his first wife, Jemima Biggar of Saltfleet, and his second wife, Margaret Fisher, his twenty one sons and daughters further established their Loyalist heritage through intermarriage with other Loyalist families who settled in northern Oakville.

In the Palermo district, at one time referred to as Hagersville, descendants of the **Buck, Hager, Inglehart and Lawrence** families, can easily trace their lineage back to the United Empire Loyalists who settled first in the townships along the southern shore of Lake Ontario.

The corner now called Trafalgar was once called Postville, the area settled by the “sons and daughters of **Jordan Post**, a “Late Loyalist”, who had come to York from New England in 1802.”

By 1813, **Philip Sovereign** and family arrived at the Twelve Mile Creek. Originally from Sussex County, New York, they had settled earlier in Waterford in the Western District of Upper Canada.

Their new farm extended along the lakefront, west of the Indian Reserve on the old Lake Road.

On February 28, 1820, the five principal chiefs of the Mississaugas surrendered to the Crown their reserves at the Twelve and Sixteen Mile Creeks. Fresh opportunities for the entrepreneurial settlers opened up.

Alexander Proudfoot established a store at the south-west corner of the Ninth Line at Dundas Street about 1820. His wife was **Amelia Jarvis** whose Loyalist father, Stephen Jarvis, had settled in York.



**Elizabeth Inglehart,  
nee Fisher.**

It is recorded that the first mill in Trafalgar Township was built on the Sixteen by **Phillip Triller**, a Loyalist, who in 1806 had brought his wife and ten children from New Jersey to Upper Canada. Triller drew Lot 20 of the 1<sup>st</sup> Concession south of Dundas Street through which the Sixteen runs, but to get a mill site, he requested Lot 32 on the lakeshore, not far from his home. However Lot 32, already belonged to **William Allan** (for whom Allan Street in Oakville was named,) and it was **Charles Sovereign** who later secured it and, built a sawmill. Unsuccessful with his petition, Triller proceeded with the work of establishing a mill at Dundas Street.



**Hagar Homestead - Palermo**

In 1827, the Lieutenant-Governor received at least two petitions regarding the development of mill sites on the Twelve and Sixteen Mile Creeks. Many Bronte area names with Loyalist connections included William and Ezekiel Lawrence, William and Hiram McCraney, Mahlon and Daniel Bray, Jacob and William Triller, Thomas Hinton, Philip and Charles Sovereign and Jesse Belyea.

Perhaps there is greater familiarity with the Chisholm story. **George Chisholm** of Tryon County, New York joined the British army in 1777 and at the end of the American Revolution, moved to Shelburne, Nova Scotia. In 1796, the family moved to a tract of land on the north shore of Burlington Bay. In 1812, his son, William, married **Rebecca Silverthorne**, also of Loyalist lineage. They settled on a farm on Dundas Street in Nelson Township in 1816, and there established a general store. In August 1827, William Chisholm acquired 960 acres of “Old Oakville” for \$4116.00. By the time of his purchase, William Chisholm had been a member of the House of Assembly, a Parliamentary Commissioner assigned to supervise the building of the Burlington Bay Canal and also had served on the Board of Directors for the Welland Canal.

Another of the first purchasers of the newly surveyed land in Oakville was **Jacob Randall**. His father, also known as Jacob Randall, left New York in 1783 for Nova

Scotia. In 1822, the father and five sons moved on to Upper Canada, where they all received land grants. Jacob Junior found employment in William Chisholm's shipyard at Burlington Bay before moving on to Oakville.

In 1831, Justus Wright Williams moved from Burlington Bay to Oakville with his wife, **Nancy Aikman**, the daughter of John Aikman and Hannah Showers Aikman, both members of old Loyalist families who had settled in the Niagara Peninsula. Nancy's sister, Hannah, became the wife of Egerton Ryerson, known as the founder of the Ontario Public School system.

In 1833, Robert Smith acquired Lot 22 of the 4th Concession Trafalgar Township. He was the son of Joel Smith, a merchant in Nelson Township and William Chisholm's partner at the time Oakville was founded. His mother, as a daughter of a Loyalist, **Sgt. Robert Campbell of Butler's Rangers**, was granted land as well. In 1838, Joel bought the adjoining Crown Reserve Lot 23 from King's College. Hiram, another son of Joel and Margaret Smith, bought Lot 21 bordering the 4<sup>th</sup> Line from Kings College in 1840.

Thus Loyalist heritage took early root throughout the Oakville community. No doubt there are many more family names that could be included in our community history. In time, more of these personal stories of settlement will be rediscovered.

Fred H. Hayward UE, Hamilton Branch  
- United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada

## References:

Philip Brimacombe, *The Story of Bronte Harbour*

Hazel C. Mathews, *Oakville and the Sixteen: The History of an Ontario Port*

R. Janet Powell, Ed., *Annals of the Forty, Vols. 1-10*

**Photos:** Courtesy of the Trafalgar Township Historical Society via Oakville Images and compiled by Elise Cole, Oakville Library (Central Branch)

Visit the OHS website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the enlarged and colour version of this newsletter and, explore the many informative areas of the website for event and tour dates.

# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – December 2007

The store is **William Buckle's Butcher Shop** located on the northwest corner of Lakeshore Road and Dunn Street. At a later date the Woolworth's store was located here. Currently, RBC Insurance has an office building on this site. The photograph shows a Christmas display of poultry decorated with holly. Pictured are William Buckle, Evans Long and Ernie Buckle. The floor is covered in sawdust, used to absorb blood of meat as it was butchered. According to Chief Constable George Sumner's diary, he paid \$1.76 for an eleven pound turkey at a price of 16 cents per pound.

May Isaac

## “Remembering Trafalgar Township”

Our November presentation was given by **Ruth Blair**, Blair Archival Research ([www.familyhistorysearches.com](http://www.familyhistorysearches.com)). An informative talk was given on places and persons in and about Trafalgar Township with insight to those areas no longer in existence. It was very well received. Pictured is Director **Jim Young** with Ruth Blair.



Lance Naismith





**Barb Savage introducing  
Ruth Blair**



**“Our Refreshment  
Volunteers”**



**Admiring the postcard display**

### **Book Launching**

**A** work of love, the well documented book “**Oakville Street Names & Landmarks**”, co-authored by **David Ashe** and **Joyce Burnell**, was launched at

City Hall on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007 to a receptive audience. **Mayor Burton** did the honours. This book, which is a must for anyone who enjoys Oakville's rich past, is available at local bookstores and at the Society.

Lance Naismith



**David Ashe – Joyce Burnell**

The Oakville Historical Society is dedicated to the preservation of Oakville's history as an archival society. Documents pertaining to the growth of our Town are precious in that they let our future generations understand just how Oakville evolved. For those tracing their residential or family history, these documents are priceless. If you have any pertinent documents or photographs, please share these with the Society either in their original form or copies. Contact a volunteer and we'll let you know how you can help preserve our past.



## Annual Wine & Cheese Party

The 2007 Annual Wine & Cheese Party seemed to be a success by all appearances. Members were able to meet one another and enjoy the comfortable ambience of the Society building. Our Town Crier, **Ian Burkholder** opened the festivities with a flourish. The Societies' President George Chisholm presented **Ann Reynolds** with an appreciation gift for her service to the Society over the years and wished her luck in her new endeavours in Stratford.



L/R Ian Burkholder, Anne Reynolds, George Chisholm

**Joyce Burnell** signed copies of the book she co-wrote with David Ashe and was



Dr. Angela Kaslauskas  
& Joyce Burnell (R)

presented a bouquet of flowers by **Dr. Angela Kaslauskas**. The success of this well attended party was not only due to the spirit with which the members attended, but also the volunteers who helped with the refreshments and organizing.

Barb Savage noted, "That many people helped make the Wine and Cheese party a great success. Too many to list, but our thanks to all the women who made sandwiches and squares, as well as all the people who went out of their way to pick up cheese and fruit trays and make the wine. This is why the Society is succeeding, because everyone helps out when it's needed. **Everyone should take a bow!!!**"

Lance Naismith

**WHY NOT BRING A FRIEND TO OUR NEXT MEETING**



**“The Gathering”**



**L/R - Becky Lindsay, Ian Burkholder & June Hitchcox**



**“Harry and Friends”**



L/R – Marianne Hawthorne, Dr. Angela Kaslauskas, Joyce Burnell, Mayor R. Burton, Wendy Burton & Sheila Chreighton

### The Collection

**M**argaret Buxton has been very busy cataloging a new acquisition to our photographic collection. **Bronte Outer Harbour** is a far cry from what it was in the early part of the last century. The outer harbour (photo c. 2001) has been built and is a very busy port, with its own restaurant. The record of its construction is an important part of our local history and fortunately it was recorded and the



photographs donated. These photographs will give future generations a chance to see how our area has changed over time. With that in mind, please look at your photographs and documents before you trash them. These small pieces of history are important to the Society in giving one the bigger viewpoint. And remember, today's documents and photographs will be tomorrow's history.

Here are some from the collection, showing various stages of construction of Bronte Outer Harbour.



**Bronte Outer Harbour –  
laying stone 2001**



**Bronte Outer Harbour –  
preparing Marina 2001**



**Bronte Outer Harbour  
Marina 2001**



**Bronte Outer Harbour –  
Lighthouse Restaurant -  
2001**





**Bronte Outer Harbour – Lighthouse Restaurant finished  
2003**

## **A Fond Farewell**

*So long, it's been good to know you.*

**T**o the many friends I've made at the O.H.S. over the last 22 years, thank you for being a special part of my time in Oakville. I will keep in touch and please, if you are in Stratford, let's get together. (Contact information at the Society – Editor)

Ann Reynolds

## March Presentation

**C**atherine Slaney's talk (Knox Church on February 20<sup>th</sup>) on **Dr. Anderson Abbott** was most interesting. Catherine discovered that she is the great granddaughter of Dr. Abbott, the first black man to graduate at U of T in 1861 as a medical doctor. Little is written re Dr. Abbott but he organized hospitals for the Union Army and became a personal friend of Abraham Lincoln. Catherine did not know of her black history, and she later wrote a book – "**Family Secrets, Crossing the Colour Line**".



**Barbara Savage with Catherine Slaney (R)**

Barbara Savage

## Oakville's a'changing

**S**ome of you may have noticed the area bounded by Kerr Street, Speers Road and Shepard Road has been slowly changing. First to go in that area was the old Swiss Chalet. Now, the three homes and the "Alexander" apartment building are vacant and awaiting redevelopment.

The two dwellings at 531 and 533 Kerr Street are of interest, as they are listed on the Town's heritage registry. Other than the Stoneboat Restaurant in Bronte, they are claimed to be the only remaining stone houses in Oakville.

The developer, Empire Communities (Water Garden Communities), has stated they wish to incorporate the structures into the proposed development of three apartment towers. Hopefully the two buildings will be saved for future generations.

Below are some pictures of the site as it is today.





### [Post Office Exhibit](#)

For those of you who have not visited the Society lately, you are missing a very intriguing exhibit on the postal service, as it was in the early days of Oakville. Put together by **Mary Noad and Rosemary Seeton**, this display educates one on the various aspects of our early post office. Items such as cross writing, which enabled one to double the use of one side of paper and thus save postage, is visually displayed - as well as envelopes, stamps and other memorabilia. Make a point of visiting and enjoying this display.







## Membership Renewal

### *Reminder*

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2008, we ask you to do so soon, preferably before the Annual General Meeting, March 26<sup>th</sup> - particularly if you wish to vote at that meeting. A renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter. Thank you.

Andrea Stewart

## *THE WAY THINGS WERE*



1. Can you identify the man 3<sup>rd</sup> from the left in the topcoat?
  2. Can you identify the man, middle front with the hat and goatee?
  3. What was he known for?
  4. Can you identify anyone else in the picture? If so, let us know.
- ~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

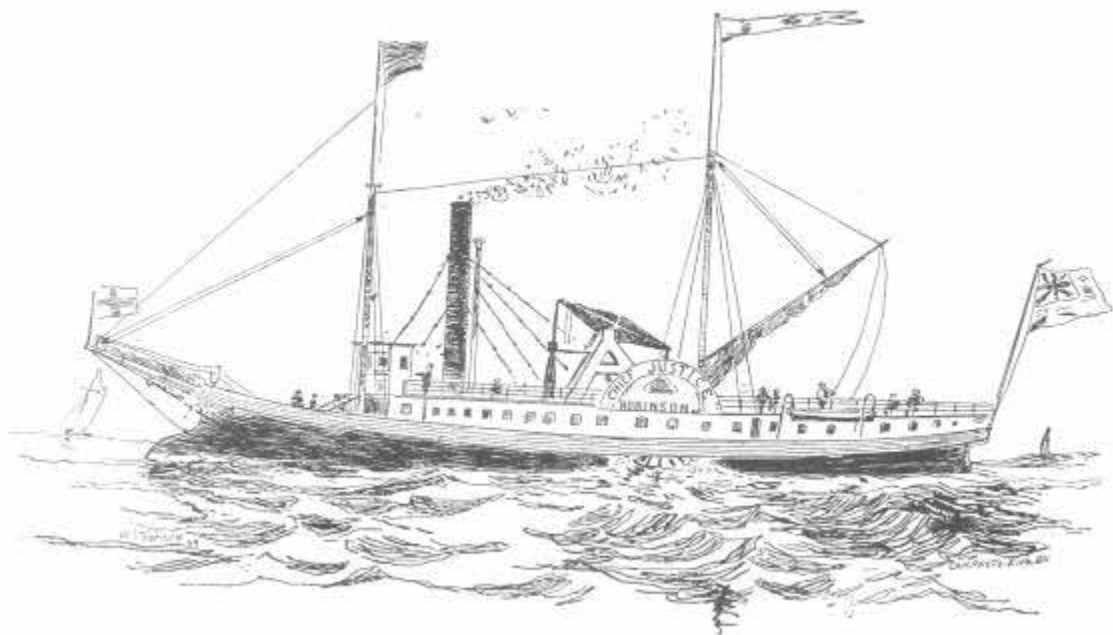
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~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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STEAMER CHIEF JUSTICE ROBINSON.

## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**JUNE 2008**

**Volume 42: Number 2**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**June 8<sup>th</sup>**

***“Concert in the Park”*** – Lakeside Park. Dixieland Band and, the Oakville Wind Orchestra performing. Rain Date: June 22<sup>nd</sup>. Bring a picnic hamper, lawn chairs and all your friends and neighbours. Prizes are available for the ***Best Victorian hat***. The Concert is also sponsored by the Town of Oakville. No food will be sold at the Concert. **Be there – 12 noon to 4 PM. FREE ADMISSION**

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**October 15<sup>th</sup>**

***“Gun boats on the Great Lakes”***  
– Cheryl MacDonald

**November 19<sup>th</sup>**

***“An Evening with Mike Filey”*** – Mike Filey

## HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS SCHEDULE (2 hours)

| MONTH  | MAIN ST                     | HERITAGE HOUSES                         | TRAFALGAR RD                                   |
|--------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| JUL    | Sun 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2pm   | Tues 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2pm              | -----                                          |
| AUG    | Sun 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2pm  | Sun 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2pm              | Sun 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2pm                     |
| SEP    | Sun 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2pm   | Sun 14 & 21 2pm                         | Mon 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2pm                      |
| OCT    | Sun 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2pm   | -----                                   | Mon 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2pm                     |
| STARTS | S/W corner Navy & Lakeshore | OHS Society Building<br>110 King Street | St. John’s United Church<br>262 Randall Street |

## GHOST WALKS (1 HOUR)

| MONTH | Thursday/Tuesday<br>6:00,7:00 & 8:30pm                                                                                                              | Saturday<br>6:00, 7:00 & 8:30pm                                                          | Dates that have a third Walk – 6:00pm are<br><b><u>Bold &amp; underlined</u></b> |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SEPT  | -----                                                                                                                                               | 27th                                                                                     |                                                                                  |
| OCT   | Thurs 9 <sup>th</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> ,23 <sup>rd</sup> & <b><u>30<sup>th</sup></u></b><br>Tues 21 <sup>st</sup> & <b><u>28<sup>th</sup></u></b> | 4 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , <b><u>18<sup>th</sup> &amp; 25<sup>th</sup></u></b> |                                                                                  |

**ALL WALKS ARE \$12.00/PERSON**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In March many of our members attended the **Annual General Meeting** held at Knox Church. Again this year a pot-luck supper was held before the meeting. Perhaps the dinner had something to do with the attendance at the meeting. **Margaret Buxton, June Hitchcox and I** were elected to serve an additional three-year term as directors. The members of the Board of Directors are: Harry Barrett, Drew Bucknall, Ev Bullied, Margaret Buxton, George Chisholm, June Hitchcox, Walter Jennings, Lance Naismith, Barb Savage, Andrea Stewart, Karen Woolley and Jim Young. At the Board Meeting following the Annual General Meeting the Officers of the Society were confirmed and are: myself as President; Barb Savage as Vice President; Jim Young as Secretary and Walter Jennings as Treasurer. I feel very fortunate to have such a strong board to serve the Society.

The Society has three major projects on the go this year. We are the lead organization for **“Doors Open Oakville”** which is set for 27 September. Barb Savage represents the Board in this project. Drew Bucknall chairs a **Future Planning Committee** which is looking into how the Society will interact with the community. Their work is critical to the future of the Society. June Hitchcox is leading a group of volunteers in gathering information on heritage buildings in town, particularly along the **Main Street**. The long-term goal is to work with Heritage Oakville and the Town to create a fourth Heritage District along Lakeshore Road. These projects are in addition to the usual walking tours, Thomas House openings, Concert in Lakeside Park and everything else our Society and our volunteers do. It will not be a quiet summer.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
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Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

Visit the OHS website at  
[www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)  
for the enlarged and  
colour version of this  
newsletter

**COVER PICTURE:** Line drawing of the steamer, Chief Justice Robinson

**Page Two:** The Granary by Oakville Harbour

## *A Whistle in the Distance: Steamboats at Oakville* (1833-1903)

William Chisholm began work on building a harbour at the mouth of the Sixteen Mile Creek at Oakville in 1828. By 1831, despite difficulties securing a loan to complete the project, the facilities, including piers, were nearing completion. In addition, a channel was dredged at this time to allow vessels of greater draught to pass in and out.

The lack of steamer service from the western end of Lake Ontario was the subject of a meeting called at Hamilton in 1831, “to consult on the expediency of building a steam vessel to ply between Burlington Bay, York, and Niagara, the Genesee and Oswego Rivers, the last two named places being the entrance to the Erie Canal and the City of Rochester.” At the meeting, of which William Chisholm was chairman, it was decided that, “more speedy intercourse was needed to be established between Burlington Bay and the Capital of the Province”; and that therefore a vessel of sufficient dimensions to carry both passengers and freight be constructed.”

Oakville’s isolation ended in the Spring of 1833 when the steamer **Constitution** was launched at Chisholm’s Shipyard at the north end of Navy Street on the Sixteen. It was the earliest steamer to ply the head of Lake Ontario regularly between Hamilton and York and ports on the south shore of Lake Ontario, like Port Charlotte (Rochester) and Oswego, New York. The steam engine had been combined with the paddle-wheel, starting with John Molson’s Accommodation built at Montreal in 1809. Averaging five miles an hour, the Constitution could travel from Oakville to Toronto in three to four hours, stopping at Port Credit. While sailing schooners, a number of which were built on the Sixteen as early as 1829, carried bulk cargos like wheat and lumber, the steamships carried passengers and package freight. Built of tamarac, red cedar, oak and pine, Constitution had a ladies’ cabin on deck, rather an unusual feature for the time, and thirteen berths, “furnished in the most superb style.” The men’s cabin accommodated twenty-four, with extra cabins in the bow for another fourteen. Furnishings such as chairs and settees were made and upholstered “by **Rainey and Schofield of Oakville.**” Launched on January 19, 1833, the vessel under **Captain William Critchell, R.N.**, retired, made her trial run from Oakville to York in two hours, averaging twelve miles an hour.

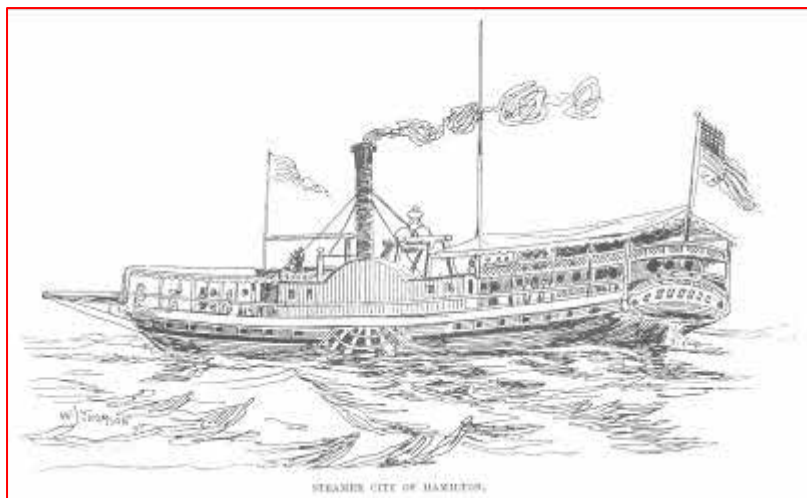
The one-hundred-fifty ton **Oakville** was the second steamer to be launched at Chisholm’s Shipyard on May 7, 1834. Of similar size to the Constitution, she was under



the command of **Captain John Mills** and commenced her regular trips from Hamilton to Toronto, touching at the Burlington Bay Canal and Oakville each way. As was common at the time, Oakville underwent several name changes over the years to Hamilton, then subsequently Union, ending her days as a sailing barque.

There are a number of fascinating descriptions of steamer travel on the Great Lakes in the nineteenth century. **Susanna Moodie's** book, "Roughing it in the Bush", describes the experience in colourful terms. **Sir Richard Bonnycastle** asserted that, "nothing can exceed the comfort and style of many of the lake steamers. They very often have music aboard, and in the ladies' cabin there is a piano. A respectable stewardess waits on the female cabin passengers, who are ushered to dinner etc. by the captain, in short, everything is very orderly and very well conducted on board the British steamboats and, I have no doubt, it is the same on board the Americans, which are very splendid." Bonnycastle, however, deplored the American custom of mixing alcoholic beverages and calling them by such absurd names as "cocktails", "ginslings", and "mint juleps"! His observations were made while travelling aboard the steamer **Transit**, formerly the Constitution of Oakville.

The trip from Hamilton to Toronto took four hours and cost 10s cabin and 5s deck. Stops at Port Credit, Oakville, and Bronte added to the transit time. In the early 1840's the steamers, all side-wheelers, continued to be equipped with masts and sails so that full advantage could be

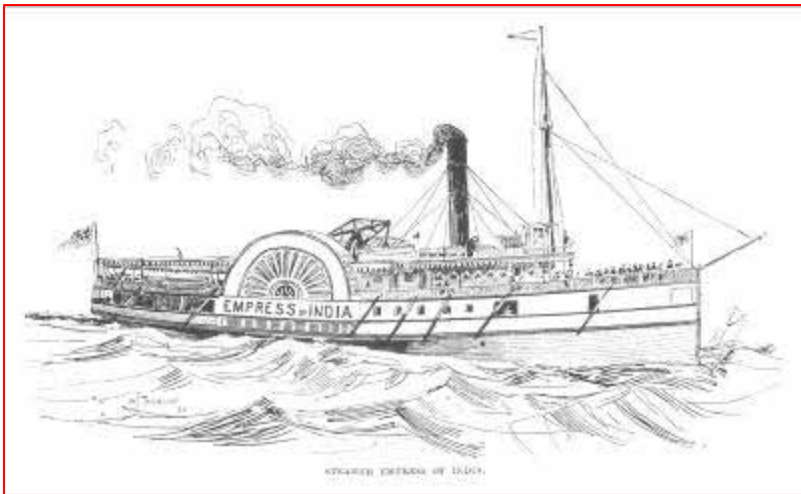


taken of a favourable wind, the engine being used only to sail against the wind. Huge quantities of fuel wood were required to fuel the boilers of these vessels. At Oakville the wood was stored along the lake bank between Navy and Thomas Streets. After "wooding up" the steamer's cannon would fire a salute (whistles were introduced during the 1840's). Competition was intense and frequently steamers raced one another to be the first to secure passengers and freight at the next port. Some captains showed little regard for the safety of either passengers or the vessel.

In the 1840's the steamers **Experiment** and **Gore** started calling at Oakville three times a week. The captain of the Experiment was **Thomas Dick**, who later built the Queen's Hotel in Toronto, now the site of the Royal York. At this point the screw propeller was starting to replace paddle wheels. Higher pressure engines assured speed and increased reliability. Such vessels were nicknamed "Puffers".

During the "**Wheat Boom**" of the 1850's, Oakville was known as one of the top ports in Canada West. From 1846 to 1853 the number of steamboat calls at Oakville rose from 946 to 1163. The **Frontier House Hotel** was built on Navy Street in Oakville in 1853 and was known as the "Steamboat Hotel" because it catered to travellers by water.

Despite the arrival of the Great Western Railway at Oakville on December 3, 1855, steamboats continued to battle this new competition for passengers and freight for some years on. Rail travel did present some danger in the early days as witnessed by the Desjardins Canal disaster near Hamilton on March 12, 1857, in which sixty people, including **Captain James Sutherland** of the steamer Magnet, perished. However, rail communication and changes in agricultural practices were bringing alterations in the economic patterns in Canada West. Consequently, many ports began to suffer economically as shipping concentrated in the larger centres like Toronto and Hamilton.



As mercantile traffic declined on Lake Ontario, the pleasure traffic increased during the 1860's. By the 1880's, often three or four excursions with 1000 to 3000 people would arrive in one day. During the summers of 1867 and 1868, the steamer **Rothesay Castle** alone transported one or more excursions

most every day of the week. Beardsley's Grove, just east of Allan Street on the lake, was a popular destination. On June 3, 1869 a Temperance excursion brought five-hundred passengers from Toronto.



By 1873 five trains running each way stopped at Oakville. With increased speed, frequency and reliability, train travel continued to eat away at steamboat passenger revenues. However, lake passenger travel was destined to last several more decades. The Rothesay Castle burned in 1874 and subsequently was rebuilt as the **Southern Belle**. This vessel was a regular caller at Oakville to the 1890's.

The **Empress of India** built in 1876 was a daytime excursion vessel. Fares were fifty cents per person from Oakville to Toronto. It was later renamed the **Argyle**, but still continued to call at Oakville. The Hamilton Steamboat Company ran the **Mazeppa** and the **Modjeska** in the Toronto to Hamilton trade. These vessels were often used in the excursion trade to various picnic grounds around the western end of Lake Ontario, including Grimsby Beach, Burlington Beach, and Chisholm's Grove (later Lewis' Grove and Harbour Grove) on the west side of the Sixteen at Oakville. By 1898 the Hamilton Steamboat Company was using a smaller vessel, the **Greyhound**, to call at Oakville with excursionists since the mouth of the Sixteen had silted up so badly.

During the late nineteenth century, the sandy soil along the lakeshore between Clarkson and Bronte became one of the most important areas of Canada for the growing of small fruit, especially strawberries. This fruit was carried from Oakville to the fruit market in Toronto (where the Sony Centre for the Arts now stands) mostly by boat. Perhaps the most well-known vessel in this trade was **White Star**, which had been purchased for \$25,000, a sum mostly raised by local fruit growers. Built in 1897 at Montreal, the vessel offered a reprieve for local growers, as no one else expressed an interest in continuing steamboat service to Oakville. It held 700 passengers and was "beautifully fitted up, lighted by electricity, stately and comfortable, a first class steamer for the Oakville, Toronto and Lorne Park route."

In 1900, during the Pan American Exposition at Buffalo, White Star was pressed into service ferrying passengers to that famous event. A smaller, older side-wheeler, **Richelieu**, was substituted on the Oakville run. In 1901 White Star resumed service to Oakville. Besides carrying huge volumes of small fruit and passengers to Toronto, White Star became known as the "**Sunday School Boat**". Sunday schools from Toronto would picnic at Harbour Grove at the foot of Forsyth Street at the lake, where there was a refreshment booth, a pavilion, a playground and sports facilities. From 1899 to 1902 White Star called at Oakville at 7A.M, 12 Noon and 6P.M.

Strawberry shipments sometimes exceeded 40,000 quarts at 5 cents per quart. In 1903 several cribs were added at the southern end of the east pier, creating an "L-shape", so White Star could load and unload passengers and freight without entering the harbour.

During repairs at Toronto on July 11, 1903, White Star burned. Thirteen were asleep on board at the time and superstitious mariners stated that as she drifted into Toronto Harbour, disaster had been diverted. She was the last steamer ever to call at Oakville on a regular basis.

With the opening of the **Radial Railway** from Hamilton to Oakville in 1904, extra competition was placed on the steamers for freight and passenger revenue. The opening of the Toronto-Hamilton Highway (now Lakeshore Road) in 1915, the first paved major highway in Ontario, reflected the growing use of automobiles, buses and trucks as the major method of carrying people and commodities. Toronto-Hamilton steamers like the Modjeska, Macassa and Turbinia lasted until World War Two, bypassing Oakville, but even their whistles in the distance have become a faint memory.

Phil Brimacombe

**References:** Hazel C. Mathews      Oakville and the Sixteen, ‘The History of an Ontario Port’  
John Ross Robertson:      Landmarks of Toronto, Volume Two  
The Scanner:      The Toronto Marine Historical Society (Monthly Publication)



Steamer “Greyhound”

# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – March 2008**

The man with the goatee is **Charlie Priestman**, continuing a tradition which started in 1922 when a group of Irishmen travelled (40 kms) from Toronto City Hall to Oakville’s downtown to enjoy bootleg green beer on St. Patrick’s Day. This task was eventually taken over by a **Barney Heard** and is presently being continued by **Eddie Williams**. The man in the top coat (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) is former Oakville Mayor, **J. M. Campbell**.

Lance Naismith

## **Outreach**

Most of you know that we have an Outreach goal to promote Oakville and its history. During April, **Harry Barrett** outreached Outreach! Radio Canada International, owned by the CBC, contacted Harry and interviewed him about Oakville. The interview was then translated into **Arabic** and broadcast live from the Society to **Eastern Arabic countries** such as Jordan and Lebanon. Using modern technology, it all looked so easy!

Barbara Savage

## A Pharmacopoeia and John Urquhart – 1802-1867

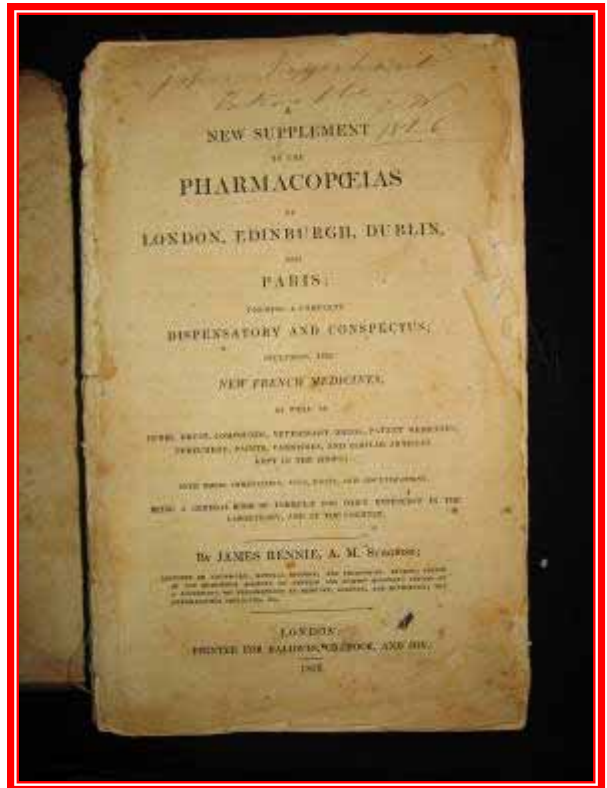
John Urquhart was born in Scotland in 1802 and grew up on the Scottish estates of the Duke of Sutherland. He was trained as a teacher but was always interested in medicinal matters. He arranged to embark to the New World and began a career in 1830 as a teacher in New York.

As New York was not to his liking, he moved to Upper Canada, and there secured a post as a teacher in West Gwillimbury, near Lake Simcoe. An epidemic of cholera was being experienced in York (Toronto) and he jumped at the chance to help at the hospital there. Two years caring for cholera patients provided him the medical experience he needed. When the epidemic subsided, he considered qualifying as a surgeon and apothecary.

After moving to Oakville he built a shop and home, giving the shop the elegant name of “Medical Hall”. It was located at 62 Colborne Street (Later renumbered 182), between Thomas and George.

There, his son Dr. John Urquhart (1844-1933) was born, the Medical Hall (See plate 29 – “Oakville & the Sixteen”) later being taken over by him after the father retired.

It was in 1846 that the apothecary acquired a copy of “**New Supplement to the Pharmacopoeia**”, printed in London in 1826. The book, derived from the medical knowledge of London, Edinburgh, Dublin and Paris, provides a complete “Dispensatory and conspectus..... as well as Herbs, Drugs, Compounds, Veterinary Drugs, Patent Medicines, Perfumery, Paints, Varnishes and similar articles kept in the Shops”. It is in effect, an assembly of all these things.



There is little evidence of use, and is in good condition except for the covers, which are detached, and the spine is missing. Some notes have been written on the back cover and also on an adjacent page, but these writings do not seem of medical matters; more that the book was a convenient source of paper. The book was acquired recently by OHS from a descendent of the original owner – an interesting addition to our Archives.

The donor of the Urquhart pharmacopoeia is Dr Gerald Coleman, a great great grandson, who lives in British Columbia.

Harry Buxton

**Editor's Note:** Ev Bullied and Lance Naismith recently came into possession of a medicinal bottle inscribed with “Dr. J. Urquhart, Oakville”. It has been presented to the OHS for purposes of display with the Urquhart pharmacopoeia.



### Recognition

Three members of the Society received recognition on April 30<sup>th</sup> from the Town of Oakville for their contribution on the **Advisory Committee for the Citizens Task Force-Oakville's 150th Anniversary**. Three cheers for Jane Hawkrigg, Francine Landry and George Chisholm.

Barbara Savage

## Annual General Meeting

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the Oakville Historical Society held its Annual General Meeting at the Knox Church. It was well attended and the pot-luck supper was again a success, unless you were on a diet.

It was opened by our official OHS Crier, Ian Burkholder. It was a good opportunity for members to meet their directors and socialize with other members of the society.



OHS Crier Ian Burkholder  
officially opening the meeting



Getting ready for the pot-luck



Digging In!!!!



Socializing



## Hookers' Donation

Members of the Oakville Guild, formerly "Marjorie Carberry Rug Hookers Guild", put together a very lovely quilt that commemorates Oakville's 150<sup>th</sup>. Each part of the rug visually illustrates a part of Oakville's history. The Guild donated this rug to the Town of Oakville, where it is proudly displayed in the front lobby of City Hall. It is well worth a visit to City Hall to admire this fine piece of craftsmanship. The quilt (pictured to right) is shown with Pauline Power (left), a friend of "hooker" Nancy Loosley, (right). Nancy hooked the "schooner" square second from the bottom on the right. It won first place at the 2008 Ontario Hookers Guild meeting in Midland, Ontario. This year the title was "Hooked on History".



Picture by Marianne Hawthorne



Rug hanging in lobby –  
City Hall

A round of applause should be given to all those involved in the creation of this project. They are:

|                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Barbara Rennick | Nancy Looseley    |
| Lynn Boon       | Pat Rushbrook     |
| Carol Rhodes    | Lynn Munari       |
| Donalda Fordham | Sharon Harvey     |
| Mary Pomeroy    | Yvonne Wettlaufer |
| Nijole Campbell | Yvonne Muntwyler  |
| Herb Vandewall  | Gerry Sanderson   |
| Jennifer Curran |                   |

Lance Naismith



## Doors Open

Both the Thomas House and the Society will be open to the public 10am to 4pm - Saturday and Sunday - Sept 27th and 28<sup>th</sup>. **WE WILL NEED MANY VOLUNTEERS!!!** If we have extra, Doors Open will need help in other locations. Please phone the Society and leave your name and hours available to help.

### *Activities include:*

**Saturday:** A walk of the Main Street &, a night Ghost Walk  
**Sunday:** Harvest Festival at the Thomas House 1pm to 4pm.  
This includes a Bake Table and Children's Craft table,  
plus free Hot Apple Cider to visitors.

Come and while involved, have fun!

Barbara Savage

**HAVE YOU SENT US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS???**  
**CONTACT THE SOCIETY ( [info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org) ) - JUNE**  
**HITCHCOX - ANDREA STEWART AND ENSURE YOU ARE UP**  
**TO DATE**

## The Library

The Library has taken possession of two interesting books. One is “**Seven Sundays**” by Julika Winkler, a member of the OHS. It is the story of churches along the Dundas Highway.

As well, we have received a book titled: “**History of Saint Mildred's-Lighbourn School**”, which was published by the school. The school has been in existence for over 110 years.

These and many more other interesting books are available at the OHS and, we have one of the largest marine book collections to compliment Oakville's nautical past.

Ev Bullied

## Volunteers

Our volunteers are the very lifeblood of the Oakville Historical Society. Without their ongoing dedicated efforts, perseverance and willingness to learn and teach, our Society could not survive.

They offer their skills in various ways - research, data collection, Thomas House interpreters, event food preparers, painters and carpenters to name just a few areas of assistance.



Volunteers can be of all ages, representing all aspects of Oakville's history and future. Without knowing and understanding the past, you have doomed yourself to an unfulfilled future.

Being a volunteer at the Society can be one way you can help form the future of Oakville. A rich heritage needs to be dusted off and proudly shown, not kept in a drawer that is only opened on special occasions. Be a volunteer and help

ensure that Oakville's past is remembered so that our future is rich in promise. (above pictures, taken by June Hitchcock - volunteers planning the 2008 season for the Thomas House)

If you or a friend is interested in volunteering, please don't hesitate to contact us at  
**info@oakvillehistory.org**



## SPRINGTIME AT THE SOCIETY

*Are you bored? Wondering what to do with your visiting friends and relatives? Are the kids/grandchildren driving you up the wall?*

*Well, come out and visit the “Thomas House” and relive some early Oakville history. Conveniently located at Lakeside Park – open Victoria Day weekend to Labour Day, Tuesdays to Thursdays & on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. 1pm – 4pm. September \* Sundays only. Mrs. Thomas is sure to be in to answer all your questions about pioneer life.*

## *THE WAY THINGS WERE*



1. Where is this building located?
2. When was it built?
3. What was it used for?
3. Who is the current occupant?

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**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**





~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
~~~~~



**THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER**

**SEPTEMBER 2008**

**Volume 42: Number 3**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**September 27**

“Harvest Festival” at the Thomas House, along with Doors Open.

**December 5<sup>th</sup>**

“Annual Wine and Cheese Party” at 110 King St.

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS (7:30pm, Knox Church)

**October 15<sup>th</sup>**

“Gun boats on the Great Lakes”  
– Cheryl MacDonald

An author coming to us from Nanticoke Ontario who specializes in Canadian history- The gunboats provided a sense of security after the Fenian raids into Canada.

**November 4<sup>th</sup>**

“An Evening with Mike Filey” – Mike Filey

He has written nearly two dozen books on various facets of Toronto’s past. For the past twenty years he has written a very popular column in the Sunday Sun called "The Way We Were". He can also be heard almost daily on AM740. **NOTE DATE CHANGE FOR THIS EVENT**

## HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS SCHEDULE (2 hours)

| MONTH  | MAIN ST                     | HERITAGE HOUSES                         | TRAFALGAR RD                                   |
|--------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| SEPT   | Sun 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2pm   | Sun 14 & 21, 2pm                        | Mon 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2pm                      |
| OCT    | Sun 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2pm   | -----                                   | Mon 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2pm                     |
| STARTS | S/W corner Navy & Lakeshore | OHS Society Building<br>110 King Street | St. John’s United Church<br>262 Randall Street |

## GHOST WALKS (1 HOUR)

| MONTH | Thursday/Tuesday<br>6:00,7:00 & 8:30pm                                                                                                               | Saturday<br>6:00, 7:00 & 8:30pm                                                          | Dates that have a third Walk – 6:00pm are <b><u>Bold &amp; underlined</u></b> |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sept  | -----                                                                                                                                                | 27 <sup>th</sup>                                                                         |                                                                               |
| Oct   | Thurs 9 <sup>th</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> , 23 <sup>rd</sup> & <b><u>30<sup>th</sup></u></b><br>Tues 21 <sup>st</sup> & <b><u>28<sup>th</sup></u></b> | 4 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , <b><u>18<sup>th</sup> &amp; 25<sup>th</sup></u></b> |                                                                               |

**Note:** Walks are \$12/ person

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This newsletter marks the end of a busy and very wet summer. Your Society continues to function like a well oiled watch. The Thomas House saw its usual crowds and quiet days. We had a very successful “**Bands in the Park**” and the office saw many visitors. I don't normally have the opportunity to spend much time at the office, but this summer I was working on some renovations to what was the back kitchen. It is amazing how busy the office is on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Judging by the number of visitors, researchers and volunteers, we are obviously doing our job well.

On 27 and 28 September, we will be very involved in the first annual **Oakville Doors Open**. With twenty venues in our first year, it's shaping up to be quite an event. We are the lead organization and are very pleased to have **Elizabeth Waldorf** as the event co-ordinator. **Barb Savage** is looking for volunteers to assist with the event. If you can help out, please call her at the office at 905 844-2695.

**Drew Bucknall** and his group have been making some progress with the development of plans for the future of the Society. We have a new and very powerful computer at the office and have recently upgraded our internet access. Training is ongoing. Our website has become an integral part of the operations of the Society. Many visitors are now booking spots on our walking tours online and the number of email inquiries continues to increase.

As always, if you have any concerns, questions or comments, please contact the office or me by email at [president@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:president@oakvillehistory.org).

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

**COVER PICTURE:** Montage showcasing some “**Doors Open**” sites - prepared by Carolyn Naismith. Page two - Band Stand in Lakeside Park.



## *Doors Open Oakville*

The first annual Doors Open Oakville event will be held September 27 to 28, 2008. Historical buildings, arts and cultural organizations, will be opening their doors free to the public - the event is part of a larger province-wide tourism initiative called “**Doors Open Ontario**”.

The Doors Open concept had its beginnings in France in 1984. From there it grew to 'European Heritage Days' in 11 countries. Today over 40 countries, worldwide, have initiated the program. Each year in Ontario, hundreds of historic buildings, natural spaces and heritage gardens – some of which are rarely accessible to the public – open for free as part of “Doors Open”. Many of the participating sites in Oakville will offer special activities such as tours, exhibitions and demonstrations. The guiding principle is to educate and inform the community about the importance of architectural, cultural and natural heritage sites.

Oakville is an ideal location for this event as it has such a rich history and many of its important architectural sites have been protected over the years, so that they remain a physical presence of the past for the present and the future. Oakville is also a town with great artistic and cultural resources, fostered through the years by individuals and groups, who are passionate about what they do and understand the value arts and culture bring to the quality of life in Oakville.

"The idea is that for one weekend, people from all different cultural and heritage institutions, open their doors to the public and give them a chance to see something



### **Media Launch – Doors Open** (L to R)

**Kevin Flynn MPP, Bill Nesbitt (Erchless), George Chisholm (OHS), Lindsay Williams (Ont. Trillium Foundation), June Cockwell (Oakville Community Foundation)**

they wouldn't normally see," said **Bill Nesbitt**, Oakville Museum supervisor and a member of the "Doors Open" Oakville committee. "It is kind of a behind the scenes peek and I think people will be surprised at their own community and there's more going on in Oakville than they think. It is also completely free and run by volunteers, which is nice. We want people to see what a great breadth and depth of culture exists here."

The launch for Doors Open Oakville was held June 26, 2008, at the Oakville Club, itself an historic structure having started as a granary over a century ago. Among those in attendance were: Ontario Trillium Foundation representatives **Lindsay Williams** and **Gilmar Militar** and the Oakville Community Foundation vice-chair **June Cockwell** -- both organizations having donated funds to make the event possible, the president of the Oakville Historical Society, **George Chisholm**, and the Oakville MPP, **Kevin Flynn**. "It will give people a sense of the heritage and history of the town of Oakville, so we encourage people to investigate their community and see what we have to offer," said George Chisholm. "This is a great program and I know that this will show people across the province the cultural treasures and riches we have right here in our own neighbourhood," said Kevin Flynn. "It is tough to convince people that our heritage needs to be preserved, so I'm thankful to all our volunteers who made this event possible. Oakville has a remarkable history and a great collection of historical buildings and now we have an opportunity to showcase that to the rest of the province."

To date, the featured Doors Open Oakville sites include:

|                                         |                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Oakville Museum at Erchless Estate      | Schooner Anitra docked at Oakville Club                       |
| St. Jude's Anglican Church              | Oakville Galleries in Gairloch Gardens                        |
| St. Jude's Cemetery                     | Merrick Thomas House                                          |
| Amos Biggar House/The Cork House        | Oakville's First Post Office                                  |
| The Granary                             | Oakville Lighthouse                                           |
| Palermo Schoolhouse                     | Sovereign House                                               |
| Masonic Temple                          | John Bell Chapel at Appleby College                           |
| George K. Chisholm House/Canadian Sound | Oakville Historical Society Archival Collection and Libraries |
| The Kensington (green roof)             | Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts                       |
| Turner Chapel Antiques                  |                                                               |

## Erchless Estate

This four-acre property includes the restored home of the founding family of Oakville, the Chisholm's, as well as a Coach House and Gardeners Cottage. In 1856 R.K Chisholm constructed a two-storey Custom House and the first Oakville branch of the Bank of Toronto. It is now home to the **Oakville Museum**.

Oakville Museum is a four-acre estate home and gardens set on the shores of Lake Ontario in downtown Oakville. The Museum preserves and interprets the town's history through the heritage and home of Oakville's founding family, the **Chisholms**. The Town of Oakville owes its existence to the vision of **Colonel William Chisholm** (1788-1842), an enterprising merchant and shipbuilder. In 1827, he bought 960 acres of land from the Crown at the mouth of the Sixteen Mile Creek on Lake Ontario to establish a port, shipbuilding yard and the village of Oakville.

Today, visitors can take a guided tour of Erchless, (c.1858), which is authentically restored to the elegance of its 1925 appearance. Visitors can also experience the **Custom House**, once home to a bank, general store and Oakville's Custom Offices, now housing the Museum's temporary exhibits with a beautiful view of Lake Ontario. Visitors may also enjoy a delightful walking tour of the estate grounds and gardens with a panoramic view of the Oakville Harbour. Across from Erchless is the Old Post Office - open seasonally.

Oakville Museum is owned and operated by the Town of Oakville, administered through the Recreation & Culture Department and is designated as a Category A Heritage Institution, holding objects of national significance.



Custom House

## St. Jude's Anglican Church

St Jude's was established in 1839. The present building has been the church's home since 1883. Completed in 1896 the Bell Tower houses a set of 9 chime bells cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London, England for a cost of \$3,587. The tower clock was installed in 1906, and is wound by hand once a week.

St. Jude's Church began its life as a mission on August 12, 1839 when the Rev. Tom Greene arrived on horseback from St. Luke's (Burlington), with his sacramental vessels and robes in saddle bags, to celebrate the first recorded Eucharist. At that stage in its development,

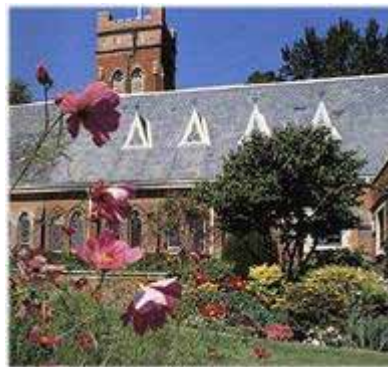


Oakville was a tiny, but lively village of some 500 souls. (Today, of course, it has multiplied over 200 times).



From 1842 to 1884, services were held in a frame building, once the property of early Methodists, which stood at the corner of Lakeshore Road and Thomas Street, site of the present Bank of Montreal. The present building has been the church's home since the first service on December 16, 1883, though many changes have been made. In 1887 the parish hall was completed to consist of what is now the main hall with a vaulted ceiling, featuring a beautiful Queen Victoria Jubilee window, the gift of a long-time warden,

Christopher Armstrong. The bell tower was completed in 1896. In 1924, the parish hall was enlarged by adding a large room and a kitchen to the west with three rooms and a small kitchen on the second floor as well as classrooms in the basement. The church itself was extended (in 1956) thirty-six feet to the north from its original wall (where the baptismal font is now located), and includes a gallery over the narthex. The parish hall had also been extended northward to provide office space and a new choir vestry. The sanctuary was enlarged by moving the communion rail to the steps of the chancel and the choir stalls to the floor of the nave.



### [St. Jude's Cemetery](#)

**I**n the mid 1800's, a plot of ground on the lake shore, about one mile west of the town, was purchased for a rectory and cemetery – now known as St. Jude's Cemetery. An addition was made in 1927 expanding the cemetery to 13 acres and the former rectory was moved to St Jude's Church. Many prominent Oakville settlers rest at this site.

St. Jude's Cemetery (on the Lakeshore Rd. across the Sixteen Mile Creek at Brookfield Road) has been the final resting place for many parishioners since the late 1850's, when the land was purchased for this purpose. In 1979, with the staffing management to run the cemetery placing a growing burden on the church, it was decided to surrender the property to the Town of Oakville, but the title remains "St. Jude's Cemetery."

### [Oakville Galleries in Gairloch Gardens \(Og2\)](#)

**Og2** is a public, contemporary art gallery located within a preserved Lakeshore estate and garden that date from the 1920's. The interior of the heritage building has been physically conserved and maintains climate and security controls to protect the exhibited art.

For Doors Open Oakville, visitors will enjoy Og2's exhibitions and a screening of *Paving the Way to Paradise*, an archive-based video documentary, produced by Og2, **Teresa Casas** and **Michelle Gay**. This documentary gives a brief, pictorial background



to the historical circumstances behind the design of **Gairloch Gardens**, while providing a larger historical context for development in Oakville from the turn of the twentieth century to present day.

### **Oakville's First Post Office**

Originally located on the corner of Lakeshore and Navy St, this building was used as a post office from 1835 to 1856. William Chisholm was the first Post Master. The building was put to other uses after 1856 such as a wool storehouse, and after a second storey was added it functioned as a blacksmith's shop, a stable, a welders shop and lastly a leather storehouse. Located in Lakeside Park, foot of Navy Street (east side).



### **The Anitra Schooner**

This classic wooden gaff-rigged schooner has been sailing out of the Oakville Club for 82 years under the **Macrae** family burgee for the entire time. Named after an Egyptian dancing girl, Anitra proved to be fast for her age. She flies some 100 racing pennants, including the esteemed 1939 Prince of Wales Cup. Designed by **Montye Macrae** and built in Hamilton in 1926, Anitra's 40 feet of oak frame and cedar planking has stood the test of time. Her rig, reminiscent of the old schooners of Oakville, is a pretty sight on Lake Ontario.



Anitra, with owner, Jamie Macrae

## Amos Biggar House (Cork House)

**A**mos Biggar was a United Empire Loyalist and built his home in 1816, in the Classic Revival Style and is a good example of a Loyalist farmstead home. The house is one of the few that remain in Oakville from **the “Mackenzie Rebellion”**. The **Jelinek Cork Group** of Oakville has turned it into the Cork House, a museum and product showroom wrapped into one.



In 1808, before the town of Oakville existed, the Crown granted the land at 502 Dundas Street West to **Daniel Shawson**. In 1815 Mr. Shawson sold the land to a United Empire Loyalist named **Amos Biggar**. Biggar built the original rectangular section of this house in 1816. Single storey additions were added to either side of the 1-1/2 storey rectangular original section. These additions were probably built

by the next owner of the house, **Philip Box**. In 1853, the house was sold to **Jonathan Pettit**. Already standing in 1837, the house is one of the few that remain in Trafalgar/Oakville from the "MacKenzie Rebellion". In 1903, the farm was sold to **George King** who reared at least 9 children there. In 1936, the farm was sold to **Harriet Pierce Bunting** who then sold the land to **Taymouth Industries Limited** in 1949.

Recently, the town of Oakville passed a bylaw to save the house from being destroyed. In 2000, the home was moved from its original location to the corner of the property where it also received its new address - 2441 Neyagawa Blvd. The house is now home to **Jelinek Cork Group** and the **Cork House**. The home has been restored and many elements besides the structure remain in their original form.



## George K. Chisholm House

The house was built in 1848 by its namesake, the son of Oakville's founder, **William Chisholm**. This 1½ story structure was one of the first brick buildings in Town. It is now home to local retailer **Canadian Sound**. There is a fine regency styled verandah with intricate trellises which wrap around the entire building. Some of this building's architectural features include a low pitched roof, a distinctive chimney, and a front door flanked by sidelights.



## Sovereign House

This house is a solid, stately brick building that was constructed by one of Bronte's founding fathers, **Charles Sovereign**, in 1825. In 1988, under the threat of demolition, the house was moved to the Bronte Bluffs. Charles Sovereign built this house on the property owned by his father, Philip, one of Bronte's earliest settlers. Charles opened the first school in the area in 1815 when he was just 17 years old. After teaching for several years he became the first local school inspector. His collection of journals, which he kept from age 36 to his death at 87 and are filled with interesting facts of life in Bronte in the 1800s, are now housed in the provincial archives.



From 1910 to 1915, Sovereign House was home to Canadian author **Mazo de la Roche**. She featured the home, as well as other details about Bronte and Oakville villagers' lives, in her novel "Possession", which became the prototype for her successful Jalna series. Today Sovereign House is the home of the Bronte Historical Society.

## Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts

The Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts was built in 1977 to address the needs of a growing community to have a live performing venue. Designed by Alastair Grant, a junior architect at Ron Thom Partnership, the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts was built as a 485 seat auditorium and 120 seat cabaret style studio theatre.

Home to the best local and international live entertainment right in the heart of downtown, the Oakville Centre has over 260 performances per year staged. Surrounded by fabulous restaurants and unique shopping experiences, the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts has been host to Juno award winning artists such as Jane Arden, Colin James, Andre' Philippe Gagnon, Al Simmons Leahy and international stars including Bob Newhart, Inti-Illimani, Tower of Power, Bill Cosby and many more. The Oakville Centre is also home to the Oakville Drama Series and The Oakville Symphony Orchestra.

## Oakville Historical Society Office and Archives

Located on the north side of the Erchless Estate are, “The Cottages”. They were erected in the mid 1950’s when Hazel Mathews and Juliet Chisholm relinquished Erchless and the Custom House to Hazel’s son.

Now equipped with environmental control systems, the Cottages provide areas for archive storage, a library and display space to protect and share the documents of **Oakville’s history.**



Compiled and/or written by Elizabeth Waldorf

## Volunteers:

For each site we will need 2-3 volunteers per day for the weekend of Doors Open Oakville, September 27-28, 2008. The event also has need of several interpreters for some of the sites, such as the Palermo Schoolhouse. Site information will be provided.

Contact:

Elizabeth Waldorf

Doors Open Oakville Coordinator

[Doorsopenoakville@gmail.com](mailto:Doorsopenoakville@gmail.com)

905.845.6601 x 5122

*To find out more about Doors Open Ontario call 1-800-ONTARIO (668-2746) or visit [www.doorsopenontario.on.ca](http://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca). Doors Open Ontario is a program of the Ontario Heritage Trust. The **Ontario Heritage Trust** is an agency of the Government of Ontario dedicated to identifying, preserving, protecting and promoting Ontario's heritage for present and future generations. Doors Open Oakville is generously supported by grants from the **Ontario Trillium Foundation**, which is an agency of the Government of Ontario and, the **Halton Healthy Community Fund**.*



Oakville Lighthouse

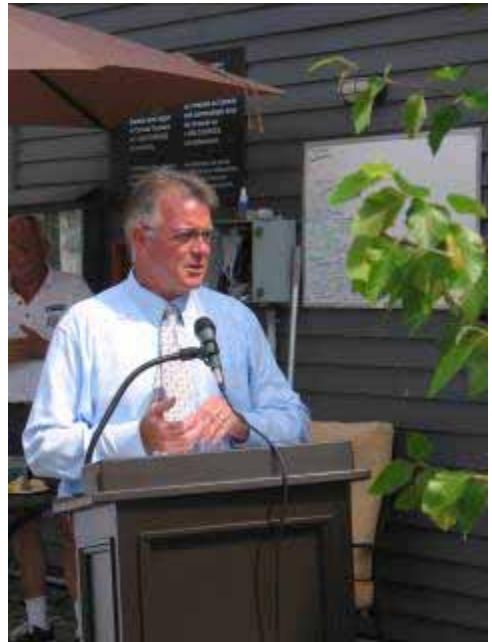


Palermo Schoolhouse

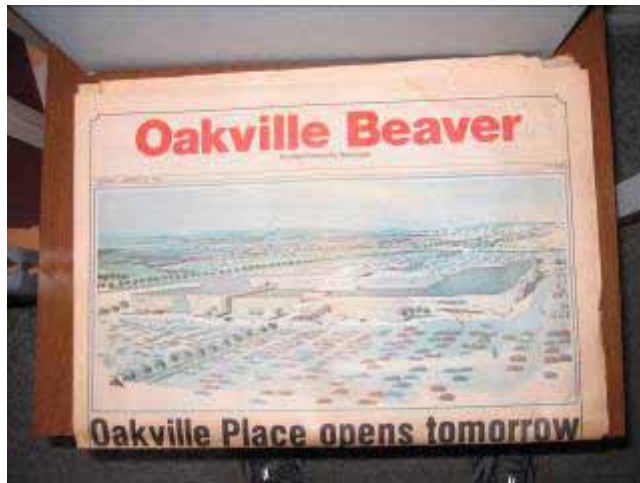




The Granary



# *AROUND THE SOCIETY*



## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – June 2008

The building is located in downtown Oakville at 234 Lakeshore Road East. It was built circa 1855/56. The building housed a series of hardware stores, beginning with **John McCorkindale** in 1856, followed in 1878 by **James Kelley**, who is shown in this 1897 photograph. His son-in-law, James McGregor, took over the business in the early 1900s. He stocked a variety of goods and had a tinsmithing and plumbing business as well. In the 1950s, Oakville Hardware operated their business in this building. The current occupant is **Prime Time Sports Bar**.

May Isaac

**Note:** One of the original stained glass windows (right) that was recovered from the building and now in the possession of Kelley’s great-great granddaughter, **Cathy Kelley**.



## May Presentation

Author **Dorothy Duncan** gave a very informative and tasty presentation on “Pioneer Cooking”. Not only were the audience given an in-depth history of pioneer cooking in Canada, but their taste buds were tantalized with an offering of two types of pioneer cooking – produced as close to the original as modern ingredients allow.

The audience left with an appreciation of the hardships in preparing a meal and the types and variety of foods that were available to early settlers.



**Dorothy Duncan (L) & Heather Davis**

Lance Naismith

## Community Spirit Award

Sponsored by the Oakville Beaver, the “**Community Spirit Awards**” was held at the Oakville Conference Centre, Holiday Inn (Highway 25), on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008.



Nominated by Carol Gall, with the nomination being supported by Barb Savage, George Chisholm and Marianne Hawthorne, our very own **Harry Barrett** was this year’s recipient.

Harry has continued to be involved in this community in a dynamic way and, a lot of us must thank him for his pursuit in making Oakville a better place to live. Congratulations on an award well deserved.

**Mayor Bob Burton & Harry Barrett (R)**

Lance Naismith



## CONGRATULATIONS HARRY

### Concert in the Park

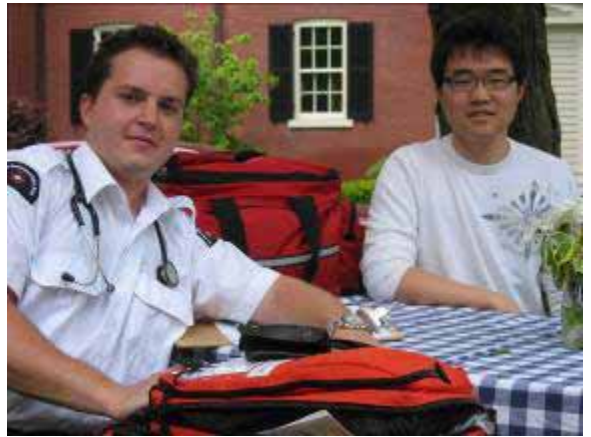
This years “Concert in the Park” was held under beautiful skies and, the waterfront crowd was totally entertained with the lively tunes of the “**Dixieland Band**” and the spellbinding melodies of the “**Oakville Wind Orchestra**”. Opened by our own Crier, Ian Burkholder, the crowd of music lovers enjoyed each others company, the weather and, having a lovely lunch while enjoying the music. Some even relaxed along the lakeside, quietly enjoying an afternoon of music while basking in the sun or, relaxing under a shady tree.





**Pat Mack** won first prize – Joyce Burnell's book on "Streets and Landmarks" for Best Hat and Costume and, **Gloria Niblock** won second prize for Best Hat, and received a gift certificate (\$25) to Bookers. Congratulations to both for helping make this concert a success.









**From this:**



**To this:**



**WE ALL HAD FUN!!!!!!**



## Cooking up a Storm at the Thomas House

Following in her mother's footsteps (the late Mabel Wilson), Carol is cooking a chicken and greeting visitors at the Thomas House. On many Sundays and Monday holidays Mabel and granddaughter, Jessica, would welcome everyone too.

During ghost walk season, Carol becomes a pirate and entertains visitors with spine tingling tales.

Barbara Savage



## Here's to Harry and Margaret

Harry and Margaret Buxton celebrated their 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary recently and an impromptu gathering of friends at the society occurred where we all shared in this happy occasion. I must admit that the chocolate ice cream cake was sinfully good. We are glad we were able to share this happy moment in their lives and look forward to their shared company around the Society.



## Oakville Trafalgar High School – 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Speaking of anniversaries, the Oakville Trafalgar High School recently held their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a social gathering and other events. One of our members, Evelyn Bullied had the honour of being the senior graduate that attended.



George Chisholm & Ev Bullied

**History** may be old news, but it takes people today to preserve it for our next generation. Without the help of volunteers, our local history will wither and die and the “**WHY**” a place developed will be lost to our future understanding.

Become involved in preserving what you and others have accomplished in Oakville and be a member of the Oakville Historical Society. It’s **your** history that will be preserved.

# **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



Picture courtesy of Barbara Ellis

- 1: Can you identify the name of this sail boat?
  - 2: Can you identify the captain sailing her and the passenger?
  - 3: Where was the picture taken?
- ~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**





~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
~~~~~



## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**DECEMBER 2008**

**Volume 42: Number 4**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

December 5<sup>th</sup>

“Annual Wine and Cheese Party”  
6:00pm to 9:00pm  
110 King Street



March 25<sup>th</sup>

“Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper”  
Knox Church – 7:30pm

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

February 18<sup>th</sup>

*Heritage Matters*: Speaker - Michael Seaman

May 20<sup>th</sup>

*Bring On The Bloomers* - the liberation of women during Victorian Times. Speaker - Ken Weber

October 21st

*The War of 1812*: Speakers - Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nichol and Mrs Nichol (in costume)

November 18<sup>th</sup>

*The History of the Lorne Scots*: Speaker - Rick Ruggle

**Note:** Evening Programs all at Knox Church at 7:30pm for 2009, unless otherwise noted.

If anyone would like to be added to our "HERITAGE EVENT" email list, please email [info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org). We interact with seven other Halton Heritage groups in order to promote all up-coming Heritage Events.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The fall season is winding down and on behalf of the Board I would like to extend a huge thanks to **Barb Savage** for all her work in organizing two major events. “**Doors Open**” was a smashing success. There were over 8000 visits over the two day period. Many of those I spoke to were from out of town and make a habit of attending Doors Open events all over the province. Barb was our representative on the Doors Open committee and put countless hours into the job. **Many of our volunteers assisted by supervising and, working at the venues around town.** Next year we hope to involve more of our volunteers.

No sooner was Doors Open finished when Barb had to gear up for the annual **Ghost Walks**. Barb and her group of volunteer walk leaders and refreshment servers had quite a job. Some of the groups were very large. It's interesting to note that an increasing number of walk bookings are coming through our evolving **website**.

We have recently had two excellent speakers' nights. In October, **Cheryl MacDonald** spoke about “*Gunboats on the Great Lakes*”. We plan to have her return to speak on a different topic. In early November, a large group heard **Mike Filey** speak about, “*Toronto Then and Now*”. He had a great selection of before and after photos. Guess who organizes these events? If you have suggestions for speakers, you can contact her through our website **www.oakvillehistory.org**.

Many aren't aware that our Newsletter editor, **Lance Naismith**, prepares two versions of this newsletter: a **print** version and an amplified and larger version on our **website**.

Our annual members “**Christmas Wine and Cheese**” event is fast approaching. I hope to see many of you there on **5 December**.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

**COVER PICTURE:** Cover art was supplied by Meagan McLellan.

# *Christmas Memories of Oakville*

*Reflecting gratefully on the good things in life  
with Barbara Thornton-Savage*

As the holiday season approaches, I once again reach for my volume of Christmas recipes that have inspired our family's celebrations for decades. These recipes are a kind of time capsule carefully documenting the festive foods enjoyed by our little Oakville community almost a century ago, Sitting down with a cup of tea, I open Dad's recipe book and remember. As I drift back through the years, I once again enter an enchanting world of memories and recapture the sheer joy of this magical holiday season from my childhood.

Suddenly it's Christmas time, 1939 again. I'm just eight years old and standing at the top of the stairs savoring the wood smoke from the oven in the bakeshop behind the kitchen below. I can hear Mom and older sister Joanie laughing and humming our favorite holiday tunes as I make my way down to see Dad.

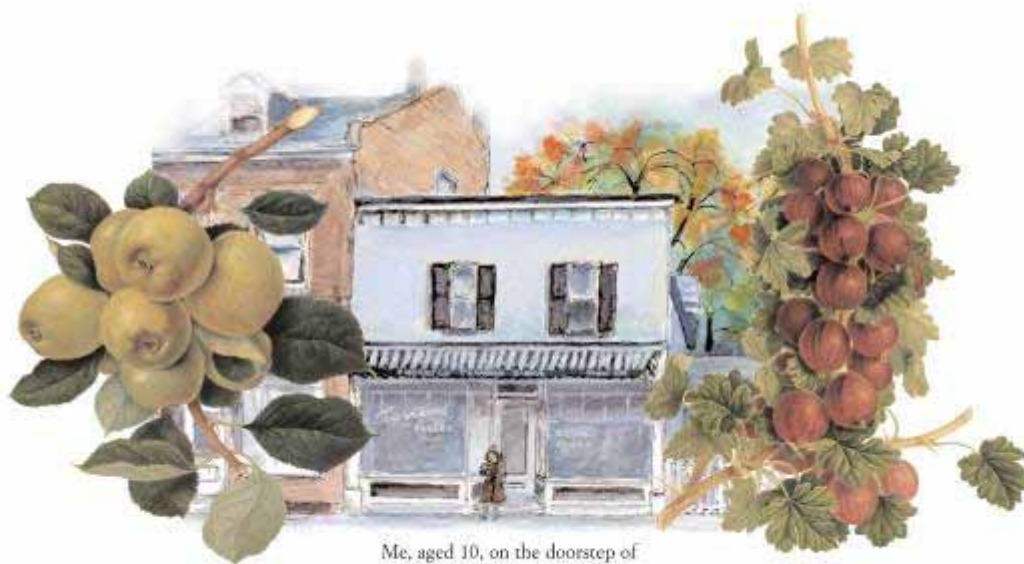
Dad's day began at 4 a.m. everyday except Sunday. All the bread and baked goods had to be prepared before the store opened at 9 o'clock. Dad was so proud of his little shop, Thornton' Bakery, on Colborne Street (now Lakeshore Road) with the cozy flat above that was our home. The large oven in the bake shop was wood-burning, so Dad had to start early to get the oven hot enough to bake the bread, cakes and pastries that would soon fill the shelves and window of one half of the store.

The other half was the children's favorite where the fragrance of cinnamon, orange peel, cloves and peppermint permeated the air. This was the candy side with baskets and jars overflowing with candy canes and humbugs, maple fudge, chocolate, roasted cashews and red skin peanuts. All sumptuous treats for sharing or giving. Best of all was the Mixed Nut Brittle. Dad made and sold tons of it. Unfortunately he never became a rich man because he really didn't count his hard labor when working out the price of the goods.

The sweet smell of peppermint filled the whole of the store and flat above. There were pans and pans of candy canes all made by hand. The whole family took part in the exciting task of making these sparkling festive confections. First, Dad would boil the fragrant toffee mixture until it formed a mound, he would then cut it in half. One half he

would pull over a hook, over and over again until it turned pure white. Pulling the hot toffee on the hook was strenuous work but Dad was strong and never complained. He then added bright red food coloring to the other half that he laid in strips over the white and twisted into a long rope. This was cut into varying small lengths and hastily passed along to my Mom, brother, sister and me so we could bend a hook in one end. We had to work fast as the candy would harden quickly.

I recall just before Christmas standing outside the store looking in at the candy window. I suppose I must have appeared wistful because a very kind lady suddenly went into the shop and bought me a small bag of candy. I can still see her shining eyes as she handed me this gift. I quickly realized she did not know who I was but even though I was a young child I knew not to spoil her act of generosity by saying that my father owned the shop! It's strange but seventy Christmases later, I still vividly remember her kindness.



Me, aged 10, on the doorstep of Thornton's Bakery in 1941.

Once again I call upon my store of Christmas memories as I push open the door and wiggle my way through the crowded shop. It's impossible not to get swept up in the Christmas spirit when its bustling all around you. The waft of warm butter and vanilla mingle with the sugary scent of a hot batch of cookies baking in the oven. But just now I've got a job to do. I interrupt Mom serving customers by giving her a little hug as I



squeeze past into the bake shop in the back.

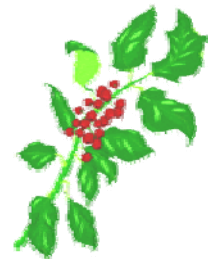
There, wedged between long tables holding all different sizes of dark fruit cake sumptuously topped with an inch of almond paste and a thin sheet of crisp white icing, I can see my Dad and sister Joan. They don't notice me they are too busy writing Merry Christmas and Season's Greetings on the cakes before piping a scroll around the border and adding a Christmas rose or two. Since I was not good at decorating, my job was to follow along and add a small stem of paper holly.

In retrospect, it sounds as if we all participated in child labor, but it was so much fun and such a sense of connection with the whole family. And there was always lots of free time too. As soon as I finished my holly contribution I dashed out to meet with some friends to go ice-skating on the river. It had been so cold that we were able to skate right up to the Old Mill built by William Chisholm.

Now it's dusk and I'm walking home along the river path towards the town. As I reach the high street I am greeted by a warm, golden light radiating from all the windows. A magical moment in twilight with Christmas bells ringing as I enter the shop. The sound gives me a sudden rush of happiness as I anticipate the festive time to come. On Christmas day the church bells chime Christmas carols which echo along Colbourne Street, always quite deserted on that most special of days.

It's closing time as I enter the shop. Mom just smiles at me as I scoop up one lonely gingerbread man left on the tray and whispers that there is a plate of sugar frosted mincemeat pies to enjoy after supper. Tomorrow Dad would be baking some Christmas cookies specially for us to offer Santa on Christmas Eve.

In retelling the story of my childhood I appreciate there are few things that stir warmer memories than the food we remember from that time. I would like to share with you one of my particular favorites - Dad's recipe for Mixed Nut Brittle - which I very much hope you will one day press into your own book of Christmas memories.





## *Ingredients for Mixed Nut Brittle*

2 cups fine white sugar  
1 teaspoon salt,  
2/3 cup of water

1/3 cup of corn syrup  
1/3 cup of butter

1/4 teaspoon lemon juice  
4 cups mixed nuts (Brazil, walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds, and cashews)

## *Preparation*

Butter a cookie tray with an lip at least 1 inch high, and place in the freezer.

## *To mix*

In a heavy pot, over a gentle heat, combine sugar, salt and water. Stir continuously until all sugar crystals are dissolved. Put in the candy thermometer, clipping it to the side of the pan, and turn up the heat.

Bring the mixture to a boil and then add corn syrup. Do not leave the boiling sugar unattended as it rises quickly in the pan and may boil over. Heat the mixture up to 280 degrees F. Add butter and continue to cook, stirring frequently. The temperature is very high and splashed boiling sugar syrup is extremely dangerous - as dangerous as boiling oil on the skin - so be very careful.

When the temperature reaches 285 degrees F, remove from heat and stir in the lemon juice. Immediately add the nuts and mix thoroughly. Pour onto the cold, buttered tray, and separate into clusters by pulling the mixture apart with the tines of two buttered forks. Work quickly, as the toffee will harden very fast.



*Editor's Note: As Christmas approaches, we all start to prepare for the festivities and make plans for our family activities. Christmas is also a time of reflection, a time to rejoice in our good fortune and hopefully, time spent with family and friends will take the edge off those hardships we have had over the year. This issue brings us an article written by Harry Buxton, from the pages of our December 1998 edition and some short notes from our December 1994 edition. I hope you enjoy this issue and your fortunes continue to prosper in the New Year.*

## **"THE TRADITIONS OF CHRISTMAS"**

There is no evidence that **Jesus** was born on December 25th. What evidence there is suggests that his birth occurred several years before zero A.D., most probably in the year 6 B.C. It was the second century that first used the date as the feast of the Nativity. In the year 350, December 25th was officially declared by Pope Julius I, as Christmas, the birth day of Jesus. The date coincides roughly with the winter solstice, the day on which the sun appears to move from its southernmost position, towards the north.

The day itself had to be rescheduled when the Gregorian calendar replaced the errors of the Julian calendar and eleven days were "lost".

There is a tradition in Britain that **Joseph of Arimathea** visited and at Glastonbury, planted his thorn staff which grew and bloomed each Christmas Eve, and so did its cuttings and seedlings. After the calendar change, a crowd of people assembled in Buckinghamshire, England, on December 25th (old calendar) to see their descendent thorn bloom. It did



**Commin's Music Hall \*\***

not. Back again on January 6th (old calendar), December 25th (new calendar), and the thorn bloomed. The tree knew best!

Christmas lights perhaps developed from an Irish tradition of placing candles in their cottage windows, to help the Holy Family should it pass by. Decoration of homes with greenery seems to have been developed from very early times - holly, evergreen boughs, and of course the mistletoe. The power of mistletoe derives from Nordic legend, when **Balder the Beautiful's** mother, **Frigga**, got all things - rocks and trees – to promise not to harm her son. Since Frigga neglected the mistletoe as harmless already, jealous Loki fashioned an arrow from it, and had Balder's blind brother Holder shoot it at the protected one, killing him. **Loki** was punished, but Frigga blessed the innocent mistletoe and it became a symbol of love.



**Oakville Harbour in Winter**

Incorporated into a Christmas garland and hung up, it became the "kissing bough", and any lady who "accidentally" wandered beneath it paid the penalty; she must allow herself to be kissed.

The Christmas tree is attributed by legend to **Martin Luther**, who, walking at night, viewed the starry sky through trees, and hurried home to place candles on a tree he brought in.

As to the benevolent gentleman we know as Santa Claus, he had his beginnings in an early Christian bishop, **Nicholas, Bishop of Myra**, in Turkey. After his death in 343 A.D. he became the patron saint of children, students, Russians, and also of bankers, sailors - even of vagabonds and thieves. In New Amsterdam, New York, Saint Nicholas became mispronounced as Sinta Claes - hence to us now Santa Claus.

The feast of the twelve days of Christmas, early was celebrated with generously loaded tables of good food. Seventeenth century diarist, Samuel Pepys, was well reputed to enjoy a good and hearty meal. He has been kind enough to leave us a recipe for mince pies.

## "To Make Mince-pyes:

Take a pounce of tongue after tis par boyled, two pound of suet, chop them very small, three pipins chopped small, and one lemon pill shred small, two pound courance a few raisons shred, one ounce of spice, the juice of one lemon, halfpinte of sack, some dates shred, a quarter of a pound of candeed cittron, lemon and oring pill, and sugar to your likeing, mingle well together for use."

Our own Oakville diarist, **George Sumner**, does not describe a very elaborate Christmas. Christmas Eve was a working day, as was the day after Christmas.

Christmas Day itself was usually the occasion for a few visitors, coming for Dinner and Tea. Less frequently George and **Mary Sumner** went to visit family. His monthly accounts for December show modest purchases to celebrate the season. A turkey (1873 - 98 cents; 1875 - \$1.35; 1878 - 60 cents!) was presumably the Christmas mid-day dinner centerpiece, though George never commented on its palatability. A Christmas cake was the feature of the tea, with mid-December purchases of fruit.

Useful articles such as boots and overshoes may have been gifts or winter essentials, but the luxury of slippers (for Mary and daughter Tilla) did appear, as well as a new dress for Mary.

But the thing that counted most for George Sumner in winter and, particularly at Christmas, was sleighing.

Typically, in spring and fall, the roads were a sea of mud. In summer, they were rutted and dusty. Not till the frosts and snow of winter did the roads firm up, and out came the horse-drawn sleighs. No sleighing was an unhappy comment; good sleighing or fine sleighing cheered up George Sumner, even if on Christmas Day he had to clear snow from sidewalks.



It was on the passable winter roads that **Mrs. Anna Jameson** was able to reach Oakville from York in 1837 (January). Travelling in a sleigh, "like a barouche," drawn by two grey horses, she reached the "**Oakville House Hotel**" kept warm on the ride "burned in furs; a blanket....." and "buffalo and bear skins heaped all over". During her couple of hours at the Oakville House, the stage coach arrived. "It was a heavy wooden edifice, about the size and form of an old-fashioned lord mayor's coach placed on runners, and raised about a foot from the ground; .....painted bright red, and long icicles hung from the roof."

The "monstrous machine" discharged eight men equally heavily protected against the cold. They proved "when undisguised", to be gentlemen en route to their duties in the House of Assembly.

It must be the lighter vehicle, rather than the stage on runners, which aroused in George Sumner's breast the sights and sounds of Christmas.

Perhaps we all keep in our memories and recall some aspects, some traditions of Christmas past. We hope they come back to you as happy thoughts at this season of goodwill, when "abundance rejoices and want is keenly felt."

**Merry Christmas!**

Harry Buxton

\*\* Sketch of the Commin's Music Hall by Karen Stephenson. Built in 1894 by Mr. Commin it was located on the N.E. Corner of Trafalgar and Lakeshore Roads in Oakville, until it burned to the ground in 1898. Pauline Johnson, known for her aboriginal poetry, did a recitation at the Hall.

### *Winter Notes*

From our archives, verses from a couple of Christmas Cards: This verse appears on a card sent by a member of the Lightbourne family.

*"Hearty Christmas Greetings"*

*"To you and yours. Glad sunny hours  
I wish you most sincerely  
Through all the year May fortune cheer  
And not at Christmas merely."*



And, not everything was sunny at Christmas. Another poem, this from an archival clipping, has a more plaintive story -

*"The wind blows high,  
O prithee note,  
Soon we shall need an overcoat.  
And if we wear  
The one we had  
Last Winter, Thousands will be sad.  
But if a new one  
We should buy,  
How can we pay the tailor guy?"*

And:

Remarkable snowfalls have been experienced at Oakville, a couple of times within living memory. One blanketed the Town in 1936. The Toronto Daily Star of February 14th, 1936, reported how snow and wind, piling up drifts eight feet deep, tied up traffic on the Lakeshore Highway near Oakville. "Dozens of automobiles, many trucks and buses, were abandoned along the roadside and their occupants took shelter in friendly farm houses." There was another very heavy fall in 1944. Snowbanks on Lakeshore Road were recorded in photographs.

But sometimes the snowfall just added to the beauty of **Oakville**.

And sometimes, the cold is to be enjoyed, by skating on the **Sixteen**.

**Are you looking for a Christmas gift for that hard to buy somebody in your family? Well, look no further and visit our website ([www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)) and click on PUBLICATIONS. And remember, as a member, you get a great discount on the books. It is worth the visit.**



# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – September 2008**

The photo was of the “*Anitra*”, showcased during the 2008 “**Open Doors**” event in Oakville. Sailing her off Dumfounder Island, is her Captain, Jamie Macrae and passenger Jane Hawkrigg.

Lance Naismith

Addendum: In our September solution, please add the following: “...! James Kelley, who is shown in this 1897 photograph’ should read, ' His son John, who is shown in this 1897 photograph, continued the business in 1893.

## **Outreach –Thomas House**

Pat Mack opened the Thomas House for 128 visitors (3 busloads) from Toronto. The visiting ladies were Chinese and spoke no English, so, translators accompanied them. Since Pat had lived in Taiwan for four years, she was able to speak a little Mandarin. Needless to say, the visitors were thrilled.



Barbara Savage

## October Presentation

Our October presentation, held at Knox Presbyterian church, was “**Gun Boats on the Great Lakes**”. With period pictures, **Cheryl MacDonald** gave us a very informative lecture on how the gunboats provided a sense of security to Canada after the **Fenian Raids**. Tied in with naval history from the U.S. Civil War and War of 1812, she gave an excellent overview that not only gave the politics of the period but, also the living conditions our sailors lived under.

Lance Naismith



L/R: Cheryl MacDonald; George Chisholm, President; Andrea Stewart, Membership Director



## The “Ghost Walks”

The Ghost Walks were a great success thanks to the many volunteers who helped, especially the three leaders **Wendy Belcher, Carol Gall and Francine Landry Smith**. It was Francine’s idea to develop the Ghost walks as a fund raiser for the Society. Next year **Julie Mathers** is joining the leaders.

Barbara Savage

## Membership Renewal Time

Just a reminder that **memberships are due** for renewal December 31<sup>st</sup>. If you have renewed any time between September 1<sup>st</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup>, please disregard this notice. If not, would you be kind enough to use the enclosed form to renew your **membership for 2009**.

Thank you for your continued support.

Andrea Stewart

## Acquisition to the Library

We have acquired a copy of “Mr. Jim - Personal Recollections of James W. Snow. Jim Snow worked as a farmer before entering political life, and was the president of Snow Construction Ltd., Snow Properties Ltd. and Oakville Investments Ltd..

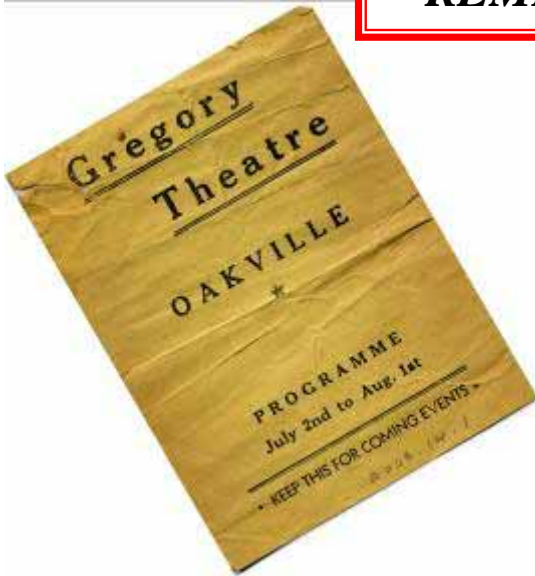
For more on his life, go to: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_W.\\_Snow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_W._Snow).

Lance Naismith

## Can you Help?

We are in possession of a small copy of the “**Order of Service at the Marriage of Dorothy Hawthorn Cox to Max Miller Wyndham**”. If you are related to either of these people or, know how to contact someone, please contact Ev Bullied at the Society and let her know. It would be nice for a family member to acquire the booklet.

## DO YOU REMEMBER?



### Historical Walks

For those who have taken our Historical and Ghost Walks, I think you can say that they are a very enjoyable way to learn about Oakville's history. Our guides are volunteers who want to share the rich history of Oakville with those who want to know about how Oakville developed. Here is one such testimonial from one of our guests.

*Dear OHS*

*With nine other members of our Gourmet Group, we enjoyed a lovely tour of historical Trafalgar Road last Saturday. I hadn't realized that Trafalgar Road had so much history!*

*We should thank George Chisholm, our guide, for making it so interesting and informative. George's extra little asides added a lovely flavour to the written script and we all enjoyed it immensely.*

*Thank you all for your work in making the historical society such an asset to the town.*

*Heather Strucken*

## *Blast from the Past*

# McGregor's Hardware Store

---

Shelf and Heavy Hardware  
Builder's Hardware  
Tin and Plumbing shop in connection  
All work guaranteed.  
Vacuum Cleaners to let, hand and electric.  
Paints, Oils and Glass.  
Screen Doors and Windows.  
Refrigerators.  
Spades, Hoes, Rakes, and Shovels.

**ALL AT ROCK BOTTOM  
PRICES.**

---

**Jas. N. McGregor**  
Oakville                      ✨                      Ontario

Munn's United Church article from 1973

## *Oakville church 150 years old Sunday*

OAKVILLE — A church founded by itinerant "saddlebag preachers" on a homestead here will celebrate its 150th anniversary Sunday.

Munn's United Church on Dundas Highway E., believed to be the oldest ac-

tive congregation in the Oakville area, will celebrate its founding at both 11.15 a.m. and 7 p.m. services.

The efforts of the saddlebag preachers, who travelled west from Toronto on Dundas St., met with suc-

cess among the early settlers in North Oakville and by 1823 a group was meeting at the Munn family homestead. The group flourished and grew along with the small community known as Munn's Corner and by 1826 regular serv-

ices were being held in the school house.

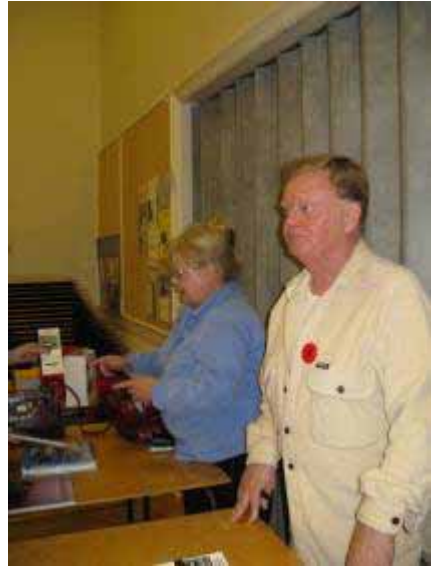
In October 1844 a frame church was built on the northeast corner of Sixth Line and Dundas St. It was replaced just before the turn of the century with the brick church now being used.

The denomination changed with Church Uni in 1926 but the congregation continued under the Unit Church of Canada and la joined with another pione congregation in North O ville, Wesley Unit Church, to form the pres group.



## [An Evening with Mike Filey](#)

On Tuesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, our regular Knox presentations treated us to “**An Evening with Mike Filey**”, author, columnist and contributor to AM 740 radio. His passionate interest in Toronto history led to years of research and involvement in the Toronto Historical scene and his presentation style and humour held our interest. His presentation interspersed photographs and drawings of Toronto, then and now. The old photos evoked nostalgia, even for those of us too young to remember, and the glossy colourful photos of Toronto now, despite the loss of many of the old buildings, are quite beautiful.



Author Mike Filey

It was heartening to learn of the loving and thoughtful preservation of many of the old, handsome buildings: The Royal York; Old City Hall; Old, Old, City Hall (now St. Lawrence Market); and, St. Lawrence Hall, to name a few. Mike’s passion reminds us of the importance of the work of preserving our heritage, while allowing for intelligent development. Mike’s handsome book, “**TORONTO, The Way we Were**”, is now available in bookstores, just in time for Christmas.

Andrea Stewart





# *THE WAY THINGS WERE*



1. Can you guess the date?
2. What is the street?
3. What is the building?

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
~~~~~



**THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 2009**

**Volume 43: Number 1**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

March 25<sup>th</sup>

“Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper”

\*\*\* Note time change: Knox Church – 6:30pm

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

May 20<sup>th</sup>

*Bring On The Bloomers - The Liberation of Women during Victorian Times.* Speaker - Ken Weber

October 21st

*The War of 1812:* Speakers - Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nichol and Mrs. Nichol (in costume)

November 18<sup>th</sup>

*The History of the Lorne Scots:* Speaker - Rick Ruggle

**Note:** Evening programs all at Knox Church at 7:30pm for 2009, unless otherwise noted.

Have you started planning for the summer yet?

Don't forget to visit our website at

[www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) and check out the upcoming **Heritage** and **Ghost** walk schedules.

## New OHS Sunday Hours

To accommodate those members who are unable to visit the Society during regular hours, we will be open **EVERY THIRD SUNDAY** as well. If you would like to volunteer to assist, please contact the Society. It would be one way to get further involved in Oakville's history.

If anyone would like to be added to our "**HERITAGE EVENT**" email list, please email [info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org). We interact with seven other Halton Heritage groups in order to promote all up-coming Heritage Events.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**T**here was an excellent photo in a recent issue of the Oakville Beaver of **Harry Buxton** receiving a lifetime achievement award from the Lieutenant Governor for all his work promoting history and heritage with the Society. As with most awards, this one was well-deserved but should really be joint as he and Margaret have been a team for many years.

In January we offered a whisky nosing (tasting) in conjunction with the Oakville Museum. **Bill Nesbitt**, supervisor at the museum, did a super job and we are grateful to **Mr Con Constandis, CEO of Corbies Distillers**, who were our sponsors for the event. The tasting was the first in a series and each of those who attended had a special surprise at the end of the evening. In April we will be hosting a wine tasting event and later in the spring, a beer sampling. We hope that these tastings will become regular events. We are also starting to gear up for another busy season. **Doors Open** will run again in September and the first organizing meeting will be held later this week. You'll hear more about it in the near future. The **Annual General Meeting** is set for later in the month. I hope to see many of you there for our now-famous pot-luck supper.

Many of us were saddened to hear of the sudden death this past week of **Norm Sadler** at the young age of 66. A couple of years ago Norm, not a member at the time, took on the job of recreating our **web site** and has done a wonderful job. It has become a very important way for us to communicate with the public. Norm spent countless hours working on it and in improving our use of technology in the office. At the same time he got "hooked" on the history of Oakville. We will certainly miss him around the office and extend our sympathies to his family.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

**COVER PICTURE:** Picture of the "Coalhaven" in an unknown port, highlighting the unloading equipment.

## “Bayanna” and Coals to Oakville

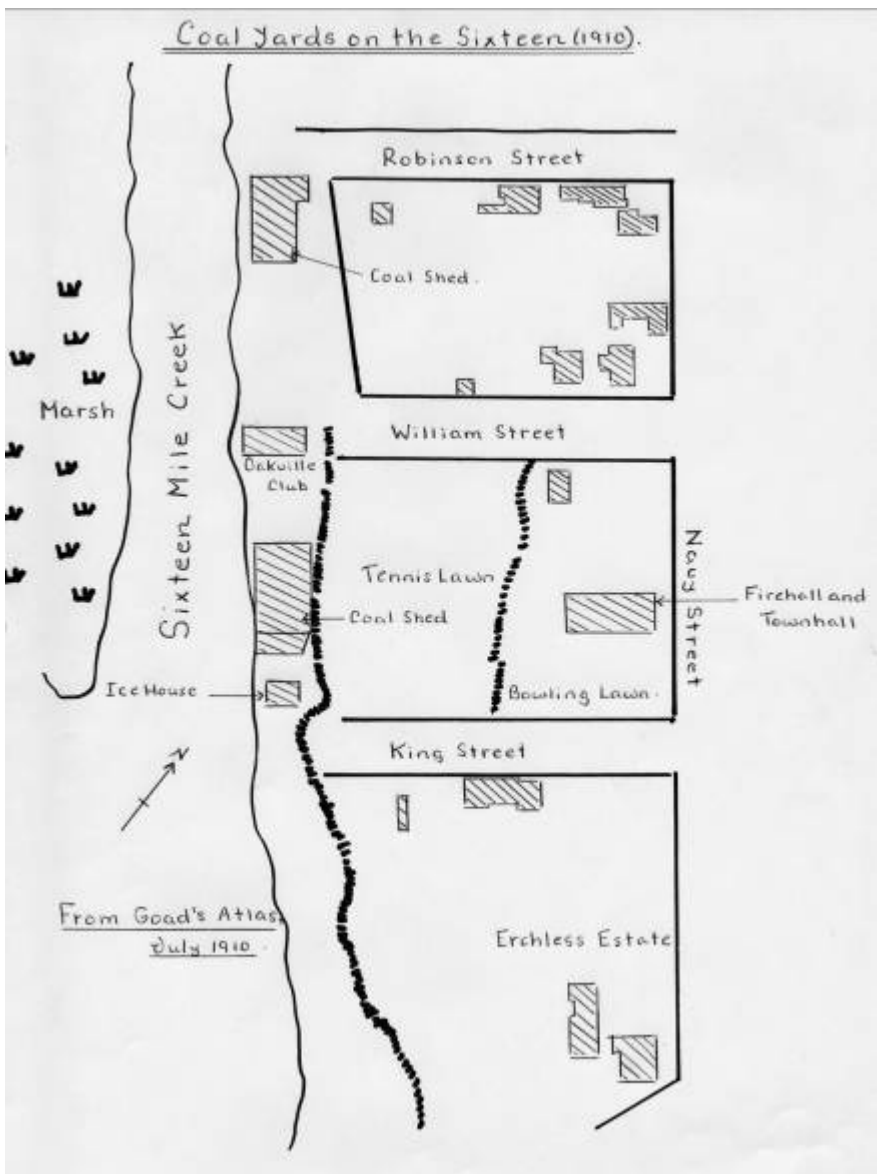
Remember the days when men, blackened with dust, delivered coal to homes and businesses? Companies like **Elias Rogers** and **Milnes** were synonymous with these deliveries in Toronto. In Oakville names like **Hillmer** and **McDermott** conjure up images of those times.

With the advent in the mid-1800's of coal burning stoves, furnaces, steam locomotives and other machinery fuelled by coal, the transport of this “**Black Gold**” from the Appalachian coalfields of West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, and especially Pennsylvania, became a vital trade. Coal was gradually supplanting wood as the main energy source for Ontario's homes and industries. The railways soon recognized the efficiency of coal in firing their larger engines, especially in light of the dwindling supplies of cordwood, as centuries-old tracts of timber fell to the axe.

Ontario was without its own coal supply. The nearest deposits were found in the states mentioned earlier. Coal could be delivered by rail, however it was expensive. The alternative was to be found with the many freighters and schooners plying the Great Lakes. They were able to cut costs by collecting cargos of coal at U.S. ports, such as Oswego and Charlotte (Rochester), New York and Ashtabula, Ohio, delivering them with considerable savings to Canadian ports like Oakville. The Pittsburgh, Shenango and Lake Erie Railroad Company had a line from Butler, Pennsylvania, in the coalfields near Pittsburgh, north to the Lake Erie ports of Erie, Pennsylvania and Conneault, Ohio. South-bound trains brought iron ore from the Lake Superior region south to the steel mills of Pittsburgh. Northbound trains transferred the coal in the empty freight cars northward. Another railway involved was the Pittsburgh, Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad. The coal ships traveled across Lake Erie, through the Welland Canals, to ports along the north shore of Lake Ontario. Coal from the ports along the south shore of Lake Ontario in New York simply crossed the lake to markets like Toronto, Oakville and Cobourg.

Upon arrival at the Sixteen in Oakville, the coal-laden steam cargo vessels and schooners would unload at the two coal yards on the east bank of the river, between Robinson and King Streets. The coal was unloaded by wheelbarrow from the schooners. In the larger steel-hulled vessels like “**Bayanna**” and “**Coalhaven**”, there were on-board conveyors to transfer the coal from the ship to the yard. A lot of our coal came across the

lake from Charlotte, the port for Rochester, New York. This coal was carried from the coalfields to the south by the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railroad.

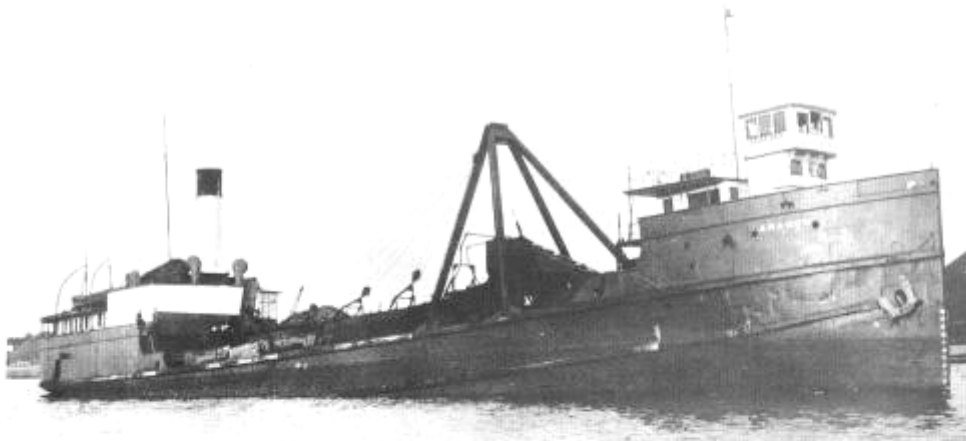


The coal was piled separately in the coal yards as to variety and size for different uses. “Chestnut” and “Pea” sizes, for example, were used in household furnaces. “Cannell” coal was used in fireplaces. “Soft Coal” was used for heating in larger buildings. There were three coal, wood and ice businesses in Oakville prior World War



Two, operated by **Mr. Ford**, **Mr. Hillmer**, and the **McDermott Family**. Mr. Hillmer operated his business on the Seventh Line (Trafalgar Road), south of the railway tracks on the east side. Main Lumber later occupied the site. The coal from the **Marlatt and Armstrong Tannery**, on the west bank of the Sixteen, south of Colborne Street West (Lakeshore Road West), was unloaded by the tannery powerhouse, which had boilers and furnaces to supply steam and heat for the factory, then the largest industry in Oakville until it ceased operations in the mid-1920's. The steam locomotives, which pulled freight, inter-city passenger and commuter trains through Oakville, also required substantial amounts of coal.

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ARAGON, in the colours of the Tees Transit Company, is seen in the Toronto Ship Channel in this 1945 photo by J. H. Bascom.



BAYANNA, complete with COLLIER's funnel and forward cabins, is outbound at Toronto Eastern Gap on September 11, 1960. Photo by the Editor.

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One vessel which brought “coals to Oakville” for a number of years was the steel-hulled freighter “Bayanna”. She was a self-unloader, which meant that land-based equipment was not required. Such was the case with most of the smaller lake ports like Oakville. “Bayanna” had been constructed at Wyandotte, Michigan in 1896. She was 247 feet in length and had a 42 foot beam. “Bayanna” was powered by a triple-expansion engine. The vessel was registered at Cleveland, Ohio, and initially bore the name “**Aragon**”. Owned by C.R. Jones and Associates, she sailed under the colours of the Argo Steamship Company. Especially built for the Welland Canal service, she handled many cargos like corn, iron ore, coal and lumber. She was painted with a standard black hull, with white cabins and a black stack. Her boiler house was painted grey. After a short time on the Great Lakes, “Aragon” was transferred to the eastern seaboard of the U.S., where the vessel served in the lumber trade until 1916.

Many fascinating stories are connected with “Aragon”. In one incident in November, 1921, “Aragon’s” travels took her to Chicago, where she loaded 75000 bushels of corn for delivery to the Edwardsburgh Starch Company on the St. Lawrence River at Cardinal, Ontario. All went smoothly until “Aragon” cleared the Welland Canal at Port Dalhousie. Down-bound on Lake Ontario, she was confronted with a dense fog which blanketed the calm lake. She strayed from her normal course and eventually, on the evening of November 17<sup>th</sup>, she arrived in Athol Bay off Prince Edward County. Athol Bay was nowhere near her intended destination. Continuing on her journey, “Aragon” passed the infamous **Wicked Point**, an area of dangerous shoals, where other vessels had met their doom. However, she was too close to shore and she grounded on **Salmon Point**. “Aragon” summoned assistance from Kingston. The Donnelly Wrecking Company soon responded. As the Salmon Point area is completely open to the lake and provides no shelter along the shore, “Aragon” was in a precarious position when the weather began to worsen. The salvage efforts became complicated. To keep the ship from pounding on the bottom, her hold was flooded. Salvage work resumed. A small quantity of undamaged corn was removed from her hold before the Donnelly crews were chased from the exposed wreck by the inclement weather. Early the next year, **Mr. John Russell**, a well known Toronto shipping entrepreneur, took over the salvage efforts and succeeded in freeing the vessel.

“Aragon” was bought in 1922 by John Russell and **Robert Campbell** of Montreal, repaired and returned to service under the Canadian Flag. Five years later she was converted to a self-unloading sandsucker at Canadian Vickers Shipbuilding, Longue Pointe, Montreal. Older canallers like “Aragon” were becoming obsolete, replaced by a new generation of British-built vessels of the same size and therefore still able to negotiate the canals around the rapids in the St. Lawrence River.

In the 1929 Depression, the decline in the building trades, a leading to a slump in the demand for construction materials, caused “Aragon” to be placed out-of-service until 1941. In that year Tees Transit of Hamilton bought her. At this time the more modern British-built canallers were utilized to assist with the war efforts in the North Atlantic convoys, leaving older canallers like “Aragon” to fill the gap.

Another interesting episode in “Aragon’s” life took place in December of 1945. She was loading a cargo of coal at Sodus, New York, for delivery to the Soward’s coal dock at Kingston. Encountering an early winter storm on her outbound passage, she returned to Sodus. She waited several days for the storm to abate, and her supply of bunker coal was running very low. The vessel returned to the Sodus coal dock for re-fuelling. However, the temperature plummeted during the night, and by morning “Aragon” was frozen fast to the pier! She managed to break free, but on steaming into Lake Ontario it was discovered that she was taking water forward. The hole was plugged with a mattress, of all things, and she was able to travel to Kingston safely. She immediately unloaded at Soward’s dock, this process bringing the damaged plating above the water level. “Aragon” was laid up at Kingston and never again sailed for Tees.

**George Davidson** of Brockville purchased “Aragon” in 1945-46. He was connected with Coal Carriers Corporation Ltd. of Montreal, the operators of the freighter “Coalfax”, a frequent visitor at Oakville, bringing coal from U.S. ports. Davidson formed Bayswater Shipping Ltd. out of Brockville, and in the spring of 1946 “Aragon” joined “Coalfax” in the Lake Ontario coal trade, which included visits to the Sixteen. “Aragon” also carried cement on the Upper St. Lawrence River for the Canada Cement Company Ltd. of Montreal. At this time “Aragon” was renamed “Bayanna”, the latter part of the new name being chosen in honour of Anna McKinnon, the mother of George Davidson. The “Bay” prefix seemed to appeal to Davidson, as the other three vessels that his company was to own, were all given similar names.

Despite her self-unloading equipment and the raised hatches which she had been given, “Bayanna” was looking rather forlorn. Even her blue hull colour, with its white trim, and her blue, white and black stack design could not do much to improve her appearance. The only major recent improvement had been the addition of a new stack. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect was her little wooden pilothouse, which, complete with corner braces, squatted atop an equally quaint texas (the pilothouse). The whole structure was a bit loose after years of buffeting from the winds and waves of Lake Ontario, and had to be secured to the forecandle by means of a cable, which passed over the pilothouse roof, and was attached to the deck on either side, turnbuckles being provided to facilitate the occasional necessary tightening.

In 1960, “Bayanna” was re-fitted and continued in service until 1962. In that year she was stranded near Deseronto in eastern Lake Ontario, near the Bay of Quinte. After being towed to Deseronto, she was gutted by fire in May, 1964, and subsequently scrapped.

Many of you are familiar with the wonderful photograph depicting “Bayanna’s” cousin, “Coalhaven”, unloading in the Sixteen in the late 1940’s. It is quite remarkable that vessels like these were once able to navigate that far up the creek! With “Bayanna’s” demise, a career of almost seventy years had come to an end. After World War Two, gas and oil replaced coals, as they were cleaner and more energy-efficient. Not only had “Bayanna” faded from the scene, but also Oakville in her role as a commercial port on Lake Ontario

Phil Brimacombe

A special thanks to **Dr. Lorne S. Joyce**, Port Credit, for his assistance in the preparation of this article. His local knowledge of nautical history is a respected source.

The Society not only needs the help of many volunteers, but **your membership dues** are necessary to allow them to continue on with the work of preserving Oakville’s history for future generations. If you haven’t submitted your **2009 dues**, please use the enclosed form and show your support.

Visit the OHS website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the enlarged and colour version of past newsletters and explore the many informative areas of the website for event and tour dates.

# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – December 2008**

**A** major winter storm hit Oakville in December 1944 and the photo shows snow piled into high banks. The building is located at 216 Lakeshore Road East. At the time the photograph was taken, the building housed the **Oakville Post Office**. It later became the **Oakville Public Library**. The current occupant is the retail operation of **Tommy Bahama's**. To the right of the Post Office and set back from the street is Hitchcox Garage with a Model T Ford parked on the street. This site is now part of Town Square.

May Isaac

## **Ontario Heritage Trust:**

### **Heritage Community Awards**

**A**cross Ontario, this program has served as a way of recognizing outstanding achievements in local heritage conservation. The winners from Oakville for 2008, members of the Oakville Historical Society, are as follows:

#### ***Lt. Governor’s Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement:***

This award was presented to **Mr. Harry Buxton**, a Past President of the OHS on February 20<sup>th</sup>.at Queen’s Park

***Heritage Community Recognition Award:*** Presented on March 10<sup>th</sup> at Oakville Town Hall to:

Lifetime Achievement	- Harry Barrett
Built Heritage	- Francine Landry
Cultural Heritage	- Barbara Savage
Natural Heritage	- Joyce Burnell

## **HERITAGE MATTERS**

**M**ichael Seaman, Manager Heritage Planning from the Town of Oakville, spoke to us on 18 February at our regular Knox presentation series. The town now has a staff of four involved in Heritage Conservation Planning; reporting to Michael are two planners and a heritage inspector. As well, personnel from Culture and Legal Departments and Clerical resources interact with Michael's department.

Enthusiastic about heritage matters, Michael was inspired, following a co-op assignment in heritage planning, to return to University to pursue a Master's degree in heritage conservation.

His presentation discussed the past, present and future of heritage in Oakville, going back to 1953, when OHS founder Hazel Chisholm Matthews, began to recognize the importance of our heritage buildings. We now have three heritage districts; Downtown, established in 1982, First and Second Street district, established in 1987 and Trafalgar Road, established in 1994. All properties in heritage districts are considered designated. A fourth district to be established would be downtown. Apparently 90% of the buildings along Lakeshore Road have been designated.

He cleared up some misconceptions about designation; designation applies only to the exterior and does not prevent changes, but provides a process to guide change. Far from restricting sales or resale value, there is strong evidence to the contrary. There is a strong market for heritage properties and people willing to pay a premium for them. Heritage conservation not only improves our quality of life, but enhances our sense of place, contributes to our economic health, provides exciting community spaces and reduces landfill. This latter point is most interesting; he said, "The greenest building is one that already exists". How sad it is to see the debris, some of it in perfect condition, ripped out of houses under demolition in the name of modernization, not to mention the destruction of beautiful, graceful old buildings.

We are indeed grateful to have the Town and Michael's department committed to heritage conservation.

Andrea Stewart



## Health Care As It Was

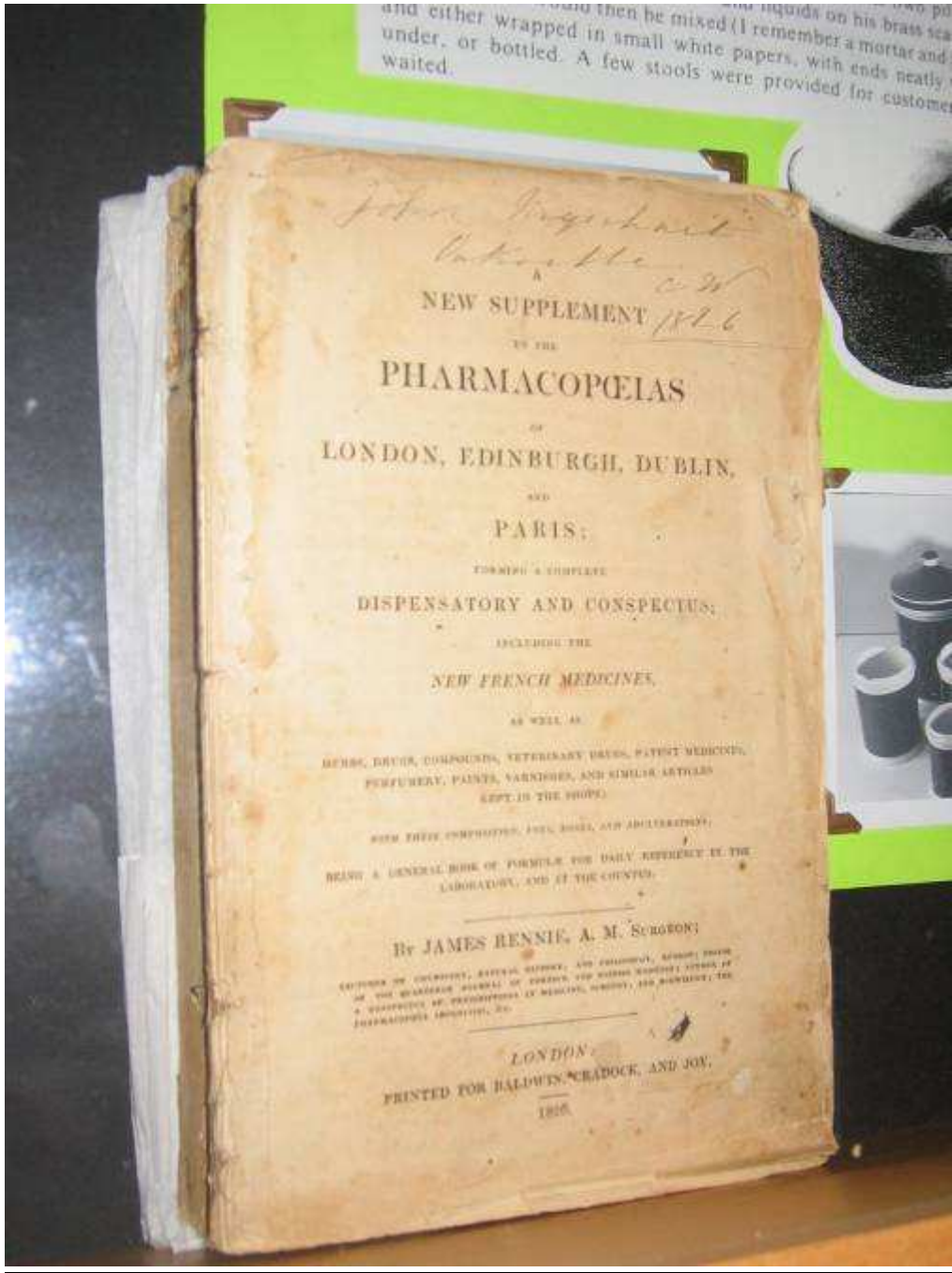
On display at the Society is a very in-depth and interesting display of health care in Oakville's past. This display, put together by Mary Noad and Rosemary Seeton is concerning health care (and its practitioners and practices) as it was from the early 1800s to the early/mid 1900s. Much of the textual material is drawn from Hazel Chisholm Matthew's [Oakville and the Sixteen](#). Go to our website for a view of the display or, better still, visit the Society and see it live.



**L/R Mary Noad and Rosemary Seeton**









## ***THE WAY THINGS WERE***



- 1: What was the name of the sawmill in the foreground?
- 2: What was stored in the last building (on the right) on the bank across from the mill?

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

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~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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|                         |                       |    |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----|
| 1 James Fletcher        | Mary Guff             | 8  |
| 2 Lizzie Campbell       | Becca Balmer          | 9  |
| 3 Minnie Jones          | Emily Willoughby      | 10 |
| 4 Bill McDonald         | Mittie Williamson     | 11 |
| 5 Sylvester Lebar       | Jesse Urquhart        | 12 |
| 6 Mary Jane Wilson      | Florella Porter       | 13 |
| 7 Janet R. McConquodale | Sarah A. McConquodale | 14 |

## THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2009

Volume 43: Number 2

## SPECIAL EVENTS

June 14                   **“Concert in the Park”** – Lakeside Park  
Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 – 12noon to 4:00pm

September 26-27   **Doors Open:** The 2nd annual Doors Open in Oakville is planned for September 26th and 27th 2009, 10am to 4pm. Last year was a great success and this year we are adding even more sites. We need many volunteers to assist with crowd control and explanations re the sites. Please telephone Julie Hawryzko at 905 845-6601, Ext 5122 to register as a volunteer. This will be voice mail so be sure to leave your name and number.

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**October 21st**                   *The War of 1812:* Speakers - Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nichol and Mrs. Nichol (in costume)

**November 18<sup>th</sup>**                   *The History of the Lorne Scots:* Speaker - Rick Ruggle

**Note:** Evening programs are at Knox Church at 7:30pm for 2009, unless otherwise noted.

Have you started planning for the summer yet?  
Don't forget to visit our website at  
[www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) and check out the  
upcoming **Heritage** and **Ghost** walk schedules.

**Cover Picture: Grammar School Class C. 1865**



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In March we held the **Annual General Meeting** of the Society. At the meeting it was announced that two directors have decided to retire from the Board. **Evelyn Bullied** and **Walter Jennings** have both served our Society for many years and have done exemplary jobs. Ev has maintained our library and has been a fount of knowledge on Trafalgar Township and the main street of Oakville. She has always been a keen volunteer for just about any event in which the Society has been involved. She has been a true ambassador for the Society. Between Ev and Harry Barrett, there isn't much they don't know about our town. We will certainly miss her at the board table as there will be no one there to make sure Harry's recollections are completely accurate. Walter Jennings has served this Society well as Treasurer for a long time and it is due in large part to his well-prepared budgets and grant requests that we are in such good financial health. In addition to his duties as Treasurer, Walter has prepared exhibits and prepared and runs the Main Street Walk.

I am pleased to note that **Phil Brimacombe** has come on to the Board to replace Ev. Phil is a long time member of the Society and was on the Board briefly several years ago. He is a retired history teacher from E.J. James School. After a difficult search, I am also pleased to announce that we have found a new Treasurer for the Society. **Greg Munz** agreed at our last board meeting to be appointed to the Board and to serve as Treasurer. Greg is new to the Society but I am confident that he will fit in well on the Board.

On Saturday, May 2nd, we offered a wine tasting in conjunction with the Oakville Museum. **Dan Sutherland**, owner of Rosehall Run Winery in Prince Edward County, educated about 40 of us about his wine in the Studio Theatre at the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts. Musical entertainment was provided by The **Matildas**, a quartet from Hamilton. Excellent cheeses were provided by **Whole Foods Markets**. This tasting was the second in a series. Stay tuned for further information about our upcoming beer tasting and appropriate entertainment.

Summer is fast approaching and your Society will be very active as usual. There is an ongoing need for volunteers for the Thomas House and many of our other programmes as well. You'll read more about them elsewhere in this newsletter.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385

[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

## *Early School Days*

The 960 acres of land at the east and west of the Sixteen, known as "the Indian Reserve" was offered for sale in August 1827 and the Reserve was purchased by **William Chisholm**. Chisholm called his new parcel of land the village of Oakville. At this place, on the banks of the Sixteen, between the stream and Navy Street, to the north of the Lakeshore Road (known then as Colborne Street), he had a meeting-house erected, a frame building put up in late 1827.

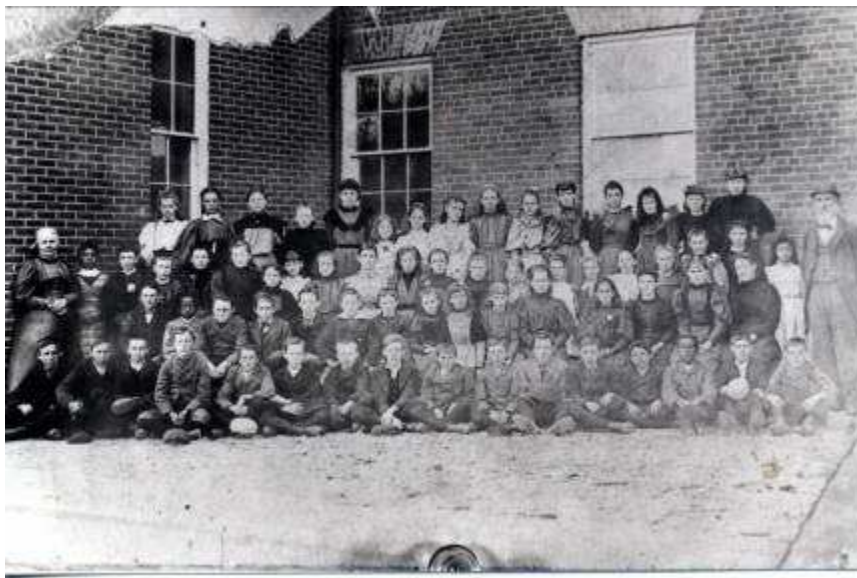
At the beginning, the meeting-house was used by any denominations of the Church for Sunday worship. The **Methodists** were the first denomination to build their own "home", a chapel at Lakeshore Road and Thomas Street, on the northeast corner. The Methodists could not afford the new chapel; the **Anglicans** bought it, and it became **St. Jude's Church**. The Methodists then resumed worship at the meeting house. Legislation had by that time encouraged education in many communities. A community, provided at least twenty pupils were in attendance, could build a school house, and get a grant to assist with the cost of the teacher's salary. The community could elect three trustees, who would "examine a teacher's qualifications, engage or dismiss him, lay out a course of study, select textbooks, and draw up rules for regulating the conduct of pupils." There were no school taxes, only attendance fees. Fees ranged from seven shillings six pence per quarter for each scholar; the school master was paid fifteen to twenty pounds per year. When a school building was needed, the meetinghouse was also used for that purpose. As the number of pupils increased, there was need for a larger building and one was built at the same site.

Oakville's first school, the **Oakville Common School**, began in 1836. The first school master, **William Tassie**, was aged 21, tall and handsome. He was of Scottish descent, but had been born and educated in **Dublin**. The trustees (one of which was Justus Williams) drew up their rules. Among them were; hours of operation, care of health - particularly regarding infectious diseases, conduct - no swearing, avoiding "all screaming and useless noises" at breaks; during school hours not be allowed to



**Dr. William Tassie**

whisper and laugh. Good fires were kept during wet and damp days. With respect to this item, the teacher required of each subscriber to furnish his quota of firewood, have it cut and properly piled. There were no rules included about the teaching of writing, reading, arithmetic or penmanship. One of the important tasks for the teacher was the cutting of quill pens. After three years of these duties in Oakville, Tassie moved to Hamilton, then after fourteen years he went to Galt where he taught for the next twenty years. William



**Central School Group**

know anything about Mr. Cook. We know a good deal about the next incumbent head master of Oakville Common School, **Arthur Cole Verner**.

Arthur Verner was born in Ireland, a younger son of Sir William Verner, in 1811. He was unfortunate to have been born with a deformed right arm, but was quite able to use the left arm, to the extent that he would manipulate it and use it to show people, particularly children, sleight of hand tricks. Verner was a graduate of **Trinity College**, Dublin. After his marriage to Harriet, (his wife's family name is not recorded.) they produced a son named Frederick, in the year 1836, so they were probably married no later than 1835. They decided to go to Upper Canada at Trafalgar Township, and in 1837 applied to purchase the north half of a Clergy Reserve of Lot 12 of the Second Concession S.D.S. Arthur Cole Verner asked William Chisholm to examine the proposed land and it was in Chisholm's opinion that the land was poor for cultivation, and the Lot was worth fifteen shillings per acre.

Tassie died in 1886, aged seventy one.

The next schoolmasters appointed by the Common School were **C.G. Friend** (c. 1840) and **John Cook**. Friend lived "on Lot 9, Concession 4 S.D.S. He was described as a "stout, genial gentleman", well

liked by parents and pupils. We don't

That is what Verner agreed with the Department of Crown Lands, fifteen shillings per acre or seventy five pounds for the one hundred acres. Verner promptly built a home on the property at the north western corner (ie. at the intersection of Upper Middle Road and 7th Line). His teaching began at **Wellington Grammar School**, and the family lived at Guelph until the late eighteen-forties when he was engaged as the headmaster of Oakville's Common School.

A few years later (1854) when the **Oakville Grammar School** was formed, he became headmaster of both the Common School and the Grammar School. Just a year earlier Verner began to exploit his land by designing a series of small-holdings, which he called the community of "Vernerville". The land fronted on the 7th Line, and the first purchases were in 1856. 7th Line was a plank road, part of the Trafalgar, Esquesing and Erin Road

Company, built to bring wheat to Lake Ontario from northern farms. The plank road was not a success. The new village declined almost as soon as it started. Verner gave up his teacher's position in order to promote **Vernerville**, and a new headmaster of Oakville Grammar School was appointed, **William Oliver**. We lose sight of Arthur Cole Verner from this point, but his son, Frederick, became a noted artist, specializing in animal paintings. He moved to London, England to live and was later knighted - Sir Frederick Verner.



**Ninth Line School (Maple Grove)**

Harry Buxton

Visit the OHS website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for past and enlarged and colour versions of this newsletter and, explore the many informative areas of the website for event and tour dates.

*SCHOOL DAYS IN OAKVILLE*



Munn's School Group \* 1903 - 1905



Unidentified School Class C. 1890

# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – March 2009**

The name of the sawmill in the foreground was “Doty” and, the building on the right stored coal, brought in by steamers. Housewives quickly learned to bring in their washing when the ships brought the coal in to the harbour.

Lance Naismith

## **Concert in the Park**

Organized by the Oakville Historical Society and sponsored by the Town of Oakville, you are invited to the **BAND CONCERT IN LAKESIDE PARK**, Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup> 2009 from 12noon to 4:00PM. Enjoy some lively tunes by the St. Paul’s Dixieland Band from 12noon to 2PM and then an eclectic mix of music by the Oakville Wind Orchestra from 2:30pm to 4:00pm.

Bring your family and friends to this FREE concert, with your lawn chairs and picnic hamper.

Barb Savage

*Your membership dues make this Newsletter possible*



## Outreach

Part of the mandate of our Society is to ensure that the rich and vibrant history of Oakville is made available to the community in a variety of ways. Newsletter, website, Thomas House and our viewable collections are just some of the ways. **Volunteers** also go out and discuss our historical past with various groups or lend information posters for events. Here are just some of them:

- June 11<sup>th</sup>      Chartwell Retirement
- June 12<sup>th</sup>      Halton Region Morning Walk
- June 23<sup>rd</sup>      T.D. Bank Group
- August 19<sup>th</sup>    Parkinson Tours – bus tour of Oakville

Barb Savage

### New OHS Sunday Hours

To accommodate those members who are unable to visit the Society during regular hours, we will be open **EVERY THIRD SUNDAY** as well. If you would like to volunteer to assist, please contact the Society. It would be one way to get further involved in Oakville's history.

## Thomas House

On Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, Pat Mack welcomed 62 students and 8 supervisors to the Thomas House. The group was comprised of Grade 7 exchange pupils from **Quebec** and pupils from **St. Josephs in Oakville**. Everyone enjoyed the warmth of the fire as they explored the history of the Thomas family and the house. They ended each session with the fun of playing with the toys of the period.

Pat Mack

## Presentation

**B**astards, Lumps, Tittlers and Loaves!!! If you had been at the Society recently, you would have learned that they were terms used to describe sugar moulds. We recently had a presentation by **Richard Feltoe**, Curator of the Redpath Sugar Refinery Museum.

**Redpath Sugar** was founded in 1857. Sugar comes from sucros, which is sugar cane. It grows in the tropics - India to China, Middle East and Malta.

There was no natural supply in the west. The most reliable source for Redpath is Brazil – also Australia. Sugar was originally thought of as a spice. It was a bit of a status symbol to serve, with 1 K of sugar being worth \$1000.00. It was also used as a wonder drug to treat wounds in the 1500's, the Napoleonic Era and, the Spanish Civil War. It would be placed on a large open wound.



Sugar cane is not transported in its natural state, but is crushed by rollers and then placed in a barrel. **Molasses** drops to the bottom with molasses being the lowest form of sugar and has to be separated in the refining process. In the early 1870's, the centrifugal machine was adapted for use at Redpath and this speeded up the refining process. (**Ed. Note:** Centrifugal machine originally designed for Victorian Laundries and adapted for other uses in the 1860's-1870's)

Redpath produced packaged sugar in 1912. They used blue paper to increase the white look of granulated sugar. The commercial uses are fertilizer, paper, gasoline and all types of spices – over 70 % of production is commercial. Brown sugar is white sugar sprayed with molasses.

**Columbus** brought sugar cane and slaves on his second trip and went to the West Indies. The slaves came from **Timbuktu**.

**Tip:** To prevent hardening of brown sugar put a cup of soft brown sugar into a ziplock bag and put it into the freezer. It will be soft when you use it.

Ernie Carroll

If anyone would like to be added to our "**HERITAGE EVENT**" email list, please email [info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org). We interact with seven other Halton Heritage groups in order to promote all up-coming Heritage Events.

### OHS LOTTERY

The Society's mandate is to not only be an archive and protect historical documents relating to the Town of Oakville, but we are also a source for those doing research – professionally and as a hobby. In order to protect our collection, it is necessary for us to ensure a protective environment. However, we want our history to be open to all to enjoy. In this regards, we are moving forward and looking at putting our collection into an electronic format that will be accessible to all via the internet.

Of course, this costs money and we have limited resources. This is one reason your **membership dues** are so important. In order to raise funding for our future needs, we will be holding a lottery at specific events, starting with the Concert in the Park (Lottery tickets will also be available at Midnight Madness, the Thomas House and Doors Open).

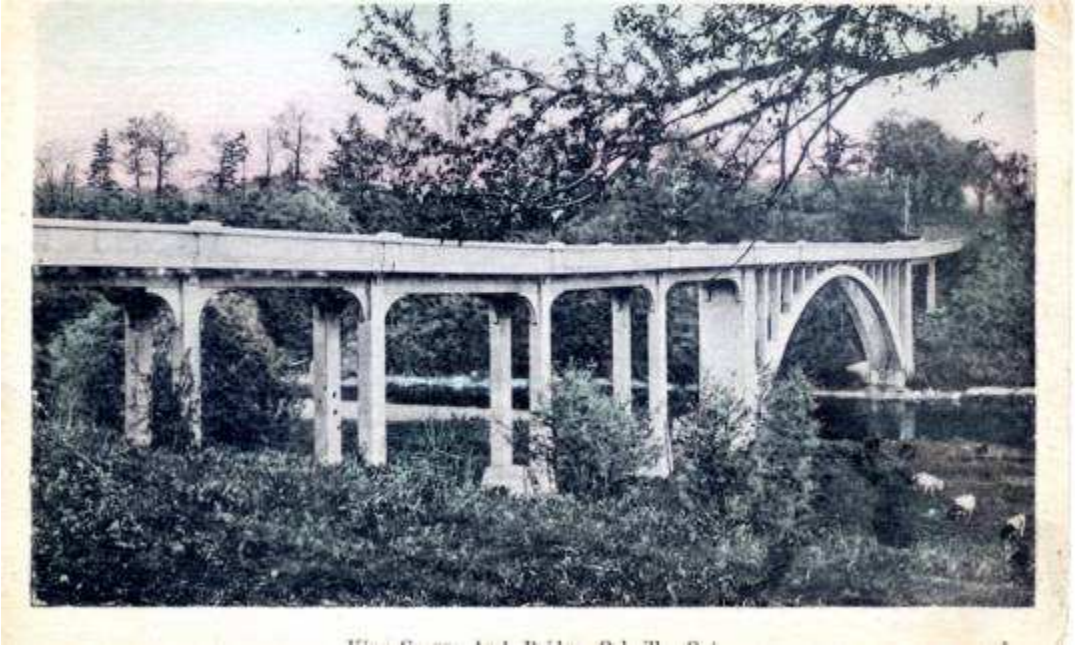
**And the grand prize???? One return trip for two (2) people, to any scheduled WestJet destination (charters exempt) – worth over \$4,600.**

**WestJet** has graciously donated these tickets to help the Oakville Historical Society bring its collection into a new era of accessibility. Please consider buying these tickets when offered - \$5 for one, 3 for \$10.00.



Lance Naismith

## *THE WAY THINGS WERE*



1. What was the bridge's original name?
2. When was this bridge built?
3. Where is it located?

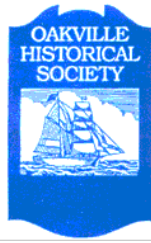
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**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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**THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER**

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

**Volume 43: Number 3**



## SPECIAL EVENTS

### **September 26-27 Doors Open:**

The 2nd annual **Doors Open** in Oakville, co-hosted by the OHS, is planned for September 26th and 27th 2009, 10am to 4pm. There will be an information tent located at the Town Square in downtown Oakville and a brochure with a map will be available. The same sites as last year plus new ones will be open and they are all free to the public.

We need volunteers; even a half day would help. Telephone number is 905 845 6601 ext: 5019.

Our annual **Harvest Festival** will be held on Sunday Sept 27th at Lakeside Park. There will be a bake table, free apple cider, displays, crafts and games for the children.

The grand finale will be the drawing of the ticket to name the winner of the **WestJet** return flight for two anywhere that **WestJet** flies. (to be held at the Historical Society at 4pm on Sunday September 27th.)

**DO YOU HAVE YOUR TICKET FOR THE DRAW????**

**December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009:**      **“Annual Wine and Cheese Christmas Party”**  
**6:00pm to 9:00pm**  
**110 King Street**

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

October 21st                      *The War of 1812:* Speakers - Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nichol and Mrs. Nichol (in costume)

November 18<sup>th</sup>                      *The History of the Lorne Scots:* Speaker - Rick Ruggle

**Note:** Evening programs are at Knox Church at 7:30pm for 2009, unless otherwise noted.

Have you started planning for the fall yet? Don't forget to visit our website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) and check out the upcoming **Ghost Walk** schedules.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this, summer, or lack thereof, is starting to wind down. I'd say that our busy season is leading into a busy fall season. Truth be told, all seasons for the Society seem to be busy and getting more so. Two major events this fall: our very popular series of **Ghost Walks** and the second annual **Doors Open Oakville**. Both require help from our volunteers. If you can help out, please contact **Barb Savage** by phone through the office or by email at [vp@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:vp@oakvillehistory.org). Barb would be delighted to hear from you. In conjunction with the Oakville Museum, we also have the third in our series of tasting events taking place on **17 October**. This will be a **beer tasting** which will be held at the Oakville Centre on Navy Street. For further information, please email me at [pres@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:pres@oakvillehistory.org).

You may have noticed that our website hasn't changed in the past few months since the untimely death of **Norm Sadler**, our webmaster. We're very pleased to announce that **Mr Hugh Ramsay** has offered to take on this very important job. It will take him a while to become familiar with Norm's previous work before you notice any changes but it will soon return to being one of our major methods of communication with our members and the public.

I'm also happy to report that we are in negotiations with the Town to acquire space at the new **Queen Elizabeth Park Community Centre**. We hope this will allow us to move the archives out of our office and into safer space which will have fire protection. We will then have more space for research activity at the office. After all, most of our visitors don't require access to the original document.

As you start your Christmas shopping, please keep in mind some of the publications available from the Society including "Oakville and Sixteen" and "Oakville a Small Town". New to our publications selection are two of a series of shipwreck maps of the Great Lakes. We are only stocking the maps of Lake Ontario and Lake Huron (including Georgian Bay). For further information visit the Publications section on our website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org).

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**COVER PICTURE:** Captain Sam Joyce. Local area fisherman and was also master of the Marlatt yacht, the Aggie. "He who rests in a calm must row in a storm".

## *Oakville and the Golden Age of Yachting on Lake Ontario (1870 – 1939)*

Standing on Oakville's Lakeshore Road bridge spanning the Sixteen Mile Creek, one can scan southward and view one of the finest small craft harbours on the Great Lakes. A forest of masts and sails belonging to a wide variety of sailboats associated with the **Oakville Yacht Squadron**, and the **Oakville Club**, slap away in the stiff breezes from the blue expanse of Lake Ontario beyond.

Notable among this fleet is the venerable "**Anitra**". This classic wooden gaff-rigged schooner has been sailing out of the Oakville Club for over 80 years under the **Macrae Family** burgee. Named after an Egyptian dancing girl, "Anitra" flies some 100 racing pennants, including the prestigious 1939 Prince of Wales Cup. Designed by **Montye Macrae** and built at Hamilton in 1926, Anitra's 40 feet of oak frame and cedar planking are beautifully maintained. This wonderful link to the past had joined the Royal Canadian Yacht Club in the late fall of 1926 and signalled the event by winning the Commodore's Prize (on time allowance) from the First Division in the last cruise of the season. Such accomplishments as we shall see were not at all uncommon for Oakville sailing craft!

From the 1870's to the Second World War, Oakville was often referred to as "**The Newport of Canada**". Wealthy Torontonians, like the Ryrie, Eaton, Cox and Flavelle families, built impressive lakefront estates along the lakeshore in Oakville and Trafalgar Township. Prominent Oakville resident and owner of the Marlatt and Armstrong Tannery on the Sixteen, **Cecil G. Marlatt** held several important positions at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club from 1907 to 1924, including Commodore. Marlatt was the owner of the R.C.Y.C.'s most famous boat, "**Aggie**", about which we shall hear more later.

Another prominent local yachting family connected with the R.C.Y.C. was the Macrae family. **Hubert H. Macrae** served as the Vice-Commodore of the Club from 1925 to 1927. The **Chisholm** family was involved in sailing P. Class boats like the well-known "**Utalía**" and the "**Patricia**". Soon after its establishment in 1908, a close link developed between the Oakville Club and the R.C.Y.C..

Yachting had increased during the 1870's on Lake Ontario and a large number of yacht clubs sprang up on both the Canadian and U.S. shores. On summer weekends it was not unusual to see 50 or more boats from various clubs around the lake visiting the Sixteen.

Oakville also became the destination of many R.C.Y.C. races. Visiting yachtsmen built huge bonfires at night on the beach at the western entrance to Oakville Harbour. Despite some excessive partying at times, it is reported that the local townspeople were generally tolerant of the visitors. This feeling was undoubtedly enhanced over the years as yachts, built at **Andrews' Boatyard** at Oakville, began to distinguish themselves in races around the Great Lakes.

The names of **Captain James Andrew** (1844 – 1930) and his brother **John** (1846 – 1918) are synonymous with Oakville yacht-building. James and John had arrived as youths with their family from Dundonald, Scotland, in the 1850's. They had journeyed across the North Atlantic on one of the infamous "floating coffins" called the "**Crown**". After the usual wretched 6 week voyage, the family boarded the steamer "**Magnet**" at Montreal and eventually landed at Oakville, where they decided to settle. James and John ventured onto the Great Lakes at an early age as Seamen Apprentices, eventually becoming Master Mariners. About 1861 James journeyed across Canada, learning the shipbuilding trade. In 1887 the brothers saw the future in yacht-building and they set up a boat-building yard beside **Doty's Planing Mill** on the west bank of the Sixteen, just south of Colborne Street (now Lakeshore Road).

They began building racing and pleasure yachts for wealthy sportsmen, as the emphasis was shifting from weight, durability and capacity, to lightness of construction for speed. The boatyard soon developed a reputation for producing some of the best designed, fastest boats on the Lakes.



The "Aggie" – c. 1912

Upon his retirement in 1915, Captain James Andrew continued to live with his sisters in a house into which they had moved in 1891. The house still stands on the north side of William Street, just west of Navy Street, opposite Market Square.

The first and perhaps most famous sailing yacht to be launched from the Andrews' Boatyard, was "Aggie" on October 25, 1887. She was designed and built by James Andrew for Cecil G. Marlatt. "Aggie" was named after Marlatt's wife. This vessel became the most successful yacht under the R.C.Y.C. burgee, accumulating no fewer than 83 winning flags in the course of her long career! "Aggie" often tried, but never won the Prince of Wales Cup, however she did win the Queen's Cup in 1897, and almost every other cup in the club more than once. She had dimensions of 60 feet overall, with an 11 foot beam. The clock on "Aggie" was engraved "1<sup>st</sup>. September 1906" – also engraved, "Presented to H.M.C.S. Oakville, November 5, 1941, for the duration of the War." "**H.M.C.S. Oakville**" was a corvette, which had been commissioned at the mouth of the Sixteen in 1941. The binnacle was loaned to the Oakville Historical Society by **Art and Evelyn Bullied**. It was said that after 100 years the compass gave an accurate indication of north. On October 2, 1945, the Toronto Evening Telegram reported that, "*Today the Aggie is a total wreck, pounded to pieces at the Burlington Lighthouse.*"

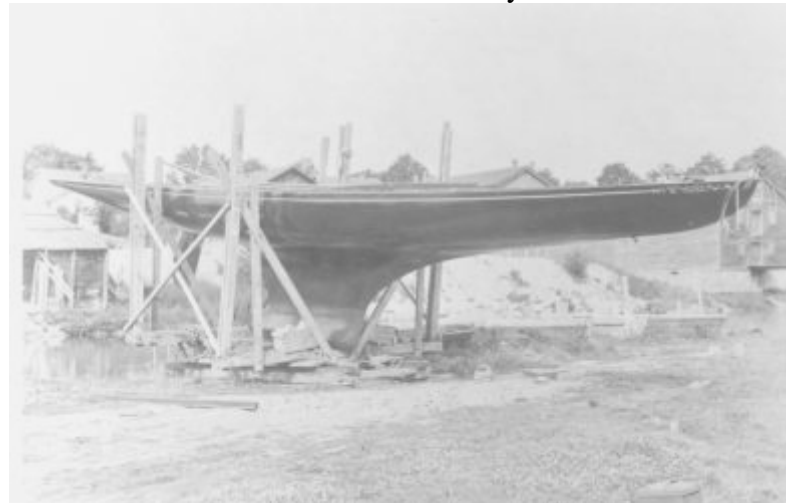
More yachts were to follow from the busy boatyard on the Sixteen. In 1895 "**Winetta**" was launched. Owned by the well-known Toronto yachtsman, **Aemilius Jarvis**, the 64 foot yacht was the first R.C.Y.C. boat to use cross-cut sails. She won the Queen's Cup, the Prince of Wales Cup, and many other races on Lakes Ontario and Erie from 1898 to 1905. During World War One, her 9 ton lead hull was stripped for bullets for the war effort. By 1935 she had been re-rigged as a ketch and sailed from Toronto to the South Pacific, under the name given to her in a 1915 re-build at Oakville, "**Merrythought**". She was last reported in the New York City area in the late 1930's.



Canada - 1895

In 1896 James Andrew built “**Canada**”. He used white oak in her construction, by that time a rare variety of wood. He had salvaged the wood from the bottom of the Sixteen by the old log chute at the 6<sup>th</sup> Line and the 7<sup>th</sup> Line (now Trafalgar Road). “Canada” won the first Canada’s Cup race held off Toledo, Ohio, in 1896, against her U.S. challenger, “**Vencedor**”, of the Chicago Yacht Club. The next boat to slide into the Sixteen was “**Beaver**”. She had been designed by the well-known Arthur Payne of Southampton, England. She was defeated by the sloop, “**Genessee**” of Rochester, New York, in the 1899 Canada’s Cup race off Toronto.

The high-water mark of boat-building in Oakville was 1899, when a second vessel, “**Minota**”, was launched at Andrews’. Owned by a syndicate of R.C.Y.C. members, including George A. Cox and Joseph H. Flavelle of Oakville, she had been designed by Mr. H.C. McLeod, General Manager of the Bank of Nova Scotia. She lost out to “Beaver” as the Canadian entry into the 1899 Canada’s Cup, although she was



admired by many and was faster in light to moderate breezes. Two years later “**Invader**” (*to the left*) was launched and soon distinguished itself by winning back the Canada’s Cup off Chicago against her U.S. rival “**Cadillac**”, skippered by “**BathHouse**” Bill Thompson, later to become Mayor of Chicago. In 1903 the

R.C.Y.C. defended the Canada’s Cup with another of James Andrew’s creations, the cutter “**Strathcona**”. Mr. Norman Macrae had her built by Andrews’ after receiving her timbers from her designer, A.E. Payne. She quickly became known as “the fastest Canadian yacht afloat”, reflected in a long list of trophies to her credit. Prince of Wales Cup, 1903, Queen’s Cup 3 times, and the Lorne Cup 9 times! “**Zoroya**”, launched in 1905 along with “**Temeraire**”, also distinguished themselves, especially the former winning, among other trophies, the Fisher Cup, the Prince of Wales Cup 5 times in succession, and the Edward, Prince of Wales Cup. “Zoroya” later found U.S. owners, while “Temeraire” became a yawl, owned in Kingston and later in the Bay of Quinte.

The last two vessels built by Andrews' of Oakville were "**Crusader**" in 1907 and "**Ahmeek**" in 1914. R.C.Y.C. Vice-Commodore Frederic Nicholls had "Crusader" built from the designs of William Fife Jr. On finding problems with the boat, Nicholls brought Fife over from England to personally supervise the work of re-casting her lead ballast and re-modelling her deadwood to afford her more stability.

"Ahmeek", built by club subscription, was the finest P. Class sloop that had yet been seen on the Lakes. Of the raised-deck type, her mahogany hull "finished bright and girdled by a gilt arrow, and everything in her was of the best quality." Her early performances had given promise of ultimate success. However, World War One intervened.

In 1914, yachting crews were busy forming units in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. Yachting fleets were dismantled, swinging idly at moorings, or hauled out in the marine yards, allowing them to rapidly disintegrate. Like some of the best yachts, "Ahmeek" was purchased by Americans and found a new home at the Eastern Yacht Club in Marblehead, Massachusetts.

After the re-build of "Winetta" into "Merrythought" in 1915, the Andrews' Boatyard fell silent forever. A colourful chapter of the marine history of Oakville had come to an end!

Phil Brimacombe

**Your membership dues make this Newsletter possible**

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# AROUND THE SOCIETY



## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – June, 2009

**B**uilt in 1936 “The Sixteen Mile Creek Bridge” or “King George Arch Bridge” was one of the finest bridges constructed by the Department of Highways in the 1930s. Arches were used extensively throughout the bridge’s design. The bridge itself is a two-span open spandrel concrete arch bridge, but even within the superstructure, many additional arches were used below the bridge deck. It is now under extensive reconstruction.

(<http://www.thekingshighway.ca/PHOTOS/QEWphotos6.htm>)

## Presentation



**O**n May 20<sup>th</sup>, we were very fortunate to have Ken Weber as our guest speaker. A very informative and entertaining talk – *Bring on the Bloomers – the Liberation of Women during Victorian Times*, was well received by those in attendance. Learning how the corset and bicycle had a role in woman’s emancipation was educational and humorous. Why you ask? One of the benefits of attending the talks!! Hopefully we will see you at the next one.

**Ken Weber** accepts a token of gratitude from one of our directors, **Karen Woolley**.

## Concert in the Park

We were blessed with lovely weather at this year's concert, which was opened by **Mayor Rob Burton**. The musical performances by our lively "*St. Pauls Dixieland Band*" and the medley of music by the "*Oakville Wind Orchestra*" gave the crowd a beautiful afternoon of relaxing music. We would like to thank those who attended for their generosity in buying the **Westjet/OHS Lottery** tickets. As well, we want to show our appreciation to the **Town of Oakville** and **Councillor Roger Lapworth** for their support in this event, without which it would not have been possible. Please make sure you note the date for next year's event, which is usually the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in June.

**Plan your picnic now!!!!**



L/R Harry Barrett, Mayor Rob Burton, Barb Savage

Lance Naismith









### Is it bad to be designated “Heritage”?

I guess it depends on whether or not you want to demolish a piece of Canada’s history to make a fast buck. There are a lot of rumours flying about concerning a heritage designation and it does not mean the end of the world for you and your home. You can make authorized changes/renovations and, there is proof that the majority of designated properties perform better than average or average in their value history trend when compared to non-designated. The “rate of sales” are not negatively affected and designated properties tend to resist down-turns in the market. And, there is a robust market for such homes. This was substantiated in a report by **Robert Shipley** and **Shannon Bernstein** called: *“Report on Research Concerning Trends in Property Values of Designated Heritage Properties in Several Ontario Communities”*.

Information submitted by Jamie Macrae



## Midnight Madness – We’re baaaack!!!!!!

For long term members of the Society, you’ll have memories of the hectic days of Midnight Madness on main street Oakville. Well, with a vengeance, the Society has returned to promote the Society and take the opportunity to sell our Lottery tickets. Well received by the crowd, we not only sold a good number of tickets but had a lot of people inquire about the society. The volunteers (too many to list for this edition) are to be thanked for their attendance and support and we hopefully will want a presence next year.

Lance Naismith



## Community Spirit Awards

A June evening was chosen by our Mayor and Town Staff to award Community Spirit Awards to various people who have contributed to our community in different ways. It is an honour that the Society has had another member chosen, **Barbara Savage**, for “*Heritage and History*”. Past persons honoured were Harry Barrett., Joyce Burnell and, the late Mabel Wilson and the late Alvin Duncan. Barbara is here with Mayor Rob Burton and supporters.



Marianne Hawthorne

## “Upcoming” Presentation

Cathy Ben Bow Plews has agreed to do her presentation **at the Society** on Thursday November 26th at 7:30pm. Come and hear about her visit to **Kenya**. Cathy purchased beads made by the women of Kenya (their only source of income). Once home she strung the beads, sold them and, sent the money back to Kenya to support **Insulin Dependent children**. Slides of the Diabetic Clinic in Kenya will be shown and beads will be for sale.

Barbara Savage





## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. Can you identify the man and woman?
  2. What business did he own?
  3. What yacht did he own?
- ~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

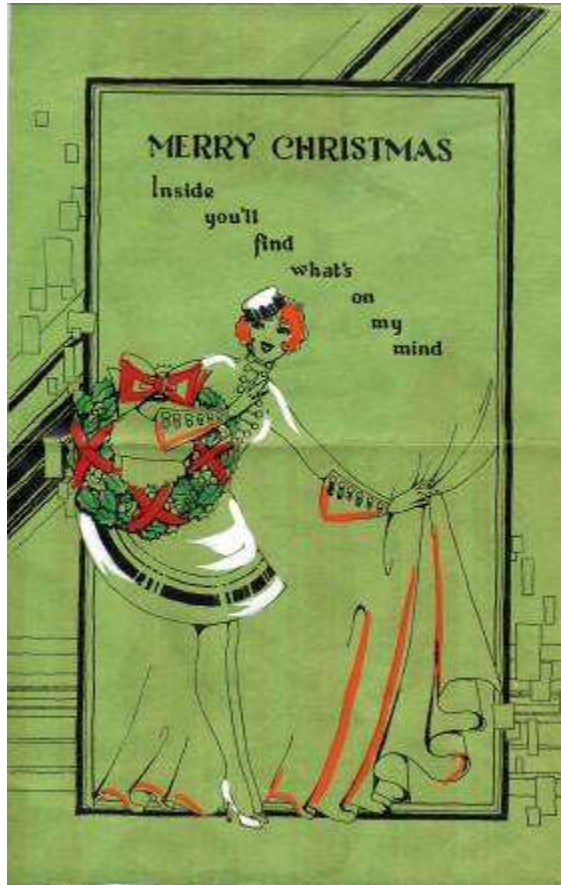
**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**DECEMBER 2009**

**Volume 43: Number 4**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009:** “Annual Wine and Cheese Christmas Party”  
**6:00pm to 9:00pm**  
**110 King Street**

**March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010:** Annual General Meeting  
**Knox Church – 6:30pm - POTLUCK**

## WANTED

**“VICTORIAN” STYLE CLOTHING REQUIRED FOR GENTLEMEN  
CONDUCTING OUR GHOST WALKS**

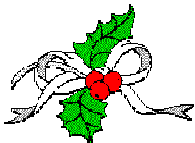
**If anyone has any items such as “Morning Coats, Frock Coats, Tail Coats, pin striped or plain trousers, silk vests” – these would be greatly appreciated by the Society to add that authentic historical feel to our Ghost Walks for next year. If you can help, please contact Mary Davidson at the Society office.**

Just a reminder - **Memberships are due** for renewal by December 31<sup>st</sup>. If you have renewed any time between September 1<sup>st</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup>, please disregard this notice. If not, would you be kind enough to use the enclosed form to renew your **membership for 2010.**

*Thank you for your continued support*

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Some of you are aware that I retired from teaching in June after 30 years with the Halton District School Board, mostly in the Tech Department at Oakville Trafalgar High School. I thought that I would have more time to do some of the other things on my list. So far it hasn't happened, but it's only been a few months. Working on renovations at St John's has been my main focus recently, but my wife and I have a cruise booked for November. We'll be back in time for the **annual Members' Wine and Cheese**, which is set for Friday, 4 December. I hope to see you there.

Your newsletter editor, Lance Naismith, has recently overseen a fundraising lottery for the Society. As an employee of **Westjet**, he was able to arrange for the donation of two round trip tickets to anywhere that Westjet flies. The funds will be used to purchase IT equipment to help further our goal of automating our records and to make our material more readily available to the public. His Worship, **Mayor Rob Burton**, drew the winning ticket at the end of Doors Open. The winner was **Mr. Hermann Leiningen**.

**Doors Open** was a great success again this year and coincided with our annual Harvest Festival. I would like to thank all of you who volunteered your time to help out. **Barb Savage** is particularly deserving of our thanks, as she has worked as our representative on the committee for the past two years.

A couple of weeks ago we took delivery of twenty rolls of microfilm from the Church of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City. This microfilm covers the **Halton Registry** documents from the start of record keeping to 1958. We've been working on this project for some time. As we don't have the equipment necessary to view the film, we are in the process of working out a deal with the Oakville Public Library, so that they can hold it for us and make it available to the public. Those looking for information on property ownership in Trafalgar Township, Oakville and Bronte, will no longer have to make a trip to Milton.

In mid October, several members of the Society attended the third in a series of tasting events arranged by the Society and the Oakville Museum. This was a beer tasting held at the Oakville Centre for Performing Arts and featured **Bill Nesbitt**, Supervisor at the Museum. With the assistance of **Brenda Chisholm**, who looked after the food, Bill did a great job. Entertainment was provided by Oakville Ale and Sword, which performed two longsword dances and Tom Miller, who sang. Oakville Ale and Sword includes both your president and treasurer as dancers. To sum up the event, "a good time was had by all".

*Have a Merry Christmas and a great New Year.*

### **COVER PICTURE:**

Christmas card sent to Mr. & Mrs. Ryland New,  
Oakville, Ontario - postmarked December 25th, 1928

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

## *Freemasonry in Oakville*

**S**ecret societies!!! These two words conjure up pictures of darkened rooms, mystical spells, flowing capes and skullduggery at its finest. And, near the top of the list – **Freemasons**. Over the years Freemasonry has been treated as a secret society and to some, a society with a dark side. But Freemasonry is not a Secret Society, but a Society with secrets. For those who attended the **Doors Open** event and visited **Oakville Lodge #400**, you would have seen that Masons can be very open.

The UK Sibelius Lodge 9448 explains:

“To understand how Masons got the reputation as a secret society it is necessary to go back in history to the days when actual stone masons traveled the country from one job to another. This migration was usually done by an entire group of masons who were known as a lodge. These men would travel sometimes great distances to their next place of work and it was common for these stone masons to stay with other masons on their journey.

On arriving at their new place of work how would these masons demonstrate their skill? The answer is so simple it almost beggars belief but it worked. They demonstrated their rank and skill with secret handshakes and words.

Modern Freemasonry is directly descended from these early stone masons and to this day Freemasons demonstrate their skill in the 'Craft' by means of secret words and handshakes. Such secret words and handshakes are not given to the world at large but are normally only exchanged between active Freemasons. That is the root from which the idea that Freemasons are a secret society.”

The history of Freemasonry in Oakville, which is today proudly practiced within Oakville Lodge No. 400, has its roots in another lodge, a lodge closely associated with the founders of Oakville.

In 1827 **William Chisholm** bought the land upon which Oakville was developed. He was a member of **St. Andrews' Lodge No. 1** in York (Toronto) and to attend lodge

meetings, his trip via horseback took six to seven hours each way, thus making it a 2 day trip. His two sons **George King Chisholm** and **Robert Kerr Chisholm**, also joined.

By 1850, Oakville had become a thriving port and there was frequent trade with York. Masters of these ships and local members became members of **King Solomons' Lodge No. 22** in York. By 1857 George King Chisholm had become Oakville's first mayor and discussed the formation of an Oakville Masonic Lodge with other local masons. A petition was forwarded to the Grand Lodge and dispensation was granted to White Oak Lodge on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1868. A Charter was issued at the July, 1868 Grand Lodge Convocation and was signed by Grand Master Most Worshipful Brother A.A. Stevenson. **White Oak Lodge No. 198** was now a reality.

Members represented all aspects of local Oakville society - from farmers to hardware merchants, mariners to saddlers and blacksmiths, physicians, custom officers and oil refinery owners.

William Chisholm was the lodge's first Worshipful Master and meetings were held on the 'Tuesday on or before the full moon' in the first lodge hall, located in **William Robertsons'** Hardware Store (S/W corner of Colborne St, later Lakeshore Blvd and Navy Street).

It later moved across to the Navy Block on the S/E corner and they rented the second floor over **John Barclays'** Dry Goods Store. As an aside, the Navy Block had been built by **William Romain**, who, in partnership with **Peter MacDougall**, later built The Granary.

The old adage of never talk about religion, politics or money, when on a social night out, was the bane of White Oak Lodge. During the latter part of the 1870's members allowed local politics to infiltrate the lodge and, because of the feelings of two members (one a Tory and the other a Grit), it became impossible to bring in new members. Each would "blackball" those affiliated with the other party. The last candidate initiated was **Samuel Armstrong** in September 1880.

A decision was made on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1882, that the charter be surrendered and the last entry of this lodge was made March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1882. Within the minutes it should be noted that the members asked that another lodge be allowed to form within Oakville.

Thus, on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1882, dispensation was granted to **Oakville Lodge U.D.**, which eventually was numbered 400 and its first regular meeting was held



December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1882. **John Kaitting** was the lodge's first Worshipful Master. The first candidate was William Biggar Chisholm, nephew of the founder.

On April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1883, tragedy struck when a fire broke out in the newspaper offices situated in the Navy Block. All was lost in the Masonic Hall, except for the saving of the records, thus preserving the early history. Temporarily situated in a building occupied by a Charter Member, **Thomas Paterson** at the corner of Colborne and Thomas Street, they moved into the rebuilt Navy Block, now called the **Romain Block** and the site dedicated on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1884. You can see the fading outlines of Masonic symbology next to that of the Odd Fellow's symbols along the roofline today.



The Lodge prospered and enjoyed involvement in many activities, with contributions to various charities such as The Sick Children's Hospital and the Children's Aid Society.

In February, 1919 it was decided to investigate a new temple and, on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1919, the land at the n/e corner of Church and Thomas Streets was purchased and fund raising began in earnest to build a new Lodge. A member of the lodge, **Brother Connery**, donated the architectural plans and the building, was completed in the summer of 1924, with the first meeting held September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1924, under **Worshipful Master Reg. M. Smith**.



Following WW II there was a growing interest in Freemasonry and eventually, the **Claude M. Kent Lodge No. 681** was dedicated October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1955 and **Trafalgar Lodge No. 712** in 1964. Both co-exist in the same temple as Lodge # 400.





The Romain Block today

## *History leaves impression on student*

**Kevin Liu** - Kids Speak Out, School News, Appleby College, Senior 1

Published on September 11, 2009 in the **Oakville Beaver**.

**W**ith all the fervor caused by the new hit movie *Time Traveler's Wife*, it is understandable that time travel would be the newest infatuation on the ever-evolving minds of the average Oakville citizen.

Time travel has forever been measured as impossible and simply a mere component of unlikely science fiction novels. However, I am writing to let you in on Oakville's best kept secret, an opportunity to travel through time.

I am referring to the Thomas House Museum, where I work each Sunday as a tour guide for the Oakville Historical Society.

As a history enthusiast, this opportunity is one I will never forget. Each time I step through the wood-planked doors of the breathtaking 19th century farmhouse, I am transported back in time to the Canadian pioneer period.

The Thomas House is a small, white house with an unremarkable composition. The thing that separates it from other houses is that it is the exact diminutive white house that stood 180 years ago.

Merrick Thomas built this farmhouse in 1829. He was a prominent businessman, William Chisholm's (the founder of Oakville) brother-in-law and an important planner for the Village of Oakville.

The cabin is furnished with stunning antique artifacts, implementing the exact lifestyle brought to the area by Oakville's earliest settlers. Everything ranging from the grand stone fireplace to the old rope bed gives a wonderfully intricate insight into pioneer life.

When I was 10, I sat down in my first history class as a completely uninterested 10 year old. However, as I listened to my teacher, I felt a sense of wonder not possibly applicable to any other academic area. History gives the mind endless possibilities to imagine, dream and marvel.

As a member of the Oakville Historical Society, those possibilities are boundless. Each person I have worked with has an unparalleled passion for historical studies and what seems like all the time in the world to discuss it with an interested teenager.

With the support and guidance of mentors at the society, I will have the opportunity to publish my first book (a historical non-fiction on pioneer history, of course) this fall. Furthermore, with my historical background at the Oakville Historical Society, I was able to found the first international historical organization for teens, known as History Now.

Most people are exhilarated by glittery jewels and shiny objects while, admittedly, I am the exact opposite. I am most eager when explaining the usage of an old and rusted 1850s apple peeler or the correct way to grind grain with a flour sifter.

The Oakville Historical Society has been a wonderful resource that has made those opportunities possible. Whether it is the brilliant people or awe-inspiring relics, I am able to credit Oakville Historical Society with one of the most memorable aspects of high school life.

More information about the Thomas House Museum can be viewed at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) . You can also visit [www.historynow.ca](http://www.historynow.ca) .

Visit the OHS website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the enlarged and colour version of this newsletter and, explore the many informative areas of the website for event and tour dates.

## ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



### **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – September 2009**

**P**ictured were **Mr. and Mrs. C.G. Marlatt**, who owned the “Aggie”, named after Marlatt’s wife. He was a principal in Marlatt and Armstrong Tannery as

well as being Oakville's mayor in 1896-97 and, a commissioner with the Oakville Water and Light Commission in 1908.

Lance Naismith

## Presentation

### **Robert Nichol -The Forgotten Hero of the War of 1812**

**C**heryl MacDonald and Bob Blakely, authors and historians with a strong interest in the War of 1812, were our guests at Knox Presbyterian Church in October. Dressed in historical costume, they gave a dramatic account of the life and death of Lt. Col. Robert Nichol of the Norfolk Militia who, under the command of his good friend, Major-General Isaac Brock, played an integral role in the War of 1812.

Cheryl, playing the part of Robert's wife, and Bob narrating the story, enthralled us with an account of Nichol's life; his heroic conduct during the war and of his untimely and mysterious end; he and his horse having fallen several hundred feet down the Niagara Gorge in 1824. The ghastly evidence does not seem to add up to the coroner's finding of accidental death, and Cheryl and Bob continue to sift through the records in order to find some answers to the mystery and to properly honour the life and achievements of this man and his contribution to Canadian history and politics, as war hero and MLA for Norfolk County.

Anyone interested in further reading, can obtain copies of Cheryl and Bob's book, **ROBERT NICHOL, FORGOTTEN HERO**, for \$5.00, through the Oakville Historical Society.

Andrea Stewart.

## Future Presentation

**O**n Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the Oakville Heritage Society is proud to have as a guest lecturer, **Mr. Stewart Henderson**, who is with the Provincial Heritage Organization. At this time he will discuss heritage matters at the provincial level. This presentation will be at the Knox Church at 7:30pm.

Barbara Savage



## Star Gazing at the Society

A clear sky, warm temperatures and good company - who could ask for more? A great night in August was had in Lakeside Park, when a joint effort was organized by the Royal Astronomical Society and OHS to gaze at the stars – celebrating “The International Year of Astronomy”. (Galileo first look at the stars 400 years ago)

We wish to thank those who brought the equipment and knowledge that allowed all the attendees to enjoy the star gazing, as well as those who purchased draw tickets for the **Westjet/OHS lottery**. A totally successful way to enjoy the evening with friends.

Lance Naismith



Merrick & Esther Thomas – AKA  
Wendy Belcher & Phillip Brimacombe



Susan Wells - enjoying  
the “HARVEST  
FESTIVAL”.

## Outreach

Three cheers for **Andrea Stewart** who led a choir of teenage girls from Czechoslovakia who were visiting St. Andrews Church on a walking tour of Old Oakville. Then, on the same day at night, she was in charge of the Ghost Walks.

Our Society thrives because of the many dedicated volunteers.

Barbara Savage

## ***THE WAY THINGS WERE***



1. Can you identify where this building is?
2. What markings were on the building?

Note – this colour edition is due to the generosity of our sponsors. Thank you.

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 2010**

**Volume 44: Number 1**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**March 17<sup>th</sup>**      **The Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper at Knox Church (in the basement) – 6:30pm (NOTE DATE CHANGE)**

**June 13<sup>th</sup>**      **Annual Picnic in the Park – Lakeside Park. Noon to 4:00PM  
Bring your own picnic and enjoy the bands. Admission:FREE!**

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**May 19th**      **Mr Ken Weber: “Surely Not in Canada”. Be prepared to laugh.**

**October 20th**      **The “Mississauga Disaster”. Slides and Discussion.**

**November 17<sup>th</sup>**      **“Come down to the Sea in Ships”. A voyage in history with Phillip Brimacombe**

**Note:**      **Evening programs are at Knox Church at 7:30pm for 2010, unless otherwise noted. Please visit [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for updates and new events.**

If anyone would like to be added to our "**HERITAGE EVENT**" email list, please email [info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org). We interact with seven other Halton Heritage groups in order to promote all up-coming Heritage Events.

### **NEW MEMBERS WELCOMED**

**Mr. R. Burns  
Ms. J. Kay  
K & J. Crane**

**Mr. J. Sinnott  
Mrs. A. McArthur  
Mr. H. Leingingen**

**Mr. & Mrs. F.W. Long  
Mr. & Mrs. G. Kerr  
Mr. M. Seaman**

**Our new members are from the local Oakville area, as well as from Sparta, Ontario and, Hudson, Ohio, U.S.A. We hope you enjoy exploring Oakville’s history.**



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Over the past couple of months, several members of the Society have been involved in a new initiative instigated by **June Hitchcox**. "*Oakville and the Sixteen*" is a fine reference book on the history of Oakville and "*Oakville A Small Town*" also contains much information on the history of our town but in a more anecdotal format. Unfortunately, neither one contains anything on our more recent history.

In conjunction with the Oakville Public Library, the Trafalgar Township Historical Society, the Oakville Museum and Appleby College, we have started collecting reminiscences of Oakville from the 1930's on. Our short term goal is to publish these electronically. A longer term goal is to publish selected stories in print.

Consider this an invitation to record your stories of Oakville from the 1930's to the present day. We're not looking for major works – 300 words or so would be appropriate and please consider submitting more than one story. Encourage others you know to do likewise. Some excellent examples are on Bob Hughes' website <http://www.oakville-memories.info/>. Typed submissions may be submitted at the office. Electronic versions may be submitted to [info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org) for now. Eventually our website will be changed to have a separate page or section. Photos are welcome. All submissions are subject to editing.

On behalf of the Board I would like to add my congratulations to **Harry Barrett** for his well-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award from the province. This does NOT mean that he can retire.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of **Greg Munz**, our relatively new Treasurer. Greg has recently completed a much-needed revision of our budget process.

I hope to see many of you at the **Annual General Meeting** coming up. For some reason attendance has improved since we turned it into a potluck dinner event.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

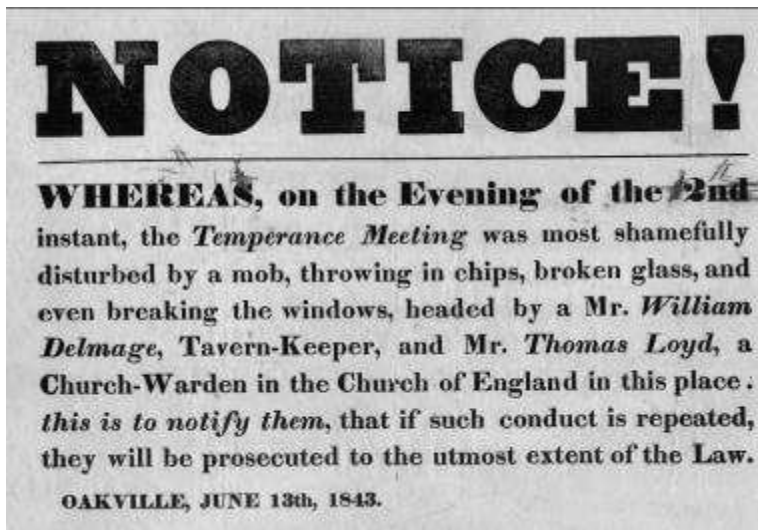
**COVER PICTURE:** Captain Robert Wilson as a young man.

Advertising insert artwork and compilation done by Carolyn Naismith

## *Irish in Early Oakville*

“Ontario: Whatever Happened to the Irish”, the title of the first chapter of **Donald Harman Akenson’s** book, *The Irish in Ontario* forms the premise of this research into the early nineteenth century Irish settlers in Oakville.

According to Akenson, it is estimated that Irish immigrants to Ontario in the nineteenth century outnumbered those of the Scots and English combined. The pre-famine immigrants came mostly from the northern part of Ireland and especially from those areas in which there was a domestic textile industry, the linen industry suffering, as it was in the early 1800s from decline and dislocation. In addition, Belfast had experienced a population boom. These pre-famine immigrants, according to Mr. Akenson, though in reduced circumstances, were well above the poverty line and had emigrated for economic advancement rather than fear of starvation or oppression. Further, he observes, there doesn’t seem to have followed the fierce nationalism and ghettoization that characterised the Irish experience in the U.S, especially in cities such as Boston and New York. So the racist depiction of the Irish as “feckless, pre-modern, culturally handicapped, passive exiles” did not pertain to Ontario’s Irish immigrant experience.



**"Sober-minded as they may seem to have been,  
there did exist some minor mischief!"**

The early Irish settlers in Oakville seem to have been anything but feckless or ill-prepared to meet the challenges of building a new town. Over twenty-eight percent of those listed in the 1841 Oakville-Trafalgar census were listed as having come directly from Ireland and that does not include the many more that had arrived via the U.S. and England. The majority of the Irish seemed to have come from the north of the country, particularly Ulster. They brought with them the skills



necessary to build ships and homes for the new town; they were carpenters and ships' carpenters, as well as labourers and mariners. An enterprising group, they seemed to have blended in well with their Scottish and English counterparts, and to have thrived and distinguished themselves.

Mrs. Chisholm-Matthews relates a humorous anecdote which illustrates this. When William Chisholm and Irishman Robert Baldwin Sullivan, Commissioner of Crown Lands, were inspecting a settlement in Owen Sound in 1841, the latter remarked how, following the inspection of one remarkably well-ordered and prosperous homestead, the latter praised the evident Scottish prudence, courage and energy, Mr. Chisholm replied, "Well, it may be all just as Scotch as you like to make it, but after all the man is an Irishman."

The early Irish in Oakville seemed to have evidenced none of the nationalist and sectarian sentiment prevalent in the U.S. Indeed there are stories of tolerance and harmony. Mrs. Hazel Chisholm-Matthews in her book, "Oakville on the Sixteen", states that the large percentage of Irish who settled in Oakville had come from Northern Ireland and many of these were Orangemen. It is noteworthy that the local Catholics took the Orangemen's celebrations good-naturedly, enjoying the music and dancing with the Orangemen. There seemed to exist in early Oakville a mood of ecumenical good will; the Presbyterians supporting the building of St. Andrew's Catholic Church, and in return, it is thought, the Catholics naming their church St. Andrew's in honour of St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland. The land for the church was given by William Chisholm. Mrs. Chisholm-Matthews recognizes the families responsible for building the church as Thomas and John Sweeney, Patrick Rigney, Patrick O'Shaughnessy, John Caven, Captain Nicholas Boylan, the O'Boyles and the McDermotts.

One reminder of the early Irish is the story of Vinegar Hill. This name was given by the early Irish to a little hill running to the north of John Street which apparently bore a striking resemblance to the site of a battle. Remembered with much bitterness, it had been waged in Wexford, Ireland, in 1789 where many Irish rebels had been slaughtered by the forces of King George III.

Surprisingly, nothing is written of the Oakville experience during the famine migration era which began in 1845, and neither does the 1851 census show any significant increase in the number of Irish immigrants during this period. There is no record, either, of the typhus epidemic, brought by the Irish famine victims, which plagued the Eastern part of Upper Canada. The one cholera outbreak that was mentioned and capably handled by John Urquhart (1802-67) and a team of dedicated medical people,

had actually occurred much earlier, in 1832, and this earlier outbreak was recorded to have involved immigrants from Britain in general. It is recorded that during the summer of 1847 when the quarantine station at Grosse Isle in the St. Lawrence was overflowing with the Irish immigrants who had fled the famine and were dying from typhus in the thousands, that a Board of Health was established in Oakville to deal with those who might arrive in Oakville, but no further details are given.

It might be wondered if any residual nationalist sentiment could have been elicited in the Oakville Irish community by the attempts of William Lyon Mackenzie and his reformers to stir up popular sentiment for his 1836 rebellion. However, his efforts seemed to have met with little success in Oakville, the majority of the new Irish population having loyalty to the British institutions and to the Empire. Not much is known about the existence of any rebel sympathisers in Oakville; there were no arrests of Oakville persons, but The Oakville Company of the Militia played a part in quelling the rebellion.

Similarly, the Fenian raids in 1886 and 1887, propagated by Irish Republicans in the U.S., and meant to attack the British governors of Canada, were warded off by the militia. There is reported to have been some sympathy in Oakville in favour of the Fenians and though an uprising in the town was expected, it too was avoided. Some of our early settlers went on to become prominent citizens, others to prosper quietly but, all in all, they had a lasting influence on the history of the Town. Many of the Irish settlers named in the 1841 census were mentioned in Mrs. Chisholm-Matthew's book, allowing us to follow the progress of many of the pre-1841 settlers. Captain Nicholas Boylan arrived in 1821 and became master of the Trafalgar and owner of the Britannia after twelve years in the Chisholm employment. His was one of the families involved in the building of St. Andrew's. Michael Butler, arrived in 1831, was a Ship's Carpenter who worked as a shipwright for William Chisholm. William Creighton, arrived 1837, owned a general store at Dunn and George. Lawrence Culloden, 1833, was a cabinetmaker who produced coffins and whose son became owner of the newspaper, "The Sentinel" with John Diamond. John Diamond, 1831, was a highly respected man, an Innkeeper whose son John Segur Junior became a surgeon in the Canadian Artillery. Captain Maurice Fitzgerald, 1840, labourer, later



**Captain Robert Wilson**

became a Ship's Captain. John Forman, 1821, farmer, became Innkeeper of the Temperance House. Thomas Lloyd, 1835, whose occupation was listed on the census as "Gentleman" went on to keep a hotel which featured bears and raccoons! John Moore, 1820, educated for the Presbyterian ministry in County Armagh changed his career plans during his crossing to Canada when the captain of the vessel taught him navigation. In 1837 Moore was believed to have been involved in the torching of the steamer, The Caroline, and sending her over the Niagara Falls, in retaliation for the Mackenzie rebellion attempt. Robert Murray, who arrived 1835, was a Presbyterian Minister, the third son of a merchant from Banbridge, Ulster. He became Pastor of the Scotch Kirk and later became influential in the educational affairs in the Province. William O'Reilly, 1832, was a Tavern Keeper. David Patterson, from Ballymena, who had apprenticed as a Carpenter and Shipwright in Belfast, became a Shipwright employed by William Chisholm and later, as Pathmaster. Charles Reynolds, 1827, was one of the first merchants to stock millinery. Pat Smithwick, 1833, was a Tavern Keeper. James Streele, 1833, a Saddler and Harnessmaker was on a committee to prevent the spread of cholera. John Sweeney, 1831, a Ship's Carpenter, was involved in the building of St. Andrews; Thomas Sweeny, 1835, was a Ships Carpenter. Thomas Thomas, 1835, was a Ship's Carpenter, John White, 1823, Farmer, became Liberal member for Halton.



**Captain George Wilson**

noted for his kindness in bringing homeless sailors to live

with him during the winter. But it was his involvement in the Underground Railroad which was most notable,

Three brothers merit special mention: George, William and Robert Wilson. Their mother, the widow of a Linen Merchant from Ulster, emigrated from Ireland in 1817 with ten children in tow, settling in Perth. Three of the brothers arrived in Oakville three years later and were listed in the census as Mariners. George and William became Ship's Captains and married sisters from Port Nelson and Mrs. George (Mary) became a bakery owner. Captain Robert became the first master of the schooner, The Lady Colborne, and was



**Captain William Wilson**

smuggling stowaway slaves in the hold of his ships on their return across the lake from the U.S.

In conclusion, rather than the dispirited and dispossessed Irish immigrants one might have expected to discover, the early Irish of Oakville made a significant contribution to the building of the town and, in some cases, became influential in the politics, educational and religious affairs of the Province.

**Editor's note:** The foregoing article was based on our very early records and does not cover the entire history of this topic. We would welcome any further anecdotes or facts our readers may have concerning this very early period, or of the history of succeeding generations of the early settlers.



**Our Society in the Winter – bench in honour of Art Bullied, a long time and dedicated member of the Society**

# *AROUND THE SOCIETY*



## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – December 2009

It is a present day view of the “**Romain Block**”, at the corner of Navy Street and Lakeshore Road. It originally was marked “Masonic Hall” and was emblazoned with the Masonic symbol. Masonic Lodge #400 met there.

Lance Naismith

## Doors Open

The third annual Doors Open will be held again the last weekend of September. The first two have been a great success. New sites will be added to the growing list. Again, this year we will need **volunteers**. There will be more information in the next Newsletter. People who have volunteered in the past years have all enjoyed being part of the activities. So mark your calendar for **September 25th and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010**.

Barbara Savage

Visit the OHS website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the enlarged and colour version of this newsletter and, explore the many informative areas of the website for event and tour dates.



## White Elephant Sale

Jim Young is organizing a White Elephant Sale for **Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010** at the Society (9 am to 2pm) as a fund raiser for the Society. Please bring jewelry, books, dishes, gadgets, small furniture, etc, but **no clothing** to the Society.

**WE need volunteers** to help sort, price and sell. The funds will go to the painting of our Society building and you can have a little fun as well.

Barbara Savage

## Presentation - The Scotch Block

Our February Speakers' Meeting featured **Jim Dills** and **Gloria Brown** of the Milton Historical Society. They spoke about a Scottish settlement in the 1820's. They gave us an interesting account of these hardy early settlers' land clearance, agricultural and industrial developments and showed photographs of the still existing Boston Presbyterian Church established in 1820 and, the many beautiful houses still remaining - including the Harrop House and the Kaneff house which was featured in the recognizable Trisha Romance painting.

The book, "**Halton's Scotch Block, The People and their Stories**", is available from the Milton Historical Society.



**L/R Gloria Brown, Andrea Stewart,  
Jim Dills**

Andrea Stewart

*If you haven't submitted your 2010 dues, please do  
so and show your support.*



## Volunteers are Everything

Our Society exists because of the generosity of our patrons, our members, advertisers and especially our volunteers, who put in a lot of hard work ensuring everyone gets to enjoy the rich history of Oakville. For those who attend our presentations, we have Barb Savage to thank for organizing these events. As well, we should also thank those who put together the refreshments on those nights.

I recently received the following from Joy Sanders and I believe it deserves a special notice in our newsletter. **“Our sincere thank you to Grace and Herb Schroeder, who generously provide the refreshments for the Knox Church meetings.”**

Lance Naismith

Three cheers for Harry Barrett and the Town of Oakville. On February 19th 2010 they both received awards from the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. Harry, the Lifetime Achievement Award for promoting Heritage and, the Town for their strong support of Heritage.

## 2010 Information Brochure

Trying to work out what to do this year? Maybe you are expecting guests to arrive for a short stay? Well, thanks to **Mary Davidson**, the **2010 Information Brochure** is now available at the Society and at various establishments around Oakville. Grab one and make some plans to enjoy the rich heritage of Oakville with some friends and also learn about the Society.

Lance Naismith

*Bored, listless or have some time on your hands?  
Get out and show your skills by being a volunteer at the  
Society. You never know – you just might find that niche that  
gets you out of the rut.*

**Trivia:** In what year did Oakville become a town? And a city? Ans: Pg. 12

## November Presentation

An interesting evening was spent November 18th with **Rick Ruggle**, author and official Historian for the Lorne Scots. During his talk Mr. Ruggle traced the history and development of the regiment particularly their connection with Oakville. (photo L/R \* Phillip Brimacombe – Rick Ruggle)

Their history is recorded in a book by Mr. Ruggle which is available at the Society for \$10.00.

Barbara Savage



## Heritage Month

Heritage month was celebrated by our Mayor, Councillors and guests at the upper level of **Season's restaurant** on Wednesday February 17th 2010. The building is of great Historical interest as it served as the Town Hall and Jail from 1912 to 1957. Two jail cells are still in the basement, the main floor was the police station and the court room and administration was on the 2nd floor.

**Michael Seaman** outlined the history of Heritage in Oakville with humorous input by **Harry Barrett**. It was an interesting and very informative session.

Barbara Savage

## Annual Wine and Cheese Christmas Party

December 4<sup>th</sup> was an exciting time at the Society. The Annual Wine and Cheese Christmas Party was held and it allowed members to not only get to know their Society but each other.

Any Society is only as strong as its members and having a get together to discuss various issues only makes our Society that much stronger. Mayor Rob Burton and his wife attended and mixed with the crowd and shared some Christmas spirit with the Society's members.

Lance Naismith

**Trivia Answer:** Oakville a town in 1857. Still not called a City.



### [Beads for Africa Presentation](#)

Cathy Benbow Plewes attended the Society and gave a very interesting and moving pictorial presentation of her trip to Africa. Of special note was her story of how the women in an area of **Kenya** would make beads, this being their only source of income to support **Insulin Dependent children and the Diabetic Clinic** there.

Cathy brought these beads home and, with the help of volunteers, had the beads strung into beautiful pieces of jewelry. These were offered to those attending and donations were gratefully accepted to assist the children back in Kenya.

Lance Naismith







**L/R Cathy Benbow Plewes and Barbara Savage**

## **Help Save A Heritage Home In Bronte Creek Provincial Park**

The Park has an 1860 Georgian house, "**Silver Creek**", built for Ralph Breckon, farmer. It is one of the very rare houses left standing in Ontario to have been built of hand-made brick by the builder, Edwin Brown, from the clay on the property. It took him one year + one day to build the house.

Later it was to have been for Arts and Crafts (1970's), but plans changed. It was carefully boarded up to save for future use. Since



then, open windows, doors, missing shingles and bricks falling from the chimneys, have been an open invitation for animals, birds, rain and snow to enter - causing damage. **"Demolition by Neglect"**. The many buildings in the Park are architectural gems from the 1800's. We urge you to contact **MPP Kevin Flynn** to have this house properly preserved for future use. Perhaps the dream of eventually having this wonderful home well-used by many groups - schools, scouts, girl guides, families - all wanting a farm experience - over-night or longer - may even be fulfilled.

MPP Kevin Flynn - [kflynn.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org](mailto:kflynn.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org) - 905-827-5141 - 2330 Lakeshore W. (Bronte).

June Hitchcox

Older Views (1970) Note careful boarding which preserved building compared to above recent photo (Nov 2009) showing neglect.





## OAKVILLE MEMORIES 1930 TO NOW

If you have ever called Oakville "**HOME**" - now or in the past - this is for you. There are 2 reading/reference books for the history of Oakville from its beginning to 1930, **BUT nothing from then to now**. If you send your stories, there will be.

The 3 Historical Societies, Central Library, Erchless Museum and the Town have combined to publish a book/website to fill this void so that future generations will be able get the "flavour" and facts of Oakville from 1930 to now. Personal, folksy memories - the Great Depression; World War II; the school I go (went) to; why I came to Oakville; our basketball team won yesterday.

Addresses, full names, dates, photos if possible - no limit to the number of stories. The boundaries are Oakville as it stands to-day.

Please tell your friends, neighbours - spread the word.

Articles and their writers will go down in history!

For examples, please see <http://www.oakville-memories.info/>

Oakville Historical Society: [info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org) 905-844-2695, 110 King St., Oakville ON L6J 1B1

Open: Tuesday -Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm

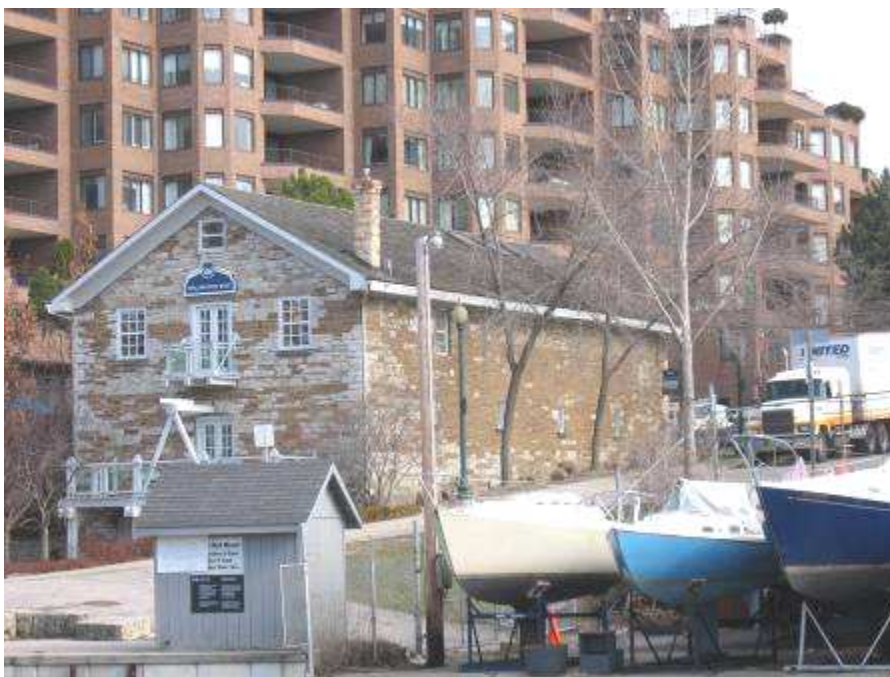
### Editorial

Too often we hear from our friends how they were able to go to the U.K., Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East or, wherever and how they enjoyed walking down the old streets and admired the historical buildings so plentiful. How often have we heard people complain that they were castled out or, had seen more than enough old churches? But, they said it with pleasure as they truly enjoyed admiring the historical landscape of the old country.

People move to various places for many reasons, some because they are attracted to the atmosphere generated by our historical facades. Canada is a relatively new country in comparison to Europe, the Middle East or, even the Far East. Our historical landscape is only just developing. But, are we too quick to want the newest, the fanciest and most luxurious buildings we can, without any thought as to what is happening to our history. Long term residents of Oakville have seen many changes. Some for the better and some, well, more consideration should have been given.

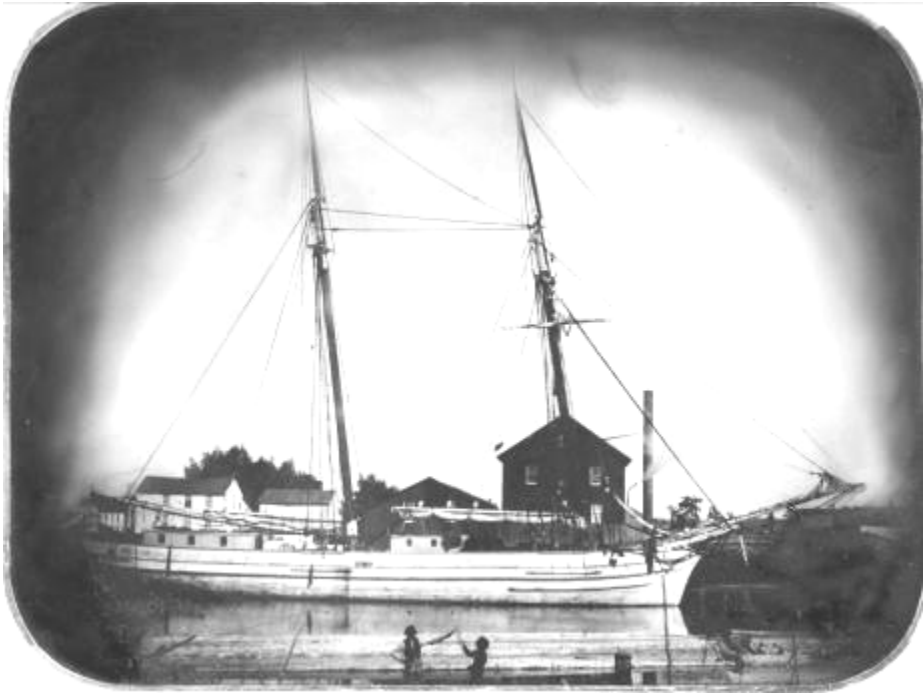
Our present downtown is an attraction to people. Why some people are moving here. Not all want plastic, stainless steel and glass facades that reflect the passage of people. Some like the historical grandeur offered by our older buildings - buildings that reflect history, stability, strength and warmth that cannot be achieved by our cold building materials of today.

Remember, new is not always good and yes, some old buildings need to be removed, but not because some allow them to deteriorate or burn down to ensure destruction or, by those buying up large tracts of land for future profit. Save yourself a trip to the old country and admire our own historical heritage. Maybe, in the future, we'll have Europeans coming here to admire our history - but only if we save it.



**Will our history survive our future?**

## *THE WAY THINGS WERE*



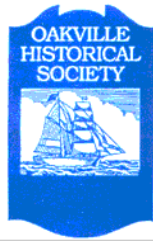
1. Can you identify the schooner?
  2. Can you name a Captain and an owner?
  3. Can you identify what type of photography was used?
- ~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
~~~~~



## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**JUNE 2010**

**Volume 44: Number 2**



## SPECIAL EVENTS

**June 13** Annual Picnic in the Park – Lakeside Park. Noon to 4:00PM  
Bring your own picnic and enjoy the bands. Admission:FREE!

**September 25-26**

### **Volunteers Needed for Doors Open Oakville**

Every year in Ontario hundreds of historic buildings, natural spaces, heritage gardens and cultural sites are open for free to the public as part of Doors Open Ontario. The goal of Doors Open is to educate and inform the community about the importance of architectural, cultural and natural heritage sites. Doors Open Oakville will occur on the weekend of Sept. 25 & 26, featuring approximately 40 sites. Volunteer responsibilities include greeting and guiding the public through various sites in Oakville on Sept. 25 or 26.

For further information:

Contact: [www.doorsopenoakville@oakville.ca](http://www.doorsopenoakville@oakville.ca)

Phone Number: 905.845.6601 ext. 5122

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**October 20<sup>th</sup>** The “Mississauga Disaster”. Slides and discussion.

**November 17<sup>th</sup>** “Come down to the Sea in Ships”. A voyage in history with Phillip Brimacombe

**Note:** Evening programs are at Knox Church at 7:30pm for 2010, unless otherwise noted. Please visit [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for updates and new events.

If anyone would like to be added to our "HERITAGE EVENT" email list, please email [info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org). We interact with seven other Halton Heritage groups in order to promote all up-coming Heritage Events.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It was nice to see such a good turnout for our annual general meeting in March. Whoever had the idea to add a potluck dinner to this event should be congratulated. The food was, as usual, excellent. At the meeting we confirmed the appointment of two directors to the board - elected one new member. These new and newish board members are Greg Munz, Susan Wells and Mary Davidson. I would like to thank the departing board member, Drew Bucknall, for his work with the board. While Drew has retired from the board, he is still serving an active role in heritage Oakville as he is a member of Heritage Oakville.

At our board meeting in April, the board elected the four officers of the corporation who remain:

George Chisholm – President  
Barbara Savage – Vice President

Greg Munz – Treasurer  
Jim Young – Secretary

It seems that your Society gets busier and busier every year and there are more demands on the time of our volunteers. While many of our members choose not to be active volunteers for a variety of reasons, we could certainly use more help. Tuesdays and Thursdays are very busy times at the office but many are not aware that we are now open on the third Sunday afternoon of each month and that more visitors are arriving then as well. So far, Phil Brimacombe and Mary Noad have looked after this duty but, they could use some help. It is a longer term goal of the Society to open the office on more than one Sunday afternoon per month. Phil and Mary would be happy to train anyone who is interested in helping out. You can email me or call the office at 905 844-2695 and leave a message if you would like to be a new or returning volunteer. We can most likely find just the job for you.

This past month several representatives from the Society attended a series of meetings concerning the Downtown Oakville Strategic Review (DOSR). This is a review initiated by the Planning Department at Town Hall. Many super ideas were put forth and the consultants should be able to put together a great report. One message that was put across loud and clear was that Oakville needs a fourth Heritage District – the Main Street. It will be interesting to see what comes out of this.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

**COVER PICTURE:** Example of early Oakville architecture – “The Slacer Cabin”  
*Advertising insert artwork & compilation done by Carolyn Naismith*

## *Early Oakville Architecture*

The construction methods used by Canada's early builders were influenced by their place of origin. They built their dwellings to resemble the ones they left at home, not only because they were homesick and wanted to replicate their old environment, but also because they possessed certain skills and used them to fashion homes with the materials they found in their adopted land.

Many of us have in mind a log cabin when we think of a first dwelling built by new settlers. (I am writing of houses in this article however, logs were used for structures of many purposes: churches, post offices, etc.)

That house would not be typical of that built by immigrants from the British Isles or most of Europe. A house built of trees, kept round in section, laid horizontally, one on top of another, was unknown to them. This use of timber, developed in places including Scandinavia and Switzerland, was transported to the new land now known as the USA. In fact, it has been conclusively argued that the first houses in North America built by immigrants were frame structures, as the log-building people did not arrive until the 1700s. Since Oakville was settled after, in the early 1800s, in large part by United Empire Loyalists, the US-learned log-building skills were put to use here.

There are not many log homes left from the early days, as they were given over to shelter animals or tractors and later left to fall back into the ground. Also, since a home was needed in a hurry, the trees were felled, logs cut and walls built before the timber was sufficiently dry (drying took twelve months or so, a luxury not allowed.) The result was walls that dried and shrank, and the bottoms row of logs rotted and settled due to alternate exposure to wetting and drying.



1820's Log Cabin – Oakville Yacht Squadron

Even those that survived may be mistaken for frame houses (built of wood, cut and shaped by the mills that appeared soon after the settlers.) One-room log cabins were added to and covered by wood siding or stone, so that for all the world they had the appearance of a dwelling of a much wealthier occupant. The log cabin on the grounds of the Oakville Yacht Squadron was such a house. When the house, then on Trafalgar Road, was being torn down in the 1970s, it was noticed logs were underneath the outside covering and (thankfully) the preservation of the 1820s cabin building began. (I had the pleasure of visiting a two-storey farm house in Saskatchewan and was shown behind the plaster walls: the humble first home of Ukrainian-Canadians was built of prairie sod, cut into squares and piled up to form walls, the exterior sheathed with wooden siding)

This is not to say there were no log homes built to last. Some had the benefit of a good foundation and a good plan, designed to withstand the freeze and thaw cycles of the seasons of this area. A matching of the skills of the immigrants to the materials on the land and to the wild variables of temperature must have taken some skill and experimentation.

Some factors determining the size of the dwelling are - the size of the trees available, time allowed for construction (was it spring? Or were the leaves falling?) and funds available.

First, a foundation was laid. This could be as simple as fieldstone piled in the shape of the proposed cabin, held with mortar or not. Sometimes the vertical stump leftover from the tree, felled to make the wall, was kept as part of the foundation that held the horizontal logs. As you can imagine, the foundations were not always long-lasting, but when a family needed a roof before winter arrived the settlers did what they could.

In the basic log house, the wall of the house was made up of one full log length: that is, if the house was 20 feet long then the log was 20 feet long. There was not a joining of logs somewhere along the length. The logs were usually between 8 and 11 inches in diameter and varying sizes were used in the same wall. The corners were secured with a variety of different styles of keys that originated from a variety of different cultures. It is the success of these keys that partially kept the walls from falling apart from each other.



Corners

The 7th or 8th log up from the bottom was the tie log, which was necessary where the joints at the corners were not sufficient enough to hold the walls vertical.



Chinking between logs and, corners

The chinking used to fill the gaps where the logs did or did not join was moss, clay or lime made on the site. The space may have been filled first with branches to cut down on the amount of chinking required. This was an on-going seasonal task as the ground shifted and the logs shrank as they dried.

The trusses for the roof could vary in spacing from two feet to five and were cut and notched on the ground before being lifted to the roof for piecing together. Carpenters' marks can still be seen on some rafters today. An early form of roof finish was one of hollowed out logs placed across the roof trusses, overlapping, to allow the rain to fall away from the roof rather than into the dwelling.

The floor, if not packed dirt or clay, was logs halved lengthwise with the flat side up. A chimney was constructed of stone from the farm site or of locally-made bricks.

Two men experienced with an ax could put up a house in a few days, but the time and cost varied. For example, an average 10 feet by 20 feet log house built in 1820, could be erected in four weeks at a cost of £33. Windows cost more, as well as the cutting of the openings to receive them. The cut was made after the logs were in place. This could add over £2 extra. Windows were small, few in number and as they had to be manufactured some distance away and transported to the house, were expensive.



Window structure

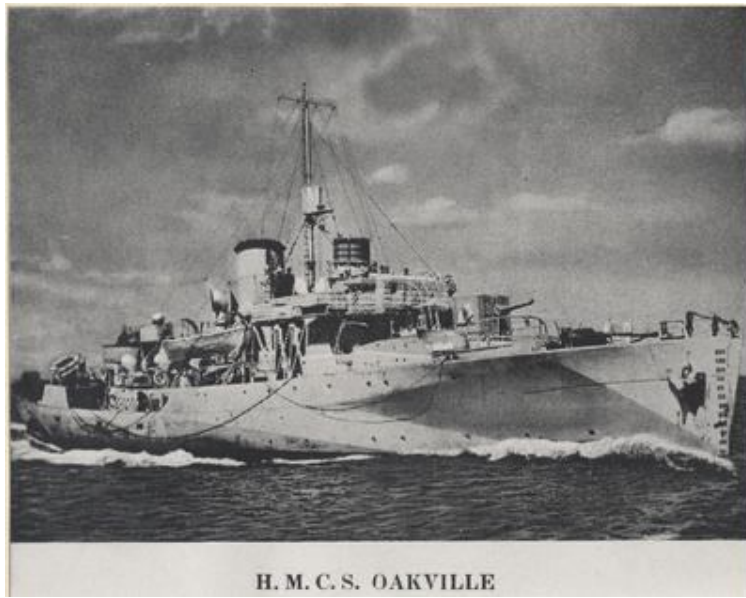
This was the basic dwelling. Luxurious touches, such as plaster applied to interior of the walls, a ceiling and interior partitions, could be added in the future, but now here was a house to keep the snow and rain (mostly), off the settlers' heads.

Susan Wells

### Canadian Naval Centennial \* 1910-2010

Canada's Navy is celebrating 100 years of service. Oakville may not be considered a "naval" town but, it has a rich maritime history and a link to the Navy with a namesake that fought proudly during WW II. H.M.C.S. Oakville gained a reputation as a strong and fighting ship with a proud crew. Let us think of all those who have manned our ships in war and peace.

*"God bless our ships and all who sail on them"*





# *AROUND THE SOCIETY*



## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – March 2010

The daguerreotype photograph showed the schooner Britannia, once owned by William Chisholm. One of her Captains was Robert Wilson (1806-1888). This type of photograph was the first large scale commercial photographic process and was developed by Louis Daguerre and Joseph Niepce.

Lance Naismith

## Oakville’s own “Antiques Roadshow”

Viewers of “The Antiques Roadshow”, clutching their own Victorian button collection, probably dismiss as theatrics for the TV camera, the reaction of the guests on the show who, when told by the expert that the folk art gee-gaw they picked up at the garage sale in Clappison’s Corners in 1978 for 50 cents, is now worth \$2000.



Jed Gardner of Turner’s Antiques (37 Lakeshore Rd. West) appraised my 1880s British perfume bottle and I had

Jed Gardner appraising Janet Carr’s portrait of “John West”



such a reaction. “Really!?” I said, astonished. “I had no idea.”

Mr. Gardner, who has been in the antique business for over 20 years and has operated Turner’s for eight, probably heard similar reactions at an event 24th April where, with Cogeco TV filming, he appraised antiques. Donations were gratefully accepted by the Oakville Historical Society.

Susan Wells



Cogeco T.V. Crew



Susan Wells with Robert Gardner

### **Tidbits from the Past**

**J**ohn Cosley, who was possibly an escaped slave, not only dabbled as a barber, hairdresser, proprietor of Indian root shrub, toys, gunsmithing and inventing (breach loading rifle, a folding water and feed trough), briefly owned and edited “The Bee”, a small newspaper of the 1860’s. He used a hand press that printed simultaneously on both sides. Alas, “The Bee” was no more when the editor, as they are wont on occasion, stung personages of importance. Sometimes the power of the press isn’t omnipotent.

Lance Naismith

**DID YOU KNOW?** The Society is a member of the Ontario Historical Society. Learn more at: **John McKenzie House**  
34 Parkview Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario, M2N 3Y2  
**Phone:** 416.226.9011**Fax:** 416.226.2740  
**E-Mail Address:** [ohs@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca](mailto:ohs@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca)

## Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting for the Society was held at Knox Church on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The potluck supper brought in a lot of tasty morsels and, for those with a sweet tooth, the offerings were very satisfying.

The meeting was opened by our very own Society Crier, **Ian Burkholder**. Various reports were brought forward by the directors, informing the members of our finances and membership and upcoming projects. Greg Munz & Susan Wells were confirmed in their positions while Mary Davidson was elected to the Board.



L/R \* G. Chisholm (Pres.), J. Young (Sec.) & Crier Ian Burkholder

Lance Naismith

**Trivia:** Who did William Chisholm hire to lay out the streets of Oakville? Ans: pg 10

## What's on your plate Sundays???

In case you don't know, the Society is open for business every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month (1-4p.m.?) and we look forward to seeing you if you'd like to come down and talk to the volunteers about Oakville's history.

Also, for those members who find the week-day hours a problem due to work, commitments, etc, this is a good chance to volunteer and learn more about the Society and the rich history we have in Oakville. Trained volunteers are already on site but, extra help is very much appreciated and, as stated, this is a good way to increase your knowledge about the area. So, come on down and spend some leisure time.

## Thomas House

The Thomas House, located in beautiful Lakeside Park at the foot of Navy Street, is now open and Pat Mack and all her volunteers are eagerly awaiting your visit. Combine a tour of the historic district with this beautifully preserved example of early

19<sup>th</sup> pioneer house architecture. FREE ADMISSION but donations are gratefully accepted. TRIVIA ANSWER: *Merrick Thomas, original owner of this house, was given the job of designing the street structure of early Oakville.*

Thomas House visiting hours are 1:30 to 4:00 P.M. as follows:

- Victoria Day Weekend to Labour Day - Saturday, Sunday & Holidays;
- Plus, during July and August: Tuesday through Thursday inclusive.
- Closed after Labour Day (except for HARVEST FESTIVAL).

Lance Naismith

### Oakville Memories: 1930 to Now

**W**e have over 100 memory articles already!!! We are hoping for many more. Even if you came to Oakville yesterday – why did you come? Was it for business? What business and address. Are you here because you have just retired – why? Did you come when you had children at home? What school did they go to? What do you like about Oakville or, not like? What clubs do you belong to and what do you do there? Do you have a special memory of Oakville – Hurricane Hazel 1954, etc?

We would love your stories – or more if you have them!!

June Hitchcox

### Selling Heritage

**J**ames Neilson, a York University student who, working as an intern under Michael Seaman, Manager of Heritage Planning, gave a short presentation to the volunteers at the OHS on how to stimulate interest in Oakville's heritage. Responsible for producing a report on this subject, he spoke on how to incorporate Heritage into Oakville's various tourism programs. Such things as signage, brochures and partnerships were discussed and an informative Q & A period was held afterwards.

Lance Naismith

<b>HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS - 2010</b>			
<b>(All Walks commence at 2:00p.m. – 110 King Street)</b>			
	HISTORIC HOUSES	MAIN STREET	TRAFALGAR
JULY	Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> Canada Day	Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup>
AUGUST	Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup>	Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup>
SEPTEMBER	Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup>	Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> Labour Day

COST: Adult - \$10, Child - \$5, Family \$25

VISIT <http://oakvillehistory.org/html/walkTours.htm> for tour descriptions

The Historic Houses & Main Street tours leave from and return to the Oakville Historical Society at 110 King Street, west of Navy. Enter from the park or from King St. Go to the south side of the building.

The Trafalgar Road tours leave from and return to the parking lot of St. John's United Church.

Tour duration is about 2 hours. Each tour is preceded by a brief talk on related Oakville History. Tea and light refreshments are served after each walk.

Guides are OHS volunteers who are long-time local residents.

### **The White Elephant Sale & Society Information**

The sale was a great success thanks to the many members who donated articles and extra thanks to all the members who came out on Saturday and worked all day selling. Special thanks to Jamie Macrae for all of his work.

The Harvest Festival is booked for Sunday September 26th at the Thomas House from 1pm to 4pm. Again there will be a bake table, games and crafts for the children and Historical Displays of interest to everyone.

Pat Mack held an orientation for new volunteers on Monday May 17th at the Society. Pat along with husband Bill does a great job keeping the pioneer farm house in good shape for the many visitors. She also organizes the schedules for the summer months making sure a volunteer is on duty to welcome guests.

Andrea Stewart and Phil Brimacombe welcomed a group of students from Surrey British Columbia and the Christian School of Oakville and told the “History of Oakville”. It was so cold by the lake they took shelter at Erchless and Michael Brown kindly gave them a tour of Erchless where it was warmer (there was no room at the Society because of the Sale).

Barbara Savage

### [Apathy: The Developer's Newest Weapon](#)

**I**t is such a disgrace to watch Toronto's built heritage being pulled down around us. As we stand silently on the sidelines, our collective history is being destroyed, brick by falling brick. We stand and watch, afraid to question anything. Why should we get involved, the disinterested ask? Change is for the good. Change in this form is **not** for the good. This is change for the sake of the almighty dollar. Grand Victorian and imposing Edwardian structures are being demolished for their prime land, to be redeveloped into condos or town homes. All trace of the land's previous inhabitants are removed, save for maybe the name or perhaps the facade. These are all token gestures. Why do we stand by and watch? We are afraid to question. We are told that we will like what takes history's place. Will we?

But when will people say enough is enough? Look at the city that spreads for miles and miles around you. Look at the towers that reach into the sky. They have no character. No class. No souls. These buildings are cold, glass-clad monstrosities. They will never stand for half as long as their predecessors did. In one hundred years will any of these new, cutting edge buildings still be here? No. They will be gone, replaced by something else.

People seem to forget, quite conveniently, who is going to maintain these buildings in their old age. When these structures that people hailed as modern need massive rehabilitation, who will foot the bill? (Witness the example of the Italian marble cladding on the façade of First Canadian Place being replaced after less than forty years.) Will the



Condo development on site of demolished  
Addison-on-Bay art deco building

owners of these towers be able to afford the astronomical costs of the repairs to ensure their sixty-floor asset is safe?

These are sad times for Toronto and her history. The past is for sale. When developers see beautiful old structures, they don't say, "Isn't this a sight to behold?" They say, "I wonder how many towers we can squeeze on this location?"

The past is being lost. It can be seen all around us, and there is no need to look far. Be it Victorian homes on Charles Street, an Edwardian hospital on St. John's Road, a publishing moguls palatial estate on Austin Terrace, or even a car wash parking lot over our first parliament buildings, we witness the destruction daily.

But we do nothing. We turn a blind eye. Why? Because the past stands in the way, and we desperately want to be modern.

By Adam Howell

*Ed. Note: This article was published with the kind permission of the author and the Etobicoke Historical Society Newsletter, "The Aldernews", where it was first published. The tone is pertinent to our historical heritage in Oakville.*

*This newsletter by the Oakville Historical Society is published quarterly (March, June, September, December) as a benefit of membership. It may not be sold or reproduced without the express written permission of the OHS.*



## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. Oakville Harbour was originally privately owned. When did the Town of Oakville take ownership?
2. Who owned the first shipyard and what was the name of the first ship launched?
3. Whose yacht won the first Canada-USA match race for sailing yachts & when?

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM & every Third Sunday of the month**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**SEPTEMBER 2010**

**Volume 44: Number 3**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### **Volunteers Needed for Doors Open Oakville**

Our third annual Doors Open is being planned for September 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 10am to 4pm both days. Lots of new sites and interesting events are being planned by our Committee. This is a wonderful family event free to the public. We also need volunteers to be at the different sites on one or both days.

Phone the Society and leave your name and phone number if you can help.

Also on Sunday Sept 26 we will be holding our Harvest Festival at Lakeside Park from 1pm to 4pm. Again there will be a Bake Table and games and crafts for the children. Come and join in the fun. Preserves and baking can be left at the Society Saturday and Sunday morning as the Society will be open for Doors Open. Money raised helps with expenses at the Society.

**December 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**CHRISTMAS PARTY: 6:00PM – 9:00PM (110 King Street West)**  
**ALL MEMBERS** are invited to the Society for the Annual Christmas Party. Come and mingle with fellow Oakville history enthusiasts and enjoy a scrumptious spread provided by the Friends.

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**October 20<sup>th</sup>**

The “Mississauga Disaster”. Slides and discussion.

**November 17<sup>th</sup>**

“Come down to the Sea in Ships”. A voyage in history with Phillip Brimacombe.

**Note:** Evening programs are at Knox Church at 7:30pm for 2010, unless otherwise noted. Please visit [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for updates and new events.

**Wanted: Victorian style ladies hats and a top hat for ghosts and hosts.  
Anyone with expertise in creating costumes for our Ghost Walks  
CONTACT: Barb Savage 905-845-3620**



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to report that this fall your Board intends to proceed with the development of a Future Plan with the assistance of a professional facilitator. This will build on the work done by Drew Bucknall, Karen Woolley and Lance Naismith. With the number of new initiatives and existing projects, we need to sort out where the Society should be in the future.

One of the new initiatives has to do with the former Queen Elizabeth Park School which is in the process of becoming a Community Centre. Once the renovations are complete, the Society will have about 900 square feet of storage and work space and the opportunity to work with the Museum on joint exhibits there. We hope to move the bulk of the archival collection to Queen Elizabeth Park where it will have proper fire protection. This will also free up space at the office for more research. Those who work out of the office will agree that space is at a premium.

Many have commented on the work being done at the Old Post Office next to the Thomas House. At this time it is up on blocks about 6 feet off the ground while a new concrete foundation is being put in. Once it is back to its normal level, work will commence on the building which will include a new roof. It hasn't yet been decided what will be inside the building but we hope to see joint exhibits featuring our archival items and the Town's artifacts. After all, what is one without the other? We are looking forward to working with the Museum on these projects.

Doors Open is fast approaching and many of you will be approached to help out as volunteers for the event. Barb Savage is our representative on the Doors Open Committee. This year the committee is assisted by a part-time co-ordinator, Lyne Mainville. In this, its third year in Oakville, the event continues to grow.

I would like to thank Pat Mack for her dedication over the past few years as Thomas House Co-Ordinator. The Thomas House has long been a major focus of the Society and Pat has done an admirable job in scheduling volunteers and keeping the building running well.

I would also like to congratulate the Town on winning the Prince of Wales Prize for Municipal Heritage Leadership. Barb Savage has put countless hours into nominating the Town for this award. We are very sorry to see Michael Seaman, the Manager of Heritage Planning at Town Hall, depart but wish him well in his new job as Planning Director in Grimsby.

**Cover Picture:** Daniel Fassler as young Robert Murray Thomas (standing in front of the Thomas gravestone – Robert Murray Thomas and wife's side).

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

Advertising insert artwork & compilation done  
by Carolyn Naismith.

## *GHOSTS*

Shhhhhh!!!!

Can you see them?

Can you hear them?

Oakville's ghosts are returning.

**G**hosts – do they scare you or intrigue you? Most people tend to associate ghosts with Halloween or haunted locales. But do ghosts really exist, and if they do, why are they here? Belief in ghosts or the spirits of the dead crosses all cultures, dating back to pre-literate times. Certain religious practices - funeral rites, exorcism, and some practices of ritual magic – were designed to appease these ghosts, these spirits of the dead.

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. Why? Perhaps 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*. Finally, some, like Rebecca Chisholm, like it here and just cannot bear to move on.

And in the fall, near All Hallow's Eve, the veil between our dimension and the dimension beyond is thinnest and ghosts apparently can come through more easily which is why there is so much paranormal activity.

There are different types of ghostly appearances. A crisis apparition is the appearance of a ghost, usually to a loved one, at a moment of great crisis or actual death. Typically, the ghosts appear only once to that person who may be many miles away at the time of the incident. Many apparitions are viewed repeating the same motions or scenes.

Some classic hauntings fall into this category such as the Brown Lady of Raynham Hall, who was always seen moving down a hallway with a lantern in her hand. Usually these ghosts pay little or no attention to the observer like the butler at Erchless 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.

There are also many legends of ghost lights, which are often said to be caused by someone's ghostly lantern or by a spectral train. Sometimes inanimate objects are said to be cursed or possessed. A particular piece of furniture will refuse to stay in place, even moving in front of the owner's eyes. The piano stool in the Paterson home does not like to be moved and when it is taken from the attic, there is much unexplained noise and activity there.

Poltergeists are the only spirits who leave immediate physical traces. Poltergeists are best known for throwing things about and producing rapping sounds and other noises. In fact, the word "poltergeist" means "noisy ghost" in German. Poltergeists often occur where there are children on the brink of puberty, and often interact with people. Which poltergeist tosses around papers at Erchless?

While ghosts are usually described as solitary essences that haunt particular locations, objects, or people with which they were associated in life, across the centuries there are stories of phantom armies which might be foretelling the

future or replaying the past, and stories of phantom ships such as the Flying Dutchman and the Mary Celeste.

But what of our Oakville ghosts? According to Joyce Burnell, long-time member of the Oakville Historical Society and author of Ghosts of Oakville and Boo Too, Oakville has only the



Robert Murray (aka Daniel Fassler) & Esther Thomas (aka Wendy Belcher) in front of Thomas family gravestone.



nicest ghosts, not scary and not threatening. Joyce collected Oakville ghost tales and published her first book in 1999. The Oakville Historical Society began its Ghosts Walks almost a decade ago under the inspired leadership of Francine Landry who assumed the character of Mary Jane MacDougald, daughter of William Chisholm. At the time, Francine lived in the MacDougald home. The ghosts of Esther Thomas (Wendy Belcher), Jacques the Buccaneer (Carol Gall) and Merrick Thomas (Philip Brimacombe) return annually to lead the Ghost Walks. Mary Jane retired last year to give Francine some much deserved rest from her hauntings. This year, Esther and Merrick's youngest son, Robert Murray (8 year old Daniel Fassler) will also be returning from beyond to help with the Ghost Walks. As well, Jim Young and Midge Philbrook may be 'possessed' by characters of old.

Those participating in the Ghost Walks have often added their own tales of ghostly encounters. One woman had met Alice, the ghost that frequents Oakville Centre, in the washroom of the Centre. She was delighted to hear the story of this ghost and relieved to have an explanation of her experience. Another woman saw a worker in old clothes in the sanctuary of St. Jude's Church during a break in a day-long workshop. When she asked what work was being done, she was told that there was no work, no workmen and, all doors had been locked when the workshop began.

The Society's Ghost Walks consist of a one-hour evening walk in October which starts at the Society Office on King Street. Ghost leaders share stories of Olde Oakville and the characters that lived, died and did not pass on. Each walk ends with refreshments at the Office. The Ghost Walks attract families and such groups as Beavers and Girl Guides. Cost is \$12 per adult and \$6 for those under 12. The Society also does ghostly bus tours during the day for residents of long term care homes.

Walks this year are offered from Oct 7 to October 28 on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. For specific dates and times, please phone the office (905-844-2695) or go to our website [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org). The ghosts ask that you phone for reservations.

Shhhhhh!!!!

Can you see them?

Can you hear them?

Wendy Belcher

Come join them! Anyone interested in helping with our Ghost Walks by hosting the evening or leading a walk may contact Barb Savage 905-845-3620

# *AROUND THE SOCIETY*



## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – June 2010

With the coming of the railroad in 1855, the harbour fell on hard times and slid into disrepair. It was sold to the Town of Oakville in 1874 for \$250.00. It was William Chisholm himself that established Oakville’s first shipyard on the south bank of the Sixteen Mile Creek, near the north end of Navy Street. The first ship built, in 1828, was a 50 ton, 80 foot two masted schooner named Trafalgar. Oakville built by James Andrew in 1896, the yacht “Canada” won the first Canada-USA race, now known as the “Canada’s Cup”.

Lance Naismith

### Thomas House

After 5 years it is with mixed emotions that I give up the care of the Thomas House. However, I am extremely pleased to welcome Mary Davidson and Susan Wells who will continue to care for this historical structure.

I wish to give my heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers who helped make my job so much easier. I know you will continue to give your support to Mary and Susan. I do intend to continue as a regular volunteer when I am not travelling with my husband.

This house is such an important part of Oakville's history and I feel very privileged to have had a part in its continued use.

Pat Mack

## Presentation – “Surely Not in Canada”

**O**n May 19<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Ken Weber made a return visit to our Presentation Night and enthralled the audience with a very spirited and funny Canadian history lesson titled: “Surely Not In Canada”. With well researched historical vignettes, we learned the more “human” side of such Canadian historical figures as Sir John A. MacDonald



and William Lyon MacKenzie King. As well, we all learned about the impact of Canadian inventions upon world society. It was well received and we hope to hear more about our quirky Canadian history in the future.

Lance Naismith

## Volunteers

**M**ary Davidson has been very busy researching our past history about ten people who have contributed a great deal to Oakville. She obtained their pictures from Mary Noad and then wrote a short history regarding each person. Pictures and history were then framed with help from Greg Munz. The pictures with history will be hung in the ten guest rooms of the Halton Inn, formerly the Gibson House and, each room will be called after the Historical person framed. For example: the Merrick Thomas Room.

Well done Mary!!

Congratulations to Heather Davis who has just completed 25 years of volunteering in the Thomas House!

Many people contributed to the success of the Band concert. Unfortunately we don't have room to mention everyone. However, Donna Starkey deserves special thanks for ironing all of the bunting decorations and Marianne Hawthorne for washing and ironing all of the tablecloths. Thanks again to Kopriva Taylor Funeral Home for loaning us 50 chairs for the Band.

Pat Mack is retiring from managing the Thomas House this fall in order to travel more with her husband Bill. They have done a great job and we will miss them both.

Our latest movie star is Phillip Brimacombe, who will be appearing in "Walking in the Past", a new history show from TV Cogeco that explores the history of Oakville, Burlington, Flamborough and Waterdown. Tune in this fall for a brand new perspective on the stories and events that shape our communities.

Pat Mack is welcoming day campers from Erchless to the Thomas House this summer during July and August to learn about pioneers and how they lived.

Phillip Brimacombe will be teaching Schooner days around our harbour.

Our volunteers have had a busy summer.

Barbara Savage

| <b>GHOST WALKS - OCTOBER</b>                                       |               |               |               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>DATE</b>                                                        | <b>6:00PM</b> | <b>7:00PM</b> | <b>8:30PM</b> |
| Thurs 7 <sup>th</sup>                                              |               | √√√           | √√√           |
| Sat 9 <sup>th</sup>                                                |               | √√√           | √√√           |
| Thurs 14 <sup>th</sup>                                             |               | √√√           | √√√           |
| Tues 19 <sup>th</sup>                                              |               | √√√           | √√√           |
| Thurs 21 <sup>st</sup>                                             |               | √√√           | √√√           |
| Sat 23 <sup>rd</sup>                                               | √√√           | √√√           | √√√           |
| Tues 26 <sup>th</sup>                                              | √√√           | √√√           | √√√           |
| Thurs 28th                                                         | √√√           | √√√           | √√√           |
| <b>\$12/ADULT, \$6/CHILDREN UNDER 12. INFANTS FREE *CASH ONLY*</b> |               |               |               |
| <b>RESERVATIONS: CALL 905-844-2695</b>                             |               |               |               |

## Community Spirit Award for Heritage

Long time member Jamie MacRae was nominated by Barb Savage and seconded by Harry Barrett for the Community Spirit Award for Heritage and, HE WON!!!

Congratulations Jamie.

It is an award well deserved for his many years of volunteering for the Oakville Historical Society and his commitment to Oakville's Heritage Community. Jamie's enthusiasm for Oakville's history is very apparent and not only will he assist and give advice on heritage restoration, he is heavily involved in the Society's plaque program.

His sailboat, the "Aggie" is also a piece of Oakville heritage, as is his house. Not one to hesitate in exploring Oakville's history, he is well deserving of this award. Thanks for your contribution to the understanding of Oakville's history and sharing those moments with us.



Jamie MacRae - wife, Jane Hawkrigg

Marianne Hawthorne & Lance Naismith

L/R: Harry Barrett,  
Jamie MacRae, Jane  
Hawkrigg & Barbara  
Savage



| <b>HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS - 2010</b>                                                                                                                                                                        |                        |                         |                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>(All Walks commence at 2:00 p.m. – 110 King Street West)</b>                                                                                                                                               |                        |                         |                                      |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                               | HISTORIC HOUSES        | MAIN STREET             | TRAFALGAR                            |
| SEPTEMBER                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> | Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> | Monday 6 <sup>th</sup><br>Labour Day |
| COST: Adult - \$10, Child - \$5, Family \$25 CASH ONLY                                                                                                                                                        |                        |                         |                                      |
| VISIT <a href="http://oakvillehistory.org/html/walkTours.htm">http://oakvillehistory.org/html/walkTours.htm</a> for tour descriptions.                                                                        |                        |                         |                                      |
| The Historic Houses & Main Street tours leave from and return to the Oakville Historical Society at 110 King Street, west of Navy. Enter from the park or from King St. Go to the south side of the building. |                        |                         |                                      |
| The Trafalgar Road tours leave from and return to the parking lot of St. John’s United Church.                                                                                                                |                        |                         |                                      |
| Tour duration is about 2 hours. Each tour is preceded by a brief talk on related Oakville history. Tea and light refreshments are served after each walk.                                                     |                        |                         |                                      |
| Guides are OHS volunteers who are long-time local residents.                                                                                                                                                  |                        |                         |                                      |

### [Welcome Aboard](#)

We’d like to welcome the following new members to our Society: Ms. Margaret Godefroy, Oakville; Mr. and Mrs. Carlos Fassler & Family, Oakville; Ms. Sue Hobson, Oakville; Mr. Benson Savage, Oakville; Ms. Barbara Lynn Taylor, Tonawanda, New York. We look forward to meeting you and sharing your interest in Oakville’s history.

Andrea Stewart

### [World of Antiques](#)

Jed Gardner, with a strong boost from the Oakville Historical Society, successfully launched The World of Antiques on TV COGECO. Says Gardner, "The quality of the production is excellent". We certainly lucked out when David Bartlett was assigned by COGECO to produce, direct, and edit the show." Gardner, though, credits the Oakville Historical Society with encouraging members to participate in the program. More shows are being scheduled and the response to the pilot has been very favourable.



## Thomas House

I am, of course, assuming that all members of the Society have at one time or another, visited the Thomas House in Lakeside Park, a beautifully preserved piece of Oakville history, highlighting the lives of the Thomas Merrick family, an important person in the early development of Oakville, along with William Chisholm. We are lucky that we have volunteers who have learned the history, period customs and, even dress the part to give some realism to your visit.

Yacoub Husseini of *Yacoub Husseini Photography*, visited the Thomas House in July and photographed two of our volunteers (Wendy Belcher, Philip Brimacombe) in their period costumes. Our thanks to Yacoub for making a record of this and sharing the photographs with us.





Visit the OHS website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the enlarged and colour version of this newsletter and, explore the many informative areas of the website for event and tour dates.







## Milton Historical Society Visit

Members of the Oakville Historical Society were honoured to be guests of the Milton Historical Society, located at 16 James Street, Milton in the Waldie's Blacksmith Shop in July, 2010. They were given an overview of the Society, along with a history of the Society and its relationship to the Waldie Blacksmith Shop. After the presentation, a tour of the "WORKING" blacksmith shop was given, with the blacksmiths actively engaged.

Our thanks to those who arranged and gave the tour, along with those who are ensuring that the historical aspects of blacksmithing is kept alive.

A side trip was also taken to the Boston Presbyterian Church and Cemetery.

*When Esquesing was settled in 1819, the area from the base line to the 15<sup>th</sup> Sideroad and from the 5<sup>th</sup> line to the 2<sup>nd</sup> line soon became known as the Scotch Block. Some of these settlers came directly from Scotland, but a great many others came via the USA. The first minister to come to this Presbyterian settlement was the Rev. Wm. Jenkins of Markham, who preached in June 1820 at the farm of Andrew Laidlaw on Lot 6, Con. 4. In 1821, a session was chosen of the following men: John Stirrett, James Laidlaw, Robert Shortreed, George Barbour, Thomas Barbour, George Darling, James Frazer, and John Creighton. A meeting was called on 4 March 1824 to consider the purchase of land for a church and burying ground. The appointed committee purchased one and a half acres from Andrew Laidlaw. At a meeting later that year, Malcolm McNaughton, James McLaren, Duncan Campbell, Andrew Hardy, and Jasper Martin were elected trustees for one year, and it was decided to proceed with the building of a church, a school, and dividing the cemetery into lots. From almost the beginning, the congregation was divided by different views concerning articles of faith and by the early 1830s a large and influential element had resolved to leave and start a new church. This group was to become the United Presbyterian Church just down the road. After years of being served by Missionary preachers, the Rev. Peter Ferguson was inducted as the first pastor on 11 April 1832.*

*The current church was built by James Smith in 1868, and is named after Thomas Boston. (Above taken from website of Halton Genealogical Society - <http://www.halinet.on.ca/sigs/ogshp/h/es06.htm>)*









## Historical Art Available

Michael Hitchcox, an experienced artist, is making available to the Oakville Historical Society a number of lovely prints depicting the Oakville and Bronte area. These are done in colour and would make an ideal gift or, addition to your home. Copies are available for viewing at the Society, with proceeds going to the Society to help with future plans.

Below are a couple of prints:



Bronte Harbour 'Fall Colours'

\$85.00



Bronte Harbour Winter

\$85.00



## *Picnic in the Park*

On June 13<sup>th</sup>, the Society held its annual “Band Concert in the Park” at Lakeside Park. The weather co-operated and everyone had a fun time enjoying the company and the music. Those attending enjoyed some lively tunes by the St. Paul’s Dixieland Band and then an eclectic mix of music by the Oakville Wind Orchestra. Below is a visual record of the good times had by all.



From Left to Right: Adele Hurley, Pat Bailey, Susan Peacock, Tina Breckonridge, Liz Montegue, Ted Bailey, Aubrey Martin, David Peacock, Lori Hewitt  
Back Row: Mr Marshall, Catherine Hurley

We have a lot of history in the above group, people who have put a lot of effort into not only the Society but promoting the Town of Oakville.

Adele Hurley and her sister Catherine have always been strong supporters of Picnic in the Park especially when we rented donkeys for the children to ride. Pat Bailey and her husband Ted worked very hard when the Society was being renovated. Susan Peacock and her husband David wrote the book "Old Oakville". Tina Breckonridge is a long time supporter of the Society ( now 102!). Liz Montegue composed a colourful book of Oakville's Heritage Sites in an appeal for the Prince of Wales Award for Oakville. (ed. Which Oakville has won for 2010). Aubrey Martin, this years winner of the Best Hat Award. Lori Hewitt Donated an antique sideboard to the Society. Mr Marshall is a past president of the Society.







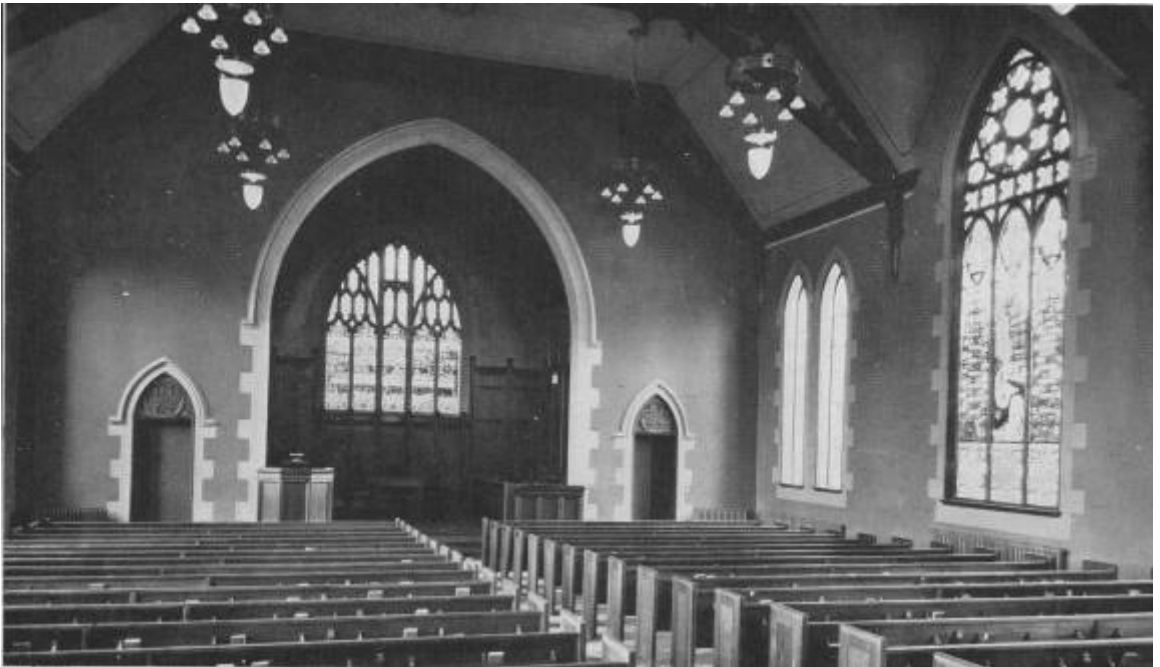








## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. Can you name this building and when it was built?
2. Who built this building?
3. Who laid the corner stone?
4. When was music allowed in the church?

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

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**Oakville Historical Society E-mail [info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)**





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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**DECEMBER 2010**

**Volume 44: Number 4**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**December 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**CHRISTMAS PARTY: 6:00PM – 9:00PM (110 King Street West)**  
**ALL MEMBERS** are invited to the Society for the Annual Christmas Party. Come and mingle with fellow Oakville history enthusiasts and enjoy a scrumptious spread provided by the Friends.

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**February 16th 2011 HMS Ontario - “Her history and sad fate 1780”**  
**Speaker Mr Ray Peacock**

**March 23rd 2011 OHS Annual meeting - preceded by a pot luck supper at 6pm**

**May 18th 2011 Halton’s Heritage - “William Halton and Halton County”**  
**Speaker John McDonald, Historian and Author**

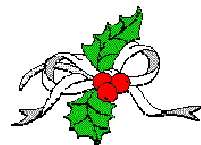
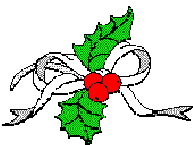
**October 19th 2011 Adaptive Neighbourhoods**  
**Speaker Claire Loughheed, Senior Manager of Cultural Services, Oakville**

**November 16th 2011 Halton County and the 1918 Influenza Epidemic**  
**Speaker John McDonald, Historian and Author**

### Evening Programs

As of 2011, all evening programs will be held at **St John’s United Church** in Lusk Hall at 7:30pm. Entrance is off Dunn Street.

We have enjoyed our association with Knox Presbyterian Church but they are using their hall very frequently and, it is too difficult for many of our members to get to the basement.





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Just about all who read this newsletter have an interest in history extending beyond just that of Oakville. Brenda and I had the opportunity to investigate a different kind of history in late October. We went on a long-planned cruise of the Galapagos Islands. We started our trip by flying to Quito, the capital of Ecuador. Quito is over 9000 feet up in the Andes and was taken over by the Spanish in the mid 1500s – and we thought we had history. The old part of Quito is a World Heritage Site and is a beautiful city. We then flew out to the Galapagos Islands which are about 1000 km off



the coast of Ecuador. It was a trip of a lifetime. The islands are beautiful and clean and the wildlife is amazing. You have to watch where you are walking so that you don't step on the metre-long iguanas.

In early October the Board plus some invited participants spent a day working with Joan Kanigan to develop a framework for future plans for the Society. The day went very well. We haven't yet received her report but I think we all gained a better insight of what must be done to help the Society be successful over the next few years.

Our annual members' wine and cheese party is coming up in early December. This is a great opportunity for members to get together. If you haven't attended in the past please consider this event. I look forward to seeing many of our members there.

I hope you and your family have a very merry Christmas.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

COVER PICTURE: Winter view of the Thomas House, Lakeside Park.  
Advertising insert artwork & compilation done by Carolyn Naismith.

## *Oakville Hotels (Part One)*

Today, the shopping mall appears to have taken the role as a major community focus for social interaction. In bygone days, the local inn, hotel, or tavern largely filled this function.

Fortunately, we have several hotels in central Oakville which date back to our early days as a community. Three of them, the Canadian Hotel at Navy and Robinson Streets, Forman's Temperance Inn at Trafalgar Road and Randall Street, and the Halton Inn at Lakeshore Road East and Thomas Street, have retained much of their former glory, albeit only the Halton Inn still functions as a hotel. The Oakville House, the oldest continually operating hotel in Ontario when it closed its doors in the 1980's, was replaced by a thoughtfully designed replica, which today houses an array of businesses. Forman's Temperance Inn has also been attractively restored. The Frontier House is now two private residences, one on Navy Street, and the other on King Street.

Navy Street functioned as the town's major business street, along with Colborne Street East (now Lakeshore Road East) through the 1800's. As Navy Street had close access to the busy commerce of the Sixteen Mile Creek and Oakville harbour, it was inevitable that several of Oakville's first hotels would have close proximity to this busy thoroughfare.

Oakville's first hotel was built by William Chisholm in the winter of 1827-28. The first proprietor was William Young, who had supervised its construction. On the day of the raising, William Chisholm wrote, "one beam had been raised and securely stayed, the event being celebrated by a drink of whiskey all round, costing at that time 20 cents a gallon. Word was brought to the crowd by a man on horseback that a large bear had been treed by dogs

(where the residence of James Rylie later stood on Lakeshore Road East at the Ninth Line). The raising was at once formally adjourned, the whole crowd



Oakville House – horse drawn bus to Railway Station

joining in the hunt, when with axes, crowbars, and hand spikes the bear was soon dispatched. His hide for years lay before the open fireplace in the large sitting room, where travellers rejoiced in the roaring fire and drank their grog in comfort.” The Oakville House welcomed a number of distinguished visitors in its early days, among them Sir Francis Bond Head, who stopped to dine there while on his way to take up his duties as the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada at Toronto. William J. Sumner, the owner as of 1834, also welcomed Anna Jameson, the wife of Upper Canada’s Attorney General. Arriving by sleigh on a cold journey along the Lake Road, Mrs. Jameson described her stop at the Oakville House in this manner: “I stood conversing in the porch, and looking about me, till I found it necessary to seek shelter in the house, before my nose was absolutely taken off by the ice-blast. The little parlour was solitary, and heated like an oven. Against the wall were stuck a few vile prints, taken out of old American magazines.”

The Oakville House was nicknamed, “The Hotel de Sumner”, and upon completion of some renovations, Sumner announced, “The subscriber informs the Public that....during the past summer, he has improved and enlarged his Home internally and externally. A large commodious Gallery has been attached, from which the Town of Niagara, Brock’s Monument, Spray of Niagara Falls, and some of the villages on the borders of Ontario are distinctly seen. Two stages arrive daily to dine. His beds are clean and comfortable – Larder is well stored as the market will admit – Good Liquors, purified by the addition of Ontario’s beautiful waters – good fires to cheer the minds of his guests and warm their cold fingers – good stables – good Hay and Oats – attentive Ostlers to comfort the noble steed – and his charges are NOT locked up in ‘chase’ of Oppression. Call and see an Old Tavernkeeper, W.J. Sumner.”

By 1852, the Oakville House had been taken over by John Williams, William J. Sumner having died in 1843. The history of the hotel during the 1840’s is rather obscure. In 1869, Chief Sumner noted in his famous diary, “Johnny Williams ‘Oakville House’ served as the Officers Mess for the 20<sup>th</sup> Halton Battalion.” By the turn of the century, the Oakville House was under the proprietorship of Murray Williams.

Going south of Colborne Street down Navy Street, the Canadian Hotel was built by John Williams, and opened at the height of the “Wheat Boom” on December 15, 1857. It had 32 bedrooms, many of which were only 6 feet square. Four parlours were frequently used by commercial salesmen to display their wares. Williams provided a safe for patrons’ valuables by building next to the cellar stairway a row of cupboards which were hidden by hollow panels and almost impossible to detect. Williams ran the Canadian Hotel until 1867, when he sold it to James Teetor for \$2005.00. There is a

legend that a tunnel led from the east part of the George K. Chisholm House at the northeast corner of Navy and Robinson Streets to the Canadian Hotel, as the Chisholm House was used to store contraband liquor smuggled from Bermuda. Another legend has it that a young chambermaid one morning entered the bar room at the Murray House, as the hotel was later known, to empty the ashtrays before the 11 A.M. opening time. When she entered, she was surprised to find a “French Buccaneer” in the room, wearing a wide-brimmed hat that was turned up on one side. He was seated at the bar. The chambermaid asked, “How did you get in here?” At that point he vanished. Terrified, the young lady fled, not even returning to collect her week’s wages! It is possible that there is a connection to an area at the north end of Navy Street called “The French Village”, where French-Canadian labourers were employed loading lumber onto the cargo schooners in the early days. In 1886, with the support of the Temperance Movement, James Taylor bought the Canadian Hotel for \$5000.00 and operated it during the remainder of the Prohibition Era. In 1896, Murray Williams bought the Canadian Hotel and restored it to its former glory when it had been operated by his uncle, John Williams. The hotel had had almost a dozen proprietors over



Canadian Hotel – Present Day Carpedia International

the years, and had gone steadily downhill since the time Sam Flaherty had operated it as the International Hotel. Murray Williams operated the establishment, which he renamed the Murray House, for 40 years. During this time the hotel was popular with summer visitors to Oakville. A highlight of this era was when a grand banquet was held to commemorate the opening of the Aberdeen Bridge across the Sixteen on Colborne Street in 1894.

Further south, at the southeast corner of Navy Street and King, was the Frontier House, opened in 1853. Barnet Griggs had remodelled a house on the site into a hotel, which Jesse Belyea of Bronte took under lease. As the Canadian Hotel was popular with farmers bringing their loads of wheat flour and barley from the rich agricultural hinterland of Halton to be shipped from the Sixteen, the Frontier House became known as

the “Steamboat Hotel”. This is due to the fact that passengers taking steamboats like the “Chief Justice Robinson” and “Great Britain” to various ports on Lake Ontario would stay there due to its close proximity to the piers at the mouth of the Sixteen where the steamers would tie up. Belyea announced, “His hotel is the largest, and his accommodations the best in Oakville. He has spared no expense in filling up his house for their reception. Coaches always in attendance to convey passengers to and from the boats.” Long drive sheds lined Navy Street on the east side, south of the hotel where patrons could leave their buggies for a day while taking a steamer to Toronto, Hamilton, and Niagara. In 1855, Reuben Brooks became the proprietor. The hotel closed in 1860 when the economy entered what was known as the “Wheat Bust”. It was remodelled into a house. In 1912, the house was divided, and one half was moved around the corner to King Street where it stands today.

Phil Brimacombe

**Ed. Note:** Oakville had many hotels established in its history and it would have been impossible to tell the whole story within the limits of this issue. So, instead of continuing the story on our website, we have decided to put **Part Two** in the March edition of our Newsletter.

To ensure you get to read the second part, **RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP**, which allows our Society to put together the events and the newsletter for your enjoyment.

You will note that this is the second year we have been able to produce a colour version of our print Newsletter. I would like to thank the sponsors for their kind generosity in supporting the Society, which has allowed us to produce this Newsletter. Please show your appreciation by supporting them or, passing by and thanking them for their assistance.

Merry Christmas, Season’s Greetings and Happy Holidays to all.

Editor

Visit the OHS website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the enlarged and colour version of this newsletter and, explore the many informative areas of the website for event and tour dates.



## ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***

### **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – September 2010**

Looking towards the Chancel, the picture is a view of the interior of Knox Presbyterian Church. Built in 1888 at a cost of \$10,800 by James MacDonald, whose father had built the old church, he took the old church building as part payment and converted same to three houses on William Street. The cornerstone was laid by Mrs. Agnes Waldie Marlatt, mother of Major K.D. Marlatt. Although authorized in 1872, due to conflict within the congregation, music did not appear in the church until 1894, with the installation of a pipe organ.

Lance Naismith

Do your **Christmas** shopping the easy way by buying books at the Society.

We have many Oakville books including the “**new reprinted and revised**” Harbour Books by **Phillip Brimacombe**.

Also we have watercolour prints available by **Michael Hitchcox**.



## Presentation – “The Mississauga Disaster”

Matthew Wilkinson’s presentation of the 1979 Mississauga Rail Disaster was very timely as we were shown images of a recently-elected first-time mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion (12 terms ago). Mr. Wilkinson, a 7th-generation born and raised Mississauga resident, and a Historian with Heritage Mississauga, enthusiastically told the tale of a CPR train loaded with explosive and poisonous chemicals as it made its way to Mavis Road, Mississauga on November 10, 1979 where, at 11:53 pm, the improperly-lubricated wheel bearings caused an axle to burn through causing part of the 106-car train to leave the tracks.



L/R Mathew Wilkinson – Greg Munz

Because the train de-railed and cars exploded at a place where there were few buildings and occurred at night with few people about, there were no deaths. Hazel McCallion did however sprain her ankle.

The talk was enjoyed by 42 interested attendees, many with their own stories of evacuating the Oakville hospital and their own homes.

Susan Wells

## Welcome to our new Members

Carla Hacket	Oakville	Joan and Ray Peacock	Oakville
Margery McCraney	Kemble	Jasmine Fong	Oakville
Edna Parker	Oakville	Hilary Scott	Oakville
Charlotte Strongman	Oakville	Stephan/Fiona Collins	Oakville
Frank/Carolee Wynia	Oakville	Shona Rochefort	Oakville
Stan Smurlick	Oakville		

Andrea Stewart

## [The Ghost Walks](#)

The Ghost Walks were again a great success in spite of Wendy Belcher having a very painful knee and Phillip Brimacombe totally incapacitated with a painful leg. Wendy was pushed by wheelchair on her walks and Carol Gall did extra walks. Francine Landry came out of retirement to help. All deserve a lot of credit.

Next year we will be training extra leaders to cover emergencies. So, if you are interested, contact Wendy Belcher at 905 844 4194.

Barbara Savage

## [Harvest Festival](#)

In conjunction with “Doors Open”, which was very successful for the Society in terms of visitors, we also had our yearly “Harvest Festival” at the Thomas House. Manned by our volunteers, the large crowd of visitors left with many positive comments on the work being done at the Thomas House.



Saba Family, Mississauga (Front)  
Joy Saunders (L) Lindsay Thompson

Our volunteers can be proud of the work they have accomplished in telling the history of Oakville through the Thomas House. Carol Gall is to be thanked for entertaining the children (and adults) with the items she brings and displays outside for usage by our visitors.

Lance Naismith

## [Archival Committee](#)

Recently I opened a small envelope and found a collection of old Hillmer photos which I knew would make a nice addition to our Archives. Thanks go out to Marion Hillmer for sending them to us.

I am sure that many of our readers could find similar interesting things tucked away in a drawer or cupboard. Don't throw them out - look them over and consider passing them on to the Society.

Margaret Buxton

## OHS Visits Halton Region Museum

At the invitation of Linda Twitchell, a number of members attended this Museum, at Kelso, September 8. Cindy Ledwith and Michelle Finn reviewed the history of the historic Alexander Farm c 1836-61, and then gave us a tour of their amazing archives.

Among other things, we saw a display of washing machines depicting the two hundred year evolution of laundry equipment, communications equipment and farming equipment. Memorably, a wicker coffin and a ball-and-chain, gave us a flavor of the times.



This museum is well worth a visit for all ages, but notably they conduct presentations for groups of school children. They are also planning a series of jazz concerts between now and Christmas. You can look them up on their website [www.halton.ca/museum](http://www.halton.ca/museum).

Andrea Stewart



## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. In front of what hotel was this photograph taken?
  2. Who is the gentleman in the windbreaker?
  3. Do you recognize the gentlemen in the photograph?
  4. By what names has the hotel in the background been known?
- ~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
~~~~~



## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 2011**

**Volume 45: Number 1**

## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

**June 12th            The Annual Mayor's Historical "Picnic in Lakeside Park" \* 12 – 4 PM**

## **PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS**

**2011**

**March 23rd            OHS Annual Meeting - preceded by a delicious potluck supper at 6pm – St. John's United Church**

**May 18th              Halton's Heritage - "William Halton and Halton County"**

**Speaker John McDonald, Historian and Author**

**October 19th        Adaptive Neighbourhoods**

**Speaker Claire Loughheed, Senior Manager of Cultural Services, Oakville**

**November 16th      Halton County and the 1918 Influenza Epidemic**

**Speaker John McDonald, Historian and Author**

### **Evening Programs**

As of 2011, all evening programs will be held at **St John's United Church** in Lusk Hall at 7:30pm. Entrance is off Randall Street.

**COVER PICTURE: 1897 – Royal Exchange Hotel – S.E. Corner Colborne & George Sts.**  
Advertising insert artwork and compilation by Carolyn Naismith.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### **“A home is no longer a home – it's an investment”**

**W**e've all seen or heard of egregious examples of the demolition of perfectly sound, presentable and usable houses either by design or neglect. It happens in Oakville and, more visibly in some cases, all over the province. An historic area of downtown Brantford was gutted recently. A beautiful church in Picton was knocked down. The Empress Hotel in Toronto burned by arson. Some original farmhouses in the north part of Oakville have burned. It's a very disturbing trend.

A few years ago, the Ontario Heritage Act was amended to include the creation of municipal lists of Properties of Interest. Oakville created one with some 400 properties on it. Unfortunately, many of them don't quite meet the criteria for designation under the Act. According to the “Tool Box” provided by the Province there are three criteria under which a property may be designated: design or physical value; historical or associative value or contextual value. Many of the properties on Oakville's list stand on their own. These have become fair game for those who want to knock them down and build another McMansion. One way to protect them is to create more Heritage Districts. Oakville now has three in the downtown area but we need several more. Bronte, Palermo, the harbours and others should all be Heritage Districts to afford some protection before it's too late. People move to Oakville because of its heritage and beautiful old and older properties but many of these buildings are being knocked down to build new houses for them as an investment to move into. Many studies show that a heritage designation improves the value of a property and those around it yet many are being torn down.

Even a heritage designation doesn't protect the property. In too many cases the Ontario Municipal Board, represented by one person, overturns decisions made by the municipality and endorsed by the region. Ontario is the only province that has such a body made up of appointees many of whom have no background in heritage or planning and the cost of defending municipal decisions is enormous. Examples abound – Sharkey's on Lakeshore Road, Downtown Bronte just to name a couple. There are also those who thumb their noses at designations and do what they please. Buildings have been torn down, facades have been altered inappropriately, heritage permits have been ignored – the list goes on. The OMB served a valuable purpose when it was formed but that time is long past.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
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[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

## *Oakville Hotels (Part Two)*

The hotels and taverns along Colborne Street East (now Lakeshore Road East) tended to cater more to the stagecoach traffic between Hamilton and Toronto. In 1831, William Uptegrave built a hotel on the southeast corner of Colborne Street East and George Street in what was then referred to as “**The Hollow**”. After a few years, Uptegrave leased it to John Diamond while Uptegrave built a tavern across the street. In 1848, John Diamond died and the hotel became known as The Royal Exchange. It was in the possession of James Macreadie at this time, and was frequently referred to as “**Macreadie’s Hotel.**”

It served as the main stop for the Weeks and Company Stagecoaches running along the Lake Road from Hamilton to Toronto. This was a 5 to 6 hour journey in the 1850’s, with coaches leaving Hamilton at 8.30 A.M. and 3.00 P.M. daily except Sundays. The arrival of the coach created excitement in the small community. During the stopover, passengers would enjoy refreshments at the hotel and, *“to the accompaniment of a blast of the horn, flourishing of the whip, and much hallooing to the horses on the part of the driver, the coach would depart.”*

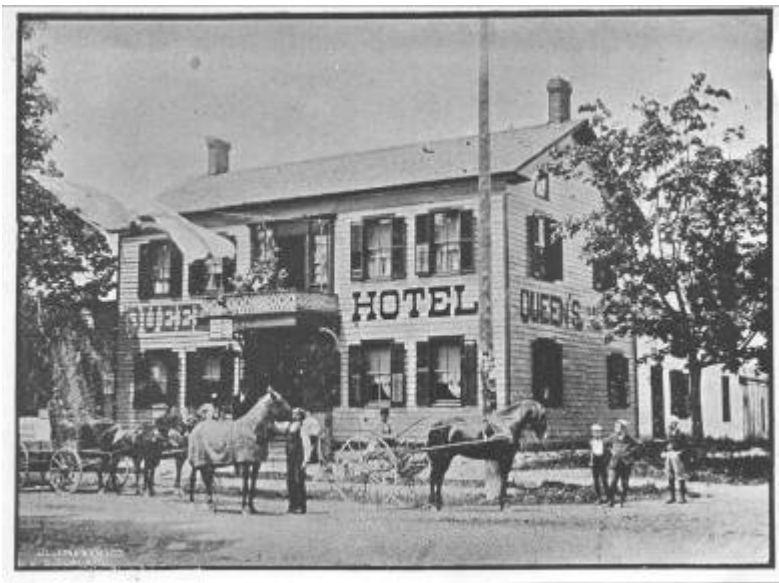
In the 1860’s, Joseph Boon bought the hotel and doubled its size by building to the west. In 1870, Duncan Oliphant bought the hotel, however he was described by William Sumner in his diary as “a hickory landlord”, totally lacking in expertise and experience. James Arno subsequently leased the hotel and, among other improvements, installed a new bar with a long mirror surrounded by stuffed birds and animals, a common decoration of the day. The hotel was demolished in the 1930’s to make way for Oakville’s fifth post office, which still stands as part of the Towne Square.

William O’Reilly’s Tavern was situated at the southeast corner of Dunn and Colborne Streets where Knox Church stands today. When Thomas Lloyd took it over it became a notorious establishment. John A. Williams lived next door as a child and remembered that: *“It was a rough-cast and quite noted building. Thomas Lloyd Esq., an Old Country gentleman, kept a hotel here and in the yard a black bear chained to a pole. It ran around the pole backwards and forwards and made the most horrible noises while being fed, especially when a live pig was given to it, a man holding the pig’s hind leg while it was torn to pieces. It was awful to hear the growls and squeals but it drew a crowd of whiskey suckers and loafers.”*

Eventually, George Baker, the town's first constable, took over the hotel and renamed it the **White Oak Hotel**. It opened with a grand ball on March 1, 1870. Baker ran the hotel until 1876, when one of the Walsh Brothers became its last proprietor. In the 1880's, the building was demolished to make way for the church.

In 1860, John Wray converted the house at the northwest corner of Dunn and Colborne Streets into the **Victoria House Hotel**. In 1868, Arthur Goring bought it. One Sunday afternoon in the late 1860's, a battle took place outside the hotel between Protestant and Roman Catholic sailors leading to more than one broken head and one broken arm! During most of the 1870's, William Walsh was the proprietor. In 1886, with the repeal of the Scott Temperance Act, the hotel business in Oakville revived. William Wynne took over the Victoria House.

The **Queens' Hotel**, as it was now known, was the headquarters for horsemen and bicyclists. Wynne owned several trotting horses, and also at this time, bicycling had become very popular with the laying of a cinder path from Toronto to Oakville, a forerunner of our contemporary bicycle paths! In 1900, the Queens' Hotel closed and was remodeled into Buckle's Meat Market.



Queen's Hotel

As a large percentage of the Irish who had settled in Oakville and district were from Northern Ireland, the celebration of "**The Glorious Twelfth**" every July 12 was an important community event. During the parade **Paddy Smithwick's Tavern** at the northeast corner of Colborne and Reynolds Streets served as their meeting place. John A. Williams wrote: "*On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July the Orangemen gathered in the town from all the country lodges within a circle of eight or ten miles, and they would march around town from Paddy Smithwick's, where a pail and cup or glasses were passed around. Then the*

*Fife and Drum started again, halting at Diamond's in the centre of town then up to the Oakville House where dinner was prepared and all enjoyed a feast once a year at least".*

In 1833, John Forman built Oakville's first Temperance Hotel at the southwest corner of Dundas (now Trafalgar Road) and Randall Streets. In 1850, Charles Davis took over the hotel and named it the **Oakville Temperance Hotel**. Conveniently, Ontario's first Temperance Hall was built in the 1840's right across the street where Tim Horton's now stands. Unfortunately, Davis became involved with the authorities for selling "spirituous liquors", and his establishment was subsequently taken over by Jacob Barnes, a blacksmith, who ran the hotel, now known as the Halton County Hotel, until his death in 1868.

Up Dundas Street (nicknamed "The Station Road"), was another hotel built by John Williams in 1855 to accommodate travelers to and from Oakville via the Great Western Railway. The railway had started service between Hamilton and Toronto through Oakville in December of that year. The hotel was a roughcast, wedge-shaped building situated immediately to the southeast of the Oakville train station, which was at that time, located on the south side of the tracks. Williams sold it shortly after it was built, and it had a series of proprietors until it closed in 1923. It became a storage warehouse for a winery, and was demolished in 1935.



THE GIBSON HOUSE

We have discussed the hotels and taverns in Oakville which had derived their existence to the stagecoach, steamboat, and train traffic that once thrived in Oakville. In 1906, when automobile traffic along Lakeshore Road was in its infancy from Toronto to Hamilton, a hotel catering to vehicular traffic was built at the southwest corner of Colborne Street East and Thomas Street. Boasting a 50 foot bar, at first the establishment was known as the **Gibson House**. A friend of the proprietor, Charlie Priestman of Toronto, began walking along Lakeshore Road from Toronto to Oakville every St. Patrick's Day. In 1953, Hazel Mathews reported that Priestman had just completed his 36<sup>th</sup> walk at the age of 85! In the 1940's, the Hotel Gibson burned, and a new building

replaced it called **The Halton Inn**. Today, the Halton Inn is the last of Oakville's hotels, described in this article, to be still serving guests.

In these days of hotels, which cater largely to the automobile traffic along our busiest highways, there is somehow a sense of detachment and a generic quality in contrast to our town's past when each hotel had its own personality and uniqueness.

Phil Brimacombe

## [Oakville Memories](#)

**O**ur new project, **OAKVILLE MEMORIES: OLD & NEW** which includes input from Oakville, Trafalgar, Bronte Historical Societies, Central Library, Town of Oakville, Erchless Museum and, Appleby College, is now on the web.

Please Google: **Oakville Memories: Old & New** then click on **Project**. They can also be found on the Oakville Historical Society and Central Library webs. There are 90 Memories entered now and many more getting organized along with photos, to be entered soon. We hope to make them into a history book(s) of the 1900's and 2000's and that these factual and personal memories will keep coming far into the future. We would love to have yours, too!

June Hitchcox

### *"Save this Date"*

#### **Sunday June 12, 12-4pm**

"The Annual Mayor's Historical "Picnic in Lakeside Park", in partnership with the "Friends of the Oakville Historical Society", will be held on that date. In addition to the fine music supplied by two bands, we will have a Period Hat and Costume contest and, a bicycle decorating contest, magician, clown, balloons, an antique Ford car, etc). Mark it down now and have some fun.

Marianne Hawthorne

# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – December 2010**

**T**he picture was taken in front of “Hotel Gibson” and the man in the windbreaker - “Charlie Priestman”. Alf Whittaker is holding the key with Ross Gibson, owner of the Gibson, holding the box. Also shown is J.M. Campbell, former mayor of Oakville, Leonard Cornwall, Moe Wineburg and Stan Strickland. Hotel was also known as Hotel Decker, Gibson House and Halton Inn.

Lance Naismith

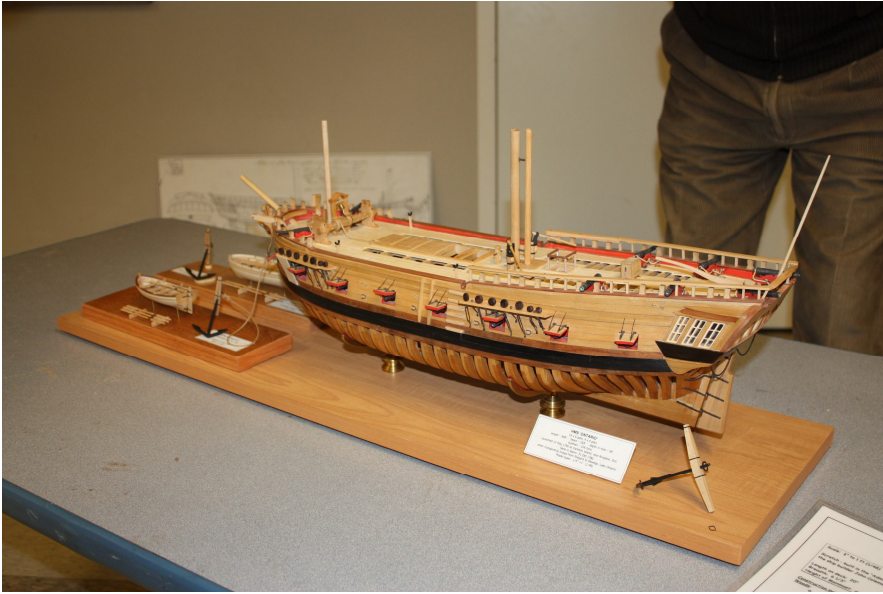
## **HMS Ontario – “Her History and Sad Fate – 1780”**

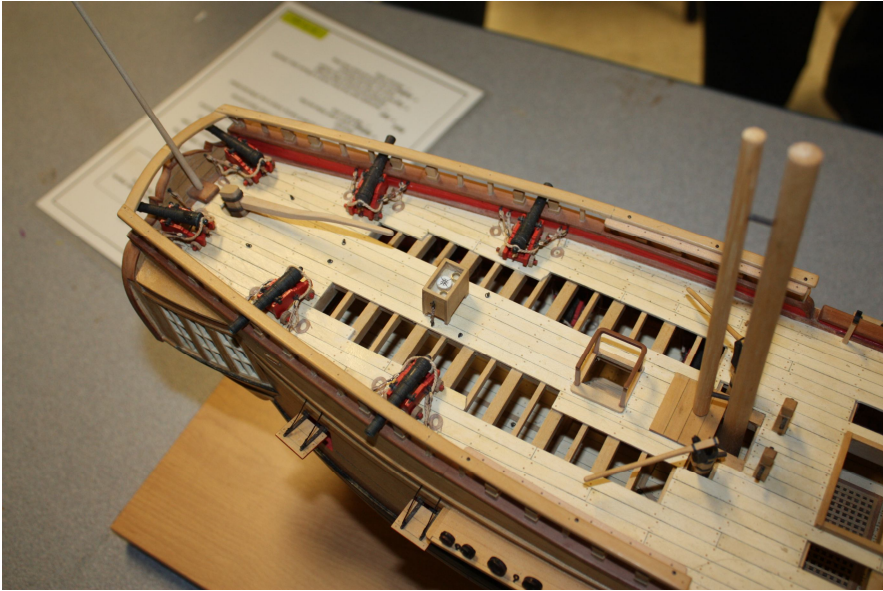
**M**embers and guests of the Society had the pleasure of Mr. Ray Peacock, who gave a very well illustrated history, accompanied with a stunning model, of HMS Ontario, a Snow Brig that was used by the British on Lake Ontario against the United States during the War of Independence. His in-depth lecture gave everyone an idea of life aboard a ship on Lake Ontario in the 18<sup>th</sup> C. As well, he gave a slide and video presentation of the ship, where she now lies in Lake Ontario.



L/R Harry Barrett – Ray Peacock







## Awards Presented to OHS Members

Two members of the OHS were honoured with awards recently. Phillip Brimacombe received the *2010 Heritage Community Recognition Program Certificate of Lifetime Achievement* and, Dr. Lorne Joyce received the *Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement*.

Congratulations to both of you for your past work in heritage education and for your continued efforts with not only the Society but your enhancement of heritage within the community.

Lance Naismith

## Thomas House

Calling all volunteers!! Ladies and gentlemen, the time is fast approaching when we will be opening up the House and we hope that all our wonderful helpers and anyone new, will be able to help us continue the great tradition. We will be calling around – or you can call us and let us know when you will be available to participate during this summer.

Times are 1:30pm to 4:00PM

Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays	May to September
Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays	July & August only.

We close for the season after Labour Day but, will re-open for **Doors Open** and the **Harvest Festival**, which is the last week-end in September.

We will all get together before the start and go over any questions you may have.

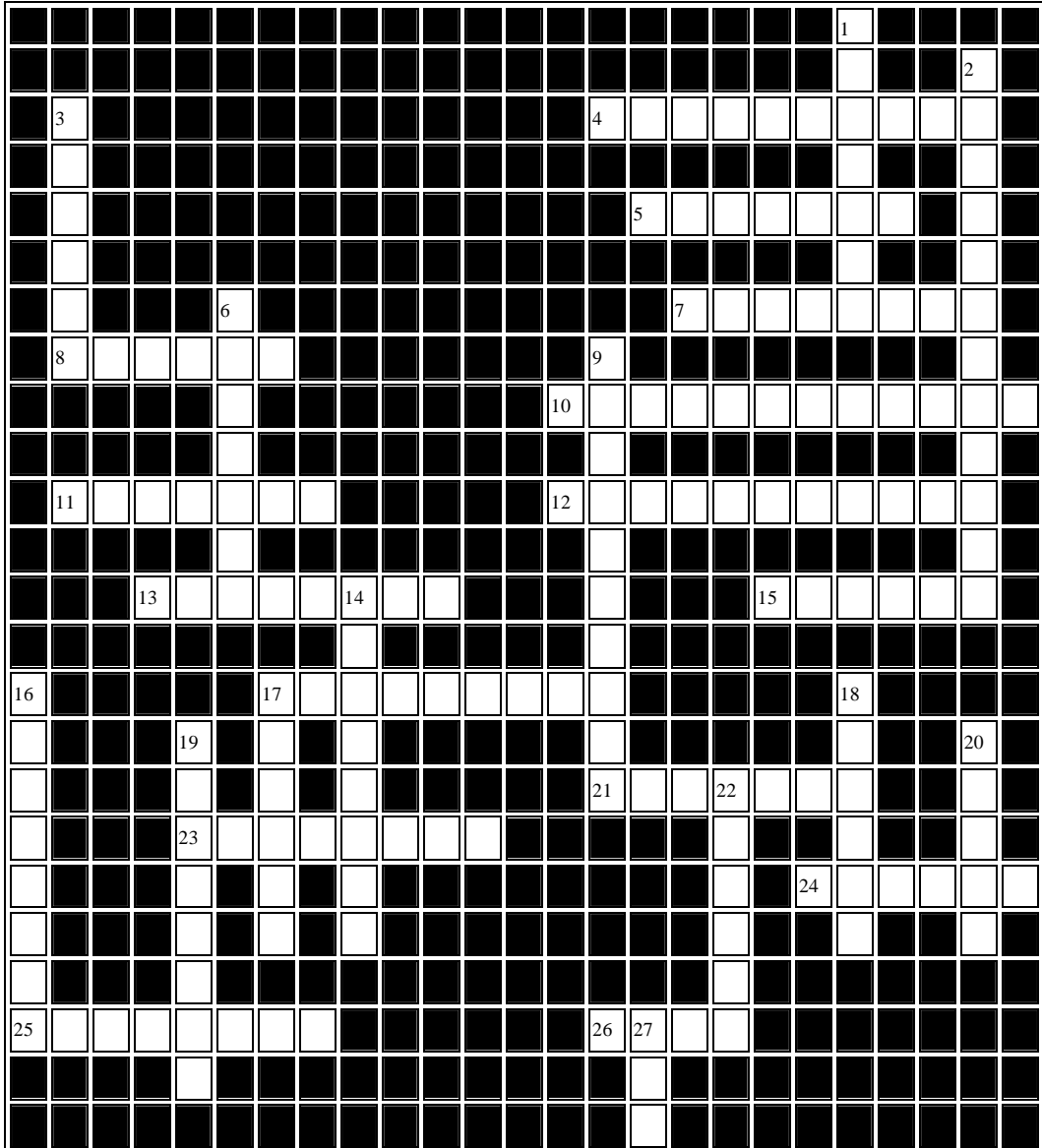
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Email: [charles.davidson@sympatico.ca](mailto:charles.davidson@sympatico.ca)

**Susan Wells** 905-844-4474  
Email: [swells@cogeco.ca](mailto:swells@cogeco.ca)

Mary Davidson

## Crossword Puzzle

Think you know your Oakville history? Try this challenge. Hint: Answers in “Oakville and the Sixteen” or visit the OHS and ask a volunteer.



ACROSS		DOWN	
4	Name of Original people at site of Oakville	1	Early crop went in these
5	Olympians from Oakville	2	Olympian from Oakville
7	Richard Wood's business	3	Kept a diary
8	This railway connected with Hamilton	6	Is a former mayor
10	Early crop	9	These lifted material from lake bottom
11	Wrote about Oakville	14	Oakville founder
12	This Railroad helped people escape	16	Oakville ..... Hospital
13	Had a garage downtown	17	Olympian from Oakville
15	Actress from Oakville	18	Former name of Trafalgar Road
17	Schooner owned by Chisholm	19	Estate, now museum
21	Oakville was built around this Creek	20	Used to power mills
23	Former name of Lakeshore Dr.	22	Was an Oakville farmer
24	Franchised hair Products	27	Oakville named for this tree
24	Name of Park downtown		
26	Early houses made of these	***	<b>Compiled by Susan Wells</b>

## [Membership](#)

### RENEWALS FOR 2011

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2011, please phone us at 905-844-2695 or download the renewal form from the website and mail it to us.

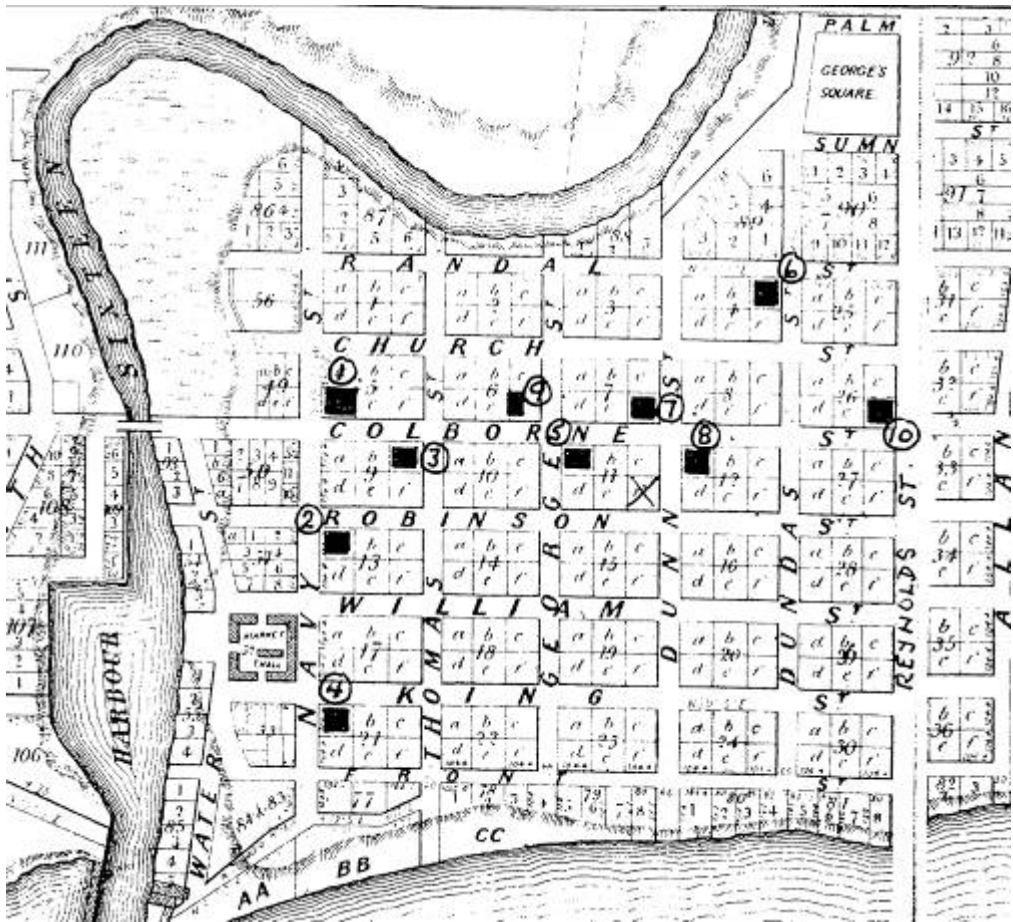
### New Members since December:

Terry & Joanne Riley	Oakville	Charlena Tursok	Oakville
Katia Miropolskaia	Oakville	Carroll Castle	Oakville
Robert Pugsley	Hawkestone, Ontario		

Andrea Stewart



# THE WAY THINGS WERE



1. Can you name the hotels number 1-10?

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**





~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
~~~~~



## THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

**JUNE 2011**



**Volume 45: Number 2**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

June 12<sup>th</sup>

The Mayor's Historical Picnic in the Park & Oakville Historical Society Band Concert on Sunday from 12 – 4:30 PM – Lakeside Park, foot of Navy Street.

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**2011**

October 19<sup>th</sup>

Adaptive Neighbourhoods

Speaker Claire Loughheed, Senior Manager of Cultural Services, Oakville

November 16<sup>th</sup>

Halton County and the 1918 Influenza Epidemic

Speaker John McDonald, Historian and Author

**Whaaat!!!!**

Wondering what the funny looking square on the front page is? Called a QR Code, it was originally developed to track automobile parts but, it now allows people with a camera phone to connect to a webpage. Look for them in magazines and on billboards. This particular QR Code will link you to the Oakville Historical Society Webpage.

Try it!!!

\*\*

In your travels, please stop by our advertisers and check them out. Their patronage helps to produce the December edition in colour.

\*\*

**COVER PICTURE:** Postcard of the Savoy Café, O/O by Joe Ming on Lakeshore Rd.

Advertising insert artwork and compilation by Carolyn Naismith.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter. This summer promises to be busy for your Society with all the usual activities but with some changes.

The Thomas House will be open as usual this summer. If you haven't visited it in a while, drop by and bring your friends and/or visitors. Lakeside Park is beautiful in the summer and the Thomas House is open afternoons Tuesday through Wednesday and both Saturday and Sunday. If you would like to volunteer, please contact the office.

Our "Bands in the Park" started many years ago as "Picnic in the Park". This year, it is changing again to be, "The Mayor's Picnic" on 12 June. It will feature the usual bands but, will also include demonstrations by the Oakville Scottish Country Dance Group and Oakville Ale and Sword. The Scottish Country Dancers will also be dancing on the museum grounds on Sunday evenings in August. If you would like to give it a try or just watch, drop by. Apparently the Pipes and Drums of the Halton Regional Police will be performing on the museum grounds this summer as well. Further information will be on our website as it becomes available.

Our historical walks will also be on again. There are three different walks: Heritage Houses south of Lakeshore Road; Main Street and, Trafalgar Road. Please encourage your friends, relatives, neighbours, acquaintances etc to go on one. Further information is available on our website.

Doors Open is set for 24-25 September. Andrea Stewart has taken over from Barb Savage as our representative on the committee. If you haven't been involved before, now's your chance.

Hope to see you at one of our events this summer.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

## *Oakville Postcards: Windows On Our Past*

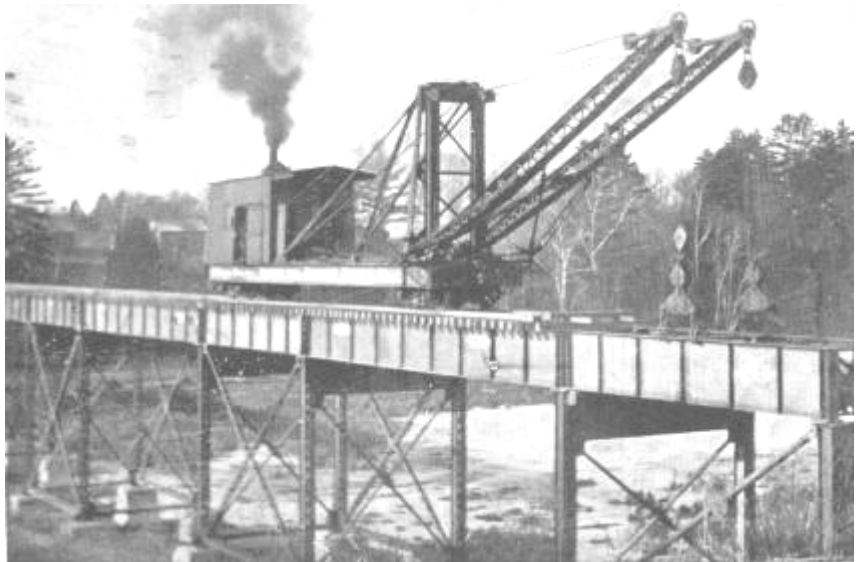
The early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was the golden age of postcards. There were postcards for every holiday – New Years, Valentine’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Christmas. We have many of these in our collection, but we now concentrate on cards of Oakville and Bronte. The majority date from 1900 to 1930.

The first postcard was issued in Canada in 1871. It was a prestamped, pictureless card with a face value of one cent. The postcard could be delivered to any address within Canada. One side was for the address, the other for a brief note from the sender.

About 1897, private mailing cards contained an image on the back while the front was divided by a vertical line. On the left was a message and on the right a place for a stamp with a space below for an address. It wasn’t long before almost every hamlet, village, town and city had postcards showing images of rivers, bridges, railways, harbours, schools, parks, churches and streetscapes.

The cards illustrating this article show scenes of Oakville as they were, with brief notes as to what the area looks like today.

The Hamilton Radial Electric Railway Company laid tracks from Hamilton to Oakville in 1905. A combined passenger and substation was built at Randall and Thomas Streets where the track ended. The building is still there today. Passenger volume on this line peaked in 1913, declining steadily until 1925 when the Port



Building the New Electric Railway Bridge c. 1903

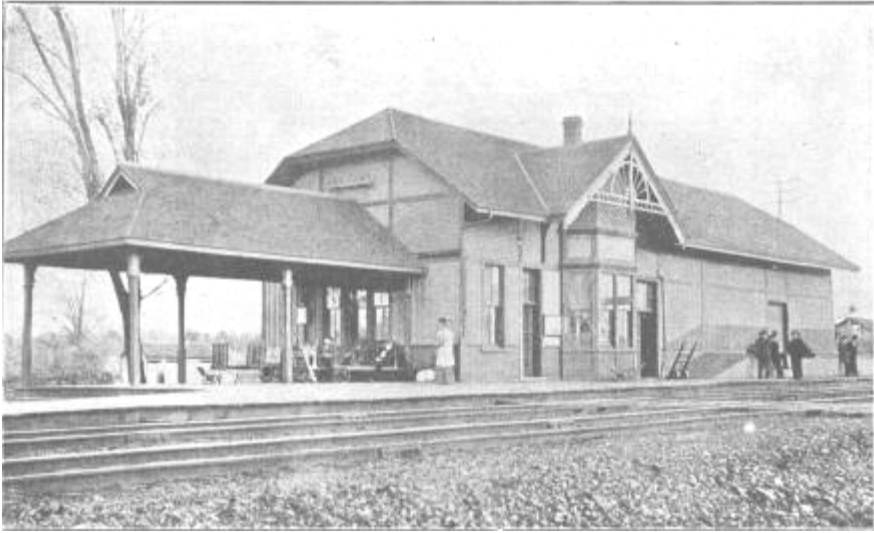
Nelson to Oakville Line was abandoned. The Sixteen Mile Creek foot bridge was used by many students to get to Central School until 1960. Today, the William Anderson Bridge connects Randall and Rebecca Streets, bringing eastbound traffic into downtown Oakville.

This view of Colborne Street (now Lakeshore Road) leads our eyes into Oakville's only shopping district. Note the vintage automobiles and the spire of Knox Presbyterian Church. Many of the buildings shown still exist today. Several have been converted into upscale restaurants. In all seasons of the year, Lakeshore Road is a hive of activity. The photographer likely stood in the middle of the road, between Navy and Thomas Streets. Can you date this image by close examination of the vehicles?



Colborne Street c. 1930???

The Grand Trunk Railway was important to Oakville's development as it was a major transportation link to Toronto and Hamilton. The depot (station) was situated where the GO Station and VIA Rail Station are today. Similar postcards show horses and buggies dropping off and picking up passengers from Trafalgar Township and downtown Oakville. Stand anywhere in the GO parking lot today, and imagine this scene c. 1910. Just north of this site ran the Middle Road, known today as the Q.E.W. (Queen Elizabeth Way)



Grand Trunk Depot c. 1920

One of my favourite images of Oakville is this one looking east from Forsythe Street.



Colborne Street – looking east



If you continue along the dirt Colborne Street, you will cross the Aberdeen Bridge (c. 1895 – 1920). Note Central School in the upper left corner. On this site today is located Oakville’s 1967 Centennial Project: library, theatre and swimming pool. Today, in the lower left, are highrise condos built in 2007-08. Check out the mode of transportation, hydro lines and the river landscape in general. How times change!

Ross Wark  
Trafalgar Township Historical Society

### MEMORIES PROJECT

If all goes well, we have high hopes of having the first printed version of our **Oakville Memories: Old & New** in the works, (at present available only on the web). Please contact the office if you would be interested in such a book, so that we can order sufficient copies.

June Hitchcox



Departure of Volunteers in the “Edgemere Truck”

## LIBRARY ADDITION

The “Final Report, Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation’s Traditional Territory” – Ontario is available for viewing at the Society. Reference – read in only.

## BURLINGTON CITIZENS FORM GROUP TO SAVE HISTORIC TRAIN STATION

Heritage advocates, train enthusiasts and other concerned citizens of Burlington have incorporated as the **Friends of Freeman Station (FOFS)**.

The group's aim is to raise funds to preserve, re-locate and, restore the 1906 Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) station, formerly located near Brant Street and Plains Road in Burlington, and find a sustainable use for the building.

For more information, please visit [www.freemanstation.ca](http://www.freemanstation.ca) or contact [info@freemanstation.ca](mailto:info@freemanstation.ca).

Jacquie Johnson Gardner

Visit the OHS website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the enlarged and colour version of this newsletter and, explore the many informative areas of the website for event and tour dates.

### **Advertisers**

We are fortunate to have some sponsors who believe in the work of the Society. Please note them on the last two pages (18-19) of this newsletter (insert on the print copy). Their generosity allows us to print our December edition partially in colour. When you visit them, tell them you saw their ad right here in your newsletter.

# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – March 2011**

- |                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1: Oakville House (1827)         | 2: Canadian Hotel (1857)          |
| 3: Hotel Decker (1906)           | 4: Frontier House (1853)          |
| 5: Royal Exchange Hotel (1830’s) | 6: Forman’s Temperance Inn (1833) |
| 7: Queen’s Hotel (1870)          | 8: White Oak Hotel (1870)         |
| 9: Smithwick’s Tavern (1830’s)   | 10: Uptegrave’s Tavern (1830’s)   |

Phillip Brimacombe

## **Answers to March 2011 Crossword Puzzle**

### **Across**

**4.** Mississaga **5.** Jelinek **7.** Kerosene (his house is now Maclachlan College) **8.** Radial  
**10.** Strawberries **11.** Mathews **12.** Underground **13.** Hitchcox **15.** Duncan (Little Mosque on the Prairie) **21.** Sixteen **23.** Colborne **24.** Harper **25.** Lakeside **26.** Logs

### **Down**

**1.** Baskets **2.** Vancoeverden (kayaker) **3.** Sumner **6.** Barrett (Harry) **9.** Stoneboats  
**14.** Chisholm **16.** Memorial **17.** Bailey **18.** Dundas **19.** Erchless **20.** Water **22.** Thomas  
**27.** Oak

Susan Wells

## Mayor's Historical Picnic in the Park & Oakville Historical Society Band Concert

**Date:** Sunday June 12<sup>th</sup> 2011

**Time:** 12 noon to 4:30pm

**Place:** Lakeside Park, bottom of Navy Street

**Featuring:** St. Paul's Dixie Land Band – Noon – 2:00pm  
Oakville Wind Orchestra 2:15 – 4:15pm

**Fun for the family** – Clown with balloon sculptures and pocket magic! Fire engine!  
Police cruiser! Antique Ford!

Bring your own picnic and a lawn chair and enjoy a musical afternoon at the beautiful  
Lakeside Park venue.

**ADMISSION FREE!**

Mary Davidson







## Thomas House

It's that time of year again and with the coming of spring, the Thomas House will have opened the weekend of Sunday May 22<sup>nd</sup> and Victoria Day Monday 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011.

Susan will be calling around to members to confirm dates for volunteer attendance at the House. If you are not on our list of volunteers and would like to consider this an enjoyable way of introducing visitors to pioneer life for a couple of hours, give us a call.

Mary 905-842-6935, e-mail: [charles.davidson2@sympatico.ca](mailto:charles.davidson2@sympatico.ca) OR,  
Susan 905-844-4474, e-mail: [swells@cogeco.ca](mailto:swells@cogeco.ca)).



**Opening Hours** are 1:30pm to 4:00pm Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays, May to September and, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in July and August only.

The Thomas House closes for the season on Labour Day, Monday September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

Mary Davidson

## [News Around Town](#)

You may remember the pictures taken in the Thomas House with Wendy Belcher and Philip Brimacombe in costume, which appeared in our September 2010 issue. Well, our photographer, Yacoub Husseini has won a Town award. The following has been borrowed from the Town of Oakville website:

### *Let's Talk Oakville* Summer 2010 Cover Photo Contest Update

Congratulations to Yacoub Husseini, the winner of the summer 2010 *Let's Talk Oakville* cover photo contest! Yacoub, a Ward 5 resident, beautifully captured downtown Oakville's pier near Lakeside Park which is a popular summertime destination for residents and visitors alike. The runner-up is Raj Vemulapalli, a Ward 1 resident, with his photo of the colourful foliage in Coronation Park in the summer. His photo is on page 11 of the newsletter.

You will see more of Yacoub's photographic skills in an upcoming OHS newsletter.

## [Society Offices](#)

We are continuing to open the offices and museum of the Oakville Historical Society on King Street, from 1:30 to 4:00pm every third Sunday in the month. We would be delighted to welcome you to our beautiful headquarters by the Volunteers' Fountain if you are taking a stroll in the vicinity.

Phil Brimacombe, Mary Noad, Stuart Sherriff





## 2011 HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS

Month	Heritage Houses in Old Oakville	Heritage Main St. Of Old Oakville	Historical Walk of Trafalgar Road
July	Canada Day, 1 <sup>st</sup>	Sunday, 10 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday, 24 <sup>th</sup>
August	Sunday, 7 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday, 14 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday, 21 <sup>st</sup>
September	Sunday, 4 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday, 18 <sup>th</sup>	Monday 5 <sup>th</sup>

Meet Location: Heritage House Tour – O.H.S. at 110 King St; Main Street Tour – O.H.S. at 110 King Street; Trafalgar Tour – St. John’s United Church parking lot.

All walks start at 2:00pm for approximately 2 hours. Tickets are \$10 each, \$5 for children and \$25 per family. Refreshments afterwards.

For more info visit our website, send an email or, phone the Society (info on back page).

**RESERVATIONS REQUESTED.**

### Back in the Day

Oakville’s first telephone arrived only 30 years after Oakville became a town or, less than 60 after being settled. Set up in Mr. William Busby’s jewelry and watchmaking shop on Colborne Street (Lakeshore Road), the small switchboard gave service from 8am to 8pm weekdays, 2 to 4pm Sundays and 10 to 12noon and 2 to 4pm on holidays. For 1887 there were 8 subscribers, all business premises and a long distance line from Toronto to Hamilton which went through Oakville.

No one had a telephone number until 1899. In 1909 Oakville had its 100<sup>th</sup> telephone. Telephone installations matched Oakville’s growth with 1000 in 1926, 2000 in 1946 and 3000 in 1949, reflecting Oakville’s post WWII expansion.

The “dial system” began at midnight, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1954, with Mayor Lachlan McArthur placing the first long distance call and Reeve William Anderson the first local call on the new equipment.

Lance Naismith



## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. Name the building in the background with the tall smokestack.
2. What is the pile of stones on the left called?
3. Who put it there?

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

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*Preserving Oakville's  
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Since 1953*  
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## THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SEPT 2011



Volume 45: Number 3

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Our fourth annual Doors Open is being planned for September 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 10am to 4pm both days. We need volunteers for the Society and Thomas House. For more info, visit:

[http://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts\\_1\\_13063\\_1.html](http://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_13063_1.html)

This is a wonderful family event free to the public. We also need volunteers on September 25<sup>th</sup> at the Thomas House for the Harvest Festival (1PM to 4PM). Do you have goodies for the “Table” as well?

Phone the Society and leave your name and phone number if you can help.

Money raised helps with expenses at the Society.

### PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

2011

**October 19th**      “Come down to the Sea in Ships”. A voyage in history with Phillip Brimacombe

**November 16th**    Halton County and the 1918 Influenza Epidemic  
 Speaker John McDonald, Historian and Author

### 2011 HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS

| Month     | Heritage Houses in Old Oakville | Heritage Main St. Of Old Oakville | Historical Walk of Trafalgar Road |
|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| September | Sunday, 4 <sup>th</sup>         | Sunday, 18 <sup>th</sup>          | Monday 5 <sup>th</sup>            |

**COVER PICTURE:** L/Cpl Agnes Forster

Advertising insert artwork and compilation by Carolyn Naismith.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this, it's another hot August day. What a difference from the summer of 2010 when we rarely used our air conditioning. The heat this year has certainly affected the operations of the Society. Walking tour attendance has fallen off even more and attendance seems to be down at the Thomas House. Let's hope that the fall weather is better.

Keep the weekend of 24-25 September open – for Doors Open. Andrea Stewart is our representative on the Doors Open committee and could certainly use your help as a volunteer. She can be reached by leaving a message at the office at 905 844-2695. Consider also taking part by visiting one or more of the sites open for the event. Admission is free.

While our traditional walking tours are becoming less popular, group tours are increasing. Organizations contact us to arrange a special tour for their members. Some are done on foot as usual but some are done by bus or large van – particularly for retirement homes. If another organization of which you are a member would like a special tour, please contact us. Ghost tours become more popular every year as well and we could certainly use some help with them both as leaders and refreshment providers.

All our usual events will be running this fall as well. Harvest Festival is set for 25 September at the Thomas House. Two public meetings will be held in the fall at St John's United Church and **the annual Members Christmas Party** is in the planning stages.

I hope to see you at one of these events.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

**In your travels, please stop by our advertisers and check them out. Their patronage helps to produce the December edition in colour.**

# **KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING**

## **(OAKVILLE IN WORLD WAR II)**

**I**n an article in the “Oakville Record Star” on Thursday May 10, 1945 there was the following report:

“Three thousand people gathered in Victoria Park on Monday afternoon to join in a service of Dedication and Thanksgiving in celebration of the defeat of Germany after five years and eight months of bitter war.

In opening the ceremony, His Worship Mayor Campbell said, “Today we celebrate the complete and utter defeat of the foul force, which for nearly six years has brought untold suffering and misery to humanity.

To our splendid men and women who have stood in the forefront of battle, we acknowledge an undying obligation. To those who bear the scars of war we promise our continuing efforts to assure them just compensation. To those gallant lads who have died on our behalf, we dedicate our lives to bringing to reality those high ideals of equality of opportunity, freedom and peace, for which they made the supreme sacrifice. To those near and dear to them we offer our sincerest sympathy.

May we unite with those who return in building a Canada which will be a proud memorial worthy of the sacrifice of the dead.”

With those words a fitting closure was made to the World War II era in which a small community of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants sent the highest proportion of volunteers to serve than any Canadian community of its size.

Canada joined the war effort on September 10, 1939. This was a week after Britain joined because of the Statute of Westminster, which meant Canada had to vote before entering the war. One of the first developments to meet the challenge was the switching of factories to make war equipment. Many factories were set up which helped increase the employment rate both locally and nationally. After a long economic

depression people in Oakville and surrounding Trafalgar Township welcomed the opportunity for full employment in factories like the John Inglis plant on Strachan Avenue in Toronto where peacetime production of household appliances changed to producing equipment for the armed forces. This facility by 1943 was turning out 60% of the world's supply of the Bren gun. The same could be said for the establishment of Victory Aircraft in Malton where aircraft like the Lancaster bomber, destined for overseas combat, were now being produced. Local workers took advantage of the new employment opportunities both in local factories and in factories situated within commuting distance. One big change was the employment of women in munition factories like Canadian Arsenals Limited near the rifle ranges on Lakeshore Road and Etobicoke Creek in Toronto Township. Visitors from Oakville riding on the Toronto Transit Commission streetcars and trolleys noticed that women were driving the vehicles for the first time! This freed up the male drivers, most of whom were volunteering for military service.



Art Hillmer, Kyle Thompson (neighbour) & John Hillmer – Sept 1942



Locally, men and women were travelling to Hamilton or Toronto to sign up for military service at the recruiting offices. On visiting the Memorial Hall at the new campus of Oakville Trafalgar High School one cannot be unmoved by the large number of staff and senior students from that school, the only local high school at that time, who made the supreme sacrifice. On a fall day in 1936 the rugby team at Oakville Trafalgar High School took the championship in Group One of their league. Later, 4 of the 18 members of the team lost their lives in World War Two. Douglas G. "Granny" Morris, a Wing Commander was killed in action in February of 1942. Jack Kemp joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1941, and was married in October of the same year. He was reported missing and presumed killed as a result of air operations in July of 1942. Flight-Sergeant, Pilot Bill Archibald, son of Principal R.H. Archibald, was reported missing as a result of air operations in September 1941. He was presumed dead on November 28 of the same year. Flying Officer R. Montye Bull graduated in Manitoba in 1941 and was later reported killed in action. For a small town losses, like these were especially difficult as everyone knew one another and shared in the grief of nearby friends and relatives who had lost loved ones or who had learned of injuries sustained in combat.

Everyday life in Oakville during the Second World War was similar to life in hundreds of other small communities all over the Dominion of Canada at the time. Those who lived at the time will recall the coupon books that one had to use to purchase items like tea, coffee and gasoline. They'll remember enjoying sodas and the terrific lunches at Len Hope's Drug Store on Colborne Street here in town. How about the awesome milkshakes at Dunn's Drug Store? Teens and adults alike enjoyed the dances at Victoria Hall on Reynolds Street during the war, enjoying hits like "I'll Never Smile Again" by Toronto's own Ruth Sandler Lowe, "Take the 'A' Train" by Duke Ellington, "Stardust", and my personal favourite, "Frenesi", also by the legendary Artie Shaw. Among other favourites were "Stormy Weather" by Lena Horne, "A Tree in the Meadow" by Margaret Whiting, and who can forget "Pennsylvania 6-5000" by the great Glenn Miller? For the more adventuresome, a drive into Toronto along the Lakeshore Highway, or the newly-opened Queen Elizabeth Way, to the Palais Royale or the Palace Pier at Sunnyside would be a treat as top musicians like Harry James, Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman made these clubs popular destinations on their North American tours. If a young man really wanted to impress his girlfriend, taking her into Toronto in a 1940 Chevy Sedan Classic, a 1941 Willy's Coupe might go over well. Perhaps they might borrow their parents' 1940 Cadillac Sixty Special Classic or the family Packard or Hudson. Still, most were happy walking to the dances on Reynolds Street or borrowing dad's old Ford if they promised to be home by 11!

I can remember my grandparents, who lived in High Park in West Toronto during the War, talking about the fine programs on C.B.C. Radio. They especially enjoyed the antics of “The Happy Gang”. Like many in Oakville, they listened to the C.F.R.B. news from the overseas conflicts, from people like Lorne Green, Gordon Sinclair, and Charles Collingwood Reed. Wes McKnight was another popular radio personality. In the early evenings they would faithfully read the old Toronto Telegram while listening to “Amos and Andy”, “The Texaco Star Theatre”, or my grandfather’s favourite, “The Bickersons”. He joked that it was the best representation of married life he had ever heard! I assume he was joking. Certainly, such enjoyment offered brief respites from the continuous litany of suffering and loss as a result of the war. I should imagine that local people also enjoyed the escapism from life’s grim realities at the time by attending the movies at the Gregory Theatre on Lakeshore Road at Trafalgar. Among popular films of this era were “Mrs. Miniver” featuring Greer Garson, and Canada’s own Walter Pigeon. Other popular movies were “Desperate Journey” with Errol Flynn, and Ronald Reagan, and “The Road to Morocco”, one of the popular “Road” movies featuring Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour and Bob Hope. My grandfather especially enjoyed “A Yank in the R.A.F.” according to his memoirs that our family has kept over the years. I somehow imagine that it is due to the fact that “The Girl With the Million Dollar Legs”, Betty Grable, was featured in that production! The entertainment in those days seemed to strike a balance between glorifying the war effort, as well as emphasizing the nature of strong family and community to “Keep the Home Fires Burning”.



H.M.C.S. Oakville

One of the fascinating stories to come out of Oakville and vicinity in the Second World War was the visit of the corvette H.M.C.S. Oakville to the Sixteen when she was commissioned in November 1941. She had sailed from Thunder Bay where she had been built to her namesake town for an official launch. The town put on a party not seen at any time previously. There was a blue-ribbon parade, speeches, tours of the boat and an evening banquet. The community collected 300 books for the ship's library, bought percolaters for the galley and radios for the crew quarters. Sailors received care packages and knitted clothes. A handmade silk ensign was presented to the captain. Canada's Naval Chief of Staff and Minister of Defence were on hand. The corvette, one of many built in Canada for convoy duty, had her moment in glory in the summer of 1942 when she captured and sunk a German submarine in the Caribbean, off the coast of Haiti. The vessel ended her days when she was sold to the Venezuelan Navy and was decommissioned in 1962.

It is quite interesting to read the newspapers of the time, some of which are available in the Oakville Historical Society collection at our offices on King Street. Imagine a new car being offered at Stirling Dynes Motors here in town for \$925.00! Gas was 19 cents a gallon at the McColl Frontenac gas station. A decent bungalow could be purchased for \$6900.00 locally. Bread at the Loblaws Groceteria on Colborne Street near Thomas Street was 8 cents a loaf. However, I suppose that one has to appreciate that the average annual salary was only \$2000.00 per year, and the minimum wage was 30 cents an hour! Many local people worked in local factories like Glassco's Jams on Randall Street or the Oakville Basket Factory up on the Sixth Line and Trafalgar near the train station and found it a struggle to make ends meet, especially with the larger families of the day. It was a blessing that seasonal work could be obtained on the surrounding farms. For example, strawberry picking was one method of securing extra income. In those days Oakville and Trafalgar Township was known as "The Strawberry Capital of Canada". Paycheques came out on Friday and there was the usual trek to The Bank of Toronto, The Bank of Commerce or The Imperial Bank of Canada on Colborne Street to cash them.

Most readers are aware of the old Independent Order of Forresters Orphans' Home on Bond Street in the area of Oakville north of Rebecca Street and east of Kerr Street. During the war this building was taken over by the Department of National Defense for the Ortona Barracks. Many servicemen and their families were located in Oakville and their homes were subsequently built between Kerr Street and Queen Mary Drive. These houses were built between 1941 and 1947 by The Wartime Housing Limited (later C.M.H.C.). 30,000 of them were built to provide affordable accommodation for munitions workers and returning veterans and their families. Surrey Park was one such

development at the northwest corner of Rebecca Street and what is now Dorval Drive. These houses were recently demolished. It is said that one million of these wartime houses still exist in Canada today. Hopefully those built in Oakville will be retained as a symbol of housebuilding in another era. Local men joined The Lorne Scots Regiment that was based in Halton and Peel. Others joined regiments like the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders in Toronto, and the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. Local army recruits trained in facilities like Camp Borden and Niagara–on-the-Lake. Those heading into the Royal Canadian Air Force trained as pilots at air stations that were springing up all over the country. Bases like Port Maitland, Centralia and Muskoka trained domestic pilots as well as those from countries such as Holland, Norway, Poland and Czechoslovakia. In the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was established in May 1940 and lasted until March 1945 when the plan came to an end. There were 130,000 graduates trained in Canada. 72,835 were Canadian. 50,000 pilots were trained as part of the program, including a significant number from the Oakville area. Women enlisted in the armed forces and joined groups like The Canadian Women’s Army Corp, the Wrens, and Ferry Command. Women who did not join the armed forces gathered to make up care packages for those serving overseas. Some Red Rose tea or Maxwell House coffee were always welcomed by servicemen overseas. A couple of sticks of Wrigley’s chewing gum and some Sweet Cap or Export A cigarettes were a treat. If the serviceman didn’t smoke, he could trade them for other items. Condensed milk was a treasured item. In addition, letters from loved ones back home dispelled some of the tragedy, stress and frequent monotony of everyday life. Of course, servicemen were not allowed to disclose their location or any other strategic information that could have been useful to the enemy. Offending parts of letters were routinely blacked out by censors. “Loose lips sink ships” was the rule.

Oakville has three war memorials: the recently-refurbished Oakville Cenotaph in George’s Square, The Bronte War Memorial on Lakeshore Road and the Trafalgar Memorial. The memorial on George’s Square was constructed by The Royal Canadian Legion who underwrote the initial \$5500.00 cost. The granite benches were unveiled by Mrs. Charles Foot, wife of the Past President of the Legion, and Mrs. Nellie Hurst of Burnett Street, who lost 2 sons in the World War II conflicts in Italy. It is encouraging today that Remembrance Day services are attracting more and more people every year. In recent years efforts have been expanded to recognize those who fought in the Korean conflict, as well as those men and women who have served in various peacekeeping efforts around the world since World War Two. Finally, in more recent times we remember Canadians who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, especially local residents like Colonel Geoff Parker who died serving his country in May 2010 while serving with The Royal Canadian Regiment. He was the highest-ranking Canadian soldier to be killed in the Afghan conflict. We remember local people serving from 1939 to 1945 like Rear

Admiral Hugh Pullen, Lieutenant Colonel Charles K. Nicholl, Lieutenant-Colonel J.P. Browne, Colonel Jock Anderson, a decorated Canadian army chaplain, and the Honourable Ray Lawson, an Oakville resident who later became Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario. Among other things we remember Ray Lawson for his efforts in establishing major defense industries during the Second World War like the great refinery complex in the east end of Montreal. Today, there is Ray Lawson Boulevard in Montreal named after him. Local individuals did a great deal to help achieve victory.

It must have been a wonderful scene in Oakville the day World War Two ended in 1945. I understand that workers were allowed to leave to celebrate with family and friends and, needless to say, ears were peeled to the radio as they gathered around the RCA Victor radio to hear the celebrations in Times Square, New York, Trafalgar Square in London, and on Bay Street in downtown Toronto. The church bells must have been ringing in Oakville to their heart's content that glorious day, hopefully ringing in a new era of everlasting peace.

Phil Brimacombe

## ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



### **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – June 2011**

**P**rior to the use of concrete, slab rocks taken from the floor of Lake Ontario by “Stone Hookers” were used for foundations. They were measured in a pile 3’

high, 6' wide and 12' long called a "Toise". Each "Stone Hooker" vessel could carry 2 of these and they were stored on the shore. Picture shows a "Toise" on the west pier of the 16 Mile Creek, near the C.G. Marlatt Tannery.

Lance Naismith

## Membership

Welcome to our newest members of the Oakville Historical Society!!

Anita Cwynar  
Pauline Powers  
Terence Whelan

Sandy Forsythe  
Trish Ray

Shavak and Freny Madon  
Gary Reed

Andrea Stewart

## Thomas House

I would like to send a truly heartfelt "thank you" to all those who volunteered so faithfully and well over this very hot and humid summer with a high volume of visitors – you have certainly conveyed that "pioneer spirit" in your dedication – "THANK YOU", again.

Mary Davidson

## Great White Oak

Near the end of September, saplings from the officially designated historic 260 year old Great White Oak on Bronte Road will be available for sale. Only 500 saplings, from this iconic Oakville tree that was twice saved from destruction through the hard work of citizens, will be available. Contact Liz Benneian at [president@oakvillegreen.org](mailto:president@oakvillegreen.org) so she can add you to the list.

Mary Davidson





## Mayor's Historical Picnic in the Park

This year's Picnic in the Park was a success, weatherwise and attendance. The two bands - the St. Paul's Dixie Land Band and the Oakville Wind Orchestra, entertained those who attended and either sat by the lake or close up to the music.

Announced by the OHS Crier Ian Burkholder, Mayor Rob Burton and former mayor Harry Barrett officially opened the event.

Children in attendance were also entertained by "Roundabout" the clown, a fire truck and a police car.



Mayor Rob Burton & Marianne Hawthorne





















## William Halton and Halton County

**A**t our March presentation, John McDonald, a historian and author, gave a very in-depth talk on William Halton and his impact upon not only Halton County but Ontario as well.

The presentation was rounded out with an entertaining visual presentation, along with William Halton's life story – one not just centred in Canada. The presentation was well received by those in attendance.

Lance Naismith

CHECK OUR DECEMBER  
NEWSLETTER FOR THE 2012  
SPEAKERS PRESENTATION  
SCHEDULE



Phillip Brimacombe and  
John McDonald

## AGM

Due to inclement weather on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, our Annual General Meeting was put over to May 18<sup>th</sup>. We know several people were heartbroken to miss the Pot Luck dinner and look forward to our AGM in 2012. The meeting was held and mandatory reports made to the members. Three directors were confirmed by the members. At the following board meeting, George Chisholm, Barb Savage, Jim Young and Greg Munz agreed to continue in their office.

Also at the AGM a long time member, Ernle Carroll was honoured for her long service to the OHS and cake was enjoyed by all.

We would like to mention that a member of the OHS, Drew Bucknall – a very active member of the OHS and the Heritage Committee, was honoured by the Ontario Heritage Trust with a Certificate of Achievement in Appreciation of Volunteer Work to identify, preserve, protect and promote our Province's rich Heritage.



Lance Naismith

## The Cottages at 108 and 110 King Street

Editor's Note: You've probably been there and, walked past them or went into them and thought it was an odd design for a house. Well, there are some odd things about our Society building but, it is really two buildings, designed by two descendents of our founder, William Chisholm. Here is the history, -written by an unknown writer.

These Cottages on the north side of the Erchless grounds were designed by sisters Hazel Matthews and Dr. Juliet Chisholm, great-granddaughters of

Oakville's founder William Chisholm. Juliet Chisholm was an artist and pediatrician, Hazel an author and historian.



In 1953 the two women moved into the newly-built cottages, leaving the Customs House occupied by Hazel's son Monty Hart and his family. Juliet lived at 108, Hazel in 110.

Number 108 was conceived by Juliet as a Normandy cottage with stone floors, inspired by the years she had spent in France. The pinkish tint of the floor tiles is a

characteristic of the Credit Valley stone used in their construction.

Hazel's residence at Number 110 was in a more contemporary style. The differences in design went as far as the heating systems; 108 (Juliet's) was heated using forced air, whereas 110 (Hazel's) had radiators installed for a hot water heating system. There was a great deal of second-hand material used in the construction of these two homes, possibly due to the shortages brought about by World War II.



By the mid-70s, both the Erchless Family Home and the Cottages were occupied by tenants. The Town of Oakville purchased Erchless Estate in 1977 and continued renting the properties for some time. The Customs House was restored and opened to the public in 1983, while the Erchless Family Home did not open to the public until 1991.

In 1992 the Oakville Historical Society reached an agreement with the Town of Oakville whereby the Society was granted possession of the Cottage at 110 King Street.

Juliet's Cottage at 108 King continued to be occupied by its tenant, Commodore Robertson. Eventually the Society took over the second cottage also and commenced a three-year renovation project to join the two buildings into one. Vintage materials were used to maintain an authentic appearance.

The renovated building now houses the Society's archives, a collection of historical documents pertaining to the history of the Town of Oakville.



Erchless Estate – next  
door to OHS



## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. The “Sea Gull” is famous for initiating trade with what country in 1865?
2. What famous shipbuilder built the “Seagull” on the Sixteen?
3. What was its cargo? (Ed. Note: Dual spelling of ship – which one is right?)

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER 2011

Volume 45: Number 4



## SPECIAL EVENTS

Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011

**CHRISTMAS PARTY: 6:00PM – 9:00PM (110 King Street West). ALL MEMBERS are invited to the Society for the Annual Christmas Party. Come and mingle with fellow Oakville history enthusiasts and enjoy a scrumptious spread provided by the Friends.**

Wednesday, March 21st, 2012

**OHS Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper Starting at 6:00pm**

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

2012

Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> 2012

**The Avro Arrow – a video and talk by Steven Shaw**

Wednesday, May 9th, 2012

**The War of 1812: Speaker Mr. Ken Weber**

Wednesday, October 17th, 2012

**Women and the War of 1812: Speaker Cheryl MacDonald**

Wednesday, November 21st, 2012

**The Home Children with focus on those who came over from the Dr. Barnardo Institute. Speaker Elaine Guther**

**All programs will be held at St. John's United Church and begin at 7:30pm, except the March 21st program (6:00pm).**

\*\*

**COVER PICTURE:** Celebrating an Olde Tyme Christmas with a toast in the Thomas House.

Photo credit: **Yacoub Husseini** – [treasurethemoment.ca](http://treasurethemoment.ca)

Make-up Artist: Alex C

Advertising insert artwork and compilation - Carolyn Naismith.

*Full Story  
on Page 26*



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This issue of the newsletter should reach you before the annual members' Christmas Party. If you haven't attended in the past or recently, consider dropping by to meet some of our new members and chat with older ones. You'll be sure to notice some changes in the two main rooms. Greg Munz and I have been hard at work painting and installing picture rails so that displays and exhibitions can be set up more easily. By early December it will probably still be a work in progress. Greg plans to install a permanent timeline showing events which have affected Oakville. The rooms look brighter already.

Our Ghost walks experienced major growth this year and our income was about double that of last year – but at a cost. Our five volunteer walk leaders, supervised by Wendy Belcher, conducted 36 walking tours, four bus tours and two PowerPoint presentations. They had assistance from several Society volunteers and, new this year, students from Oakville Trafalgar High School. These walks have become a major source of income for the Society and, in short, they were swamped. Please consider giving them a hand next year. Wendy would love to hear from you.

We were very pleased and honoured to receive a significant donation in memory of Norm Sadler from his two daughters. Norm was responsible for developing our website and passed away very suddenly. While developing and working on the website, the Society and Oakville's history became a major part of Norm's life.

I hope you and your family have a very merry Christmas.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

*Society offices are open every third Sunday  
of the month – 1:30pm to 4:00pm*

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

If you wish to submit photos for the Print newsletter, please ensure they are **high resolution** – not email quality. Otherwise they will not reproduce well. Editor

## *Oakville's Secret Santa (Land)*

In the spring of 1958, my parents announced we would soon be leaving our apartment in Toronto to move to a brand new house in Oakville. I did not want to go. They said Oakville was a great place and there would be lots of new friends to make and places to explore.

When I finished grade one, we moved to Seabourne Drive just east of the Third Line, which was a few streets from the end of town. After that, there was nothing but fields, old farmhouses, empty barns, forests, ponds and creeks. The houses on Seabourne ended at Tansley Drive, but the street continued south to Rebecca all the way down to Lou's BA. That's right, there was no Hopedale Mall or even its predecessor, Hopedale Plaza – just fields, a woodlot, a great tobogganing hill, and a place for our parents to buy gas and for us to buy hockey cards and inflate bicycle tires.

The day after moving in, there was a knock on the door. Dad answered and a young six-year old boy, said, "Hi, my name is Don. I saw a boy move in here. Would he like to play?" The answer, of course, was yes. Don Buckland and I became great boyhood friends and were like brothers until his passing in 2008.



**Santa Land – Village area**



**Oakville's Dolores Buckland (centre) with relatives visiting from Nova Scotia**

On a hot day in the summer of 1958, Don and I were sitting on the Buckland's front porch with nothing much to do. Then Don piped up, saying, "Hey, Roy, do you want to go to Santa Land?" I asked what Santa Land was and he enthusiastically explained it was a place with a building shaped like old Mother Hubbard's shoe, miniature houses for the three little pigs, an igloo you can get into, a big corn on the cob to eat lunch in, a big apple, and lots of other things. Then, he added, "Oh yeah, there is also a castle and a huge swimming pool with a raft in it." I looked at him and thought to myself, my new friend is nuts. He insisted we should go and I agreed.

We walked to the top of Seabourne and then turned left onto Bridge Road, which took us over to the Third Line. We then walked north until the houses ended just before Al's Esso on the southwest corner of Third Line and Speers Rd. There were a couple of factories north of Speers and south of the QEW. After that, there was nothing but farms all the way to Milton, which itself, was mostly farms.

South of the highway, there was a bridge over the 14-Mile Creek. The Third Line had only one lane in each direction and today, I don't think motorists even realize they are on that bridge. Nonetheless, the real fun began there because that is where we left the road and scrambled down the embankment to the creek below.

We then headed west for about the length of a football field or a bit more. Then, the creek swung sharply north toward the highway. I had no clue where we were, but Don knew the terrain. I could hear the highway traffic getting louder and I was now starting to believe a little bit more in Santa Land. Then, Don said, "We need to go under the

highway now”. Walking up the creek in the huge culvert under the QEW highway was a memorable experience and a very cool part of going to Santa Land.

When we surfaced on the other side, Don told me we were very close. After about five more minutes of following the creek, walking along a path at the west end of a farm that still exists today, there was a small hill. At the top, there it was – Santa Land.

I think there were about ten buildings, but that was 53 years ago, and I never did count them. Some were in rough shape, but others were still good, including Old Mother Hubbard’s shoe. However, weather and kids had taken their toll.

We then crossed the creek on the west side of the village and started the steep climb out of the valley. When we reached the top, it was flat again and, to my amazement, there they were – the castle and the pool. The apple and corn on the cob buildings (food stands) were there, too, but nobody was using them to sell hotdogs and drinks anymore. I couldn’t believe my eyes.

Don and I went to Santa Land many times and in all seasons, including the dead of winter. It was always like a Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn adventure and I will never forget that feeling. We were lucky to grow up in west Oakville at that time.

*The following historical account of Santa Land is based on information provided by ten or twelve people who lived in the area at the time or who were directly involved in the Santa Land project. I thank each and every one of them.*

Bill Adams was the creator and promoter of Santa Land. Adams was an entrepreneur and promoter from Hamilton, who later lived in Burlington for many years



**Mid-fifties clothing styles**

until his passing five or six years ago. His plan was to build an amusement park, based on Santa's Village in Bracebridge.

In the early to mid 1950s, the QEW was not the major highway it is today. In fact, local farmers also used it to move tractors and implements from one farm or field to another. This was common practice for many years, and may have still been the case when Santa Land was built. There were fewer highway lanes then and no service roads, which made it possible for visitors to use the main entrance, which was directly off the north side of the highway, a short distance west of the Third Line.



### **Visitors to Santa Land**

Research indicates that Santa Land most likely opened in the summer of 1956 and closed in 1957. It was not intended to be open in the winter months and, as one person stated, "It wasn't built to last."

In 1956, John Patterson was a young sign painter in his late teens or early 20s. Adams asked him if he could paint QEW road signs for Santa Land, which he did. The signs were 8 feet by 4 feet and hard to miss. But Patterson remembers when the provincial government informed Adams that he could no longer use his entrance off the QEW. The highway signs had to come down and Patterson was asked to quickly paint new ones that would direct highway traffic up the Third Line to Upper Middle Road, where cars could turn left (west) to a new entrance at the north end of the valley. The road signs were made, as were a number of other ones to guide people along the trails



from the new entrance on Upper Middle Road to the village, pool and castle at the south end. The loss of the main entrance on the QEW spelled the beginning of the end for Santa Land.



**Did these Nova Scotia boys find Rudolph in Oakville?**

The pool was about 80 feet long and was built in the shape of a snowman. The head was 20 feet long and 10 to 12 feet deep with a diving board. At the far end, near the castle, there were two wading pools, which were the snowman's feet. They were one foot deep. The mid section was the snowman's belly. It was three to four feet deep. The snowman had his buttons painted on the bottom of the pool. The rest was painted snow white with blue trim.

In those days, much of swimming pool construction was manual. Machines were used, but not like today. It took a crew of 42 men 13 days to build the Santa Land snowman pool and adjacent change room. The pool was built by Oakville Custom Swim Pools Ltd., now called Canada Pools. It is the same company that built the pool in the Oakville Club.

The general consensus today is that Santa Land opened too soon because Adams was under financial pressure to make loan payments. Combined with the loss of the main entrance, he was forced to declare bankruptcy and close the facility.

Today, just north of the old Santa Land site, there is a ballpark and city paths to enjoy walks through the valley. In 1956-57, there was Santa's village, a petting zoo, elves, paper mâché figurines, and even a Santa Land Princess. The first princess was Sandra Stayton, who won a contest to earn the position, which was to be friendly with visitors and introduce them to Santa Claus who was in the castle next to a very large and unusual swimming pool.



### **Bill Adams: creator, promoter and owner of Santa Land**

Unfortunately, when Don and I showed up in 1958, the pool was a green, slimy swamp with turtles, frogs and who knows what else. But, it did have a raft, and we sure used it.

People say, “If you build it, they will come”, but it isn’t always true.

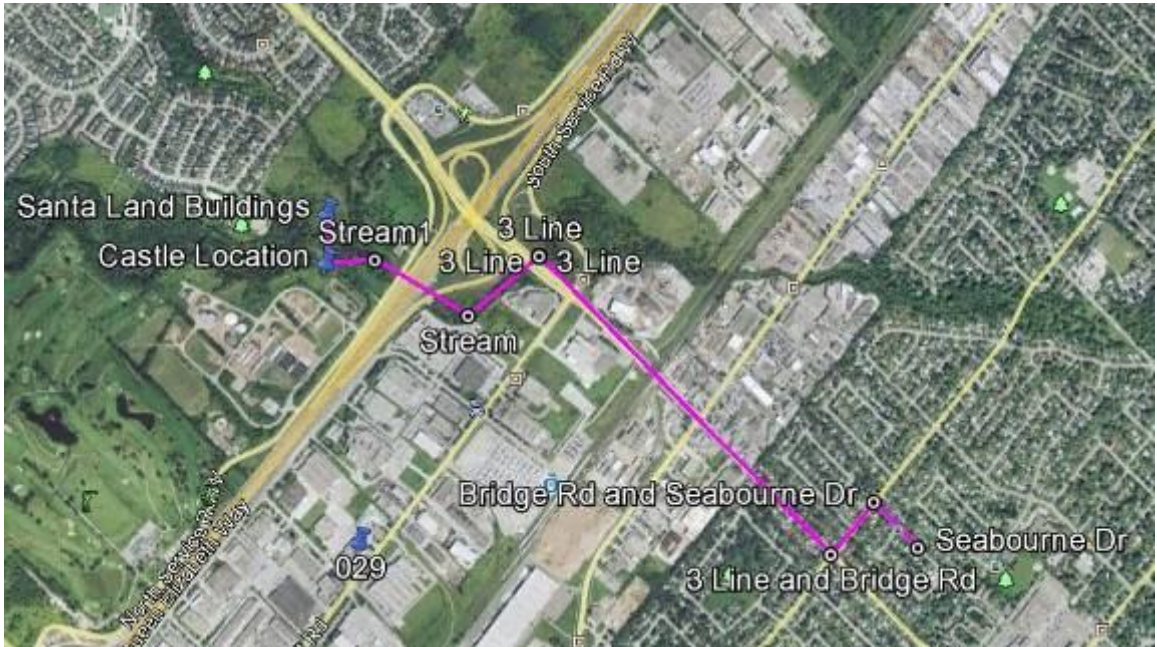
It was a great time to be a young boy growing up in the Third Line area where Oakville stopped, and exploring began. At age seven, nothing was more fun than going to Santa Land.

Thanks Don.

As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. For this article, we are lucky to not only have some pictures taken while Santa Land was open but some taken by the author during his re-discovery of this Oakville piece of history. Follow along on this magical tour with the following pictures. Editor

Roy Maxwell

## Re-discovering the Past



### **Roy and Dons' Adventure Path**

*Go west young man and follow the creek north, under the highway, and keep going until you reach Santa Land.*



**Author, standing under the Third Line bridge more than 50 years later. Looking towards Santa Land.**

**The trees you can see are at the south end where we began our trek under the Q.E.W. It was not as long in the 1950's prior to building the Service Roads. The lighter coloured concrete shows where it was extended later. It was always a fun walk and easier in the winter when the creek was frozen.**



**This is the north end and the kids' gateway to Santa Land.**





**Almost there!!!!**

**The old Santa Land site (2011). The creek is on the left behind the trees. This is the place where Santa's village was located – a few strong baseball throws south of where the ball park is today.**







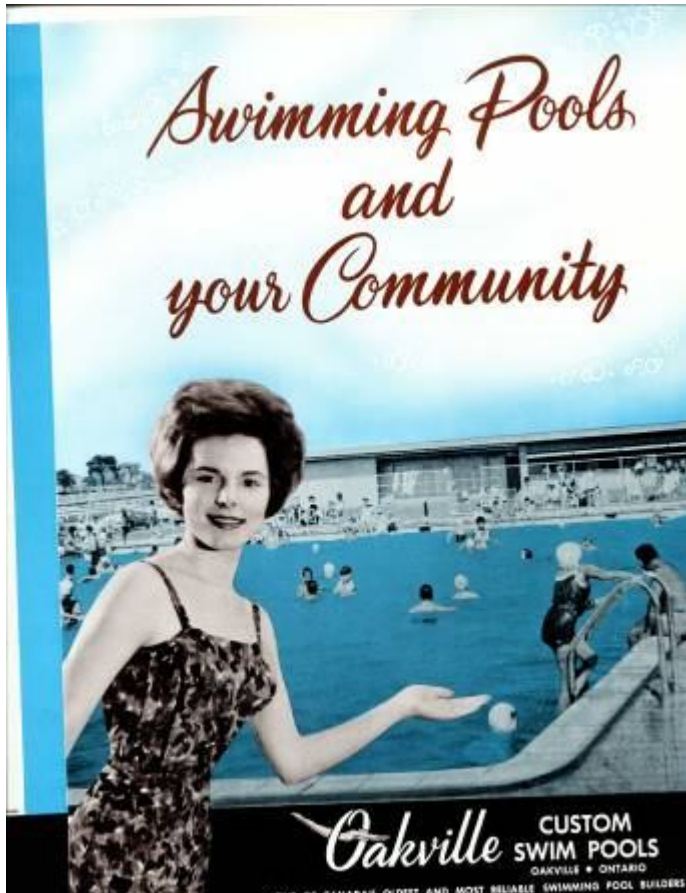
**This is where there used to be a bridge across the creek that linked the village in the valley to the castle and pool above on the west side of the creek. It was a steep walk up railway tie steps to get to the top. My memory tells me that the bridge and steps were where two trees now hang over the creek and the bit of land and grass in the middle. If I am wrong, it won't be by much.**



**Although a bit fuzzy, this picture showing the construction of the pool is too valuable to omit. (Like our memories, even the fuzzy ones are interesting – Ed.)**

**The snowman pool is starting to take “shape”.**





**This is a 1950's brochure for Oakville Pools, whose name was changed to Canada Pools because "Oakville" sounded too local. They are still located on Speers Road, east of the Third Line. Their office may be the oldest building on Speers Rd.**

## References and Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people who are all former or present-day Oakville residents. Each provided valuable information to help explore the history of Santa Land.

- Jean Bennett (valuable information and contacts)
- Rob Buchanan (2010-11 photos)
- Dolores and Steve Buckland (1950s Santa Land photos; perhaps the only ones in existence)
- Terry Buckland (for his own Santa Land memories and for finding and sharing the Buckland family's Santa Land photos)
- Canada Pools (for providing extremely valuable Santa Land history and photos of the snowman pool)
- J.D. Patterson (for providing first-hand knowledge about Santa Land, its road signs, and traffic challenges)
- Glenn Powell (valuable contacts)
- John Rogers (historical information about farm ownership on the North Service Road between Bronte Road and Third Line)
- Nance and Rod Waterman (valuable contacts)
- Roy Maxwell

Do you have any Oakville "Memories" you'd like to share? If so, contact June Hitchcox at the Society.

**Your memories are tomorrow's history lesson.**

# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – September 2011**

The “Sea Gull”, launched in 1864, initiated trade with Port Natal in South Africa. Built by John Simpson at his yard in Oakville, the cargo it carried on this epic voyage were buggies and prefab houses (first in South Africa).

Phillip Brimacombe

### **Thomas House**

Pat Mack, our long-time interpreter at Thomas House kindly volunteered on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2011 to host a group of 40 visitors from the Halton Multicultural Council, Adult ESL Learner Group.



Their tour also included the Post Office and Erchless Museum. We are always learning from our visitors as we discuss use of everyday implements and how they are so similar across many cultures. Many times we hear, "My grandmother used one of those in (Switzerland), (China), (Finland)."

Susan Wells



## Visitors to Thomas House during 2011 Season

APPROXIMATE TOTAL     **3,400**

VISITORS FROM COUNTRIES OTHER THAN CANADA:

<u>Country</u>	<u># Entries</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u># Entries</u>
Africa	2	Australia	4
Brazil	1	Bulgaria	1
China	2	Corsica	1
Ecuador	1	Finland	1
France	4	Germany	6
Holland	1	Hungary	4
Israel	1	Italy	5
Japan	2	Korea	4
Mexico	6	Pakistan	1
New Zealand	1	Poland	4
Portugal	2	Romania	1
Russia	1	Slovakia	2
Switzerland	2	Taiwan	1
Thailand	1	Trinidad & Tobago	2
Turkey	1	Ukraine	2
UK: England	12	Venezuela	1
Scotland	2		
Ireland	3		
Wales	1		

**35 Countries**

**88 Sets of families/individuals**

Mary Davidson

## Presentation

**S**tonehooking, smuggling and sailing at the Oakville Harbour. These intriguing topics and more were engagingly presented by your OHS member and author, Phillip Brimacombe.

Phil, always ready to spread his ample knowledge of local historical events, filled in at short notice and engaged the audience with stories and facts concerning Oakville's Harbour history, weaving in stories of the lives of captains and builders. Thanks Phil, for your dedication.

Susan Wells

## Christmas Presents?

**L**ooking for Christmas presents? The Oakville Historical Society has small and larger prints of "Olde Oakville" suitable for framing, by artists Don Sutherland and Michael Hitchcox. We invite you to drop in Tuesday or Thursday afternoons - 1:00 am to 4:30 pm - and have a look! Books? We have a fine selection of books related to Oakville's history and, if you have someone who loves maps, we have maps for sale that show all the sunken ships in Lake Ontario. Support your Society and give someone a gift they will love.

June Hitchcox

## Ghouls, Sparks, Beavers and Spirits!

**T**he ghost walks took on a new "life" this year with around 500 souls attending; about a third of them from youth groups, and many of them in Halloween costumes. Children and adults alike were delighted to hear the stories of Oakville's earliest inhabitants, some of whom have never left us!

There were some forty-two walks, ably guided by the ghosts of Esther Thomas (Wendy Belcher), her husband, Merrick (Phillip Brimacombe) and son Murray (Daniel Fassler, aged nine), together with Buccaneer Jacques (Carol



Gall) and one of Oakville's early mayors, Peter MacDougald (Stewart Sherriff).

It was a very busy time and we are grateful to the more than a dozen volunteers who helped host the events, as well as the local high school students who came out to help.

Andrea Stewart

**Esther and Merrick Thomas**





**Merrick Thomas chatting up the visitors.**

### **The Cottages at 108 and 110 King Street**

**T**hese Cottages on the north side of the Erchless grounds were designed by sisters Hazel Matthews and Dr. Juliet Chisholm, great-granddaughters of Oakville's founder William Chisholm. Juliet Chisholm was an artist and pediatrician, Hazel an author and historian.

In 1953 the two women moved into the newly-built cottages, leaving the Customs

House occupied by Hazel's son Monty Hart and his family. Juliet lived at 108, Hazel in 110.

Number 108 was conceived by Juliet as a Normandy cottage with stone floors, inspired by the years she had spent in France. The pinkish tint of the floor tiles is a characteristic of the Credit Valley stone used in their construction. Hazel's residence at Number 110 was in a more contemporary style. The differences in design went as far as the heating systems; 108 (Juliet's) was heated using forced air, whereas 110 (Hazel's) had radiators installed for a hot water heating system. There was a great deal of second-hand material used in the construction of these two homes, possibly due to the shortages brought about by World War II.

By the mid-70s, both the Erchless family home and the Cottages were occupied by tenants. The Town of Oakville purchased the Erchless Estate in 1977 and continued renting the properties for some time. The Customs House was restored and opened to the public in 1983, while the Erchless family home did not open to the public until 1991.

In 1992 the Oakville Historical Society reached an agreement with the Town of Oakville whereby the Society was granted possession of the Cottage at 110 King Street.

Juliet's Cottage at 108 King continued to be occupied by its tenant, Commodore Robertson. Eventually the Society took over the second cottage also and commenced a three-year renovation project to join the two buildings into one. Vintage materials were used to maintain an authentic appearance.

The renovated building now houses the Society's archives, a collection of historical documents pertaining to the history of the Town of Oakville.

### [The Importance of Heritage](#)

**T**oo often I hear that saving our Heritage isn't good business. I guess for those in the salvage business or buy/tear down real estate market that is true.

But, it has been proven that Heritage designations do not reduce value. And, they do not stop you from fixing up your place. The interior is usually yours to do with what you want. The exterior is another matter. Most people buy a home because they not only like the house but like the character of the area. So, why should people come in and tear down what people bought in the area in the first place? Heritage can protect value, character and maintain standards. What's wrong with that?

Lance Naismith



## Painting up a Storm

Our Society president, George Chisholm and Treasurer, Greg Munz have been painting up a storm at the Society offices. The great room with the fireplace and the front lobby area were in dire need of some tender care, so they both went at it and have done a fine job. As well, they installed a display system which will enhance our ability to show various educational packages. As well, they have been working on the visitor washroom.

Thanks guys for a great job.

Lance Naismith



**Greg staining up a storm.**



**George having a rest (?) while painting.**

## Doors Open

**D**oors Open this year exceeded all expectations with 7,026 visits to all sites - which is more than a thousand over the previous year. The most frequently visited sites were The Old Post Office: 850 visits, Thomas House with 785 visits, and Erchless with 654 people going through. There were 506 visits to our OHS offices.

Phillip Brimacombe's heritage tour received much appreciation from local visitors and out-of-towners alike: Phillip looked like the Pied Piper as the crowds following seemed to grow with each block! On behalf of the Doors Open Committee I would like to thank all our volunteers for their hard work and willingness to help Oakville host this event.



Andrea Stewart





## The Making of the Cover

Early April – just the time to celebrate Christmas. The front cover of the December 2011 edition of the Society’s newsletter was a project spawned from a “nice to have” type of conversation that took a life of its own and is the result of a lot of creative work by a number of people who enjoyed recreating a moment in history.

On the eve of the photo shoot, casual passersby would have seen the Thomas House lit up inside by flickering candles, with the laughter of children punctuating the still air of Lakeside Park. Curiosity would have stimulated some to investigate this strange apparition and they would have been rewarded by a sudden chorus of Christmas songs accompanied by a fiddler. Suddenly, the Thomas House would have exploded with bright flashes and raising voices – adult and child alike. What would have seemed like ghosts of Christmas past would suddenly be revealed as a photo shoot of costumed volunteers of the Oakville Historical Society representing a typical Christmas celebration by the Thomas family and friends.

The idea of a Christmas Cover for our Newsletter had its roots in a short conversation between myself and Mary Davidson. She quickly took the bull by the horns and elicited help from various people to organize and plan this event. Along with Susan Wells and Agnes McArthur, the inside of the Thomas House was quickly decorated into a Christmas motif – hanging decorations and a small tree. And the family Bible – that was supplied by Jim Young.

We were lucky when award-winning photographer Yacoub Husseini, of Treasure the Moment Photography volunteered his skills to bring about this recreation of history. Aply assisted by makeup artist, Alex C, the thrill of a pioneer Christmas was brought alive and recorded for posterity.

As you can see by the front cover, everyone took care to dress for the occasion. The two young ladies had their dresses made for them especially for this event by their grandmother, Anne Marie Lattemore.

It was fun doing the event and the following pictures are dedicated to those who helped with this project and for those who gave support for the idea.



















And, what's a traditional Christmas without the traditional tintype.





## The Cast



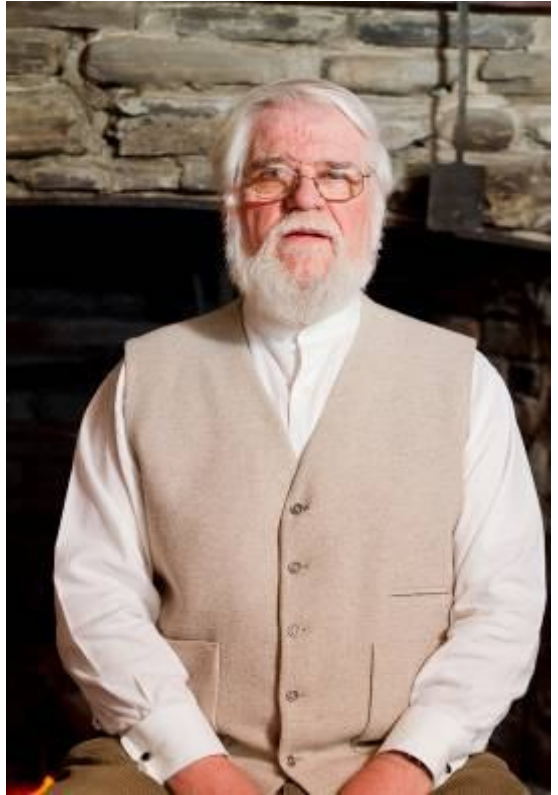
**Mary Davidson**



**Phillip Brimacombe**



**Wendy Belcher**



**Gord Lattemore**



**Anne Marie Lattemore**



**Pauline Hadfield**



**Richard Hadfield  
(Fiddler)**



**Daniel Fassler**





**Kaitlyn Powell**



**Keira Powell**



One thing about doing a photo-shoot like this is being able to record the activities from behind the scenes. Here are a few pics to show how it is done.



**Table set and fire ablaze**



**Cast arriving**



**Makeup!!!!**



**And, more makeup**



**Memorizing their lines????**

**Warming up  
the fiddle**







**Yacoub getting the cast together for the shoot**



**Lights, Camera, ACTION**  
**Well, at least lights and camera**

**Steppin' Out**



**Discussing the props**





**Setting up the cover shot**



**A successful shoot!!!**

## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. Do you recognize where this is?
  2. What are they building?
  3. Who owned this project?
- ~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**

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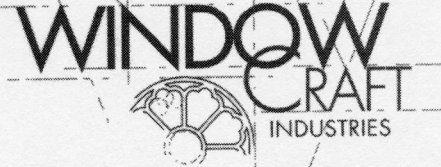
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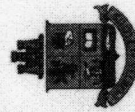
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~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
~~~~~



## THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

**MARCH 2012**



**Volume 46: Number 1**



## SPECIAL EVENTS

- Wednesday, March 21st, 2012 OHS Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper  
Starting at 6:00pm
- Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 OHS Yard Sale at 110 King Street 9AM – 1PM
- Sunday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Mayor's Picnic & Band Concert – Lakeside Park  
\* Noon to 4:30pm
- Saturday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 Doors Open
- Saturday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 Harvest Festival Bake Sale – Thomas House,  
Lakeside Park 11AM – 4PM
- Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Members Christmas Party, OHS office – 110  
King Street

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

2012

- Wednesday, May 9th, 2012 The War of 1812: Speaker Mr. Ken Weber
- Wednesday, October 17th, 2012 Women and the War of 1812: Speaker Cheryl  
MacDonald
- Wednesday, November 21st, 2012 The Home Children (with focus on those who  
came over from the Dr. Barnardo Institute).  
Speaker Elaine Guther

All programs will be held at St. John's United Church and begin at 7:30pm, except  
the March 14th program (6:00pm).

\*\*

**COVER PICTURE:** Fisherman's Shanties Along Bronte Harbour C. 1910 Ross  
Wark Collection  
Advertising insert artwork and compilation by Carolyn Naismith.



Atex Printing & Graphics -Proudly putting quality images on paper! - 2070 Speers  
Road #1, Oakville, 905-465-3220 <http://atexdigitalprint.com/>

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Your Society is very fortunate to have a very active group of volunteers. It seems as if the size of this group is growing but there is always room for more. On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons the office seems to get busier month by month. Many of our volunteers contribute on other days as well and much work is done at home. Some time ago we started opening on the third Sunday afternoon of the month and Phil Brimacombe and Stewart Sherriff have helped out many visitors during this new open time. Volunteerism can be a hot topic and there is a real push by different organizations and levels of government to recognize the efforts of volunteers. We get a fair amount of mail concerning volunteer awards and recognition. It's impossible to formally recognize everyone and some of the award applications require an amazing amount of work by – a volunteer. I am very pleased to report that I recently received an invitation to attend the Ontario Heritage Trust - Heritage Community Recognition Program Awards Ceremony to be held at Town Hall at the end of February. Long-time members and volunteers Margaret Buxton and Evelyn Bullied will be receiving this award. My congratulations to them.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held 21st March at 6:00 at St. John's United Church. As usual the meeting will be preceded by a pot-luck dinner. Let's hope the weather is better this year.

A month or so ago Greg Munz and I had the opportunity to tour through the new Queen Elizabeth Park Community Centre where the Society will have about 1000 square feet of storage space. We will also have the opportunity to put up displays in the building in conjunction with the Oakville Museum. Eventually most, if not all, of our archives will be moved there where they will be better protected against fire and we will have more space at the office for research. The Society will be represented at the official opening to be held on 24 March. If you have the time, go by for a tour of this great facility.

The Society is looking for a new treasurer. If you have an accounting background and are interested in taking over this position, please contact me.

I hope to see you at the Annual General Meeting.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

## *Bronte: Ever Growing, Ever Changing*

**B**ronte is located around the harbor area where the Twelve Mile Creek (Bronte Creek) enters Lake Ontario. Originally aboriginal lands, Bronte as a village began to take shape in the early 1800s. Philip Sovereign bought land west of the harbor in 1814. In 1834, a sawmill was built, and the village was laid out with various sized lots for sale. A road from Toronto was constructed that closely followed the Lake Ontario shore.

During the 1850's, the harbor was a thriving centre for the export of wheat and lumber from the surrounding Township of Trafalgar. Later, fishing and boat building were prime industries, as was stonhooking – dredging flat stones from the lake bottom. These stones can be seen in a few remaining buildings from this time period. These ventures attracted merchants, artisan and other industries – the basket factory and blacksmith shop being but two. Bronte Steam Mills was one of the largest grist mills in the province when it opened in 1858. Next to the mill was the post office operated by Joseph Flumerfelt. In the early 1900s, he had postcards printed in Germany showing local Bronte scenes which proved popular with tourists. Allie and Lila Flumerfelt, along with Councillor Alf Jennings, opened the last “stand alone” post office in the early 1950s.



Councillor Alf Jennings (L) &  
Allie Flumerfelt (R) at opening of new Post  
Office (Ross Wark Collection)

Bronte's first log school was likely built in 1815 on West Street near Chisholm. The Sovereigns and the Belyeas were prominent in educational affairs. In 1872, a two story school made of stone was constructed on the north side of Chisholm St. (now Marine Drive). It was demolished in 1923 and a new school was built with the south half built in 1949. Centriller School closed in June of 1976. Students then moved to Westbrook (later demolished), Eastview and St. Dominic's. T. A. Blakelock High School is the closest secondary school since Queen Elizabeth Park H.S. closed a few years ago.

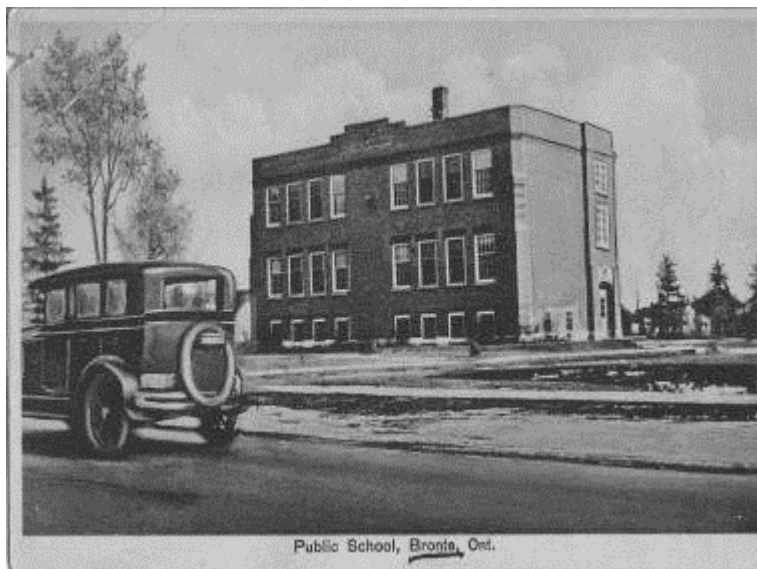
As a child in the late 1940s, parental warnings kept us from biking from our Oakville home to Bronte. Something about those “Bronte boys”. It’s my understanding that a similar warning was issued to Bronte “Ciscoes” (fish) travelling by bus to Oakville Trafalgar High School on Reynolds Street.

How times change!

Today a group of Oakville – Bronte people – of a certain age – meet at the Firehall Restaurant. Many share memories, pictures, postcards and newspaper clippings of times past. The basket factory, fishing shanties, teen town, Orange Lodge, volunteer fire department, Bell telephone operators with their friendly “number, please”, west pier diving tower, and many more have disappeared, but memories linger in the minds of long time area residents. The Commercial Fisherman Memorial on the east pier tells the story of brave men who fished the lake. Some never returned.

From 1951 – 1958, Bronte was incorporated as a village within Trafalgar Township. In 1962, the Township (including Bronte) became part of Oakville. Families who enriched this vibrant community include: Adams, Allan, Bray, Hinton, Speers, Cudmore, Pollock, Osborne, MacDonald, Triller, Joyce, Hill, Hopkins, McKim, Orr, Ingledew, Sargent, McCraney Pickard, Page and Belyea.

Today, “Bronte Village” has a great deal to offer residents and visitors alike during every season. Hundreds are drawn to July 1<sup>st</sup> celebrations south of the Lakeshore on Bronte Road. The harbor area park in August attracts art lovers to Art in the Park. Brightly decorated streets, shops and restaurants are popular during the autumn and winter....all year round really. Add in the boardwalk, both piers, parks, recreational boats of every description and you have a photographer’s delight.



Bronte Public School (Centriller) Ross Wark Collection

This eclectic article leaves much for readers to investigate for themselves. Celebrate our past and preserve our heritage. We've lost too much already. Support the efforts of The Bronte Historical Society to showcase the best that remains. Volunteers are always willing to assist with research, displays and art shows.

Ross Wark  
Trafalgar Township Historical Society

## *AROUND THE SOCIETY*



### Solution to “The Way Things Were” – December 2011

The December photo showed the “Snowman” pool in Santa Land. It was taken while the finishing touches were being applied and water filling the pool. This project was the vision of Bill Adams.

Lance Naismith

#### **HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS AND GHOST WALKS**

**Planning your summer and fall events – relatives/friends visiting?  
Check our website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the 2012 Schedule.**



## Martin Luther King Day at the Synagogue

On a Sabbath day in January members of the Oakville Historical Society were invited to Shaarei-Beth EL Synagogue on Morrison Road to hear Don DeCoursey give an account of growing up in Oakville as a person of colour, in recognition of Martin Luther King Day.

Don was born in Oakville in 1942 into one of the two original black families in Oakville who had come from Maryland in the 1850s; the Duncans and the DeCourseys who were related through marriage. Growing up on the “East Side”, the only black family in the neighbourhood, they nevertheless got along and forged lifelong friendships with neighbouring kids. Overall, Oakville was a racially tolerant place to live, though he did recall one very unpleasant, hurtful situation.

Oakville was a much smaller community with a population of around 5,000 and, Don’s parents Gordon and Betty, were an outgoing couple; active members of St. John’s



Don DeCoursey

United Church and various social groups; his Dad serving in the Lorne Scots and his Mother in the district commissioner’s office of the Girl Guides. He recalls shopping on Saturday mornings, a social event, running into friends who called his father “Speck” because of his freckles.

His family knew and worked with members of the Jewish community, including the family of Max Brown, founding member of the synagogue and the Burkes, one of whom, Bill, taught Don to play trumpet and they played together in the Oakville Citizen’s Band.

The other link with the Jewish community is his wife of sixteen years, Lena, with whom he enjoyed learning about Judaism and enjoyed the trip of a lifetime, to Israel. Don and Lena, who



Gordon & Betty DeCoursey

have just become members of The Oakville Historical Society, are also friends of membership volunteer, Stanley Smurlick, and his wife, Shirley.

Members of the Oakville Historical Society would like to thank Rabbi Stephen Wise and the congregation of Shaarei-Beth EL for their hospitality and kindness in guiding us through the service and for providing a social hour following.

Andrea Stewart

### Membership Report

We welcome the following new members who have joined this year so far:

Jackie Bennett	Ross Erdis	Reiner Jaakson	Wendy Janisse
Doug Mabee	Evelyn Ortwein	Linda Rothney	Yvonne Vanderlin
Lena Ruehle and Don deCoursey	Eileen Za	Steve Zazulyk	
Irene and Bruce Richards	Andrew and Carol Kennedy		
Scott Hannah, Heritage Manager, Town of Oakville			
Dave Gittings. Town Councillor			

We look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming events.

**For those members who have not yet renewed, we urge you to do so before the March Annual General Meeting so that you will be entitled to vote.**

Andrea Stewart

### Yard Sale (White Elephant Sale)

Set aside Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 for the OHS YARD SALE, which will be held at 110 King Street (9AM to 1PM) and, the early bird gets the best pick. We're asking members and non-members to scout out their garages and basements for good, clean, non-clothes items or appliances etc. that would be suitable for sale.

As well, volunteers to organize on the Friday (May 25<sup>th</sup>) or help on the day of sale would be appreciated.

Jim Young

Please take time to look at our advertiser's insert. Their sponsorship has been the reason we have our COLOUR December edition. It would be appreciated if you were to stop by and thank them.

## Books For Sale

Available for gift giving, for the history buff in the family or, whoever would like to be one!

### **Oakville & the Sixteen**

*Members - \$35.00*

*Non-Members - \$50.00*

### **Oakville: A Small Town**

*Members - \$10.00*

*Non-Members - \$12.00*

### **Oakville Harbour & Bronte Harbour**

*Members - \$10.00*

*Non-Members - \$12.00*

### **Oakville: Street Names and Landscapes**

*Members - \$35.00*

*Non-Members - \$42.00*

### **Halton's Heritage: Wm. Halton & Halton County (New this year)**

*Hard Cover - \$55.00*

*Soft Cover - \$42.00*

### **Ever Faithful**

*\$25.00*

### **A History of the Lorne Scots**

*Members - \$10.00*

*Non-Members - \$12.00*

### **Old Oakville**

*\$25.00*

*All prices quoted include taxes.*

**Just a phone call away – we will happily meet with you at our offices when convenient to you. Cash or cheque only. No credit cards please.**

Mary Davidson

If you wish to submit photos for the Print newsletter, please ensure they are High Resolution – not email quality. Otherwise they will not reproduce well. Editor

## 1918 Influenza Epidemic

*The Spanish Flu was the most devastating epidemic in recorded history. Arriving as it did at the end of World War I, with returning troops and increased civilian movement conditions were ripe for disease. It spread rapidly, claiming at least fifty million people world-wide. more than were killed in the war. No country seems to have been immune. Canada lost at least fifty thousand lives.*

At our most recent Speakers' Night, John McDonald of the Milton Historical Society spoke about the effect of this devastating epidemic in Halton. Though little had been written about the epidemic, Mr. McDonald was able, through interviews with local residents and newspapers from the period, to present a graphic and interesting account of the local impact.

The first signs of the influenza in Halton were found in October 1918. The epidemic lasted until March or April of 1919, and took a roller-coaster progression, with the most severe outbreaks occurring around Christmas 1918 and January 1919. Curiously, this flu seemed to hit not the young or frail elderly, but healthy 25-45 year-olds. By the time the epidemic ended, some 150 Halton residents were dead and several hundred had been severely affected, out of a total population of 23,000.

The first recorded report was in Georgetown on October 10, 1918. There were some 300 cases in Burlington. Many doctors died and nurses had to be trained to deal with the sick. The funeral director died and the demand for coffins couldn't be met. There are reports of self-contained funeral streetcars. The local newspapers contained numerous advertisements offering medicines, salves, and ointments.

In order to contain the spread, the medical authorities sought to ban assemblages and close public places such as schools and theatres. This ran counter to those who sought to organize public rallies and to raise funds for the last few months of the war effort. The clergy were upset about the closure of churches and theatre owners petitioned the Boards of Health in the municipalities to reopen the theatres. Images of throngs of people at train stations welcoming home soldiers illustrated how difficult it would have been to prevent gatherings. In December of 1918 "Business as Usual" was declared but it was not to be; the 'flu was more severe when it came back at Christmas and January. The Guelph Winter Fair went ahead and many farmers became infected. Despite the grimness, the illness and loss of life, there seems to have been no evidence of hysteria and, on the contrary, much kindness among the public. People demonstrated a great ability to cope, not only with the war, but also with this final insult.

As there was no central health authority such as Health Canada, each Halton municipality had its own Board of Health to deal with the crisis. In 1919 Federal Health Care came into being, together with new awareness program.

The origin of the flu is still not scientifically known but it is believed to possibly be a bird flu from the far East; some believe it may have started from a swine flu in the United States. The reason it was named “Spanish Flu” is that Spain, having been neutral during the war was therefore not censoring their newspaper reports and able to report the epidemic, unlike the other countries involved in the war effort who didn’t want their enemies to know that they had been badly affected. Because the Spanish reported the widespread illness and death, it looked as if the epidemic had started there.

Andrea Stewart

### **Grand Opening: QE Park Community and Cultural Centre**

**Saturday March 24th, 10am - 5pm**

**A** brand new community centre is opening up in the old QE Park High School, and the OHS is going to have a climate-controlled storage facility there to better protect our precious archives. The GRAND OPENING will see many interactive activities, including some of our own from the Oakville Memories project. For more information, contact Alyssa Reynolds or Yvonne Verlinden through the OHS.

Yvonne Verlinden

### **Society Offices**

**W**e are continuing to open the offices and museum of the Oakville Historical Society on King Street, from 1:30 to 4:00pm every third Sunday in the month. We would be delighted to welcome you to our beautiful headquarters by the Volunteers’ Fountain if you are taking a stroll in the vicinity.

Phil Brimacombe, Stewart Sherriff



*Editor's Note: A long standing member of the Oakville Historical Society and a Director, Barbara Savage, recently passed away. She will be missed by us all. Below is a reprint of an article written about her early years in Oakville.*

## *Christmas Memories of Oakville*

*Reflecting gratefully on the good things in life with Barbara Thornton-Savage .*

As the holiday season approaches, I once again reach for my volume of Christmas recipes that have inspired our family's celebrations for decades. These recipes are a kind of time capsule carefully documenting the festive foods enjoyed by our little Oakville community almost a century ago, Sitting down with a cup of tea, I open Dad's recipe book and remember. As I drift back through the years, I once again enter an enchanting world of memories and recapture the sheer joy of this magical holiday season from my childhood.

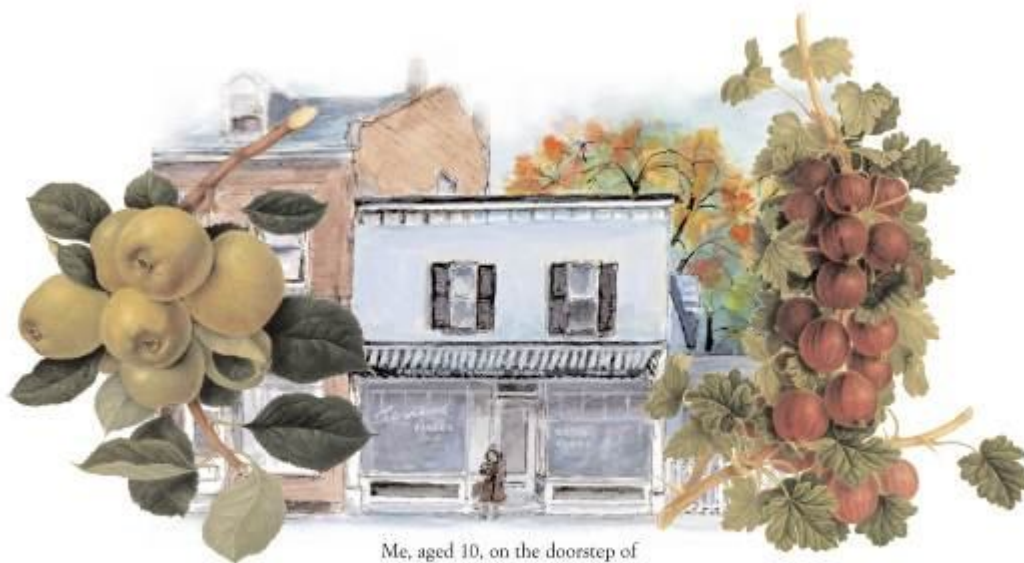
Suddenly it's Christmas time, 1939 again. I'm just eight years old and standing at the top of the stairs savoring the wood smoke from the oven in the bakeshop behind the kitchen below. I can hear Mom and older sister Joanie laughing and humming our favorite holiday tunes as I make my way down to see Dad.

Dad's day began at 4 a.m. everyday except Sunday. All the bread and baked goods had to be prepared before the store opened at 9 o'clock. Dad was so proud of his little shop, Thornton' Bakery, on Colborne Street (now Lakeshore Road) with the cozy flat above that was our home. The large oven in the bake shop was wood-burning, so Dad had to start early to get the oven hot enough to bake the bread, cakes and pastries that would soon fill the shelves and window of one half of the store.

The other half was the children's favorite where the fragrance of cinnamon, orange peel, cloves and peppermint permeated the air. This was the candy side with baskets and jars overflowing with candy canes and humbugs, maple fudge, chocolate, roasted cashews and red skin peanuts. All sumptuous treats for sharing or giving. Best of all was the Mixed Nut Brittle. Dad made and sold tons of it. Unfortunately he never became a rich man because he really didn't count his hard labor when working out the price of the goods.

The sweet smell of peppermint filled the whole of the store and flat above. There were pans and pans of candy canes all made by hand. The whole family took part in the exciting task of making these sparkling festive confections. First, Dad would boil the fragrant toffee mixture until it formed a mound, he would then cut it in half. One half he would pull over a hook, over and over again until it turned pure white. Pulling the hot toffee on the hook was strenuous work but Dad was strong and never complained. He then added bright red food coloring to the other half that he laid in strips over the white and twisted into a long rope. This was cut into varying small lengths and hastily passed along to my Mom, brother, sister and me so we could bend a hook in one end. We had to work fast as the candy would harden quickly.

I recall just before Christmas standing outside the store looking in at the candy window. I suppose I must have appeared wistful because a very kind lady suddenly went into the shop and bought me a small bag of candy. I can still see her shining eyes as she handed me this gift. I quickly realized she did not know who I was but even though I was a young child I knew not to spoil her act of generosity by saying that my father owned the shop! It's strange but seventy Christmases later, I still vividly remember her kindness.



Me, aged 10, on the doorstep of Thornton's Bakery in 1941.

Once again I call upon my store of Christmas memories as I push open the door and wiggle my way through the crowded shop. It's impossible not to get swept up in the Christmas spirit when it's bustling all around you. The waft of warm butter and vanilla mingle with the sugary scent of a hot batch of cookies baking in the oven. But just now I've got a job to do. I interrupt Mom serving customers by giving her a little hug as I squeeze past into the bake shop in the back.

There, wedged between long tables holding all different sizes of dark fruit cake sumptuously topped with an inch of almond paste and a thin sheet of crisp white icing, I can see my Dad and sister Joan. They don't notice me they are too busy writing Merry Christmas and Season's Greetings on the cakes before piping a scroll around the border and adding a Christmas rose or two. Since I was not good at decorating, my job was to follow along and add a small stem of paper holly.

In retrospect, it sounds as if we all participated in child labor, but it was so much fun and such a sense of connection with the whole family. And there was always lots of free time too. As soon as I finished my holly contribution I dashed out to meet with some friends to go ice-skating on the river. It had been so cold that we were able to skate right up to the Old Mill built by William Chisholm.

Now it's dusk and I'm walking home along the river path towards the town. As I reach the high street I am greeted by a warm, golden light radiating from all the windows. A magical moment in twilight with Christmas bells ringing as I enter the shop. The sound gives me a sudden rush of happiness as I anticipate the festive time to come. On Christmas day the church bells chime Christmas carols which echo along Colbourne Street, always quite deserted on that most special of days.

It's closing time as I enter the shop. Mom just smiles at me as I scoop up one lonely gingerbread man left on the tray and whispers that there is a plate of sugar frosted mincemeat pies to enjoy after supper. Tomorrow Dad would be baking some Christmas cookies specially for us to offer Santa on Christmas Eve.

In retelling the story of my childhood I appreciate there are few things that stir warmer memories than the food we remember from that time. I would like to share with you one of my particular favorites - Dad's recipe for Mixed Nut Brittle - which I very much hope you will one day press into your own book of Christmas memories.



## *Ingredients for Mixed Nut Brittle*

2 cups fine white sugar  
1 teaspoon salt,  
2/3 cup of water

1/3 cup of corn syrup  
1/3 cup of butter

1/4 teaspoon lemon juice  
4 cups mixed nuts (Brazil, walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds, and cashews)

## *Preparation*

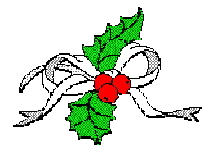
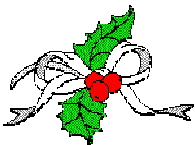
Butter a cookie tray with an lip at least 1 inch high, and place in the freezer.

## *To mix*

In a heavy pot, over a gentle heat, combine sugar, salt and water. Stir continuously until all sugar crystals are dissolved. Put in the candy thermometer, clipping it to the side of the pan, and turn up the heat.

Bring the mixture to a boil and then add corn syrup. Do not leave the boiling sugar unattended as it rises quickly in the pan and may boil over. Heat the mixture up to 280 degrees F. Add butter and continue to cook, stirring frequently. The temperature is very high and splashed boiling sugar syrup is extremely dangerous - as dangerous as boiling oil on the skin - so be very careful.

When the temperature reaches 285 degrees F, remove from heat and stir in the lemon juice. Immediately add the nuts and mix thoroughly. Pour onto the cold, buttered tray, and separate into clusters by pulling the mixture apart with the tines of two buttered forks. Work quickly, as the toffee will harden very fast.



## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. What is the name of the bridge in the picture?
2. What is the white building in the background?
3. What was the road called when the bridge was present?

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**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**





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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**JUNE 2012**

**Volume 46: Number 2**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

- Sunday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012** Mayor's Picnic & Band Concert – Lakeside Park  
Noon to 4:30pm
- Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012** Doors Open
- Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012** Harvest Festival Bake Sale – Thomas House,  
Lakeside Park 11AM – 4PM
- Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012** Members Christmas Party, OHS office – 110  
King Street

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

- Wednesday, October 17th, 2012** Women and the War of 1812: Speaker Cheryl  
MacDonald
- Wednesday, November 21st, 2012** The Home Children (with focus on those who  
came over from the Dr. Barnardo Institute).  
Speaker Elaine Guther

All programs will be held at St. John's United Church and begin at 7:30pm.

Attending the Mayor's Picnic on June 10<sup>th</sup>?  
Don't forget to invite neighbours, friends,  
relatives and anyone else who would enjoy an  
afternoon in the Park listening to some stirring  
music. Bring the babysitter as well, as kids are  
welcome.

**COVER PICTURE:** Oakville's Old Boys' Band – August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1924 - Front porch,  
Mount Vernon, Oakville (Lakeside Park now)  
Advertising insert artwork and compilation by Carolyn Naismith.



Atex Printing & Graphics -Proudly putting quality images on paper! - 2070 Speers  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This newsletter marks the start of our summer season – a time when your Society is even busier than usual. There is an increased need for volunteers in a variety of roles. You don't need to be an expert on history or the history of Oakville as we offer free training. If you would like to help out at the Thomas House, at the office, with walks, or just help out please let us know.

Our last two speakers' nights have been particularly well attended. In February, Society member Steve Shaw presented his movie on the Avro Arrow. Close to 100 people turned out to hear it including several former Avro employees. The Arrow is obviously still a hot topic. One person wondered how long the meeting would have run if we had moved it across the corner to the pub. The May meeting with Ken Weber talking about the War of 1812 was almost as well attended. As usual, Ken held the audience spellbound. With 2012 being the 200th anniversary of the War, there is great interest and there are many events around the area in commemoration. After the meeting, a visitor gave the Society a silent movie of Charlie Chaplin which came from the old Victoria Hall on Reynolds Street. On the surface, it sounded like a great item to add to the collection but film of that age is on nitrate stock which deteriorates with age and can spontaneously ignite. The cost to safely store this movie is prohibitive so we are looking for a more appropriate home for it. Speaking of Victoria Hall, which stood where the Curling Club parking lot is now, if you have any photos of the **outside** the building, we would love to have them as we do not have a photo of the outside of the building in the collection.

In March, we held our annual meeting which was preceded by the usual pot-luck dinner. Three directors had their terms expire and all were re-elected. Welcome back to Harry Barrett, Phil Brimacombe and Jim Young. Because of low attendance at the last two board meetings, the board has not yet elected officers. We are, however, in need of a new treasurer. Greg Munz has decided not to continue in that role although he is staying on the board. If you know of someone who might be interested in taking over as treasurer, please let me know.

Later this month, a small group will be getting together to start the research required to create a new walk. It was decided a while ago to create at least one cemetery walk and the project is finally rolling. The first walk will feature Oakville St Mary's Cemetery at the top of Lyons Lane.

In February we were saddened by the passing of long-time Society member and Vice President Barb Savage. Barb was involved in just about every function of the Society and was a prime advocate of the Society. She is missed.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

## *Oakville and the War of 1812*

Isaac Brock and the battle of Queenston Heights, Tecumseh, the burning of York, the burning of Washington, Laura Secord and her cow. These are the images that usually come to mind when we think of the War of 1812.

The war was a far more complex event than these vignettes illustrate. Declared by the United States on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1812, the war was ostensibly about the right of American sailors to be free from forcible service in the Royal Navy (impressment) and the right of Americans to freely trade through the British naval blockade into Europe. Lingered unresolved issues from the American Revolution and the 1783 Treaty of Paris which ended it, also played a large part in the process leading to the declaration of war by the American government.

The war was fought mainly around the Great Lakes, mostly on Canadian soil, five hundred miles from the ocean and the maritime causes outlined in the declaration of war. The major portion of the war rolled up and down the Niagara Peninsula and along the Niagara River for two years with side campaigns in southwestern Ontario, the Ohio Territory and along the St Lawrence River and eastern Townships of Quebec. The defeat of Napoleon in 1814 allowed Britain to focus her military efforts against the Americans, leading to the occupation of a large part of northern Maine, the attack on and burning of Washington and the unsuccessful attacks on New Orleans and Baltimore.

The war had no direct impact on Oakville and the Halton Region. In 1812, there wasn't anything here to be impacted on. Oakville and Bronte didn't exist and the town sites were reserved by treaty for the use of the Mississauga Indians as farming and fishing sites. The Lakeshore Road, (Highway 2) wouldn't be built for another twenty years. Legal settlement in the region, which had only begun in 1805, was thinly scattered along Dundas Street (approximately where Highway 5 is now located) and on the west side of Nelson Township. There were less than twenty families settled along the lakefront from Burlington Bay to the mouth of the Credit River. The largest population centre was the hamlet of Wellington Square, located at the north end of the Burlington Beach strip on Joseph Brant's land grant and adjoining settlement to the west along the north shore of the bay in East and West Flamborough townships. Out of a population of roughly three hundred people, half of whom were children, all males between the ages of sixteen and sixty were required by law to serve in the militia. Based on roots stretching back to the ancient British fyrd, dating from Saxon times before the Norman invasion of 1066, the

militia called on the population to defend the country. It had its flaws; organised along regional lines, the militia was only required to assemble between one and four days a year for training at the discretion of its local commanders, it could only serve for a maximum of six months when called out and it had no equipment. All members were required to provide themselves with their own musket within six months of registering with their local company and there were no uniforms.

In early 1812, Major General Brock, the administrator of Upper Canada, took steps to improve the effectiveness of the militia by creating Flank Companies within the existing militia units. These companies would be the first to be called out for service when needed and would train for up to six days a month. An additional incentive to joining was that they would be paid for this training, starting at the rate of six pence per day for a Private.

The Chisholm brothers of West Flamborough were among the most active in this service. The sons of Scottish Loyalists forced out of the upper Hudson River Valley during the American Revolution, John Chisholm commanded the 1st Flank Company of the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of York Militia throughout the War, William served as a Sergeant in Captain William Applegarth's 2<sup>nd</sup> Flank Company, later being commissioned as an Ensign and then Lieutenant and serving as a Lieutenant in the Incorporated Militia while the third brother George, served as a Sergeant and Ensign in his brother John's Company. All three would serve throughout the war, taking part in the battles of Detroit, Queenston Heights, Stoney Creek, Lundy's Lane and Fort Erie.

While the war only came as close to Oakville as the capture of York and the battle of Stoney Creek, it did pass relatively close by when the American naval forces of Commodore Isaac Chauncey chased the British naval forces of Sir James Yeo from York to Burlington Bay in what became known as the "Burlington Races" in September of 1813.

The most positive impact of the war on Oakville was the effect that it had on the man who created Oakville, Merrick Thomas. Born in Vermont, he was brought to the Queenston area where his father, Seneca, was employed on the construction of gun



Merrick Thomas 1806-1856



batteries on the British side of the river. His father was arrested and jailed as a suspected American spy for having crossed to the American side of the river after the declaration of war became publicly known. During his time in jail, his wife died leaving the children in the care of relatives and friends. On being released from jail, Seneca fled back to the United States, abandoning his children. Merrick would recall in later years how the family had all fled to the British fortified camp at Burlington Heights in the face of the American invasion in the summer of 1813, with himself at the age of nine, driving a wagon and pair of horses the whole distance.

The war both strengthened existing attitudes toward the United States and Americans and created new ones among the inhabitants of Upper Canada. Bishop John Strachan of Toronto created a mythology, which endures to this day, about the sturdy Loyalists of the militia who had saved Canada from the Americans, while down playing the efforts of the small British Army garrison of the day. This early nationalism helped to concentrate political power in the hands of the small group of well off veterans and their families. Known as the “Family Compact” they would dominate the history of Ontario for the next thirty years, eventually leading to the struggle for responsible government and the creation of Canada as we know it today.

Americans remember the War of 1812 every time that they play their national anthem. In Canada, we are more reserved. The War of 1812 was a major factor in the development of Ontario and later Canada. We often overlook the part it played or ignore it entirely as a historical sideshow of little significance. It took Laura Secord, whose father kept the Government Inn on the Credit River, all day in June of 1813 to walk twelve miles across country in the heat of a Niagara summer to warn the British at Beaverdams of an impending American attack. Now that travel is much easier and far more comfortable, take the time to visit one of the many events which will be remembering the War of 1812 at National Historic sites, battlefields and communities across Southern Ontario over the next two years and learn about the people and events that helped to create our province and country.

Stewart Sherriff

Visit the OHS website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the enlarged and colour version of this newsletter and, explore the many informative areas of the website for event and tour dates.

# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## **Solution to “The Way Things Were”**

The photo shows a view from West River Street looking east onto the old Triller Street Bridge, c1912. The white building in the background is the Methodist church.

Lance Naismith

## **Volunteer Service Awards**

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012, five members of the Oakville Historical Society were honoured to receive “Volunteer Service Awards” from the Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

May Isaac, June Hitchcox and Lance Naismith received their 10 year pins and Phillip Brimacombe his 20 year pin. Margaret Buxton did the Society proud with her 40 year pin.



L/R Lance Naismith, Margaret Buxton, May Isaac, Phil Brimacombe, June Hitchcox

## Future Speakers

As you may know, the OHS does outreach by attending various groups and giving talks on Oakville history. These can be professional groups, charities, youth organizations or senior residences. We are looking for people who have an interest in sharing their knowledge (hobby, research, etc) with others and are willing to set up a presentation that could include photographs, slides etc. We can help them work up a powerpoint presentation and give access to our full database of photographs and textual information. Contact us at the Society and put forward an idea that you would like to develop.

Lance Naismith

## Thomas House

The Thomas House will open on Friday May 18<sup>th</sup> for the 2012 season and our interpreters are in place for May. We are still waiting to hear from those volunteers who so willingly gave of their time last year – please let us know the days you would like to work during June (weekends only) then July, August - Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays – weekends and holiday Mondays, closing at the Labour Day weekend on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012.

We would also like to welcome those new members who have expressed an interest in acting as interpreters at the Thomas House – give us a call with your preferred dates, and we can pair you up with another volunteer as this is a great way to become familiar with the history of the House and its family – and all the other great stories you will hear from visitors! We have a package outlining all you need to know available at the Offices.

Please phone or e-mail:

**Mary Davidson: 905-842-6935**  
**Susan Wells: 905-844-4474**

**charles.davidson2@sympatico.ca OR**  
**swells@cogeco.ca**

Mary Davidson

## The Plaque Committee – Oakville Historical Society

Good progress is being made in the construction of new historical plaques for various structures in Oakville. The Plaque Committee has been meeting once a month since the early part of the year at our Oakville Historical Society offices on

King Street. The committee is composed of Phil Brimacombe, George Chisholm, June Hitchcox, Doug Mabee, Jamie Macrae, Ray Peacock, John Sinnott and Jim Young.

Each member has volunteered to handle a different aspect in the process of producing the plaques. We thank our President, George Chisholm, for recently demonstrating to the committee a new process of carving the letters on the plaques using computer technology. Ray Peacock and Jamie Macrae are to be thanked also for their valuable assistance in putting together a flowchart detailing the process by which the idea for a new plaque is initiated and researched to the final steps of production and installation.

We have a number of plaques underway and various members of the committee are involved in carving and painting. We also thank Susan Wells for volunteering to update the albums in our library at the King Street offices. These albums contain photographs and descriptions of the structures that have been plaqued. We are grateful to May Issac, our librarian, for her efforts in taking so many photographs included in these albums. They are a superb resource for those interested to researching the history of our older buildings. We have also discussed the possibility of initiating a new program of installing plaques on more recent structures in town sometime in the future.

Phil Brimacombe

## [Oakville Heritage Awards](#)

**T**wo of our long standing members received awards from the Oakville Ontario Heritage Trust at Town Hall.

Presented by Mayor Rob Burton, Margaret Buxton (**L**) received the 2011 Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement for sustained volunteer contributions to community heritage over a period of 25 years or more and, Evelyn Bullied (**R**) received the Lifetime Achievement Award for her support of Oakville heritage for over 20 years. Congratulations to both for all their efforts.



Susan Wells





## Presentation – Avro Arrow

A large audience of over 100 on 15 February at St. John's United Church felt they were witnessing a great moment in Canadian history told through the recollections of men and women who engineered and built the **Avro Arrow** in the 1950s ending in 1958 when the programme was abruptly halted by the Diefenbaker government.



Steven Shaw

Steve Shaw, of Steve Shaw Productions, presented a video, “The Decade of the Avro Arrow”, to a very interested crowd. In this audience were 8 former employees of Avro Aircraft Limited (Canada), eager to add to the information. There were many heads leaning in to hear the rumours, the gossip and, the unofficial reports of an aircraft industry, told by some of the 14,000 people who worked there and were told one morning they were out of a job. We had to remind ourselves this all happened over 50 years ago but you would not have known that from the passion of the employees. Thank you Steve Smith and, thank you to the special eight who made the evening electric.

Susan Wells

Grace Schroeder getting the goodies ready. Our thanks Grace – very much appreciated.





Jim Young, Secretary – Making the introductions.



Ex-Avro Arrow Employee





### Presentation – War of 1812

**H**ands up. Who was Charles Plenderleath? No? John Harvey? What about Sir Isaac Brock or Laura Secord? (No, Laura did not make chocolates for Brock). Enthusiastic author **Ken Weber** answered these questions for a large, equally enthusiastic audience at your Society's May 9<sup>th</sup> talk on the War of 1812.

Mr. Weber (**R**) made 200-year-old events appear fresh, relating details such as: one attack was successful because the attacked enemy was drunk, another because the commander was off for the weekend seeing his lady friend down the lake, taking his fleet with him to impress her.



We look forward to hearing this skillful author again. Funds received by Mr. Weber were donated to the **Escarpment Land Preservation Program** of the Bruce Trail Association.

Susan Wells

### **Presentation at the Society – War of 1812 (local impact)**

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Michelle Guay, a student serving an internship with the University of Toronto Historical Studies Program spoke about the War of 1812 as it applied to Trafalgar Township. Though there was no major event in Trafalgar Township there was a significant contribution from the township militia.

When the war began on June 18, 1812, the militia were largely credited with the defence but a considerable part was played also by the native people. At the time the countryside was dense wilderness and a harsh environment. At first, settlers were reluctant to leave their farms; their priority was to clear the land, plant crops and to protect from weeds and pests; not to mention plunderers. Some who had arrived from the US were reluctant to fight their fellow Americans. They lacked training and were relegated to support roles.

Brock established a “Pitchfork Militia”, comprised of native people, settlers and the regular army. A flank company of 20-30 Trafalgar militiamen became available, recruited largely by John Chisholm, son of George. Their leaders were leading citizens; large landowners and merchants.

Much has been made of the number of desertions; but these were desertions to their homes and not to the enemy, an act of high treason. There was some understandable disaffection; shortage of money, harsh weather, sickness, lack of clothes, shoes and equipment, not to mention fear for their homesteads and families. However, they did prevail but it meant the destruction of lives (many died of flesh wounds) and property (by not only the Americans, but also by the British and some Indians). It also presented opportunities for many to gain land grants, promotions and pensions. The greatest gain was their pride in the shaping of Ontario as they continued to carve farms out of the wilderness.

Andrea Stewart

*Do you do **Facebook** or **Twitter**? Help out the OHS by putting event information out via Social Media. It would be appreciated.*

## Mayor's Picnic & Band Concert

If you missed the Mayor's Picnic & Band Concert this year at Lakeside Park, you missed out on having some good memories. The weather was perfect and the place resounded with jazz, classical and pop music and, the laughter of children having fun – a mixture of fun one doesn't get to experience too often. Add to that the Thomas House, our homegrown Audioman – Roger Lapworth who provided gratis the sound system. And, two, count em, two clowns – Roundabout and Doodlebug, who entertained the children and, some adults still enjoying life fully, with balloons and facepainting (PartyCalifornia). Our Oakville Fire Department gave us an educational demonstration on how to tear apart a car and save a life. Some of us had the enjoyment of actually helping to crash the cars. Once the heavy equipment got working on the cars, everyone enjoyed watching them come apart like tissue paper. ☺ Oakville Hydro showed up with a real crowd pleaser – something young and old could all enjoy. A ride in a real bucket hoist simulating “High Wire” repairs. From the smiles on the children's faces (and the parents), you could see this was a real hit. Kudos to St. John's Ambulance staff who were on standby all afternoon.

The picnic was opened with short and sweet lighthearted speeches by His Worship, Mayor Rob Burton and former Mayor, Harry Buxton. This was quickly followed by the St. Paul's Dixieland Jazz Band, who got everyone's blood flowing with some snappy and lively tunes. Between the battle of the bands, the Oakville Ale & Sword Scottish Dancers gave an entertaining demonstration of Scottish dancing and showed that all could enjoy this group activity. The rest of the afternoon was spent listening to a variety of tunes given by the Oakville Wind Orchestra – Canada's largest running community band. Led by Conductor Chris Arthurs, we were entertained with not only an eclectic blend of classical and pop music but some background mixed with the occasional lighthearted comments that kept us interested in what was next. A repeat of last years “competition with the speed boats” was held but, I think the Orchestra won this year.

Mr. Ed Finch, along with his wife Helen, attended with their 1931 Model “A” Ford, which formed the perfect backdrop for our lady of the afternoon, Marianne Hawthorne. Surprising how many people wanted pictures with the car and her alongside. I think we could have sold tickets and squashed the country's debt.

This was a joint effort between the Oakville Historical Society volunteers and the Town of Oakville. Marianne Hawthorne (organizer) would like to make special mention and thanks to: Donna & John Starkey, Mary Davidson, Maggie, Brock and Sara Leaver,



Carroll Castle, May Isaac, Lance Naismith, Jamie McCrea, former Mayor Harry Barrett, current Mayor Rob Burton and “Parks and Open Space” staff from the Town of Oakville. Our appreciation to Kopriva Taylor Funeral Home for their chair loan. There is so much to tell about the picnic so, let the following pictures close off the story.



Audioman starts the process – setting up the “sound”.



Early Bird gets the setup. Carroll Castle and Marianne Hawthorne bringing the “Stuff”



Former Mayor Harry Barrett  
giving a helping hand.



Beating the crowds and  
getting there early and,  
relaxing by the lake. No  
life like it.





“Audioman’s” groupies awaiting the tunes.





Donna Starkey bringing the bunting



Jamie McCrae & Don Calendar (Atlanta, Georgia) putting up the bunting.







A well deserved break by the setup crew.







**DON'T FORGET TO MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR  
NEXT YEARS CONCERT – 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF JUNE**



St. Paul's Dixieland Jazz Band

L/R D. Crown, M. Prout, B. Devey, J. Mink, D. Flewelling, H. VanMelle, R. LeFevre





Mr. E. Finch (owner) with 1931 Model A Ford

Young entrepreneurs – proceeds donated to “Sick Kids” Hospital



Fire Department Crew – “The Autoextracation Team”  
L/R K. Merriman, P. Turpin, M. Bortolotto, Capt. K. Cutmore, C. Roberts, Capt. M. Hall







Oakville Hydro – “High Wire”  
bucket demonstration.











Oakville Ale and Sword  
Scottish Dancers





Oakville Wind Orchestra











**THAT'S ALL FOLKS!!!!**  
Too bad these folks missed it.  
Maybe next year?

## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. Can you identify the location?
  2. Can you identify the event being celebrated?
  3. Do you recognize the stone building right centre of picture?
- ~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2012



Volume 46: Number 3

## SPECIAL EVENTS

- Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012    Doors Open
- Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012    Harvest Festival Bake Sale – Thomas House,  
Lakeside Park 11AM – 4PM
- Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012        Members Christmas Party, OHS office – 110  
King Street 6:00pm to 9:00pm

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**2012**

- Wednesday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012    Women and the War of 1812: Speaker Cheryl  
MacDonald
- Wednesday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012    The Home Children (with focus on those who  
came over from the Dr. Barnardo Institute).  
Speaker Elaine Guther

All programs will be held at St. John's United Church and begin at 7:30pm.

\*\*

### **HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS AND GHOST WALKS**

Planning your fall events – relatives/friends visiting?  
Check our website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the 2012 Schedule.

**COVER PICTURE:** George Chisholm Jr.'s sword  
Advertising insert artwork and compilation by Carolyn Naismith.



Atex Printing & Graphics -Proudly putting quality images on paper! - 2070 Speers  
Road #1,Oakville, 905-465-3220 <http://atexdigitalprint.com/>



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Traditionally, fall tends to be a bit quieter for the Society but, while discussing this with some of the other Directors today, it seems that this may no longer be the case. Several events and initiatives are planned:

Wendy Belcher is gearing up for our very popular Ghost Walks. There are 28 of them scheduled for the month of October. Wendy has a very dedicated group of volunteers running these walks but there is always room for more help. Wendy and the Bronte Grandmothers for Africa are also running a special series of our Main Street Walk to raise funds for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

Doors Open is set for Saturday 29 September. This year the event is for one day only. For further information, visit [www.oakville.ca/museum](http://www.oakville.ca/museum). Andrea Stewart is our representative on the Doors Open Committee and she could also use your volunteer help. A bake sale will be held at the Thomas House at the same time.

Two excellent speakers are booked for the fall. On 17 October Cheryl MacDonald will speak about Women and the War of 1812. On 21 November, Elaine Guther will speak about the Home Children with a focus on those who came to Canada from the Dr. Barnardo Institute. Both events will be held at St John's United Church starting at 7:30. As usual, there is no admission charge and the events are open to the public.

We are also very pleased to announce a revamp of our website. Mr. Yacoub Husseini has offered to update the website and will be presenting some suggestions to the Board in October.

I would also like to thank Susan Wells for agreeing to be our new Vice President. Jim Young remains our Secretary and *we are still looking for a new Treasurer*. Please contact me if you have any suggestions.

I hope to see you at one or more of our events.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

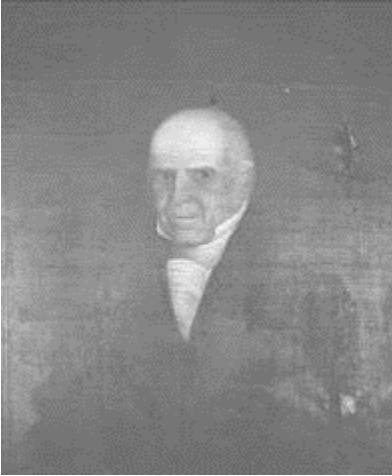
Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)



## *Chisholm Veterans of the War of 1812*

George Chisholm Sr. was born 19 July 1752 in the Parish of Croy, Scotland, very near the Culloden Battlefield. He was the sixth child (fifth son) of John Chisholm and Janet MacGlashan. In August 1773 he set off for North America on the Pearl, leaving Fort William and arriving at the Port of New York six weeks later.



George Chisholm Sr.  
1752-1842

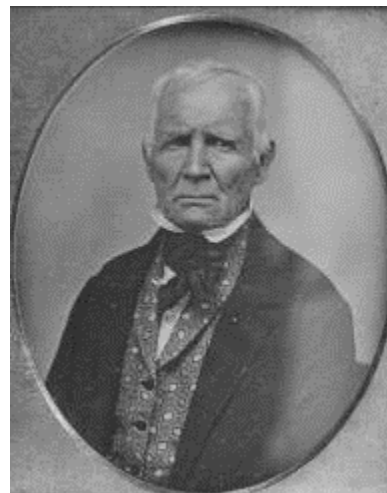
He had not long been settled in Kortright Township near the Head of the East Branch of the Delaware River in the Province of New York when the American Revolutionary War started. He joined Brigadier Barry St Leger and participated in the battle at Oriskany, New York, on 6 August 1777, following which he joined General “Gentleman Johnny” Burgoyne. He was captured at Sugar Loaf near Fort Ticonderoga, escaped and made his way to New York City where he married Barbara McKenzie. Their first two children, Janet and Mary, were born there. When New York was evacuated in 1783, he was a Port Roseway Associate and

helped settle what is now Shelburne, Nova Scotia. The next four children, John, James, William and Barbara, were born there. Conditions were not good in Shelburne and in 1791 the family headed west to the Niagara Peninsula in Upper Canada where his older brother, John, had already settled. They were among those who signed the Address of Welcome to Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe dated at Niagara 24 February 1792. By 1793 the family had moved to property in East Flamborough (now Burlington, Ontario) George Sr. and his partner Charles King had purchased. The last two children, Christy and Nancy, were born there.

For several years George Sr. had held a commission as captain in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of York Militia. The area around the head of Lake Ontario was part of the District of York at the time. At the outbreak of war in 1812, George Sr. marched off to Niagara with his sons but was not permitted to remain as he was too old (he was 60). At the threat of another invasion the next year, George Sr. stood ready again. “In the month of July 1813” wrote the major commanding the 2nd Regiment of York Militia, “when the Enemy’s fleet appeared off Burlington Heights – he again shouldered his musket, headed

a number of Volunteers and marched them to Burlington where he remained until the fleet disappeared.” He died on his farm on the north shore of Burlington Bay on 5 December 1842 at the age of 90. His wife had died in 1824.

His three remaining sons also held commissions in the same regiment. John, the eldest, was commissioned Captain of the 1<sup>st</sup> Flank Company on 10 May 1811. William was commissioned Ensign on 8 May 1811. George Jr. was a sergeant in the fall of 1812 and was gazetted Ensign on Christmas Day 1812. All three served extensively in the conflict. Their first action was at the capture of the fort at Detroit in August 1812 under General Brock. Some 3500 Americans were taken prisoner by a force of about 300 regular soldiers, 400 militiamen and, about 600 natives. William was chosen to replace the American flag with the Union Jack over the captured fort.



John Chisholm  
1784-1861



William Chisholm  
1788-1842

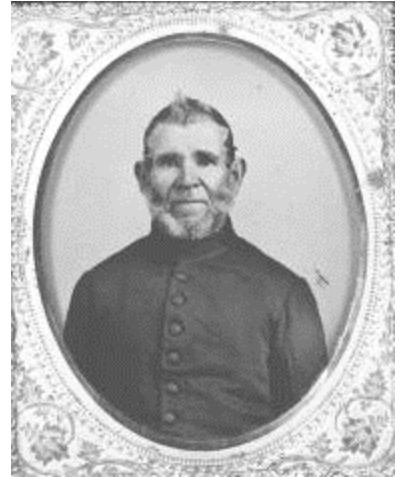
On the morning of the Battle of Queenston Heights (13 October 1812) the 1<sup>st</sup> Flank Company was stationed on the brow of the escarpment firing down on the invaders when General Brock was mortally wounded. Debatable legend has it that Brock’s last words were “Push on, brave York Volunteers”. The battle was fought over the property of George Sr.’s brother, John, who had been granted Lot 2 Niagara Township as a Loyalist. All three sons went on to become Lieutenant Colonels and commanded regiments of the Gore Militia which replaced the York Militia in 1818.

John had various businesses in Burlington and was Collector of Customs at Burlington Bay. He married Sarah Davis, daughter of William Davis and Hannah Philipse, and had seven children. They are both buried at St Luke’s Cemetery in Burlington.

William also had various businesses and founded what is now the Town of Oakville, Ontario, in 1827. In 1812 he married Rebecca Silverthorn, daughter of John Silverthorn and Esther Corwin. They had eleven children. Both are buried at Oakville Cemetery.

George Jr. took over the family farm on the north shore of Burlington Bay but lost it soon after his father's death in 1842. He had pledged it as security for bank loans obtained by his brother William for a power project. When the Oakville Hydraulic Company failed, the banks foreclosed on the property.

I am very proud to own my great-great grandfather's sword and musket. Family legend has it that he carried the sword at Queenston Heights. The musket was presented to him by Sir Francis Bond Head, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, for his services during the 1837 Upper Canada Rebellion. While carrying the musket at the Battle of Montgomery's Tavern a rebel shot at him. The musket ball is still embedded in the stock.



George Chisholm Jr.  
1792 - 1872

George Jr. married Eliza McCarter, daughter of Oziah McCarter and Abigail Land. George Jr. and Eliza had seven children and are buried at St Paul's Presbyterian Church Cemetery in Burlington.



Chisholm Family Sword

George Chisholm

Ed. Note: To differentiate the two Georges, Sr. & Jr. are used in the article, although not necessarily used by family.

# *AROUND THE SOCIETY*



## Membership Report – August 2012

**O**ur total membership year-to-date numbers 212, including twenty-three new members so far this year. Welcome to our new members - we look forward to your participation.

*Jackie Bennett, Lorraine Bird, Kathy Cunningham, Don Decoursey and Lena Ruehle, Sara Douglas-Murray, Ross Erdis, Dave Gittings, Scott Hannah, Reiner Jaakson, Wendy Janisse, Averil and Joe Jany, Andrew and Carol Kennedy, Doug Mabee, Evelyn Ortwein, Alyssa Reynolds, Irene and Bruce Richards, Linda Rothnay, Karen and Bruce Slayer, Yvonne Verlinden, Ann Weeks, Stanley and Betty Yeo, Eileen Za, Steve Zazulyk.*

**However, there remain some forty-four existing members who have not renewed so far this year. If you have overlooked your renewal, please let us know that you intend to remain on our membership list.**

Andrea Stewart

If you wish to submit photos for the Print newsletter, please ensure they are **high resolution** – not email quality. Otherwise they will not reproduce well. Editor.

## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – December 2011

The picture was taken on the west side of the “Sixteen Mile Creek” and shows the ceremony for the opening of the Aberdeen Bridge in 1895. This was a swing bridge, unlike the solid structure that now overlooks the “16” on Lakeshore Road. The stone building to the right is the “Granary”, built in 1855 by Peter McDougald and William Romain and, the only stone warehouse of its type surviving on its original site in Ontario.

### Books For Sale

Available for gift giving, for the history buff in the family or, just yourself!

<b>Oakville &amp; the Sixteen</b>	<i>Members - \$35.00</i> <i>Non-Members - \$50.00</i>
<b>Oakville: A Small Town</b>	<i>Members - \$10.00</i> <i>Non-Members - \$12.00</i>
<b>Oakville Harbour &amp; Bronte Harbour</b>	<i>Members - \$10.00</i> <i>Non-Members - \$12.00</i>
<b>Oakville: Street Names and Landscapes</b>	<i>Members - \$35.00</i> <i>Non-Members - \$42.00</i>
<b>Halton’s Heritage: Wm. Halton &amp; Halton County (New this year)</b>	<i>Hard Cover - \$55.00</i> <i>Soft Cover - \$42.00</i>
<b>Ever Faithful</b>	<i>\$25.00</i>
<b>A History of the Lorne Scots</b>	<i>Members - \$10.00</i> <i>Non-Members - \$12.00</i>
<b>Old Oakville</b>	<i>\$25.00</i>

*All prices quoted include taxes.*

**Just a phone call away – we will happily meet with you at our offices when convenient to you. Cash or cheque only. No credit cards please.**

Mary Davidson



## Doors Open Celebrates Five Years in Oakville

**D**oors Open Days provides free access to buildings not normally open to the public. The first Doors Open Day took place in France in 1984, and the concept has spread to other places in Europe, North America, Australia and elsewhere. Doors Open Days promotes architecture and built heritage to as wide an audience as possible within and beyond the country's borders. It is an opportunity to discover hidden architectural gems and to see behind doors that are rarely open to the public for free.

In 2011 Oakville sites experienced 7,000 visits, thirty-five percent coming from out-of-town; the remaining sixty-five percent from Oakville. The event is managed by a committee comprised of non-profit partners from across the community and supported by over one hundred volunteers. The small budget for the event is financed by The Town of Oakville and generous sponsors from the community. This year we are pleased to thank the following sponsors: Revera Retirement Living (representing Churchill Place, Trafalgar Lodge and The Kensington), Strickland Mateljan Design Associates, Accountant Charles Havill, Olsen Europe, L'Occitane, Flower Duo and Fortino's.

Our fifth annual Doors Open Oakville will take place **Saturday, September 29**. Details of the event will be found in our brochure or in our ads in the Oakville Beaver.

If you think you would like to be involved in hosting this exciting event, or if you would like further details of our participating sites, please contact **Andrea Stewart** at the Oakville Historical Society (905) 844-2695.

Andrea Stewart

### Thomas House

**A**n incredibly hot and humid summer seemed to affect the turnout of visitors to the Thomas House this year. So far (mid way through August) - 2249 .

On the bright side however, we have some excellent new interpreters who gave of their time – Yvonne Verlinden, Hilary Scott, Shona Rochefort, Eileen Za, and Elizabeth Pereira – thank you ladies!

Of course, we also thank our regular interpreters and I want to name you because you are the back-bone of our organization –Wendy Belcher, Phillip Brimacombe,

Heather Davis, Carol Gall, Dave Hutchison, Madlyn Kayer, Pat Mack, Linda North, Margaret Simmonds, and Lindsay Thompson.

We still have the **Harvest Bake Sale** to come on Saturday September 29<sup>th</sup>, with the Thomas House open for that one day only, to coincide with Doors Open, this year in Oakville. The call goes out to all who bake, preserve - send us your cakes, pies, cookies, scones, breads, jams, jellies as these are greatly appreciated by our customers on the day – we sold out by 2pm last year! We will accept your goodies either on the Friday 28<sup>th</sup>, or early Saturday morning. The sale is from 10am to 4pm.

### Investigation #1

*“Things that go bump in the night” department.* Well, actually 3 pm or thereabouts on a scorching hot day in July! Three women came into the Thomas House and were standing in the centre of the room. Suddenly one of the women moved quickly to the door and asked if there was a “presence” in the house. I had never heard that mentioned. She said it was a male and not too happy that people were in the house. Also that he had died in the house and was connected with the number 12. The second woman said that she had heard something loud as well, as did the first woman. They said that they weren’t frightened but were more comfortable by the door. I told them I would pass on the information as it’s the first I’d heard of anyone here!

### Investigation #2

Another day in July brought us a phone message from a resident on Chisholm Street. Their neighbour was having his driveway done. He had removed the surface of the drive and underneath, he found two hidden secret rooms. Question was, could these rooms have something to do with the Underground Railroad or rum running in Oakville’s past?”

Society members Susan Wells, Mary Davidson and, Margaret Godefroy, jumped into the car and drove across the bridge to Chisholm St. and, at that moment the owner of the driveway was at his front door. When we questioned about the rooms, he gave us a small smile and said, “coal bunker”. The concrete-lined hole right up against the foundation of the house, built in about 1960 (although it is an old street so might have had another structure on it previously), had a blocked-up hole that gave access to the basement furnace. We all had a good laugh!

Mary Davidson

We've been **Tweeted**: "Entripy, Shelli Brar: "Just took a tour of Thomas House in downtown Oakville. Loved seeing how people lived in the 1800's." <http://t.co/6HdXKezA>

## [Society Offices](#)

**W**e are continuing to open the offices and museum of the Oakville Historical Society on King Street, from 1:30 to 4:00pm every third Sunday in the month. We would be delighted to welcome you to our beautiful headquarters by the Volunteers' Fountain if you are taking a stroll in the vicinity.

Phil Brimacombe, Stewart Sherriff

**Please take time to look at our advertiser's insert.**  
Their sponsorship has been the reason we have our COLOUR December edition. It would be appreciated if you were to stop by and thank them.

## [Oakville Historical Society](#)

**H**ave you ever wondered about the history of the OHS building? For the long term members, you lived it but, for those just starting out, here is a brief history of "the Cottages".

In 1953, sisters Dr. Juliet Chisholm and Hazel Mathews left the Customs House at Erchless to move into cottages they designed themselves on the same property. Each lady had definite ideas of structure - e.g. Juliet wished hers to have 'Normandy' floors, hence the stone tile flooring (she had served overseas with the Canadian Army in WWII.) There were two heating systems: forced air and hot water.

In 1992 the Oakville Historical Society signed an agreement with the Town of Oakville and took over these properties. Changes were made using wreckers' materials to keep a 'vintage' look and the two cottages were incorporated into one building.

Fifteen members of the Society were involved in the renovation over a period of three years.

## Garden Guerillas

Averil and Joe Jany – and their daughter Susan, along with Margaret Godefroy have been doing great work on our jungle of a yard at the Offices. Things are being cut back, plants thinned out and moved, weeds sent packing, order is returning – now we are just waiting for the temperature to go down so we can introduce some new plants. The hot and humid weather has been a bit of a drawback this summer, so we are hoping come September we will see more of you out on Friday mornings at 9am. We will be calling for a crew to help clear leaves in the fall (yes, it IS coming).

Also, a big Thank You to Jamie Macrae who fixed the broken seat on the picnic table at the side of the Offices – it is a lovely spot now for a coffee or lunch.



Susan, Averil and Joe Jany  
Working the “Secret Garden”

Mary Davidson

## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. Who is this public figure?
2. What office did he hold?
3. What were the circumstances regarding this photograph?

~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**DECEMBER 2012**



**Volume 46: Number 4**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**CHRISTMAS PARTY: 6:00PM – 9:00PM (110 King Street West) ALL MEMBERS are invited to the Society for the “Annual Christmas Party”. Enjoy a scrumptuous spread provided by the Friends.**

Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**Christmas at the Thomas House: 2pm to 5pm. Bring the whole family - sing carols around the fireplace. Donations are welcome. The Erchless Museum is having Tea and a tour the same day.**

Wednesday, March 20th, 2013

**OHS Annual General Meeting and Pot Luck Supper, starting at 6:30pm at St. John’s United Church.**

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

### 2013

Wednesday, February 20th  
Wednesday, May 15th

**Speaker: TBA**

**Speaker: Maureen Jennings, Author - Murdoch Mysteries! and more. (There will be a \$5 charge for this meeting.)**

Wednesday, October 16th

**Speaker: Mr. John Kenty, author of Canada Cycle & Motor: The CCM Story-Bikes in Summer, Skates in Winter!**

Wednesday, November 20th

**Speaker: TBA**

**All programs will be held at St. John’s United Church (Lusk Hall – Randall & Dunn) and begin at 7:30pm, except the March 20th program (6:30pm for Pot Luck, 7:30 for AGM).**

\*\*

**COVER PICTURE:** Celebrating an Olde Tyme Christmas in the Thomas House.  
Photo credit: **Yacoub Husseini – [treasurethemoment.ca](http://treasurethemoment.ca)**  
Make-up Artist: Alex C.  
Advertising insert artwork and compilation - Carolyn Naismith.



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## President's Message

Christmas is almost upon us and, to help the season along, plan to attend our annual Members' Wine and Cheese set for Friday, 7 December. This is a very popular and busy event.

Our Ghost Walks continued to be popular this year. Even the storm on the Monday before Hallowe'en didn't stop us. A large group of about 30 male and female Cubs and Leaders from Ecole Ste Marie made up most of the early walk and had a great time despite the wind. Our thanks to Wendy Belcher and Mary Davidson and their dedicated group for all their work on this great event. It also is a major source of income for the Society.

Speaking of income, we continue to be in real need of a new Treasurer. If you know of someone who might be willing to take this on, please contact me.

Thanks are due as well to Andrea Stewart and her group of volunteers for all their work on Doors Open 2012. Although it ran for only one day this year, it was a very busy day. 378 visitors toured the Thomas House – a record for one day.

The redesign of our website is continuing and the new version should go live in the early spring.

Our May Speaker's Night features Maureen Jennings. Ms Jennings is the writer behind the very popular Murdoch Mysteries.

We have started the move into our new storage area at Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre (QEPCCC) - the storage/archives room are in the S/E corner of the office building. We will be able to set up some more research space and a digitization facility there.

If you haven't seen the changes to the Cenotaph in George's Square, go have a look. An entrance walkway has been added, the granite deck around the original monument has been replaced and a new wall has been added behind. The new wall has the names of those who died during active service carved on it. Three names are on it: two from the War of 1812 and that of Colonel Geoff Parker, killed in Afghanistan two years ago. I sincerely hope no more names will be added. Metal plaques list the names of those who have served on UN peacekeeping or NATO operations. To be eligible, the person must have lived in Oakville when they joined up.

If I don't see you at the Christmas Party, I hope you and your family have a great holiday season.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

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George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

## The Sound of the Hickory Stick

As a retired Oakville Elementary School teacher I have always had a nostalgia for the old one-room schoolhouses that dotted the landscape of our province in days gone by. Fortunately a significant number of these wonderful structures live on, many of them surviving as residences lovingly restored by their owners. In this article I am going to concentrate on our community's first schoolhouse, the Oakville Common School.

Let us flashback in time to 1836. In that year, nine years after William Chisholm began construction on the townsite of Oakville at the mouth of the Sixteen Mile Creek, the Common School was established. It was situated in the Meeting House that stood at the present site of the Centennial Library on Navy Street. To the north was "Frenchtown" where a number of workers employed in the shipyard at the top of Navy Street on the "Navy Flats" lived. To the south was Baker's Livery Stable. Hazel Mathews in her book, "Oakville and the Sixteen", describes the structure as follows: "the neat frame building of the meetinghouse, which was used as a schoolhouse, was an advantage over the structures of rough logs usual for schools at the period. Under the low windows of the three sides of the room there were desks of slanted boards suspended on hinges which could be let down when religious services were held (during the week the pulpit was relegated to a corner of the room). Only those who were being taught penmanship used the desks. For other lessons children sat on long benches facing the master's desk, each pupil's equipment consisting of a slate, pencil, and the odd book".

At this time in Upper Canada, communities like Oakville would get together to provide a suitable school building and, provide funds for the teacher's salary and supplies. Since it was confirmed in 1836 that there would be a minimum of 20 pupils, the Oakville Common School was eligible for a government grant. The local voters elected 3 trustees who were entrusted to examine the teacher's qualifications, engage or dismiss him, lay out the course of study, select textbooks, and set up student discipline guidelines. We are indeed grateful to Justus Williams, a prominent local merchant, for spearheading the establishment of Oakville's first school.

The first schoolmaster at the Oakville Common School was William Tassie. He was born in Dublin, Ireland and educated there. Upon immigrating to Upper Canada he began his teaching career in Nelson Township west of Oakville. It is said that he,

"believed in the rod as did all Old Country teachers". Mr. Tassie eventually became a renowned educator throughout what was then known as Upper Canada.

What was a typical day like in the life of William Tassie and the pupils at the Oakville Common School? Similar to today, the school commenced classes at 9 o'clock. With the schoolbell ringing across the valley of the Sixteen Mile Creek, the children would enter the schoolhouse in a straight line, take their seats and, begin with the Lord's Prayer. A firm clip on the ear was not an unusual punishment for any student who was slow in following the schoolmaster's instructions! Then, facing the Union Jack and a picture of Queen Victoria, the class sang, "God Save the Queen", while Mr. Tassie played the piano that had been generously donated by a benefactor in the village. An arithmetic lesson started the day, presumably designed on the hopeful assumption that the pupils were as wide awake and mentally alert as they would be at any time throughout the remainder of the school day. The arithmetic lesson was followed at 10:30 by a 15 minute recess. Lessons in reading and literature followed.



William Tassie

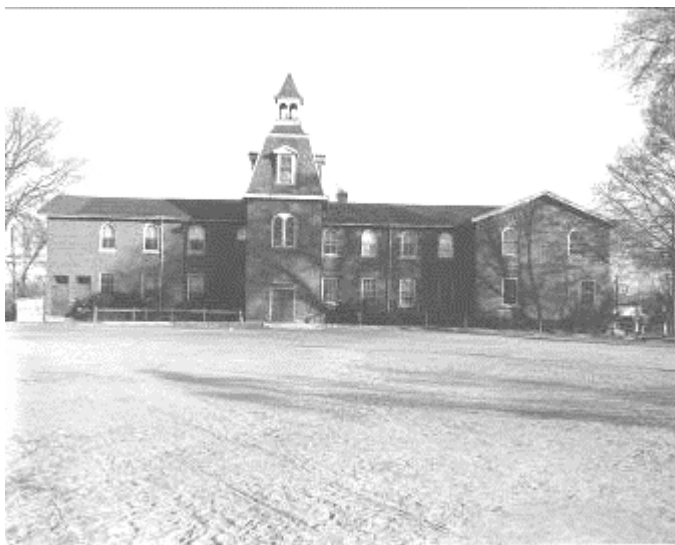
As the Oakville Common School was situated at the centre of Oakville, the pupils went home for lunch between noon and 2 o'clock. Another arithmetic lesson followed lunch with a reading lesson after the afternoon recess at 3 o'clock. If the teacher was so inclined he would provide opportunities for the students to enrich their educational experiences by engaging in music and art activities. Once or twice, a week history and geography was taught. However, the major emphasis was on "The 3 R's" as there was a concern at this time that it was vital that the younger generation learn their sums and work to become functionally literate. Many of their parents had not had the opportunity to attend school whether it was in Canada or in the Old Country. As a result illiteracy was very common among the adult population. The pupils were dismissed at 5 o'clock. It was a long day for Mr. Tassie and the children!

Rote-learning was regarded as a "mental muscle builder" and children memorized verses and multiplication tables, capital cities, the dates of battles and the words in the speller. In writing class for example, pupils spent hours making pot hooks and slanted lines before tackling the art of making letters. They practised on small, wooden-framed slates, with slate pencils that squeaked in unison throughout the Common School



classroom. In the one-room schools the schoolmaster was responsible for teaching pupils from Grade 1 to Grade 8. There was relatively little time for teacher-guided explanations. The older students were frequently called upon to assist the younger ones. Also, the schoolmaster's time was occupied in preparing quill pens, ruling loose sheets of paper, and setting copies.

In cooler weather the students assisted in bringing in the wood. It was supplied by the fathers who were employed in local establishments like Joseph Milbourne's Distillery at the mouth of the Sixteen, Melancthon Simpson's Shipyard just north of the Common School, the Chisholm Sawmill and Gristmill at the head of navigation on the Sixteen or, in one of the increasing number of hotels and shops lining both sides of Colborne Street (now Lakeshore Road) between Navy Street and Trafalgar Road. Other fathers were schooner captains and sailors on one of the many wooden cargo schooners and steam passenger vessels that journeyed from Oakville to other ports on the lake. The mothers at this time worked out of the home.



Oakville Public (Common) School  
1850 - 1960

Just like today, the students at the Oakville Common School often got into mischief! One common trick played on the schoolmaster involved the older boys bringing gunpowder to the school. They would secretly place it in the hollow at the top of the pot-bellied stove at the back of the classroom. When the heater became red hot the gunpowder went off with a muffled "WOOF", leaving a startled teacher and many amused students! Another favourite pastime with children who attended the Oakville Common School according to "Oakville and the Sixteen" was

excavating the foundation of the schoolhouse on the west side where it was perched atop the steep bank of the Sixteen. Frequently, Aboriginal bones and artifacts were found. Another activity was digging under the foundations of the school in the hope that the structure would eventually topple into the marsh below with a little push to get it started! It is said that the marsh itself was the home of many long, black water snakes as well as

mud turtles which the boys would frequently let loose in the schoolhouse. The girls reportedly went crazy! Then a boy would "selflessly" volunteer to catch the poor creature and return it to the marsh thereby affording him an extra recess of 15 to 20 minutes.

The older children often lost school time in the warmer months as they would work on the farms in surrounding Trafalgar Township to provide needed extra income for their families in Oakville. In one case, an 8 year old boy missed a significant amount of school as he was engaged as the cook on board the cargo schooner "Albacore". Such stories were not uncommon. There were epidemics of the usual childhood maladies like whooping cough, measles and scarlett fever that would clear a schoolroom for days on end due to the relative lack of quick and effective medical attention at the time. Poor water quality and the fact that the town dump was situated in the marsh right below the schoolhouse did not help matters. The bigger boys, frequently restless and bored, were often absent, being otherwise occupied on hunting or fishing expeditions up the valley of the Sixteen. Some thoroughly enjoyed stirring the pot. One boy who was reported as having been strapped, apparently said "thank you" when the ordeal was over. When asked why, the young man replied with bravado that his parents had told him to say thank you for everything he got! On occasion a newly-recruited male teacher, often only 3 or 4 years older than his new charges, found himself in the position of having to fight one of the older boys in the school to establish their authority as the schoolmaster.

The days of the Oakville Common School ended in early 1850 when the newly-constructed Central School was opened immediately north of the old schoolhouse. The Common School became a garage for Oakville's first fire engine. The red brick Central School was expanded several times over its 109 year history and for many years incorporated both the elementary and grammar school students. The venerable old building holding so many memories for generations of Oakville residents, many of whom are still living in Oakville today, was demolished by Lakeview Demolition Company in 1960 for only \$425. Hopefully a similar fate does not await the old Oakville-Trafalgar High School structure on Reynolds Street. Replacing the old Central School was New Central School that opened in 1959. The bell from the tower of the old Central School was transferred to the new school where it still rests today.

Perhaps in future newsletters Society members will be interested in writing articles expanding on what I have written about the old Common School. It would be fascinating to read about the histories and anecdotes associated with Oakville's other old schools like St. Mary's on King Street (demolished in the 1980's), Brantwood (formerly the Allan Street School), Westwood, Linbrook, Maple Grove and of course Oakville-

Trafalgar High School. I know that articles on St. Mildred's Lightbourn School and Appleby College would also prove to be valuable additions to our newsletter archives.

Phillip Brimacombe

### Christmas Presents

Looking for Christmas presents? The Oakville Historical Society has small and larger prints of "Olde Oakville" suitable for framing, by artists Don Sutherland and Michael Hitchcox. We invite you to drop in Tuesday or Thursday afternoons - 1:00 am to 4:30 pm - and have a look! Books? We have a fine selection of books related to Oakville's history and, if you have someone who loves maps, we have maps for sale that show all the sunken ships in Lake Ontario. Support your Society and give someone a gift they will love.

June Hitchcox

### Books For Sale

Available for gift giving, for the history buff in the family or, just yourself!

**Oakville & the Sixteen**

*Members - \$35.00*  
*Non-Members - \$50.00*

**Oakville: A Small Town**

*Members - \$10.00*  
*Non-Members - \$12.00*

**Oakville Harbour & Bronte Harbour**

*Members - \$10.00*  
*Non-Members - \$12.00*

**Oakville: Street Names and Landscapes**

*Members - \$35.00*  
*Non-Members - \$42.00*

**Halton's Heritage: Wm. Halton  
& Halton County (New this year)**

*Hard Cover - \$55.00*  
*Soft Cover - \$42.00*

**Ever Faithful**

*\$25.00*

**A History of the Lorne Scots**

*Members - \$10.00*  
*Non-Members - \$12.00*

**Old Oakville**

*\$25.00*

*All prices quoted include taxes. Cash or cheque only. NO CREDIT CARDS please.*

# *AROUND THE SOCIETY*



## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – September 2012

**I**t was all about “Percy the Penguin”. In 1974, then Oakville Mayor Harry Barrett had a problem. Fritz the Cat and the Three Musketeers had taken “Percy the Penguin” and demanded a ransom – Mayor Barrett had to ride a bike through the downtown mall at high noon, against a town bylaw. Bending to the demands he rode a tricycle along the mall and Percy the garbage bin was eventually restored to his job – collecting refuse.

Lance Naismith

## Erratum

In the last issue, the following members had their names spelt wrong - Steve Zazulyk and Yvonne Verlinden. We offer our apologies.

Do you have the writing bug and maybe a historical story or two in you? We are always looking for material. Maximum - 2 or 3 pages single space typed. If you have pictures, we can always use them – we’ll scan originals.

## Presentation – War of 1812, Incorporated Militia

Your Historical Society was thrilled 17th October 2012 to introduce to a full St. John's Church hall, a very talented and enthusiastic speaker, Richard Feltoe, author and archivist.

Mr. Feltoe, Curator and Corporate Archivist for the Redpath Sugar Museum, is also a living history re-enactor who, with passion and humour, told of strategies and battles of the “Incorporated Militia of Upper Canada” during the War of 1812-1815.

Mr. Feltoe brought with him arms, cooking implements, toiletry kits and uniforms that his family constructs for the battle fields. And speaking of family; if you are part of his, whether a wife, child or grandchild, you become part of war re-enactments.

Thank you Mr. Feltoe for a talk illustrated with anecdotes and detail.



Greg Munz with Richard Feltoe (R)

Susan Wells

## Membership Renewal

Just a reminder that your membership renewal for 2013 becomes due on 31st of December. We are enclosing a membership form for your completion and return.

Your prompt renewal helps the Society in so many ways. The Newsletter you are reading is supported in part by your dues, along with the presentations and events and, the Walks (Ghost and Historical). Although we depend greatly on volunteer help, there are costs that must be met and your membership dues go a long way in keeping the Society a viable entity in the development of Oakville and keeper of the past.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Andrea Stewart



## Thomas House stars in Sheridan College video

Students from Sheridan College did a Christmas oriented video on Santa Claus called “Deck the Malls”. The narrator used the Thomas House to read a poem and the inside of the Thomas House was used as a backdrop – fireplace in action.

Go to the following link to view the Youtube.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W\\_2gX0\\_jwDg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_2gX0_jwDg)

And, here is a behind the scenes look at the production.





Katie Breen, James Garcia, Brian Oliver,  
Stefano Vito

### Society Member Honoured

With military precision, Mayor Rob Burton led the charge in a secret mission – to honour Harry Barrett at his 87<sup>th</sup> birthday party at Seasons Restaurant. He announced Oakville Council’s decision to name the town’s network of waterfront parks as the “Harry Barrett Waterfront Park System”. Before, during and after his 13 year tenure as mayor, Harry developed the Town’s waterfront holdings through the Planning Act, something future generations will fully enjoy. Thanks Harry for a job well done!



Lance Naismith

### Doors Open – Results

We are pleased to report a successful and fun day for the fifth annual Doors Open event, thanks to the support of our volunteers and sponsors. Overall attendance for Oakville was calculated to be around 3,600 visitors. The Thomas House saw some 378 visitors, our offices 116, Erchless 325 and the Old Post Office some 421.

Fifty-two people accompanied Phillip Brimacombe on his tour of historic Oakville and Jamie Macrae welcomed 292 aboard The Anitra.

Local restaurants and stores no doubt welcomed increased business since 24% of our survey respondents did some shopping while in town. The same percentage also reported having visited a restaurant.

Twenty-five or more Society volunteers spent the day welcoming visitors as well as attending the harvest table at the Thomas House.

Anna Laplante from Burlington won the draw for the \$250 gift certificate from our sponsor, Olsen Europe. This draw was taken from those who took the trouble to fill in the survey given to all the attendees at the various sites. Congratulations to Anna.

Andrea Stewart

*Society offices are open every third Sunday of the month – 1:30pm to 4:00pm*

### Scenes Around the Society



Eileen Za, Lindsay Thompson at the Thomas House.

## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. Do you recognize who this is?
  2. In front of what store was this taken?
  3. What was the relationship between the store and the person?
- ~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

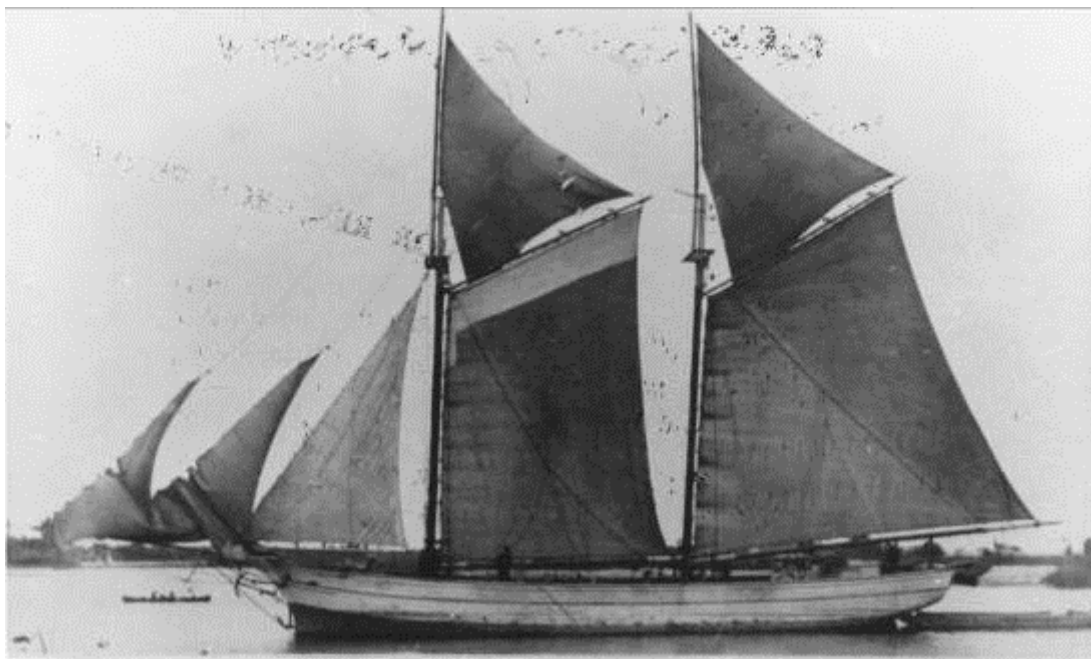
**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**



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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 2013**



**Volume 47: Number 1**



## SPECIAL EVENTS

Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> March

OHS Annual General Meeting and Pot Luck Supper starting at 6:30pm at St. John's United Church.

Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> May

Thomas House opens for the Season (Victoria Day weekend).

Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> June

Mayor's Annual Picnic hosted by the Society at Lakeshore Park, Oakville from Noon to 4:30pm.

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

2013

Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> May

Speaker: Maureen Jennings, Author - Murdoch Mysteries! (There will be a \$5 charge for this meeting).

Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> June

Speaker: Don Smith, Author, speaking about his sequel to "Sacred Feathers" – called "Mississauga Portraits" – highlighting 6 important Ojibwa Chiefs. NOTE: The meeting will be held in the Auditorium at Central Library, Navy Street, Oakville. The time is 7pm to 8:30pm.

Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> October

Speaker: John Kenty, author of Canada Cycle & Motor: The CCM Story - Bikes in Summer, Skates in Winter!

Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> November

Speaker: Tom Bochsler & Bob Chambers – The presentation will describe the visual impact of two experienced photographers and, covers the gamut from the ancient equipment of the 50's to the digital photography of today.

All programs will be held at St. John's United Church (Lusk Hall – Randall & Dunn) and begin at 7:30pm, except the March 13<sup>th</sup> program (6:30pm for Pot Luck, 7:30 for AGM).

\*\*

**COVER PICTURE:** Stonehooker schooner "Newsboy" - 1910

Advertising insert artwork and compilation by Carolyn Naismith.



Atex Printing & Graphics -Proudly putting quality images on paper! - 2070 Speers Road #1, Oakville, 905-465-3220 <http://atexdigitalprint.com/>

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This issue of the Society's newsletter is the last to be created by Editor Lance Naismith. Lance has been editor for some years having taken it over from Harry Buxton. Lance tells me that he would like to move on to some other projects dealing with his family history. Under his leadership the newsletter has acquired several advertisers, has introduced the use of colour in some issues and has split to two versions of the same issue. The online version is somewhat amplified and contains more photos. Fortunately, we don't have to search for a replacement editor. Vice President Susan Wells has agreed to take it on. On behalf of the Society I would like to thank Lance for his hard work during his tenure as editor and welcome Susan to the position.

Over the past few months your Society has been increasing its exposure to the community. One method has been through opening the Thomas House on more days. After an absence of some years, the Thomas House reopened at Christmas this year. It was also open for Family Day on 18 February. Both opening days were well attended. We are also working with the Oakville Museum to open for more school events. This year we'll be keeping it open on weekends in September because of increased traffic in Lakeside Park. Sadly, the Thomas House is starting to look a bit run down. The do-list includes painting the outside, repairing the hearth and repairing some of the shutters. If you would like to help with any of these jobs, please let me know. The building is also settling somewhat at the northwest corner. We've been agitating to have the stone-faced bank behind the house moved back to improve airflow and once that's done we'll be able to have a better look at what's required to repair the foundations. For a building that's 184 years old, it's not in bad shape.

2013 marks the twentieth anniversary of agreement between the Town of Oakville and the Society. I'm very happy to say that, thanks to our dedicated volunteers, the Society is very healthy. At a budget meeting last week it was noted that our actual income for 2012 was within \$100 of our projected income. We are, however, very much in need of a treasurer and have been beating the bushes for some time. If you have any suggestions, we would very much like to hear them.

I hope to see many of you at our Annual General Meeting set for 13 March at St John's. As usual, the meeting starts with a pot-luck dinner at 6:30.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

Archive Hours \* Tues & Thurs –  
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

## The Mosquito Fleet

It was a mild, sunny May morning in 1900 when a passenger aboard the Hamilton Steamship Company's "Turbinia", en route from Hamilton to Toronto, wrote this observation of the Lake Ontario shoreline from Port Nelson to Port Credit.

*"I could observe long lines of rough-looking schooners anchored offshore. It was a calm morning and the water was crystal clear. They lie there with their patched and blackened sails, brailed up, swinging in apparent idleness at their anchors while at some distance from them 2 or 3 solitary-looking men in a scow angled with long poles, which they thrust down in the water. The vessels were mostly scow-built, that is, flat at both ends and schooner-rigged with, I am told, a capacity of 2 to 10 ton of stone. On account of their heaviness when loaded with stone, they carry long raking masts and an immense spread of canvas, which is all right as long as they are loaded, but makes them unsteady when running light in a gale.*

*Such is the so-called "Mosquito Fleet", a collection of over 100 stonehooking schooners engaged in a commercial activity unique on the Great Lakes and for that matter, in the entire Dominion of Canada."*

Such a scene was repeated countless times during the stonehooking era. From the 1820's to the 1920's these craft worked the lake bottom between "The Highlands" (Scarborough Bluffs) in the east to Port Nelson in the west. The main stonehooking ports were Port Whitby, Frenchman's Bay, Port Credit, Oakville and Bronte.

Dundas Shale, a grey blue stone, was retrieved from the inshore. It formed in layers which, when worked on, cracked into rectangles. Among the Dundas Shale were the Glacial Drift boulders of granite ("Hardheads") left by the last ice age. Local stone, being soft red shale and sandstone, was not much good except for filling cribs, so the Bronte and Oakville stonehooker fleets quarried the lakeshore easterly where blue limestone provided superb building material.

Our first structures in Ontario were built from wood, soil and stone. However the constant threat of fire soon made stone or brick construction a necessity in the building trade. Stone as a building material became more fashionable after 1840. It was the common building foundation that found the most utilitarian use for stone.

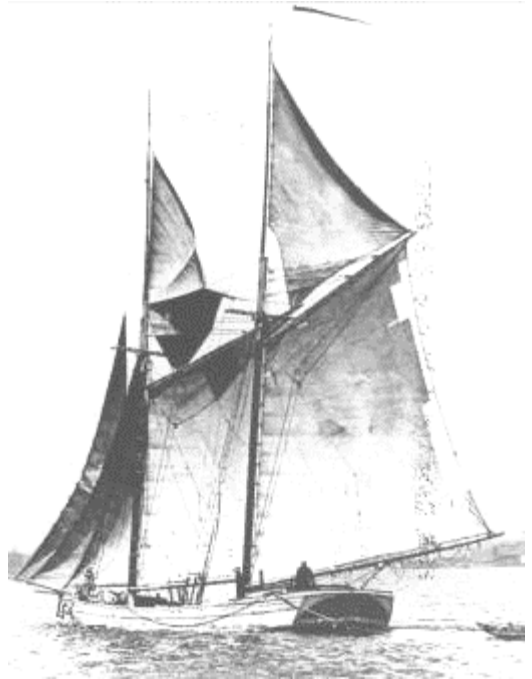
A half-century of clearing land had exposed shale - the perfect foundation stone for the growing number of stone and masonry houses in our province. Along the shores of Lake Ontario blocks of shale were available, not just from bedrock land deposits, but from the lake bottom. Submerged stone, retrieved from Lake Ontario, could also be used for roads, sidewalks and pavements.

There were 3 methods of securing the stone - quarrying, raking and "blind stavling". Quarrying involved going ashore and breaking away pieces from the low cliffs with sledgehammers or picking stone off the beaches. When raking they moved along within a short distance of the shore, where they could see the lake bottom and pick up the stones they find with long-handled rakes or

hooks. When stone was scarcer, they moved out into the deeper water and dragged their hooks along the bottom, putting in all they could catch. This is called "blind stavling".

However, if the wind stiffened, as it usually did mid-morning, it would discolour the water so much that raking soon became impossible, while rough water made blind stavling hazardous.

In Bronte, for example, the foundation of many 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings were made of shale including the beautiful old stone building still standing at the southeast corner of Bronte Road and Marine Drive. Many of the old walls lining the estates along Lakeshore Road East, as well as the foundation of the barn at Appleby College, are examples of the use of lake stone.



Rapid City - 1910

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a coastal and international trade for small schooners carrying grain and wood products. When these lines of trade languished with the coming of the railway, many crews along the lakeshore became active in the stone trade. As arduous as it was, the stonehooking trade attracted many "landlubbers" as well as seasoned mariners who were anxious to partake of the profits. A boat had to be secured, any type of boat that would float with cargos of stone. As scow models were the easiest and cheapest to build, they became the mainstay of the "Mosquito Fleet". It was said that a local shoemaker, carpenter and a blacksmith were attracted to the trade. A writer at the time described the scow-building mania as follows:

*"McCurdy laid by his lap-stone,  
McAuliffe threw down his plane,  
George Johnson gave up his horse-shoeing  
For they all had scow on the brain."*

The stonehookers brought the sand, stone and gravel to the Queen's Wharf at the foot of Bathurst Street or the West Market Slip in Toronto. The stone was piled in rectangles, one toise was 6 feet, by 12 feet by 3 feet high, 216 cubic feet weighing 10 tons.

In the 1840's the stonehooking fleet was carrying 43,000 tons per year into Toronto. One observer noted that the specially-built scow schooners had low freeboards and the hold was only 4 feet 6 inches deep on average. This made for easier "tossing" aboard the stone, handling and trimming below. He added, "They were built by the mile and cut into lengths as needed."

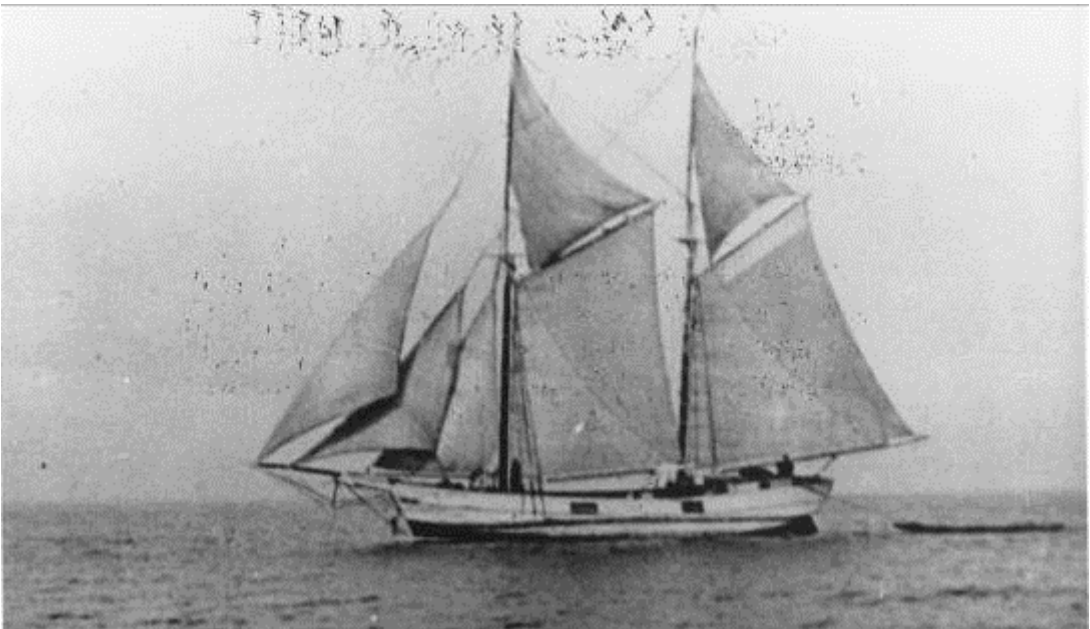
Perhaps the most beautiful stonehookers were built by Lem Dorland at Bronte between 1880 and 1885. They included "Madeline", "Newsboy", "Rapid City", "Northwest" and "Maple Leaf". Sam Adam's ledgers from his blacksmith shop in Bronte still exist. They refer to the iron work for the Bronte stonehookers. Some entries include: "ironing deadeyes' \$3.00", "12 chainplates \$4.50" and 2 travellers \$1.50."

The "Homing Birds" referred to the stonehooking men in more modest craft who guided their scows along the lakeshore and then returned to port to fill up the deck of their stonehooker. After as many as 5 weeks loading in port they would sail to Toronto to unload. The "Far Flyers" used better-built vessels often built at Bronte and designed specifically for the trade. They would venture anywhere for sand, gravel, hardheads, cobbles, pavers, builders or crib stone.



The "Maude S" was another local stonehooker. Her stem, keel and stern port came from the Gooderham yacht "Geraldine". She was also one of the "Honey Carriers" carrying manure from the 1000 horses owned by the Toronto Street Railway from Toronto to farmers' fields at Clarkson, Oakville, Bronte, Grimsby and Jordan Harbour.

On the same day Oakville was incorporated as a town in 1857, the United Government of Canada West and Canada East enacted the "3 Rod Law". This prohibited the harvesting of stone within 3 perches (1 perch equals 17.5 feet) of the low water mark in the Counties of York, Peel and Halton. Farmers whose land fronted Lake Ontario were especially upset when they saw their shoreline eroded as a result of the stonehookers' activities. Even cemeteries, like the one in Bronte, suffered from such erosion. The statute did not however eliminate inshore stonehooking. Instead, it encouraged the stationing of a lookout in the rigging to watch for approaching government vessels or landowners. Even 40 years later statistics show that between 2500 and 5000 toise of stone were removed from the lake bottom every year.



Lillian – Last of the Stonehookers  
1925

The introduction of concrete precipitated the decline of stonehooking and improved quarrying methods, as well as better road transport, helped it along. Around

1900 the gradual introduction of steam power at the inland quarries, together with the introduction of better-quality Portland Cement, led to concrete becoming the preferred building material.

The last stonehooker to see service was the old "Lillian" which had survived over 70 years on the lake after having been built at Henderson, New York in 1856. She was transferred to the Hamilton Sea Cadets as a training vessel in 1929. Another old timer, "Northwest", was operating out of Midland, Ontario as a camp boat in the 1930's.

Our gratitude is extended to C.H.J. Snider who wrote 1300 weekly articles for the old Toronto Evening Telegram between 1931 and 1956, including many on the stonehooking industry. Through his interviews with members of the stonehooking families years ago like the Blocks, Hares, Naishes, Peers, Blowers and many others, we are afforded a valuable insight into this fascinating part of our local marine history. We are also indebted to Dr. Lorne S. Joyce of Port Credit who has carried on invaluable research into the marine history of Lake Ontario over the decades and has always been so willing to share his vast knowledge with us.

Phil Brimacombe

## **HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS AND GHOST WALKS**

**Planning your summer and fall events – relatives/friends visiting?  
Check our website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for the 2013 Schedule.**

*This will be my last edition of the OHS Newsletter. It has been a pleasure to present a public face of the OHS to not only members of the OHS but also those who read the newsletter at the Library and Town Hall and, on the web. I am grateful to those who have supported me in preparing historical articles and information pieces for publication as they have enhanced the quality of the newsletter. I appreciate Harry and Margaret Buxton's efforts in building a very strong foundation upon which to build this newsletter and, I look forward to our new editor, Susan Wells continuing this important OHS document. Please give her all the support I received.*

*Lance Naismith, Editor*

Please take time to look at our advertiser's insert. Their sponsorship has been the reason we have our COLOUR December edition. It would be appreciated if you were to stop by and thank them.

# *AROUND THE SOCIETY*



## Solution to “The Way Things Were” – December 2012

The young lady in the picture on the last page of our December edition was our own, Evelyn Bullied, a longtime resident of Oakville and member of the OHS. It was a winter picture (20F below) taken in front of Dunn’s Drug Store where she managed the soda fountain and also was a pharmacist’s helper. There was no hospital at the time in Oakville and 4 drug stores serviced the town. Doctors either did surgery in their homes or, made house calls. Drug stores would take turns for overnight service.



*Eve Bullied inside Dunn’s Drug Store*

Lance Naismith

*Society offices are open every third Sunday of the month – 1:30pm to 4:00pm*

## Membership Report

We welcome the following new members who have joined since September 2012.

Lynne Ball                                      Emily & John Cates                                      John Caufield  
Pauline & Richard Hadfield    Heidi MacLellan & Family    Rob Windmill

We look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming events.

**For those members who have not yet renewed, we urge you to do so before the March Annual General Meeting so that you will be entitled to vote.**

Andrea Stewart

## November Presentation

**M**rs. Elaine Guther is committed to telling the story of her mother and thousands like her who arrived in Canada with a tin box and not much else. They were the children of Barnardo's, a charitable organization in the United Kingdom dedicated to helping destitute and orphaned children.

Alice Taylor (1909-1992) was born in Notting Hill, London and sent to Barnardos house, Hazelbrae, Peterborough, Ontario at age 12. Mrs. Guther travelled from Grimsby to give us a very moving and informed talk about her mother. There are thousands of stories like Alice's and that is not surprising considering it is estimated 12% of Canada's population are descendants of these young immigrants. Thank you, Mrs. Guther. (Picture: Greg Munz (L) & Elaine Guther)



Susan Wells

## Yard Sale (White Elephant Sale)

**T**he Society will hold its Annual Spring Yard sale on Saturday, May 11th, from 9:00 a.m. till 2:00 p.m. with no rain date. If you or any family and friends are moving/downsizing or just doing a basement/garage clean-out and have some

good, saleable items (no clothes, large furniture or appliances, please), please call Jim Young at 905-337-7001 (office) or 289-259-0955 (cell) and leave a message to arrange for pick-up. He will even pack for you.

Volunteers are also needed to set up for the Sale on Friday, May 10th starting at 9:00 a.m. and/or on Saturday, May 11th starting at 8:00 a.m. on the day of the Sale. It is always a fun day and proceeds of the Sale go towards funding equipment and other things used in the day to day operation of the Society and its work in preserving the history of Oakville for future generations.

Thank you so much in advance for your continuing support. It is very much appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you.

Jim Young

### Heritage

There is a common misconception that the Oakville Historical Society prevents owners of designated properties from making changes to their property or has a lot of say in what can and can't be done with designated properties. This is untrue.

Since the 1950s we have provided our black and white historic building signs to property owners but they do not imply any form of designation. They simply show pride in ownership and give the public some history of the property. For further information please refer to our web site, [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) or to the town's webpage <http://www.oakville.ca/business/heritage-planning.html>

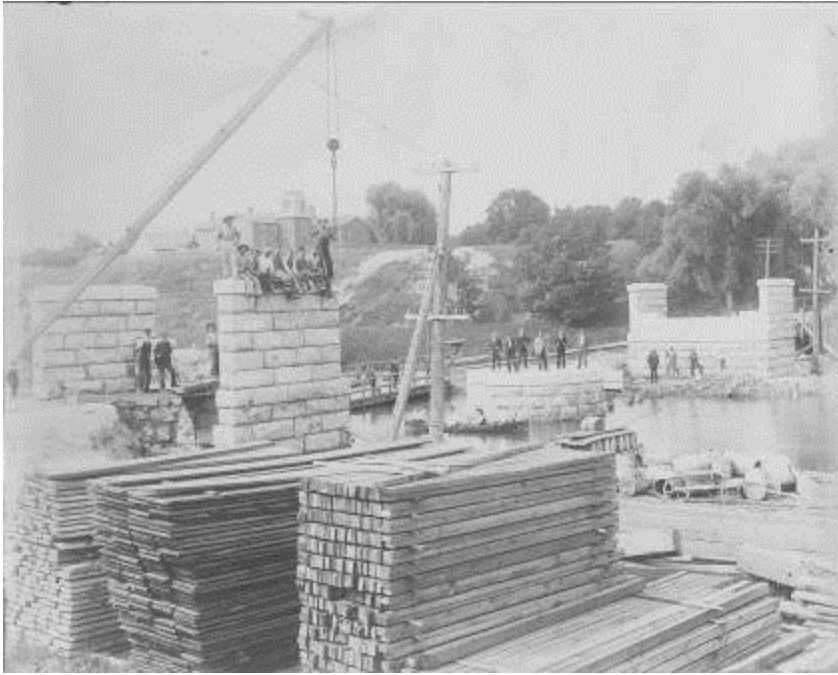
George Chisholm

#### **NOTE: SPECIAL DATES**

|                                 |                                                                |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>May 19<sup>th</sup></b>      | <b>Thomas House Opening (Victoria Day Wknd)</b>                |
| <b>June 16<sup>th</sup></b>     | <b>“Special” Doors Open events in aid of Alzheimer Society</b> |
| <b>Sept 28<sup>th</sup></b>     | <b>Thomas House – Harvest Festival Bake Table</b>              |
| <b>Sept 29<sup>th</sup></b>     | <b>Last day of season – Thomas House</b>                       |
| <b>Oct 15 – 29<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>Ghost Walks</b>                                             |
| <b>Dec 6<sup>th</sup></b>       | <b>Members Christmas Party – 110 King St. W, 6-9pm</b>         |



## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. What is being built here?
  2. When was this built?
  3. What is the building in the upper left corner background?
- ~~~~~

**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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A.D.Hitchcox

**THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER**

**JUNE 2013**



**Volume 47 Number 2**

## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

**Sunday June 9** Mayor's Picnic hosted by the Society, Lakeside  
**Noon - 4:30 pm** Park, Front Street

**Sunday June 23** TriDelta Alzheimer's Gathering. The Oakville  
**9:30 am - 1 pm** Historical Society and Thomas House are open.

## **PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS**

**Monday** Speaker: Mr. Don Smith. "Mississauga Portraits", a  
**June 24** history of the Mississauga people in Oakville. This is a  
sequel to "Sacred Feathers". Also speaking will be Dr.  
Allan Sherwin, on Herbal Medicines of Indigenous  
Peoples. 7:00 pm at the Oakville Central Library.

**Wednesday** Speaker: Mr. John McKenty, author of Canada Cycle  
**October 16** & Motor: The CCM Story. Bikes in summer, skates in  
winter! 7:30 pm at St. John's United Church

**Wednesday** Speaker: Messrs. Tom Bochsler & Bob Chambers. The  
**November 20** presentation will describe the visual impact of two  
experienced photographers and covers the gamut from  
equipment of the 50s to digital photography of today.  
7:30 pm at St. John's United Church

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**AS** I write this many of us are looking forward to the Speaker's Night set for next Wednesday, 15 May when **Maureen Jennings**, creator of The Murdoch Mysteries will speak to what will most likely be a full house. Organizing our Speaker's Nights is not an easy task and I would like to publicly thank **Mary Davidson** for all the hard work she does to arrange these events. Also deserving of our thanks is **Grace Schroeder** who looks after the refreshments served afterwards.

After a long search I am very happy to report that we have finally found a new treasurer, **Christine Fung**. At our May board meeting, Christine was appointed as a member of the board, subject to confirmation at the next General Meeting, and as Treasurer. Also new to the board table is **Averil Janey**. Averil has been making her presence known around the society by supervising some long-needed work in the garden.

Attendance at our Walking Tours has been declining for several years but there has been an increase in the number of requests from organizations wanting one of our walks so we've decided to give our scheduled walks a rest and concentrate more on these special requests. This won't affect our ghost walks which will run as usual in the fall. In addition, we are still working on a guided walk of Oakville and St Mary's Cemeteries. We're also sorry to report that the decision has been made to not run Doors Open this year. A cultural event will take its place.

We've become a popular place for high school students to fulfill their community service hours and most are putting in more than the required 10 hours per year. A group is hard at work scanning the indexes from all our reference works and making them into a searchable index. They seem to be enjoying themselves.

Earlier this week **Harry Barrett**, **Bill Russell** and I represented the Society at the official opening of the new **Garth Webb Secondary School** near Dundas and Bronte Road. The school is named after **Garth Webb** who was responsible for creating the Juno Beach Centre in France. We were all very impressed with the new building.

See you at the picnic!

**George Chisholm** President, Oakville Historical Society



## **Albert Douglas Hitchcox: Oakville and Juno Beach**

**AT** your Oakville Historical Society we receive many requests for help with research. Some callers' requests are real puzzles and some callers' requests makes us tingle, like the one we received from the southern US. The woman explained that she had a relative who moved to Oakville in the mid-1800s whose name was Duncan. "Duncan!," I exclaimed, "The ancestor of Alvin Duncan, who volunteered at the OHS and donated to our archives?" We also recently had a request to find the date of death of a man called Hillmer. The Hillmer name is well-known in Oakville because the family owned businesses, including ones for coal and transport.

Then a few months ago a resident contacted us because she knew one of our volunteers, and she sought information about a person with that same surname. What followed involves a Grade 7 student, Oakville's pioneers, WWII and your OHS.

École Forest Trail Public School student Olivia McKeown, as part of a school project, was searching for an Oakville resident to honour at the Juno Beach Centre Veteran and Donor Brick Program. She choose Oakville-born WWII Veteran Mr. Hitchcox and then heard there was a woman of that name who volunteers at OHS. Contact was made with our volunteer June Hitchcox who is a sister-in-law of the late Albert Douglas Hitchcox and she provided Ms. McKeown with information required for the Juno Beach Centre.

The Juno Beach Centre was conceived by Burlington resident and WWII Veteran Garth Webb (d. 2013). While attending the 50th anniversary of D-Day in 1994 he saw there was no lasting memorial to the thousand Canadians who lost their lives in that battle. After tireless fundraising by Webb and others, the Juno Beach Centre opened in Courseulles-sur-Mer in 2003. In 2012, Oakville's Garth Webb Secondary School was named in his honour.



*Olivia Mckeown writes:*

*Not long before Remembrance Day 2012, I saw a newspaper article about a project in Halton that commemorates Canadian veterans of World War II. It's called the Juno Beach Memorial Brick Project. This Project offers the opportunity for anyone to purchase a brick, which has on it an engraving showing a veteran's name, rank, and what he or she did in the war. These bricks are placed on the columns at the Juno Beach Memorial Center in Courseulles-sur-Mer, France, a place I visited with my family when I was in Grade 2.*

*When I read this newspaper article about the Juno Beach Memorial Brick Project, I decided to take this project on because every Remembrance Day I think of all of the brave soldiers who fought for our country. Not all of them are recognized and they all need to be remembered! I thought it would be a great way for my school, École Forest Trail Public School, to honour a veteran from Oakville who fought in World War II. I did some research and found Albert Douglas Hitchcox, a courageous young Navigator who fought for our country. Mr. Hitchcox passed away a few years after serving in the war. By cross-referencing veteran names with veterans on the Memorial Brick Project website, I determined that there was no brick commemorating Mr. Hitchcox and his contribution as a navigator on a Lancaster bomber even though he flew on 41 bombing missions over France and Germany, including one on D-Day, June 6th 1944, the day the allies landed on the beaches, the pivotal battle in the defeat of Germany. Mr. Hitchcox grew up in Oakville and his family's farmhouse is across the street from T.A. Blakelock High School, which many of École Forest Trail's Grade 8 students are soon to attend. I thought my school's Remembrance Day ceremony would have even more meaning to the students if they could think about an actual veteran, especially one from Oakville whose family home is located so near the French Immersion high school and on Rebecca St., a well-known Oakville street. When I told my fellow students about Mr Hitchcox, our Student Council bought a memorial brick to commemorate Mr. Hitchcox.*



A.D. Hitchcox's grandfather and grandmother, Albert and Olivia, arrived to Oakville from England in 1912 with 10 children and built a house at what is now 1107 Rebecca St. The house to the west at 1119 Rebecca was built by A.D. Hitchcox's father, Dudley Hitchcox in the early 1920s.

Doug, as he was known, was born 28 September 1923, and grew up around Oakville including Bond Street, played hockey as a goalie and was attending 4th Form (Gr. 12) at Oakville Trafalgar High School when he joined the RCAF July 7, 1942. He was 18. Because of his young age, to join he needed letters of recommendation which were written by the school principal, the mayor and his parents.

In England Mr. Hitchcox trained in a twin-engine Anson training plane which flies at 100 - 120 mph. He qualified as a Flying Officer, Air Navigator and while the normal number of sorties was 40, Doug was asked to step in when another navigator was ill and thus flew 41. When the crew would return successfully from a



raid they all received a fresh egg for their efforts. The navigator's work was to guide the aircraft to its target and to tell the bombardier when to drop the bombs. The plane he flew for the missions was a 4-engine British make and his captain requested a new plane saying that the one they were flying was not safe. The request was denied. On one trip the engine blew up. They got a new plane.

After the war, he returned to Oakville, finished high school and trained as an actuary. He met his wife Della in Toronto and they moved to Portland, Maine where he became Vice-President at Union Mutual, an insurance company. When Doug died at the age of 52 he left his widow with four young children. Doug is described by his family as a wonderful, caring man.

*Written by Susan Wells with research by Della Hitchcox, June Hitchcox, Bill Hitchcox, Olivia McKeown and the Veteran and Donor Brick Program.*



(L) O. McKeown, J. Hitchcox

A. Douglas Hitchcox  
F/O Nav. 158 Squadron - RCAF  
July 7, 1942 to March 3, 1945  
Bomber Command (D-Day)

Inscription on the Hitchcox brick.

The donation is \$250 CDN, payable to:  
Juno Beach Centre  
828 Legion Road  
Burlington, ON  
L7S 1T5

Please take the time to look our advertisers' insert. Their sponsorship has been the reason we have a COLOUR December edition. It would be appreciated if you were to stop by and thank them.

## OHS Members Recognized



(L) W. Belcher, D. Fassler, P. Mack and H. Davis

**Ontario Volunteer Service Awards** were presented recently to four of our members; long time volunteers **Wendy Belcher, Heather Davis and Pat Mack**, together with our youngest volunteer, **Daniel Fassler** were recognized during an awards ceremony hosted by The Ontario Honours and Awards Secretariat of The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

Heather and Pat have, among other activities, contributed to the staffing and interpretation of The Thomas House. Wendy and Daniel have added much colour and interest to the ghost walks.



(L) Jamie Macrae and Mayor Rob Burton

Member, **Jamie Macrae** was honoured recently with the **Ontario Heritage Trust Award** for his contribution to the preservation of Oakville's Built Heritage. For more than thirty years he has been a passionate advocate for Oakville's heritage and architecture, providing expertise in the identification and preservation of Oakville houses and buildings. His work with Oakville Historical Society has involved the restoration of The Thomas House as well as the building and maintenance of the volunteers' fountain at our front door. Over the years he has helped owners of historically significant buildings in Oakville to research the provenance of their properties and to install plaques to recognize their historical significance (this work is now the function of a committee). In addition, each year during Doors Open, he generously invites the public aboard his historical yacht, the Anitra. A big thank you and congratulations to Jamie.

*Andrea Stewart*

## The Thomas House

**The Thomas House** opened for the 2013 season on the 19th of May.

We are in need of a few more volunteers this year and if you can help out with a day or days, please call me, Mary Davidson, at 905-842-6935. We have two new school volunteers joining us this year. Welcome to **Brayden Ross** and **Clare Fiala** and graduate student **Katelynd Chojnacki!**

Grateful thanks to those who have interpreted for us in the past: **Phil Brimacombe**, **Pat Mack**, **Dave Hutchison** - we understand you will be helping out with other projects for the Society! This is a very enjoyable part of our year, when the doors open, the fire is on, the sun shines (mostly!) and our visitors are so appreciative of this permanent reminder of pioneer days and what life was like in the early days of Oakville. *Mary Davidson*



(L) Madlyn Kayer (OHS), Hilary Speed

**Opening Times:** 1:30 to 4:00 pm.

May 25 - June 30 Sat and Sun

July 1 - September 2 Sat, Sun, Tue, Wed, Thur  
and Holiday Mondays

September 8 - 29 Sun

**Harvest Festival Bake Table** September 28  
11 am to 4:00 pm. Donations of baked goods and preserves are welcome.

## From the Archives Recent Acquisition

**THE** OHS is fortunate in that Oakville residents remember us when they are looking for a home for valuable photographs, deeds and other family papers. This photo and others is from Mr. & Mrs. P. Wakely.



**1890** Unidentified woman and dog with dog-operated butter churn.



## Around the Society



J. Pugsley and H. Barrett showcase donated treasures at the OHS offices in preparation for the annual Yard Sale, May 11th.



**The OHS Garden**, like all gardens, requires a great deal of work in the spring. The Garden Committee would love some help, if only for the next few weeks. We garden on Friday mornings, starting at 9 a.m., but not in the rain. If interested, call Averil Jany at 905-845-7472.

*Averil Jany*

## Solution to “The Way Things Were” - March 2013

**ON** the last page of the March 2013 Newsletter is a picture of the Aberdeen Bridge over Sixteen Mile Creek at Colborne St. (now Lakeshore Dr.) taken in 1894. In the background to the left can be seen Oakville Public School.

## Keep a Look-out



**For** over 90 years, there has been and still is, a Winzer family member living on Kerr St. Mr. Jack Winzer (shown at left), who was brought up at 371, recently showed us original furniture, trunks his grandmother brought from England and features of the house such as this light switch. Kerr Street history will be detailed in our next issue.



**DID** Oakville have street names attached to the corner building? Are there any left, like the Toronto one illustrated here? Let us know if you find any.

**WHAT** would you like to see in your OHS Newsletter? Suggestions welcome. Call me at 905-844-4474 or email at [swells@cogeco.ca](mailto:swells@cogeco.ca)

I wish to thank Lance Naismith for providing me with many hours of assistance with this, my first edition of the OHS newsletter. He and others before him have set a very high standard. I will say to Lance what he has said to me countless times, "Much appreciated."

*Susan Wells, Editor*

## THE WAY THINGS WERE



1. Who is the woman?
2. Where is the building?
3. What is the building now?

### **Oakville Historical Society**

**110 King Street, Oakville**

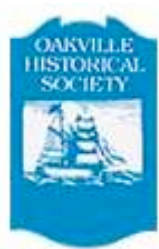
**Archive Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm**

**Third Sunday of the month 12:30 to 4:00 pm**

**(905) 844-2695    [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street,  
Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**





~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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# **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**SEPTEMBER 2013**



**Volume 47 Number 3**



# **PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS**

**Wednesday  
October 16**      **Mr. John McKenty** author of *Canada Cycle & Motor: The CCM Story* will speak about the part the company played in our lives. Skates in winter, bikes in summer....

**Wednesday  
November 20**      *The Art of Industry* authors **Mr. Tom Bochsler** and **Mr. Bob Chambers** will present anecdotes and comment on the 117 years of press and industrial photography showing the gamut of celebrities, politicians, steel, forests, mining, architecture and much more; not to mention the change from the now seemingly ancient equipment of the 1950s to the digital photography of the 21st century.

Above presentations held at St. John's United Church at Randall and Dunn and begin at 7:30 pm.

**Thomas House** is open September every Sunday 1:30 to 4 pm and on Saturday, the 28th for the Harvest Bake Table, 11 am to 4 pm. Donations of any sort of delicious baking and preserves are welcome. Please deliver them to the OHS office the previous Thursday and Friday.

**Ghost Walks** provide an eerie spine-tingling sensation with a dash of old Oakville history. These walks start at 110 King St. and are about one hour. Drinks and cookies are served after the walks at our offices. Reservations are required. Phone (905)844-2695.

## **2013 Schedule**

October 15,17,19      7:00, 8:30 pm

October 22,23,24,25,26,28,29      6:00, 7:15, 8:30 pm



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<http://atexdigitalprint.com/>

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**Quite** the season of mixed weather this past summer. A two-week heat wave followed by nights in the low to mid-teens. It hasn't however, affected attendance at our events and at the Thomas House. The Mayor's Picnic, operated by your Society, went very well. Attendance was good, the weather cooperated, the music was great and the Oakville Scottish Country Dancers performed in their usual exemplary manner. (I'm a bit prejudiced.)

We've had the benefit this summer of at least ten young volunteers to the Society. You'll read more about them elsewhere but it is certainly refreshing to see young people working at the Thomas House and at the office. It was particularly good to see Thomas House volunteer Eileen Za passing on her knitting skills.

Mary Davidson has two excellent speakers lined up for the fall and is hard at work setting up speakers for 2014. Also coming this fall is our new walking tour through Oakville and St Mary's Cemetery. With all the Ghost Walks scheduled, October will be a busy month.

We are still looking for some volunteers to help out as speakers at retirement homes and schools as we get a fair number of requests. In some cases we've run out of topics. If you have an historical topic that you would like to speak about, please let us know. *George Chisholm, President*

Our June issue featured a photo of Mrs. Hazel Chisholm Mathews laying the corner stone of the Post Office at the corner of Church and George Streets, May 1958. The building is now empty.

Cover Photo: Drawing of Mrs. Neal's House by her grandson Dylan Neal.

# The People Of Early Kerr Street

IT is believed that Kerr Street was named, around 1850, for Mr. Robert W. Kerr, who had been commissioned by William Chisholm to carry out the official plan for the new town of Oakville. Joyce Burnell's book, *Street Names and Landmarks*, records that initially Kerr Street was the major route from the harbour to Lower Middle Road, now the Queen Elizabeth Highway, but as shipping and industry moved from the area, Kerr Street's growth was halted for a time.

Unlike the historic downtown, Kerr Street has few older buildings and little to remind us of early Oakville, so I set out to speak to early resident, Catherine (Cay) Neal (née Laing), aged ninety-one, to learn about life in the Kerr Street neighbourhood. Joining Catherine were her

brother Gerald Laing and her brother- and sister-in-law Earl and Georgina Grant.

Catherine lives on Stewart Street in a house built by hand in the 1940's on a property adjacent to her parents' house on a lot that cost \$75. She and her husband, Orville, lived in the basement while they finished the upstairs. Orville served in the RCAF during the war.



Catherine Neal, Gerald Laing  
& Earl Grant



Stewart Street

Catherine grew up in a farmhouse on the large Stansbury farm, just up from Stewart Street, where the Dollar Store is today and where the Stansbury family ran commercial gardens. Beyond Stewart Street, both North and West, was farmland where sugar beets, asparagus and strawberries were grown. They recalled Ukranian refugee workers, most of them women, living in tents on the property.

Many of the residents in the area were employed at the jam factories which produced jam from the strawberry crop, at the basket factory which produced baskets for the fruit, at the tannery and at the paint factory. Gerald worked after school at Glassco's jams.

**Catherine** and her brother spoke of the IOOF (Independent Order of Foresters) orphans' home (right) at the corner of Kerr and Bond Streets, which later became Ortona Barracks and later, Oaklands Centre for handicapped persons.



South of that was a swamp and near to that, Very's Flowers greenhouses.

Gerald remembered skating at the swamps, one between Morden and Fourth Line and the other at "Dummies' Bush", a copse of trees in the middle of asparagus fields. There were areas of quicksand, one where the Oakville arena was built.

Where Stoney's is now, there was a bowling alley and, around the corner, the original shop of Gerrie Electric.

In one of the stone buildings on the site of the new Rain condo complex at Kerr and Speers, lived a Mary Smith, sister of Charles Snowball Forsythe and who in the mid-40s, sang in the Presbyterian choir with Catherine.



Violet & Ernest Winzer with daughters. 1923

Catherine still maintains her house and plays the organ by ear. She and Orville were keen golfers who enjoyed membership at The Oakville Golf Club. They had two children, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Coincidentally, around the time we began to research the history of Kerr Street, we received a visit at the historical society, from Dr. Jack Winzer from Barrie who had lived at the old house at 371 Kerr Street from 1944 to 1974. The Winzers lived in Oakville for almost 100 years. Jack's grandfather, Ernest Winzer, born in England in 1885, came to Oakville in 1913 and became a gardener for the large estates along the lakeshore, including the Scaddings and the Dunwoodys. During the winter he cleaned chimneys and was part-time caretaker for various buildings including the old Central school. He married Violet Warner in 1916. Three daughters followed: Margaret, Dorothy and Ethel.



In 1920 Ernest and Violet purchased the house at 371 Kerr Street, on land originally owned by the Chisholm family, and later purchased an adjacent property. The house is a two-storey frame building, built in the same vernacular style as the other houses on along Kerr Street at the time. Its horizontal wood siding was later covered by Insulbrick in the 1950s. When the house was built, the majority of Kerr Street was residential,

with farmland to the North. Now the house is for sale, probably for commercial use.

Jack remembers an apple orchard to the east of the property which extended to a bush known as the Forster Survey. There was a vineyard on the west side of Kerr Street, and Very's farm on the east side of Kerr Street south towards Westwood School. Up until the early 1950's, the present Kerr Street, which was then known as Kerr Street North, ended at Rebecca Street. There was a small ravine separating it from Kerr Street South which extended south from Colborne Street (now Lakeshore Road), down to the lake.

The harvest picture (page 7) was on the dining room wall at 371 for almost a century. He believes the photograph was

taken around 1915 by what is now Speers Road.

The railway tracks across the top of Kerr Street were a great fascination for Jack in the 1940s. He recalls his Aunt Ethel taking him, nearly every evening, to watch the steam engines and exchange waves with the engineers.



Ernest Winzer 1920



371 Kerr St. 1935 before present Insulbrick cladding



Winzer girls 1930



**Stargazing** was to become a great interest. The gift of a telescope in 1955 from his Aunt Ethel fostered in Jack a great interest in astronomy; from the back yard on clear nights he looked at the moon, planets and stars and from the boardwalk at the front of the house, he could observe Saturn.



(Obviously Kerr Street was not as busy as it is now!) This interest led Jack to a Ph.D in astronomy from the University of Toronto.

Jack recalls that the residents in the 1950s of the old stone houses south of the railroad tracks, were the Smiths and the Bacons. He remembers the IOOF orphans` home having been known, during the 1940s, as the “Home Corner”. This building later became the centre of Ortona Barracks and Central Army Command Headquarters and eventually Oaklands Centre.

The late R.O. (Bob) Hughes in *Oakville Memories Old and New*, moved to 52 Kerr Street between Westside Dr. and Harold Ave. between Penman’s store and Bamber’s Red and White store. As a boy he was employed hulling strawberries at Stansbury’s just north of Bamber’s Store. Mr. Cecil Taylor who owned a farm at the top end of Kerr just below the Lower Middle Road (now Queen Elizabeth Way) used to drive his Model T Ford down Kerr Street to pick up the waiting pickers who hung onto the running boards and sprawled on the rear and front fenders as he brought them to work. Some of the strawberries went to market and others to the two jam factories in Oakville: Glassco’s near the railway station and Jacobs’ on Randall, near the Scout Hut. He recalled the First Nations people who came from Northern Ontario to do the picking and were accommodated in a shack in the middle of the patch.

**From** these memories from the 1930s to the 1950s, we get some sense of the evolution of Kerr Street. It seems that the north part of the town only began to develop when the Stansbury family sold much of their farmland for residential and commercial use. In 1933, they had purchased a large tract of land which they farmed until 1947 when they began to sell some for residential lots and the portion on the North part of Kerr Street for commercial and retail use. There is a photograph in The Oakville Journal Record, October 1971, showing Leonard Stansbury ploughing a field, presumably prior to 1947, in what was to become Kerr Street North Business Community, “Oakville’s central community.” Kerr Street is now a commercial area, most of the residential buildings having been demolished in the 1950s and 1960s.



Kerr St. c1960 looking north. IOOF is top left with Westwood school ( Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides), centre.

The old stone houses (below), referred to by Mrs. Neal and Dr. Winzer, Nos. 531 and 533



Kerr Street, have been designated and remain on the site of the Rain condominium development awaiting relocation and restoration by the new owners of the property. They were built by the Smith family, first generation Scots settlers who came to Canada in 1907. No. 533 was built in 1911, to resemble their parents’ house in Aberdeenshire and 531 was built twenty years later. These are thought to be the only known indigenous shale stone

houses in Ontario, a practice which stopped around World War One with the reintroduction of concrete.

**Many** improvements have been made to Kerr Street, now known as Kerr Village. A Community Improvement Plan has been recently approved in principle, pending budgetary approval, as a partnership between the business owners and The Town, to further improve the appearance of the business district. The active community organization, The West River Residents Association works closely with local businesses and The Town to organize social and cultural events and to bring the community together.

*Grateful thanks to Mrs. Neal and Dr. Winzer for providing photos. For anyone interested, these and a number of others are available in our files. Andrea Stewart*

## **New Volunteers**

**University Volunteers**, Steven Davidson and Marco Ilaio have come to us this summer offering their expertise. They will be working on a new look to our Historical Walks Presentations which we are hoping will be available for our 2014 Walking Tours.

We have a project involving students to digitize the reference books in our Library, eventually get it on line, and to show indices – this is a work in progress! The following students responded to my request to all High Schools in Oakville and I would like to thank them for their enthusiasm – we are learning from them if truth be known!



Alvin Leung (R), Iroquois Ridge High School  
Olivia Kumar, Iroquois Ridge High School  
James Lane-Davies, MacLachlan College  
Katharyn Stevenson, St.Mildred's Lightbourn  
Dean Barsenbach, St. Ignatius of Loyola  
Ryan Heinzl(L), Garth Webb Secondary School



**Clare Fiala** and **Brayden Ross** are two young women who have been spending precious vacation time at the Thomas House very ably instructing visitors the duties required of settlers their age in the 1850s. We look forward to seeing them next summer when we need kindling gathered and butter churned. *Mary Davidson*

## Spring Presentations

**Maureen Jennings**, the celebrated author of the *Murdoch Mysteries* TV series proved a most popular choice as it was standing room only at St. John's United. Ms. Jennings proved to be not only a great writer, but also a very entertaining speaker. We were sorry to hear that her other TV series *Bomb Girls* was not to be continued, however there is a Movie of the Week coming up which will retell the story – and who knows – perhaps encourage the powers-that-be to continue with the series. A special treat was to welcome one of the original Bomb Girls who attended our meeting.

**Don Smith**, one of our members from Calgary, was the special guest at our June meeting held at the Central Branch of the Oakville Public Library and a very special place for our speaker as it was the site of his primary school; another standing-room-only event. We also had Dr. Allan Sherwin whose book *Bridging Two Peoples* is the biography of Dr. Peter E. Jones, son of the Peter Jones of Don Smith's *Sacred Feathers*, and also covers the use of plants for medicinal purposes used by First Nations people. Both authors are to be congratulated on the research which has gone into these two works, “a step towards giving the First Nations people recognition and respect.” Thank you also to Mississauga Historical Society who handled the selling of both books.

*Mary Davidson*



Maureen Jennings (above right)  
greet fans



Dr. Smith (above left) enjoys  
comments from an interested  
audience member.

## Around The Society



IN addition to older buildings we have been preparing plaques for more contemporary structures pre-dating 1970, buildings that have something unique about their architecture: they might be representative of a certain design associated with a period like the so-called “war-time houses.” We thank June Hitchcox and assistants for their diligent research, George Chisholm, our president, for constructing the plaques, Claudette Shaw (shown left) for her expert paint skills and Jamie Macrae for handling inquiries as well as securing them to buildings. *Philip Brimacombe*

We were delighted to have received an overshot coverlet (right), a gift from Mrs. E. Ruch, who writes, “I received the blanket from a cousin who was exactly the same age as my mother (born 1897). The cousin was born when her mother (born approx. 1856) was in her early 40's. I assume the age of it (1838) is that which is woven into the blanket.” The coverlet will be displayed in the Thomas House.



A new addition to our Fireplace Room is the table, pictured left, a gift from OHS member and archivist Margaret Buxton. When she and her husband Harry moved into their house on West Lynn Rd. in 1972 this table was in the basement where it stayed until Margaret left the house last year. Since Mr. Reg Smith owned the house previously and he came from the original Smith farm west of Fourth Line by Rebecca St. it is believed the table was part of that property. Under the metal covering that Mr. and Mrs. Buxton removed were newspapers from 1917. Thank you Margaret for your generous gift.



# *THE WAY THINGS WERE*



1. Where is this building?
2. When was this picture taken?
3. What was the event?

**Oakville Historical Society 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm**

**Third Sunday of the month 12:30 to 4:00 pm**

**(905) 844-2695**

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street,  
Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4**





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Preserving Oakville's  
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Since 1953  
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OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2013

Volume 47 Number 4



# PUBLIC SPEAKERS & EVENTS

**Friday  
December 6  
6 - 9 pm**      **Annual OHS Wine and Cheese at the Society office, 110 King St.  
A good chance to meet your OHS friends with a glass of wine and  
tasty nibbles.**

**Thursday, 21st December is the last day the OHS office is open in 2013. It re-opens  
Tuesday, 7th Jan 2014.**

## 2014

**Wednesday  
February 19**      **Hon. Col. Gerald Haddon will speak about the history of Canadian  
Aviation and specifically of his grandfather, J.A.D. McCurdy.**

**Wednesday  
April 16**      **Mr. Terry Reardon, author, will speak about his latest book,  
*Winston Churchill and MacKenzie King So Similar-So Different.***

**Saturday  
May 10**      **Annual Yard Sale 110 King St.  
Please think of donating to the sale when you are culling your  
treasures. Phone us to arrange pick-up if needed.**

**Wednesday  
May 21**      **Ms. Birch is the author of *Settlement* a story of romance and  
adventure set in Upper Canada in 1836-37. She speaks about the  
challenges of re-creating a long-ago world and making a case for  
historical fiction.  
“Ann Birch has worked for a decade in Toronto’s finest old houses as  
an historical interpreter. She can tell you why table knives had  
rounded edges, why candles had to be stored in metal safes at night  
and why even the best people seldom bathed.”**

**Speakers are presented at St. John’s United Church, Dunn and Randall Streets at 7:30 pm**

## Some Sites of Interest

**Sheridan College at the Thomas House** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W\\_2gX0\\_jwDg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_2gX0_jwDg)

**History at the Thomas House** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LP-Q7jeBsec>

**A house is moved in Bronte** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCjIkfJCIi8>



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It never ceases to amaze me how busy our Society is. There always seems to be some new or continuing initiative and some get more mention than others. In this issue's comments, I'd like to mention some of them.

**Web Site Re-design** This has been going on for a while and we think we're getting closer to rolling out our new website. I'd like to thank Yacoub Husseini for all his work over the past year or so. After conducting a Christmas photo shoot at the Thomas House, Yacoub offered to help us update the website. He has met with the board several times and we're getting closer to the release.

**Social Media** We've had a Facebook page created by Debbie Dunn and now maintained by Gillian Schnurr. You can have a look at it by going to [www.facebook.com/oakvillehistoricalsociety](http://www.facebook.com/oakvillehistoricalsociety). We also have a twitter account @oakvillehistory

**Ghost Walks** This just keeps growing under the leadership of Wendy Belcher and Mary Davidson. Final figures aren't available yet but the walks have become a major source of income for the Society. This year we acquired several new walk leaders, some new to the Society, and several new volunteers. We're just about maxed out on capacity closer to Hallowe'en. The walks have also brought us some new members.

**Historical Walks** While we didn't offer scheduled walks this year because of a major decline in interest, we are seeing an increase in the number of requests for walks for special groups. Most recently I took a group of 29 members of the University Women's Club on a walk which was followed by a catered lunch. The same day I took out a group of Grade 7 students from a Montessori School. This past fall we held the first of our walks at the Oakville and St Mary's Cemetery.

**Collection** Margaret Buxton was observing recently that she's just about caught up on bringing items into the collection. We can't have that! New items continue to arrive one way or another. If you hear of something that might be appropriate for our collection, please let us know. Photos, documents, appropriate newspaper articles and etc. can all be brought into the collection.

**Archival Storage** As time permits we keep plugging away at moving items in the collection to our storage facility at Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre.

**Exhibits** Congratulations to Rosemary Seeton and her group on the new exhibit at the office. Greg Munz is currently working on a display featuring the research and fabrication of our signature historic building plaques. We still have a lot of work to do in educating the community that our plaques do not cause or show any kind of heritage designation.

**On-line Access to the Collection** This is an area that we really need to get working on.

**Thomas House** The number of visitors and cash put in the donation box are both up significantly this year. Thanks to Jamie Macrae, most of the exterior of the building has been repainted. The painting will be completed in the spring.

**Memories Project** A dedicated group under June Hitchcox, Margaret Godefroy and Hugh Ramsay continue to plug away at this project and publication is getting closer.

I've probably left something out as there are just so many projects going on. If you would like to become more involved with the activities of the Society or have ideas or suggestions, it's your society – speak up.

Unfortunately, I'll be missing the annual members' get-together this year as I'll be travelling.

*George Chisholm, President*

# THE OAKVILLE BASKET FACTORY

A former brewery building built around 1866 was the first location of the basket factory when William Bigger Chisholm and Charles Pettit Chisholm began production in 1874 on the shore of the Sixteen Mile Creek on Trafalgar Road. After fires twice destroyed buildings, the factory was built on a 5 acre site just south of the railroad tracks on what is now Cornwall Road, west of Trafalgar. A water wheel was the source of power in the first buildings but in the new location it was a large steam engine that powered the machinery. It was in this building that baskets were produced until 1984 and where John Sawyer toiled in the summer of 1971. His recollections follow.



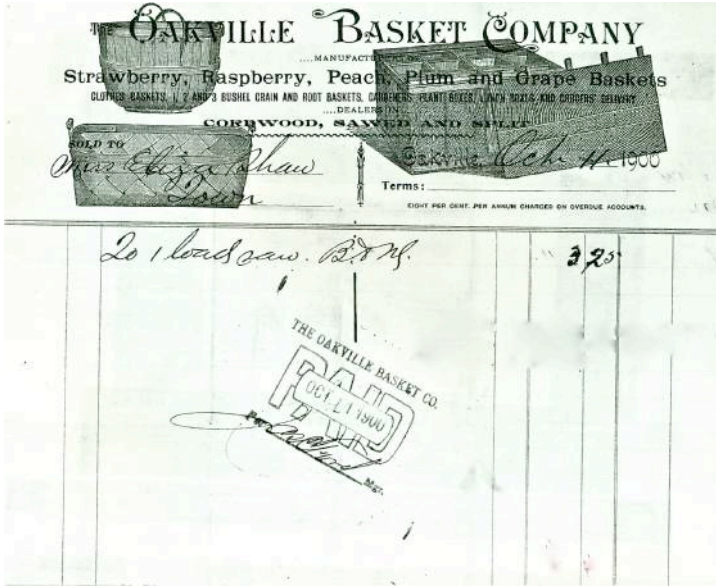
The Oakville Basket Factory, final location

**It** smelled sour and earthy. Not entirely unpleasant or overwhelming, the smell of fermenting hardwood still lingers in my memory.

It is hard to believe the summer of 1971 was over 40 years ago. About to graduate from White Oaks High School, I needed to find a summer job to earn my tuition for Sheridan College. For many generations my family worked in the lumber trade and I had experience harvesting and working with lumber.

I assumed that was why Mr. Stevenson, the manager of the Oakville Basket Factory, hired me as a student labourer. He was a tall man in his late fifties or early sixties with a gruff, no nonsense manner. His thinning, grey hair was combed back in the style of the 1950s and I had the impression he was more than a little bit frugal. The pay was \$2.35 an hour, not a great wage, but better than the minimum at the time and enough that I could save for my tuition.

Agriculture was once a key part of Oakville's economy and farmers needed baskets to pack and ship their crops. For many years the Oakville Basket Factory manufactured and distributed baskets to local farms, throughout the country and into the northern United States. Until the opening of Ford's Oakville assembly plant in 1953 the basket factory was arguably the Town's highest profile business. Outside of the community Oakville was known as the place where wooden baskets were made.

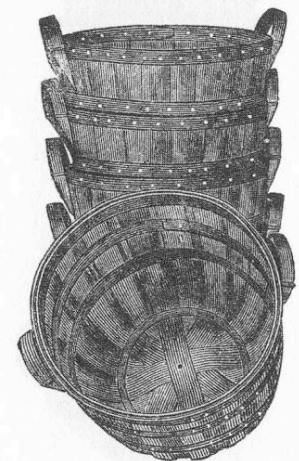


The factory was located on the west side of Trafalgar Road where Cornwall Road is today. It was old, dirty and looked very much like the photos taken of the factory at the turn of the last century that the Historical Society has on file. Everything was starkly utilitarian. Aesthetics were not a consideration in the construction of the facility. The core of the factory was made of poured concrete and a number of rough additions and outbuildings had been erected over the years.

Working the night shift my interaction with other staff was limited. I did work the day shift for a few weeks and had the opportunity to see the entire manufacturing process. During the day most of the factory workers were first generation Italian or Portuguese women. There were a few men who did the heavy manual work at the beginning of the manufacturing process.

One of the characters I recall was Frank who was in charge of “security”. He was one of the few people on the property that was well dressed and one of the last people around who still wore a fedora. His hat was usually tipped back or tilted to the side like a Clark Gable or Humphrey Bogart character. Frank made a point of telling me about the time he spent in prison for armed robbery, his adventures running from the police and how they finally captured him. His stated intent was to keep me on the straight and narrow. I remember asking why there would be a need for security - was there a problem with basket thieves? He said because the site was very large, open, not fenced and with several entrances, things did disappear from time to time. Frank also said there was often thousands of dollars in the office as many of the farmers paid the company in cash for their baskets.

A unique feature of the factory was that its primary source of power came from a large reciprocating steam engine. You can still see its remains; they have been preserved on the south side of Cornwall Road between 16 Mile Creek and Trafalgar Road. The boiler that created the steam for the engine was heated by burning waste wood from the manufacturing process.



3 Bushel Basket.

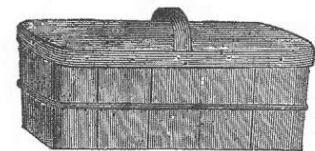
The steam engine brings me to the second character I clearly recall. His name was Jim, a Scotsman who looked as old as the factory, although he was probably not much older than I am today. Jim was a short, slight, bald man with a thick brogue. A stationary engineer, he was responsible for operating and maintaining the steam engine. With the hot summer weather and the heat from the fire, Jim was always covered in perspiration. As we shoveled waste wood into the boiler, he explained the devastation that could result if the pressure in the boiler was not carefully controlled. The resulting explosion would level the building. Jim told me the basket factory was the last steam powered factory in Ontario.



Wheel before the move across Cornwall Road.

Raw hardwood logs, predominately maple, were delivered to the factory. The logs were cut into four foot lengths at the factory and then loaded onto sturdy carts. The carts were wheeled into large concrete and metal steam boxes. I estimate the steam boxes were six feet high, six feet wide and ten feet deep. The logs were steamed for 24 hours and when they were removed from the steam box their bark was stripped off.

The logs were then mounted on a peeler. Picture a giant lathe with a large log spinning on it. A very sharp steel blade would be forced against the spinning log and it would peel off a thin veneer of wood. The wood veneer was still green and wet so it had to be dried in a large kiln. The constant supply of wet wood accounted for the distinctive smell of the factory. After they were dried the sheets of veneer were sliced on a guillotine into the various sizes needed to form the baskets. Up until this point of the process most of the work was done by the men.



12 Quart Fruit Basket.



10 lb. Grape Basket.

The bottoms of the baskets were manufactured off-site and shipped to the factory on pallets. They were made of poplar, a light weight, readily available species that had few other commercial uses so it was relatively inexpensive. Most of the assembly process was completed by the women. They used foot operated industrial staplers to attach the various pieces of the





Medium or Deep Clothes Basket

basket together. I remember spending a few days stapling handles onto baskets. It was tedious, repetitive work.

I was fascinated with the ancient printing press that was used to stamp the names of the farms on the end of the baskets. There was a machine shop on the property where blades were sharpened, parts were made and equipment was repaired. One of my duties was to operate a machine that formed one pint cardboard berry boxes. I remember the pride with which Tony, the supervisor, told me that the machine was designed and built at the factory by the staff in the machine shop.

Wooden baskets had been made by various companies in Oakville since the mid-1800s. I suspect a number of factors contributed to the demise of the industry here in Oakville. There were the rapidly increasing costs of wood and labour. It would have been hard to compete with alternative materials such as cardboard and plastics and automated manufacturing processes. There were also changes in agricultural practices, shipping, distribution channels and retailing that reduced the need for wooden baskets. Changing land use in the area and quickly increasing land values would have contributed to making the operation of the factory an inefficient use of the site.

In 1984, I recall reading with some sadness in the *Oakville Beaver* that after many years of providing steady jobs and profile to our community, the Oakville Basket Factory had quietly closed its doors. I still smile whenever I see a wooden fruit basket.

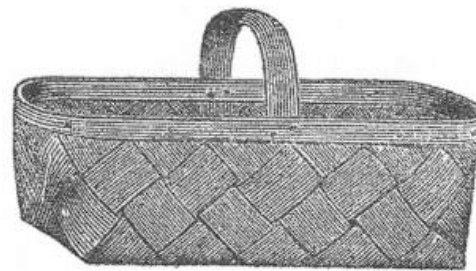


*John Sawyer is the President of the Oakville Chamber of Commerce. He grew up in Oakville, and is a proud graduate of Sheridan College.*

*John assures us that the baskets he is holding in the photo above, in front of the wheel at its new location on the south side of Cornwall Road are virtually identical to the ones he manufactured in 1971.*



**Before** self-serve stores had become popular there were no metal carts on wheels for customers. A grocer served customers at the counter and the shopper picked up a Market Basket. They were about 12” wide, 20” long and 10” deep (30 x 50 x 25 cm) and made of woven rattan-type of material in strips about 2” (5 cm) wide. The grocery to first use these baskets was Loblaws, newly opened on the south side of Colborne (Lakeshore Rd). These baskets were soon known as “Loblaws” baskets regardless of what they contained or where they were used. At the time of introduction, circa 1930, \$5.00 worth of groceries would fill up one of them.



No. 4 Market Basket.



Max Auwaerter, Lesley Anderson and in front, Leah Thompson

**The Ghosts of Oakville** returned for another successful spooky season. The Society hosted 36 evening walks plus six afternoon bus tours for seniors. Thanks to Mary Davidson and her caterers who lit the lanterns and kept the cookies and hot cocoa coming; thanks to Max Auwaerter, Lesley Anderson and Leah Thompson for roaming the streets in character and a big thanks to our ghosts - Wendy Belcher (Esther Thomas), Curtis Belcher (John Thomas), Philip Brimacombe (Merrick Thomas), Daniel Fassler (Robert Murray Thomas), Carol Gall (Jacques the Buccanner), Pat Mack (Alice of the Oakville Centre), Stewart Sherriff (Peter McDougald), Kelly Pardy (Mrs. Wilson - Capt Robert's mother), Kelsey Levine (Elizabeth Wilson - Capt Robert's sister).

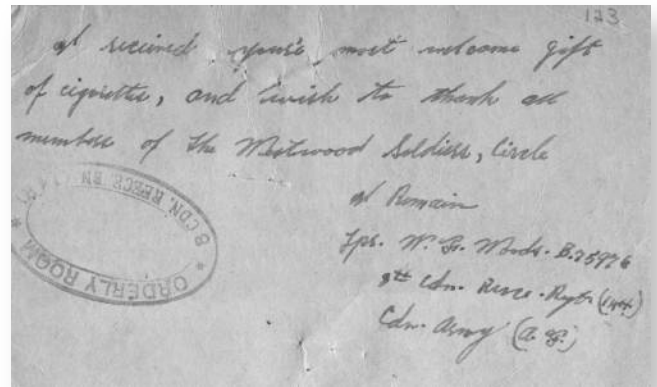
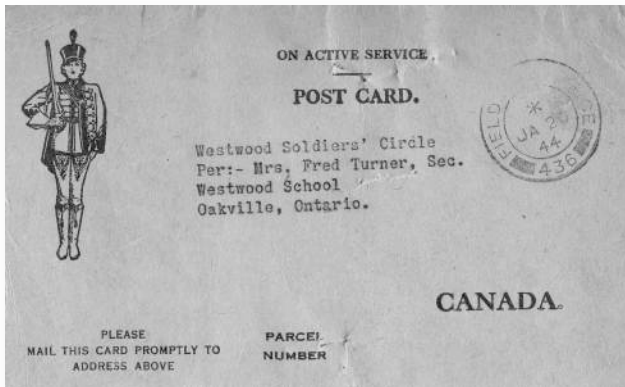
## GHOST WALKS



Daniel Fassler, left and Pat Mack

# WE WELCOME VISITORS

Mrs. Mary Woods, shown at right, recently dropped in to view our archives. Her husband, W. Woods, while serving overseas during WWII received gifts from the students of Westwood School. Enclosed was a self-addressed card, shown below, on which the recipient expressed his appreciation. We gave her copies of the three cards that her late husband had signed.



# FALL CLEAN-UP



Lance Naismith, left and Mary Davidson

The word went out and a dozen OHS volunteers showed up with rakes to herd the leaves to the curb. Thank you! Many hands make light work!



Stan Smurlick

# MEMBERSHIP

Once again it's time to renew your membership. We ask you to please complete and detach this form and return it by mail or in person to our office. Thank you for your continued interest in and support of our work. We hope that you will enjoy the benefits of membership in the Oakville Historical Society.

*Andrea Stewart, Memberships Secretary*

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Email.....

## MEMBERSHIP CATAGORIES AND FEES

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| <b>Senior (65 or over)</b> | <b>20.00</b>    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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# RECENT SPEAKER



**Mr. John McKenty**, shown above, author of *Canada Cycle & Motor Co.: The CCM Story*, gave a lively and informative talk on the history of CCM from its founding in 1899 to its eventual demise in 1983.

The company was created as a result of the merger of several smaller bicycle companies at a time when American companies intended to open branch plants. The first President was Walter Massey of the well known Massey family. He had business experience with mergers, and had the support of many prominent Canadian bankers and businessmen who served on the executive and the board of directors.

Over time, the company diversified its products by introducing motorized forms of transportation including the automobile under the name of 'The Russell'.

In 1905 the company began the production of hockey skates using scrap metal from their plants. Initially, blades and boots were manufactured separately and had to be assembled by the buyer. Mr. McKenty displayed one of the blades from his personal collection of memorabilia. CCM skates were advertised as the 'king of all skates for fast hockey' and were used by all levels of amateur and professional hockey teams.

For the members of the audience, who had owned either skates and/or bicycles, it was a nostalgic reminder of this iconic Canadian brand. *May Isaac*



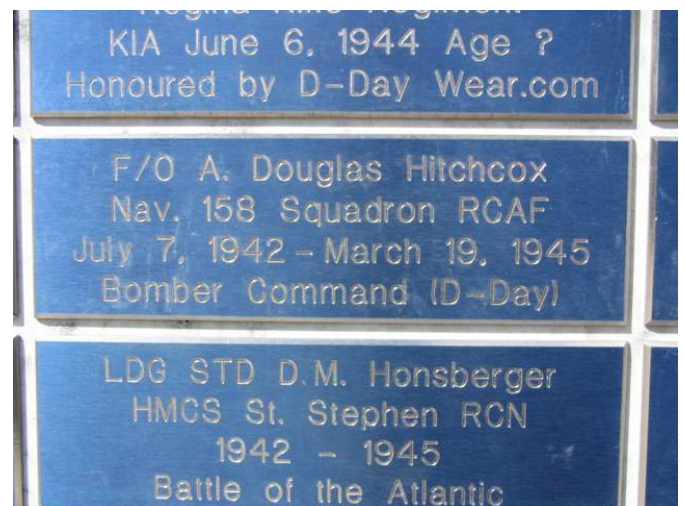
# WE WILL REMEMBER



**Mark Hitchcox** indicating his father's plaque at the Juno Beach Centre

**Mark Hitchcox** (left), son of **Douglas Hitchcox** whom we wrote about in June 2013, sent us photos from his recent visit to the Juno Beach Centre. He writes -

“...the highlight of the visit was to see Dad's name on his brick. To the extent that Dad doesn't have a grave marker anywhere, this served as a physical reminder to the world of his existence and of one of the roles he played during his too-brief time on this planet. It was hard for me to leave when it came time to go.”



**F/O A. Douglas Hitchcox** plaque shown larger, right

**Mr. Alan Ernest** (right) has been contracted by the Town of Oakville to repair headstones including those at Oakville St. Mary's Cemetery on Lyons Lane. The Society recently conducted tours for the Bronte Grandmothers for Africa and Alan was on hand to answer questions about his work. One query was, why are there small stones atop some headstones? Are they placed by a visitor to show respect to the deceased? Are they placed at Jewish graves to keep the soul down? We asked Alan his opinion. His thoughtful, considered reply was, “I put them there to indicate which headstones need my attention.”



# THE WAY WE WERE



## Oakville Historical Society

110 King Street, Oakville

**Archive Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm**

**Third Sunday of the month 12:30 to 4:00 pm**

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~~~~~  
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 Since 1953**  
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IN THE HEART OF ONTARIO

Administered by The Oakville Historical Society

THE  
 OLD POST OFFICE  
 &  
 THOMAS HOUSE  
 MUSEUM

The area known as Old Oakville, with its quiet charm and interestingly varied architecture is still mainly intact. Many buildings and homes carry the Historical Society's plaque as proof of history. The Oakville Historical Society, an organization of volunteers, combines the administration of the Museum with active preservation of Old Oakville . . . and invites you to join with them in this work of preserving history!

**service clubs . . .**

Most major service clubs are represented in Oakville and contribute actively to the Community. Visiting members are welcomed.

**churches . . .**

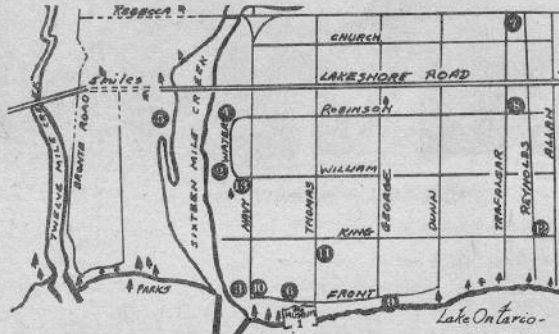
of all faiths welcome visitors to Oakville.



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 Old Post Office . . . 1835  
 Thomas House . . . 1829
2. The Oakville Club 1878
3. Customs House . . . 1855
4. Old Stone Granary . . . . . 1850
5. Old Lighthouse . . . 1889
6. Peter McCorquodale House . . . . . 1837
7. Temperance Hall 1843
8. Leach House . . . . . 1837
9. Worn Doorstep unknown
10. David Patterson House . . . . . 1830
11. Glenorchy . . . . . 1839
12. St. Andrew's Church . . . . . 1840
13. Market Hall (Navy Park) . . . . . 1862

Plaques on old buildings are authorized by the Oakville Historical Society

## THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

**MARCH 2014**

**Volume 48 Number 1**

# PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

## Wednesday March 19th Oakville Historical Society Annual General Meeting

All members are invited to enjoy a pot luck supper at 6:30 pm and make your voice heard at the General Meeting at 7:30 pm. St. John's United Church.

Wednesday  
April 16 **Mr. Terry Reardon**, author, will speak about his latest book, *Winston Churchill and MacKenzie King So Similar-So Different*

Wednesday  
May 21 **Ms Ann Birch** is the author of *Settlement*, a story of romance and adventure set in Upper Canada in 1836-37. Ms Birch has worked for a decade in Toronto's finest old houses as a historical interpreter.

Wednesday  
Oct 15 **Ms Kealy Wilkinson**, Executive Director of the Canadian Broadcast Museum Foundation will talk on the history of the Canadian Broadcasting system

Wednesday  
Nov 19 **Ms Bev Dietrich**, Curator of Guelph Museums. Her talk will be, "In Flanders Fields: John McCrae's Story".

**Above presentations are held at St. John's United Church at Randall and Dunn Streets and begin at 7:30 pm.**

Saturday  
May 10 **Annual Yard Sale** at OHS Offices 110 King St.  
Please think of donating to the sale when you are culling your treasures.  
Call us if you would like us to pick up donations.

Sunday  
June 8 **Annual Mayor's Picnic and Band Concert** hosted by the Oakville Historical Society. Noon to 4:30 at Lakeside Park



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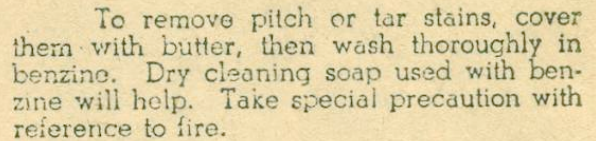
# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Will** this weather ever change for the better! It's been a fairly quiet few months at the office partly because volunteers and visitors have difficulty parking (because of the snowbanks) and then getting into the building because we were caught by a January thaw/freeze which left the walks with 2" of frozen slush.

Please note the date for our upcoming Annual General Meeting. As usual, there will be a pot-luck dinner before the meeting.

For several years now, the attendance on our historical walks (not including the Ghost Walks, fortunately) has been declining. There has, however, been an increase in the number of groups that have contacted us to book a walk. We're hoping this trend will continue. If you're a member of another organization and think their members might be interested in a walk, please suggest it. We also have our new walking tour of Oakville and St Mary's Cemetery. Custom walks can be arranged.

There have been some improvements recently to our facilities. Thanks to Jamie Macrae, the Thomas House got a much-needed coat of paint in the fall. Thanks to the Town, leaks around the chimney at 110 King have been repaired (we hope), the bank behind the building has been stabilized and we have a new fence. We'll be making some more repairs to the buildings this summer.



To remove pitch or tar stains, cover them with butter, then wash thoroughly in benzine. Dry cleaning soap used with benzine will help. Take special precaution with reference to fire.

Doors Open will run again this year but as a Halton-wide initiative. Stay tuned.

This just in – 2014 marks the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn – a decisive Scottish victory in the First War of Scottish Independence. There is, apparently, some debate as to the actual site of the battle but it is generally agreed that it wasn't where the modern visitor centre is located. The Carse of Balquhiderock (pronounce that!) is the most likely place according to the National Trust for Scotland – about 1.5 miles northeast of the traditional site.

*George Chisholm, President*

*Cover illustration and Handy Hints for Ladies taken from 1968 Oakville Directory*



# OAKVILLE REAL ESTATE

## ...a journey back in time

**Anyone** who has had experience with buying or selling Real Estate will tell you that the three most important factors are location, location, and location. For all of us now living in this community we obviously understand how important these factors are but has this historically, always been the case in Oakville. Delving into the topic I start to realize that the wants and needs of homebuyers when looking to purchase a home have basically stayed the same over the generations.

### Let's go back to the year 1913...

The Oakville Historical Society has a copy of a booklet introducing a new development called Brantwood. This new development was situated between Allan St. and Gloucester from Spruce Ave. to Colborne St. (#2 Hwy now known as Lakeshore Rd E.).

*“Healthy lifestyle-living near water” “City conveniences with quick commute” “The most desirable locality in Oakville, which is rapidly becoming an exclusive suburb of the sister cities of Toronto and Hamilton”*

These were a few tag lines used by the developer to draw in prospective buyers to look at home specifications and maps for house locations. It's surprising to see that some of the same reasons why we choose to call Oakville a home today are the same reason families selected Oakville 100 years ago.



Some of the original Brantwood Residence of Professor G.A.Guess, Brantwood homes are still standing today. Take a drive around the neighbourhood and see if you can spot some from the old development.

By the way, you could take the Grand Trunk Railway and get to Toronto in 36 minutes. Sound familiar?

## Let's jump ahead to the 1950s...

**Oakville** was a different place when compared to today. Lakeshore Road was called Colborne Street and the town limits were from Maurice Dr. to Allan St.

The Ford Motor Company opened its doors and the first car rolled off the lot May 11th, 1953; employees needed a place to live. Other businesses needed a place to operate from and for their employees to live as well. Trafalgar Township was in the process of being developed from Third Line to Ninth line.

In June 1954, the Oakville Trafalgar Real Estate Board was formed with 41 members. Based on research I found, there were only 3 real estate brokerages in town: W.S David and Sons, T.S.H Giles and Ryrice & Carter. In the 40s and start of the 50s however, with Oakville growing at a rapid pace, the need for a Board was apparent. The newly created board was to help increase the realtors' image and to set guidelines around buying and selling in the Oakville area which was now on the map and growing.

Bungalows were being built on large lots. Depending on zoning you could get a 1,350, 1,150 or 950 square foot home built with no garage, a single or a double car garage. These modern homes offered town sewers and were heated with oil. The odd home even had air conditioning.

To remove the water mark which forms on the bathroom tumbler, fill it with sour milk or buttermilk and let stand over night.

To clean chimneys and stovepipes, put a piece of zinc on the live coals in the stove.

Save tobacco ashes and use them for cleansing silver or silver plate. Apply with a damp cloth, and finish with a soft dry one.

Let's talk about a man by the name of Thomas A. Blakelock – sound familiar? It is the name of the second-oldest high school in Oakville, located on Rebecca Street just west of Fourth Line, built in 1957 and named for him in recognition of his many years of service to the province and community. The school is still in use today. Thomas was one half of the general contracting company known as the Blakelock Brothers Lumber Company which he established with his brother James in 1912, building homes and providing supplies to the general public. In 1949, the brothers were advertising their abilities to build homes as “the Home Builders”. One such home was constructed in 1947/8 at Reynolds and William Street. It is understood that the home was built for a pastor, by the name of Robert W. Allen and with much help from the community to accomplish it. If anyone knows more about this we would love to hear from you.



**Today** this home is still standing and located in the Heritage district south of Lakeshore Road in Olde Oakville on William Street. As you will see from the picture the home looks relatively the same. The original cedar shake siding (as told to me by the current owner) has been changed to horizontal siding and is now white. I look forward to seeing the home in the springtime as the gardens grow to showcase its beautifully landscaped yard.



1948



2014

**T.A. Blakelock** went on to enter public life as a councillor for the Town of Oakville and later successively served in multiple roles within the county of Halton as Warden, Mayor and member of the Ontario Legislative Assembly for 18 years. He then served on the Oakville-Trafalgar District High School Board for ten years as both member and chair. He also had time to be on the local parks management board.

To soften butter, fill a small china bowl, one just sufficiently large to cover the butter, with boiling water; let stand a minute or two or until thoroughly heated, then empty the water and immediately turn the hot bowl upside down over the butter. In a few minutes, the butter will be softened so it is just right.

## Fast forward 10 years to the 60's...

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- Solid brick bungalow—3 large bedrooms.
- Large kitchen with breakfast area.
- 4-piece colored tile bathroom.
- 35-ft. recreation room — divided basement.
- High, sandy lot measuring 60' x 150'.
- Sanitary sewers, 100 amp. wiring, oil heat.
- Completely decorated and ready for occupancy.
- N.H.A. mortgage carries for \$80 monthly.

This home represents top value in an R-2 area, and we are instructed to present all offers. Asking price \$15,150. Co-op list.

Oakville amalgamated with Trafalgar Township and Bronte. Oakville Trafalgar Real Estate Board had been established for several years and the local paper, The Oakville Record-Star, had established a Real Estate section where buyers could expect to find all the listings for both new builds and re-sales in one place. One ad shows a solid brick bungalow minutes from T.A. Blakelock high school for \$15,150. The realtors were instructed to bring all offers. Another offers 70 different models and based on price you could have a “True Hollywood kitchen, 2-car garage, treed lots, or executive home with fireplace” encouraging buyers to “visit the heated, furnished showroom at Bridge Road and Third Line”.

Oakville continued to grow through the 60's and 70's and develop lands east over to Winston Churchill, west to Burloak Road and north to Upper Middle Rd.


Developers were offering features not unlike what families are looking for today such as 3 bedrooms, L-shaped living room, fireplace, and open kitchens to dining rooms. Today we see advertisements such as exclusive neighbourhood, updated bungalow with granite counters and stainless steel appliances, and double garage with

inside entry.

The town of Oakville has added more than 100,000 residents to its neighbourhoods and with it has grown a very active Real Estate industry. Through all of Oakville's growth, it has managed to maintain its small town feel, which is only one of the many reasons we all choose to live here.

When it comes to location, location, location you will find after looking at all of the neighbourhoods that there is no bad location in Oakville.

If you have time, stop by the Historical Society for a chance to take a look at the beautiful Brantwood development book with maps and photos of how they creatively advertised and built homes in the early 1900s. *Dawn McWhirter, Sales Representative with RE/MAX Aboutowne Realty, also provided additional photos and images.*



**"IN THE LAND OF THE WHITE OAKS"**

**\$500**

**FULL DOWN PAYMENT**

It's here all homes in offer for in the Oakville area. Look for the building near the Market Street in Scarborough. — from 75¢ to 1.00 per sq. ft. in the White Oak area. — from 75¢ to 1.00 per sq. ft. in the White Oak area. — from 75¢ to 1.00 per sq. ft. in the White Oak area. — from 75¢ to 1.00 per sq. ft. in the White Oak area.

**JUST A SAMPLE**

**SLIM FULL PRICE** — 8 rooms, fully decorated. Low salary. Two-car garage. Low down payment.

**SLIM FULL PRICE** — Three bedrooms, wood lot, with fullwood kitchen. BEAR and first garage in R-2A, mortgage in \$12.00 monthly.

**SLIM** — Three bedrooms with full wood. Two-car garage. Fullwood kitchen. BEAR and first garage in R-2A, mortgage in \$12.00 monthly.

**SLIM** — Executive home with granite and stainless steel. Updated woodpaned kitchen. No salary representation.

Visit Our Hottest, Furnished Model Homes  
VALLEY 7-1125

C. A.

**STANLEY**

REAL ESTATE  
BRIDGE ROAD AT THIRD LINE

# AROUND OAKVILLE

## The Webbs of Kerr Street

The article on Kerr Street in our September newsletter elicited many comments and memories from members. Member Wendy Janisse called with regard to the article, suggesting that her Mother, Audrey Turner, aged 102, would like to add her memories of early Kerr Street, so I set out to speak with Audrey, so articulate and bright that one would assume her age to be much younger.

Audrey's husband and Wendy's Father, George Herbert (Bert) Webb was born in 1908 in a dark brown house on Brock Street and Bond, near Ortona Barracks. The family later moved to a stone house built with stones from their fruit farm which was located on Kerr St. on the west side of Oakwood between Prince Charles and Stewart Streets. (The house later became a motor vehicle licensing office.) While gathering the stone for the building of the house, the family found a musket and arrowheads. This collection is still in the family's possession.



Mrs. Audrey Turner  
*photo A. Stewart*

Bert's father's name was George William Webb. His mother, Mary Kate Webb, was a great friend of Mrs. Stansbury whose family owned a large strawberry farm up on Speers Road. Bert went to grade school with the Smith girls who lived in the old stone houses, now on the Rain development condo site awaiting redevelopment. Audrey and Bert went to Oakville Trafalgar High School with the eldest girl, Elsie Smith, and Audrey recalls a Good Friday hike along Highway 2 with the Smith girls.

Bert's sister Connie went to secretarial school and his brother Maurice joined the air force. The day before he was posted to go overseas, he died. His name is engraved on a plaque at St. Jude's Church and at the cenotaph.

Bert and Audrey, nee Leaver, were married in 1934 and had 4 children, Keith, John, Wendy and Susan. The Webbs lived initially in an old house on Reynolds Street, still standing, and later moved to Park Avenue, where they built a house that cost \$4000 on a \$100 lot. The basement was being dug on the day that the Second World War was declared and they moved in during February, 1940.

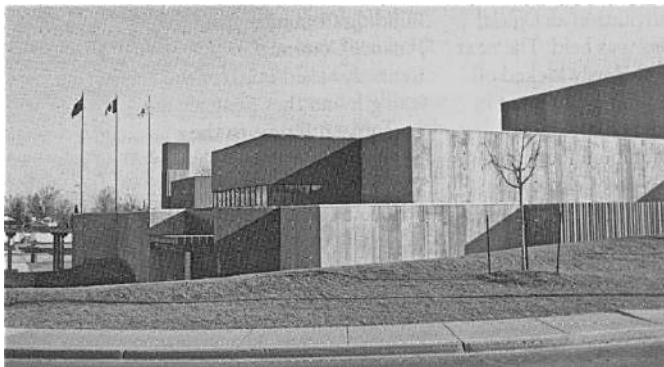
**Bert** became head mechanic at Whittaker`s garage where he worked for many years with Ethel Winzer, mentioned in our article on Kerr Street. Bert played trombone in The Oakville Band.

Wendy`s sister was born in Mrs. Taylor`s Nursing Home , housed in the old house just north of the tracks on the east side of Kerr. Wendy was born in a nursing home located south of Bamber`s store.

Audrey`s family background is also of interest. Her mother lived on Royal Windsor Drive in a house built by her Grandfather William Winter, stonemason. (The house is still standing, east of Ford Drive just past Rona on the north side of Royal Windsor Drive.) William Winter built the foundation for Knox Presbyterian Church. The Winters came from England and the children went to Maple Grove School. Audrey grew up in a house on Winston Churchill Blvd. and recalls the long walk from there to the school. Grandfather William Winter raised four girls and two boys after his wife died. There is a cairn, located on Winston Churchill Blvd. and the QEW, dedicated to the Winter family, as well as the few families who lived in the little hamlet of Sheridan.

*Andrea Stewart*

**The Oakville Centre For The Performing Arts**, shown right, designed by Ron Thom, opened in 1977 as part of Centennial Square. The town of Oakville is now seeking citizens` opinions on what the Square should look like in the future.



An exhibit of the architect`s work, *Ron Thom and the Allied Arts* is at the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Arts, Toronto, until April 27.

## AROUND THE SOCIETY

On 18 February, four members of the Society received Ontario Heritage Trust Awards in a ceremony at Town Hall. Clare Fiala and Brayden Ross were presented with Young Heritage Leaders Awards in the Built Heritage category for their work at the Thomas House. Andrea Stewart and George Chisholm received Heritage Community Recognition Awards. Andrea's was in the Built Heritage category, partly for her work on Doors Open. George's was in the Cultural Heritage category.



G. Chisholm, C. Fiala, Mayor R. Burton,  
B. Ross, A Stewart  
*photo V. Segreto*



Hon. Col. Haddon (l) with an  
interested audience member.

*photo S. Wells*

**Honorary** Colonel Haddon spoke at our recent Speakers event with passion and personal anecdotes about his grandfather, J.A.D McCurdy, the first British subject to fly a heavier-than-air machine in the British Empire. The flight took place February 23, 1909 on Bras d'Or Lake, Baddeck, Nova Scotia in an aeroplane called the Silver Dart. There were so many facets to his recollections (Mrs. Mabel Bell's financial contribution, Mr. McCurdy's meeting with the Wright brothers) that the audience had many questions which were all thoughtfully answered.



# AROUND THE SOCIETY



Photo above shows the process of constructing a plaque - all for a donation of \$150.

Having a plaque made for your building – be it a store, house or other structure – is easy. Simply contact the Society and give us the address of the building. We have information and the date of construction on many of the buildings in town. P. Brimacombe, G. Chisholm, M. Davidson, J. Hitchcox, R. Peacock and J. Young, the plaque committee, welcome your requests.

When hanging out clothes, put your basket on the children's wagon. If a child is handy to pull it for you, so much the better. It saves stooping and keeps the basket clean on muddy days.

To prevent clothes from freezing to the clothesline rope boil it for half an hour or so in salt water. This will also prevent the line from tangling. The clothespins should be boiled in salt water, too.

To clean and keep the clothes from sticking to the line in winter time, rub the wire clothesline with a cloth soaked in coal oil.

If knives are to be stored for a time, clean them, rub them with a little sweet oil, and fold them one by one in flannel, baize or chamois leather.

To clean white kid gloves, pull them on the hands, and rub firmly with a piece of flannel dampened with a soapy solution to which a little milk has been added. Care should be taken to wet the gloves as little as possible. Afterwards place in the open air to dry.

The Thomas House will be open Monday May 19th and our summer schedule begins in June. If you enjoy meeting the public and would like to volunteer a few hours in our c1850 museum, we want to hear from you  
~ Complete list of Handy Hints for Ladies - and Gentlemen! will be supplied ~  
Call and ask for Mary Davidson or Susan Wells



# THE WAY THINGS WERE



Where is this wonderful place?

**H**OW different the picture of a home in Brantwood! Here one may enjoy immunity from the gaze of the curious passer-by—from the pranks of the mischievous small boy—from the irritating buzz and grind of the city's turmoil, with its accompaniment of soot and smoke. ¶In Brantwood one may keep a horse, a cow and some chickens, and the rich, loamy soil is particularly adapted to the cultivation of flowers, vegetables and fruits. The first strawberries raised in Canada are said to have been grown in Oakville, and to-day Oakville strawberries are famous for their size and flavor. ¶Moreover, in Brantwood it is not necessary to wait a lifetime to enjoy the pride and comfort of arching shade trees. Maples, elms and oaks of nearly a century's growth are here in abundance, and majestic pine groves furnish shade and color-contrast sufficient to satiate the soul of the landscape painter or the lover of nature. To acquire such trees is a long and tedious process—to select a homesite and decide as to which trees shall be preserved is a delightful pastime.



## Oakville Historical Society

**NEW!! Send all mail to:**

110 King Street

Oakville, On L6J 1B1

Our office address is now  
our postal address



**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](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)



**THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER**

**JUNE 2014**

**Volume 48 Number 2**



# PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

Wednesday  
Oct 15      **Ms. Kealy Wilkinson** is from the Canadian Broadcast Museum Foundation which collects, preserves and celebrates the National Broadcast Collection including programs, artifacts, oral histories, etc. from private and public broadcasters. She will share some of these with us.

Wednesday  
Nov 15      **Ms Bev Dietrich**, Curator of Guelph Museums. Her talk will be, "In Flanders Fields: John McCrae's Story".

**Above presentations are held at St. John's United Church at  
Randall and Dunn Streets, 7:30 - 9:00 pm  
Admission is free and refreshments are served**

**The Mayor's Historical Picnic** will be held on Sunday June 8th at Lakeside Park. **Mayor Rob Burton** and our OHS Crier, **Ian Burkholder**, will open the picnic at 12:00 noon. Oakville's **Dixieland Band** will play until 2:30 and following that the **Oakville Wind Orchestra** (Canada's oldest Concert Band) will play until 4:30. Picnickers will be entertained by the **Oakville Ale and Sword Dancers** and children will be treated to balloons as well as face painting.

The **Oakville Firefighters** will once again be present with their Fire Engine and will demonstrate auto-extrication as part of their public education special projects. **Oakville Hydro** will be giving "bucket" rides in their special "cherry picker". Antique **Ford** cars will be on display.

It is an afternoon of music and free family fun . Bring friends and family, a picnic lunch, lawnchairs and sunhats.      *Marianne Hawthorne*



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Another** summer season must be upon us as the Thomas House is open for business and the Mayor's Picnic is all set to go. I hope to see many of you there.

This past winter has been one of the coldest and longest in recent memory. It was so cold, in fact, that for several months the sewers at the office were frozen solid. If made for some dashes across the lawn to the Museum. With the warmer weather, they're fine now so bring on the crowds of summer visitors.

If you are a member of another group, please consider booking one of our group walks. We now offer four – Old Oakville Heritage Houses, Main Street, Trafalgar Road and the new Oakville and St Mary's Cemetery. At this point, we are only offering them to groups. If we get enough interest, however, we can easily set one up.

I would like to thank all those who gave best wishes on the safe arrival in Regina of our first grandchild – Geneviève Rose Chisholm, a member of the 8<sup>th</sup> generation in Canada.

*George Chisholm, President*

Five of our board Members were recognized in April by the **Ontario Government's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration** for years of volunteer dedication with Oakville Historical Society: Harry Barrett (60 years), George Chisholm (20 years), Greg Munz, Mary Davidson and Susan Wells (5 years each). George also received an award for his work with his Robotics Team. We are very grateful for the dedication and contribution of each of these hard-working board members.

**Harry Barrett** received enthusiastic applause, especially from the young volunteers in the audience. Harry's association with Oakville Historical Society began in the 1950s when he discovered old ships' manifests and other documents while working at Erchless and brought them to the attention of Mrs. Hazel Chisholm Mathews, founder of Oakville Historical Society. Mrs. Mathews used these documents in her noted history of Oakville, *Oakville And the Sixteen*. We are grateful to Harry for his ongoing work dedicated to the heritage of our beautiful town. *Andrea Stewart*



H. Barrett(l), M. Davidson, G. Chisholm,  
G. Munz

# Oakville and the Mississauga in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

by Don Smith

**After** the American Revolution British American settlers loyal to the Crown arrived on the north shore of Lake Ontario. They encountered the Ojibwe First Nations. For some unknown reason the non-Aboriginal settlers termed the Ojibwe on the north shore of Lake Ontario, “Mississauga”, the name by which they are still known to this day. It is not their designation for themselves. In their Ojibwe language they call themselves, Anishinabeg, often written “Anishinaabeg.” They belong to a First Nations group that extends from the Great Lakes to the Northern Plains. The Ojibwe came down from the north, and by the beginning of the eighteenth century had expelled the Iroquois or Five (later Six) Nations from southern Ontario. As the Royal Proclamation of 1763 stipulated, the British made treaties with the Mississauga on the north shore of Lake Ontario before actual settlement proceeded.



**Peter Jones** at age 31 on the eve of his departure from England for Canada. Artist: Matilda Jones. Courtesy of the Victoria University Library, Toronto

**Oakville** remained a reserve on each side of the Sixteen Mile Creek, 960 acres in extent, until 1827. In that year Oakville’s founder, William Chisholm, purchased the tract from the Crown. The British believed that the treaty of February 28, 1820, gave them the right to sell the reserve. The British used the payment to help pay for the construction of log cabins for the Mississauga. At the Credit River to the east, Mississauga converts to Methodism (Methodists are now part of the United Church) built a model village.

**From** 1826 to 1847 the Credit Mississauga hunters, and fishers adapted to a new lifestyle of clearing land and practising European-style agriculture. Their own Ojibwe leaders such as Chief Peter Jones led the community. When in residence in the village the children and young adults attended the mission school and learned English. Literacy in English allowed them to record their own version of past events. The Credit Mississauga recalled the February 1820 treaty in terms quite different from the British. In 1847, Head Chief Joseph Sawyer and Chief Peter Jones recorded the Mississauga recollections of the treaties.

The list they prepared of “tracts of land, which to the best of their knowledge and belief have never been surrendered to the crown,” included, “the Reserve at the 16 mile creek now Oakville.” They believed that the British had promised to protect their land, not to sell it.

Oakville is blest that Hazel C. Mathews, William Chisholm’s great-granddaughter, wrote *Oakville and the Sixteen*. She was so thorough. In 1947 descendants of John Aikman Williams (1829-1921), an early resident of Oakville, allowed her to copy his memoirs. The original manuscript has not survived but her extensive summary does. In his memoirs Williams recalled how in the mid-1830s a group of Credit Mississauga returned to Oakville each summer. They encamped in a clearing on the east side of town site, near present-day First Street. Mathews summarized in *Oakville and the Sixteen*: “They made baskets, moccasins, bows and arrows, axe handles, ox yokes, brooms and mats to be traded in Oakville. Small Indian boys amused the white boys by shooting coppers out of a stock split so as to hold a copper while the sharp end was pushed into the ground. Old George Crookfinger was one of their leaders.”

Apart from Williams’s manuscript little additional knowledge survives about the Mississauga in early Oakville. In 1847 the Credit Mississauga moved further westward after the British refused to grant them security of tenure to their Credit River Reserve. They relocated west of Hamilton, near Hagersville, and there founded New Credit where they live today. In the late nineteenth century, well into the mid-twentieth century some New Credit people returned to Oakville but not to the lakefront. They and other First Nations berrypickers travelled in the late spring for a number of weeks to the strawberry farms north of town, such as that of John Cross north of the railway where Cross Avenue now runs. No written accounts record their memories.



Mississauga Place-Names at the Western End of Lake Ontario

**One** important reference does survive of a Mississauga visitor to Oakville. Hazel Mathews located it. In the *Oakville Star*, an early Oakville newspaper, she found an 1889 news story which reported that “Saigitoo, the medicine man from the Mississaugas of New Credit, ... son of the well known Indian doctor Maungwudaus,” visited Urquhart’s Medical Hall with a “full supply of medicines from his father’s recipes.” [The actual building in which Mr. Urquhart sold his herbs still stands at 182 Lakeshore Road East. For over twenty years it has been the home of TO SET A TABLE, which sells kitchenware and tabletop gifts on the same site in the same structure that Urquhart’s Medical Hall once occupied a century and a quarter ago.] Allan Sherwin noted many non-Aboriginal Canadians in the nineteenth century appreciated the experience and wisdom of the First Nation herbalists.

**Saigitoo**, or George Henry Jr. to use his English name, was in his mid-60s at the time of his Oakville visit. His father, Maungwudaus, or George Henry, had worked as a Methodist missionary assistant after several years of schooling at the Old Credit mission.



Maungwudaus, “a great hero,” in English George Henry.  
second from left, 1851

**The** entrepreneurial Maungwudaus came to find Methodist church life too confining. In 1844 he broke away, and toured in Europe with his family in what would later be called a “Wild West Show.” Saigitoo, the best archer of Maungwudaus’s sons, spent his teenage years abroad. Each member of the troupe received a silver medal from the King of France in Paris. They were welcomed to the home of the Duke of Wellington in London. Queen Victoria’s first cousin, Sir Augustus d’Este, befriended them. Around 1854 Saigitoo took up residence at New Credit and married Mary Finger, one of George Crooked Finger’s granddaughters. As Allan Sherwin describes in *Bridging Two Peoples* Saigitoo became a prominent member of the New Credit community serving on their Council in the late nineteenth century.

In the 1890s the Elders had not forgotten that the British had sold their last remaining reserves, at Oakville, Bronte, and the Credit. On November 20, 1894, Saigitoo himself spoke at an important meeting at New Credit about land issues. The Hamilton Spectator reported the next day: *A Claim to Be Made to the Government For Payment for a Large Tract of Land on the North Shore, Including the Site of Oakville.* In Dr. Peter E. Jones's words the Dominion and the Provincial Board of Arbitrators decided, “*against the Indians’ claim.*”

**Don Smith**, a professor emeritus of history at the University of Calgary, was raised in Oakville. A member of the last graduating class of old Central School he attended Oakville Trafalgar High School, and then the University of Toronto. After graduate studies in Canadian History at Université Laval in Quebec City (M.A.) and the University of Toronto (Ph.D.), he taught at the University of Calgary from 1974 to 2009. He is author of *Sacred Feathers* and *Mississauga Portraits Ojibwe Voices from Nineteenth-Century Canada*.

**Allan Sherwin** is a professor emeritus of neurology at McGill University where he taught and practiced clinical neurology. Dr. Sherwin’s clinical practice included work at a clinic responsible for the health of a First Nation community, which led to an appreciation of Indigenous traditions. He is author of *Bridging Two Peoples Chief Peter E. Jones, 1843–1909*.

OHS June 2014 cover is from *Mississauga Portraits* by Don Smith and reproduces the painting of Maungwudaus, completed by the famous Canadian artist Paul Kane around 1851. All illustrations accompanying this article are courtesy of Don Smith.



## AROUND OAKVILLE



**Al Wilson (at left) and Jack Mason** meet every week and recently I had the pleasure of joining them. Al was born and grew up in Oakville while Jack moved here after serving in the army in World War II.

If you need to know anything about life in Oakville in the last 85 years, these are the men to ask. Between them they can tell you what an Oakville house lot cost in 1945 (\$50); where the rat-infested dump was (near the mouth of the 16); what happened after the basket factory workers went on strike (the pay rate went *down*

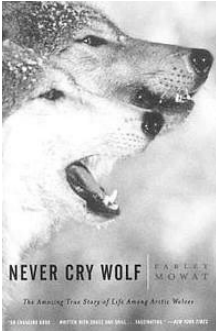
from 15¢ to 12¢ per hour); where Count Basie played c1940 (the Country Club, in the former Jacob's Jam factory, Randall St.); cars Al has owned (one a 1962 Silver Grey Studebaker Lark); how 7 and 9 year old brothers enjoying a Sunday afternoon sail on Montye Macrae's schooner the *Anitra* and explained their absence to mother when it turned into a two-day race to Kingston against World War II training vessels; and other recollections a family paper cannot print. *Susan Wells*



Jack owns a pot manufactured by the aluminum factory that stood at the northeast corner of Trafalgar Road and Randall Street, currently the site of Trafalgar Lodge.

# AROUND OAKVILLE

## IT ALL STARTED RIGHT HERE IN OAKVILLE



**Farley Mowat**, May 12, 1921 - May 6, 2014, spent time with his grandparents at 212 King St. Oakville.

From *Never Cry Wolf* :

“It is a long way in time and space from the bathroom of my Grandmother Mowat’s house in Oakville, Ontario, to the bottom of a wolf den in the Barren Lands of central Keewatin, and I have no intention of retracing the entire road which lies between. Nevertheless, there must be a beginning to any tale; and the story of my sojourn amongst the wolves begins properly in Granny’s bathroom.”



212 King St., Oakville  
For Sale, see RE/MAX Aboutowne  
Realty Corp., Brokerage

Correction. On page 9, March 2014 issue, we misspelled Whitaker. The name has one T. Thanks to a reader who alerted us. We welcome all comments and suggestions.

## DOORS OPEN

**Mark** your calendars for the weekend of September 27 and 28. The Town of Oakville will be participating in a Halton-wide **Doors Open** event which will include many new sites in Halton Hills (Glen Williams), Milton and Burlington. A brochure describing the various sites will be available over the summer at our office, as well as Town of Oakville public spaces. We will welcome volunteers who are interested in assisting as hosts at our various sites. Please let me know if you are interested. *Andrea Stewart*

# AROUND THE SOCIETY

## Thomas House 2014

open 1:30 - 4:00 pm

**May & June** Open weekends and Holiday Mondays as of Saturday May 17, 2014

**July & August** Open weekends and Holiday Mondays plus Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays

**September** Open Labour Day & Sundays until the end of September

**Saturday & Sunday, September 27th & 28th** Open with extended hours to coincide with the other venues throughout Halton for **Doors Open**

Do drop in and visit with our volunteers – bring your visitors for a glimpse of Oakville history.

*Mary Davidson*

## Yard Sale 2014

In spite of the weather, we had a good turnout for the Yard Sale May 3rd and had some great things to sell.

Our grand tally at 3:30 pm was \$996 which was rounded up with an anonymous donation of two toonies, making the total an even \$1000.

I would like to thank all of you for your contribution of sale items, hard work setting up for the sale and selling to the public, today and during past sales. We had great support again from The Friends and other friends who helped out, including the Lakeside Rate Payers Association.

Several attendees expressed an interest in the Speakers Nights and in obtaining a membership in the Society. I think everyone enjoyed themselves and hopefully gave the OHS some added exposure, while earning a few extra dollars for the coffers of the OHS.

*Jim Young*



Volunteers and bargain hunters

# AROUND THE SOCIETY

**Our** April speaker was **Mr. Terry Reardon** (r), author of *Winston Churchill And Mackenzie King So Similar So Different*, an intriguing title, the difference being obvious. While Mr. Churchill was famously extraverted, charismatic and impetuous, Canada's Prime Minister Mackenzie was a cautious introvert. But whatever the differences, they built a working, somewhat personal, relationship whose significance would have a profound effect on the outcome of World War II. Canada's role in the war was incalculable; it is estimated that our per capita contribution was three times that of the US. The sacrifice of the young men who went to war, the sacrifice made by Canadians in financial aid, technology and food all played an essential role. It is said that without Canadian food aid the British would have starved. King, working as intermediary between Churchill and Roosevelt played a large part in gaining the support of the American public in supporting the war. Mr. Reardon is to be congratulated on this readable and fascinating story and interesting account of the negotiations that took place in the course of World War II. Copies are available at a discount to our members through our office. *Andrea Stewart*



## **Hi Members,**

There are some forty memberships which have not yet been renewed for 2014. We should hate to lose interested members. If you have not yet renewed, please complete and return the enclosed yellow renewal form.

Please note that we are now having our mail delivered to the office rather than the PO Box number. **Our new address is 110 King Street, Oakville, ON L6J 1B1**  
*Andrea Stewart, Memberships*

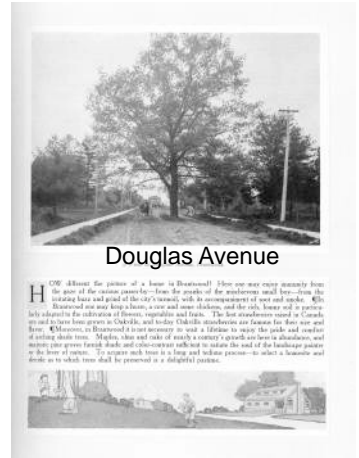
# THE WAY THINGS WERE



**Power Store** on Kerr St. opening day, September 1959. To the north (right, in above picture) is the Liquor Control Board, now Salvation Army. The Power Store building has been replaced.



In 1814, land that is now **Glen Abbey** was granted to King's College. In the 1930s Toronto mining executive André Dorfman purchased 350 acres for a country estate, which he called Raydor (ré-Dor). The Toronto diocese of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) purchased the estate for \$265,000 in 1953. It was used as a retreat until 1963 when Clearstream Developments purchased the property for a golf course.



**Brantwood Survey Booklet.** Copyright 1913 by Cumberland Land Co. Limited. Brantwood Survey is bordered by Colborne St.(now Lakeshore Rd.), Spruce Ave., Allan St. and Gloucester Rd.

**Send all mail to:**

**110 King Street  
Oakville, On  
L6J 1B1**

**Our office address  
is now our postal  
address**

## Archive Hours:

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

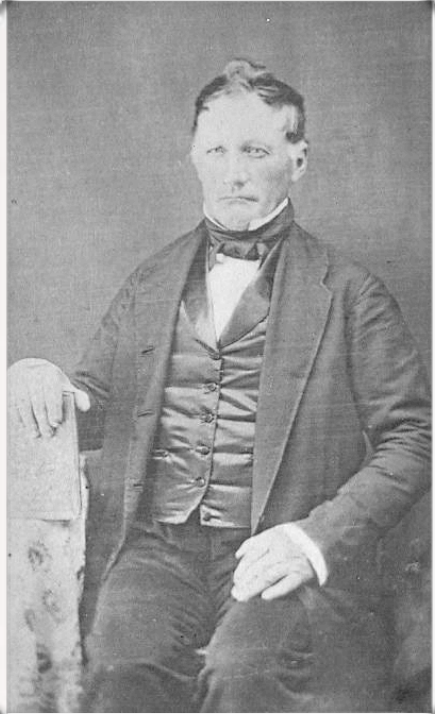
**(905) 844-2695 [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**







**Esther Thomas**  
**1806 - 1891**



**Merrick Thomas**  
**1803 - 1856**

*An Influential Oakville Family*

**THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER**

**SEPTEMBER 2014    Volume 48 Number 3**

# PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

Wednesday  
Oct 15      **Ms. Kealy Wilkinson** will speak about the Canadian Broadcast Museum Foundation which collects, preserves and celebrates the National Broadcast Collection including programs, artifacts, oral histories and etc. from private and public broadcasters.

Wednesday  
Nov 15      **Ms Bev Dietrich**, Curator of Guelph Museums. Her talk is entitled, "In Flanders Fields: John McCrae's Story."

Wednesday  
Feb 18      **Mr. Bill Thompson** from the Halton County Radial Railway will give a historical review of Canada's Street Cars.

**Above presentations are held at St. John's United Church at Randall and Dunn Streets, 7:30 - 9:00 pm  
Admission is free and refreshments are served**

**Mark** your calenders for the weekend of **September 27 and 28**. The Town of Oakville will be participating in a Halton-wide **Doors Open** event which will include many new sites in Halton Hills (Glen Williams), Milton and Burlington. A brochure describing the various sites is available at our office and at Town of Oakville public spaces. We welcome volunteers who are interested in assisting as hosts at our various sites. Please let me know if you are interested. Our offices at **110 King St** as well as the **Thomas House** will be open. We also offer tours of the **Town Of Oakville/St. Mary's Cemetery**, Lyons Lane. *Andrea Stewart*

Send all mail to:  
**110 King Street**  
**Oakville On L6J 1B1**  
Office address is our mail address



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

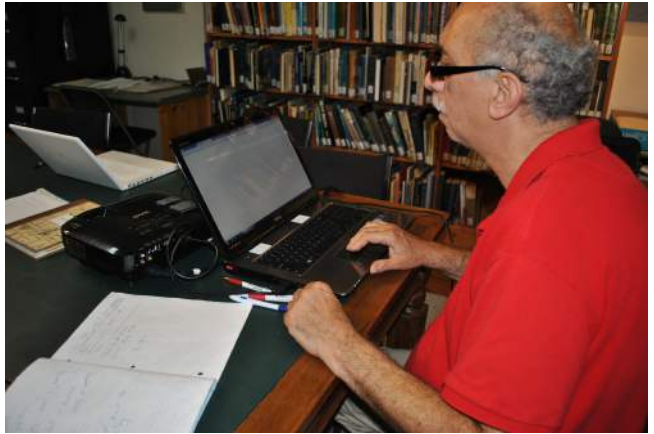


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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**At last!** Our new website has gone live. On behalf of the board and the society, I would like to thank **Stan Smurlick** for all his work in recreating the website. It is the main way that we communicate with the general public and, although Norm Sadler did an amazing job with the previous version, a re-work was past due. Please have a look at it and make suggestions. It remains a work in progress. [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)

**We've** been making some changes at the office this summer. The storage or archives room (depends who you talk to) in the southeast corner of the building has been emptied, cleaned and painted. All the oversize archives boxes and our collection of the Steve Nease cartoons have been moved to our space at the Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre. The space reclaimed at the office will become our technologies room. As part of our long-term plan to scan items in the collection and automate our records, we are applying for a Trillium grant to furnish this room with appropriate equipment including a copy stand, large-format scanning equipment and computers. Thank you **Donna Moran** for deciphering the grant requirements.



Mr. Stanley Smurlick, tireless OHS  
website designer

**There** was an informal discussion last week about how busy the office is becoming. Granted, some days are fairly quiet but on most days there can be anywhere up to 15 people hard at work on one project or another. A recent visitor was a former tenant who was amazed at the changes we've made over the years. **Phil Brimacombe** and **Stewart Sherriff** continue to open the office on the third Sunday afternoon of each month and the number of visitors continues to grow. Many are out for a walk and just drop in but more and more are making a special trip.

**By** November 11th, a new exhibit should be in place. Stay tuned for an official announcement. *George Chisholm, President*

# MERRICK THOMAS

**Long** before it made its journey to its current home in Lakeside Park, the Thomas House stood on the North side of Lakeshore Road West, west of Margaret Road West, as a reminder of one of the first families to settle in Oakville, Ontario. In fact, the travels of the house from its original locale to Lakeside Park, a transition made



Thomas House at Lakeshore Drive, 1955

possible by the Oakville Historical Society in 1955, parallels the travels of the Thomas family, moving from Massachusetts upwards into Ontario, before settling in Oakville.

Although the house in question belonged to Merrick Thomas, the story of the family begins with his father, Seneca Thomas and his misadventures on both sides of the War of 1812.

**Seneca Thomas** was the son of Dr. Amos Williams and was born in West Brookfield, Massachusetts. He married Aseneth Gibbs of Greenwich, Massachusetts and the couple moved to North Vermont afterwards, having four children together. At the outbreak of the War of 1812 Seneca was working on the fortifications on Queenston Heights for the British forces. Despite his employment with the Colonials, he swiftly defected from their side, enlisting in the American forces in New York State. During his service with these forces, he was wounded and taken prisoner on October 12th 1812, at Queenston Heights. Soon after this event however, he was hit with another tragedy in the death of his wife. With his four children left without a mother, he was permitted to attend the funeral under guard. At the funeral, Seneca staged an escape and it was said he “managed to escape, either by the connivance of his captors or by his own shrewdness, ever after giving Canada a wide berth.” With his escape from Canada, his children were separated, with only the two oldest boys, Merrick and Charles Augustus remaining together, until Charles moved to Eastern Massachusetts at the age of fifteen.

**While** in his residence in America, Seneca recovered from the loss of his first wife, marrying Hannah Gibbs, sister of Aseneth and they settled in Worcester, Massachusetts. After the honeymoon, it is said that Seneca inquired as to the location of money she had boasted of, with Hannah replying “Oh, that was courting talk. Where are all the houses and canal-boats that you were possessed of?” with Seneca revealing “well Hannah, that was courting talk too”. Seneca would outlive Hannah, and she died without children in Worcester, Massachusetts. Seneca spent much of his latter life spending time with one of his sons in Boston. He did receive a pension from the United States, which honored his services in the War of 1812, and even went on to marry again, although his third wife outlived him. He died in Worcester, Massachusetts on April 2nd, 1860 at the age of eighty-six with his lineage entirely represented through his first marriage. It was said of Seneca Thomas that he was “a man of great independence of character, caring little for others’ opinions of his doings, and was inclined to be sarcastic in his own opinion,” an image reinforced by the way in which he led his life.

**Merrick Thomas**, Seneca’s eldest son, led a less complicated history, and was the Thomas who was the first of the family to settle in Oakville, Ontario. He was born in St. Alban’s, Vermont on May 26th, 1803 and was said to be the first white child delivered in that town. At the time of his mother’s death and his father’s dramatic escape from British imprisonment, Merrick was no more than 10 years old. It is said that one of his first memories was of driving an army cart with the British forces on their way to Burlington Heights. At this time, he was employed by a Mr. William Kent, living at the head of Lake Ontario, in a settlement called Saltfleet, a township which is now part of Stoney Creek. Mr. Kent owned a substantial number of enterprises in the area, including a store, salt-works and a saw-mill, as well as multiple ships. Merrick Thomas worked his way through many positions as a result, serving “as a sawyer, sailor and clerk,” up to the position of general manager.

**After** leaving Mr. Kent’s employ, Merrick served as a general manager under William Chisholm, who was running a mercantile and lumber business in Nelson, Ontario, transporting lumber down the St. Lawrence to Quebec with ships also following this route. William Chisholm eventually elected to place Merrick Thomas in charge of the new settlement in Oakville, Ontario, with Merrick helping to clear forests, establish buildings, improve harbours, create piers, as well as construct vessels, with claims being made that Oakville was the first settlement to build a steam boat on Lake Ontario.



**Merrick Thomas** also served as “a Justice of the Peace for the united counties of Wentworth, and Halton, District of Gore ... held a commission as captain of artillery, and was a Government Commissioner of Light-houses and Harbours ... had his tastes led him into politics, would have been successful as a political leader.” He married Esther Silverthorn of Lundy’s Lane in 1827 and had seven children with her, although three would die in infancy. In Oakville they lived first in a house on Thomas Street, which was built in 1833 but was destroyed by fire in 1839 while occupied by William Chisholm. However, their surviving house was built on what Trafalgar Township records show as a two-hundred-acre farm, leased from King’s College, to Merrick Thomas in 1829.

**The** house itself is believed to have been built in 1829 on the site of what is now St. Thomas Aquinas High School and St. Jude’s Cemetery. Merrick Thomas purchased the house in 1839, expanding it in 1860 and closing in the veranda. It is built in a “Loyalist Style,” a simple building with two rooms and a loft which was accessible via an outside stairway. The bulk of the present structure is original. A

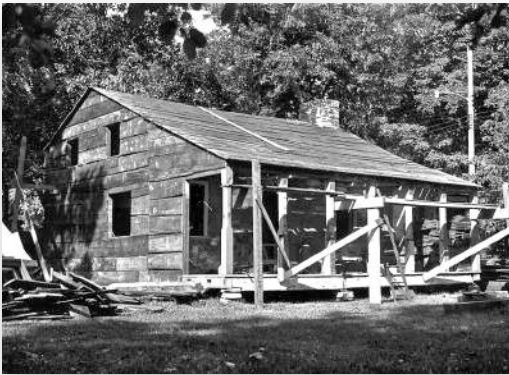


On the move to Front Street

A shadow was cast in 1840 when Merrick Thomas along with Chisholm and other merchants were involved in the incorporation of the Oakville Hydraulic Company. However, as the Sixteen Mile Creek was too shallow to erect the proposed dam, in 1841 the banks foreclosed and suits were brought against Chisholm, Thomas and John Moore, a carpenter and Mariner. This put Chisholm into debt and he died two days after selling his lands to settle his debts. It is believed this is the reason the deed to the farm property was placed in the names of Thomas’ sons George and Charles in 1840 (who at ages 6 and 10 made very youthful property owners!) which may have been foresight relating to the foreclosure of the Oakville Hydraulic Company

**Merrick** died afterwards in 1856 leaving behind his children and his wife, who lived until at least 1890 on their original homestead. His youngest son Robert, who was deaf and non-verbal from the age of three or four lived in Oakville until 1931. All the other children returned to the U.S., mostly to the Boston area. *Alex Gallacher*

*Alex Gallacher is a fourth year B.Ed./B.A. Honours History student at Brock University. She has a particular interest in British History and was the 2014 recipient of the John M. and Barbara McEwen Book Prize in British History from Brock University. She plans on one day helping to foster a love of history in others by becoming a high school history teacher.*



Settling in at present location, Lakeside Park on Front St.

### **Saturday September 27th at 7:30 pm**

Join us for **Astronomy Night** with the Mississauga Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada at Lakeside Park. View the skies through large provided telescopes, weather permitting. Thomas House will be open for coffee and cookies.

### **Oakville Memories: Old and New**

A dedicated team has been assembling a book of 200 stories about living in our fine town and it will soon be published. We thank volunteers **June Hitchcox, Hugh Ramsay, Bob Potvin, Helen Debenham, Margaret Godefroy, Renee Lehnen, Mary Davidson** and many others for their hard work. Stay tuned. Meanwhile, you may get a flavour here - <http://images.halnet.on.ca/117/Exhibit/1>

# AROUND THE SOCIETY

**Our** May speaker was **Ms. Ann Birch** (below), author of *Settlement*, a story of romance and adventure set in Upper Canada in 1836-37. Her story was based on the memoir of Mrs. Anna Jameson, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles*. Mrs. Jameson had been well-connected in society and in literary circles in England but was persuaded to come to Canada at the dubious invitation of her estranged husband Robert, Attorney General of Upper Canada. Robert's ambitions required that he be seen to be a married man, but the marriage was not happy. Disillusioned with Toronto and its Society, Anna adventured in the summer to Detroit, Mackinaw Island, Sault-St-Marie, Manitoulin Island and Penetanguishine. She returned and wrote her memoir. Ms. Birch weaves her story around Mrs. Jameson's adventures and a suggested relationship with Sam Jarvis, a complicated and colourful man who was appointed to Superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1837. Both the memoir and the novel describe the domestic, social and political life of the upper classes of the mid-19th century as well as life in the wild among the native people of the time.



Ms. Ann Birch signing copies of *Settlement*

**Ms.** Birch's details of artifacts and houses is informed not only by her studies, but by her volunteer work at Toronto's old houses: The Grange, built in 1818 and The Campbell House, 1822.

**There** is some information about both books, as well as biographies and an interview with Ms. Birch on line. *Andrea Stewart*

## AROUND THE SOCIETY

**Philip Brimacombe** was recently honoured with **The Town Of Oakville Heritage and History Award** for his dedication and commitment to the Oakville community. Phil, a retired teacher, continues to write, tutor and volunteer.



Enjoying **Phil's** good humour are (standing from left) June Hitchcox, Jim Young, Andrea Stewart & Mary Davidson. Seated is Margaret Buxton. Each year the awards are designed by a local artist, the 2014 awards being created by artist **Soyeon Kim**.



**Phil** is shown above (with Oakville founder William Chisholm) enlightening The Kensington residents of Oakville's history.

Our very popular **GHOST WALKS** are scheduled for  
October 16th to 29th.

The tour begins and ends at our office at 110 King St. after which  
refreshments are served.

All ages, groups and individuals are welcome.

Take a look at our fresh new website for further information.

<http://www.oakvillehistory.org/>





## AROUND THE



**Andy He** (above) spent part of his summer before Gr. 12 with us, transcribing the indices of *Oakville and the Sixteen*. We have many opportunities for students wanting to learn of Oakville's history while completing required school credits.



**Stewart Sherriff** (above) collaborated with **Andrea Stewart** (text), **Vince Segreto** (photography) and **Donna Moran** (design) to produce a self-guided tour of the Erchless Estate. Pick up your copy at our office.



The OHS and The Town of Oakville's Erchless Museum regularly co-operate with each other, opening their respective historical properties to groups of school children. Here is volunteer **Hilary Speed** (in the guise of Mrs. Esther Thomas) asking young children, "What do you suppose this piece of china under the bed is used for?"



## AROUND OAKVILLE



**Doris (Leany) Mitchell** (left holding baby) was born in Winnipeg, worked in Toronto and lived in Oakville. She posed for this poster which was circulated during WWII. **Evelyn Bullied**, who donated this image, reports she and a friend walked Lakeshore from Third Line to Winston Churchill, and not one farmer refused to buy a Victory Bond.



**Mona Brajak** (at right) regularly places our Oakville Historical Society information frame on Lakeshore Road near her salon **Mona's Coiffure**, 94 George St. and takes it in at the end of her day. We applaud citizens who are involved with their community.

The **Oakville Historical Society** has a massive collection of letters, photographs, diaries, ledgers, flyers and brochures which are catalogued and stored in our archives. They have been donated to us by citizens who realized the need to share these records of our past. Please remember us when you no longer want to keep such treasures. Contact us, we will look after them and everyone will have access to the history they reveal.

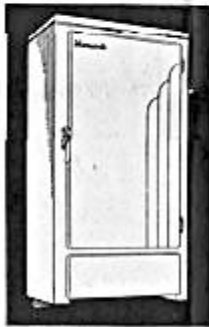
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1. What is the name of the advertiser?
2. Did this advertiser tell the truth?
3. Did this advertiser succeed in stopping the sale of electric refrigerators?



**Greg Munz** is designing a new display which will be in place by November 2014. The topic is WWI.



**Mr. Buist** with his new house plaque. (with S Wells, left)



Lyon's Log Cabin newly refurbished and moved, at Shipyard Park, Oakville Harbour. Was built in the 1820s and once stood on Trafalgar Road adjacent to the former village of Vernerville.



# PICNIC IN THE PARK



**Jim Young (l) with Mayor Rob Burton** at the Mayor's Historical Picnic in the Park



**P. Brimicombe and L. Naismith** at the picnic.

# PICNIC IN THE PARK







# THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

December 2014      Volume 48 Number 4

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

Wednesday  
Feb 18 2015     **Mr. Bill Thompson** from the Halton County Radial Railway will give a historical review of Canada's Street Cars.

Wednesday  
April 22 2015     Author **Ron Brown** will profile his travels *From Queenston to Kingston: The Hidden Heritage of Lake Ontario's Shoreline*.

Wednesday  
May 20 2015     **Larry Sherk**, holds one of the largest privately owned collections of breweriana in Canada, if not the world. He will tell us about caps, bottles, labels.....

**Above presentations are 7:30 to 9:00 pm at St. John's United Church, Randall and Dunn Streets. Admission is free and refreshments will be served.**

Friday  
Dec 05 2014     Your Oakville Historical Society's **Annual Christmas Wine and Cheese Party**. Put on a smile and meet your fellow members. 6 to 9 pm at OHS offices, 110 King St.

Wednesday  
March 18  
2015     Oakville Historical Society **Annual General Meeting**. Potluck. Meet your fellow members, enjoy a delicious meal and give your input to YOUR society. St. John's United Church, 6:00 to 9:00 pm



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I would like to start off by thanking **Wendy Belcher, Mary Davidson** and all those who helped out with this year's **Ghost Walks**. It was another spectacular season but we're just about maxed out on available space and time. The **Ghost Walks** bring many people in who have never been in the old part of town before and have never visited our office. Many express a real interest in the history of Oakville and the work of the Society. Some may come back for the other things we do. This year we used the **Oakville Arts Council Volunteer Hub** to bring in some students to help, as local citizens in period costume. All the comments received have been very positive.

**Mary Davidson** is a director of the Society who deserves special thanks. Not only does Mary look after most of the scheduling and organizing for the **Ghost Walks**, she also organizes our **Speakers' Nights**, looks after most new volunteers, is one of the prime organizers at the **Thomas House**, is very involved with the **Memories Book** project and is rarely too busy to help in any way she can. We would be lost without her.

I'd also like to thank **Donna Moran**. Through her efforts, the Society will be receiving a **Heritage Organization Development Grant** of \$1545. This is a provincial grant. Donna has also been involved in submitting a **Trillium Grant** application to assist us in the purchase of equipment to be used in digitizing the archival collection and records.

Our new **First World War Exhibit** is ready for visitors, thanks to the leadership of **Greg Munz** and others. Make sure you pay a visit to see it and send your friends. Shown at right are **Krista MacLaren** with her father **John Schwab** viewing the First World War uniform of John's father, **Clarence Schwab**.

I hope to see most of our members at our annual **Christmas Wine and Cheese** on December 5th, 6 to 9 pm.

*George Chisholm President*



# The Forgotten Pride of Oakville: Steamships of the Oakville Port

*By: Mark van Huuksloot*

**The** storefronts of the historical downtown Oakville, filled with coffee shops and restaurants, no longer represent the port town that once made its home here. A passing tourist would not be able to see the opportunities that this town provided the people in the nineteenth century. Unless they travel off the main streets and find the small historical plaques that are tucked away from the busy modern life, there are very few reminders of the past. Even William Chisholm's home bears little more than a plaque to commemorate the founder of Oakville. There are no longer the dry docks, slipways, beams or hooks that had allowed the Oakville shipbuilders to build great steamships that would be Oakville's pride on the Great Lakes. That doesn't mean that they have to be forgotten, or that they didn't help build the foundations for the Oakville today; it is perhaps because of them Oakville survived on Lake Ontario.

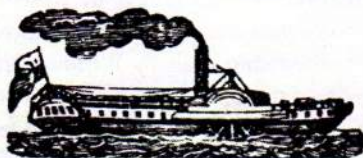
**Lake** Ontario has always been important to the settlements that were founded along its shores. Used for shipping and travel, even warfare, the lake was always bustling with numerous ships passing every day through the Great Lakes network. It is not surprising that, with this number of ships plying the lake, there were a large number of incidents that occurred over the years. Sitting below the surface, like a carpet across the floor, are hundreds of ships and thousands of souls, lost to shoreline and storm, leaving behind nothing but their stories. These ships and sailors, though seemingly insignificant today, were the lifeblood of their age, and provided a great service to the settlements all around the great lakes. Oakville can lay claim to only a couple of the hundreds of ships that passed through the lake, and each has a story, even if we have forgotten many of them. Most of the ships that were produced from Oakville's docks, serviced Lake Ontario well, most notable are the steamships which were more reliable than their predecessors which included schooners, among other ships. Eventually though, when the hulls grew tired or the engines started to whine, they were broken down for parts. Three ships from Oakville shared this fate of repurposing, leaving the waters of the lake to give life to new ships.



The Steamship *Constitution*, built in 1832, was the first steamship from Oakville, and ran the shores for sixteen years, and though not without incident, with still enough life and running parts to be dismantled to be used again. It gave its engine to a new steamship, the *Ploughboy*, and the Oakville legacy continued for nineteen more years, before The *Ploughboy* burned to the waterline while being repaired in Detroit.

The *Oakville*, later named The *Hamilton*, built in 1834, two years after the *Constitution*, was the second steamship to leave the bay of Sixteen Mile Creek, she was rebuilt into a barge after ferrying passengers throughout Lake Ontario for six years. The *Union*, built almost beside the *Oakville* in 1834, was the third ship to set sail from Oakville. After capsizing, three short years after being built, she followed her sister ship and was rebuilt and repurposed into a three masted sailing vessel known as a barque. These ships stood the test of time and have been remembered, even if it is by a few. However what about the steamships built in Oakville that have been lost to the lake?

**NEW ARRANGEMENT.**  
*The Splendid Low Pressure Steamboat,*



**CONSTITUTION,**  
*EDWARD ZEALAND, Master.*

**W**ILL during the present season, touch at and leave the following ports, as follows, viz :  
 Will leave Port Hamilton every Sunday



There are many stories hiding below the waves, lost to most as time passes and places change and old gives way to new. There are two stories of steamships built in Oakville, lost to the cold lake depths that should be remembered.

They begin their tragic tales on the shores of Sixteen Mile creek.



**Off** the shores of Toronto, the *Burlington* was seen burning in the year of 1841. And although the scorched remains no longer lie in what would have been their permanent resting place; plenty of boats pass over her would be gravesite, unaware of the tragic story that occurred. As the last recorded ship built by William Chisholm, a prominent Upper Canada Politician and businessman of the nineteenth century whose efforts brought about the founding of Oakville, the fire of the *Burlington* was a poor end to this shipbuilder and businessman's legacy.

**Servicing** the waters between the greater Toronto areas for the short span of four years, the *Burlington* caught fire at a dock, as many steamers did in that age, and was lost before the fire brigade could save her. With the rumoured cargo of gunpowder aboard, the *Burlington* burned too fast to be recovered in one piece, though through the will and talent of shipbuilders, the hull was salvaged and used to build the schooner *Scotland* six years later. Fires were common on ships, as they were made of flammable materials and often carried dangerous cargo but loss at a dock was a rare event for steamships, though wasn't unheard of, and this was not the last. The last steamer from Oakville was not lost at a dock; however another fire did claim this steamship on the shores of Lake Huron, far from its builders' yard.

**The *General Wolsely***, built in Oakville at the end of the steamship era in 1884, found its permanent resting place in Cape Croker in the Georgian Bay, only two years after commissioning, making it one of the shortest lived steamships to be built in Oakville. After running aground in the bay, as many ships had before, this ship was abandoned with such haste, that only a portion of the cargo was recovered.

**Generally**, people of today know little of how essential these steamships were in the lives of the people living along the shores of The Great Lakes. They brought communities together that were otherwise quite isolated and without the industry of building them and the trade that they brought, Oakville would have been a very different place today.

*Mark van Huuksloot is a History Major at Carleton University*

Information gathered thanks to

The Great Lakes Maritime Database, Regents of the University of Michigan; 2014,  
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/t/tbnms1ic?page=index>

H.C. Mathews, Oakville and the Sixteen: The History of an Ontario Port. University of Toronto press; 1953

And special thanks to Phil Brimacombe of the Oakville Historical Society.

## AROUND THE SOCIETY

*What do you do at the Oakville Historical Society? We asked a few volunteers.*

*Phil Brimacombe tells us -*

I delivered a presentation on the History of Oakville to the residents of Kensington Seniors Residence.

I delivered a presentation to the grade 7/8 students of Clanmore Montessori School as part of a walking tour of Old Oakville conducted by Andrea Stewart.

I assisted in taking care of the Thomas House.

I opened up the office on King St with Stewart Sherriff every third Sunday of the month from 12:30 to 5:00 pm, as we have for the past few years, .

I am continuing to compile research albums on the marine history of Oakville and Bronte Harbours. Albums on stonehooking, fishing, and the coal industry are nearing completion.



**Doors Open Halton** OHS opened its doors to visitors, and long-serving volunteers made them feel welcome.

Standing left to right - Marianne Hawthorne, Donna Starkey, Sarah Leaver, Renee Lehnen, Andrea Stewart, Susan Wells, Carol Castle. Seated Claudette Shaw

**We get questions!** My great-grandparents lived on Reynolds Street. Is the house still there? I would like to know when and where the first Woolworth's store was put up. I am seeking information on a Black American, former slave, James Wesley Hill, a resident of Oakville following his escape from Maryland. I am needing information on some of the men lost in WWI who were members at St. John's United Church.

In years past, the **Oakville Historical Society** conducted scheduled **Guided Historical Walks** during the warmer weather. We put out a sign on Lakeshore and when interested people appeared, we headed out. We noticed a waning interest in this type of gathering so our guides now lead them when we have a group request. We continue to get calls from singles wanting a guide so we will schedule a few walks next year and see how it goes. Watch for an announcement.



## AROUND TOWN

### *Oakville in year 2000: You might not recognize it*

The Oakville of the year 2000 will be greatly different from the Oakville of today. In fact an Oakville resident who leaves this year and comes back in 20 years might not even be able to recognize the community, predicts town long range planner, John Walker.

The changes won't be the Buck Rogers stuff of the 1930s - buttons, flashing lights and a gadget for everything - but they will be radical, nonetheless, he says.

Walker says there won't be many more high-rises because those buildings are not energy-efficient. Instead there will be an increased number of low-rise development and more moderate types of housing. In Oakville of the future, neighborhoods will be geared more to pedestrians and less to roads and other physical services. Walker believes the town will retain its community charm and avoid the urban blight that sprawls across areas to the east and west. "Oakville is the only community that stops Toronto and Hamilton from becoming another Los Angeles," he says. It is a waste of time, energy and human resources to have much of Oakville's population commuting daily to Toronto when their jobs could be done as easily in Oakville. As the energy crisis intensifies, individual homes will have to become more self-sufficient drawing power from their own plants perhaps using solar energy. Sewer systems which form a major part of residents' tax bills will be reduced as homes process their own sewage using special toilets.

by Michael Shapcott

*A Salute to Oakville March 30, 1977*

**Sean Livingston** (below), Naval Reserve Officer (CIC) launched his book *Oakville's Flower The History Of HMCS Oakville*, next door at Erchless Museum. HMCS Oakville was a Canadian World War II corvette that fought in the Battle of the Atlantic, and was one of the few corvettes to sink a U-boat. Book is available at local bookstores and on-line.



**Just a reminder that 2015 Membership Renewals are due in December.** A renewal form is enclosed for your completion and return, together with your cheque.

**This year we will not be issuing membership cards since there seems to be no need for them.** Instead we will confirm your renewal either by Canada Post mail or by email. However, if you feel the need to have a card please indicate so on your renewal form.

**Thank you for your support and we hope you will continue to enjoy the benefits of membership.**

Andrea Stewart, Memberships Secretary.

## AROUND THE SOCIETY

Our October speaker was **Ms. Kealy Wilkinson**, (left in picture), Executive Director of **The Canadian Broadcast Museum Foundation**. With a long history in Canadian Broadcasting and especially with the CBC, Ms. Wilkinson treated us to an exciting chronology of the technology, people and events in Canadian broadcasting.

In 1920 Canada put the world on air with the first real radio broadcast ever. We heard of the importance of radio broadcasting in keeping us informed of the events of World War II, the bad news delivered by “The Voice of War” or, popularly, “The Voice of Doom” Lorne Greene, and war correspondents such as Matthew Halton, Peter Stursberg and Rene Levesque. For much needed light relief during the war there was big band music and The Happy Gang. CBC’s radio drama was the best in the world and the BBC came recruiting our stars.



The advent of TV gave us a chance to see other parts of our country and its people, developing a shared citizenship as well as educating and welcoming newcomers to Canada. We had the longest transmitter network in the world and it grew steadily, outpacing that of the US. We were the best informed country in the world with access to everybody else’s information.

Sadly, though, the preservation of Canada’s important broadcast history is in peril. Owing to a lack of resources, a great many of these records have been destroyed and we have lost a large part of this treasure. There is hope that this destruction can be slowed, thanks in large part to Ms. Kealy’s Foundation. However, there is an urgent need to collect vast quantities of memorabilia and funds are exhausted. See how you can help by looking up the website, [www.aireum.ca](http://www.aireum.ca).

Plans are to create the most technologically advanced museum in the world, a virtual museum that will not only preserve the stories of the early broadcast pioneers who shaped our thoughts and dreams, but will continue to capture our stories in the future. It would be most fitting to see our pioneering legacy preserved. *Andrea Stewart*



## AROUND THE SOCIETY

If you're looking for a gift for that history-minded person, consider the books and prints stocked by your Society. There is a member price for most items and we don't charge HST. More information is available on our website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org). We are the sole source for some of the items including the beautiful Rindlisbacher print of the schooner **White Oak** leaving the harbour. We hope to have prints of some of our old maps available soon.

**Oakville - A Small Town 1900 - 1930** by Frances Robin Ahern Members: \$10 Non-members \$12

**Oakville and The Sixteen** by Hazel Chisholm Mathews \$35 & \$50

**The Story Of Oakville Harbour** by Philip Brimacombe \$10 & \$12

**Ghosts of Oakville** by Joyce Burnell \$10 **Boo Too** by Joyce Burnell \$10

**Oakville Street Names & Landmarks** by David Ashe & Joyce Burnell \$35 & \$42

**Prints of Oakville** \$16 & \$20 **The Walker's Guide to Old Oakville** \$2

**Old Oakville** by Suzanne and David Peacock \$25 **A History of the Lorne Scots** \$10 & \$12

**Lake Ontario Graveyard of the Great Lakes** \$20



**Plum Johnson** lived with her parents and brothers in a large house at the foot of Oakville's Trafalgar Road. The book, *They Left Us Everything* (at left) is a fine-tuned account of family life from WWII to the present. Follow the author around Town and identify the landmarks. See where to buy at <http://plumjohnson.com/>

If you, like Plum Johnson, need to have a clear-out, think about donating to our **Garage Sale**, held at the offices on **2nd May 2015**. Books, china, small furniture, bric-a-brac & etc. are all valuable to treasure hunters. If you need us to pick it up, give us a call. 905 844-2695

**William Whitaker and Sons**, right, west side of Dundas St. (now named Trafalgar Road) between Colborne St. (now Lakeshore Rd.) and Church St. There is some confusion about the spelling of Whitaker. As often happens, some family member will leave out a T, or a D as in Davi(d)son and that makes it difficult for future genealogists to find ancestors. At OHS we have records with reference to *this* Whitaker with one T.





## AROUND THE SOCIETY



September's newsletter featured an image of a **MONARCH** ice box in a **Hillmer** advertisement. Member **Sandy Bray** called us to say, "I have one of those!" and she sent us a photo, shown at left. Sandy tells us the ice box was owned by her great-grandfather Alfred Bray and it is still used by Sandy at the same cottage. Mr. Hillmer could not slow the sale of electric refrigerators and there are few ice boxes still in use.



Since the spring, **Joe and Averil Jany**, above, have spent hours and hours in our garden weeding, transplanting, pruning, trimming and raking. If they have other commitments their daughter Susan comes over. Thanks Jany family! Our garden has never looked better.



**Rosemary Seeton** at left, diligently searches for photographs and documents in our archival room. If you are looking for a photograph, a map, a document, chances are Rosemary can find it.



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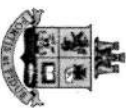
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## THE WAY THINGS WERE



1. What are these objects called?
2. What are they for?
3. To whom would you give these gifts?

*Answers in the March 2015 edition*

### Archives Open

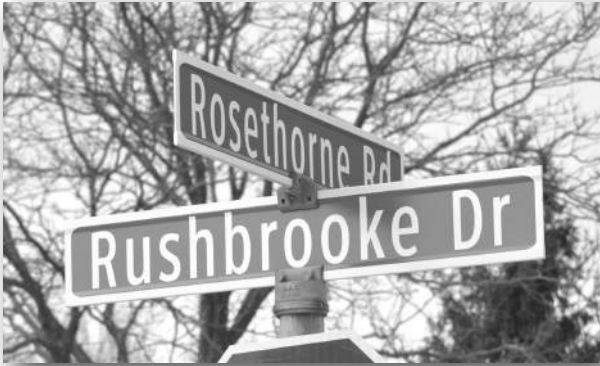
Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm  
Third Sun. of the month 12:30 to 5:00 pm  
905-844-2695 [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)



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**THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 2015**

**Volume 49 Number 1**



# PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**Wednesday March 18th 6:00 with meeting at 7:30 to 9:00 pm**

The Oakville Historical Society **Annual General Meeting** takes place at St. John's United Church. Please bring a contribution for our pot luck.

All Society Members Welcome.

Wednesday  
April 22

Author **Mr. Ron Brown** will profile his travels *From Queenstown to Kingston: The Hidden Heritage of Lake Ontario's Shoreline*

Wednesday  
May 20

**Mr. Larry Sherk** holds one of the largest privately-owned collections of breweriana in Canada, if not the world. He will tell us about caps, bottles, labels.....

**Above presentations are held at St. John's United Church at Randall and Dunn Streets, 7:30 - 9:00 pm**

**Admission is free and refreshments will be served**

Saturday  
May 2

**YARD SALE** at OHS offices 110 King St. If you need assistance now to remove your treasures, call Jim Young at (905) 338-5577 or (289) 259-0955 and we will pick up and store your donations for the sale.

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

If anyone missed the membership renewal form which was meant to have been enclosed in our last newsletter, please phone the office (905-844-2695) and we will arrange delivery of the form.

In order to vote at the upcoming **Annual General Meeting** you will need to have a current membership status.

*Thanks, Andrea Stewart*



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's been fairly quiet around the Society since Christmas although some days there's quite a crowd at the office. Our membership has been increasing a bit and we're getting an increasing number of people contacting us about volunteering. The board and regular volunteers are working on creating some Finite Projects – with a start and end rather than ongoing.

**Another** group has met to discuss potential exhibits and has generated a short list. If you have an idea for an exhibit, please let us know. You might, however, be asked to help out with preparing it. It has been decided to leave the current **WWI** exhibit up until November. If you haven't seen it, drop in on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon or on the third Sunday afternoon of any month. Special openings can also be arranged if you know someone who would like to see it. We are asking members if you can contribute artifacts, photos and information to our next exhibit: **Oakville's History of Recreational Boating**.

**Plaque orders** seem to be increasing as well. We have five or six on the go now and ten more waiting for the completion of research.

**On** behalf of the board, I would like to welcome **Mark Verlinden** as our new treasurer. Mark is a recently retired VP from Scotiabank. Like Greg Munz and me he's also a Scottish Country Dancer. If we keep going we'll have our own set.

**After** a couple of years of planning and procrastinating a small committee has been formed to look after funds that have been so ably managed by the Friends for many years. This new committee reports directly to the board and comprises Marianne Hawthorne, Greg Munz and Jim Young. This has brought about a change in the role of the Friends of the Oakville Historical Society. Rather than being a parallel organization, the Friends will function as a committee responsible for events including the Mayor's Picnic and the annual Members' Christmas Party.

**Believe** it or not, spring is coming and we need some help with the gardens. If you're interested in helping out and enjoying our lovely garden at the same time, please contact **Averil Jany**.

I hope to see you all at the **Annual General Meeting**.

*George Chisholm*  
*President*

# Oakville in Retrospect *by Art Bullied*



Mr. Arthur Bullied

**In** 1911 my parents purchased property on the north side of Pine Avenue. At that time it was the north edge of town in the new Tuxedo Park. The west branch of Morrison Creek was at the back of the property and a source of fish, suckers, in the spring. We had a garden, a barn for two horses, some chickens and pigs, slaughtered for our own use in the fall, at Chamberlain's on the north east corner of Pine Avenue and Reynolds Street. The Chamberlains had a large barn and fruit trees. I was born three months before the beginning of the First world War. My first memory, very dim, was of Charlie Haddlesey and Story Redshaw coming along Pine Avenue from the railway station when they were demobilized. There were other soldiers returning but I don't recall their names.

**In** 1919 my parents sold the property and we moved to Toronto. The event of that year was that I had chicken pox!

**We** returned to Oakville in 1921 to a house on the north side of Maple Avenue (now No. 335) built for us by the Blakelock brothers. I was seven years old by then and have some memories.



335 Maple Avenue in 2015

*The article reprinted here was written by Mr. Arthur Bullied (1914 - 1996) in 1991 and was provided with kind permission by his wife Evelyn (Savage) Bullied. Space does not allow for the whole recollection to be printed and will be continued in later issues.*

I went to Brantwood School that September. Some of my fellow students were Herb Merry, Kelly New and Cliff Post (Sandra's father). In the area within a few blocks of our home were Doug Armour, Joe and Bill Anderson, Jack Worrall, Jack Markey, the Galbraiths, Cam Hillmer and the Spurgeons. We played ball on the Hillmer's extra lot on Spruce St. with Mr. McPherson's barn on the back of the lot facing Maple Avenue as the backstop. Mr. McPherson kept a horse, using a buggy in the summer and cutter in the winter. He was a retired farmer from the Fourth Line and Upper Middle road. Cam Hillmer had a pony and a two-wheeled pony cart with a big square woven wicker basket on it to sit in. The pony and cart were kept at the family business, Hillmer Fuel and Ice Company on the east side of Seventh Line (also known as the Station Road) now Trafalgar Road where Main Lumber is now. In addition to work horses for the business, Mr. Hillmer had a horse, buggy and democrat. They were cared for by an old coloured man who lived on the west side. I think his name was Mr. Jones.



Co-created by Mitchell Cushman and Julie Tepperman

Welcome back to Brantwood High! As alumni, we cordially invite you to a reunion celebrating a century of life at Brantwood, before our school closes its doors for good.

The celebration takes place at Brantwood School, 221 Allan Street  
Contact Theatre Sheridan for tickets

I was about 9 when I had a paper route. "Allowances" still hadn't really come into vogue and I wanted spending money. I had 52 customers from Maple Avenue East to within a few hundred yards above the Lakeshore Road on the 8th Line (now Chartwell Road). The Toronto Star at that time sold for 2 cents per copy and for 50 cents a month it was delivered. The delivery boys (I don't recall there being any girls) received 23 cents for each 100 papers delivered. One of my customers, I recall the incident well, was the Glassco family at No. 340 Spruce Street. There is a glassed-in veranda at the front door. One day I rolled up the paper and threw it on the veranda. But it went through one of the bottom panes. There went the total income for a week!

## Summer Holidays

**What** did we do? There were a few options. We could either hull berries at Glassco's Jam Factory located on the Sixth Line (now Old Mill Road) on part of what is now the Go parking, pick berries and fruit or there were a few jobs in the summer at the Basket Factory. I didn't relish working at the Basket so I picked berries or hulled them at the Jam. Amazingly I still like strawberry jam.

I well recall one particular berry-picking day, July 1st 1927. While most of the kids were receiving their Canada Diamond Jubilee medals I was picking berries at Gilbey Hardy's farm where the Ford Truck Plant is now, which, coincidentally had been Ev's Great-grandfather's farm. Her family came to the area in 1832. The temperature was 103 degrees Fahrenheit. Not a comfortable day! Picking berries and fruit I went as far west as the Hitchcox farm on Lee's Lane - I took the Oakville-Hamilton radial car from the station at the south east corner of Thomas and Randall Street. Most of my fruit-picking was on the Eighth Line at Ford's, Leache's or Macdonald's (they had all been my paper route customers) or Al Earle's on Morrison Road. Also on my paper route was a fruit farm between Gloucester Avenue and Balsam Drive south of Macdonald Road where there were delicious peaches, pears and apples, and until the trees died out, sweet chestnuts. All of which I enjoyed!

## What did we do for fun?

**In** the fall we had apple fights with the kids from the "American Side" across the Sixteen Mile Creek. There was an old apple orchard on the present hospital property for the east side battle ground. The locale over the river was a similar old orchard in the Forrester property east of Queen Mary Drive.

**There** were four ways to get across the river, two for vehicles and two by foot: the Colborne Street low-level bridge (Lakeshore to-day), the Radial Bridge which had a pedestrian walkway, the low-level bridge on the Lower Middle Road (Queen Elizabeth Way) and the railway bridge. There was a two-foot wide planked strip between the two sets of tracks. Before you ever tried that, you were warned, "If you get caught on the bridge with the train approaching, lie face-down on the planks facing the on-coming train and cover your eyes with your arm." The odd person did get caught by two trains and had to turn around for the second one.

*to be continued.....*



# AROUND THE SOCIETY

## In Flander Fields: The Story of Colonel John McCrae

**Our** November speaker, **Bev Dietrich**, Curator of the **McCrae House Museum** in Guelph told us the story of the author of that iconic poem, the enduring tribute to the soldiers who lost their lives in Flanders Fields during World War I.

Though we know him mainly for this poem, less well known are his varied and many accomplishments: soldier, explorer, physician, scientist, educator and poet.

After studying Medicine at The University of Toronto where he graduated at the top of his class, McCrae enlisted and served in the Boer War. On his return, he served in many capacities involving pathology and medicine at various hospitals in Montreal and at McGill.

**When** the First World War began in 1914, McCrae enlisted as the Brigade Surgeon in the First Brigade of Canadian Field Artillery. He was responsible for a field dressing station at the front and treated the wounded during the Second Battle of Ypres in the spring of 1915. As well as performing his duties as surgeon, he also served in the Artillery, when needed. In the summer of 1915, McCrae was transferred from the artillery Brigade to the Number 3 Canadian General Hospital in Wimereaux, France, where he was second in command of medical services.

**The** poem was written at the end of seventeen days' of heartbreaking service to the injured from the battle of Ypres and following the death of his good friend Lt. Alexis Helmer. A fellow officer retrieved it after McCrae tossed it away and sent it to newspapers in England. It was first published in Punch on 8 December 1915. This was but one of twenty-eight poems and short stories he wrote.

**On** January 24, 1918 he was appointed as consulting physician to the First British Army, the first Canadian so honoured. Four days later, on January 28th, McCrae died at the age of 45 from pneumonia, complicated by meningitis. He is buried at Wimereaux Cemetery in France.



Ypres field dressing station

# AROUND THE SOCIETY

## COLONEL JOHN McCRAE cont'd

**This** remarkable man's accomplishments are legendary but so were his congeniality, humour and generosity. He was a popular guest at society dinner parties, was extremely handsome but, sadly, his marriage proposal to Nona Gwyn, niece of William Osler, was not accepted and he remained a bachelor.

**His** birthplace, The John McCrae House Museum in Guelph, interpreting the life and times of John McCrae, will re-open following renovations in May 2015.

Built in 1857 the house remained a private residence for over a century and was saved from demolition in 1968.



1968 Canada Post stamp marks the 50th anniversary of McCrae's death

**Anyone** interested in making the trip could phone me at the office so that we can arrange to go as a group.

*by Andrea Stewart*



**Stan Yeo**, at left, and **Christine Cook** count, fold, and stamp each issue of the newsletter. Thanks faithful friends!

**Ian Burkholder**, (r) our Town Crier, brings energy and poetry to our Christmas party. Thanks for your good cheer!



# OUT AND ABOUT

OHS joined other book-lovers and sellers in November at **Milton Historical Society's Book Fair** in the Waldie Blacksmith Shop. Shown right at their craft are Darwyne Hourie, blacksmith and Stuart Hill, bookbinder.



## Memories of Sybil Rampen

**My father. Captain Hugh Calverley**, came back from WW1 shell shocked, wounded and gassed and as he phrased it, "put out to pasture." Gradually he healed, and with his anchor "Diggie" raised fived children. His oldest son went off to WWII and came back home. This farm next door was purchased. He and his bride made it their first home. Then he and his young family chose the West. I happened by and announced that it was my turn. Here we have raised our five sons but now they too have flown. I have put my energy into JCHAC with my father's message that there is no better way to provide air, earth and space for coming generations.

The beginning of a road.  
Newborn babies,  
Adoration wonder,  
Two hearts beat as one.  
Roads leading to a mountain,  
Eagles flying overhead.  
Comes a day toward the end of mortal life  
Your spirit soaring to unknown roads  
The illimitable pastures of the soul

**Hugh Calverley 1968**

**The founder of Joshua Creek Heritage Art Centre is Sybil Salvin Rampen.** She was born April 29, 1929 and grew up with United Empire Loyalists. She fondly remembers sitting by a gas lamp and hearing stories about the olden days. Captured by these tales, Sybil has devoted her life to educating and promoting the importance of local heritage.

### **Joshua Creek Heritage Art Centre**

1086 Burnhamthorpe Road East, Oakville,  
Ontario Canada L6H 7B2  
(1 km East of Trafalgar Road)

Hours: Tuesday – Sunday 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm  
or by appointment

# AROUND OAKVILLE

## Street Names of Oakville

*from Oakville Community Guide 1988-1989*

**Residents** in west Oakville may have noticed the abundance of street names beginning with the letters S and T - Secord Avenue, Sunnyvale Drive, Selkirk Avenue, Talbot Drive, and Tanglewood Court to name a few - while residents in east Oakville may have noticed an abundance of street names with the letter A - Aintree Terrace, All Saints Crescent and Adair Crescent.

**This** happened by design, not accident.

**In** the past the town was divided into five areas and letters of the alphabet were designated as the first letters of street names in those areas. Streets in Old Oakville, since it was already developed, could begin with any letter of the alphabet. East Oakville street names were supposed to begin with the letters A to D, northeast Oakville E to L, north west Oakville M to R and southwest Oakville S to Z.

**But**, according to Angevaare, the housing boom of the 1980s made this plan quite unworkable and it was scrapped. Oakville's sister city relationship with Dorval, Quebec has provided the names of one of Oakville's major roadways - Dorval Drive. Oakville's sister-city relationship with Neyagawa, Japan will also provide a future street name.

Angevaare is hoping to name the extension of Dorval Drive from its connection with the Upper Middle Road Bridge to Hwy 5, Neyagawa Boulevard - currently in the planning stages.

**Occasionally** developers turn to the town for help in naming streets and the staff have been known to take a few liberties. For instance while he was the deputy clerk, Vickery named Yarmouth Crescent after his home town - Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

**And** Angevaare fulfilled a promise to a friend of Vickery's, following his death, to name a street after the late deputy clerk. Since a Vickery Drive already existed, Angevaare came up with Derrald Drive in honour of Derrald Wayne Vickery.

*Wayne Vickery was Deputy Town Clerk.*

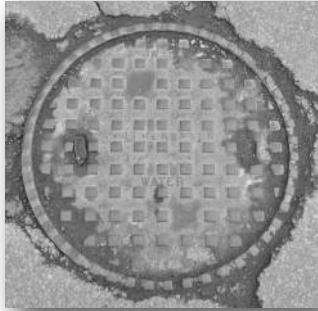
*Bo Angevaare was his successor, the Town's Co-ordinating Officer.*

**Our** December 2014 Edition **THE WAY THINGS WERE** featured a photo of 'Indian Clubs' and a Sewing Box. The clubs were thrown and caught as a form of exercise and as a display of skill. The sewing box features a pin cushion and a compartment for sewing cotton which can be threaded through holes for ease of use.

# AROUND OAKVILLE



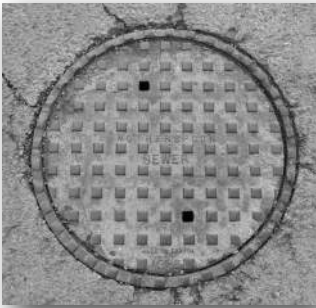
TOWN OF OAKVILLE  
1912  
MAIN SEWERAGE



J W 154  
WOTHERSPOON  
WATER  
1984



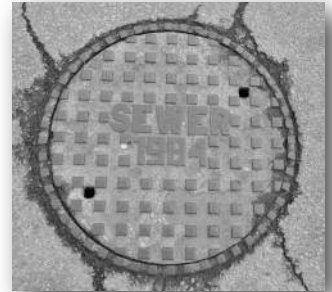
J W 159  
DANGER  
SEWER  
2000



J W 58  
WOTHERSPOON  
SEWER  
MADE IN CANADA  
1986

**Look Down!** There are a variety of covers right at your feet. Rumour is, there exists one with the date 1898

**J W Wotherspoon and Sons Foundry** was at 146 Cross Ave.



SEWER  
1894

The Autograph Album at right, was Presented to D.E. Smith B.A. by his pupils and friends of Harriston Dec. 22nd 1882 An interesting artifact in our collection.





# THE WAY THINGS WERE



1. Where is this cairn?
2. When was it erected?
3. What does it honour?

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Colborne Street c1893 (now Lakeshore Drive) at the corner of Navy Street. The storefronts Morden Fuel and Anderson's Bank were once Town Hall and Police Office

# THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

**JUNE 2015    Volume 49 Number 2**

# PUBLIC SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS



The winners of OHS Kids' Art Contest

## **PLEASURE BOATING IN OAKVILLE**

will be announced. Prizes include sailing lessons, family cruises, books and tours.

## **Mayor's Historical Picnic and Band Concert** **Sunday June 7 Noon - 4:30**

Hosted by the **Oakville Historical Society**  
at Lakeside Park, Front and Navy St.  
Fun for the Family Free Admission

**St. Paul's Dixie Land Band**  
**Oakville Wind Orchestra (Canada's Oldest Concert Orchestra!)** **Scottish Country Dancers**  
**Fire Engine Clowns Face Painting**



**Wednesday**  
**October 21**

**Mr. Ron Graner**, President of Lost Music Productions will bring us the story of the "Lost Music of David Nowakowsky" – a tale of music once thought lost to the world, and its amazing discovery.

**Wednesday**  
**November 18**

**Mr. Michael McAllister** coordinator at Hamilton & Scourge National Historic Site of Canada presents Ghost Ships: Museum Under the Waves about the hidden shoreline historic sites.

**Above two presentations will be made at St. John's United Church at**  
**Randall and Dunn Streets, 7:30 - 9:00 pm**  
**Admission is free and refreshments will be served**



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Summer** is almost here and the usual Society activities will be happening. **The Mayor's Picnic**, cleaning and opening of the **Thomas House** for the season, getting the garden in shape, setting out the fountain, annual yard sale – the list goes on. On top of these are newer initiatives.

We've applied for a practicum student from the **University of Toronto** to help us get our digitizing projects going. To go with that, we've received a **Trillium Grant** to help us purchase equipment for the job.

**Greg Munz** has been hard at work on an art contest aimed at elementary school students. The theme is pleasure boating which will lead into the new exhibit he and others are working on. You'll be able to see the finalists at the **Mayor's Picnic**.

At the April board meeting the board confirmed the appointment of Officers of the Corporation for the 2015 year with no changes. I remain as President, **Susan Wells as Vice President, Jim Young as Secretary and Mark Verlinden as Treasurer**. Mark was confirmed as a director by the members present at the AGM in March.

We're getting closer to a solution for our now annual frozen sewer problem. A recent video scope shows that there are no blockages but the line is only 28" down. The Town is looking into solutions that don't involve digging it up.

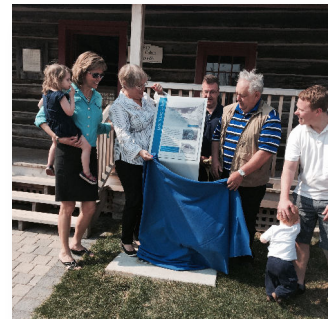
**Mark Verlinden** is working on replacing our phone service with an internet-based system that will save us a significant amount of money.

After five years, we have finally received the first shipment of our **Oakville Memories** book. Several people have been involved with this project over the past five years. Most recently **Hugh Ramsay** has been in charge. Copies are available at our offices.

If you have visitors this summer consider taking them to see the **Thomas House** this summer. A walk in Lakeside Park is very pleasant and you can visit the **Oakville Museum** and our office Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and the third Sunday of the month.

*George Chisholm*

**Lyon's Log Cabin** at Shipyard Park was recently dedicated. Shown here are Councillors Pam Damoff and Cathy Duddeck with members of the Lyon family. The cabin was previously home to the family of entrepreneur **Matilda Harper** (1859-1950) who built an international network of franchised hair salons that emphasized healthy hair care.



*Photo: Claudette Shaw*

# Harry's Corner

by Harry Lessels

**From** the thirties and into the seventies, the Town Council met upstairs in a room in a building on the south side of Lakeshore Road (then named Colborne St.) near the corner of Navy St. It was also used as a Court Room and for different public clubs; for instance the I.O.D.E. (Independent Order of Daughters of the Empire). Below the hall was the Police Office which I think also was the office of the Town Clerk. It was like a store front with only one large window and, I believe, it is occupied as a store now. It was not too wide inside, but long, and at the back there were three or four holding cells for prisoners who were later taken up to the Milton Jail. During the hungry thirties in an evening it was a common sight to see male transients waiting to be taken in for a night's shelter where they could also get something to eat. Most of these men were good citizens, going from town to town looking for work. The Police Force then consisted of Chief David Kerr and Constables Mr. W. Rosner and Mr. J. Barnes. On Saturdays a citizen was sworn in to act as an extra officer. The Chief drove a Model A Ford, while the officers walked the beat and rode bicycles when going to outlaying parts of the town.

**Chief** Kerr also acted as dog catcher, Poll Tax collector and gave out work permits which, in my case, got issued with tickets valued at from one cent to one dollar. This got us work for three days with the Water and Light Commission digging trenches with pick and shovel. This was in winter too when there was no ditch-digging machines as we have today nor did we have the fur-lined boots and thermal underwear, so common now. The foreman would gather up our lunch boxes then go to the neighbouring homes to ask if owners would allow us in to eat our lunches in the basement - no recreation rooms then, but oh it was nice sitting by the big coal-burning furnace to get warm. Have you ever eaten a frozen sandwich - well I have and it is anything but nice to bite into. About the work tickets we got, they had printed on them "for the necessities of life only" meaning no tobacco, cigarettes or liquor. They would amount to eight dollars - enough to pay a week's board, shelter and food, but no laundry. In those days when most people knew one another and were trusted, most landladies would give us back enough money to buy cigarettes or tobacco. Come to think of it, Chief Kerr was also School Truant Officer.

*Harry Lessels came to Oakville from Scotland in 1929 as he was nearing 21. He wrote a series of reminiscences for an Extencicare newsletter from 1983 to 1985. Reproduced here are a few extracts.*



# AROUND OAKVILLE

## Jacquelyn's Bridge or Mrs. Jacklin's Bridge?

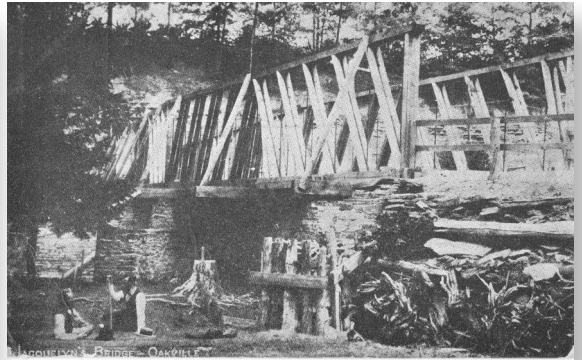
Recently the OHS was given a collection of postcards one of which is shown here, with a 1906 post mark. We went on a hunt to identify the bridge location Hazel Mathews writes in **Oakville and the Sixteen**, "*Another bridge built at Cemetery Hill, in 1868... This may have been the bridge that was later boxed in...there may be some who had their fortunes told by Mrs. Jacklin, the Negro fortune teller who lived at the turn in the road on the west bank....The box bridge was no longer needed after the construction of the High Level Bridge....when the Queen Elizabeth Way was constructed, the present bridge was built in 1936....*"

### Is Cemetery Hill near the Oakville/St. Mary's Cemetery on Lyon's Lane? Is Jacquelyn and Jacklin the same person?

Other sources put the bridge at Fourth Line and Sixteen Mile Creek near Highway 407 by Glenorchy School. Trafalgar Township Historical Society members aren't sure about this opinion; they wonder if the post card might possibly be of the old bridge that crossed the Creek at Fourth Line and Rebecca Streets. The local name of "Jacquelyn's Bridge" is not known to TTHS members; similar local names of bridges crossing the Sixteen are the "Barnstaple" bridge, as locals referred to the bridge just past the Barnstaple family farm, and the "Henderson" bridge, similarly named.



Painting of Glenorchy Schoolhouse and bridge at Fourth line just below Lower Baseline. The painting represents the site in 1870.



Postcard of Jacquelyn's Bridge c1906

*Written with research by Margaret Buxton, William Mewes, Rosemary Seeton, Trafalgar Township Historical Society with Ross Wark, Facebook Oakville, Past, Present and Future*

# AROUND THE SOCIETY

## The History of Streetcars in Canada

February's speaker, **Bill Thompson** from **Halton County Railway Museum** spoke to us about the history of streetcars in Canada.

We were amazed to learn the scope of this first means of transit, which began with horse-drawn cars in the 1860s and started to be electrified in 1891. Not only major cities but also many small towns boasted streetcars, many of them linking towns and cities; for instance Toronto to Guelph, Niagara to Toronto. The Hamilton-Grimsby-Beamsville line in 1900 carried some 259,000 passengers.

**Streetcars** boosted the coffers of many small communities by bringing tourists to dance pavilions and amusement parks, in places such as Port Stanley, Hespeler and Port Dover.

**Particularly** interesting was the Niagara Gorge Belt, a picturesque ride that ran along the Canadian and U.S. sides of the Niagara River. It started along the cliffs on the Canadian side of the river to Queenston, and crossed the river to Lewiston, N.Y. then back along the river to Niagara Falls, N.Y. running through a gorge just above water level, returning to the top of the gorge at Niagara Falls, N.Y. and back to Canada. Mr. Thompson showed us an early film taken from the train where it ran breathtakingly close to the raging river. The cost for the two hour ride was \$1.00. At its peak the ride carried 17,000 passengers a day.

**Mr. Thompson** invited us to see the museum at Halton County Radial Railway located on Guelph Line just north of the 401. Details of hours may be found on their website. *Andrea Stewart*

## Ghostly Autumn is Approaching

The Ghosts of Olde Oakville will again return this fall. Our annual and very successful Ghost Walks begin Oct 15 and continue to Oct 29. Note our webpage for specific dates and times. Reservations are needed and can be made by phone or via our webpage. We welcome anyone who would like to become a ghost (dying is not necessary) leader.

*Wendy Belcher*

## Doors Open Halton: Oakville, September 26th 2015

**As the Pan Am Parapan Am Games take place this summer from Minden Hills south to Welland, Doors Open will focus on sports venues.**

# AROUND THE SOCIETY

## Oakville Memories Old and New

The **Oakville Historical Society** has published a book full of memories from residents past and present from the 1930s into the 2000s

\$23 OHS members  
\$26 non-members  
Available at our office

We are also compiling  
**Volume Two**

Share **YOUR** stories with us

*Let's Reminisce*



Fiona Schwenderer with  
Oakville Memories



The May **OHS Yard Sale** was a huge success with over \$2000. realized. Thanks to volunteers who donated, sorted, cleaned, priced and sold treasures old and new. Above, **Ev Bullied** prepares jewellery and at right **May Issac** and sale organizer **Jim Young** place items in the right light to catch the bargain-seeker's eye.



# AROUND THE SOCIETY



*Photo: Andrea Stewart*

We were pleased that all four of our nominees for the **Ontario Volunteer Service Awards** in 2015 were successful in receiving this award for their commitment and dedication to The Oakville Historical Society: **Marianne Hawthorne, Maggie Leaver, Grace Schroeder and Donna Starkey**. Pictured here at left are Grace and Donna; Marianne and Maggie having been unable to attend. Our congratulations and thanks to these volunteers who work hard behind the scenes to make our events lively and enjoyable for all of our members.

*Andrea Stewart*

The **Thomas House** opened the May long weekend and continues to be open May weekends and -

**June** - weekends

**July** - Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays

**August** – as above, with the addition of Civic Holiday, Monday Aug. 3rd

**September** - Labour Day Weekend Sept. 5, 6, 7th all Sundays PLUS Saturday 26th for Doors Open

**Linda North** at (905) 845-4507 is looking for volunteers for some dates mostly in July and September. Hopefully we will have a lovely summer and lots of visitors with whom to share the history and artifacts of the Thomas House.

**Averil and Joe Jany** continue to do magic in our garden at 110 King St. This spring they and volunteers have dug in more donated perennials. The paths and beds have never looked better. If you can spare an hour or a morning or two please give them a call at (905) 845-7472.

**St. Andrew Roman Catholic Church** celebrates **175** years in Oakville, and members are conducting tours of their historic buildings in July and August at 47 Reynolds St. Contact Yvette Vukanovich at (905) 844-3303.

# Ron Brown ~ From Queenston to Kingston: The Hidden Heritage of Lake Ontario's Shoreline

On April 22nd 2015, **Ron Brown** took us on a nostalgic trip along the North Shore of Lake Ontario, from Queenston to Kingston. This was a nostalgia trip in more ways than one. Through a 35mm slideshow, musical interludes, and a scripted narrative, Ron went back in time, and took us along for the ride to a time when the railroad did not run and automobiles were in the distant future. Beginning with the local indigenous people and their conflicts, to the arrival of the explorers and settlers, Ron came into his own by demonstrating his keen interest and expansive knowledge of a long-gone era.

**Starting** in Queenston, we learned that there have been three Brock Monuments and that Laura Secord didn't take a cow on her famous trek through the bush, that the Welland Canal had 48 locks but with up-grades over the years can now move larger ships and pleasure boats between lakes Erie and Ontario with only 7 locks.

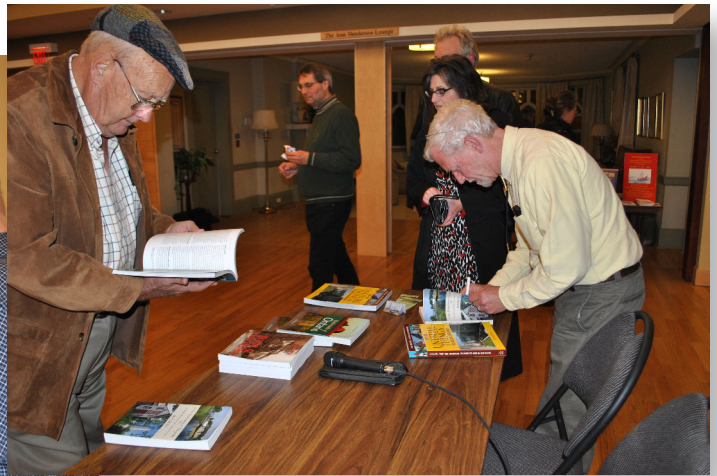
**Niagara-on-the-Lake**, once the capital of Upper Canada, still boasts some fine old buildings worthy of a visit, but the real action was in Port Dalhousie, where settlers from Quebec in search of a better life found themselves in conflict with the 'tow boys', the men who manoevered the boats through the Welland Canal. It is rumoured that local girls may have been the unwitting source of conflict. You can take your date on a romantic carousel ride in Port Dalhousie today for the princely sum of 5 cents a ride, but look out for the 'tow boys'.

**Until** the advent of the railroad which put Hamilton on the map as a major rail hub, people and goods moved about the province on ships on the Great Lakes and through canals. In 1857 a Grand Trunk Railway train met with disaster when crossing a bridge over the Desjardins Canal. The derailment resulted in 57 deaths.

**Oakville**, like many other communities along the west end of Lake Ontario experienced not only industrial, and agricultural growth, but also development of resorts, hotels and summer cottages and some might say mansions. Eventually commercial fishing disappeared and harbours took on a new life as meccas for pleasure boats and fun on the water.

**The** Toronto water front beaches developed into places of leisure as well, what with the Palace Pier Dance Hall, where the 'big bands' played and people put the pressures of life aside temporarily during the 'great depression.' The only remaining structure now is the pool at Sunnyside Park. York, now Toronto, had been chosen as the capital, but failed to maintain its status after it proved vulnerable to attack and destruction during the War of 1812. It rose from the ashes to become home and playground, an industrial centre and the financial engine of the country, although many Montrealers would make the same claim.





## From Queenston to Kingston *continued*

As a rail hub serving the need to move people and goods, Toronto expanded. The endless rows of warehouses along the lake shore have disappeared as have many manufacturing plants and heritage buildings. The site of the first parliament buildings is now nothing more than a small park with a plaque. There have been four Union Stations, the current one is in the process of being modernized. Glass towers now fill the empty spaces along the waterfront.

**The** distillery district, along with its links to ‘rum running’ was saved, and is worth a visit, as is the Redpath Sugar Museum. A portion of Ward Island remains residential, with tiny houses on small lots. These lots were originally used as summer plots where the summer crowd pitched tents. It remains to be seen what will happen when the leases run out.

**Ron Brown** at right with his publications and an interested reader.



**Moving** east we learned some of the secrets of WWII. Oshawa was the home of the ‘top secret’ Camp X, where spies were trained and codes broken. It was once visited by Ian Fleming in his capacity as some sort of spook working for British Intelligence. He went on to create James Bond – shaken not stirred. Again nothing remains of Camp X, except the site is marked.

**Two** American companies opened steel mills on the north shore and moved freight cars of steel across to the American side on large ferries. They built luxurious homes which have now mostly gone, as are the steel plants.

Cobourg, Port Hope, Oshawa, Corbyville, Belleville and many other small communities along the north shore shared the same fate. With a boom of development, was the loss of businesses and as time moved on there was the need to retrench and move ahead with new ventures.

For example Corbyville, once a leading maker of fine spirits, has closed its distillery but remains a major distributor of many brands of alcoholic beverages, but alas is foreign-owned. During ‘prohibition’ distillers could produce their products but not for local sale. To get around this they prepared shipping documents showing their products were destined for foreign markets other than the U.S.A. The story is told of one rum runner whose cargo and boat were confiscated by American authorities. The boat was sold at auction. However the new owner ended up in the boat’s home port of Belleville. The previous owner recognized his boat and through the courts won it back. Score one for the rum runner and zero for the new owner.

## From Queenston to Kingston *continued*

**Prince** Edward County once boasted two dozen canneries, which were purchased by an American firm which later closed all but two of them. Picton has preserved its Regent Theatre and its Crystal Palace and as with the other nearby towns enjoys an insurgence of summer fun-seekers. What they all have is a warm welcome and many points of interest worthy of a visit.

**The** last place to visit, the last place on the list, is Kingston, the home of Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. His home is open to the public. It was to be the Capital of Canada but like York, was too close to the U.S. border. Ottawa won the toss. Kingston is home to the Royal Military College, the Military Staff College, Fort Henry, a large military base and museum, several prisons and a major university. You could spend more time at some of these institutions than at others. The downtown is dotted with old limestone buildings going back to earlier times when it was an industrial centre. The old Kingston and Pembroke Railway engine number 1095 is proudly on display near the waterfront. It was this engine that transported Sir John A. Macdonald's body from Ottawa to its final resting place in Kingston.

**Most** of these towns have websites, so take a look at what interest you, get off that horror known as 401 and take the back roads. Slow down, take some time and visit. You will be surprised at what you might see, do, and learn. Not only that, it might be good for your blood pressure.

*Greg Munz*

**The Oakville Historical Society** has published a newsletter since the early 1960s. The publication was printed on paper, before we imagined how else information could be gathered and spread to citizens interested in the history of their town. Now many of you receive your information on line; you may in fact be reading this edition at our website [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org). We are now asking our subscribers - **How do you want to receive our quarterly newsletter? Please let us know.** You may write us at 110 King St. Oakville L6J 1B1, write the editor at [swells@cogeco.ca](mailto:swells@cogeco.ca) or call 905 844-2695. We shall be making some decisions about our print edition by the end of 2015.

**The** March 2015 **THE WAY THINGS WERE** showed a photograph of a Cairn that is at the south west corner of Winston Churchill Boulevard and QEW. The Cairn is dedicated to the families who lived at that corner, in the Village of Sheridan. The Cairn is almost hidden now by trees. Stop at the Carpool Parking Lot and have a look. Nearby is a silo, also a remnant of the Village.

# THE WAY THINGS WERE



**What was this called?**

**Where was it?**

**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](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**



**Send all Mail to  
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Oakville, On.**

**L6J 1B1**





*Oakville Baseball Team  
Halton County League  
1922*

# **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**September 2015**

**Volume 49 Number 3**



# PUBLIC SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

**Wednesday  
October 21**

**Mr. Ron Graner**, President of Lost Music Productions will bring us the story of the “**Lost Music of David Nowakowsky**” – a tale of music once thought lost to the world, and its amazing discovery.

**Wednesday  
November 18**

**Above two presentations will be made at St. John’s United  
Church at Randall and Dunn Streets, 7:30 - 9:00 pm  
Admission is free and refreshments will be served**

For individuals and small groups, the following **WALKS** are scheduled,  
starting at **2 pm. \$10.00 each.**

**Sunday Sept. 13 Old Oakville Walking Tour** Meet at 110 King St.

**Sunday Sept. 13 Oakville/St. Mary's Pioneer Cemetery** Meet at the Cemetery, Lyons Lane.

**Sunday Sept. 20 Old Main Street Walking Tour** Meet at 110 King St.

**Sunday Sept. 20 Trafalgar Road Walking Tour** Meet at St. John’s Church, Randall and Dunn St.

**Doors Open Halton Region** September 26th - 27th 2015 **Oakville** events are on **Saturday 26th ONLY**  
Meet **Historical Society** members at **Town Square**, 212 Lakeshore Road E. who will give tours  
at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

**Ghost Walks** begin mid-October. Call 905 844-2596 or see  
<http://www.oakvillehistory.org/guided-ghost-walk.html> to book.



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been a busy summer for your Society. I hope the fall will be a little less so.

**The Mayor's Picnic**, even though he was unable to attend, was very successful as usual. The Scottish Country Dancers and Longsword Dancers were well received. A new event was the presentation of awards for our first art contest. **Greg Munz** and his group did great work in pulling this together. The prize winners can be seen on our website. Our sincere thanks to all the prize donors.

**While** we were unsuccessful in getting a practicum student from the University of Toronto to help us get our digitizing projects going, we have purchased most of the equipment that was authorized in our Trillium Grant and we came in under budget. We're applying to reallocate some of the money. Now we have to get it all set up and working. We're very intrigued by an initiative of another Society which has set up a maker-space so that the public can digitize family archives.

We receive many comments on our lovely garden which is maintained by **Averil and Joe Jany**. Our sincere thanks to them for all their hard work. If you're interested in helping out, they would welcome you with open arms.

**We've** also made several improvements to the office over the summer. The Town hopes they have solved the problem of our sewer line freezing solid by running a heating cable through the sewer line. We had UV treatment applied to the windows on the south side of the building and to the skylight. Under **Mark Verlinden's** leadership, the windows and doors are getting cleaned and painted. Some siding work is being done and we're trying to get rid of some unused materials so that we can free up space.

**Since** coming on board as **Treasurer, Mark Verlinden** has saved us a significant amount of money by reworking our phone system and internet access. We're also awaiting a substantial HST rebate. Our thanks to **Donna Moran** for her work on the application for a Trillium Grant and completing the Province's Heritage Organization Development Grant application.

We have several important birthdays this fall: **Ev Bullied, Margaret Buxton, Harry Barrett, and Tina Breckinridge** who is turning 107.

**For** the past few years we haven't been offering scheduled walks. Interest fell off sharply and it got so it wasn't worth it. This fall, we'll be offering one of each of our four walks in September. Further information is available on the website. The ever-popular **Ghost Walks** will also start in October.

*George Chisholm*

# Oakville in Retrospect *by Art Bullied*

## What did we do for fun?

**The Radial Bridge** (now Anderson Bridge on Randall Street) had a particular appeal to some of our swimmers. They could dive off it into the river. Just north of the Lower Middle Road bridge (QEW) was the skinny-dipping hole. The only kids in town who had a swimming pool were the orphans at the Independent Order of Foresters Home on the north side of Bond Street east of Kerr. Victoria Hall in what is now the parking lot of the Curling Club was the place to be on Saturday afternoon for “moving pictures.” The admission for kids was either 5 or 10 cents - I don’t recall which. I don’t think I ever saw a show there that did not include a horrendous fire - in black and white of course - they were terrifying.



**The Oakville Baseball Club** used Victoria Hall for their Minstrel Shows each year. Ollie Johnson was, as I recall, the only coloured ball player we had. Ollie was always the “end man” at the Minstrel Show requiring only minimal make-up. There were dances at Victoria Hall on Saturday nights. Later when the Gregory Theatre opened at the south-east corner of Lakeshore and Trafalgar, Victoria Hall was seldom used and torn down. The skating rink was behind

Victoria Hall - the present Curling Rink. Interestingly there were two sheets for curling in the rink but they were seldom used as curling had not come into vogue at that time. There was skating in the rink on Wednesday and Saturday nights with the **Oakville Citizen’s Band** (above) providing the music. Later there was “canned” music.

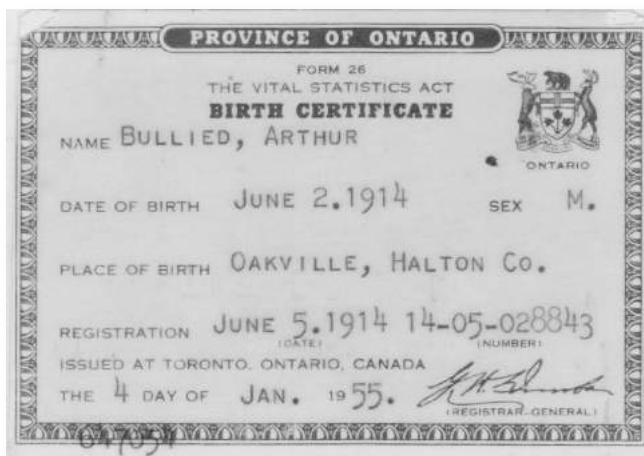
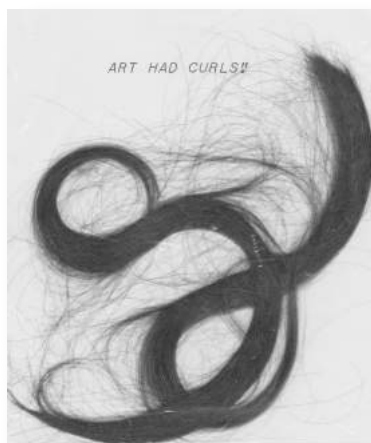
*The article reprinted here was written by Mr. Arthur Bullied (1914 - 1996) in 1991 and was provided with kind permission by his wife Evelyn (Savage) Bullied. Space does not allow for the whole recollection to be printed and will be continued in later issues. See our March 2015 issue for a previous excerpt.*

# Oakville in Retrospect *continued*

**The** baseball diamond and bleachers were in Wallace Park. Oakville had very good baseball, hockey and lacrosse teams. There were several Indians on the lacrosse teams, playing the sport they originated. At least three of the young baseball players, Don Galbraith, Tuby Carter and Cliff Post went to England to show how the game was played.

**Getting** back to what the kids did in spare time. Of course there was fishing in the river and lake, hiking up the valley of the Sixteen, or bike rides. It was a big deal to bike to Bronte, Clarkson or Postville (Trafalgar Road and No.5). Some of the kids explored the flume - the pipe that supplied water for the mill in earlier days. It was a round, wood-encased tunnel about five to six feet in diameter, very damp, moist and eerie. The flume started on the Kerr St. side of the hogback where the dam had been. The exit was about 100 yards north of the railway bridge on the west side of the creek. It wasn't everyone who knew where it was and explored it.

*Watch this space for further recollections from Art Bullied*



## **Front Page Photo Oakville Baseball Team 1922**

Back Row: "Shorty" Southwick, OF, Roy McDougall, OF, Whit. Hillmer, P & 1st B, Don Davis, P, Al Galbraith, C, Anson Lawrence, UF, Fred Tizard, Coach, Art Hillmer, OF, Hiram Williams, P & 1st B, Dave Chapman, Manager, Arthur Hillmer, Treasurer.

Front Row: George Galbraith, Mascot, Ollie Johnson, SS, George Snowball, OF, Benny Languay, 2nd B, Cecil Harker, UF, Fred Green, 3rd B, Elton Grice, Infield.

# Children's Art Contest Pleasure Boating in Oakville – Fun on the Water



**What** does pleasure boating mean to you?

**You** may never have thought about it or maybe it occupies your thoughts constantly, especially in winter when boats are abandoned, left lonely and feeling unloved, huddled together dreaming of the warmth of spring and another short season of the good life on the lake.



Judges (above) Shirley Erskine,  
Ian Cowling and Carol Sanders

**Some** 59 students in grades one to six have thought deeply about 'Pleasure Boating in Oakville' and expressed their thoughts in the art work they submitted to the **OHS Children's Art Contest**. Submissions were grouped by school classes: grades one and two, grades three and four, and grades five and six.

**The** best overall submission was awarded the Grand Prize, an afternoon sail on the **Anitra** which is the oldest schooner sailing on Lake Ontario. It was built in 1924 and has been in the Macrae family of Oakville ever since it was launched.

**First**, second and third prizes were awarded in each of the grade groupings. First prize winners received an afternoon sailing adventure on the lake. Second prizes included, two weeks of sailing lessons, canoe lessons, and a skating or swimming certificate from Oakville Department of Recreation and Culture. Third prize winners received a pass for a Ghost Walk and two books about ghosts in Oakville.

**Artist Delia Jansen**, at right, with her artwork that received Honourable Mention, Gr. 5 & 6





# Pleasure Boating in Oakville – Fun on the Water

Those who were noted for an Honourable Mention received a variety of prizes donated by the Oakville Museum and an invitation to tour the TOWARF facility in Oakville Harbour.

The names of the 14 finalists were entered in a draw for one year of art lessons at the Oakville Academy of the Arts.

The art work was displayed, and the prizes were awarded at the Mayor's Picnic on June 7<sup>th</sup> 2015. It was a thrill to see the excitement on the faces of the children as they received their prizes. Too bad the local press did not capture the moment.

**Why** did we do this? Well, it was our way of kicking off our upcoming display, 'Pleasure Boating in Oakville - Fun on the Water'. Our current display, 'World War I' will remain open until the end of November, (so you still have some time to drop in and learn some interesting facts and view some stunning photographs and interesting artefacts). Visit the display case in the lobby of the (Reynolds St.) **Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital** to view our mini-displays.

The OHS wishes to thank the following organizations and individuals for their interest and support in making the art contest a success:

The Oakville Public Library, The Oakville Museum, Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre, Oakville Department of Recreation and Culture, Burloak Canoe Club, Bronte Harbour Yacht Club, Royal Canadian Yacht Club, Curry's Artists' Materials and the Oakville Academy for the Arts.

**You** can view the art, and learn more about the activities of the OHS on our web-site, [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) *Greg Munz*



Student **Charlotte Bridge** at left has been aiding in the office clean-up. As you can see it needs some serious de-cluttering. Charlotte comes to the office with her mother **Carol Bridge** who has been scripting a new self-guided walk pamphlet. We have many other members who toil behind the scenes, applying for grants, writing proposals, cleaning the properties and working on displays. If you can lend a hand please come and see us. We are a friendly and welcoming group.



## The Couple Who Transformed Our Gardens

**As** we are deep in to the patio/backyard barbecue season, we all know how much happier we feel when we dine in our backyards, beside blooming flowers, plants and neatly cut lawns. But do you know, that merely 100 years ago, private (also backyard) gardens and landscape architectures were virtually unknown in Canada?

**That** changed in 1911, when a newly married couple from England, who were well-respected garden designers, moved to Canada to start a new adventure. Howard Dunnington-Grubb, was employed as head of the London office under Mawson, one of England's most respected landscape architects; his wife, Lorrie, had an established business herself. Her talents and partnership with a noted gardener had earned her high regards by her colleagues.

**When** Howard and Lorrie moved to a very British Toronto, they quickly prospered and became landscaping advisors to the Lawrence Park Estates with a little help of having been associated with Thomas Mawson, Howard's former employer and a Big Name in the landscape architecture industry.

**Despite** their reputations, being landscaping architects did not pay very well to support the couple. To add more financial income, Lorrie started a nursery specializing in ornamental plants, of which there was none back then in Canada. The nursery, known as The Lawrence Park, Humber Nurseries and now the Sheridan Nurseries just outside of Oakville, was relocated a few times before moving to the location it is at today. However, Howard and Lorrie's landscape-architecture business in Toronto were getting great contracts, so they had no interest to move out to Sheridan, where the nursery was located. An ad posted on the newspaper would later attract a "honest, sober, and industrious" Herman Stenson to manage the Nursery. Descendants of Mr. Stenson are involved with Sheridan today.

*by Amanda He I am hoping to gain more knowledge about the heritage of our community and passing that information on to others around us who may not know the fascinating history of Oakville. Above photo features gardens at 110 King St.*

# AROUND THE SOCIETY



**Mary Davidson**, above, is one of many volunteers washing, painting and renovating the offices at 110 King Street. She received a Gold Medal for Athletics and a stern letter from the Health and Safety Committee.



**Mark Verlinden** was caught scraping windowsills.



**Our Archives** are a few hundred images richer as we were given a box of slides. We are eager to get a closer look at *Oakville Park (Dump Site)*.



**On** the occasion of the 90th birthday (29th August) of archivist **Margaret Buxton** we gathered to wish her well. Interested in Greg Munz's (left) Art Contest are Margaret's daughter Fran Frazier, Margaret, Dawn McWhirter (standing) and June Hitchcox.

# AROUND THE SOCIETY



Some of the **Thomas House** pots, kettles and containers being catalogued.

As always, the **Thomas House** interpreters have done a great service to the Historical Society and to the many visitors who have been interested in the house and the many puzzling artifacts found in it. Thank you one and all.

**This** season, we welcomed three new interpreters to our roster, **Carolyn Caswell, Sheila Tucker and Leah Foster**. A special thank you to them, and to the volunteers who shared their enthusiasm and knowledge with Sheila, Carolyn and Leah as they learned about our special little piece of history. Student **Clare Fiala** who volunteers in the summer, recently compiled an inventory of artefacts.

**New** volunteers are always welcome! Please consider joining us. As a Thomas House volunteer, you will spend 2 1/2 hours in a beautiful lakeside park meeting people from town and visitors from around the world - 3,100 visitors so far this summer! The time flies by, and it is lots of fun. *Linda North*

**The June 2015** Newsletter contained a few errors. Oakville's downtown main street is Lakeshore **Drive**. **IODE** is **Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire** and the young person holding our new publication Oakville Memories Old and New is **Fiona Schwendener**.



**Sheila Tucker**, above, recently joined as volunteer at Thomas House.

**Maurice Drive and Felan Avenue** are named for the town's customs officer. In 1912, Maurice Felan, was charged with the responsibility of turning the Lakeshore swing bridge to allow boats to pass. His customs office was at the foot of Navy St. His son, Art Felan, was Oakville's lone policeman. Duties not only included law and order, but repairing sidewalks. Note: The pronunciation of the name is 'Morris FayLen'

# AROUND THE SOCIETY



*photo Vince Segreto*

**You** will remember that in our March issue we spoke about the presentation given to us by Bev Dietrich, Curator of the McCrae House Museum in Guelph. Some of our members have visited the museum (above), recently renovated, and much enjoyed the experience. It made a lovely day outing to visit this museum as well as the Guelph city museum.  
*Andrea Stewart*

**The** June 2015 Newsletter **THE WAY THINGS WERE** featured a photograph of **Cedar Croft Motor Court** which consisted of eleven frame cabins of various sizes located at 494 Lakeshore Road West. It was established in 1925 by Sherman Powley whose parents had operated a dairy farm there. It was owned by descendants in different forms until 1996 when it was sold to neighbouring Appleby College. The 1978 Movie *High-Ballin'* with Helen Shaver, Peter Fonda and Michael Ironside was in part filmed there. Here at right is another (fanciful) image of the property.



**The** June 2015 Newsletter featured a 120-year-old photo of this corner, Lakeshore Rd and Navy St. (in August 2015 above). It had been looking neglected but recently has had considerable painting and brick work done. Now **1883 Masonic Hall** really stands out.





# THE WAY WE WERE



**What was this building?**

**Where is it?**

**What is it 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](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**



**Send all Mail to  
110 King Street  
Oakville, On.  
L6J 1B1**



# OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

December 2015

Volume 49 Number 4

# PUBLIC SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Wednesday  
February 17 2016

Mr. Arden Phair will present "Life & Death on the Welland Ship Canal" and inform us about the Memorial being set up to commemorate a tragic event.

Above presentation will be made at St. John's United Church at Randall and Dunn Streets (enter by the Randall Street entrance)

**Oakville Historical Society Annual General Meeting**  
Wednesday March 16th 2016 Pot luck at 6:30 pm, AGM at 7:30  
St John's United Church



Calling All  
Oakville Historical Society Members!

*Christmas Wine and Cheese*

Meet fellow History Enthusiasts  
Renew Acquaintances

Friday December 4 6:00 - 10:00 pm  
OHS Offices ~ 110 King Street.

2015

As 2015 winds down, our last day open at 110 King  
St. will be Sunday 20th December 2015  
We will open again Tuesday 5th January 2016

2016

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Another** season of Ghost Walks is just over and we're now headed for Christmas. The walks continue to be an important source of income for the Society and also bring many visitors in the door. This year we've had several new guides and helpers from local high schools. My thanks to Mary Davidson and Wendy Belcher and all those involved for all the work they do organizing and conducting the walks.

A couple of months ago I started an email exchange with a man in Montreal who visits Oakville regularly and became very interested in the mill that stood in the valley at the head of navigation on the Sixteen. He had read that there was a tunnel under the Hog's Back to bring water down from a dam that was upstream from the railway bridge but couldn't reconcile the placement with what he had seen in the area. We met last week and followed the spine of the Hog's Back down into the valley. We could find no sign of the outlet of the tunnel as it must have been covered up by either the oil line through the area or by gabion work done to protect the bank. We did find one of the iron hoops that bound the wood conduit used to bring water down from the dam and when we worked our way upstream, we found the inlet to the tunnel – now collapsed. The remains of the dam are also clearly visible on the other side of the creek at the foot of the hill behind St Mary's Cemetery. At the top of the bank on the west side, we also found a cache of bottles left from the **Roux** hair care products factory that was on Shepherd. **Susan Wells, Mary Davidson** and I visited the area again today so Susan could take some photos. Our history is all around us.



*See Art Bullied's recollections in the OHS September 2015 Newsletter for his remarks on the flume.*

**Under** the leadership of **Greg Munz**, a small group is hard at work on our next exhibit, **Pleasure Boating in Oakville**. Stay tuned for further information.

**We** are very sorry to report the passing of **Margaret Buxton**, our long-time archivist. Margaret's dedication to the work of the Society helped make the Society what it is today. She is missed.

**We've** recently received word that **Bill Nesbitt**, Supervisor at the **Oakville Museum**, is retiring at the end of the year. Under Bill's leadership, the relationship between the Museum and the Society has flourished. We wish him well in his retirement.

**Our** annual members' Christmas event is scheduled for Friday, 4 December. I hope to see you there.

**George Chisholm, President**

# Oakville in Retrospect *by Art Bullied*

## Some of the People in Town

**Probably** 95% of the population were of English, Scotch or Irish descent. We had a number of coloured people (also referred to as 'Negroes'. Seldom, back then, were they referred to as 'blacks'.) There were enough of them in Oakville and Bronte to support the A.M.E. [African Methodist Episcopal Church, now Turner Chapel Antiques, 37 Lakeshore Road West]. No doubt most of these people's ancestors had come from the United States by the 'Underground Railroad' or were freed slaves. It is interesting to note that in other cities and towns they attended the B.M.E. [Baptist Methodist Episcopal] Churches. For years we went to school with these kids and played with them in harmony and respect. Mr. Alonzo Wayner was one of the first citizens chosen 'Man of the Year' in Oakville. After his retirement he could be seen walking around [west of the 16] where he lived, with his silver-headed cane given to him when he achieved the honour. For as long as I could remember he had been our 'garbage man' driving a team with a wagon. He cared for the horses. He was not a tall man, but broad, with amazing strength. He was always Mr. Wayner to me. No doubt he had limited formal education, but he studied and graduated as a Deacon in the A.M.E. Church and was the resident Reverend in the Oakville Parish.

Alvin (Zeekie) Duncan who is a radio and television repairman in town now and his brother were two-thirds of the Oakville High School Orchestra. The third member, Karl Lehman was, as we were, white.

I recall only two Jewish families, the Browns and the Burkes. Mike Brown had come from, I believe, Romania. He worked at the Basket Factory and owned a vacant lot opposite our place on Maple Avenue where he grew vegetables. They first lived on Pine Avenue but later moved to Inglehart Street. Mike and Mrs. Brown gave their children a good education. Aaron was a very successful lawyer and one of the youngest judges ever appointed in Ontario. Unfortunately he died very young. Thelma still lives in Oakville, where she was a professional photographer. Harry Barrett and I went to Mike's funeral at the Synagogue on the Eighth Line. He was a model citizen.

**Morris Burke** had a scrap metal yard on Forsythe Street on the south side of Rebecca.

When Terry McDermott and I were at the 'boat-building' stage we went to buy a Model T Ford steering column to make into a propellor shaft for our homemade boat. Mo started at \$1.00. He offered to toss in one of the resident rabbits - if we could catch it. He finally settled for 30 cents. It must have been a Monday morning! I understand that Mo still goes to work every day at his business on Speers Road.

*The article reprinted here was written by Mr. Arthur Bullied (1914 - 1996) in 1991 and was provided with kind permission by his wife Evelyn (Savage) Bullied. Space does not allow for the whole recollection to be printed and will be continued in later issues. See our March and September 2015 issues for previous excerpts. Here is an indication of the size of Oakville ~ In 1932 when Art was 18, the population was about 3,900.*



# Oakville in Retrospect .... *continued*

*The following article featuring Ruth Burke is from THE NEW TANNER, JUNE 17, 2010*

Ruth grew up in Oakville and attended Oakville High School. Two days after graduating Ruth started her first job working in an office where she remained for two years.

Her father already had a business, Burke's Salvage which sold used car parts. He decided to expand and opened a new business selling new car parts.

Ruth had two weeks holiday and during this time she helped him organize and stock the shelves. As a child, she had helped him with invoicing and paper work, so she decided to carry on working for her father's company, which is where she remained until she retired.

The scrap yard business belonged to Ruth's grand-father originally, and was later sold.

Ruth's mother was diabetic so Ruth accompanied her to the hospital and became interested in diabetes. She was on the Board for the Canadian Diabetic Association in Oakville for 23 years, and on the Ontario Diabetic Board, which was located in London, for one year. She would have remained on the Ontario Board longer, but found the driving tiring.

She has always enjoyed knitting and during the war, knitted for the Red Cross. She knitted numerous sweaters, helmets etc. She still knits for the Catholic church in Oakville, making pneumonia vests for children in Africa and India, where the days may be hot but the nights can be cold.

She knits slippers, touques and sweaters for orphaned children in Siberia which are shipped by a Pentecostal church in Milton. She tells me she has knitted 1,800 articles for this project alone.

*Art Bullied continues.....*

**There** were three Chinese families in town. **Joe Ming** operated the Savoy Cafe on Colborne Street (now 145 Lakeshore Road East). Next door at 147 was Guey Lem, better known as **Lem Guey**. Lem's cafe was not quite as prestigious as the Savoy which was more Oriental - it had more booths with higher sides. The Murray House, Oakville House and the Gibson House (Halton Inn) all served meals. After hockey or baseball games we went to Lem's or Joe's. Lem's specialty was a Western Sandwich and Joe's was Boston Creme Pie. Joe's daughter Wanda still lives in town I believe.

**Lem Guey** also owned the Anderson Block, no 134, across the street, now the Courthouse Restaurant. His major tenant was the Town of Oakville for the Town Offices, Council Chamber, Courthouse, Jail and Police Station.



**Burke's Salvage c1960**

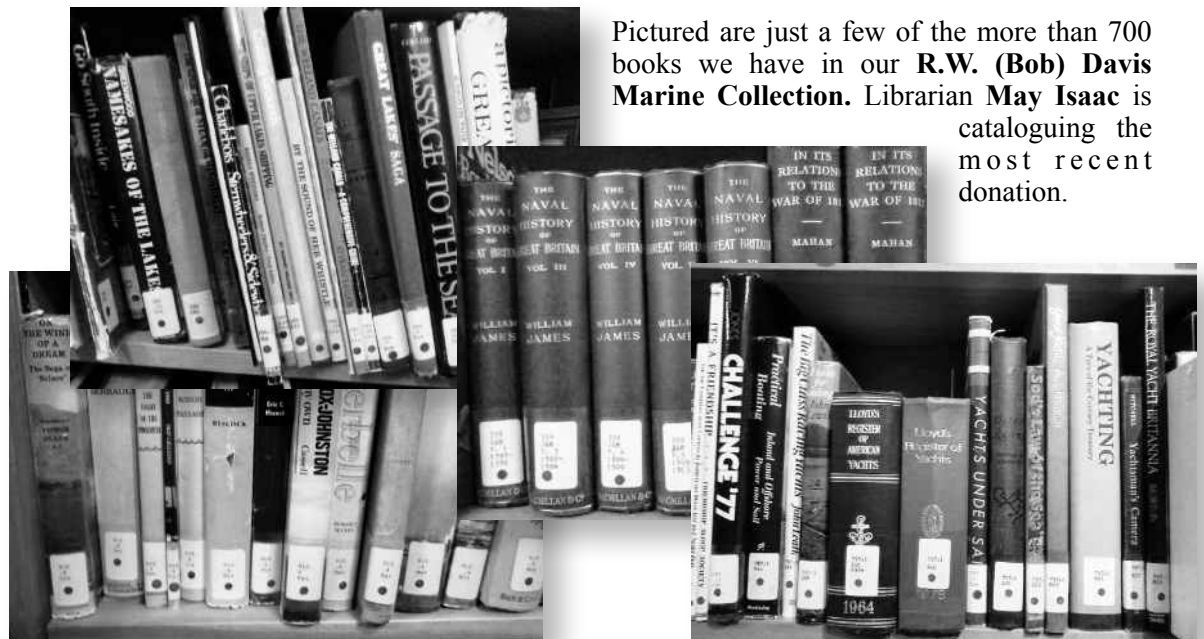
# Oakville in Retrospect .... *continued*

**Tom Young** operated a laundry back of where McCutcheon's Camera Store is now. The store in front he rented to Kelley's bicycle shop. Tom's relaxation was fishing. The Litchfields had a boat house on the east bank of the Sixteen about half-way around the curve on Dunn Street. In the evening after work Tom would sit on the dock and fish. His greatest delight was to catch a turtle, up to 18". Then the Youngs had turtle soup and other delicacies. Tom moved to Montreal to be near his son. A few years ago he came back for his ex-neighbour **Benny Thornton's** 80th Birthday Party. He even remembered that my laundry mark was A1. I often wondered if that was a description of me in Chinese. I wore a starched collar with a white shirt on Sundays to church. I have a feeling that Tom moved from the old Royal Exchange Building after it burned. It was where what is now known as the Old Library was located.

**The Palumbos** were the only Italian family I can remember. They had a fruit and vegetable store at 218 Lakeshore Road East.

**Oakville** never had what might be referred to as 'slums'. There were some houses not as pretentious as others. The closest thing to a slum area was 'Wrangle Island' on the road running east of the Sixteen, north of the Oakville Golf Club.

*Watch this space for further recollections from Art Bullied.*



Pictured are just a few of the more than 700 books we have in our **R.W. (Bob) Davis Marine Collection**. Librarian **May Isaac** is cataloguing the most recent donation.

# AROUND OAKVILLE



Chartwell Road and MacDonald Road in 2015



32 Thomas Street in 2015

**There** have been a few residences turned into hospitals before the soon-to-be-closed OTMH was opened in the 1950s.

**In** the 1930s the **Taylor Nursing Home** operated at the corner of Eighth Line (Chartwell Road) and MacDonald Road, run by June Taylor and her husband Frank. There were six bedrooms for maternity cases and convalescents. Also in the 1930s, the house at 32 Thomas Street was a maternity home.

**Pills** 1 part opium, 2 parts camphor mixed together with flour and a little peppermint water or spirits. Vinegar and Redpepper for scarlet fever.

## **For a Metic or Vomit**

Boil slipperyjohn bark to a jelly. Strain and cool it to one quart. Add 1/2 oz of metic tartar, 1 oz salsoda, 1 spoonful Lodlum, 1 Do of vinegar and 1 of honey. Shake them well and they will be fit to use. 1 spoonful for a Grown person, 1 teaspoonful for a Child.

## **To make Rheumatic Drops**

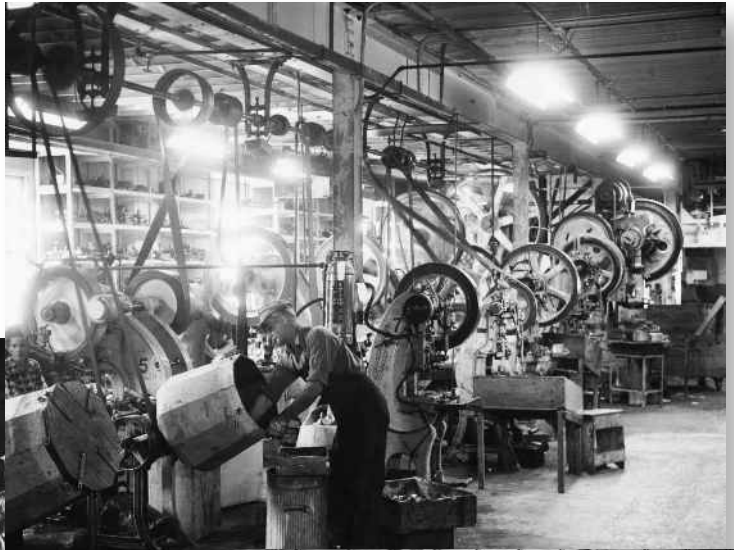
Take 1 gal of alcohol or fourth proof Brandy. 1 lb of Gummyrrh. 1 oz of cayenne pepper. Pulverize the two latter & put the whole into a stone jug, sit it into a kettle of cold water, put it over the fire and boil it 10 or 15 minutes.

Above concoctions -  
Justus Williams'  
Remedies from his shop  
ledger dated 1830-6

# AROUND THE SOCIETY



We are updating our files to reflect the existence/condition/disappearance of **House Plaques** (like the one here on Thomas St.) We have been researching house history and preparing Pride of Ownership carved wooden signs for decades but some have disappeared and some need repair. We need volunteers like new member **Nicole Léger** to walk up and down the streets, study the façade and record the details. If you enjoy a saunter through our Town's older streets, give us a call and we can set you up with a clip board, a name tag and a list of streets.



The three photographs here are of the aluminum pot factory that was at the north corner of Trafalgar Road and Randall Street.

# OCTOBER SPEAKERS' NIGHT

**Cantor Ron Graner** came to speak to us about the life and music of the little known composer **David Nowakowsky** (1848-1921). With the backdrop a beautiful concert of Nowakowsky's music given in St. Catharine's of Alexandria in St. Catharines Ontario, Mr. Graner related a fascinating story of how the music which had been lost for over a century eventually came to light.

**Born** in 1848 in Ukraine the prodigy Nowakowsky became, at twenty-one, the musical director of the Brody synagogue in Odessa. He is thought to have written a piece of music every week for fifty years but his music, through a series of pogroms, revolutions and wars was hidden until the 1950s.

**In** the pogroms of 1881, many fled from Odessa but Nowakowsky remained. When he died, poor and deserted, in 1921, none of his many works had been published. He left five children. During the Bolshevik revolution, Nowakowski's daughter, Rose, smuggled the works to her own daughter, Sophia, then a prominent concert pianist, in Berlin.

**The** family suffered much anguish as they wandered across Europe to evade the fate of Auschwitz. They settled in the French village of Colonges-sous-Saleve on the Swiss border near Geneva, taking with them Nowakowsky's papers. When Vichy France was overrun in 1943 Sophia and her son Alexandre fled to Switzerland leaving behind Sophia's husband, Boris, who saved the works by burying them on a farm.

**The** collection was brought to the US in 1952 when Alexandre won a scholarship to Columbia University and found a permanent home in the Hebrew Union College School of Sacred Music in New York in 1955.

**During** their travails the family were treated kindly by the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Catholic clergy and the Dutch-Paris Underground movement. Ron hopes to give an ecumenical Jewish-Ukrainian concert to honour the martyrs of the Dutch-



Mr. Graner (left) with Greg Munz

Paris Underground and Ukrainian Catholics who saved many Jews during World War II.

**You** can find much information about this story on Mr. Graner's website [www.musicalpawns.com](http://www.musicalpawns.com) or by viewing a copy of the DVD he was kind enough to give us. Copies of the DVD are being sold to raise funds for the concert.



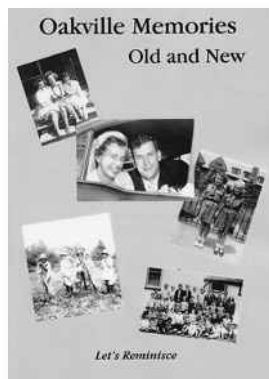
Thanks to **Shona Rochefort** (above at left) for her assistance with the audio-visual equipment.



# AROUND THE SOCIETY



If you have visited the OHS offices at 110 King St. you will have admired our beautiful gardens. This work of art is almost entirely due to the great efforts of volunteers **Averil and Joe Jany**. They gather donations of surplus perennials and place them in the right spot. They nurture them all summer while trimming away and brushing the surrounds. In the fall there is more clearing and raking. They cannot continue taking on all this work by themselves and if the beauty of the gardens is to be preserved we must have some more volunteers. Please give us a call now or in the spring with your offer to help. Green thumbs not required!



Our new publication **Oakville Memories Old and New** is a perfect Christmas gift! The contributions in the book are from the last 8 decades, so are really quite recent! \$23 for members, at our offices.

## Membership Renewal

Your membership comes up for renewal at the end of 2015. If you haven't already done so, please complete the enclosed membership form and return it to us, together with your cheque, to:

The Oakville Historical Society  
110 King Street  
Oakville, ON L6J 1B1

## New Members 2015

We are pleased to have welcomed 20 new members this year:

**Sean Duffy Family, Josie Saunders Family  
Brendan Nickel and Jordan Baker, Marie  
Descent**

**Nicole Léger, Carol Bridge, Edward and  
Patricia Bayley, Elise Cole at Oakville Public  
Library**

**Ross and Judith Dickie, Rev James and  
Bonnie Gill, Anna Hewitt, Michelle and Jeff  
Knoll**

**William Mewes, Kelsey and Wesley Mason  
Louise Perrin, Hilary Speed, Sylvia Valevicius  
Mark and Ruth Verlinden, Myra Valley  
John Wright**

Thank you for your interest in the Oakville Historical Society and we hope you will fully enjoy the benefits of membership.

*Andrea Stewart, Memberships*

If you are a member of **Facebook** you may want to join in the conversation at **Oakville, Past, Present and Future**. The site is full of photos and discussions about our Town. You may meet old friends and see old images, new to you. Also on **Facebook** see our own **Oakville Historical Society**.

# AROUND THE SOCIETY



**Harry Barrett** (above) receives congratulations from **Evelyn Bullied** on his recent birthday. *photo: Marianne Hawthorne*

Outside our door (right) an artist takes advantage of the perfect light and vista.



**Ghost Walk** guests receive drinks and cookies prepared by volunteers **Norma Marchetti** (right) and her son **Michael**.



**Ghosts** (far right) **Sarah Hammond**, **Bryn McCulloch** and **Mira Meikle** prepare for their appearances.



## THE WAY WE WERE September 2015

**Brantwood School 1920 - 2010**  
221 Allan Street  
The building has been purchased by the  
Town of Oakville.



# THE WAY WE WERE



**What was this building?**

**Where is it?**

**What is it 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](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)



## **Send all mail to:**

**110 King Street**  
**Oakville, On L6J 1B1**  
**Our office address**  
**is now our postal address**

Our *Advertisers* provide the funds for our December **COLOUR** Newsletter

# THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



**Harry Barrett**

*Still Working To  
Preserve Oakville's History*

**March 2016**

**Volume 50 Number 1**



# PUBLIC SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

**Wednesday March 16th**, Pot Luck at 6:30 pm with meeting at 7:30 to 9:00 pm  
The Oakville Historical Society **Annual General Meeting** takes place at St.  
John's United Church. Please bring a contribution for our pot luck.  
**All Society Members Welcome.**

**Wednesday  
April 20**

**Dr. Richard Ruggles** presents "WW1: The Halton Story"

**Wednesday  
May 18**

**Mr. Michael McAllister**, co-ordinator at Hamilton & Scourge National  
Historic Site of Canada presents, "**Ghost Ships: Museum Under the  
Waves,**" the hidden shoreline historic sites.

**Above presentations will be made at St. John's United Church at Randall and Dunn  
Streets (enter by the Randall Street entrance)  
7:30 - 9:00 pm Admission is free and refreshments will be served.**



## **DOWNSIZING ~ MOVING ~ CONSOLIDATING?**

Remember, the OHS **Yard Sale** is coming up on **May 14th from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm**. Jim Young would be happy to pick up your donations of knick-knacks, dishes, small furniture items, kitchen items, lamps, vases, figurines, linens & etc. anytime between now and May 12th. Call the OHS office at 905 844-2695 or call Jim directly at 289 259-0955.

Yes, this cast-iron claw-foot bathtub is for sale.



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's been very quiet around the Society since Christmas – a great time to work on some renovations. As part of our longer-range plans to digitize the collection and records, we're moving some things around at the office. We've already renovated what was a storage room in the southeast corner of the building. It's now called the **Technologies Room** and will eventually be set up for scanning and photography. The current project (*see photo of volunteer below*) involves converting the bathroom off the boardroom into a **File Room**. This will allow us to move the filing cabinets from the board room which will give us more work space and increase the amount of library shelving as the library grows. We'll also be moving our book inventory from the new technologies room to the new filing room, freeing up some space in there. The old bathroom still had its claw-foot cast iron tub in it. The walls were not in good shape and some repairs are required. The office, entryway and boardroom all need some work as well. They haven't been painted since we took over the building in the early 90s.

On behalf of the Society, I would like to welcome **Julian Kingston** as the new **Supervisor at the Erchless Museum**. He was around for a visit in early January and met several of our members.

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming **Annual General Meeting** which will be held at St John's United Church on Wednesday 16 March. As usual, a pot luck dinner will precede the meeting. The dinner starts at 6:30. The meeting starts at 7:30.

Believe it or not, spring is coming and we need some help with the gardens. If you're interested in helping out and enjoying our lovely garden at the same time, please contact **Averil Jany**.



If you haven't had a chance yet, make sure you drop in to see our new exhibit, **Pleasure Boating in Oakville**. (*see photo at left*) Greg Munz and his crew have found some great items to put on display including photos, artifacts and a great 4-foot long racing model sloop built by Harry Barrett when he was a teenager.

I hope to see you all at the Annual General Meeting. *George Chisholm, President*

*Cover photo shows Harry Barrett when Mayor of Oakville in the 1980s*

# Harry Barrett and Oakville's History

The following short story covers almost seventy years of Oakville's history and one man's vision. **Harry Barrett's** contribution to Oakville's heritage is broad and has lasted a lifetime. At 90 he is still on the Board at the Historical Society and visits the office regularly, regaling us with stories of Oakville past and improving our understanding of the Town's development. He is also Chair of the Town of Oakville Heritage Committee.

**During** his time as Mayor from 1973 to 1985, Harry Barrett reversed the "tear down" mentality of the time to one of respect for heritage. His list of achievements, honours and awards are numerous; this article will be confined to his work on the preservation of Erchless, the Harbours, the Waterfront Trails and Heritage.

## Erchless Estate

**This** wonderful property, the estate of Oakville's founding family, the Chisholms, a hub of Oakville history and a delight for residents and tourists alike would not exist today were it not for the foresight of Mayor Harry Barrett and Town Council in 1977. Mr. Barrett deserves much of the credit for saving the estate from destruction. In 1977, a request was made on behalf of the Oakville Historical Society and some residents of Old Oakville to preserve the estate. At that time, a developer owned the property and was planning to build a highrise. The Town approved the purchase and Mayor Barrett managed to secure the entire estate for \$555,000, a decision that would preserve this beautiful historic property for our enjoyment today.



*Erchless west façade 2016*

**The** Town gave the Oakville Historical Society a grant to establish a museum, but a later council proposed that The Town should assume responsibility for the museum. It was agreed eventually that The Town would keep the artifacts collected by the Historical Society and manage the Erchless Museum, the Historical Society would maintain the archives and library and run the Thomas House Museum. This compromise works well today with The Society and several departments of the Town working together amicably and collaboratively. Harry Barrett is pleased that our current Mayor and Council continue his work in the interest of preserving Oakville's heritage.

## Harry Barrett continued

**Actually**, Harry Barrett's involvement with Erchless went back much farther than his 1977 decision to save the estate. His first involvement was serendipitous. Some time in the late 1940's when Harry's father's plumbing business had the contract from the Chisholm family to winterize the house, a pipe burst in the big house and Harry, being the skinniest and most agile, was asked to wiggle under the floorboards. When he got to the north end where the help lived, he found a space beneath an 18" false floor. There he found documents including ships' manifests from the 1800s. He "scrabbled out," as he put it, and gave the papers to Mrs. Hazel Chisholm Mathews, the great-granddaughter of the Town's founder, Colonel William Chisholm. The next thing he knew, Mrs. Mathews and her sister Juliet Chisholm had been to the surplus store for coveralls to continue the search! According to her daughter, Nancy, this was to be the inspiration for Hazel Chisholm Mathews' book *Oakville and the Sixteen*, published in 1953.

**It** was around this time that Mrs. Mathews formed The Oakville History Society and Harry Barrett and she would discuss questions about the papers and the history of the town. Having grown up in Oakville, he would have been able to add much both to the book and to her efforts to form The Oakville Historical Society. Later, in the 1990s, he would spend nine months as lead volunteer in the renovation of the two small cottages on the estate which are now the Society offices

## The Waterfront

**It** is thanks to Harry Barrett's farsightedness that we enjoy the wonderful parks, open spaces and walking trails along the lake in Oakville. In 1952, when he was on the Town Planning Board, and the estates along the lakeshore were breaking up, he discovered a clause in the Planning Act indicating that when the land was subdivided and density increased, the Town was entitled to five percent of any subdivision for parkland or money in lieu. He proposed that the first fifty feet of waterfront would come under public ownership. In the 1960s a by-law was passed so that when an estate would change hands and density increase, the Town would take ownership of the lakefront.

**Harry** was recognized for this achievement in 2013 by Mayor Burton and the Town Council, at a ceremony at Tannery Park where a plaque was placed, naming the waterfront trails **The Harry Barrett Waterfront Parks System**.

# Harry Barrett continued



You can see these commemorative plaques in **Arkendo Park, Gairloch Gardens, Tannery Park, Coronation Park, and South Shell Park**. At the dedication, Mayor Burton praised Harry Barrett's leadership and foresight. *"It's with great pride that we dedicate this network of waterfront parks, open spaces and trails to Mr. Harry Barrett. Leadership stems from doing the right things for both today and tomorrow. Harry's foresight ensured that future generations of Oakville residents and visitors can access our beautiful lakefront properties. On behalf of Oakville, we thank Harry for his contributions in shaping the outstanding community we live in today."*

*Harry Barrett, Award Presentation June 2013*

## The Harbours

**Much** is owed to Mr. Barrett for his leadership in the restoration of our beautiful harbours in Bronte and Oakville. In 1973 the harbours were in poor condition so Mayor Barrett formed the **Oakville Harbour Development Authority**, charged with developing both harbours. He hired the late Gurth Bramall as Harbourmaster and many people, including lawyers and engineers volunteered their time. Along with Town staff, they were given the mandate to do the soundings, acquire the lands around the harbours, clear up the debris, landscape, dredge and create new moorings. His purpose in naming it an authority and not a committee was that in endowing people with authority they would command the respect to get things done, something committees often find difficult to do.

*"It was all part of my plan to have the waterfront and harbours available for public use,"* recalled Harry. *"We had a good council who trusted me and I them."* It is Mr. Barrett's wish that the public will eventually have access to the entire Oakville waterfront. The Town of Oakville is currently working to continue the development of the west side of the harbour, under the leadership of Chris Mark, Director of Parks and Open Space.



*Oakville Harbour looking south*

# Harry Barrett continued

## Heritage Committee

**Harry Barrett** has been member of the **Heritage Oakville Committee** since 2001. He was nominated and appointed as the representative of the Oakville Historical Society and was subsequently appointed by Town Council as Chair of the Committee. As the result of the work of the committee, some five hundred and eighty properties have been designated, including The Granary, The Murray House, Gairloch and The Sovereign House, as well as all those within the four heritage districts; Old Oakville, First and Second Streets, Trafalgar Road and Downtown Heritage Conservation Districts.

**The** Heritage Committee has recently simplified and shortened the process of approving minor changes to heritage buildings. Many decisions can now be made by the Town Heritage Department instead of having to be approved by the Committee. This has speeded up the approval process for home owners.



Harry Barrett's 90th birthday with long-time friend Evelyn Bullied aged 99. *photo Marianne Hawthorne*

**In conclusion**, our town has benefitted from Harry Barrett's leadership and foresight which came from an honest desire to do the right thing, not for himself but for his fellow citizens. His hope for the future is to see the entire waterfront under the control of The Town and accessible to the general public. He would like to see community involvement continue to grow. These wishes certainly seem to be respected by our current Mayor and Council. At Harry's ninetieth birthday party, a casual meeting at our offices, Mayor Burton and many members of Council and Town staff came out to pay their respects and express their congratulations. We at the Oakville Historical Society take pride in being able to say we know Harry Barrett for the person he is: a man of action, foresight and vision, balanced with true authenticity, compassion and humility.

*Andrea Stewart*



# AROUND THE SOCIETY

## Welland Canal Fallen Workers

The Welland Ship Canal was an amazing engineering feat carried out between 1913 and 1935. It now carries more than 3,000 vessels per year and is important for the economies on both sides of the Canada/US border. However, it took a serious toll: the lives of some 137 workers who are finally being recognized with the memorial they deserve.



*Mr. Aiden Phair, above, shows an image of the proposed memorial. photo Greg Munz*

Our February speaker was **Mr. Aiden Phair**, a volunteer with the **Canal Workers Memorial** who came to tell us the story of the workers. This, the largest loss of life on a Canadian government infrastructure project in Canada's history, was met at the time with almost total disregard for the safety of the workers and the consequent loss of life. Compensation for the surviving families was either woefully inadequate or non-existent and accounts of the various casualties related by Mr. Phair are shocking for us today. Three families suffered the loss of fathers plus sons; one father who witnessed his son's death when his body was crushed was himself crushed to death six months later. The last casualty before the Canal's Official Opening in 1932, died within an hour of arriving on his first day at the job site. His widow was left with no money, little English, and six children to provide for. Despite the loss, she persevered, keeping the family together and raising her two girls and four boys in their new home of Canada. Details of all

these casualties and the survivors can be found on the website, [www.stcatherines.ca/CanalWorkersMemorial](http://www.stcatherines.ca/CanalWorkersMemorial).

At the opening of the canal in 1932, The Honourable Dr. R.J. Manion, Minister of Railways and Canals said *Peace has its heroes as well as war, and in a construction project of this magnitude, with its daily risk, and hazard...It is only right and proper that we should give a thought to the men who lost their lives during the progress of the work.* It is only now that these workers are to be recognized. A memorial garden planned to be opened in 2017 will be located at the Welland Canals Parkway, north of Lock 3. *Andrea Stewart*



A recent acquisition to our collection is a 1953 photo at right, of a house being moved to, or from, Washington Avenue, east of Kerr Street. Above is the street today with Kerr St. at left, out of the frame.



# AROUND THE SOCIETY

We are pleased to have welcomed eight new members since our December 2015 Newsletter:

Mr. and Mrs. Don Baird  
Mr. and Mrs. M. Follows  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Jelinek  
Mrs. Peggy Morrison  
Father O'Mahony, St. Andrew Church  
Toronto Reference Library  
Ms. Rosalie Ward  
Ms. Ruth Anne Winter

We look forward to welcoming these new members at our upcoming events.

## Membership Reminder

**Thank you** to those of you who so promptly renewed your membership for 2016. However, there are some eighty memberships still outstanding. If you have been away or have forgotten, I wonder if you would be good enough to send your membership soon. We hope you will continue to enjoy the benefits of membership and support the work of our volunteers in preserving Oakville's history. Thank you.

*Andrea Stewart, Memberships*



*photo Greg Munz*

**Kaj Pindal** (born 1927) is a Danish-born Canadian animator and animation educator who worked at the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) beginning in 1957. He began his career as an underground cartoonist during the German occupation of Denmark and was forced to flee his home city of Copenhagen when his series of anti-Hitler cartoons put his life in peril. He immigrated to Canada in 1957 and joined the NFB the same year.

It was our pleasure to have Kaj discuss with us and show some of these favourites at our Speakers' night in November 2015. He also brought an example of what the students at Sheridan College have produced – a most entertaining “whodunit” about a mouse detective whose neighbourhood was the pages of a newspaper! We in Oakville are very proud of the great tradition that has made Sheridan College one of the most respected

among animators worldwide, thanks to the talents of those artists on the teaching staff and the commitment of the students. *Mary Davidson*

**Day Trips** There have been some requests by our membership for an organised excursion to a near-by museum or historical locale. We propose we meet at the office, fill our vehicles with members wanting a ride and meet at the site, which could be - Fort York, McCrae House, Dundurn Castle.... Need a Spring Day out? Call or write and let us know what interests you. We are open to all suggestions of time and place.

# AROUND THE SOCIETY

**How** did it begin? Last spring Delmanor Glen Abbey requested someone speak to about the history of Oakville. I rose to the challenge and I haven't looked back.

"The History of Oakville" sounded dull, so I named my presentation "**A Glimpse Into Our Past**" and at the end of the afternoon when I asked if there were any questions, the first question was, "Do you have any other presentations?"

I had been leading tours of the old town, but it was too much walking for seniors so I decided this would be my next challenge. I had my grandson walk the tour with me and take photos of about 45 homes of the early settlers. I then took this presentation named "**A Walking Tour - Without Walking**" to Delmanor, and that is how it all began.

I gave both presentations at five seniors homes last fall - I space them about a month apart - and each one draws between 21 to 45 in the audience, depending on the size of the home. I also spoke at the Colbourne Centre for Seniors, reaching 75 folk that day. My smallest audience so far was seven ladies in a private home.

As much as it is helpful to bring a little cash into the Society, my main reason for all this is to better educate the folk of Oakville on their very interesting past.

I will still continue to take people out for walking tours, but would like to fill the colder months with more inside presentations. And I do all this in costume. One never grows too old to enjoy "dressing up." *Trish Sinclair*

**While** volunteering at OHS and working on the recently published **Oakville Memories Old and New: Let's Remnesce**, I was led back to my favourite activity: interviewing.

As we prepare for the second edition of *Remnesces of Oakville*, the veteran volunteers of OHS suggested we record those Oakvillians whose stories could be heard by the click of a link on our website. Now I am listening to and recording our citizens tell their stories in their own words and soon you also will be able to hear them. What a great idea for readers of the future to experience the sound of the voices of the storytellers of Oakville. Please contact me at the OHS office, 905 844-2695 if you, or someone you know would like to participate in this project.

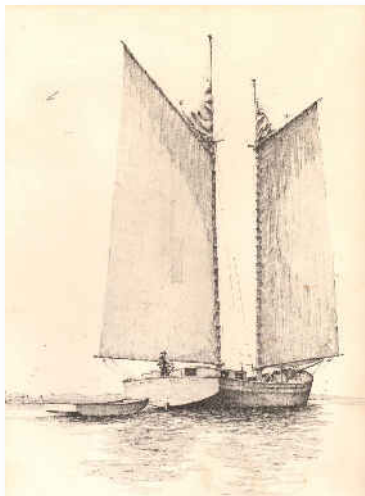
*Margaret Godefroy*



*Above, Trish Sinclair leads an outdoor tour*

# AROUND THE OFFICE

**CHJ Snider** (1879 - 1971) wrote a series of columns, “Schooner Days” which ran in the Toronto Evening Telegram from 1935 to 1956. His work included the first-hand information he gleaned from aged captains of schooners, stonehookers, and steamers, from Great Lakes sailors, and others who had an intimate knowledge of the inland seas of North America and the Toronto waterfront. This vast collection of articles has been a fascination of volunteer **Philip Brimacombe** and he has spent years collating, categorising and organising them into a form easily accessible to any researcher wishing to learn about this activity on the Great Lakes. They are all on our library shelves waiting for you to open



Pictured at left is a rendition of a **stonehooker**, the type of vessel that brought up flat stones that lay under the lake near the shore. They were extensively used to build foundations of early Oakville buildings. The stone hooking practice died out when concrete was perfected. This work by an unknown artist was donated to OHS. The back of the card is shown at right.



Our **June 2015** edition featured a photo of **Cedar Croft Motor Court**. At left is a photo that shows the property in December 1989.



This above property at 1110 Lakeshore Rd. E., shown in our **December** newsletter was once a grounds-keeper's house on the **Baillie** estate, **Lisonally**.



**Mrs. Thomas** never looked so good. The Thomas House, shown at left, had some visitors recently. **Sheridan College** students **Neda Ahmad** (photographer), **Sasha Pawluk**, **Stefania Floro** and **Gloria Siu** (hair & makeup team) used their many skills as did model **Jodi Harris**. We are pleased to lend our premises to Sheridan students as they are always professional and respectful.



# 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](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**



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**Oakville, On.**

**L6J 1B1**



# THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



*Oakville's Lighthouses*

**June 2016**

**Volume 50 Number 2**



# 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 63<sup>rd</sup> 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 36<sup>th</sup> 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?

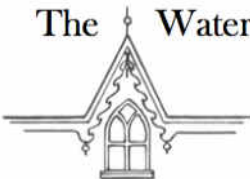
Touring across the Canada in our storymobile (a.k.a recording booth on wheels) we're gathering stories in small towns and big cities alike by means of scheduled and impromptu interviews with independent business owners, local heroes, community stakeholders, and neighbourhood residents. These stories 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:**

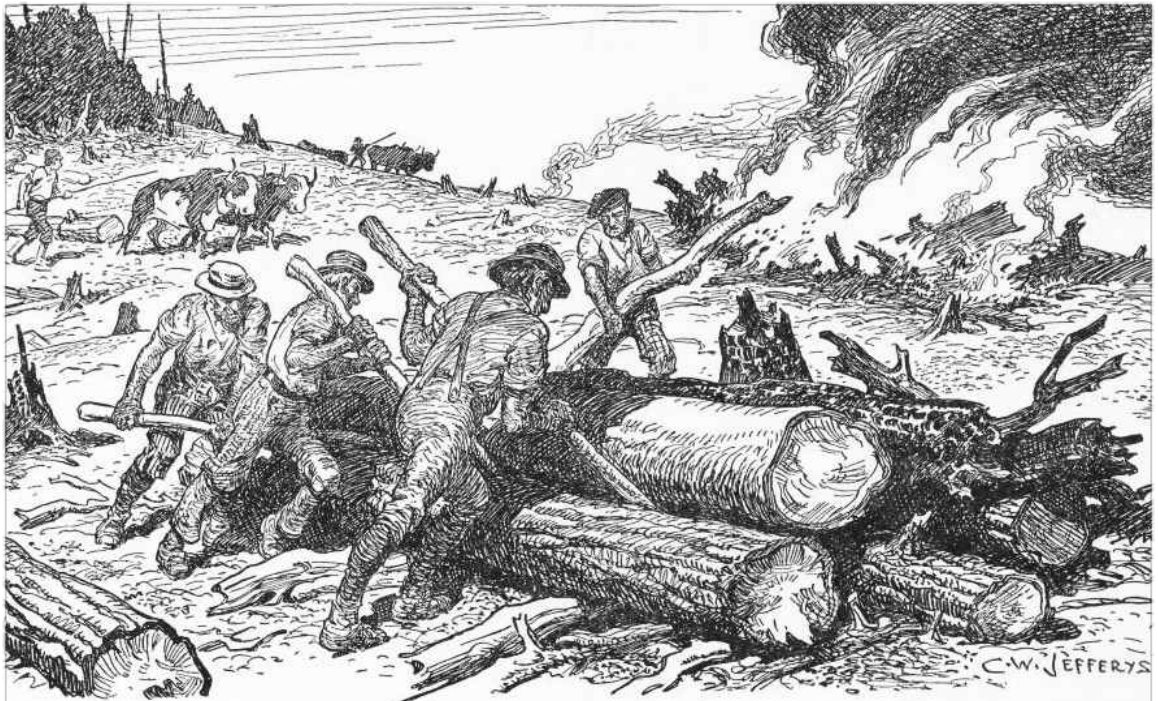
**Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm  
Third Sun. of the month 12:30 to 4:00 pm**

**(905) 844-2695      [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**



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

# THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



CLEARING LAND, ABOUT 1830

September 2016

Volume 50 Number 3



# PUBLIC SPEAKERS

**Wednesday  
November 16th**

**Plum Johnson** author of *They Left Us Everything* will speak about her family who lived on Trafalgar Rd. at the lake front. Her memoir won the **2015 RBC Taylor Prize for Nonfiction**.

**Above presentation will be made at St. John's United Church at  
Randall and Dunn Streets (enter by the Randall Street entrance)  
7:30 - 9:00 pm Admission is free and refreshments will be served.**



The Oakville-built schooner Royal Albert, which sank to the bottom of Lake Ontario in 1868, has been found near Fair Haven, N.Y. It was speculated that the load of railroad rails aboard the schooner shifted, bursting the ship's seams and causing it to sink so rapidly that the crew barely had time to escape. Shipbuilder John Simpson constructed the ship in 1858. *Oakville Beaver photo*



OHS organized a trip to **Guelph Museums exhibition Lucile: Fashion. Titanic. Scandal** *Lucile, Lady Duff Gordon, the fashionista of her day – inventor of the fashion show, creator of respectable scanty lingerie, and designer to the rich and famous.* To provide balance to their day the group then enjoyed afternoon tea at **McRae House**. All reported it was a very enjoyable outing and will plan another. Destination ideas are welcome. *Greg Munz photo*



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**We** have certainly cut back on the amount of firewood used this summer at the Thomas House. It's been so hot and sticky that most volunteers have not wanted a fire. As the weather cools we hope to get at some of the repairs required. The Town has recently moved the bank behind the Thomas House back a couple of feet and done a great job of paving the area. This means that we can finally stabilize the back corner of the building which has sunk significantly in the years since the building was moved to Lakeside Park. There is no foundation. The building is sitting on lake stones. We also need to replace some rotten wood and do some painting. The joys of owning a wooden building.

We are delighted with the number of people contacting us about volunteering for the Society. Our new volunteers include recent retirees, recent grads and students.

We're also very pleased that demand for the **Oakville Memories** book has been so great that a second printing has been ordered. We're also gathering stories for Volume 2. If you missed the boat for Volume 1 and would like to contribute to Volume 2, please let us know.

It's early, but mark your calendar for the Annual Members Christmas Party scheduled for the 2nd of December.

On 22nd August, members and guests of the Society celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of long-time member and volunteer **Evelyn Bullied**. Ev (Savage) was born and raised in the Village of Sheridan at the corner of what is now Winston Churchill Boulevard and the QEW. At that south-west corner you can visit the cairn that lists the family names of early residents.

There is so much history around us and much of it is very well presented. This past summer, Brenda and I drove and camped around the Gaspé Peninsula. Not only is the scenery amazing but there are also several historic sites. Highlights of our trip included staying in Forillon National Park and seeing whales and grey seals, camping with a view of Percé Rock, camping at Carleton-sur-Mer, visiting the Miguasha World Heritage Site with its 390 million year old Devonian shale beds and fossils, the Battle of Ristigouche National Historic Site and the Point-au-Père site with its Empress of Ireland Exhibit and HMCS Onondaga submarine. Cross that trip off our list.

*George Chisholm, President*

Illustrations on cover and pages 6 and 7 by **Charles William Jefferys** (August 25, 1869 – October 8, 1951), a Canadian painter, illustrator, author, and teacher best known as a historical illustrator.



# "THE SOUND OF THE AXE"

## EARLY LUMBERING DAYS IN TRAFALGAR TOWNSHIP



**The Virgin Forest** When the first European settlers established themselves in Trafalgar Township 200 years ago the district was covered with thick virgin forest. Approximately 85% of what is now the Town of Oakville was covered by trees of various types. This immense forest cover appeared to our earliest settlers to be an inexhaustible supply of timber, lumber, potash and staves. Through the tracts of forests covering what is now Southern Ontario were lakes like Lake Ontario, great rivers like the St. Lawrence, as well as lesser streams like the 12 and 16 Mile Creeks at Oakville that provided pathways for the shipment of wood products to markets in Britain, Europe and the United States. From the earliest French settlements in New France in the 1600s to the subsequent waves of Loyalist, British and European settlers in the 1800s, it has been estimated that 50 million acres were cleared for agriculture in the St. Lawrence Valley and the Canadian side of the Lower Great Lakes.

In the lands bordering the western end of Lake Ontario including Halton, hardwoods provided the greatest source of export revenue for the pioneer economy during the "Timber Boom" of the early and mid-1800s. Oak, elm, maple, birch, hickory and cherry were used in such trades as carriage-making which was an important industry in Oakville during the mid to late 1800s. Tanbark was used in the manufacturing process at the large tannery situated on the west bank of Oakville Harbour during the 1800s until it ceased operation in 1925. Of particular note locally were the magnificent white oak trees as well as the pines that frequently rose to 200 feet!

By the late 1820's lumbermen had ventured as far as the "Head of the Lake" including Halton County as forests further east became quickly depleted with the westward advance of European settlement. Starting at the Lake Ontario shoreline, they soon began lumbering further inland in the watersheds of the 12 and 16 Mile Creeks in Trafalgar Township.

**Clearing The Land** In the spirit of "All Help One and One Help All" the pioneers assisted their neighbours in the gruelling process of clearing the land of forest cover so fields could be established for crops and grazing. These "Logging Bees" were usually held in the winter months when pioneer farmers were not as busy. In 1837, James Logan wrote:

‘Another day went with Mr. Carnegie to a logging bee at his neighbour's place. There were about six acres to log, and he had collected about twenty of his neighbours or their servants. There were yokes of oxen with generally four oxen to a yoke, with a boy to drive. To the yoke over the necks of the oxen is fastened a long chain, with a hook at the end, and this chain was put round a log which is thus dragged to the pile.... When the logs, which vary from ten to fifteen feet in length, and from one to two and a half in diameter, were brought to a pile we laid them on in the proper manner. After the first layer was arranged the rest of the logs were hoisted on with hand-spikes. This is a very labourious part of the operation, especially when the logs are heavy; and if they should slip you are in danger of getting your leg broken or even of losing your life.... In the evening we had a dance and otherwise agreeably entertained until one in the morning.’

The social aspect of the bees was never neglected, and the host and hostess were expected to provide the best they could offer in the way of food and drink. "People in the woods have a craze for going to bees and run to them with as much eagerness as a peasant runs to a race-course or a fair," Susanna Moodie commented in her well-known book, *"Roughing It in the Bush."* For one of her own logging bees she reported that "the maid and I were engaged for two days preceding the important one in baking and cooking for the entertainment of our guests. When I looked at the quantity of food we had prepared I thought that it could never be all eaten...."

Her doubts were swept away, however, when "they all sat down at the rude board which I had prepared for them, loaded with the finest fare that could be procured in the bush. Pea soup, legs of pork, venison, eel, and raspberry pies, garnished with plenty of potatoes, and whiskey to wash them down, besides a large iron kettle of tea"

After clearing the land the pioneer farmer planted a crop of wheat. But for the next 3 or 4 years the land had to be put into pasture, as weeds would choke the grain and the trees would sprout again. Cattle kept down the sprouts and the stumps. If the stumps were not already removed by hand (another back-breaking task!) they gradually decayed. Soon the land could be ploughed and uninterrupted wheat cropping started. The wheat flour, timber, lumber, potash and wood for barrel staves provided the first sources of income for the pioneer farmers.

#### ***OUR LOGGING-BEE***

*There was a man in our town,  
In our town, in our town –  
There was a man in our town,  
He made a logging-bee;  
And he bought lots of whiskey,  
To make the loggers frisky –  
To make the loggers frisky  
At his logging-bee.*

*The Devil sat on a log heap,  
A log heap, a log heap –  
A red hot burning log heap –  
A-grinning at the bee;*

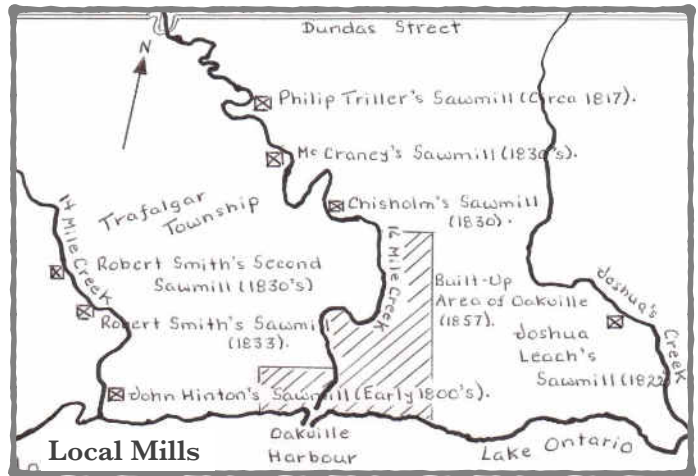
*And there was lots of swearing,  
Of boasting and of daring,  
Of fighting and of tearing,  
At that logging bee.*

Susanna Moodie

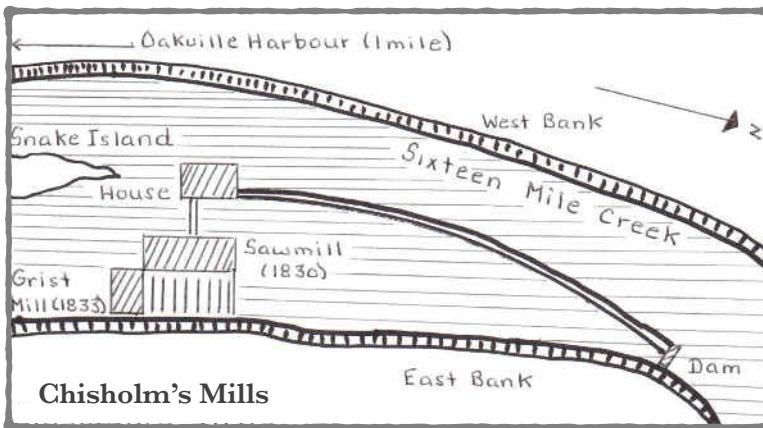
## The Lumber Trade

The timber most commonly used for mercantile purposes was white pine. However, the most valuable wood for local export was white oak. It was most suitable for shipbuilding, an industry that flourished in Oakville in the mid-1800s. After the trees were cut and the branches removed, the logs were squared. When squared the lumber was easier to raft, and, as the squared logs fitted snugly together in the holds of the Trans-Atlantic sailing vessels, the cargo would not shift with the rolling of the ship on the rough ocean crossings. The local

timber and lumber industry consisted mainly of squared timber for the British market. However the U.S. market gradually opened up to the industry by the 1840s as the supply of good-quality domestic lumber south of the border did not keep up with the demand in the fast-growing market in that country. The U.S. market demanded a good deal of Canadian sawn lumber by this time and this resulted in an increase in the number of sawmills in Southern Ontario including Trafalgar Township. Later on, as the British preference for Canadian lumber declined and



Britain turned to Free Trade, the demand for our squared lumber declined providing a further stimulus for erecting sawmills. White pine remained the Canadian timber most in demand in the mid-1800s. Called the most useful timber in the world at the time, Oakville and surrounding Trafalgar Township were at the heart of an extensive white pine forest. The wood from this tree is light but nonetheless strong and is easily worked.



It found numerous uses from matches to venetian blinds. The tree preferred the sandy soils of the old Lake Iroquois shoreline running along the northwest shore of Lake Ontario in Peel and Halton Counties.

**The King's Pines** From the time of the earliest European settlement in Trafalgar Township 200 years ago the local virgin forest had supplied pine for masts and spars in the vessels of the Royal Navy. Marked with a "broad arrow" by agents for the Crown these trees were known as the "King's Pines." The American War of Independence had put an end to the supply of New England timber to British markets. However, with the subsequent opening of the eastern colonies of British North America to settlement a new source of supply for Britain became available. Pine masts and oak timbers played a vital role in the supremacy of the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic War at the turn of the 19th Century. The Napoleonic War had closed the Baltic ports from which Britain obtained timber thus initiating a further stimulus to our local timber and lumber industry. The local timber was carefully cut and squared using axes, then dragged to the Lake Ontario shoreline and floated to the mouth of the 16 Mile Creek at Oakville. There, seasonal labourers fashioned the timber into huge rafts for the journey along the north shore of Lake Ontario, down the St. Lawrence River and through the various rapids to Montreal and thence to Quebec City where the timber and lumber were loaded into the holds of great sailing vessels for the journey overseas.

**The Potash Trade** In 1830, while the harbour at Oakville was still under construction, included in the exports of wheat, flour, lumber and tallow were 109 barrels of potash. Leached from the ashes of hardwood trees, potash was one of the chief sources of income for the backwoods settlers in the early days of settlement of Trafalgar Township. Before it was replaced by mining-sourced product, wood-source potash was much in demand in Britain for the manufacture of glass and soap. Most merchants in Trafalgar Township in the early days operated asheries in conjunction with their general stores. Potash was the settler's first manufactured product and the source of their first income besides timber and lumber. Ten acres of good timber yielded at least 5 barrels of potash. Each barrel contained 500 pounds. The difficulties the settlers encountered shipping this produce to Oakville Harbour for export overseas stimulated the construction of roads to the mouth of the 16 Mile Creek and proper port facilities such as piers, docks and a warehouse at that location.



**The Stave Trade** Staves were in great demand in Britain and the U.S. for the manufacture of barrels of all sizes and shapes. In making staves, squared white oak was cut into blocks 5 1/2 inches by 3 feet long. With a wedge and small mallet, a 6 inch block could be split into 4 staves. The sizes most in demand were the extra-heavy pipe staves and the somewhat lighter standard staves. The shorter West Indies staves were slightly narrower and thinner. Each stave was marked with a hammer bearing the initials of William Chisholm, Oakville's founder. Made in the bush during the relatively slack winter season, the staves were stacked. Before the spring freshet, cullers were sent to throw out the culls and then, unless made on farms on the northern sections of Trafalgar Township, the staves were corded together and

**The Stave Trade** *continued* dragged by oxen over the icy, snow-covered roads to Oakville. Where Trafalgar Road meets Inglehart Street a wooden slide was erected, down which staves were slid one by one onto the decks of cargo schooners moored near the head of navigation on the 16. Farmers in the northern sections of Trafalgar Township sent their staves to Oakville Harbour via the 16. As soon as the spring freshet arrived, men were hired to toss the selected staves into the river and pilot them downstream to the harbour. Carried by the high water, the staves rushed down to Lake Ontario where a boom kept them from drifting offshore. It was said at the time that one could walk on the mass of staves floating down the 16 from the harbour to the dam at Chisholm's Mills, a distance of about a mile! Transient lumberjacks lived in shanties on the flats at the north end of Navy Street and tales were told of the brawls and carousing heard at night in their makeshift encampments!

A few of the staves were used locally but most were destined for Britain. Shipping finished barrels was uneconomic as they took up too much space in the vessel holds. Barrels made from Canadian staves in Britain played a vital role in the shipment of commodities throughout the country and abroad during a period of rapid industrialization and colonization. Some were destined for the West Indies sugar trade where they were returned in the shape of sugar hogsheads and rum puncheons. Some of this produce was sent directly to Canada where the barrels would likely have been reused after being emptied of their contents or knocked down and the wood used for other purposes.

**The Final Days** By the 1860s, the trade in wood products in Southern Ontario had declined as farmers' fields had replaced much of the forest cover. Some sawmills like Doty's at Oakville Harbour survived until the turn of the 20th Century. Lumber yards like Blakelock's on Randall Street were still a common site in Oakville into the mid-1900's. Meanwhile Ontario's lumber industry moved north to districts like Georgian Bay, Muskoka and Nipissing where farming was not as common due to the thin soils of the Canadian Shield.

*The Sound of the Axe & map illustrations by Philip Brimacombe*

We are most pleased to welcome the following **New Members** since January of this year. We hope you will all make full use of our resources and enjoy the companionship of the Society.

*Andrea Stewart, Memberships*

Mr. Jim Bond Mrs. Wendy Burton Ms. Amanda Griffin Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Hood  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Jelinek Mr. William Terry and Ms. Margaret Warwick  
Mrs. Nuala Johnston Ms. Beryl Jones Mr. Julian Kingston, Supervisor Erchless Museum  
The Reverend John Maranjac, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish Church Mr. Fred Hayward  
Mr. Chris Mark, Director of Parks and Open Space Mr. and Mrs. Wade Pitman  
Ms. Carolyn Rumble Mr. Roger Sanders Ms. Christine Sherry Mr. Andrew Pierce  
Ms. Susan Schappert, Heritage Planner, Town of Oakville Ms. Carlina Watson  
Saints Peter and Paul Serbian Orthodox Church, Oakville  
Ms. Carolyn Cross, Curator of Collections, Erchless Museum  
Mr. Ethan Strathdee Ms. Carolyn Van Sligtenhorst, Heritage Planner, Town of Oakville  
Ms. Maya Vasdani Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wood Mr. and Mrs. Norman Young



# AROUND THE SOCIETY



To highlight his office display, planner and designer **Greg Munz** held a contest for younger citizens at the June Mayor's Picnic. Here is Martin Laretei (mid-left) with daughter Kristina and her children Erik and Emmet enjoying the prize of a sail on the Anitra with owner and skipper Jaime Macrae (r).



**Greg Munz** (above) recently aided young visitors with his sailing skills and terminology quiz, in conjunction with our neighbour, Erchless Museum, and their summer programme.



Levinia Kidd above (l) with sister Lilian was another contest winner. Here they are at the bow of Ruffian skippered by Peter Wells.



Claudette Shaw at left, with Nicole Lauermeier decide where to plant herbs at the Thomas House. Spurred on by Claudette, we are choosing plants that would have been grown in Mrs. Thomas' garden c1850.

The Oakville Historical Society is proud of our volunteers. **Greg Munz** is one such tireless individual, who received the 2016 Town Of Oakville **Heritage Award**. Greg continues to prepare and mount exhibits at our offices. Greg Casey (left) from Genworth Canada presents Greg (right) with his award.



# AROUND THE SOCIETY



Our archives hold 40 years of diaries of **George Sumner** who was Oakville's Chief Constable from 1859-1902. In addition to that major responsibility, here is a list of some of his other duties: Jailor, Truant Officer, Dog Catcher, Sanitation Officer, Janitor & Ticket taker at Town Hall, Immigration Officer, Superintendent of Roads & Sidewalks, Undertaker's Assistant, Summer Steamer Agent, Tax Collector, Harbour Master and Health Officer.

We were pleased to have his descendants visit us to study the diaries. Shown above are Carol (Sumner) Morling (his great granddaughter), Charles Morling (great great grandson) and Ben Morling (great great grandson) who is reading a c130-year-old diary.



**Evelyn (Savage) Bullied** who has lived and worked in Oakville most of her life was born 100 years ago on a farm where Ford now builds vehicles. We all wish our long-serving volunteer continued good health!

## Oakville's Ghosts Return

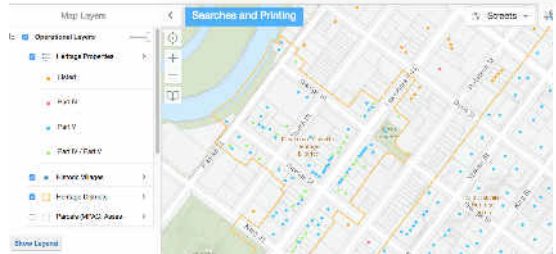
The Oakville Historical Society will again welcome the return of a number of local characters - characters who died in the 19th century. Yes, our annual **Ghost Walks** will begin on **Thursday, October 13 and run until Saturday, October 29.**

Why do we choose this time of year? In the fall, near All Hallow's Eve, the veil between our dimension and the dimension beyond is thinnest and ghosts apparently can come through more easily. But do our Oakville ghosts frighten, threaten? Not according to the late **Joyce Burnell** who was a long-time member of the Oakville Historical Society and author of *Ghosts of Oakville* and *Boo Too*, Oakville has only the nicest ghosts, which is why our Walks are so popular with families and groups of young people such as Brownies and Cubs. Last year we did 49 walks/bus tours/presentations. And this year we plan to do even more. Cost remains \$12 per adult and \$6 per child under 12 for our one hour Walks.. We are delighted that several more Society members have volunteered to haunt the streets of olde Oakville. We also welcome any members who would like to be roaming ghosts - those characters who stroll along the streets in costume once or twice during a designated walk to greet the Walk participants - a role also perfectly suited for high school students, drama enthusiasts or not, wanting to earn volunteer hours! And we also encourage members to volunteer to help with refreshments that are served after each Walk. Contact Mary Davidson or Wendy Belcher at 905 844-2695

# AROUND THE TOWN



Looking for Heritage properties?  
Go to the **Town of Oakville** website and choose **Heritage Planning**. You can choose what properties you wish to see on the map -



**Doors Open Oakville** will take place **Saturday, October 1**. We are looking forward to adding some new sites, including the Oakville Club, The John Bell Chapel at Appleby College, and MacLachlan College, Halton Regional Centre, Joshua Creek Heritage Centre, Oakville Greenhouse, and St. Andrew's and Knox churches. A full list of our Oakville sites is on the Doors Open Halton website. A brochure will be issued soon.

Some of our sites will need additional volunteers to welcome visitors and explain a little about the buildings. We will provide the necessary information for this purpose. If you think you could spare a couple of hours October 1, please email -

Membership.Oakville.Historical.Society@outlook.com  
or phone (905) 844-2695 for further information.

*Thanks, Andrea Stewart*



**June 2016** Newsletter showed a photo of a sign proclaiming **"JACOBS' JAMS MADE HERE"** 'HERE' was the north side of Randall St. at Navy St. where the Scout Hut is today. Owner George Jacobs was Mayor of Oakville from 1933 to 1939.

# THE WAY THINGS WERE



Where is this?

What was its purpose?

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](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)



Send all Mail to  
110 King Street  
Oakville, On.  
L6J 1B1

Oakville Historical  
Society  
since 1953

www.oakvillehistory.org

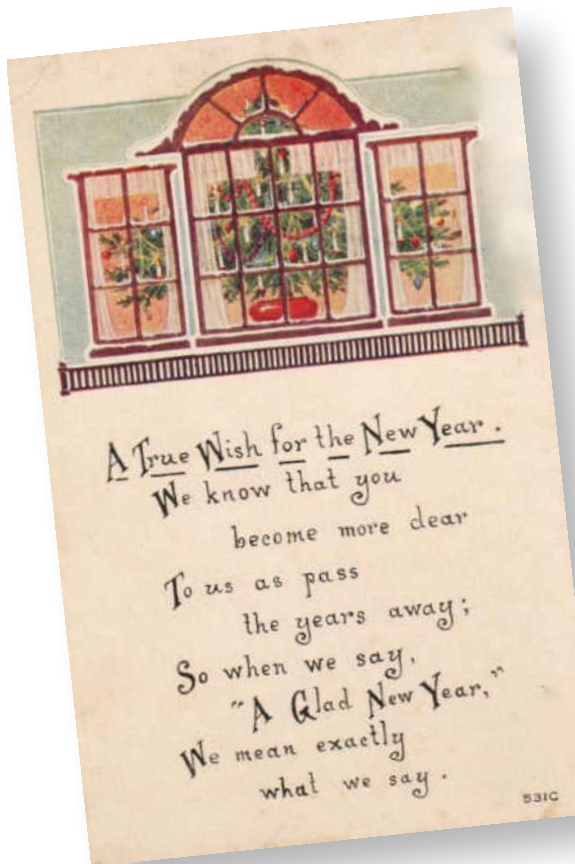
# The White Oak

News from the Oakville Historical Society

Discover

Oakville's Architecture

Pg. 5



Get ready  
For Christmas!  
Pg. 2



December 2016



## Christmas Wine and Cheese

*When: Friday, December 2nd 6:00-10:00*

*Where: 110 King Street, Oakville*

## Annual General Meeting

*When: Wednesday, March 15th 6:00 - 9:00*

*Where: St. John's United Church*

## They Left Us Everything

Ever contemplated writing a memoir? Plum Johnson did and won thousands of fans and prestigious prizes for her efforts. Winner of the 2015 RBC Taylor Prize for Non-fiction and 2016 Ontario Library Association Evergreen Award. At our November Speakers' Night, Plum Johnson spoke to 200 enthralled readers about growing up in Oakville with interesting parents of varied backgrounds. And her advice for those of you rummaging in the attic looking for old diaries to compile into a book? Read books on how to write a memoir. See how to make a memory book here - <https://plumjohnson.com>

## Plum Johnson



Visitors recently perused our archives to learn more about Ennisclare. The building at 40 Cox Drive was built in 1910 for Herbert C. Cox, President and later Chairman of the Board of the Canada Life Assurance Company. The building is a white stucco-clad structure built in a style reminiscent of the early Colonial mansions of the southern United States.



# A note from the Society *President*

Welcome to the new newsletter name and format. We've enjoyed the expertise of several new volunteers this fall. Gloria Cilliers and Ivy De Grandis came to us and offered their expertise in marketing, public relations and website development. Working with our webmaster, Stan Smurlick, they have given the website a major overhaul. If you haven't seen it, have a look at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org). Gloria worked closely with our newsletter editor, Susan Wells to develop this new format for the newsletter and it now has an official name. We also have a branding book or style guide to help us with the preparation of posters, fliers and other documents.

*"After a long wait we now have two copies of Past Perfect which is a collection management computer program."*

Treasurer, Mark Verlinden, with help from new volunteer Harris Petch, has been managing this project. This will allow us to catalogue the entire collection, attach digital images of all the items and, eventually, prepare online exhibits. A new, online version of the program is due to be released soon which will make it even more usable. We're in the process of hiring two young people under short-term contract to help us get started and learn how to use this software. Because of all the work our librarian, May Isaac, has already done in creating digital records, we're planning to start with the marine library and hope to have it catalogued in Past Perfect by Christmas.

In the new year, we hope to be looking for volunteers to help. If you'd like to learn more about the process, drop by.

Thanks to the work of Mary Davidson, Wendy Belcher, Marie Descent and several other volunteers, we've had our most successful Ghost Walk season so far and have made over \$7000 for the Society. This year we had several new walk leaders and over 50 high-school-age volunteers. Our ghost walks have indeed become a community event.

A few weeks ago, long-time member Lynn Munro brought in a donation of a shoebox of letters from the First War – all in their original envelopes with the stamps still on them. Included in the box was a diary of Melville Munro who went overseas with the locally raised 164<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. It will take us some time to sort these out and get them properly protected. A week later a very interesting scrap book going back to the 1930s was dropped off.

A fair amount of work was also done on the Thomas House this fall. Mark Verlinden and I replaced the ramp, some shutters and rotten siding and Mark spent some time on the roof removing the accumulation of moss. In the spring we hope to paint much of the building.

I hope to see many of our members at the annual Christmas Party. If you haven't been to one, plan to attend.

George Chisholm President

# In & around the Society

A group of volunteers took part in a video recording for the Oakville Arts Council on Thursday afternoon November 10<sup>th</sup> to help them promote the work of volunteers in Oakville. This will be made available at their presentation in January/February 2017 at Queen Elizabeth Park Cultural & Community Centre. We certainly did our best to promote the Historical Society. Thanks to all who took part.


We are pleased to *WELCOME* New Members:

ATA Architects The Ball Family Mr. Rick Day  
Mr. Michael Haley Ms. Claire Sinclair Mr. Jeff Stephenson  
Mrs. Cheryl Wessel Mr. Rob Windmill

## Creative Volunteers

After a successful career in banking, Ivy De Grandis followed her passion for communications. She started by completing a post graduate certificate in Public Relations and then offered her skills to OHS. In her short two month tenure, Ivy collaborated with two other volunteers in the significant undertaking of modernizing and streamlining the OHS website. Ivy also set up our team to improve our outreach and community awareness by creating tools and templates to organize our public relations, developing a method to continually keep our website updated and creating a media kit to make it easier for local news outlets to work with OHS.

Gloria Cilliers moved to Oakville from South Africa recently with her husband, Charl. Gloria has a Master's degree in Communications and B.A. Journalism and has been a journalist and editor for over 13 years. Recently worked as senior copywriter and creative manager for Avon in its marketing department. She is now editor of Canadian Insurance Top Broker magazine. With the OHS she has led a Brand Refresh Project, creating a Brand Book, refreshing design of our website and newsletter, and other creative materials like posters and logos as/when the Society needs them, as in our new Ghost Walks logo.



MacLachlan College

Lisa M. Duranleau, B.Sc., B.Ed., O.T.C.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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# Wilson House

*Compiled by Andrea Stewart*

This beautiful house, attached to Clanmore Montessori School at 2463 Lakeshore Road East and lovingly restored and maintained by the school, was built in 1902/03 by Isaac Court Wilson. It is a large red brick two-storey and typical of the Canadian-Italianate style, first introduced in the Canadian Farmer Journal in 1865 and typical of a style popular in the late Victorian era.

Isaac, born to a family of gentlemen farmers near the English Lake District, arrived with his brother John in 1884. John purchased a property to the west of Oakville near what is now Coronation Park and Isaac the property on which 2463 Lakeshore Road East would later be constructed. Isaac established a market garden farm on his 100 acre property growing raspberries, beets and peas, etc. He married Annie Snyder and during 1902 and 1903 they built the new brick house at 2463, moving in for Christmas 1903.

Isaac was very active in church life at St. Cuthbert's non-denominational church which later became St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church. Years later he became an active member of St. John's United Church in Oakville. His son, Ernest Lancaster Wilson wrote a history of St. John's in Oakville for the Church's centennial year. (Incidentally, Isaac's brother John, at the other end of town, was instrumental in founding the Church of the Epiphany in Bronte, donating the land upon which the church was built, in 1931.)



Ernest Lancaster Wilson, returning from WW1, moved into the house at 2463 Lakeshore, and assumed the responsibility of running the farm from his father, Isaac, with growing success. During the depression Mr. and Mrs. Wilson opened up the house for a short time as a guest house attracting visitors from Toronto. In the days before the highways, QEW and 401 were built, all traffic heading west from Toronto would pass the Wilson Farm along Lakeshore Road. The house remained in the family until it was sold to the school (in 1997) by the grandson of Isaac Wilson, Ernest F. Wilson.

One of our members, Mrs. Patricia Anderson who now lives in Mono, Ontario, is the sister of Ernest F. and the granddaughter of Isaac Wilson. She recalls that her parents Ernest and Dorothy lived in the house for several years until her father's death. Her brother Ernest and his wife Louise lived on in the house until it was sold to the Montessori school. Mrs. Anderson and her husband Welford lived in Oakville for seventy years, her husband having had a medical practice for forty-seven years until they moved to Mono.

# Smith Stone Houses

*Compiled by Andrea Stewart*

The old stone houses in the shadow of the Rain Condominium site at Shepherd Avenue, just off Kerr Street, have evoked much interest on the part of passers-by. As a condition of permission to build, the developer agreed to preserve the houses. Accordingly, they have been moved from their original Kerr Street location, to their present site on Shepherd Avenue and carefully restored.

A stark contrast to the modern high-rise building behind, the homes are the only local surviving examples of fully clad indigenous shale houses. The stone, Dundas Shale, was collected locally from the shallow waters of Lake Ontario by the stoneworkers.\* The practice of building stone shale houses is believed to have ended around World War One, with the introduction of concrete.

Both houses were built by a Scottish immigrant, John Bothwell Smith, who had arrived in Oakville in 1908. His wife, Margaret Jane Johnston, arrived some time later with the first four of their nine children: Douglas, John, Alexander and Mary. With her she carried what was then a substantial amount of money – one hundred dollars. John worked for the railway for a time and in 1911 purchased an eleven-acre orchard which stretched from what is now Kerr Street to the Sixteen Mile Creek. He built the larger of the two houses in 1911 to resemble a family house named Prattsaugh in Aberdeenshire.



In the early 1900's Oakville's farming industry was booming, owing to its excellent soil, its proximity to Toronto and Hamilton and to the rail line that allowed rapid shipment of perishables. Jam factories, a cider mill, a winery, and a basket factory thrived alongside the fruit growers. As a fruit farmer John Smith appears to have made a very good living, earning about six hundred dollars in 1910, one hundred and fifty dollars more than the average farmer.

By 1922 there were an additional five children: Audrey, Isabel, Elsie, Ella and Goldwin Dennison Smith. It was the daughter of Goldwin, Vivian Smith of Victoria, B.C., who contacted me to provide some details of the family. Her father, Goldwin, grew up in the larger house. The smaller of the houses, believed to have been influenced by the Craftsman style, was built by John Smith in the 1930s for any daughter who didn't marry. The one single daughter, Isabel, sold the house to her brother, Goldwin.



# Smith Stone Houses con'd



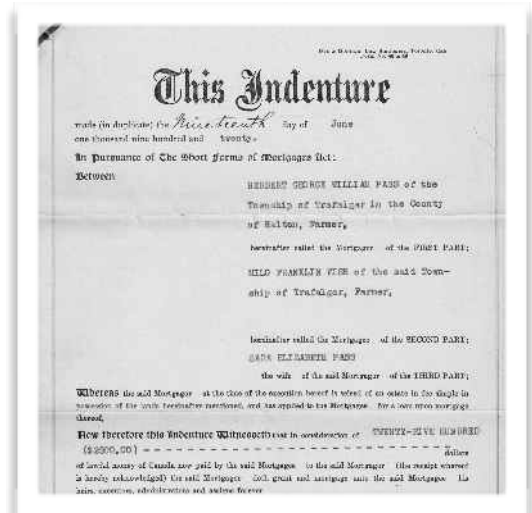
Goldwin Smith and his wife, Ruth Smith, lived in the smaller house for a time with their first daughter, Callie. Then in 1953 they moved to a larger house in Burlington. The Smith family owned a second farm around what is now Morden and Speers, the produce going to their produce store on Queen Street West in Toronto. The graves of several of the Smith family can be seen in Oakville/St. Mary's Pioneer Cemetery where there is a bench and a memorial plaque dedicated to the family.



\* Stonehooking was a method of gathering stones from the lake. Specialised schooners, known as stonehookers would anchor close to shore. A barge would be sent out to gather the stone. Long rakes with hooks at the end would be used to pry up stone which would be piled on the barge and then loaded onto the schooner.



Brian, Ed and John. 1988



Part of a 1920 Mortgage Document

## Harry's Corner

In the 1930s and I believe to the 1950s the Town Mayor, Councillors and Reeves were paid on a part-time basis according to each meeting attended. Only the Town Clerk was paid as a full-time staff member. His name was Mr. C. Byers whose brother, Mr. Byers operated a Drugstore mid-way between Thomas and George Street on the north side of Lakeshore Road, then known as Colborne Street. I still remember Mr. C. Byers who had only one hand riding his bicycle to and from his office which was downtown. The Reeve and Deputy Reeve represented the Town of the then Trafalgar Township. During some of the above dates Oakville had its first woman council member, Mrs. Haddlesly, a position rarely held by women then. During those years the Councillors took on the task of running the Town's business mostly as a public service.

*Harry Lessels came to Oakville from Scotland in 1929 when he was nearing 21. He wrote a series of reminiscences for an Extendicare newsletter from 1983 to 1985. Reproduced here are a few extracts.*

When I arrived to Oakville in 1929, the Mayor was Mr. Moat who lived to be 100 and up until his death he made daily walks from his home to the post office, which was downtown, to collect his mail as there as no delivery. He would walk about one-half mile each way.

Up until then Oakville had a water tower which stood where the Central Fire Station is today. As the Depression was on and there were a lot of unemployed men in town (there was no unemployment insurance at that time) the Mayor went to Queen's Park to ask for financial help to build a reservoir to make work for the unemployed men. With the help of Halton's Member of Parliament which if I remember correctly, was Mr. T. Blakelock, he had negotiatons at Queen's Park. Mr. T. Blakelock "Tommy" as he was affectionally known, also served for many years on the School Board and the school along Rebecca Street bears his name. Upon completion of the Reservoir it gave Mr. Moat great satisfaction that during his term in office he had been instrumental in its being built. He had foresight as it is still in use.



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## Harry's Corner .... continued

Before the building of the reservoir, that area had no apartment buildings, no Leighton Avenue or QEW highway, and was known as Red Hill, it being a red clay belt. It was a favourite hill for people to toboggan and sleigh ride down and I, along with many others spent many a happy evening there. This is difficult to imagine when one sees the busy intersection it is today.

Oakville had no mail delivery until the last war and the Post Office was in a building on Lakeshore Road (then Colborne Street) mid-way between George and Dunn Streets on the north side. It was just like a store with one large window and inside on one wall there were mailboxes that citizens rented for a fee and were given a key to open to take out their mail. Those who did not rent a box would go to the counter and ask for their mail which would be addressed to General Delivery. I remember the Postmaster at that time was Mr. Coty and he would have a staff of three or four. The rural mail was delivered, I believe on a part-time basis, by someone who owned a car.

Fellow resident Miss Post told me that in the 1920s she delivered the Trafalgar Township rural mail by horse and buggy.

### **“..no mail delivery until the last war”**

After the last war when men and women returned from overseas and a lot of immigrants came to Canada, Oakville's population grew, creating a housing shortage. New housing developments were started as well and new industries which provided work for the newcomers and the town's borders extended east, west and north. It soon became apparent that the Post Office was not large enough to handle the incoming and outgoing mail and the town was now big enough to have mail delivery. This meant that all houses, businesses and lots would have to be renumbered and that all these places would have to have a letter slot in the front door or a box for the mail to be put through or into. Mr. L. Manell, a native who was in the street-numbering business (he had done renumbering in other towns) got the contract to do Oakville. Mr. Manell, before retiring, served two or three terms on Oakville's Council as well as one term as Weed Control Officer.

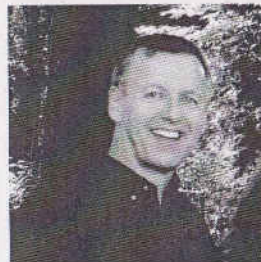
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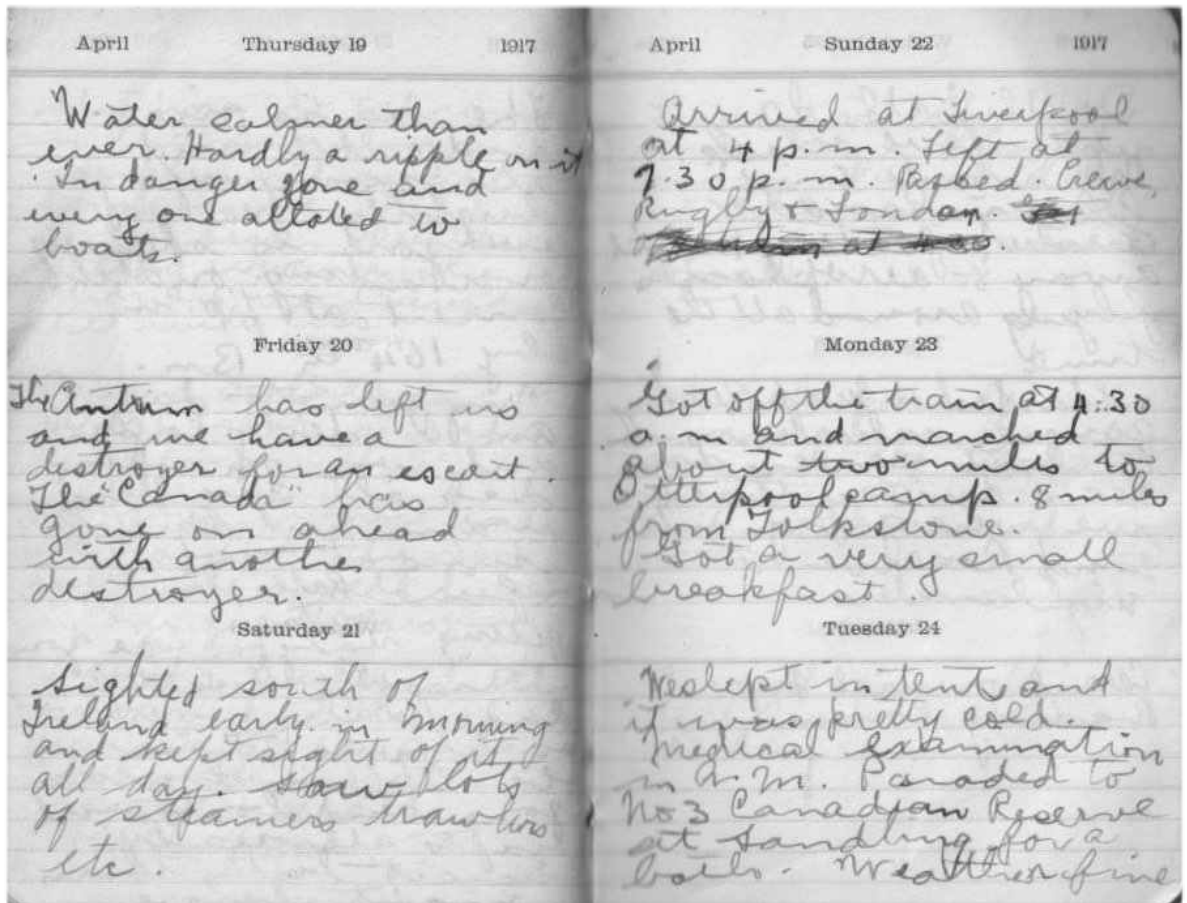
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From the diary of Melville Munro who went overseas with the 164<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

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### Oakville And The Sixteen

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**Thomas House** is closed but looking for interpreters for next year with an orientation planned. If you can spare a few afternoons in the summer, we would love to hear from you.



Average Height and Weight for Adults

|      |        | MEN        |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|------|--------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|      |        | 15-24 yrs. | 25-29 yrs. | 30-34 yrs. | 35-39 yrs. | 40-44 yrs. | 45-49 yrs. | 50-54 yrs. | 55-60 yrs. |
| Feet | Inches | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       |
| 5    | 0      | 122        | 127        | 130        | 133        | 135        | 136        | 136        | 136        |
| 5    | 1      | 124        | 128        | 131        | 133        | 136        | 138        | 138        | 138        |
| 5    | 2      | 126        | 130        | 133        | 135        | 138        | 140        | 140        | 140        |
| 5    | 3      | 129        | 133        | 136        | 138        | 141        | 143        | 143        | 143        |
| 5    | 4      | 133        | 137        | 140        | 142        | 145        | 146        | 147        | 147        |
| 5    | 5      | 136        | 140        | 143        | 145        | 148        | 149        | 151        | 151        |
| 5    | 6      | 140        | 144        | 147        | 149        | 152        | 153        | 155        | 155        |
| 5    | 7      | 144        | 149        | 152        | 154        | 157        | 158        | 160        | 160        |
| 5    | 8      | 148        | 153        | 156        | 159        | 162        | 163        | 165        | 165        |
| 5    | 9      | 152        | 157        | 161        | 164        | 167        | 168        | 169        | 170        |
| 5    | 10     | 156        | 161        | 166        | 169        | 172        | 173        | 174        | 175        |
| 5    | 11     | 161        | 166        | 171        | 175        | 177        | 179        | 179        | 180        |
| 6    | 0      | 167        | 172        | 177        | 181        | 182        | 185        | 184        | 185        |
| 6    | 1      | 172        | 179        | 183        | 187        | 188        | 191        | 191        | 191        |
| 6    | 2      | 178        | 186        | 190        | 195        | 196        | 198        | 196        | 196        |
| 6    | 3      | 183        | 192        | 197        | 202        | 205        | 206        | 203        | 200        |

|      |        | WOMEN      |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|------|--------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|      |        | 15-24 yrs. | 25-29 yrs. | 30-34 yrs. | 35-39 yrs. | 40-44 yrs. | 45-49 yrs. | 50-54 yrs. | 55-60 yrs. |
| Feet | Inches | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       | Lbs.       |
| 5    | 0      | 118        | 123        | 126        | 129        | 131        | 132        | 132        | 132        |
| 5    | 1      | 120        | 124        | 127        | 129        | 132        | 134        | 134        | 134        |
| 5    | 2      | 122        | 126        | 129        | 131        | 134        | 136        | 136        | 136        |
| 5    | 3      | 125        | 129        | 132        | 134        | 137        | 139        | 139        | 139        |
| 5    | 4      | 129        | 133        | 136        | 138        | 141        | 142        | 143        | 143        |
| 5    | 5      | 132        | 136        | 139        | 141        | 144        | 145        | 147        | 147        |
| 5    | 6      | 136        | 140        | 143        | 145        | 148        | 149        | 151        | 151        |
| 5    | 7      | 140        | 145        | 148        | 150        | 153        | 154        | 156        | 156        |
| 5    | 8      | 144        | 149        | 152        | 155        | 158        | 159        | 161        | 161        |
| 5    | 9      | 148        | 153        | 157        | 160        | 163        | 164        | 165        | 166        |
| 5    | 10     | 152        | 157        | 162        | 165        | 168        | 169        | 170        | 171        |
| 5    | 11     | 157        | 162        | 167        | 171        | 173        | 175        | 175        | 176        |
| 6    | 0      | 163        | 168        | 173        | 177        | 178        | 181        | 181        | 181        |
| 6    | 1      | 168        | 175        | 179        | 183        | 184        | 187        | 186        | 187        |
| 6    | 2      | 174        | 182        | 186        | 191        | 192        | 194        | 192        | 192        |
| 6    | 3      | 179        | 188        | 193        | 198        | 201        | 202        | 199        | 196        |



Objects from our Past





# The way things were...



## Do you know?

What this is called?

Where is it used?

*Look out for the answer in our next issue!*

**LAST ISSUE** Luther Richardson Symmes, a wealthy Toronto banker purchased land in the 1920s for a summer cottage at 492 Lakeshore Rd. E. and engaged architect George N. Molesworth to design this English-style cottage. A butler's pantry and back stairs to the maids' quarters were removed in 1998, but the servants' call buttons remain.



## Renew Your Membership

There are still members who have not yet renewed their membership for 2017. If you have forgotten or do not wish to renew, please contact A. Stewart, 905 844-2695

**Oakville Historical Society Offices will be CLOSED  
Monday, December 19th 2016 and will open Tuesday, January 3rd 2017**

### Archive Hours:

Tuesday & Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm  
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