

Oakville Historical
Society
since 1953

Historical Society News

www.oakvillehistory.org



The Post Farm

Childhood Home of Golfer Sandra Post

Volume 54 Number 4

December 2020

In & around the Society



In better times our volunteers enjoyed sharing afternoon tea with our students. This year three students have each other for company. Emily Ing (above), Madison Carmichael (below) and Julie Suh (right) have settled in to work.



Claudette Shaw, Andrea Stewart, Mary Davidson and Susan Bowen (above), Donna and Walter Moran and others have kept our gardens to the high standard set by Averil and Joe Jany. We always need help so please let us know you can join us to keep our green oasis beautiful.



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A note from the Society President

By George Chisholm

Your Society continues to stay busy, but in different ways, during this COVID-19 period.

Thanks to the efforts of Mark Verlinden, we have received funding from Young Canada Works for three students. Julie Suh and Emily Ing will be with us until the end of the year and Madison Carmichael will be working for us until March. There's a list of projects they'll be working on.

Thanks to Steve Bysouth and a great group of volunteers for the ongoing production of short videos shot in various places in the old part of town. If you have not seen them, they're available on our Oakville Historical Society YouTube channel. Also on that channel is an interesting video taken at the Wotherspoon Foundry in 1987. The foundry was on the south side of Cross Avenue. Our thanks to Paul McIvor, who shot the 16mm movie, for giving it to us.

You've probably figured out by now that we won't be having our annual Christmas Party this year. We do, however, have a special gift for paid-up members. We've recently acquired the remaining stock of *Oakville Street Names and Landmarks* from Sheila Creighton, who worked with long-time volunteer Joyce Burnell and Town employee David Ashe, to publish it. You can pick up your copy at our offices at 110 King St. any Saturday or Sunday in December up until the 20th. We are practicing social distancing so if you come to the front door we will bring your book to you outside.

We've had a query recently about the shortage of information on our plaques about the women of the households. There are two main reasons. The first is that information, if there is any, is very difficult to find. Before the 1950s very few women had paid employment outside the home. Usually all we can find is "wife of..." or "daughter of...". Secondly, there's a limit on how much information we can fit on a plaque. If a woman was the property owner, her occupation is usually listed as spinster, widow of there's nothing recorded. There

are some plaques that show a woman as the owner. The project I mentioned in the last newsletter about creating an online exhibit of plaques will have further information including any photos we have and more details on the owners. We've also been posting further information on our Facebook page as the plaques go up.

We're sorry to report the passing of Nuala Johnston, one of our volunteer archivists.

I hope you have the chance over the holidays to visit with family and friends – at least online.

Sedate, Respectable Oakville

Romance writer Mazo de la Roche once described Oakville as "sedate, respectable, and very different from the rowdy, good-humoured poverty of Bronte." She made the colourful comparison in her first novel, *Possession*, based largely on her four-year stay (1911 - 1915) at the old Crabb farm (formerly the Charles Sovereign House, now the home of Bronte Historical Society) west of Bronte Creek. The book, published in 1923, has many descriptive references which make the setting unmistakable, though in fact the place names were recorded as Brancepeth (for Oakville) and Mistwell (for Bronte). The real life Cudmore family became the fictional Chards, the wealthy Mr. Jerrold was based on Major Osler, a gentleman farmer who lived in the neighbourhood.



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The Post Farm

by Kelsey Mason

"It was the greatest town to live in," Sandra Post, the famous Canadian golfer, fondly remembers growing up in Oakville on her family's farm at the corner of Chartwell Road (formerly the 8th Line) and Macdonald Road. In 1968 Sandra, at age nineteen, left the farm to tour with the Ladies Professional Golf Association.* Having chosen to write a story about the Post Farm for this newsletter, I contacted Sandra Post by phone.

My connection with the Post farm started in January 1969 when my husband Wes, fifteen-month old son Michael and I moved from Toronto to Chartwell Road in Oakville. It was an easy walk from our old farmhouse on the east side of Chartwell to the Post farm to buy their fruit or corn which was considered the best in the area. Visiting for a number of summers, my mother-in-law and her two sisters would take our two young boys to the farm. Mr. Post would give them a ride on the wagon attached to his tractor and take them to the best place to pick apples or cherries. While the cherries were sour, they made delicious pies and my mother-in-law was an expert pie maker. Having grown up on a farm in Quebec, she and her sisters derived great pleasure from their visits to the farm. In addition to taking their produce off the farm to sell, the Posts opened a fruit and vegetable stand at the corner of Macdonald and Chartwell Road(s) which was even more convenient for us.

As we continue our chat, Sandra tells me that the farm house was built in 1916 and that three generations of Posts had lived there. Her father came to the farm when he was thirteen and lived on it for sixty-seven years. Sandra recalled that the main crops and fruit grown on the farm were corn, strawberries, and Bing and sour cherries. ("Ugh, but the British people loved the sour cherries," she noted. "We kept most of the Bings to ourselves," she added laughing.) "We also

grew thimbleberries, now called blackberries, tons of them, pears, beans, raspberries, plums and lots of apples: good Macs, Spys. The peach trees had to be chained after the big hurricane in the 50's as they all split. Golf is a bit like the farming part of me," she adds, "the similarity is that you are always considering the weather."

"My parents worked as a team," Sandra remarks, "they were up at 5:00 a.m. every morning. Dad sold produce at the Ontario Food Terminal in Toronto, and at the St. Lawrence Market in the north market which was the best place to be. They also grew many acres of strawberries in a number of locations in southeast Oakville." *Doomed Orchard is Thing of Beauty* was the title of the newspaper article that Sandra Post sent me following our phone conversation. Written in the summer of 1969 in the Oakville Journal Record, a reporter toured the farm and interviewed Clifford Post. On their seventeen acres, Mr. Post said, "there are about 400 peach trees, 200 apple trees and countless plum and pear trees. This year's bumper crop of apples originates from the same trees that produced them years ago when as many as fifty or sixty [First Nations] pickers lived on the farm in cabins during the harvesting season. When in season, peaches outsell any other kind of fruit on the market." In spite of a bumper crop year, as the weather and moisture combined to produce a record yield of all fruits on the farm, Mr. Post indicated that the days of the fruit farm were coming to an end. His farm, he said, "was about the last remaining fruit farm operating on any appreciable commercial scale left in the neighbourhood." He pointed out that although his methods were highly scientific and he knew the market well, "the economics of urban progress are such that a fruit farm located where ours is, has become so valuable that its use as an orchard becomes an economic waste."

Sad, but the Post farm's days were numbered and the farm was sold.

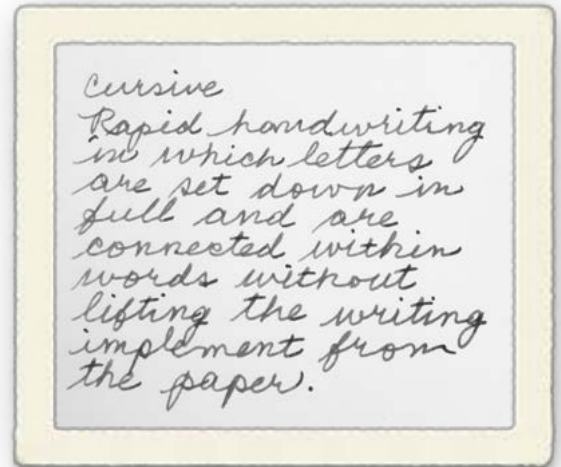
In 1980 the Post property came before a committee of Town Council for a vote on how the land should be developed. The choices were a housing development, or an 'active' park. On the side of an 'active' park, was an acknowledged deficit of park space in southeast Oakville for minor soccer. At the time, I was serving as a 'watchdog' at Council meetings as there was concern about development in Oakville. I spoke on behalf of an 'active' park. One month later, the full Council vote on the Post Property's future use was on the agenda. I was asked to speak again, and subsequently, Council voted for the 'active' park. Today Post Park exists with a soccer field, as well as a leash-free dog park. The Oakville Soccer Club expressed gratitude for the support they received, and I was gratified by the outcome.

The farm has been gone since the early eighties, but memories of a special place and an exceptional family haven't dimmed over time. Post Park is a tribute to the Post family, as well as to the town of Oakville for creating a space available for the enjoyment of its thriving population.

* Ladies Professional Golf Association - LPGA. Sandra Post was the first Canadian to play on the LPGA Tour and the youngest woman to win a women's major - the LPGA championship. As well as a recipient of the Order of Canada, Sandra is in both the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame and the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame.

Cover illustration of the Post farmhouse and barn is of a hooked rug crafted by Sandra Post's mother, Muriel Post. Photo by Sandra Post

Question - What Important Skill Is Necessary For Volunteering With The OHS?



Answer - The ability to read cursive script. It cannot be assumed that a person younger than thirty has learned or used cursive script. The handwriting in old letters and documents is often quite florid. It may also be written in cross script, where the author has written sideways across the previous writing in order to save paper, which makes the writing even more difficult to decipher. If you cannot read cursive, you cannot read many historical documents.



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OHS Provides *Outdoor* Education

by R. Sommerfeld

Early in the 20th century, there were schools with outside classrooms as society feared the spread of tuberculosis. In this COVID-19 time, medical experts again recommend taking students outside as much as possible to reduce the risk of contagion. The principal of outdoor education at the Toronto District School Board, David Hawker-Budlovsky has recommended using the community as a classroom, and he specifically mentions learning about local history while walking around the neighbourhood. And thus the OHS finds itself in the avant-garde of modern education, for we have been providing guided tours to student groups for years!

On a sunny September day this year, a group of young teenagers with two teachers from Deercroft Montessori School came to the OHS for their annual tour of Oakville's historical downtown. Ruth Verlinden, dressed in appropriately-dated costume, was their guide. She has hosted groups from this school in the past, but of course, this year was different; the teachers and students wore masks, while Ruth used a voice amplifier so that she could stand well away from the entire group.

A walking tour of Oakville can be very closely aligned to the Ontario school curriculum. The founder of the town, Colonel William Chisholm, was a United Empire Loyalist who fought in the war of 1812. Much of the tour is about what life in pre-Confederation Canada was like. The students from Deercroft had already studied the history of the time period, so the tour was relevant to them and they were very engaged and interested.

The students walked to the OHS office from their school, which is on Lakeshore Road E. two and a half kilometers away. They walked with Ruth for the tour for just under two hours, and then walked back to their school! No one complained of fatigue. No one even asked to use the OHS washroom! A very impressive group of young people.



R. Verlinden (centre) on steps of St. Jude's Church White Chapel facing Deercroft Montessori School students. Photo by Breanne Rymes.

A particularly nice ending to the visit came when their teacher, Breanne Rymes, instructed the teens to not just thank Ruth individually for the tour but also to add a fact that they remembered. It was surprising to hear how varied the responses were. Some students related a fact from the very beginning of the tour nearly two hours earlier, others remembered a small detail that had resonated with them. Ruth has customized her talk to be particularly suitable for young people, from grade 5 up. She believes it is an excellent alternative learning opportunity at this time of COVID-19 since the group is outside for nearly two hours, and it is easy to keep well-distanced. She is hoping that other school groups may benefit from taking such a tour.

Why Are So Many *Young* People at OHS?

By R. Summerfeld

In August of 2019 Emily Ing signed up for our free student OHS membership, and indicated that she was interested in volunteering. Soon thereafter she received an email from Mark Verlinden saying: "I see that you would like to volunteer with the OHS. Would you be ok with being paid for your work instead?"

Mark had unexpectedly received notice from the Canadian Council of Archives (which receives funding from the Young Canada Works program) that money was available for hiring young people, and he was scrambling to find students who were suitable. In the past, the program had paid fifty percent of the cost, but now, because of the pandemic, they were increasing the funding to 85 percent! It was too good to pass up!

And so, Emily agreed to be paid, and began to work full time for the OHS, as well as being a full-time student at McMaster in her 4th year of History and Communications.

Under the same funding program, a second student, Madison Carmichael, began to work for the OHS in November. She is in her second and final year of her Master of Museum Studies at the University of Toronto. In order to complete her studies, she is required to have an internship, and normally this would have happened last summer. However, due to Covid, of the 50 students in her program, only three were able to get an internship. So Madison was thrilled to get a full time job with the OHS. Fortunately, the funding program has become much more flexible this year, allowing students to extend their work period beyond 16 weeks, so that Madison can organize her working hours around her university obligations.

Madison and Emily are working on digitizing and cataloguing our archive but will also do research to develop WWII banners, similar to those that we had for Canadian peacekeepers. They are working with Greg Munz on this project, and expect to be able to display them at the Cenotaph in 2021.

In November, Mark sent a note to his contact at the Canadian Council of Archives, saying "I have a job for a student, do you have any money left in your programs?" Indeed, there was money available, under a program called Building Careers in Heritage and they were very pleased to have the opportunity to support a student working in this field. This funding allowed the OHS to hire a third student, Julie Suh, a graduate of the Museum Studies program at the University of Toronto.

The OHS will provide Julie with a large range of experiences that take advantage of her skills and training. She will be creating a new display in the exhibit room. She is responsible for all the research, planning, gathering of materials, and reporting regularly to the board, such as she would do in a museum. She will also do longer range exhibit planning and will automate membership data. We will introduce her to Halton Heritage Services and to the staff at the Oakville Museum so that she will be able to work with other museum professionals.

These three students are just the latest in a stream of summer students that have been employed at the OHS in recent years. Our first paid student was Ella Boswell. She came in 2017 as a volunteer. We were so impressed with the work she had done we decided to pay her out of OHS funds until government funding came through.

We had three additional students in 2017, three in 2018, three in 2019 and we have a total of five this year. Students have transcribed letters from soldiers, digitized and catalogued photos and documents, as well as photographing and cataloguing our large map drawer contents. Due to this work, all of these items are now on-line and accessible to all. They have proved to be of interest to the general public, and we often receive inquiries about OHS material someone has found on-line. In fact, the photos in the GO Transit Control Centre come from the OHS archives, and were found thanks to the work done by these students.

Our office is closed to the general public at this time, so we are able to safely accommodate the students we are employing, as is required by the funding organization.

It has been a 'win-win' situation for all as we are giving necessary employment to young people, introducing younger people to the Society, and making the treasures we have in our archives accessible and available to be used and shared.

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Difficult. Grade 7—Concert Numbers.*

Frederick Harris (1866–1945) began his music publishing business in London, England and in 1910, established an office in Toronto. In 1924, new premises were built in Oakville at 665 Dundas St. (now 461 Trafalgar Rd.) for The Frederick Harris Music Co. Limited. In

October 2020, the building was badly damaged due to a fire and was demolished.

The publishing company had not been operating at that Oakville site for some years. Another Oakville music company, Leslie Music Supply Inc., begun in 1970 by Joan Leslie, a long-time employee of Frederick Harris, ceased operating in 2020.

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Image at left courtesy of Marie Descent. Her vast sheet music collection shows Frederick Harris addresses at Dundas Street, 529 Speers Road, Box 670 Oakville, as well as just plain Oakville.

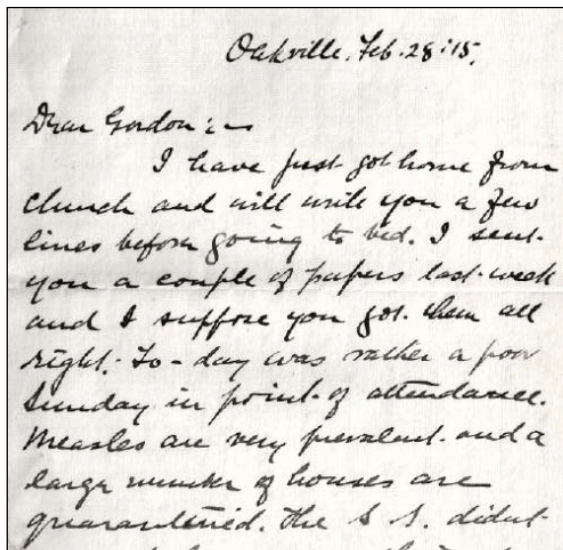
Wanted - Historical Documents Pertaining to the Period from Just Before to Just After the Second World War (1935- 1950)

By Greg Munz

The Oakville Historical Society (OHS) is building a documented history of the period just before, during and after WWII and is looking forward to adding your treasured documents, or at the very least, copies of them for what will become Oakville's Official Archive for that momentous period. A number of books about the two world wars have already been donated to the Society and will form the cornerstone of the Archive and the OHS already has a small collection of letters, photographs, and stories relating to Oakville and its residents during the WWII period. We need to expand this collection dramatically so if you have any documents pertaining to Oakville at that time, be they photographs, letters, advertisements, legal documents, school documents, newspaper clippings, etc. that may be hidden away in trunks, drawer bottoms or in the family vault, please consider donating them. (It would be a terrible shame if you were to have a treasure trove of such material which you don't know what to do with and it ended up being tossed out). No item is too small or considered by you to be unimportant. If you do not want to donate your treasures because they are part of your family archive you can loan them to the OHS where they will be treated as the valuable items they are. The OHS will scan the items for inclusion in the collection and they will then be returned to you.

The following list is not meant to be all-inclusive but it may trigger some thoughts about what your family may have stored away and would be of interest to the OHS:

- Photographs and documents relating to life in Oakville: street scenes, homesteads, landscapes, etc.
- Family life: family reunions, vacations, wedding pictures - at home or abroad, christenings, confirmations, etc.



Part of a Letter written to Private Gordon Munro by his father, 28th February 1915. From the OHS Collection. Search under 'Archive' at www.oakvillehistory.org

- Work and occupation pictures: on the farm, in factories, stores, offices etc.
- Military service: training experiences, letters home, letters received while in service, military activities, photos taken on extended leave or short term passes, attestation and release papers, flight logs, pay books, bank books, ration books, telegrams, etc.
- Church and social groups: formally organized youth groups, volunteer work, activities in support of the war effort.
- School activities: graduation photos, yearbooks,
- Local entertainment: picnics, sailing, swimming, sports teams and club activities.

While our OHS collection of WWI material is quite extensive please consider sharing images from that era also. Once you have decided you would be willing to have your documents and pictures added to the OHS collection, or if you have any questions at all, please call the OHS office at 905 844-2695 and leave a message for Greg Munz who will contact you within a day or two.

Zoom Into Speakers Night

By Steve and Judy Bysouth

The Oakville Historical Society has four planned Speakers Nights per year. Due to COVID-19, two of them had to be cancelled/postponed, but we were determined to find a way to have the November event.

The OHS membership had the opportunity to connect virtually during the Annual General Meeting in May, so a Zoom Speakers Night seemed like a good option.

After reaching out to the Board and Tim Speed (the planned speaker) it was all set. We would hold our first virtual Speakers Night in November. While not overly complicated, hosting a Zoom meeting did take a bit of learning so we even had a few fun "practice sessions" before the event.

On Wednesday, the 18th of November 2020 we held our first virtual Speakers Night. Tim Speed from the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum was fantastic as he talked about "THE DAMBUSTERS - May 1943".

The 25-30 members in attendance really enjoyed the event, even though they could not meet in person or enjoy the traditional drinks and snacks provided by Grace and Herb Schroeder.

For the foreseeable future at least, virtual Speakers Nights are the way we will be going, so we look forward to hosting the next one in February 2021.

Bronte Historical Society

Artist Christmas Sale 2020
has been cancelled due to
COVID-19 restrictions.

Membership

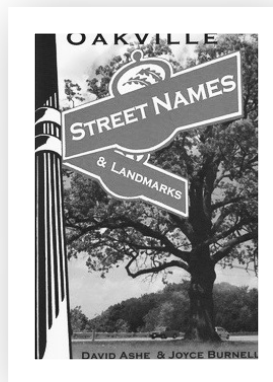
By Andrea Stewart, Marie Descent and Susan Bowen

We wish to thank our loyal members for your support this year. As a reminder that it is now time to renew for 2021, we are enclosing a membership renewal form with the newsletter.

We are pleased to have welcomed nine new members since September: Ms. Lois Badley, Mr. and Mrs. A. and L. Bellcombe, Mrs. Aynsley Butler, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne and Julie Elliott, Mr. and Mrs. Nalin Gamage, Mr. and Mrs. Don and Kate Kerr, Ms. Stacey Lewis, Ms. Donna Ratelle and Mr. Jiang Yong, as well as students, Madison Carmichael, Emily Ing and Julie Suh. As well, we are pleased to welcome back long time members and supporters, Mr. Frederick Hayward and Ms. Joan Augustine.

We wish to make a correction to our September newsletter. We reported, under New Members, a Ms. Ann Reynolds. In fact, Ann is a Life Member, one of a

number who made a significant donation to OHS in our early days. The cheque she sent was actually a further donation for which we are most grateful. Ann was an active and important volunteer until her move to Stratford some years ago and I understand has contributed widely to the music and theatre scene in that town. Thank you, Ann.



We have an important announcement. As you will have seen from the President's message, we are making a gift to all members of the book, written by our late and dear member Joyce Burnell, *Oakville Street Names and Landmarks*. You can pick up your copy any Saturday or Sunday in December up until the 20th between 12 and 2 pm. We will be practicing social distancing. Come to the front door and we will bring your book to you outside. This would be a good opportunity for you to renew your membership.

COVID-19 Can't Stop Our Ghosts

by Wendy Belcher



Our thanks go to Nicole James and members of 30th Oakville Brownies for painting and displaying their clever works of art (above) around our gardens at 110 Kiing St. this past October.

Thanks to photographer Steve Bysouth, the characters from Old Oakville have again returned. None can be seen in person but go onto the Society website to view Ghost Stories. Click 'About' then 'Thomas House' to see several videos of life there, or click 'About' and scroll down to 'Videos.' Such tales these people can tell.



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Thanks to the ghosts Rebecca Chisholm (Trish Sinclair), Esther Thomas (Wendy Belcher, above), Alice (Pat Mack), Mary Jane McDougald (Susan Bowen), Miss Andrews (Tina Driscoll), Constable Sumner (Stan Smurlic), Father Ryan (Stephen Johnson), Tillie Chisholm (Carol Gall), Captain Robert Wilson (Alan Ellis), and Stewart Sherriff as the postmaster.

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The *way* things were...



Do you know?

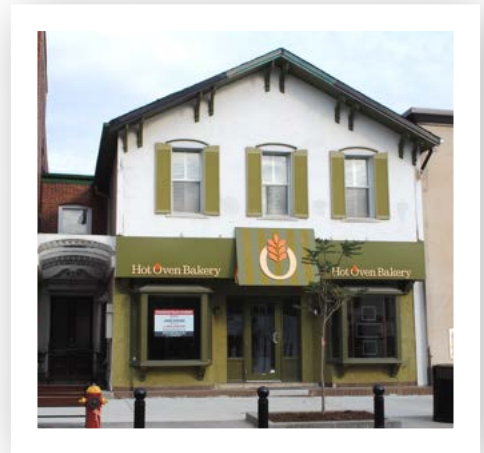
Where this road is?

Where this impression is located?

Look for the answers in our next issue!

From September 2020 **The *way* things were...**

Featured was the rear view of 195 Lakeshore Rd. E., built c1881. It held the jewellery store of William Busby who was also the manager of the local Bell Telephone whose switchboard and equipment was at the back of the store. At right is the current street view.



Archive Hours:

Tuesday & Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm

Third Sunday of the month 12:30 to 4:00 pm

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