

WHAT ARE YOUR MOST VIVID MEMORIES OF OAKVILLE?

OAKVILLE NEEDS YOUR STORIES; OAKVILLE MEMORIES: 1930 TO NOW

Please pass this on to all your friends – we hope that this will be an Oakville Community Project

This is your chance to contribute to Oakville's History! If you have lived within the present-day boundaries of Oakville, at any time from the 1930's to now, we'd love to have your 'folksy' stories so that future generations can enjoy the 'flavour', facts and history of Oakville. Perhaps you have some memories to share of how you survived The Great Depression or World War II? If you can fondly recall moving to Oakville, spending summers on the waterfront or being in the Santa Claus Parade, we would love to hear about it. Oakville reference books do not cover the time from 1930 to now and it is important, for future generations, that we fill this void. Let's share our wonderful memories of Oakville with each other!

Please send your stories and photos, with dates – as many as you would like – to the Oakville Historical Society, preferably by email (easier for us) at info@oakvillehistory.org or drop off at 110 King St., Oakville ON L6J 1B1. Mail: Oakville Historical Society, Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville ON, L6J 3A7 - or drop off at any Oakville Library. No handwritten submissions, please – if that is a big problem, please let us know. Stories and photos will be compiled into a digitized scrapbook (on computer) and a selection of stories will later be published as a book (s).

For more information, please visit the Oakville Historical Society's website at www.oakvillehistory.org or phone the Society at: 905-844-2695

Groups involved: The Town; Oakville Central Library; Erchless Museum; Appleby College; Bronte, Trafalgar Township and Oakville Historical Societies

Attached are five stories, already submitted, as examples, each in a different era. Photos will be inserted later.

By Kevin Liu - Kids Speak Out, School News, Appleby College, Senior 1- 2009

THE THOMAS HOUSE MUSEUM

With 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 the Oakville Historical Society with one of the most memorable aspects of high school life.

By Hartley Tosh 2010 1950's FORD MOTOR COMPANY

My name is Hartley Tosh, and I will write about my relationship with Ford Motor Co. of Canada Ltd. and Oakville.

I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario in May 1950. I was immediately hired by Ford Motor in

Windsor, Ontario. Ford at the time produced its own electricity. South western Ontario had recently completed its electrical switchover from 25 cycle power to 60 cycle power. Ford had their own coal mines, in Wisconsin I believe, and their own boats to move the coal to Windsor via the Great Lakes. In Windsor, Ford had an assembly plant, an engine plant, a foundry, an office building and a Ford Trade School. This school had a 4 year course to teach young people in the auto trades.

A year later in 1951, we heard that Ford had purchased some land in Oakville to build a new plant. This sounded good to me as it was much closer to my wife's parents in Brantford and my parents near Ottawa. I heard that the land was not bought directly by Ford, perhaps through a lawyer, so they wouldn't upset the residents of Oakville too much nor raise the real estate prices too much. I heard Ford paid \$1000 an acre for 1000 acres. I don't believe it was anywhere near 1000 acres but maybe half that. I understood it was bought from a man by the name of Hall. I don't know how much of this was true as it happened 59 years ago.

Another year later in 1952, I got directly involved in the new Oakville plant. I had to order all the portable power tools for the plant. These are portable tools like screwdrivers and drill motors. This was a bit of a problem as Windsor had a mixture of air tools and 180 cycle electrical tools. The electric tools were 180 cycle rather than the standard 60 cycle tools to prevent theft. Management said it had to be all air or electric, not both. We had to do wet sanding. We couldn't operate electric tools around water, so we had to choose air. This created a problem as we had to find air tools to replace the existing electric tools. But we did. The recommended air hoses were too big and unwieldy when compared to electric cables for the electric tools. We also had to find a way to lubricate the air tools and how to hang the hoses. Without a good hanging system, the hoses would become a serious tripping hazard. We had to design an air grid system to balance the air supply because, with the old system, the tools at the end of the air lines would be short of air. Lastly, we had to figure out how much we needed in air compressors. So, we had to find out the individual air consumption of each tool, how many tools to buy and the frequency of use. There were other tools I had to buy, such as car hoists, metal stitchers, riveters, welders, paint spray guns, sealer guns, auto test equipment, laboratory test equipment This kept us pretty busy in 1952.

Another year – 1953. Now the plant is built. We had to start installing equipment. We had to chase up our orders to make sure they arrived on time. Now, it was decided to send a task force of about 6 people, including me, to Oakville to oversee what's going on and get equipment installed. We had to make instant decisions such as to whether to install the standard car hoist that is installed in the ground or install 4 post hoists on the plant floor. This started in April. There was no heat in the plant, so many days it was extremely cold. We had to commute between Windsor and Oakville weekly. Now we had a deadline to meet. I believe it was May 9th, 1953 for the first car off the line. We met it but with great effort.

In July 1953, I moved from Windsor to Oakville. At that time, I believe the population was 6,000. I believe the boundaries at the time were Allen Street on the east, Kerr Street on the west, Lake Ontario on the south and Cross Avenue on the north. Now, I believe our population is about 170,000. That is some increase but our neighbours had similar growth like Mississauga and Burlington. At the time, there were no phones available, so communication was poor. I worked in Process Engineering until 1967 when they transferred me to Quality Control, where I

spent the rest of my working years. I finally retired in 1990 after working for Ford for forty years.

By Hartley Tosh 2010

OAKVILLE HARBOUR

By Bob Hughes. 1940's +-

See <http://www.oakville-memories.info/>

View From The Bridge



Above is the Oakville Harbour view from the Colborne Street bridge that we crossed when we went from the “Westside” into town (expressed as “going over town”). The picture shows two Corvettes being converted to luxury yachts shortly after the WW II.

Note the lonely vessel moored at the Oakville Club...could that be the "Aggie"?

Not so, says an e-mail from Bill Russell: "I am pretty sure that schooner tied up by the Oakville Club is the Anita, built and sailed by Monty Macrae for many years." *Thanks Bill*

Hmmm, memories of Oakville.

I lived there in the apartments (205) on Queenmary Drive from about mid-70s till mid eighties I guess. Aged say 10 to 24 or so.

There used to be access behind the building, down to the 16-mile creek (which is now blocked off and dangerous) where there was a dock. We used to (yuck!) jump off it and swim in the creek. In winter when it was frozen, we'd walk on the ice upstream into the reeds. I still have dreams about playing in the brush on that hillside and on the frozen creek. There was so much poison ivy on the hillside too, I remember. We'd sneak down there to smoke cigarettes (more yuck).

We also used to cross the Rebecca Street bridge on the catwalk underneath - that was somewhat risky, eh? I'm sure access has long been blocked off there too.

There was a great patch of wildness at the top of Queenmary Drive beyond the railway tracks too, with an amazing view of the QEW bridge over the creek. It was like a look-out, but was quite a forbidden place. You had to cross the train tracks and slip under a fence or two. There was some light industrial building you had to skirt round first.

I went to Westwood School (now a seeing-eye dog training centre) for grades 4-6 but in 2 years. I think they had portables then. What a huge patch of playground that was.

When I went away to university, I used to come home for the summer and work at the Riverside Restaurant, mostly on the patio. Wasn't that an amazing summer venue! It really was the place to be on hot days. I'm so sad it's gone.

It's very late here in Australia so I'm going to bed now. If I think of more I will email again.
Cheers, Eileen

By Eileen (Johnson) Leather Australia 1970's – 80's QUEENMARY DRIVE

GROWING UP IN OAKVILLE: THE WEST SIDE STORY

When I was born at 64 Bond Street in 1935, Oakville was a picturesque little village overlooking Lake Ontario and extending from roughly Brant Street in the West and Gloucester in the East and Queen Elizabeth Highway to the north. Our home overlooked a beautiful cherry orchard bordered by a magnificent perennial garden that was breathtakingly beautiful. The "Home" (I.O.F.-Independent Order of Forresters) was home to orphans until the Second World War when it was transformed into Ortona Barracks, a military headquarters. The cherry orchard came down to make way for the quonset huts that held the offices for the new operation and the beautiful spring blossoms no longer blessed the view.

Back to 1935: I was born at home with Dr.E.P.Soanes delivering as at that time there were no hospitals in the town and home deliveries were "the norm". Foresters Bush was a wonderful area to go for walks in the spring to collect wild flowers and pollywogs and fish in the little cove on the banks of the river. Kerr Street was residential to Stewart Street and then opened to farms and strawberry fields. Bread and milk were delivered by horse-drawn carts; the horses always

seemed to know which house was a customer. Ice trucks delivered blocks of ice for the “ice boxes” and was a great way to get a little frozen ice to munch on in the hot summers. Oakville in memory seems like “Brigadoon”; a magical village that was idyllic and peaceful. In reality, it was a time between two World Wars and the Depression, commonly called the “dirty thirties”.

Swimming in the harbour between the two piers, cycling, skating at the town Arena on Reynolds Street, Brownies and Guides at the Scout Hut on Randall, Gymnastic classes at St.Jude’s Church, tobogganing on the many hills and canoeing on the Sixteen were the many delights for children & teens.

Westwood School with its four classrooms was the primary school for the west side; Linbrook for the East Side; and Central School for grades 4 to 8. Oakville High School was the only high school for Bronte, Oakville and all the rural district. One managed to know just about everyone in their age group.

Summertime was a wonderful time to visit my grandparents’ farm in the country on Rural Route #1, now 1107 Rebecca Street. I learned to swim in a delightful little pool that was a natural formation on the little creek that wound its way down through Lady Baillie’s Estate on the Lakeshore. Indian arrow heads were often unearthed when exploring the surrounding area and casually tossed back. Wish I had them now!

The farm produce was mouth watering and delicious. My Uncle George would often take a few children in to Bronte to buy ice cream at Allan’s Pharmacy to fill a half freshly picked melon. I can still taste the treat fit for a king! Strawberries were another delight from my Aunt Hilda (Hitchcox) and Uncle Bob Burton’s 100 acre farm on Rebecca Street near the Third Line and my mother had a wonderful recipe for Strawberry Shortcake that still swirls in my mind and tickles my taste buds. The strawberries managed to find their way to “The Jam Factory” where students would often cut classes to hull strawberries by the pail. I managed to earn my money for Guide Camp this way. When we closed our eyes at the end of the day, we would see nothing but strawberries.

Surrounded by farms provided an “oldy worldy” bucolic countryside. I often cycled from Bond Street, along Upper Middle Road to the Howell’s Farm where driving the cows home for milking, bringing in the sheaves, playing in the hayloft seems now like a world that existed centuries ago. I remember the co-operative effort of several farmers who banded together and went from farm to farm to bring in the sheaves by horse drawn wagons, filling the barn to the rafters with hay.

The farms I knew did not have tractors, just horses, and dogs that scurried after all the mice that had built there homes in the cozy stacks of hay.

The farm meals for these hard working farmers were a banquet; meat, vegetables and mashed potatoes, home-made bread and the most mouth-watering array of freshly baked pies. I remember vividly the farm of the Savages at the corner of the Ninth Line and Upper Middle Road.

Winter always seemed to bring abundant snow for winter sports and temperatures that were adequate for skating on the Sixteen.

My father, who was a World War 1 veteran, married “his sweetheart” Minnie Frost from Simcoe in 1919 and worked various jobs as his family of four thrived and grew. Working at the

aluminum factory on Trafalgar, air plane factory Dehavilland during World War II, and as a Game Warden after the war, brought many interesting aspects to our life. Plastic picture frames that were riveted together, cribbage boards, aluminum bowls, copper trays and artifacts were all a product of his spare time and ability. He worked hard and I can never once remember hearing him complain. Working six days a week gave him little time for pleasure. But he seemed happy with his home life and found time for the Legion Hall where he worked on all their various projects. Having taken the “Oath of Sobriety” at the Temperance Hall on Trafalgar Road (now Tim Horton’s), he was determined to educate and provide for his family. He was also Chairman of the Library Board which saw the library move from a small little shop on Main Street to a more substantial dwelling nearby where it then became the Post Office.

My mother made the most amazing culinary feasts from a wood-burning stove, a monstrous creature that burned both wood or coal. I swear she could have earned an engineering degree! Opening the doors just right to let the amount of oxygen in to keep the temperatures at just the right level to create the loaves of bread, the berry pies, the Yorkshire Puddings, the Toad-in-the-hole, the roasts, the turkeys, the cakes and tarts.....truly a work of art! ...and this while a quilt was on four chairs in the dining room. Bacon fat was saved to make her own soap along with Gillet’s Lye. She claimed she had the whitest wash in town for just a few pennies a week. Chickens in the back yard for eggs, a garden for fresh vegetables, rhubarb patches, and clusters of lilacs were nature’s gift. Pet rabbits, a cocker spaniel and canaries and budgies were added to the menagerie.....my father even breeding canaries! Their songs filled the air and they always seemed to accompany the records we played on the Motorola which we cranked vigorously at regular intervals.

My mother’s basement was filled with jars of produce; yellow peaches and plums, and jams of all kinds. At one point she even “canned” vegetables ; peas and tomatoes. Amazingly, she still found time for “The Mother’s Union” at St. Jude’s, Red Cross work at the Masonic Lodge and many projects at the Legion Hall.

These are a few of my happy memories of growing up in Oakville.....and I have many more!

By Mary (Midge Hitchcox) Philbrook 1935 +