

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



## **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**

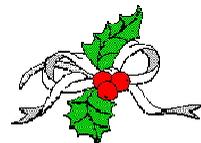
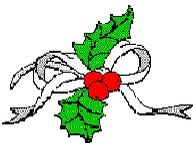
**October 19th 2011**      **Adaptive Neighbourhoods**  
**Speaker Claire Loughheed, Senior Manager of Cultural Services, Oakville**

**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

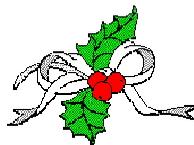
At the invitation of Linda Twitchell, a number of members attended this Museum, at Kelso, September 8. Cindy Ledwith and Michelle Finn reviewed the history of the historic Alexander Farm c 1836-61, and then gave us a tour of their amazing archives.

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**