

Oakville Historical
Society
since 1953

www.oakvillehistory.org

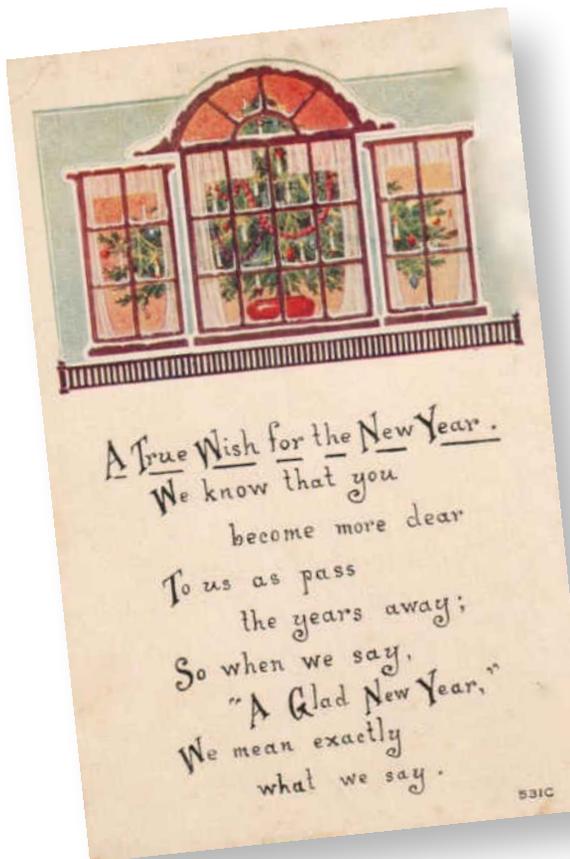
The White Oak

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. 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 164th 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 10th 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.

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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



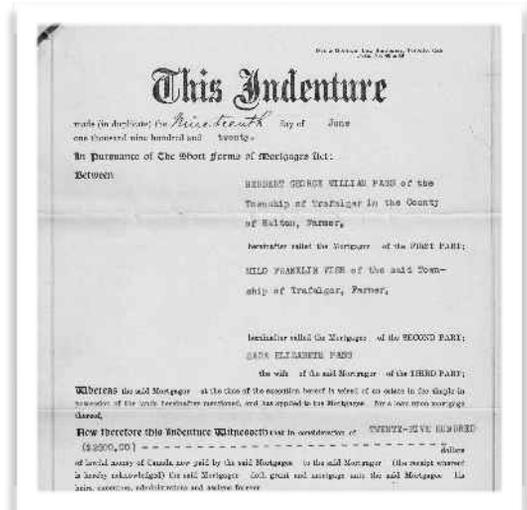
Goldwin Smith and his wife, Ruth Smith, lived in the smaller house for a time with their first daughter, Callie. Then in 1953 they moved to a larger house in Burlington. The Smith family owned a second farm around what is now Morden and Speers, the produce going to their produce store on Queen Street 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 negotiations 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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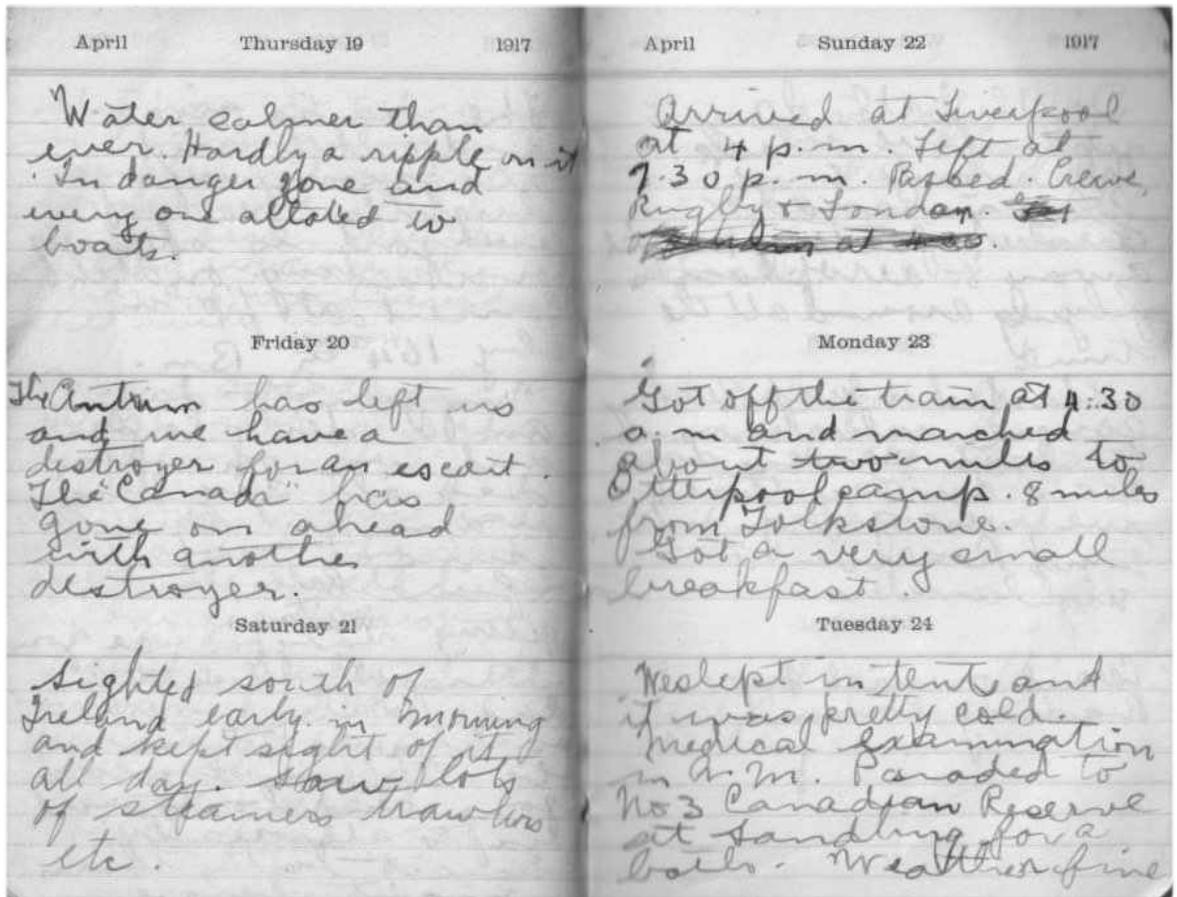
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From the diary of Melville Munro who went overseas with the 164th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

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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

Feet inches	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.
	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

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

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