



Oakville Historical  
Society  
since 1953

# The White Oak

[www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)

News from the Oakville Historical Society



Volume 51 Number 4

December 2017

## *Santa Came to Town*



Marcie Costello photo above

For the past few years in November, our King Street offices have been home to Santa. Photographer Marcie Costello feels the atmosphere is perfect for children who need calm and quiet, away from a busy shopping mall. She and her clients donate food and Christmas gifts to various charities.



Susan Wells  
photo above



**Marcie Costello**  
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## *Trafalgar or Nelson?*

Our November speaker David Hobden spoke passionately of Halton County: how information on 200-year-old maps can deceive us, and how fires can wipe out the only written records. But the question remains - was Trafalgar or Nelson the site of Halton's first post office?



M. Hawthorne and D. Hobden  
with wicket of Oakville's former post office,  
216 Lakeshore Rd E., now Tommy Bahama

Our speaker's topic February 21st, 2018 will be "An Approach To Heritage Retrofitting and Restoration" by Geri Tino who will show local examples. Held at St. John's Church, corner of Dunn and Randall Sts. at 7:30. Donations welcome, refreshments served.

# A note from the Society President

We've just finished our Ghost Walks for 2017 and they have been even more successful than last year. This year our net profit was over \$9000 - up significantly from 2016 which was our best year. Many volunteers helped out with this including close to 50 high school students who helped in the kitchen and as wandering spirits. The walks have become our major (but not only) activity for the fall season. New this year was the ability to book and pay for the walks online. The walks have become a yearly event for several groups. Mary Davidson, Marie Descent and Wendy Belcher deserve our thanks for making the walks so successful.

We also participated in Doors Open 2017 and saw many visitors to the office and Thomas House. The Thomas House is now closed for the season. It remains very popular with visitors to Lakeside Park. It's interesting to chat with people who visited when they were children and are now bringing their children to see it.

A couple of weeks ago we received a very interesting donation from Mr and Mrs Mike Carson. Mike's roots in Oakville are deep – Carons, Bacons and Nisbets. He delivered two ledgers from the W.T. Carson Company and three CDs of photos. More are to come. There is a lot of recorded history of Oakville out there and the increasing public profile of the Society means that more items are coming our way. Please keep spreading the word.

We are finally making a dent in the backlog of house plaques.



A dedicated volunteer group including Janet Godber, June Hitchcox, Rosemary Seeton and Nicole Léger have cracked some of our difficult ones. I've recently cut five plaques and have about fifteen more to go.

Our main event as we lead up to Christmas is the annual members' party which is scheduled for Friday, 1st December at 6 pm. I hope to see many of our new and long time members there.

As always, comments and suggestions are very welcome. George Chisholm, President



Oakville Historical  
Society  
since 1983

## HISTORICAL TOURS

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# Formal Fashion for Men

*Fashion illustrates the ideal of beauty while embodying the events that affect the human experience*

The Oakville Museum's Costume and Textile Collection of over 6000 pieces, preserves a significant group of garments and accessories worn by Canadians from the mid-18th century to the present. It includes dresses, suits, hats, shoes, purses, jewellery, parasols and other objects of personal adornment. Most artifacts have a strong Oakville connection.

*“Clothing is intimate. Everyone wears clothes, so everyone can relate to clothing.”*

The collection captures not only eras of constantly changing fashion trends, but also the evolving culture and social history of Oakville itself. Because clothing has a way of reflecting the world around it, it becomes an expression of our society that we can look at to better understand our past.

Clothing is intimate. Everyone wears clothes, so everyone can relate to clothing. It is the artifact that almost speaks the loudest as a poignant reminder that there was once a living, breathing, sweating human body inside the garment. Viewing a piece of clothing in a museum collection elicits an almost instinctive desire to understand the person who wore this just a little bit better.

Many museum collections contain garments that are the most refined and elegant of their period simply because everyday clothing has not survived. No one thought to save the plain, well-worn garments of the working-class man or woman.

Reflecting upon pieces from the Oakville Museum's extensive Costume Collection it is easy to invoke a sense of nostalgic warmth to the holiday season. Women wore frocks made of fabrics such as silk, velvet and wool, as appropriate to the occasion and fashion of the time. But what about the men? Womenswear gets so much more coverage than menswear as we typically believe menswear to be boring. In truth, the history of menswear is anything but dull. Men of the past had a very strict social dress code.

At the turn of the twentieth century a gentleman required not only the means to acquire formal attire, but an understanding of the etiquette of how to wear the garments.

With the rise of the business and middle class, the three piece suit evolved out of the formal business attire of the Victorian era and strict dress codes were decreed for social occasions. What was once the realm of a valet dressing a gentleman, formalwear became accessible to any man with means. He would just have to learn how to wear them.

Between 1860 and 1940 men's fashions evolved and the dress codes for formalwear were redefined and the proper attire of what to wear constantly changed. The styles and rules were set by royalty and the social elite.

# Formal Fashion for Men...

To be properly attired, any man would have to be aware of the time of day, the location, and the degree of formality defined by the invitation or event. This ability to be formally dressed involved knowledge of style, cut, colour, fabric choice and the appropriate accessories. Using the language of men's formalwear, you could convince society, whether you belonged or not, that you did belong. Clothes make the man!

During the Victorian era, the Frock Coat was worn for all formal occasions. It was considered proper business attire. Tailored from heavy black wool, it had a waist seam and a full fronted skirt that usually fell to the knee. The formal version of the coat was double breasted, worn with matching trousers, a high collar and either an ascot or four-in-hand knotted tie. By the 1880s the Morning Coat began to replace the Frock Coat for formal day events by the younger generation; however, the Frock Coat remained the choice of elderly gentleman until the First World War. After the war, its status declined until 1936 when the trend-setting Edward VIII banned it during his very short reign.



Frock Coat

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# Formal Fashion for Men...

The Morning Coat emerged during the 1880s as an option of formal dress that was worn only for events that took place during daylight. The style was also known as a cutaway since the front of the coat had rounded edges that appeared to have been cut off. The coat was usually black or dark grey and was worn with a light coloured vest, wing collar, ascot or straight tie, monochromatic striped or check trousers, grey gloves and a bowler or top hat depending on the occasion. By the late 1930s it was no longer worn for business. It was replaced by the modern business suit but was still appropriate for weddings, funerals, state events and the races.

The Tailcoat was a double breasted coat, with peaked lapels, worn with matching trousers. The style was also known as a swallow tail, as the skirt front of the coat sharply tapered towards the back for ease during horseback riding. By the twentieth century the Tailcoat became the epitome of eveningwear and was the appropriate attire for events stipulated as white tie. Only a white bow tie was worn with the Tailcoat unless worn by a waiter or servant, in which case a black bow tie was appropriate. The white tie dress code also required a wing collar, a dress shirt with stiff bosom and cuffs, cufflinks and studs, a waistcoat, white gloves and a black top hat. The wearer of the Tailcoat never sat on the tails of the coat but rather draped them over the back or sides of his chair.



Morning Coat

A new fire hall is being built at Kerr and Rebecca Streets. It will include a Fire Education and Heritage Room with interactive displays, public education materials, historical artifacts along with a 1948 vintage pumper truck on display. It is expected to open in June of 2018



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# Formal Fashion for Men...

On October 10th, 1886 tobacco heir Griswold Lorillard wore a short black dinner jacket to the Autumn Ball at the Tuxedo Club in Tuxedo Park, New York. This was the first time a shortened, more relaxed style dress coat was worn to a social event in the United States and introduced not only the Tuxedo suit but the dress code for black tie events. As the Tuxedo evolved, it offered a gentleman more options for self-expression since it had several different styles and could be worn with various accessories. These included the more relaxed fold over collar and cummerbund. The Tuxedo also introduced colour into men's formalwear with the option of coloured waistcoats, cummerbunds, bowties and pocket puffs. The Tuxedo became increasingly popular after the First World War and replaced the Tailcoat as formal dress for all occasions except for white tie events.

In 1865 Henry Poole & Company presented the Prince of Wales, who later became Edward VII, with a shortened, more relaxed dinner jacket. During a time when it was expected that a gentleman dressed for dinner, the dinner jacket was a comfortable alternative to the Tailcoat. Often made of silk or velvet, the look and cut was similar to a short dressing gown. It sported a satin or silk roll collar also known as a shawl collar and was fastened with toggles, buttons or sometimes a belt. Also known as a smoking jacket, this title alluded to the occasions when the jacket was worn over formal wear to protect it from the ash of cigars and the smell of tobacco. Carolyn Cross WO



Tailcoat



Tuxedo

Dinner or Smoking Jacket, right

Visit Erchless Museum, Navy St. and the satellite exhibition gallery at Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre. Admission is free.

Carolyn Cross, B.A., M.A. is Curator of Collections, Oakville Museum, Town of Oakville.



## *Our Volunteers Win Awards*

Oakville's best and brightest volunteers were celebrated for their contributions to the community at Oakville's 16th Annual Community Spirit Awards. Mary Davidson won the Heritage Award sponsored by Genworth Financial Canada. There is hardly an area of our Volunteer activities at the Oakville Historical Society that Mary has not influenced. As one of the co-ordinators of our popular October Ghost Walks, she seeks and schedules volunteers to lead tours, register guests, prepare snacks and clean up afterwards.

Our Society hosts speakers four times a year. Mary finds interesting authors, lecturers, columnists; anyone who can educate our society about historical topics, then co-ordinates with the staff at St. John's Church hall where they are held.

Thomas House Museum at Lakeside Park is a very popular summer destination. Mary finds and schedules the guides who educate visitors and before it opens in the spring, she helps clear the cobwebs away. She will even don an 1850s farmhouse-wife apron and mob cap herself.

The Oakville Historical Society has publishing projects that Mary nurtures to life. Recently she arranged to have republished two mainstay books of Oakville's history - *Oakville and the Sixteen* and *Old Oakville*.

Some may know Mary from the messages she sends to alert members of events.

We see her at our office every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, but that time is only a small percentage of the hours she then spends at home working on society business.

Thank you Mary.

Our volunteer Donna Starkey was presented with the Canada Sesquicentennial Awards presented during Oakville's 2017 Canada Day celebrations.

The aim for presenting the Canada Sesquicentennial Awards is to acknowledge and thank those who through their actions promoted inclusivity and celebrated diversity, worked to improve the environment, and/or who championed justice, equality, and democratic stewardship; individuals who personally made contributions that have, or are currently making the constituency of Oakville and by extension Canada, a happier, healthier and stronger place to live.

Donna Starkey has a deep commitment to volunteering at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital and is an Elder on the Board at St. Pauls United Church. As a leader in the Girl Guiding Movement of young woman, Donna has been acknowledged and awarded a plaque for her 40 year Commitment to Guiding in Ontario in April of 2014, and has received numerous other awards for supporting and teaching young women leadership roles in Oakville and Ontario throughout those 40 years. Donna was awarded the 2013 Leading Woman Building Communities Recognition Award, and she was awarded the 2015 Ontario service Award for 30+ years to the Oakville Historical Society where she has co-ordinated and aided with countless events such as the Mayor's Picnic, Yard Sale, Birthday Parties and Christmas Celebrations.

Thank you Donna.

## Members and Donors

Please note that membership renewals are due on the 31st December. You may now do this online, using PayPal, or, the old fashioned way, using the enclosed membership form which you may send in the mail or deliver in person, together with your cheque.

We are pleased to welcome nine new members since last newsletter: Mr. Neil Harrison  
Ms. Marcie Costello Mrs. Caroline Gavrillov  
Mrs. Christa Stoeckler Mr. David Hawkins  
Ms. Maisie McLean Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Moore  
Ms. Frances Ann Litchfield Ziesman

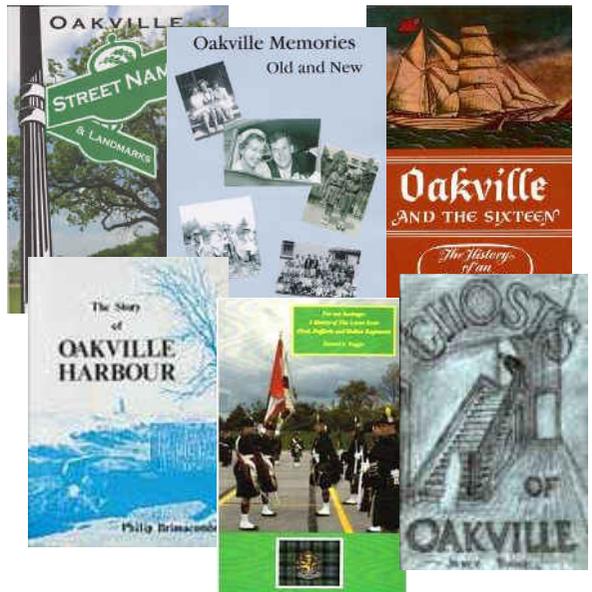
We wish to thank our new donors for their gifts to the Society. Their generosity will continue to support the work of our volunteers.

Mrs. Maria Bell Mrs. Marcie Costello  
Mr. Mark Verlinden

Andrea Stewart and Marie Descent

## Gifts

We have a collection of books that make fine gifts at this time of the year. Choose from topics such as Oakville and Bronte histories, Oakville street names, personal memories, ghosts, the Lorne Scots. See our website or visit the offices for titles and prices. Discount if you are a member!



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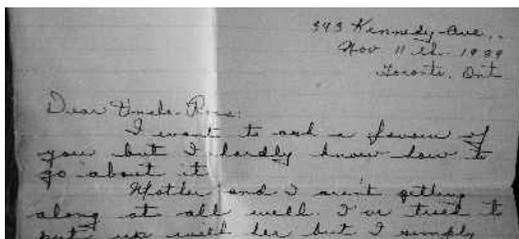


Gibson House c1925. SW corner Thomas and Lakeshore. See page 10.

## Acquisitions



The above photograph shows a small portion of a recent donation to our collection by Mr. Jed Turner of Turner Chapel Antiques. He contacted us when a customer gave him a black leather pouch full of photos, letters and personal information from some of Oakville's early families, including the Gibsons (see page 9) and Mordens. Some letters are from men serving in the two World Wars and a portion of a letter written by a young woman is shown below. We are encouraged when citizens, such Mr. Gardner remember the Oakville Historical Society and appreciate his donation very much.



Now we all want to know if Uncle Ross replied to his niece and if so, what did he say.

## Doors Open Halton

Our participation in the Halton Doors Open event this year saw an improved attendance with more overseas visitors than ever before. Our costumed volunteers provided guided tours of Old Oakville, and were able to explain Canada's history as illustrated by our Canada 150 displays. Members of 1188 Cadet Corps added to the colour by marching from the armoury and playing in front of our offices to delighted visitors and volunteers alike. A thank you, also, to the Cadets who helped guide visitors from site to site. We counted approximately 200 visitors to our office and 250 to the Thomas House. Fifty-two people joined our historic walks, guided by Trish Sinclair. Thank you to our fifteen volunteers who provided over eighty-five volunteer hours.

Andrea Stewart and Averil Jany



Members of 1188 Cadet Corps, Doors Open Halton at our OHS offices. From left to right the players are Cadet Warrant Officer Anuta Marasinghe, Cadet Warrant Officer Douglas Chang, Cadet Sergeant Alex Potapov and Cadet Warrant Officer David Hong. Photo used by kind permission of Captain David Fimio CD

## Summer Sailing

It seems like a long time since the Mayor's Picnic last June, what with the first snowfall of the coming winter season last night.

For most of us the Mayor's Picnic is now a fading memory, but for Joseph and his family the memory will probably remain vivid for some time, especially because Joseph was the winner of an afternoon family sail on the Anitra, courtesy of Anitra's proud owner Jamie Macrae. The Anitra, launched in the 1920's is the oldest schooner still sailing on Lake Ontario.

Ten-year-old Joseph invited his mother Sandra, his grandmother Nadia and two of his cousins Julie age 12 and Laura age 10, for a beautiful sunny September afternoon on the lake. Joining Captain Jamie was Greg Munz who acted as first mate for the day. Greg also brought along his first mate (wife) Lois.



Above are Julie Ward, Joseph Farha and Laura Ward aboard Anitra.

Passengers were quickly put to work, taught how to use the tiller, and to keep a sharp eye out for other boats. The crew's hard work and enthusiasm was rewarded with a variety of refreshments.

It was a great sail, one that will be remembered by everyone for some time to come.

Greg Munz



Mayor's Picnic winners above, Maggie Roy and Stella Gelfand enjoyed a sail on Peter Wells' sloop Ruffian, out of Bronte Harbour Yacht Club.

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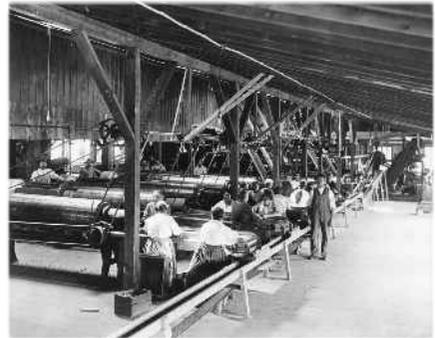
**Do you know:**

**Who they were?**

**What they were doing?**

*Look out for the answer in our next issue!*

The photograph at right, in September's Newsletter, showed bean snippers and the operators at the Chisholm-Scott Company.



**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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