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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**JUNE 2010**

**Volume 44: Number 2**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**June 13** Annual Picnic in the Park – Lakeside Park. Noon to 4:00PM  
Bring your own picnic and enjoy the bands. Admission:FREE!

**September 25-26**

### **Volunteers Needed for Doors Open Oakville**

Every year in Ontario hundreds of historic buildings, natural spaces, heritage gardens and cultural sites are open for free to the public as part of Doors Open Ontario. The goal of Doors Open is to educate and inform the community about the importance of architectural, cultural and natural heritage sites. Doors Open Oakville will occur on the weekend of Sept. 25 & 26, featuring approximately 40 sites. Volunteer responsibilities include greeting and guiding the public through various sites in Oakville on Sept. 25 or 26.

For further information:

Contact: [www.doorsopenoakville@oakville.ca](mailto:www.doorsopenoakville@oakville.ca)

Phone Number: 905.845.6601 ext. 5122

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**October 20<sup>th</sup>** The “Mississauga Disaster”. Slides and discussion.

**November 17<sup>th</sup>** “Come down to the Sea in Ships”. A voyage in history with Phillip Brimacombe

**Note:** Evening programs are at Knox Church at 7:30pm for 2010, unless otherwise noted. Please visit [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) for updates and new events.

If anyone would like to be added to our "HERITAGE EVENT" email list, please email [info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org). We interact with seven other Halton Heritage groups in order to promote all up-coming Heritage Events.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It was nice to see such a good turnout for our annual general meeting in March. Whoever had the idea to add a potluck dinner to this event should be congratulated. The food was, as usual, excellent. At the meeting we confirmed the appointment of two directors to the board - elected one new member. These new and newish board members are Greg Munz, Susan Wells and Mary Davidson. I would like to thank the departing board member, Drew Bucknall, for his work with the board. While Drew has retired from the board, he is still serving an active role in heritage Oakville as he is a member of Heritage Oakville.

At our board meeting in April, the board elected the four officers of the corporation who remain:

George Chisholm – President  
Barbara Savage – Vice President

Greg Munz – Treasurer  
Jim Young – Secretary

It seems that your Society gets busier and busier every year and there are more demands on the time of our volunteers. While many of our members choose not to be active volunteers for a variety of reasons, we could certainly use more help. Tuesdays and Thursdays are very busy times at the office but many are not aware that we are now open on the third Sunday afternoon of each month and that more visitors are arriving then as well. So far, Phil Brimacombe and Mary Noad have looked after this duty but, they could use some help. It is a longer term goal of the Society to open the office on more than one Sunday afternoon per month. Phil and Mary would be happy to train anyone who is interested in helping out. You can email me or call the office at 905 844-2695 and leave a message if you would like to be a new or returning volunteer. We can most likely find just the job for you.

This past month several representatives from the Society attended a series of meetings concerning the Downtown Oakville Strategic Review (DOSR). This is a review initiated by the Planning Department at Town Hall. Many super ideas were put forth and the consultants should be able to put together a great report. One message that was put across loud and clear was that Oakville needs a fourth Heritage District – the Main Street. It will be interesting to see what comes out of this.

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

**COVER PICTURE:** Example of early Oakville architecture – “The Slacer Cabin”  
*Advertising insert artwork & compilation done by Carolyn Naismith*

## *Early Oakville Architecture*

The construction methods used by Canada's early builders were influenced by their place of origin. They built their dwellings to resemble the ones they left at home, not only because they were homesick and wanted to replicate their old environment, but also because they possessed certain skills and used them to fashion homes with the materials they found in their adopted land.

Many of us have in mind a log cabin when we think of a first dwelling built by new settlers. (I am writing of houses in this article however, logs were used for structures of many purposes: churches, post offices, etc.)

That house would not be typical of that built by immigrants from the British Isles or most of Europe. A house built of trees, kept round in section, laid horizontally, one on top of another, was unknown to them. This use of timber, developed in places including Scandinavia and Switzerland, was transported to the new land now known as the USA. In fact, it has been conclusively argued that the first houses in North America built by immigrants were frame structures, as the log-building people did not arrive until the 1700s. Since Oakville was settled after, in the early 1800s, in large part by United Empire Loyalists, the US-learned log-building skills were put to use here.

There are not many log homes left from the early days, as they were given over to shelter animals or tractors and later left to fall back into the ground. Also, since a home was needed in a hurry, the trees were felled, logs cut and walls built before the timber was sufficiently dry (drying took twelve months or so, a luxury not allowed.) The result was walls that dried and shrank, and the bottoms row of logs rotted and settled due to alternate exposure to wetting and drying.



1820's Log Cabin – Oakville Yacht Squadron

Even those that survived may be mistaken for frame houses (built of wood, cut and shaped by the mills that appeared soon after the settlers.) One-room log cabins were added to and covered by wood siding or stone, so that for all the world they had the appearance of a dwelling of a much wealthier occupant. The log cabin on the grounds of the Oakville Yacht Squadron was such a house. When the house, then on Trafalgar Road, was being torn down in the 1970s, it was noticed logs were underneath the outside covering and (thankfully) the preservation of the 1820s cabin building began. (I had the pleasure of visiting a two-storey farm house in Saskatchewan and was shown behind the plaster walls: the humble first home of Ukrainian-Canadians was built of prairie sod, cut into squares and piled up to form walls, the exterior sheathed with wooden siding)

This is not to say there were no log homes built to last. Some had the benefit of a good foundation and a good plan, designed to withstand the freeze and thaw cycles of the seasons of this area. A matching of the skills of the immigrants to the materials on the land and to the wild variables of temperature must have taken some skill and experimentation.

Some factors determining the size of the dwelling are - the size of the trees available, time allowed for construction (was it spring? Or were the leaves falling?) and funds available.

First, a foundation was laid. This could be as simple as fieldstone piled in the shape of the proposed cabin, held with mortar or not. Sometimes the vertical stump leftover from the tree, felled to make the wall, was kept as part of the foundation that held the horizontal logs. As you can imagine, the foundations were not always long-lasting, but when a family needed a roof before winter arrived the settlers did what they could.

In the basic log house, the wall of the house was made up of one full log length: that is, if the house was 20 feet long then the log was 20 feet long. There was not a joining of logs somewhere along the length. The logs were usually between 8 and 11 inches in diameter and varying sizes were used in the same wall. The corners were secured with a variety of different styles of keys that originated from a variety of different cultures. It is the success of these keys that partially kept the walls from falling apart from each other.



Corners

The 7th or 8th log up from the bottom was the tie log, which was necessary where the joints at the corners were not sufficient enough to hold the walls vertical.



Chinking between logs and, corners

The chinking used to fill the gaps where the logs did or did not join was moss, clay or lime made on the site. The space may have been filled first with branches to cut down on the amount of chinking required. This was an on-going seasonal task as the ground shifted and the logs shrank as they dried.

The trusses for the roof could vary in spacing from two feet to five and were cut and notched on the ground before being lifted to the roof for piecing together. Carpenters' marks can still be seen on some rafters today. An early form of roof finish was one of hollowed out logs placed across the roof trusses, overlapping, to allow the rain to fall away from the roof rather than into the dwelling.

The floor, if not packed dirt or clay, was logs halved lengthwise with the flat side up. A chimney was constructed of stone from the farm site or of locally-made bricks.

Two men experienced with an ax could put up a house in a few days, but the time and cost varied. For example, an average 10 feet by 20 feet log house built in 1820, could be erected in four weeks at a cost of £33. Windows cost more, as well as the cutting of the openings to receive them. The cut was made after the logs were in place. This could add over £2 extra. Windows were small, few in number and as they had to be manufactured some distance away and transported to the house, were expensive.



Window structure

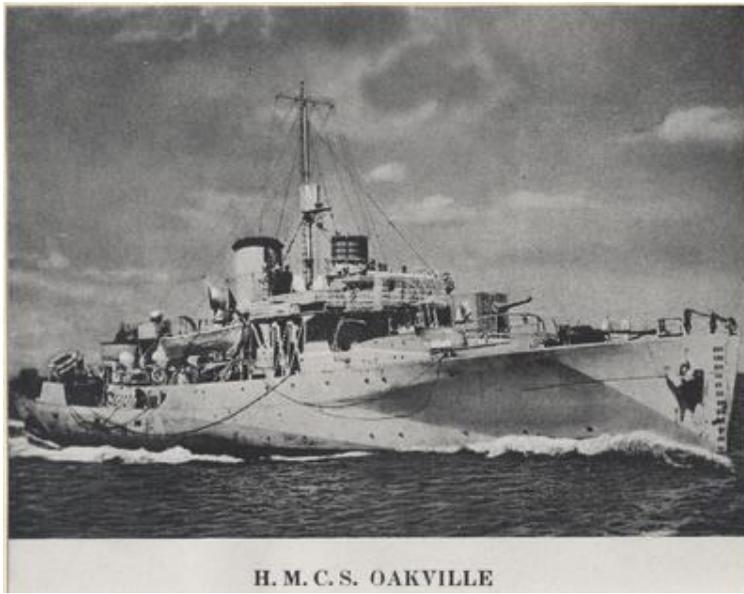
This was the basic dwelling. Luxurious touches, such as plaster applied to interior of the walls, a ceiling and interior partitions, could be added in the future, but now here was a house to keep the snow and rain (mostly), off the settlers' heads.

Susan Wells

### Canadian Naval Centennial \* 1910-2010

Canada's Navy is celebrating 100 years of service. Oakville may not be considered a "naval" town but, it has a rich maritime history and a link to the Navy with a namesake that fought proudly during WW II. H.M.C.S. Oakville gained a reputation as a strong and fighting ship with a proud crew. Let us think of all those who have manned our ships in war and peace.

*"God bless our ships and all who sail on them"*



# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



## **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – March 2010**

**T**he daguerreotype photograph showed the schooner Britannia, once owned by William Chisholm. One of her Captains was Robert Wilson (1806-1888). This type of photograph was the first large scale commercial photographic process and was developed by Louis Daguerre and Joseph Niepce.

Lance Naismith

## **Oakville’s own “Antiques Roadshow”**

**V**iewers of “The Antiques Roadshow”, clutching their own Victorian button collection, probably dismiss as theatrics for the TV camera, the reaction of the guests on the show who, when told by the expert that the folk art gee-gaw they picked up at the garage sale in Clappison’s Corners in 1978 for 50 cents, is now worth \$2000.



Jed Gardner of Turner’s Antiques (37 Lakeshore Rd. West) appraised my 1880s British perfume bottle and I had

Jed Gardner appraising Janet Carr’s portrait of “John West”

such a reaction. “Really!?” I said, astonished. “I had no idea.”

Mr. Gardner, who has been in the antique business for over 20 years and has operated Turner’s for eight, probably heard similar reactions at an event 24th April where, with Cogeco TV filming, he appraised antiques. Donations were gratefully accepted by the Oakville Historical Society.

Susan Wells



Cogeco T.V. Crew



Susan Wells with Robert Gardner

### [Tidbits from the Past](#)

**J**ohn Cosley, who was possibly an escaped slave, not only dabbled as a barber, hairdresser, proprietor of Indian root shrub, toys, gunsmithing and inventing (breach loading rifle, a folding water and feed trough), briefly owned and edited “The Bee”, a small newspaper of the 1860’s. He used a hand press that printed simultaneously on both sides. Alas, “The Bee” was no more when the editor, as they are wont on occasion, stung personages of importance. Sometimes the power of the press isn’t omnipotent.

Lance Naismith

**DID YOU KNOW?** The Society is a member of the Ontario Historical Society. Learn more at: **John McKenzie House**  
34 Parkview Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario, M2N 3Y2  
**Phone:** 416.226.9011**Fax:** 416.226.2740  
**E-Mail Address:** [ohs@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca](mailto:ohs@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca)

## Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting for the Society was held at Knox Church on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The potluck supper brought in a lot of tasty morsels and, for those with a sweet tooth, the offerings were very satisfying.

The meeting was opened by our very own Society Crier, **Ian Burkholder**. Various reports were brought forward by the directors, informing the members of our finances and membership and upcoming projects. Greg Munz & Susan Wells were confirmed in their positions while Mary Davidson was elected to the Board.



L/R \* G. Chisholm (Pres.), J. Young (Sec.) & Crier Ian Burkholder

Lance Naismith

**Trivia:** Who did William Chisholm hire to lay out the streets of Oakville? Ans: pg 10

## What's on your plate Sundays???

In case you don't know, the Society is open for business every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month (1-4p.m.?) and we look forward to seeing you if you'd like to come down and talk to the volunteers about Oakville's history.

Also, for those members who find the week-day hours a problem due to work, commitments, etc, this is a good chance to volunteer and learn more about the Society and the rich history we have in Oakville. Trained volunteers are already on site but, extra help is very much appreciated and, as stated, this is a good way to increase your knowledge about the area. So, come on down and spend some leisure time.

## Thomas House

The Thomas House, located in beautiful Lakeside Park at the foot of Navy Street, is now open and Pat Mack and all her volunteers are eagerly awaiting your visit. Combine a tour of the historic district with this beautifully preserved example of early

19<sup>th</sup> pioneer house architecture. FREE ADMISSION but donations are gratefully accepted. TRIVIA ANSWER: *Merrick Thomas, original owner of this house, was given the job of designing the street structure of early Oakville.*

Thomas House visiting hours are 1:30 to 4:00 P.M. as follows:

- Victoria Day Weekend to Labour Day - Saturday, Sunday & Holidays;
- Plus, during July and August: Tuesday through Thursday inclusive.
- Closed after Labour Day (except for HARVEST FESTIVAL).

Lance Naismith

### Oakville Memories: 1930 to Now

**W**e have over 100 memory articles already!!! We are hoping for many more. Even if you came to Oakville yesterday – why did you come? Was it for business? What business and address. Are you here because you have just retired – why? Did you come when you had children at home? What school did they go to? What do you like about Oakville or, not like? What clubs do you belong to and what do you do there? Do you have a special memory of Oakville – Hurricane Hazel 1954, etc?

We would love your stories – or more if you have them!!

June Hitchcox

### Selling Heritage

**J**ames Neilson, a York University student who, working as an intern under Michael Seaman, Manager of Heritage Planning, gave a short presentation to the volunteers at the OHS on how to stimulate interest in Oakville's heritage. Responsible for producing a report on this subject, he spoke on how to incorporate Heritage into Oakville's various tourism programs. Such things as signage, brochures and partnerships were discussed and an informative Q & A period was held afterwards.

Lance Naismith

<b>HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS - 2010</b>			
<b>(All Walks commence at 2:00p.m. – 110 King Street)</b>			
	HISTORIC HOUSES	MAIN STREET	TRAFALGAR
JULY	Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> Canada Day	Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup>
AUGUST	Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup>	Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup>
SEPTEMBER	Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup>	Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> Labour Day

COST: Adult - \$10, Child - \$5, Family \$25

VISIT <http://oakvillehistory.org/html/walkTours.htm> for tour descriptions

The Historic Houses & Main Street tours leave from and return to the Oakville Historical Society at 110 King Street, west of Navy. Enter from the park or from King St. Go to the south side of the building.

The Trafalgar Road tours leave from and return to the parking lot of St. John's United Church.

Tour duration is about 2 hours. Each tour is preceded by a brief talk on related Oakville History. Tea and light refreshments are served after each walk.

Guides are OHS volunteers who are long-time local residents.

### **The White Elephant Sale & Society Information**

The sale was a great success thanks to the many members who donated articles and extra thanks to all the members who came out on Saturday and worked all day selling. Special thanks to Jamie Macrae for all of his work.

The Harvest Festival is booked for Sunday September 26th at the Thomas House from 1pm to 4pm. Again there will be a bake table, games and crafts for the children and Historical Displays of interest to everyone.

Pat Mack held an orientation for new volunteers on Monday May 17th at the Society. Pat along with husband Bill does a great job keeping the pioneer farm house in good shape for the many visitors. She also organizes the schedules for the summer months making sure a volunteer is on duty to welcome guests.

Andrea Stewart and Phil Brimacombe welcomed a group of students from Surrey British Columbia and the Christian School of Oakville and told the “History of Oakville”. It was so cold by the lake they took shelter at Erchless and Michael Brown kindly gave them a tour of Erchless where it was warmer (there was no room at the Society because of the Sale).

Barbara Savage

### [Apathy: The Developer's Newest Weapon](#)

**I**t is such a disgrace to watch Toronto's built heritage being pulled down around us. As we stand silently on the sidelines, our collective history is being destroyed, brick by falling brick. We stand and watch, afraid to question anything. Why should we get involved, the disinterested ask? Change is for the good. Change in this form is **not** for the good. This is change for the sake of the almighty dollar. Grand Victorian and imposing Edwardian structures are being demolished for their prime land, to be redeveloped into condos or town homes. All trace of the land's previous inhabitants are removed, save for maybe the name or perhaps the facade. These are all token gestures. Why do we stand by and watch? We are afraid to question. We are told that we will like what takes history's place. Will we?

But when will people say enough is enough? Look at the city that spreads for miles and miles around you. Look at the towers that reach into the sky. They have no character. No class. No souls. These buildings are cold, glass-clad monstrosities. They will never stand for half as long as their predecessors did. In one hundred years will any of these new, cutting edge buildings still be here? No. They will be gone, replaced by something else.

People seem to forget, quite conveniently, who is going to maintain these buildings in their old age. When these structures that people hailed as modern need massive rehabilitation, who will foot the bill? (Witness the example of the Italian marble cladding on the façade of First Canadian Place being replaced after less than forty years.) Will the



Condo development on site of demolished  
Addison-on-Bay art deco building

owners of these towers be able to afford the astronomical costs of the repairs to ensure their sixty-floor asset is safe?

These are sad times for Toronto and her history. The past is for sale. When developers see beautiful old structures, they don't say, "Isn't this a sight to behold?" They say, "I wonder how many towers we can squeeze on this location?"

The past is being lost. It can be seen all around us, and there is no need to look far. Be it Victorian homes on Charles Street, an Edwardian hospital on St. John's Road, a publishing moguls palatial estate on Austin Terrace, or even a car wash parking lot over our first parliament buildings, we witness the destruction daily.

But we do nothing. We turn a blind eye. Why? Because the past stands in the way, and we desperately want to be modern.

By Adam Howell

*Ed. Note: This article was published with the kind permission of the author and the Etobicoke Historical Society Newsletter, "The Aldernews", where it was first published. The tone is pertinent to our historical heritage in Oakville.*

*This newsletter by the Oakville Historical Society is published quarterly (March, June, September, December) as a benefit of membership. It may not be sold or reproduced without the express written permission of the OHS.*

## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. Oakville Harbour was originally privately owned. When did the Town of Oakville take ownership?
2. Who owned the first shipyard and what was the name of the first ship launched?
3. Whose yacht won the first Canada-USA match race for sailing yachts & when?

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**The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville**

**Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday \* 1:00 to 4:30PM & every Third Sunday of the month**

**Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

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