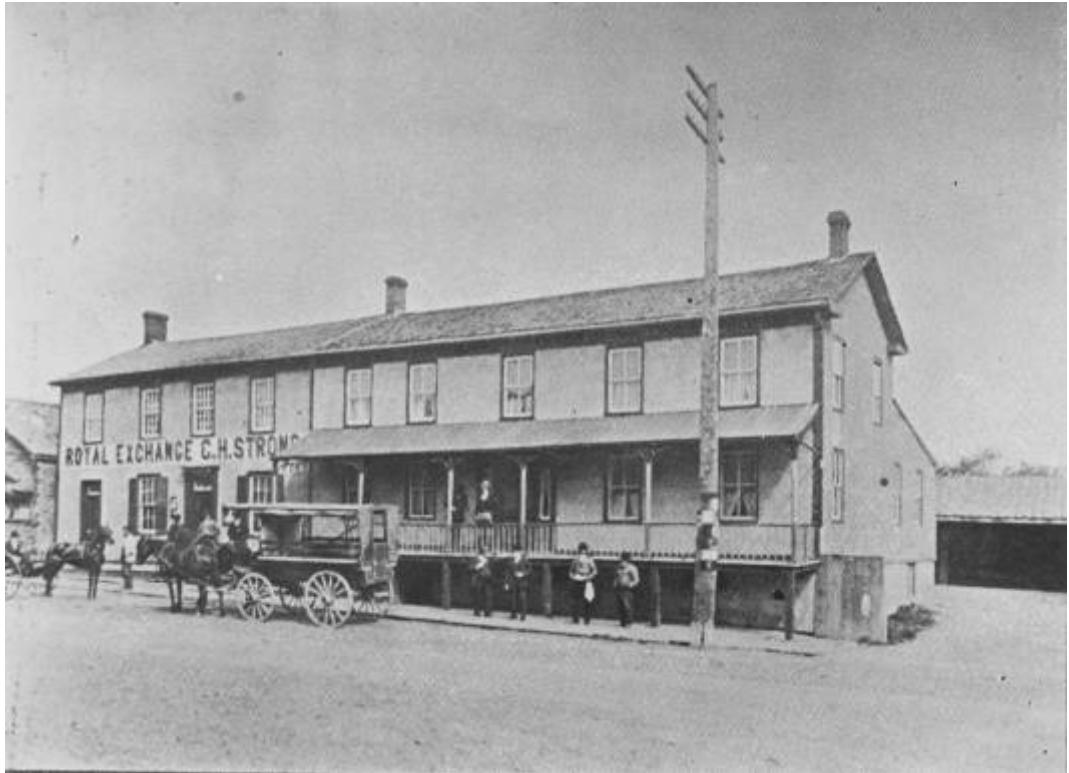


~~~~~  
*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
~~~~~



## **THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 2011**

**Volume 45: Number 1**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**June 12th            The Annual Mayor's Historical "Picnic in Lakeside Park" \* 12 – 4 PM**

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

**2011**

**March 23rd            OHS Annual Meeting - preceded by a delicious potluck supper at 6pm – St. John's United Church**

**May 18th             Halton's Heritage - "William Halton and Halton County"**

**Speaker John McDonald, Historian and Author**

**October 19th        Adaptive Neighbourhoods**

**Speaker Claire Loughheed, Senior Manager of Cultural Services, Oakville**

**November 16th     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 Randall Street.

**COVER PICTURE: 1897 – Royal Exchange Hotel – S.E. Corner Colborne & George Sts.**  
Advertising insert artwork and compilation by Carolyn Naismith.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### **“A home is no longer a home – it's an investment”**

**W**e've all seen or heard of egregious examples of the demolition of perfectly sound, presentable and usable houses either by design or neglect. It happens in Oakville and, more visibly in some cases, all over the province. An historic area of downtown Brantford was gutted recently. A beautiful church in Picton was knocked down. The Empress Hotel in Toronto burned by arson. Some original farmhouses in the north part of Oakville have burned. It's a very disturbing trend.

A few years ago, the Ontario Heritage Act was amended to include the creation of municipal lists of Properties of Interest. Oakville created one with some 400 properties on it. Unfortunately, many of them don't quite meet the criteria for designation under the Act. According to the “Tool Box” provided by the Province there are three criteria under which a property may be designated: design or physical value; historical or associative value or contextual value. Many of the properties on Oakville's list stand on their own. These have become fair game for those who want to knock them down and build another McMansion. One way to protect them is to create more Heritage Districts. Oakville now has three in the downtown area but we need several more. Bronte, Palermo, the harbours and others should all be Heritage Districts to afford some protection before it's too late. People move to Oakville because of its heritage and beautiful old and older properties but many of these buildings are being knocked down to build new houses for them as an investment to move into. Many studies show that a heritage designation improves the value of a property and those around it yet many are being torn down.

Even a heritage designation doesn't protect the property. In too many cases the Ontario Municipal Board, represented by one person, overturns decisions made by the municipality and endorsed by the region. Ontario is the only province that has such a body made up of appointees many of whom have no background in heritage or planning and the cost of defending municipal decisions is enormous. Examples abound – Sharkey's on Lakeshore Road, Downtown Bronte just to name a couple. There are also those who thumb their noses at designations and do what they please. Buildings have been torn down, facades have been altered inappropriately, heritage permits have been ignored – the list goes on. The OMB served a valuable purpose when it was formed but that time is long past.

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)

## *Oakville Hotels (Part Two)*

The hotels and taverns along Colborne Street East (now Lakeshore Road East) tended to cater more to the stagecoach traffic between Hamilton and Toronto. In 1831, William Uptegrave built a hotel on the southeast corner of Colborne Street East and George Street in what was then referred to as “**The Hollow**”. After a few years, Uptegrave leased it to John Diamond while Uptegrave built a tavern across the street. In 1848, John Diamond died and the hotel became known as The Royal Exchange. It was in the possession of James Macreadie at this time, and was frequently referred to as “**Macreadie’s Hotel.**”

It served as the main stop for the Weeks and Company Stagecoaches running along the Lake Road from Hamilton to Toronto. This was a 5 to 6 hour journey in the 1850’s, with coaches leaving Hamilton at 8.30 A.M. and 3.00 P.M. daily except Sundays. The arrival of the coach created excitement in the small community. During the stopover, passengers would enjoy refreshments at the hotel and, *“to the accompaniment of a blast of the horn, flourishing of the whip, and much hallooing to the horses on the part of the driver, the coach would depart.”*

In the 1860’s, Joseph Boon bought the hotel and doubled its size by building to the west. In 1870, Duncan Oliphant bought the hotel, however he was described by William Sumner in his diary as “a hickory landlord”, totally lacking in expertise and experience. James Arno subsequently leased the hotel and, among other improvements, installed a new bar with a long mirror surrounded by stuffed birds and animals, a common decoration of the day. The hotel was demolished in the 1930’s to make way for Oakville’s fifth post office, which still stands as part of the Towne Square.

William O’Reilly’s Tavern was situated at the southeast corner of Dunn and Colborne Streets where Knox Church stands today. When Thomas Lloyd took it over it became a notorious establishment. John A. Williams lived next door as a child and remembered that: *“It was a rough-cast and quite noted building. Thomas Lloyd Esq., an Old Country gentleman, kept a hotel here and in the yard a black bear chained to a pole. It ran around the pole backwards and forwards and made the most horrible noises while being fed, especially when a live pig was given to it, a man holding the pig’s hind leg while it was torn to pieces. It was awful to hear the growls and squeals but it drew a crowd of whiskey suckers and loafers.”*

Eventually, George Baker, the town's first constable, took over the hotel and renamed it the **White Oak Hotel**. It opened with a grand ball on March 1, 1870. Baker ran the hotel until 1876, when one of the Walsh Brothers became its last proprietor. In the 1880's, the building was demolished to make way for the church.

In 1860, John Wray converted the house at the northwest corner of Dunn and Colborne Streets into the **Victoria House Hotel**. In 1868, Arthur Goring bought it. One Sunday afternoon in the late 1860's, a battle took place outside the hotel between Protestant and Roman Catholic sailors leading to more than one broken head and one broken arm! During most of the 1870's, William Walsh was the proprietor. In 1886, with the repeal of the Scott Temperance Act, the hotel business in Oakville revived. William Wynne took over the Victoria House.

The **Queens' Hotel**, as it was now known, was the headquarters for horsemen and bicyclists. Wynne owned several trotting horses, and also at this time, bicycling had become very popular with the laying of a cinder path from Toronto to Oakville, a forerunner of our contemporary bicycle paths! In 1900, the Queens' Hotel closed and was remodeled into Buckle's Meat Market.



Queen's Hotel

As a large percentage of the Irish who had settled in Oakville and district were from Northern Ireland, the celebration of "**The Glorious Twelfth**" every July 12 was an important community event. During the parade **Paddy Smithwick's Tavern** at the northeast corner of Colborne and Reynolds Streets served as their meeting place. John A. Williams wrote: "*On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July the Orangemen gathered in the town from all the country lodges within a circle of eight or ten miles, and they would march around town from Paddy Smithwick's, where a pail and cup or glasses were passed around. Then the*

*Fife and Drum started again, halting at Diamond's in the centre of town then up to the Oakville House where dinner was prepared and all enjoyed a feast once a year at least".*

In 1833, John Forman built Oakville's first Temperance Hotel at the southwest corner of Dundas (now Trafalgar Road) and Randall Streets. In 1850, Charles Davis took over the hotel and named it the **Oakville Temperance Hotel**. Conveniently, Ontario's first Temperance Hall was built in the 1840's right across the street where Tim Horton's now stands. Unfortunately, Davis became involved with the authorities for selling "spirituous liquors", and his establishment was subsequently taken over by Jacob Barnes, a blacksmith, who ran the hotel, now known as the Halton County Hotel, until his death in 1868.

Up Dundas Street (nicknamed "The Station Road"), was another hotel built by John Williams in 1855 to accommodate travelers to and from Oakville via the Great Western Railway. The railway had started service between Hamilton and Toronto through Oakville in December of that year. The hotel was a roughcast, wedge-shaped building situated immediately to the southeast of the Oakville train station, which was at that time, located on the south side of the tracks. Williams sold it shortly after it was built, and it had a series of proprietors until it closed in 1923. It became a storage warehouse for a winery, and was demolished in 1935.



THE GIBSON HOUSE

We have discussed the hotels and taverns in Oakville which had derived their existence to the stagecoach, steamboat, and train traffic that once thrived in Oakville. In 1906, when automobile traffic along Lakeshore Road was in its infancy from Toronto to Hamilton, a hotel catering to vehicular traffic was built at the southwest corner of Colborne Street East and Thomas Street. Boasting a 50 foot bar, at first the establishment was known as the **Gibson House**. A friend of the proprietor, Charlie Priestman of Toronto, began walking along Lakeshore Road from Toronto to Oakville every St. Patrick's Day. In 1953, Hazel Mathews reported that Priestman had just completed his 36<sup>th</sup> walk at the age of 85! In the 1940's, the Hotel Gibson burned, and a new building

replaced it called **The Halton Inn**. Today, the Halton Inn is the last of Oakville's hotels, described in this article, to be still serving guests.

In these days of hotels, which cater largely to the automobile traffic along our busiest highways, there is somehow a sense of detachment and a generic quality in contrast to our town's past when each hotel had its own personality and uniqueness.

Phil Brimacombe

## [Oakville Memories](#)

**O**ur new project, **OAKVILLE MEMORIES: OLD & NEW** which includes input from Oakville, Trafalgar, Bronte Historical Societies, Central Library, Town of Oakville, Erchless Museum and, Appleby College, is now on the web.

Please Google: **Oakville Memories: Old & New** then click on **Project**. They can also be found on the Oakville Historical Society and Central Library webs. There are 90 Memories entered now and many more getting organized along with photos, to be entered soon. We hope to make them into a history book(s) of the 1900's and 2000's and that these factual and personal memories will keep coming far into the future. We would love to have yours, too!

June Hitchcox

*"Save this Date"*

**Sunday June 12, 12-4pm**

"The Annual Mayor's Historical "Picnic in Lakeside Park", in partnership with the "Friends of the Oakville Historical Society", will be held on that date. In addition to the fine music supplied by two bands, we will have a Period Hat and Costume contest and, a bicycle decorating contest, magician, clown, balloons, an antique Ford car, etc). Mark it down now and have some fun.

Marianne Hawthorne

# ***AROUND THE SOCIETY***



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

**T**he picture was taken in front of “Hotel Gibson” and the man in the windbreaker - “Charlie Priestman”. Alf Whittaker is holding the key with Ross Gibson, owner of the Gibson, holding the box. Also shown is J.M. Campbell, former mayor of Oakville, Leonard Cornwall, Moe Wineburg and Stan Strickland. Hotel was also known as Hotel Decker, Gibson House and Halton Inn.

Lance Naismith

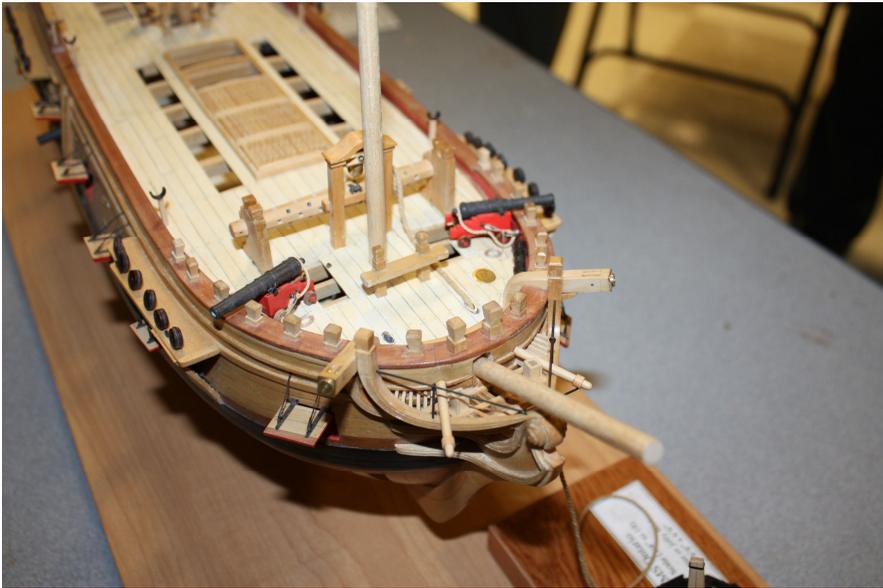
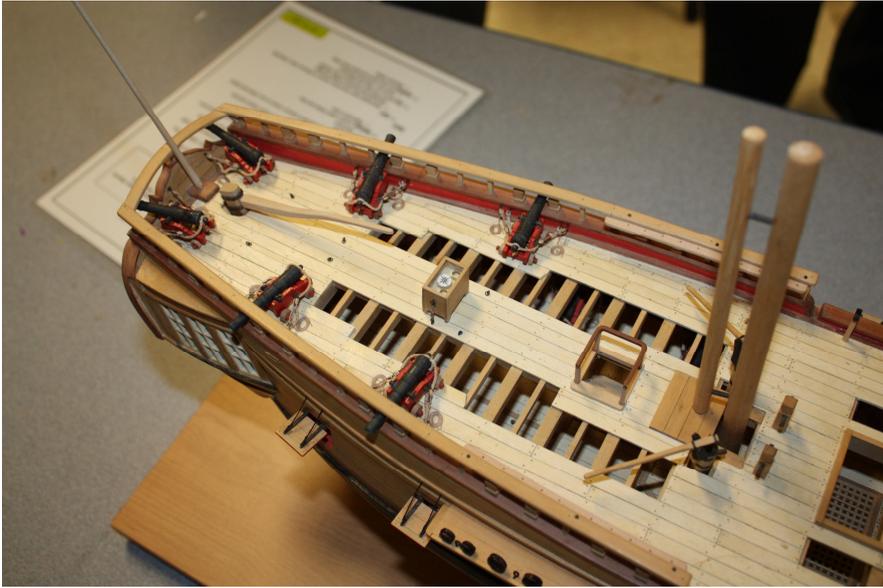
## **HMS Ontario – “Her History and Sad Fate – 1780”**

**M**embers and guests of the Society had the pleasure of Mr. Ray Peacock, who gave a very well illustrated history, accompanied with a stunning model, of HMS Ontario, a Snow Brig that was used by the British on Lake Ontario against the United States during the War of Independence. His in-depth lecture gave everyone an idea of life aboard a ship on Lake Ontario in the 18<sup>th</sup> C. As well, he gave a slide and video presentation of the ship, where she now lies in Lake Ontario.



L/R Harry Barrett – Ray Peacock





## Awards Presented to OHS Members

Two members of the OHS were honoured with awards recently. Phillip Brimacombe received the *2010 Heritage Community Recognition Program Certificate of Lifetime Achievement* and, Dr. Lorne Joyce received the *Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement*.

Congratulations to both of you for your past work in heritage education and for your continued efforts with not only the Society but your enhancement of heritage within the community.

Lance Naismith

## Thomas House

Calling all volunteers!! Ladies and gentlemen, the time is fast approaching when we will be opening up the House and we hope that all our wonderful helpers and anyone new, will be able to help us continue the great tradition. We will be calling around – or you can call us and let us know when you will be available to participate during this summer.

Times are 1:30pm to 4:00PM

Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays                      May to September  
Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays              July & August only.

We close for the season after Labour Day but, will re-open for **Doors Open** and the **Harvest Festival**, which is the last week-end in September.

We will all get together before the start and go over any questions you may have.

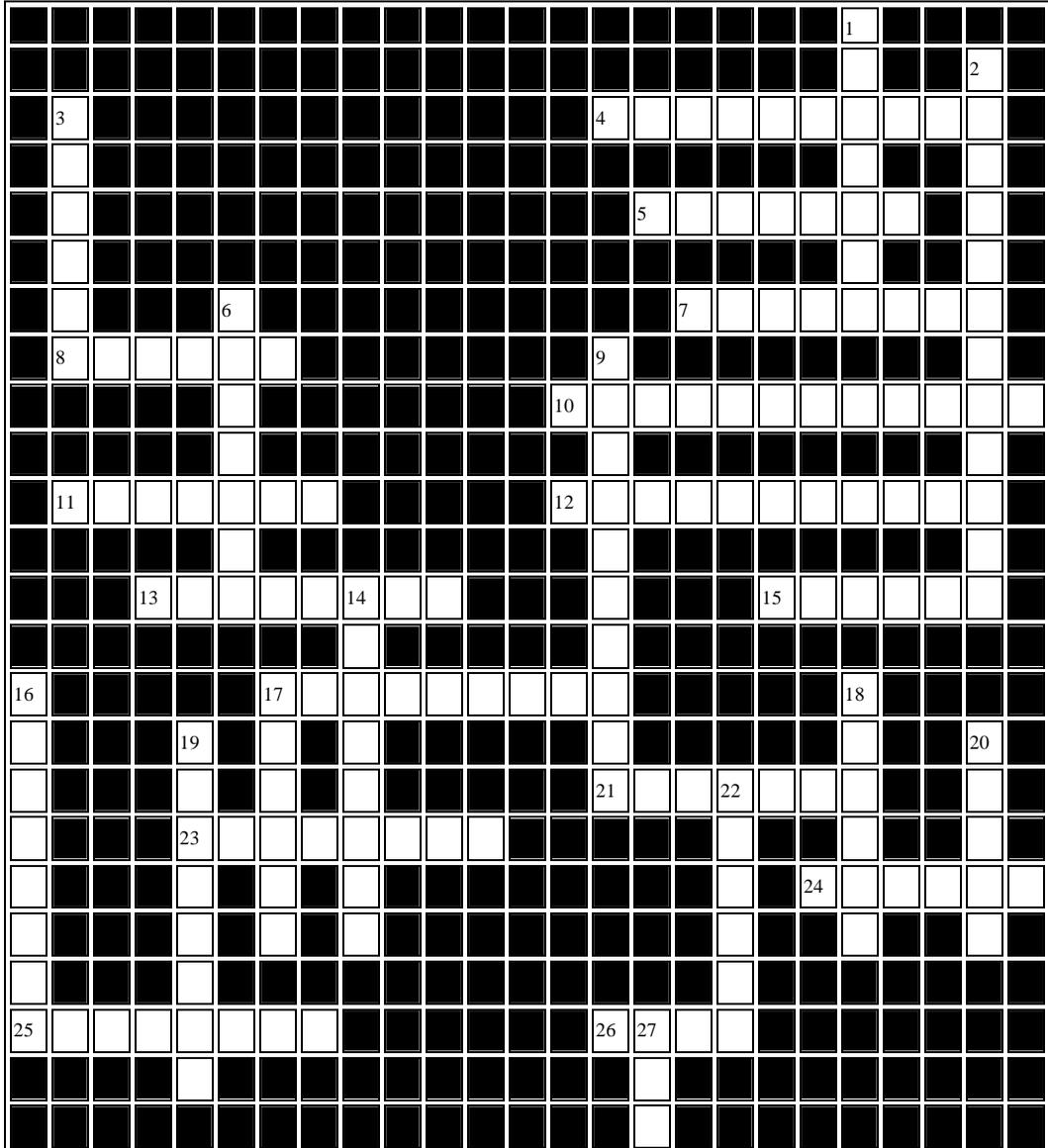
**Mary Davidson**              Phone: 905-842-6935  
Email: [charles.davidson@sympatico.ca](mailto:charles.davidson@sympatico.ca)

**Susan Wells**                      905-844-4474  
Email: [swells@cogeco.ca](mailto:swells@cogeco.ca)

Mary Davidson

## Crossword Puzzle

Think you know your Oakville history? Try this challenge. Hint: Answers in “Oakville and the Sixteen” or visit the OHS and ask a volunteer.



ACROSS		DOWN	
4	Name of Original people at site of Oakville	1	Early crop went in these
5	Olympians from Oakville	2	Olympian from Oakville
7	Richard Wood's business	3	Kept a diary
8	This railway connected with Hamilton	6	Is a former mayor
10	Early crop	9	These lifted material from lake bottom
11	Wrote about Oakville	14	Oakville founder
12	This Railroad helped people escape	16	Oakville ..... Hospital
13	Had a garage downtown	17	Olympian from Oakville
15	Actress from Oakville	18	Former name of Trafalgar Road
17	Schooner owned by Chisholm	19	Estate, now museum
21	Oakville was built around this Creek	20	Used to power mills
23	Former name of Lakeshore Dr.	22	Was an Oakville farmer
24	Franchised hair Products	27	Oakville named for this tree
24	Name of Park downtown		
26	Early houses made of these	***	<b>Compiled by Susan Wells</b>

## [Membership](#)

### RENEWALS FOR 2011

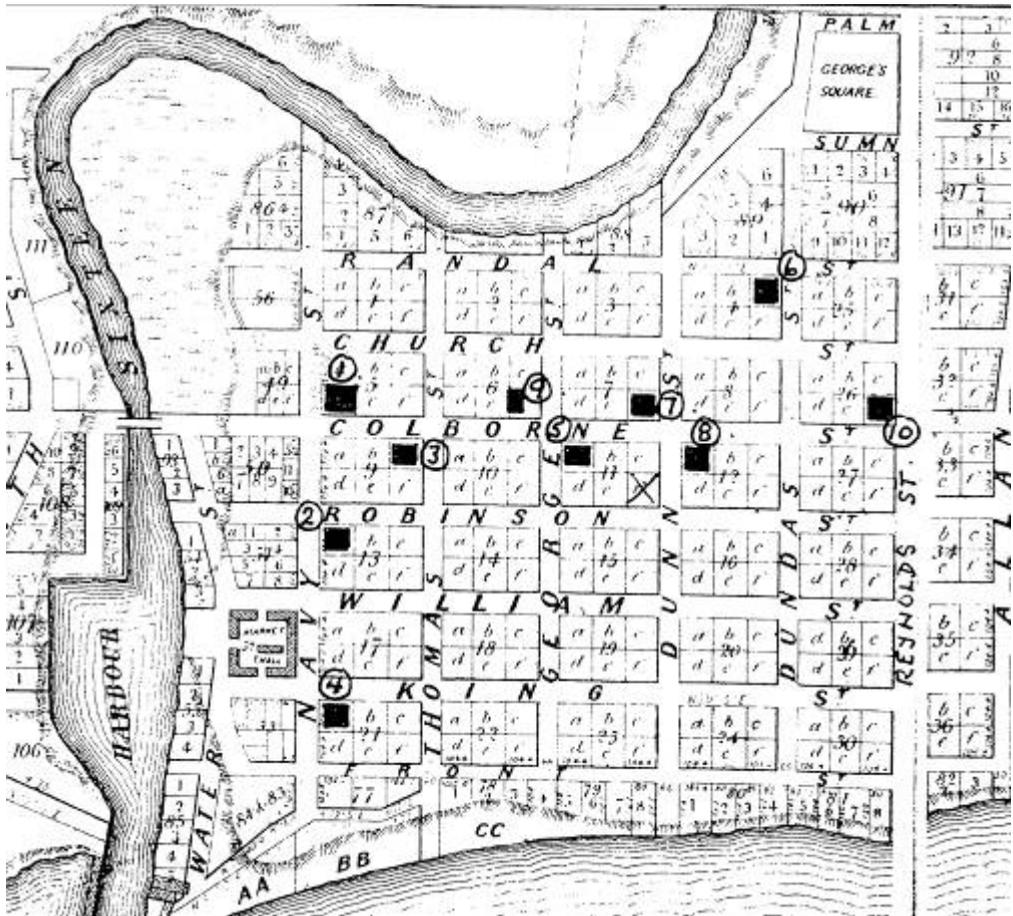
If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2011, please phone us at 905-844-2695 or download the renewal form from the website and mail it to us.

### New Members since December:

Terry & Joanne Riley	Oakville	Charlena Tursok	Oakville
Katia Miropolskaia	Oakville	Carroll Castle	Oakville
Robert Pugsley	Hawkestone, Ontario		

Andrea Stewart

# **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



1. Can you name the hotels number 1-10?

**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**