



Colborne Street c1893 (now Lakeshore Drive) at the corner of Navy Street. The storefronts Morden Fuel and Anderson's Bank were once Town Hall and Police Office

THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2015 Volume 49 Number 2

PUBLIC SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS



The winners of OHS Kids' Art Contest

PLEASURE BOATING IN OAKVILLE

will be announced. Prizes include sailing lessons, family cruises, books and tours.

Mayor's Historical Picnic and Band Concert **Sunday June 7 Noon - 4:30**

Hosted by the **Oakville Historical Society**
at Lakeside Park, Front and Navy St.
Fun for the Family Free Admission

St. Paul's Dixie Land Band
Oakville Wind Orchestra (Canada's Oldest Concert Orchestra!) **Scottish Country Dancers**
Fire Engine Clowns Face Painting



Wednesday
October 21

Mr. Ron Graner, President of Lost Music Productions will bring us the story of the "Lost Music of David Nowakowsky" – a tale of music once thought lost to the world, and its amazing discovery.

Wednesday
November 18

Mr. Michael McAllister coordinator at Hamilton & Scourge National Historic Site of Canada presents Ghost Ships: Museum Under the Waves about the hidden shoreline historic sites.

**Above two presentations will be made at St. John's United Church at
Randall and Dunn Streets, 7:30 - 9:00 pm
Admission is free and refreshments will be served**



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Summer is almost here and the usual Society activities will be happening. **The Mayor's Picnic**, cleaning and opening of the **Thomas House** for the season, getting the garden in shape, setting out the fountain, annual yard sale – the list goes on. On top of these are newer initiatives.

We've applied for a practicum student from the **University of Toronto** to help us get our digitizing projects going. To go with that, we've received a **Trillium Grant** to help us purchase equipment for the job.

Greg Munz has been hard at work on an art contest aimed at elementary school students. The theme is pleasure boating which will lead into the new exhibit he and others are working on. You'll be able to see the finalists at the **Mayor's Picnic**.

At the April board meeting the board confirmed the appointment of Officers of the Corporation for the 2015 year with no changes. I remain as President, **Susan Wells as Vice President, Jim Young as Secretary and Mark Verlinden as Treasurer**. Mark was confirmed as a director by the members present at the AGM in March.

We're getting closer to a solution for our now annual frozen sewer problem. A recent video scope shows that there are no blockages but the line is only 28" down. The Town is looking into solutions that don't involve digging it up.

Mark Verlinden is working on replacing our phone service with an internet-based system that will save us a significant amount of money.

After five years, we have finally received the first shipment of our **Oakville Memories** book. Several people have been involved with this project over the past five years. Most recently **Hugh Ramsay** has been in charge. Copies are available at our offices.

If you have visitors this summer consider taking them to see the **Thomas House** this summer. A walk in Lakeside Park is very pleasant and you can visit the **Oakville Museum** and our office Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and the third Sunday of the month.

George Chisholm

Lyon's Log Cabin at Shipyard Park was recently dedicated. Shown here are Councillors Pam Damoff and Cathy Duddeck with members of the Lyon family. The cabin was previously home to the family of entrepreneur **Matilda Harper** (1859-1950) who built an international network of franchised hair salons that emphasized healthy hair care.



Photo: Claudette Shaw

Harry's Corner

by Harry Lessels

From the thirties and into the seventies, the Town Council met upstairs in a room in a building on the south side of Lakeshore Road (then named Colborne St.) near the corner of Navy St. It was also used as a Court Room and for different public clubs; for instance the I.O.D.E. (Independent Order of Daughters of the Empire). Below the hall was the Police Office which I think also was the office of the Town Clerk. It was like a store front with only one large window and, I believe, it is occupied as a store now. It was not too wide inside, but long, and at the back there were three or four holding cells for prisoners who were later taken up to the Milton Jail. During the hungry thirties in an evening it was a common sight to see male transients waiting to be taken in for a night's shelter where they could also get something to eat. Most of these men were good citizens, going from town to town looking for work. The Police Force then consisted of Chief David Kerr and Constables Mr. W. Rosner and Mr. J. Barnes. On Saturdays a citizen was sworn in to act as an extra officer. The Chief drove a Model A Ford, while the officers walked the beat and rode bicycles when going to outlaying parts of the town.

Chief Kerr also acted as dog catcher, Poll Tax collector and gave out work permits which, in my case, got issued with tickets valued at from one cent to one dollar. This got us work for three days with the Water and Light Commission digging trenches with pick and shovel. This was in winter too when there was no ditch-digging machines as we have today nor did we have the fur-lined boots and thermal underwear, so common now. The foreman would gather up our lunch boxes then go to the neighbouring homes to ask if owners would allow us in to eat our lunches in the basement - no recreation rooms then, but oh it was nice sitting by the big coal-burning furnace to get warm. Have you ever eaten a frozen sandwich - well I have and it is anything but nice to bite into. About the work tickets we got, they had printed on them "for the necessities of life only" meaning no tobacco, cigarettes or liquor. They would amount to eight dollars - enough to pay a week's board, shelter and food, but no laundry. In those days when most people knew one another and were trusted, most landladies would give us back enough money to buy cigarettes or tobacco. Come to think of it, Chief Kerr was also School Truant Officer.

Harry Lessels came to Oakville from Scotland in 1929 as he was nearing 21. He wrote a series of reminiscences for an Extencicare newsletter from 1983 to 1985. Reproduced here are a few extracts.

AROUND OAKVILLE

Jacquelyn's Bridge or Mrs. Jacklin's Bridge?

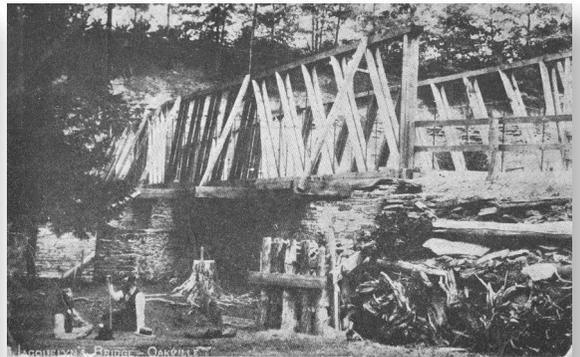
Recently the OHS was given a collection of postcards one of which is shown here, with a 1906 post mark. We went on a hunt to identify the bridge location Hazel Mathews writes in **Oakville and the Sixteen**, "*Another bridge built at Cemetery Hill, in 1868... This may have been the bridge that was later boxed in...there may be some who had their fortunes told by Mrs. Jacklin, the Negro fortune teller who lived at the turn in the road on the west bank....The box bridge was no longer needed after the construction of the High Level Bridge....when the Queen Elizabeth Way was constructed, the present bridge was built in 1936....*"

Is Cemetery Hill near the Oakville/St. Mary's Cemetery on Lyon's Lane? Is Jacquelyn and Jacklin the same person?

Other sources put the bridge at Fourth Line and Sixteen Mile Creek near Highway 407 by Glenorchy School. Trafalgar Township Historical Society members aren't sure about this opinion; they wonder if the post card might possibly be of the old bridge that crossed the Creek at Fourth Line and Rebecca Streets. The local name of "Jacquelyn's Bridge" is not known to TTHS members; similar local names of bridges crossing the Sixteen are the "Barnstaple" bridge, as locals referred to the bridge just past the Barnstaple family farm, and the "Henderson" bridge, similarly named.



Painting of Glenorchy Schoolhouse and bridge at Fourth line just below Lower Baseline. The painting represents the site in 1870.



Postcard of Jacquelyn's Bridge c1906

Written with research by Margaret Buxton, William Mewes, Rosemary Seeton, Trafalgar Township Historical Society with Ross Wark, Facebook Oakville, Past, Present and Future

AROUND THE SOCIETY

The History of Streetcars in Canada

February's speaker, **Bill Thompson** from **Halton County Railway Museum** spoke to us about the history of streetcars in Canada.

We were amazed to learn the scope of this first means of transit, which began with horse-drawn cars in the 1860s and started to be electrified in 1891. Not only major cities but also many small towns boasted streetcars, many of them linking towns and cities; for instance Toronto to Guelph, Niagara to Toronto. The Hamilton-Grimsby-Beamsville line in 1900 carried some 259,000 passengers.

Streetcars boosted the coffers of many small communities by bringing tourists to dance pavilions and amusement parks, in places such as Port Stanley, Hespeler and Port Dover.

Particularly interesting was the Niagara Gorge Belt, a picturesque ride that ran along the Canadian and U.S. sides of the Niagara River. It started along the cliffs on the Canadian side of the river to Queenston, and crossed the river to Lewiston, N.Y. then back along the river to Niagara Falls, N.Y. running through a gorge just above water level, returning to the top of the gorge at Niagara Falls, N.Y. and back to Canada. Mr. Thompson showed us an early film taken from the train where it ran breathtakingly close to the raging river. The cost for the two hour ride was \$1.00. At its peak the ride carried 17,000 passengers a day.

Mr. Thompson invited us to see the museum at Halton County Radial Railway located on Guelph Line just north of the 401. Details of hours may be found on their website. *Andrea Stewart*

Ghostly Autumn is Approaching

The Ghosts of Olde Oakville will again return this fall. Our annual and very successful Ghost Walks begin Oct 15 and continue to Oct 29. Note our webpage for specific dates and times. Reservations are needed and can be made by phone or via our webpage. We welcome anyone who would like to become a ghost (dying is not necessary) leader.

Wendy Belcher

Doors Open Halton: Oakville, September 26th 2015

As the Pan Am Parapan Am Games take place this summer from Minden Hills south to Welland, Doors Open will focus on sports venues.

AROUND THE SOCIETY

Oakville Memories Old and New

The **Oakville Historical Society** has published a book full of memories from residents past and present from the 1930s into the 2000s

\$23 OHS members
\$26 non-members
Available at our office

We are also compiling
Volume Two

Share **YOUR** stories with us

Let's Reminisce



Fiona Schwenderer with
Oakville Memories



The May **OHS Yard Sale** was a huge success with over \$2000. realized. Thanks to volunteers who donated, sorted, cleaned, priced and sold treasures old and new. Above, **Ev Bullied** prepares jewellery and at right **May Issac** and sale organizer **Jim Young** place items in the right light to catch the bargain-seeker's eye.



AROUND THE SOCIETY



Photo: Andrea Stewart

Averil and Joe Jany continue to do magic in our garden at 110 King St. This spring they and volunteers have dug in more donated perennials. The paths and beds have never looked better. If you can spare an hour or a morning or two please give them a call at (905) 845-7472.

St. Andrew Roman Catholic Church celebrates **175** years in Oakville, and members are conducting tours of their historic buildings in July and August at 47 Reynolds St. Contact Yvette Vukanovich at (905) 844-3303.

We were pleased that all four of our nominees for the **Ontario Volunteer Service Awards** in 2015 were successful in receiving this award for their commitment and dedication to The Oakville Historical Society: **Marianne Hawthorne, Maggie Leaver, Grace Schroeder and Donna Starkey**. Pictured here at left are Grace and Donna; Marianne and Maggie having been unable to attend. Our congratulations and thanks to these volunteers who work hard behind the scenes to make our events lively and enjoyable for all of our members.

Andrea Stewart

The **Thomas House** opened the May long weekend and continues to be open May weekends and -
June - weekends
July - Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays

August – as above, with the addition of Civic Holiday, Monday Aug. 3rd

September - Labour Day Weekend Sept. 5, 6, 7th all Sundays PLUS Saturday 26th for Doors Open

Linda North at (905) 845-4507 is looking for volunteers for some dates mostly in July and September. Hopefully we will have a lovely summer and lots of visitors with whom to share the history and artifacts of the Thomas House.

Ron Brown ~ From Queenston to Kingston: The Hidden Heritage of Lake Ontario's Shoreline

On April 22nd 2015, **Ron Brown** took us on a nostalgic trip along the North Shore of Lake Ontario, from Queenston to Kingston. This was a nostalgia trip in more ways than one. Through a 35mm slideshow, musical interludes, and a scripted narrative, Ron went back in time, and took us along for the ride to a time when the railroad did not run and automobiles were in the distant future. Beginning with the local indigenous people and their conflicts, to the arrival of the explorers and settlers, Ron came into his own by demonstrating his keen interest and expansive knowledge of a long-gone era.

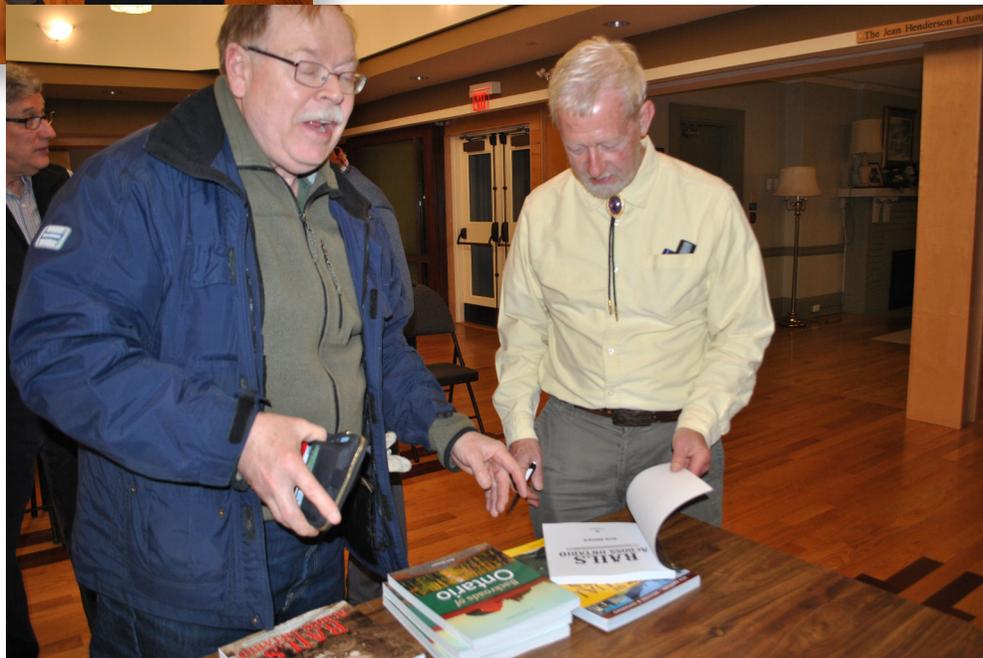
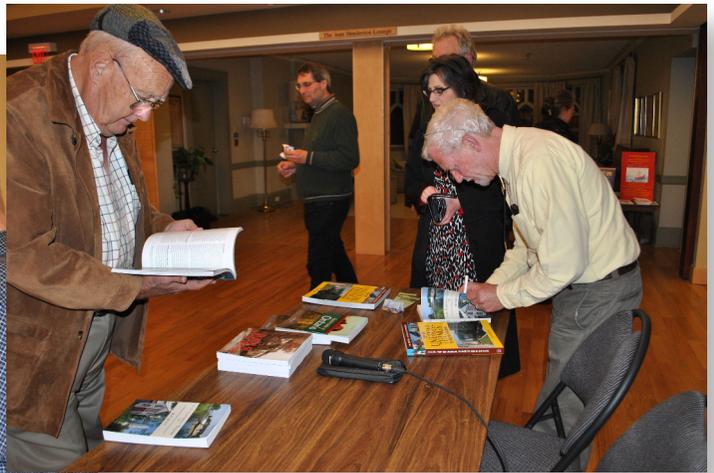
Starting in Queenston, we learned that there have been three Brock Monuments and that Laura Secord didn't take a cow on her famous trek through the bush, that the Welland Canal had 48 locks but with up-grades over the years can now move larger ships and pleasure boats between lakes Erie and Ontario with only 7 locks.

Niagara-on-the-Lake, once the capital of Upper Canada, still boasts some fine old buildings worthy of a visit, but the real action was in Port Dalhousie, where settlers from Quebec in search of a better life found themselves in conflict with the 'tow boys', the men who manoevered the boats through the Welland Canal. It is rumoured that local girls may have been the unwitting source of conflict. You can take your date on a romantic carousel ride in Port Dalhousie today for the princely sum of 5 cents a ride, but look out for the 'tow boys'.

Until the advent of the railroad which put Hamilton on the map as a major rail hub, people and goods moved about the province on ships on the Great Lakes and through canals. In 1857 a Grand Trunk Railway train met with disaster when crossing a bridge over the Desjardins Canal. The derailment resulted in 57 deaths.

Oakville, like many other communities along the west end of Lake Ontario experienced not only industrial, and agricultural growth, but also development of resorts, hotels and summer cottages and some might say mansions. Eventually commercial fishing disappeared and harbours took on a new life as meccas for pleasure boats and fun on the water.

The Toronto water front beaches developed into places of leisure as well, what with the Palace Pier Dance Hall, where the 'big bands' played and people put the pressures of life aside temporarily during the 'great depression.' The only remaining structure now is the pool at Sunnyside Park. York, now Toronto, had been chosen as the capital, but failed to maintain its status after it proved vulnerable to attack and destruction during the War of 1812. It rose from the ashes to become home and playground, an industrial centre and the financial engine of the country, although many Montrealers would make the same claim.

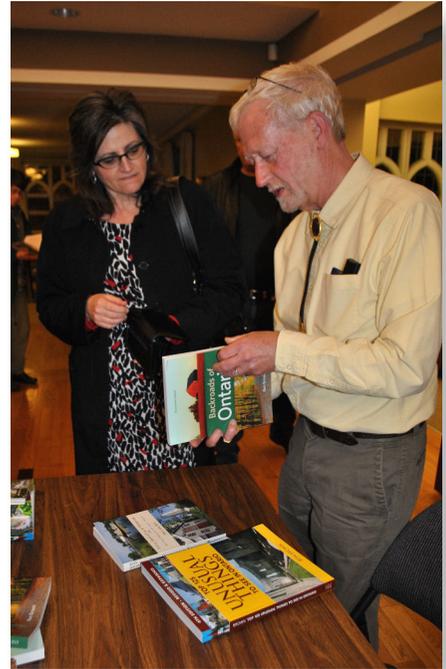


From Queenston to Kingston *continued*

As a rail hub serving the need to move people and goods, Toronto expanded. The endless rows of warehouses along the lake shore have disappeared as have many manufacturing plants and heritage buildings. The site of the first parliament buildings is now nothing more than a small park with a plaque. There have been four Union Stations, the current one is in the process of being modernized. Glass towers now fill the empty spaces along the waterfront.

The distillery district, along with its links to ‘rum running’ was saved, and is worth a visit, as is the Redpath Sugar Museum. A portion of Ward Island remains residential, with tiny houses on small lots. These lots were originally used as summer plots where the summer crowd pitched tents. It remains to be seen what will happen when the leases run out.

Ron Brown at right with his publications and an interested reader.



Moving east we learned some of the secrets of WWII. Oshawa was the home of the ‘top secret’ Camp X, where spies were trained and codes broken. It was once visited by Ian Fleming in his capacity as some sort of spook working for British Intelligence. He went on to create James Bond – shaken not stirred. Again nothing remains of Camp X, except the site is marked.

Two American companies opened steel mills on the north shore and moved freight cars of steel across to the American side on large ferries. They built luxurious homes which have now mostly gone, as are the steel plants.

Cobourg, Port Hope, Oshawa, Corbyville, Belleville and many other small communities along the north shore shared the same fate. With a boom of development, was the loss of businesses and as time moved on there was the need to retrench and move ahead with new ventures.

For example Corbyville, once a leading maker of fine spirits, has closed its distillery but remains a major distributor of many brands of alcoholic beverages, but alas is foreign-owned. During ‘prohibition’ distillers could produce their products but not for local sale. To get around this they prepared shipping documents showing their products were destined for foreign markets other than the U.S.A. The story is told of one rum runner whose cargo and boat were confiscated by American authorities. The boat was sold at auction. However the new owner ended up in the boat’s home port of Belleville. The previous owner recognized his boat and through the courts won it back. Score one for the rum runner and zero for the new owner.

From Queenston to Kingston *continued*

Prince Edward County once boasted two dozen canneries, which were purchased by an American firm which later closed all but two of them. Picton has preserved its Regent Theatre and its Crystal Palace and as with the other nearby towns enjoys an insurgence of summer fun-seekers. What they all have is a warm welcome and many points of interest worthy of a visit.

The last place to visit, the last place on the list, is Kingston, the home of Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. His home is open to the public. It was to be the Capital of Canada but like York, was too close to the U.S. border. Ottawa won the toss. Kingston is home to the Royal Military College, the Military Staff College, Fort Henry, a large military base and museum, several prisons and a major university. You could spend more time at some of these institutions than at others. The downtown is dotted with old limestone buildings going back to earlier times when it was an industrial centre. The old Kingston and Pembroke Railway engine number 1095 is proudly on display near the waterfront. It was this engine that transported Sir John A. Macdonald's body from Ottawa to its final resting place in Kingston.

Most of these towns have websites, so take a look at what interest you, get off that horror known as 401 and take the back roads. Slow down, take some time and visit. You will be surprised at what you might see, do, and learn. Not only that, it might be good for your blood pressure.

Greg Munz

The Oakville Historical Society has published a newsletter since the early 1960s. The publication was printed on paper, before we imagined how else information could be gathered and spread to citizens interested in the history of their town. Now many of you receive your information on line; you may in fact be reading this edition at our website www.oakvillehistory.org. We are now asking our subscribers - **How do you want to receive our quarterly newsletter? Please let us know.** You may write us at 110 King St. Oakville L6J 1B1, write the editor at swells@cogeco.ca or call 905 844-2695. We shall be making some decisions about our print edition by the end of 2015.

The March 2015 **THE WAY THINGS WERE** showed a photograph of a Cairn that is at the south west corner of Winston Churchill Boulevard and QEW. The Cairn is dedicated to the families who lived at that corner, in the Village of Sheridan. The Cairn is almost hidden now by trees. Stop at the Carpool Parking Lot and have a look. Nearby is a silo, also a remnant of the Village.

THE WAY THINGS WERE



What was this called?

Where was it?

What is there now?

Archive Hours:

Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm

Third Sun. of the month 12:30 to 4:00 pm

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www.oakvillehistory.org



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