

Oakville Historical
Society
since 1953

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The White Oak

News from the Oakville Historical Society

Oakville Methodists Pg. 4



Little Boat to Eden Pg. 10

Speakers

21 November, Shannon Kyles, Architect.

Speakers presented at St. John's Church, corner of Dunn and Randall Streets. Enter from Randall. 7:30 pm. All welcome, donations accepted and refreshments served.



Yard Sale

China sets and 80-year-old bicycles went to new homes. Volunteers put in long hours and worked hard to make our 2018 Sale another success with \$2,200. in sales.

Mayor's Picnic

The Oakville Historical Society would like to once again welcome the young and the young-at-heart to collectively celebrate the start of the summer season.

How? The Annual Mayor's Picnic of course.

Where? Oakville's oldest park, Lakeside Park at the foot of Navy St.

When? It is happening Sunday, 10 June from 12:30 to 4:30 pm.

Bring your lawn chairs and a picnic lunch. Sit back and enjoy the dancing and music, learn a bit of Oakville's history by visiting the Thomas House, the Oakville Museum and the Oakville Historical Society office. Invite your friends, family and neighbours. And once again children are invited to participate in fun activities such as face-painting, looking down on the park from the Oakville Hydro cherry-picker, admiring old cars and locating a number of historical items. Prizes include yacht cruises, ghost walks and books. See you there!



Editing assistance from Patricia Stephenson is gratefully acknowledged.

The White Oak Cover

- St. Jude's Church (with spire) on Lakeshore Rd.
- Darryl and Glenis Litchfield enjoy Dad's (Maurice Litchfield's) boat before launch.

A note from the Society President

At our Annual General Meeting held at St. John's in March, Claudette Shaw stepped down as a director. On behalf of the board, I would like to thank her for her years of service to the Society. We also welcomed Janet Godber to the board and at our May board meeting appointed Stewart Sherriff to the board.

Your Society is busy gearing up for another busy summer season, the office is a hive of activity and is becoming somewhat crowded at times.

"Your Society is busy gearing up for another busy summer season."

Our annual yard sale will most likely have happened by the time you read this. My thanks to Jim Young and his crew for running this event.

The Thomas House will also be open. On top of every thing else she does, Mary Davidson has been organizing volunteers and cleaning the building, ready for the new season. We're short of Thomas House interpreters this year so if you'd like to join the group, please speak up. No experience necessary and it's a great place to spend an afternoon. As usual, the Thomas House needs some work. This summer we hope to get some painting done and replace some of the posts holding up the veranda roof.

Averil and Joe Jany are delighted with the assistance they've been getting with work in the gardens.

Plan a garden visit, they're beautiful. Make sure you check out the fountain on the south side of the building. Our usual frogs and toads are busy starting new families in it.

We're very pleased to welcome Meghan Headrick back to the office for the summer. She is joined by three other young people, all working on different parts of the collection. Meghan and Julia Rothfischer are being paid mostly through the Federal Young Canada Works program. Brodie Hobson is a recent Carlton grad and is volunteering before going back to work on his Masters. Julia Davis is completing an internship. Feel free to drop by to see what they're doing.

"Our usual frogs and toads are busy starting new families..."

At a recent meeting of the plaque committee I presented some statistics for the year. So far this year we've installed 18 plaques, 5 are awaiting installation, 5 are ready to be cut and 8 are in the research stage. Our thanks to Janet Godber for all her work in researching the plaques. Many of the new installations are in the Brantwood area, Tuxedo Park and the Inglehart Survey.

We sincerely appreciate the ongoing assistance of Halton Heritage Services in planning and executing our exhibits. We now have a plan for the near future and Greg Munz is delighted to have some help. There is room for more help so don't be shy.

George Chisholm, President

Oakville Methodists

The Methodist Denomination was active early on in Trafalgar Township. Groups of them were served originally by circuit riders. These agents of the Church moved from place to place holding services wherever a small group could assemble, usually in homes.

As the population increased these groups decided to create formal congregations. A congregation which met in the schoolhouse at Munn's Corners may have started as early as 1817. The church, or more correctly for the Methodists, a Chapel, was established in 1826 at Palermo.

When the Village of Oakville was formed after the Chisholm purchase of 1827, all denominations worshipped - separately - in the Meeting House, built on the east bank of the Sixteen, approximately where the Oakville Centre is now located. They were served by the "missionaries" responsible for "circuits" among the early settlers and settlements.

With Methodism the dominant denomination in the American colonies, it was consequently the majority denomination of the Loyalists, source of many of Oakville's early inhabitants. In 1832, Oakville became part of the Wesleyan Nelson circuit, served by two missionaries, Rev. Franklin Metcalfe and Rev. Samuel Belton. These two gentlemen were responsible for twenty-five regular points and were expected to preach fourteen times in eight days.

Their salaries of £50 per annum were supplemented by an allowance of £37 (of

which £5 was for horse upkeep), to which an additional £7 per child under seven years was allowed, for these missionaries were family men.

"William Chisholm had agreed to donate an acre of land, and contributed £50 towards the building."

Justus Williams was Recording Secretary for the Nelson Circuit. The first quarterly meeting of the Circuit was "holden at Nelson Chapel" near Hannahsville (Nelson, Nelson Township) in 1832 and it was decided to acquire a parsonage at Oakville; a house was rented for this at £11 11s 3d per annum. A chapel was soon to follow. William Chisholm had agreed to donate an acre of land, and contributed £50 towards the building. The Nelson Circuit meeting of May 1834 approved the project. Trustees appointed to pursue the construction were Charles Sovereign, Justus Williams, William Hatton, Robert Leach and Elijah Dexter.

It was early agreed that the Chapel should be sited in the centre of the village rather than on the Chisholm acre so Lot C of Block 5, the north west corner of Colborne and Thomas Street was acquired from owner James Gage. This had been part of the garden of the Oakville House when that inn was first built.

Financial contributions to the Chapel building were very difficult to obtain; in fact the appeal realized little more than the £50 from William Chisholm and a similar amount from Justus Williams, but many later contributed services: lumber, stone cartage and carpentry.

Methodists cont'd

On August 12th 1835 William Chisholm laid the cornerstone and building began.

It was an ambitious structure, designed to seat three hundred persons with a spire reaching up one hundred feet. The Oakville Observer of March 1836 enthused - "The past six months has witnessed the erection of a very handsome Methodist Church to which the addition of a spire not only adds to the elegance of the building but makes it an ornament to the Town."

The lack of contributions delayed the inside furnishing of the Chapel but on October 18th 1840 the completed building was dedicated by Rev. Anson Green, assisted by the Rev. Peter Jones. Methodist services on a Sunday were held morning and evening and the congregation invited the Presbyterians and Anglicans to use their chapel on alternate Sunday afternoons.

But the debt and cost of operating the new building was too much for the Methodists. They sold it to the Anglicans and their worship services returned to the Meeting House. So in 1841 the Methodist Chapel

became the "Oakville Mission of the United Church of England and Ireland in Canada."

In 1849, responding to a petition from the minister and church wardens, Bishop John Strachan of Toronto agreed to the designation, "St. Jude's."

It would appear that in the community the loss of the Chapel to the Anglicans was blamed on Justus Williams, one of the prime movers in its construction. The talk and rumour persisted, so that in 1869 Williams defended himself through a letter to the Canadian Champion, Milton.

"I beg permission briefly to state the facts in your paper, in order to disabuse the minds of any persons who may be impressed with the idea that injustice was done in the matter." Williams in his letter pointed out that Hatton and Leach of the original Trustees, seeing the poor amount of money subscribed "declined to take any responsibility in regard to the debts which might be incurred in building." His letter continued, "In this, perhaps, they acted wisely."

Site and building underwritten by Williams himself, he was owed by the denomination and congregation \$1408.56. To secure him in this, both the church site and the one acre lot given by William Chisholm were deeded to Williams. This letter continued, "In the latter part of the year 1839 or the beginning of 1840..." he executed a deed to transfer the lot on which the church stood, to the Rev. Hamilton Biggar, for

The pound was the unit of account for currency of the Canadas until 1858 and was never linked to British currency.



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Methodists cont'd

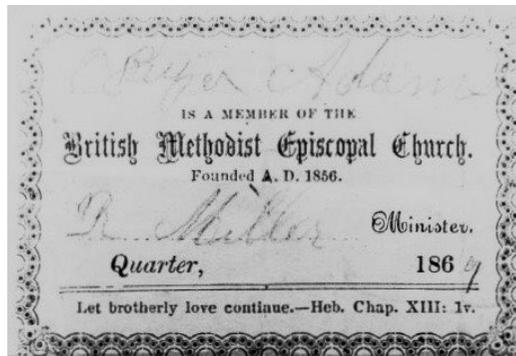
which he, Williams, received \$300., “and as it was the centenary of Methodism” a subscription to raise the balance was circulated.

“But this subscription did not meet with much favour...” Only about \$200 was raised; and this included donations of \$100 and \$50 made by Williams himself.

Though he later did not say so, one presumes that the balance of the debt went to Williams when the church was sold to the Anglicans, though he stated that he did not know the date of the sale, nor what was paid for the property.

Williams’ letter in conclusion stated, “I trust that any person viewing this case...will be inclined to think that the persons who so long sustained the burden of this debt...deserve praise rather than censure...”

St. Jude’s continued to serve the Anglicans until a new church was built by them, at 160 William Street on land which had served the community as animal pens for the nearby market building on Navy Street. When the new Church was completed in 1883, also named St. Jude’s, the old building on Colborne Street (Lakeshore Road) was sold. With its spire removed it was sold to Samuel McGiffin to serve as his hardware store.



Even this transaction had its hurdles. There was some doubt that the Denomination had the authority to complete the sale. To legalize it, an Act of the Colony Parliament was required.

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Methodists cont'd

What about the Methodists? Vacating the Meeting Room, they then used for a period, the Temperance Hall on Dundas Street (Trafalgar Road) and in 1851 they built a new frame building at Dunn and Randall Streets (where St. John's now stands). This served the Congregation until they erected a permanent building on that site, dedicated in 1878.

Perhaps coming full circle, the 1851 frame building was bought by John Williams, son of Justus Williams' first marriage. John Williams permitted the Methodist Congregation use of the building until the new Chapel was available. Then he had it moved to the NE corner of Colborne (Lakeshore) and Thomas, across the street from his father's Chapel, where it was converted into three stores.

The Merchant Bank bought the McGiffin Hardware store in 1898, using it until it was demolished in favour of a brick building. The Merchant Bank became the Bank of Montreal and that brick building is still standing at the corner, now occupied by Winterberry Lane. WO

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The Person Behind

The Plaque

. 1921 Sidney Copeland Chauffeur
384 Reynolds Avenue

One of the interesting things about researching a house is learning about the people who once lived in it. They helped to shape our community and they came from all walks of life.

Sidney Copeland was born in Streatham, England, south of London, on Oct 1, 1893 to Charles Copeland & Mary Drew. He had an older brother named Robert, born in 1891. Life for the Copelands at the end of the Victorian Era in England was desperate, as the boys spent time in the Southwark Workhouse during the early 1900's. The workhouse was the place of last resort for those living in poverty and many found themselves at their mercy on and off throughout their lives. They were discharged in the fall of 1902 and spent just a week at school before joining the hordes of urchins eking out a hand-to-mouth existence on the filthy streets and alleyways of London, England.

“So it was in 1905, that Sidney and his brother Robert found themselves on a ship bound for Canada...”

Their luck changed, however, when they were rescued from those streets by a man named James William Fegan who was the founder of Fegan Homes. Being aware of the terrible living conditions of the poor children on the streets of London he opened several homes to train boys to live a better life.



So it was in 1905, that Sidney and his brother Robert found themselves on a ship bound for Canada where Fegan had established a boys home at 295 George St., Toronto.

It is unknown where the brothers were eventually placed after they arrived in Canada, but records show that in 1915 Robert Copeland was married at St. Jude's in Oakville, his brother Sidney a witness to the event. Robert eventually moved to Simcoe where he bought a house and raised a family.

Sidney, however, decided that his life of adventure was not quite over yet so in the fall of 1915 he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force and found himself back in Europe, this time fighting in the fields of France. On Sept 22, 1916 he suffered a gunshot wound to his left knee and spent time in a field hospital in Boulogne before being patched up and sent back to the front. Almost two years later on August 9, 1918 he was struck again by a gun shot wound to his left elbow.

Behind The Plaque ...

He was transferred to Graylingwell Military Hospital in Chichester, England and fortunately didn't make it back to the front before the armistice was signed.

Sidney crossed the ocean once again on December 30, 1918, this time choosing Canada as his home, having fought for her in the Great War. In 1921 he purchased his house at 384 Reynolds Ave., married Veta Louise Barham in 1923 and had a son Clifford a couple of years later. His occupation was that of "chauffeur", likely due to the lingering war wound to his knee. The family spent over 20 years in Oakville before selling in November 1942 and moving to Mount Forest, Ontario where he died in 1971 at the age of 78.

From the alleyways of London to the fields of France, Sidney Copeland lived a remarkable life of resilience, bravery and loyalty to his new country. Oakville should be proud to display his name on the house where he once lived. Janet Godber

Twelve Fourteen Sixteen

Why are the creeks numbered?

The creek mouth location is measured in miles from La Salle Park, Burlington.

Books and Maps

Looking for local history books?
We have a variety of maps and books for sale in the Society Offices.

Kelly Mathews

author of **Eaton Hall Pride of KingTownship**

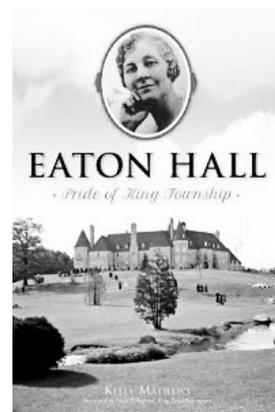


We rarely have had an author as energetic and entertaining as Kelly Mathews, our April speaker. Granted, her topic was full of interesting characters, members of the Eaton family who

for 120 years ran a company that all of Canada recognized as a leading seller of goods.

Ms. Mathews is Manager, Sport Venue Operations and Community Recreation of Seneca College. Over half of the College's grounds were once owned by Sir John Craig (youngest son of Timothy Eaton) and Lady Eaton. It was Lady Eaton who began work on Eaton Hall in 1938, after her husband's

death, and it remained in the Eaton family until her death in 1970. It became a 72-room, 35,000-square-foot Norman château. There were 248 ash trays, a movie theatre, but contrary to rumour, not a bowling alley. There were originally 15 fireplaces, but now only 10 remain. Seneca has kept their promise to never take down Lady Eaton's portrait or that of her husband, Sir John Craig Eaton.



Little Boat to Eden

Oakville in the early 1950s: a decade that began with a population of 12,193 had soared to 38,558 residents within a mere 10 years. The newly-built 50-bed Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital opened its doors. The Ford Motor Company came to town, built an assembly plant and rolled out its first car in 1953. But life along the Sixteen Mile Creek moved at a slower pace – indifferent to the burst of industry, the building and expansion of schools, and the development of subdivisions needed to accommodate the town's rapidly growing population.

When I was a young lad of maybe 6 or 7 years of age my Dad promised to take me fishing down on the Sixteen. Dad had scratch built his little 14-foot boat from Mechanix Illustrated plans. I was so proud of him, as I had watched him build this little beauty in our basement over a long winter. Then, in the early spring, he took it all apart, and reassembled it in our gravel driveway.

I had always listened attentively as Dad related all his personal experiences of fishing the river with my Grandfather. Finally after weeks of preparation, Dad had the boat launched and moored at the Oakville Power Boat Club.

I pestered him, it seemed forever, for the promised day of fishing, and sure enough, Dad came through. As Dad didn't drive at this time we ambled down Queen Mary Drive, awkwardly carrying our fishing gear, lunch box, and not to mention a jar of newly-dug garden worms. We passed the Forester Estate, down Forsythe Street and then gingerly crossed the old Radial Bridge. Down the old wooden staircase below Old Central School, then on to the Boat Club docks we trundled.

After the required social acknowledgements, and a quick trip to the clubhouse to pick up some brown-bottled Orange Crush, we were on our way!

We started upriver, past the smouldering and pungent Town dump, where huge suds spewed into the water from a sewer discharge pipe. From there on I was mesmerized by what I saw! Dad was trying hard to answer a multitude of questions that were constantly emanating from my mouth. What are those holes in the riverbank Dad? What is that nest hanging in the tree Dad? Why are all those shells on the bank Dad? Is that a turtle Dad? I was in total amazement of the vista unfolding before me! The unfamiliar smells and surroundings had me totally enthralled.

As we continued through the day, and while catching the ever-present rock bass and catfish, I was totally absorbed by the weed beds, frogs, tadpoles and minnows that teemed along the shoreline. The odd splash of an annoyed muskrat or the bobbing head of a painted turtle just added to the magic. To me this was an Eden, just down the street from where I lived.

These fond memories are etched in my mind to this day. This sentiment is shared by my sister Glenis, whose first sketches were of boats. She recalls the infinite patience of our father, and that life couldn't have been any better than being in that little boat on a Saturday morning with her brother and Dad.

The present generation will sadly never be able to experience this on the Sixteen, and Eden seems to get further away with each and every year.

Unfortunately Dad passed in 2006 but I'm sure his spirit is still trolling the Sixteen looking for the big one! Darryl Litchfield

Archival Interns



Julia Rothfischer, at left in photo, just completed her first year at the University of Western Ontario studying Media Information and Technoculture. As a lifelong resident of Oakville, Julia is excited to gain valuable work experience as well as learn more about the rich history of Oakville.

Julia Davis, at right, is currently completing her final semester at Georgian College in Museum Studies. She graduated with her honours B.A. at the University of Toronto with a major in Art History and a double minor in History and English. She is completing her co-op term at the Oakville Historical Society to gain valuable experience in the museum field and fulfil her requirements for graduation. She expects to graduate in the fall, and pursue a career in museum collections management.



We are pleased to welcome back Meghan Headrick, left, at OHS for her second term. An Oakville resident, she is entering her fourth year of undergraduate studies at Dalhousie University and the University of King's College with a major in History and minor in Early Modern Studies.

Brodie Hobson, at right, is a Carleton University graduate with a B.Eng in the structural concentration of the Architectural Conservation & Sustainability Engineering program. His interests include building science, green building design, and heritage architecture. As a lifelong Oakville resident, Brodie has a keen interest in local history and architecture.



The *way* things were...



Hidden in Plain View

These three artifacts are at the edge of busy roads and parking lots...where?

Our March issue showed this image at 3275 Rebecca St.
(Not shown is the nearby farmhouse.)

The Town of Oakville states in the Register of Properties of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest (NOT Designated)

- *This property has potential cultural heritage value for its brick farmhouse and lakestone silo.*



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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