

Oakville Historical
Society
since 1953



Historical Society News

www.oakvillehistory.org



Northern Reflections

Volume 54 Number 2

June 2020

A note from the Society President

Membership

As I write this your Society has been shut down for about 2 months. We've had to cancel our speakers' nights and the Mayor's picnic. We're legally required to conduct an Annual General Meeting but will be doing that online in the near future. You'll have received a separate notice on that. We hope to be able to have our annual yard sale in the fall and are waiting for guidance on how we can offer the Ghost Walks. We conducted an online board meeting earlier this week. It went well. We discussed having tea time online. We'll keep you informed as we start up again through announcements on the website and Facebook page. It is definitely NOT business as usual.

Plaque production has, however, been continuing. So far this year we have completed 11 plaques. That includes research (thanks, Janet Godber), cutting, painting, installing, photographing and receiving payment. We have another 4 in the works. Last year we completed about 30 of them. If you, your friends or neighbours would like a replacement or a new one, please contact us. We've done a few for buildings not in Oakville as well. When they're complete, we post information on our Facebook page and non-members who purchase one receive a free membership for the year. There's further information on our website.

I look forward to seeing you in the near future.

George Chisholm

Thank you to all you members who, despite the shutdown, have renewed your membership. We appreciate your support and hope that by now you will have received confirmation of your renewal. (We are working from home.)

We currently have 162 members and are still hoping to hear from the sixty-three members who have still to renew.

Following are new members since last newsletter: Mr. Patrick and Mrs. Laura Bourke, Ms. Riley Flynn, Mr. Tom and Mrs. Victoria Gunter, Ms. Mary Ellen Jenkinson, Mr. Jim and Mrs. Victoria Lilly, Mr. Paul Weatherhead.

Andrea Stewart, Marie Descent and Susan Bowen, Memberships.

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Bursary Awarded

By George Chisholm

Last year the Oakville Historical Society established a bursary to be presented to a cadet leaving the Lorne Scots Oakville Army Cadet Corps which the Society sponsors. Each year we dedicate our bursary in the name of a member of the Society. This year we're very pleased to dedicate it in memory of Harry and Margaret Buxton, long-time volunteers with the Society. They met in Montreal during the Second War when Harry, an RAF officer, was in Canada for pilot training as part of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Margaret was a stores corporal with the CWAC (Canadian Women's Army Corps). Harry flew PBV Catalina Flying Boats in the Caribbean for a while before switching to Ferry Command where he delivered Lancaster Bombers built in Canada to places all over the world. After the war he took a degree in Chemistry at Cambridge and they ended up in Oakville where he worked for Shell. Together they had 9 children, 29 grandchildren and 24 great grandchildren. In 2009 they were awarded the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award. Harry was President of the Society for several years and was a mentor to me when I took over as President. He passed away in 2011. Margaret was the Society Archivist for several years and passed away in 2015.

We're very pleased to announce on behalf of the Oakville Historical Society that MWO Gabriel McQueen, a student at Iroquois Ridge High School, is this year's recipient of our bursary. MWO McQueen is the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Cadet Corps. In the fall he will begin his studies in Chemical Engineering at Queen's University.



RSM McQueen receiving the Order of St George Medal for Top Staff Cadet at Blackdown Cadet Training Centre at Canadian Forces Base Borden. Presenting the medal is BGen J.M. Valtonen, CD, Deputy Commander 4th Canadian Division. August 2019. Photo provided.

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Cultural Heritage Landscapes

By Sue Schappert

Since 2014 the Town of Oakville has been working on implementing the Cultural Heritage Landscape Strategy, which is the Town's guiding document on how to identify, protect and conserve significant cultural heritage landscapes in Oakville.

So what is a cultural heritage landscape? The Provincial Policy Statement (2020) definition is: *... a defined geographical area that may have been modified by human activity and is identified as having cultural heritage value or interest by a community, including an Indigenous community. The area may include features such as buildings, structures, spaces, views, archaeological sites or natural elements that are valued together for their interrelationship, meaning or association. Cultural heritage landscapes may be properties that have been determined to have cultural heritage value or interest under the Ontario Heritage Act, or have been included on federal and/or international registers, and/or protected through official plan, zoning by-law, or other land use planning mechanisms.*

Oakville has many cultural heritage landscapes, but there are two that overlap the home of the Oakville Historical Society: the Erchless Estate and the Oakville Harbour.

Erchless Estate has been designated under the Ontario Heritage Act as a property of historic and architectural value and interest since 1976 and some of the long time members of the OHS will remember the fight led by Harry Barrett to save the property from being developed. Since then, Erchless Estate has become well-known as one of the custodial sites of Oakville's history with

the Oakville Museum and the Oakville Historical being housed in buildings on the property.

While the 1976 heritage designation saved the property and met all the legislative requirements of its time, laws and policies have changed over the years, including a significant update to the Ontario Heritage Act in 2005 and the introduction of heritage conservation policies in the Provincial Policy Statement. These changes included the introduction of the concept of cultural heritage landscapes, requiring that properties be evaluated for their surroundings and the interconnections of structures and natural elements, not just their old buildings.

Town Heritage Planning staff took on the project to research, review and evaluate the Erchless Estate through the lens of a cultural heritage landscape. In September 2019, Erchless Estate was officially recognized as a significant cultural heritage landscape through the town's Cultural Heritage Landscape Strategy. Two months later, on November 4, 2019, Council passed a new heritage designation by-law and approved a conservation plan for the Erchless Estate cultural heritage landscape. The conservation plan is a document to help guide and manage change to the Erchless Estate while conserving its cultural heritage value and supporting its ongoing uses as the Oakville Museum and the Oakville Historical Society.

The Oakville Harbour is a larger cultural heritage landscape that encompasses the Erchless Estate, reaching from Lakefront Park to the new Lakeshore Road bridge and across the Sixteen Mile Creek to Shipyard and Tannery Parks. Separate pieces of the harbour area have been piecemeal recognized as heritage for many years (Lyon's Log Cabin, the Lighthouse, the Old Post Office, the Merrick Thomas House, parts of the Old Oakville Heritage Conservation District); however, the harbour area itself had never been reviewed and evaluated as a whole and interconnected landscape.

The review of the Oakville Harbour as a potential cultural heritage landscape began in March 2019, led by consultants from Common Bond Collective. In December 2019, Council received a detailed research report and evaluation and recognized the Oakville Harbour area as a significant cultural heritage landscape. A notice of intention to designate the area under the Ontario Heritage Act was issued in February 2020, no objections to the designation were received and a designation by-law will be brought forward to Council in the coming months. The draft conservation plan has been circulated to public and private stakeholders and revisions are in progress.

While the process to protect the Oakville Harbour Cultural Heritage Landscape may be somewhat delayed due to the restrictions in place for the global COVID-19 pandemic, Heritage Planning staff are looking forward to bringing the remaining by-law(s), Conservation Plan(s) and reports to Council later this year.

Cultural heritage landscape research, evaluation and conservation for other areas across Oakville will be ongoing for the next few years as the Town moves forward with its mission to protect its cultural heritage resources for future generations. Heritage Planning staff would like to thank the Oakville Historical Society for their ongoing support of these research projects.



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How To Take Out The Printing From Cotton Flour Bags

Remove excess flour from bag and wet the bag in warm water. Spread out on a flat surface and soap all lettering well with laundry soap or detergent. Soak in the following solution for 1 hour: 2 quarts warm water with 1 cup bleach.

This solution is enough for two 100 lb. bags or four 50 lb. bags at one time.

Rinse in warm water, preferably by agitating with a stick. Although not unduly strong, the solution may affect the skin if hands are exposed to it.

Remove bag from solution and wash and rinse.

Note: Best results will be obtained if the solution is made up fresh for each occasion. A slight indication of lettering may be noticeable in some cases, but will mostly disappear when exposed to sunlight. Should it be necessary to repeat the operation, give only 15 minute treatments as excessive exposure to bleach will weaken the fabric. By Susan Bowen

Grandmother Ethel's Famous Scone Recipe

My grandmother moved from Scotland to Fernie, British Columbia in 1913 and lived there baking scones until 2007.

Hand mix: 1/2 cup room-temperature butter (salted butter tastes better but you don't have to)

1/2 cup white sugar, 2 cups flour mixed with 3 tsp baking powder and 1/2 tsp salt.

Then in a mixing bowl, mix with a fork, one egg with 1/4 cup milk and 1 tsp vanilla.

Combine the two with a minimum of handling, add in a handful of raisins or craisins if you wish. Also very nice with a few fresh raspberries broken into pieces

Once all the ingredients are combined, form batter into a rectangle on the counter and cut into sections (12 - 15). Bake at 400 degrees for 10 minutes. They also freeze well.

By Allison Headrick

A Brief History of Bronte Harbour

By Tom Appleton

After the purchase of land from the Mississaugas in 1805, life and commerce in the new Village of Bronte has evolved around the pretty harbour at the mouth of Twelve Mile Creek. Empire Loyalists escaping the aftermath of the War of 1812 crossed the undefended border seeking tranquility and opportunity in this fledgling country of Canada and Bronte became a popular destination amongst the refugees.

The land east of the Niagara escarpment proved to be a productive area for agriculture, with great harvests of wheat and soft fruit but no easy means of transport of these valued products in the absence of roads or railroads to Toronto and more distant markets.

Towards the middle of the century as more settlers arrived they put physical effort and investment into creating a harbour out of this weed-strewn creek. Eventually, with the opening of the Welland Canal a dream of future opportunities led to Bronte harbour being dug out and dredged to satisfy the needs of marine commerce. Initially Bronte boats hauled loads of grain and fresh fruit to Toronto, Montreal and through the Erie canal and the Hudson to New York.

A new opportunity was developed by residents who turned to mining slabs of slate from the shallow

waters off Bronte harbour. Called Dundas Shale, the slate was found inshore, in the very shallow shelf that extends out into the lake for hundreds of yards or more. A special two-pronged rake, with a very long handle to leverage the slabs of shale off the shallow lake bottom into the waiting boat, was created by the Bronte blacksmith Sam Adams, a freed slave and early settler who crossed the border in 1851 through the underground railroad. One of the remaining buildings in Bronte built from Dundas Shale is the Cove restaurant, at 49 Bronte Road on the southeast corner of Marine Drive, formerly known as 'Stoneboats'. Technically, however, this name was not correct as a 'stoneboat' is in fact a wooden horse-drawn sled used for clearing large stones and rocks from farmers' fields! Perhaps the owner of the restaurant thought 'Stonehooker' would have been a name inappropriate for the business?

Fishing became an important part of Bronte's commerce, but a price was paid in lives lost when crews encountered severe winter storms while fishing, even through the month of February. Mariners interred in Bronte cemetery include Jimmy Baker, first mate on the schooner Magellan, who died when it collided with the U. L. Hurd, in 1877 and the Dorland brothers, fishermen lost east of Bronte in the great gale and snowstorm of December 1886. A monument to the fishermen was recently erected in Bronte Harbour park and stands as a remembrance for all of us facing new dangers today.

The need for commercial boats was satisfied by an active boat building industry in Bronte, not only for stonehooking but also for the ubiquitous commercial fishing boats of all kinds found around the Great Lakes, a very few of which remain in commercial service.



Herring Fishing, Bronte

The fishing industry died out following WWII and Bronte Harbour was eventually cleared of the ugly remnants left behind by a century of industrial activity, to be redeveloped for recreational purposes including boating. Boat building continued the Bronte tradition with hundreds of classic C&C sailing yachts designed and built in the fifties and sixties. The construction of the incomparably beautiful Bruckmann line of classic sail and power yachts continues to this day, although now headquartered in Mississauga.

The building of Lakeshore Road, the advent of the railway between Toronto and Hamilton and eventually the Queen Elizabeth Way, signalled that the days when Bronte was a significant industrial port were clearly numbered. The amalgamation of Bronte Village with the bedroom communities of Oakville and Trafalgar Township initiated major expansion of housing and light industry across the Town.

Art In Bronte

By Sabine Frisch and Carol Sanders

With its picturesque setting, Bronte has always inspired artists. In fact, art in Bronte has been alive and well for some time from the original Mississaugas of the Mississauga Ojibwa First Nation to the present-day inhabitants of Bronte. At Sovereign House, some examples of early works can be found, such as, Lloyd Carpenter's Shadow box called 'Bronte Moments' and Shulier's watercolour 'Bronte Jubilee Bridge'. Bronte also succeeded in attracting members of the Group of Seven to paint here, for example MacDonald's 'On the Lakeshore near Bronte' created in Bronte in 1909. Art galleries have located in Bronte for many years, from the early days of Koolin's Post Office Gallery to the modern day Trius Gallery at 'The Shores'. Some artists of note in Bronte have included T.Chatfield, D.Peacock and J.Patterson.

The Bronte Historical Society has been supporting art in Bronte through its 'Art on the Bluffs' series;

these exhibitions of uncurated and themed shows run from the end of May until mid-October, including an open Christmas show in November. Generally, the artists rent the space and pay a small commission to the Society. Another local event in Bronte started as 'Art on the Green' in 1965. Now branded as 'Art in the Park', it has grown into southern Ontario's biggest one day fine art show. Back in the 60's artists hung artwork on fences and laid it out on the grass, hoping to attract purchasers at prices originally ranging from \$3.00 for a small woodcut to \$200.00 for a painting.

Over the years artists from as far away as Austria and South Africa have exhibited here in Bronte and thousands of visitors flock to the village on the civic holiday in August. Art on the Bluffs has become the destination to purchase art, watch live demonstrations, chat with the artists and just socialize.

BHS' Art on the Bluffs series was originally started by artist Lyn Estall and has continued with support at various times from members Derek Hawley, Patti Leard, Sabine Frisch and Carol M Sanders. This year, due to the restrictions of Covid-19 we may not be able to hold exhibitions at "the House" but we plan to hold virtual exhibitions on our social media accounts. Please follow us on Facebook and on Instagram (@brontehistoricalsociety) to enjoy the inspiring works produced by local artists.

All this artistic activity did not go unnoticed by the Bronte BIA when starting in 2017 they gave away plain Muskoka chairs to aspiring artists and community organizations in Bronte with instructions to express their artistic views. Every year the decorated chairs are anchored around the harbour area and became one of the biggest outdoor art installations for the summer - "at home in Bronte."

Art and artists have always felt at home here in the village of Bronte and if it's a nice day and you are very lucky, you may see one of them with their easel and their artwork, capturing a moment of life here.

Northern Reflections

Growing up in Kent Gardens

By Terry Murphy

In these strange pandemic days when disastrous news vies with proud stories of communal response, some of us are looking to history for encouragement. I have found happy respite in recalling joy-filled memories of my Oakville childhood, though it was a childhood that began and ended with lessons in tragedy and hope: I was born in the wake of Hurricane Hazel and entered grade eight during the reverberating celebration of Canada's Centennial. My parents, having weathered the Depression and the Second World War, knew how to meet disasters with resilience as well as how to rejoice in the fruits of one hundred years of "peace, order, and good government." As I walk with them through my memories, and the streets and trails of Oakville, I find a promising path.

I grew up on the edge of farmland in our home in Kent Gardens, the first subdivision north of the Queen Elizabeth Highway. Appropriately named the "Gardens" given that a vineyard once thrived on the property, and that there were still old fruit trees throughout the neighbourhood, the development encompassed three streets named, in postwar fashion, Churchill to the east, Truman to the west, and Kent (for the previous owner of the farm) in the middle, the only street that connected with Ridge Road on the crest of the Red Hill.

A month before her due date, I gave my expectant mother a scare on October 15th, 1954, the day Hurricane Hazel hit with Category One winds of 115 kilometres per hour and 200 millimetres of rain falling within 24 hours. As today, the military was called in, and Canadians, led by the Pope and the United Church as well as companies like Ford and B/A Oil, contributed generously to the Hurricane Relief Fund which

collected millions in aid. The five feet of water in our basement threatened the electrical panel, so my grandmother advised prayer and throwing a rosary into the pool. Sixth Line and access to the Upper Middle Road bridge were awash, and the water under Oakville's bridges rose to 5.5 metres meaning my parents could not use the Trafalgar underpass to get to the hospital and so drove to the Eighth Line instead. My grandfather, whose service in two World Wars left him with a "take charge" mentality, directed traffic at the Q.E.W highway crossing, still an intersection with stop signs. For all that, it was a false alarm adding unneeded drama to an already difficult situation.

To our children, the Oakville of my mid-century childhood seems remote. Every day there was still a whistle beginning and ending the workday. Sometimes the town smelled of the onions being dehydrated at the Beardmore factory, and I remember the coal deliveries which would all too soon result in my parents having to cart the rocker ash bins out for removal. I would use the coal that didn't make it down the chute as sidewalk chalk, and I played with the chains in our upstairs hall that controlled the drafts for the large, fire-breathing furnace down below.

Everything north of our subdivision was farmland. Castle Green, now called College Park, was years away from development. One rainy day walking home from Kindergarten at Lorne Skuce, we sought shelter in a haystack. Given the bucolic nature of the area, it was common to see horse riders making their way down our street. About a mile north of us on Trafalgar Road was Hughie Wilson's grand white house that reminded me of Margaret Mitchell's Tara. The trainer of horses for Woodbine had once owned all the property from what is now Sheridan College,

south to the Lower Middle Road (the Q.E.W.). His stables were located where Oakville Place now stands. In the 1940s, John Wallace purchased the property and by the 1950s, the Oakville Basket Factory had converted the stables into apartments, which is how I remember them. That white block of apartments that greeted us every time we approached the corner of Trafalgar and the North Service Road meant we were almost home. Shortly after the stables were torn down, a shopping development that housed Towers and Food City was constructed. In the 1980s, this was replaced by Oakville Place.

We walked everywhere. I loved walking downtown with my mother on her daily visits to my grandparents' home on Church Street. On Sundays, after church and a large "English" breakfast, my dad and I would go for a long walk along the wooded banks of the Sixteen. Of course, this was before any trail system was established, so we would blaze our own, climbing up and down the banks of the Creek. Sometimes we would get in the car and drive over to the Abbey to visit the priests.

My friends and I had a wonderful time playing "Pooh Sticks" in the ditches along Kent. The water ran faster and more freely back then, before the building of the Morrison-Wedgewood Diversion Channel, a 1965 result of Hurricane Hazel which had called attention to the long existing flooding problem in the areas south of Iroquois Ridge. You could watch a "Paddle-to-the-Sea" canoe-stick enter one side of a driveway and very promptly exit the other.

To expedite a shady backyard, my Uncle Al, in 1954, gave my parents some three dozen poplar seedlings, so small that he could carry them like a bouquet of flowers. I grew up to the sound of those soon-tall poplars making the sound of waves in the wind. Needless to say, with all those tall trees, making leaf mansions with many rooms was an entertaining autumn past-time, and I fondly remember the smell of burning leaves before the Town's bylaws changed.

Summers meant wonderful activities. Behind Lorne Skuce was a pond alongside which we would picnic with umbrellas we called parasols. And just east of that were fields of wild strawberries to pick. Fine weather also meant climbing up and down the banks of the Sixteen, cooking our lunch Girl Guide-style over a fire, and chilling our canned soda in the Creek using a protective "cooler" made of river rocks. Our parents, though conscientious guardians of their daughters, never thought twice about our wandering in the woods all day without adult supervision. We played in wholesome safety. The only minor change to this, and it added legendary interest rather than any sense of foreboding, was the summer of the "Faceless Lady", sightings of whom were reported frequently in the Oakville paper until she and the excitement soon faded away unexplained.

My friends and I did not have many places to shop. When we were very young, the only stores for candy treats within allowable distance were Weeks's Drug Store on the North Service Road (two blocks down from the Ontario Provincial Police Station and the policemen's houses that were built at the north-east corner of the Sixth Line and the Service Road) and the old white variety store that still stands today on the Sixth Line, adjacent to White Oaks Secondary School. Later Art's Fish and Chips opened in the drug store space and we enjoyed buying his French fries. On Saturdays, my girlfriends and I would walk under the Q.E.W. Bridge at the Sixteen to visit Book Fair and Woolworths at the Oak-Queen Mall, where we would eat at the lunch counter off milky-green Fire King Jadeite dishes.

But one special kind of shopping was reserved for trips with my father. I loved accompanying him to all the hardware and lumber stores in town. When I was very young, we would travel downtown to Fraser's on Lakeshore which seemed to sell every hardware item anyone could possibly want. With its beautiful wooden floors and a raised stage where you placed

your orders, the store seemed magical - an agrarian Gringott's Bank. In the 1960s, we could go to Foss Hardware at the Oak-Queen, and Beaver Lumber at the corner of Cross and Trafalgar. I especially loved it when Dad and I would go to McNamara's wrecking yard on the Ninth Line, just north of Upper Middle: a treasure trove of doors, windows, woodwork, and other fine architectural details that got us imagining all sorts of possibilities for creative reuse.

Canada's Centennial gave birth to many celebrations: elaborate parades and school historical pageants and even special French lessons featuring the character "Willie BuyandSpend" as he prepared to attend Expo '67 with his dapper chapeau et parapluie. This exciting celebration of Ca-na-da (as Bobby Gimby sang it) influenced my entire educational career through university with the emphasis on Can Lit and local history. Perhaps it's fitting that my first part-time job was working in the hardware-housewares department of Towers. If I wore my Towers uniform, a turquoise smock, in Oakville Place today, I would look almost as old-fashioned to the shoppers as the Edwardian families in the beautiful murals that once celebrated Oakville's retail history in the food court, before being unfortunately removed in the 2016 renovation. Such reminders prompt me to look for inspiration as well as respite in our proud past.



May everyone, stay safe, keep healthy and embrace happiness in spite of our circumstances. We still have so much to be grateful for.



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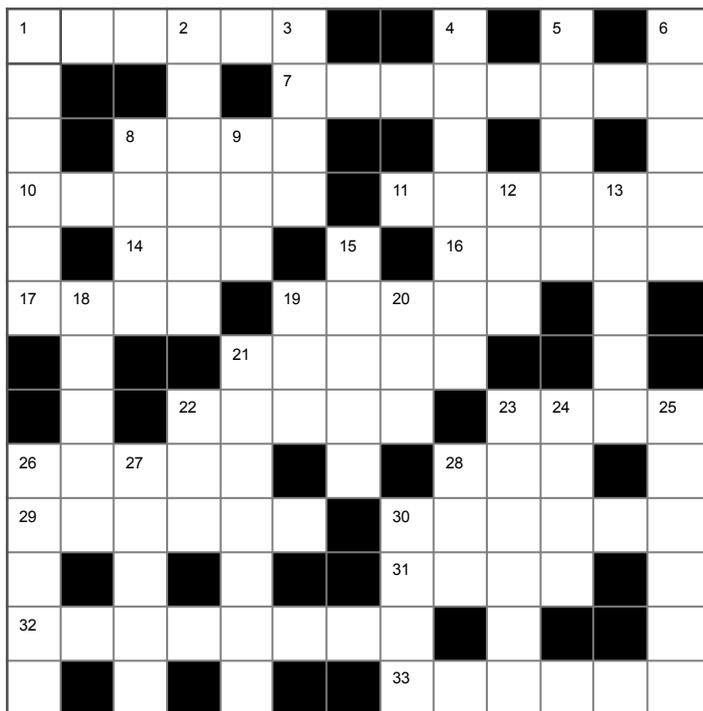


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Crossword Puzzle



Our puzzle has a few clues familiar to Oakville history fans.
Solution in the September issue.



HISTORICAL TOURS

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ACROSS

- 1 Oakville Olympic Gold runner (6)
- 7 Name frequently heard in this town (8)
- 8 Founder of SpaceX (4)
- 10 Threaded by sewers (6)
- 11 Prepares dough (6)
- 14 Kangaroo (3)
- 16 Arm bones (5)
- 17 A number divisible by 2 is this (4)
- 19 Puts teeth into (5)
- 21 Old Chevy models (5)
- 22 Spirit being or symbol (5)
- 23 Afterlife location (4)
- 26 Son of Jacob (5)
- 28 Thin fish (3)
- 29 Person in front (6)
- 30 Canadian grocery store founder (6)
- 31 Initials found on a headstone (4)
- 32 Person from a particular land mass (8)
- 33 Oakville historian, actor, street (6)

DOWN

- 1 Fishing village, part of Oakville (6)
- 2 Singer, __ Wainright III (6)
- 3 Frame that holds oxen together (4)
- 4 Tree-lined streets (7)
- 5 Oakville name and street (5)
- 6 Dr __, children's writer (5)
- 8 Paltry (4)
- 9 __ - pitch, form of baseball (3)
- 12 Multiple of the letter after K (3)
- 13 Male name (5)
- 15 Generous person (5)
- 18 Section of a song (5)
- 19 It can run your home and life (3)
- 20 Scot's hat (3)
- 21 Wind direction that sailors fear (7)
- 22 Short for Edward (3)
- 23 West Bank city (6)
- 24 Female name meaning goddess (4)
- 25 Oakville street, park, Ont. Lt.-Gov. (6)
- 26 Meusli brand (5)
- 27 Oakville Mayor much admired (5)
- 28 Long time (3)
- 30 *They Left Us Everything* family (4)

The *way* things were...



Do you know?

Where this is located?

What was its purpose?

Look for the answers in our next issue!



March 2020 The *way* things were...

Garfield Secord is closest to the chimney, with his father, Byron Secord standing underneath him. Unfortunately, this house, like all of the homes situated on the north side of Pine St. between Reynolds and Allan was demolished, likely to accommodate the construction of Cornwall Road.

Archive Hours:

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Third Sunday of the month 12:30 to 4:00 pm

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