

Oakville Historical  
Society  
since 1953

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# Historical Society News

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[www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)



## Celebrated Architect George Molesworth

Volume 55 Number 4

December 2021

# Speakers' Night

**Bonnie Sitter - Farmerettes**

16th February 2022 7:20-9:00 pm

(St. John's Church or virtual. Stay tuned)

Young women were recruited for farm work that was traditionally done by men in and around the time of the Second World War. Author Bonnie Sitter recounts their memories.

# AGM

16th March 2022 Evening

(St. John's Church or virtual. Stay tuned)

**Houses  
for  
SALE**

We have two new houses for sale, modern in every respect, ground floor consists of hall, parlor, dining room and kitchen with grade door, parlor has brick fireplace and built in book cases, dining room has plate rail and kitchen is fitted with a large cabinet, complete with bins, drawers and cupboard—will delight any housewife. First floor has four bedrooms and bathroom, linen closet off the hall, and attic for storage, hardwood floors on the ground floor. Ask to have a look through these, the location is ideal and the prices are low.

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The Oakville Star A. Forster, Editor  
December 18, 1925

# Community Spirit Award—Heritage



The Town of Oakville annually recognizes an individual or organization that has made an outstanding contribution to Oakville by aiding in the preservation and celebration of Oakville's natural, built or cultural heritage. We are pleased to announce OHS volunteer Mark Verlinden (above) was the 2021 recipient. In addition to his many duties at the Society he is a passionate advocate for safe and accessible bicycling.

The winner is presented with a local artist's work this year being that of award-winning Kara Bruce, who specializes in drawing and sculpture, in particular stone relief carving.

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# A note from the Society President

by George Chisholm

Our congratulations to our Treasurer, Mark Verlinden, on winning the Oakville Community Spirit Award in the Heritage category. Mark's more recent achievement on behalf of the Society was to successfully apply for funding for a student intern. Please welcome back Madison Carmichael who will be with us until April.

You may have seen the post on our Facebook page about the new series of banners that were unveiled at George's Square on Remembrance Day. A few years ago, Greg Munz brought his idea for a series of banners on the First World War to the board table. The result was a set of three all-weather banners that have been displayed at George's Square, Town Hall and Knox Church. They were joined by another set of three banners on Peacekeeping. COVID got in the way of the series on the Second World War planned for last year but they were completed just in time for Remembrance Day 2021. Greg led a small group of volunteers and students in preparing the banners. We appreciate the assistance of the Town of Oakville in printing and displaying them. A fourth series on other conflicts is being considered. These banners will be an asset to the Society and the Town for many years.

Our Ghost Walks returned this year but with greatly reduced scope. Many positive comments were received and our thanks to Wendy Belcher, Marie Descent, Mary Davidson and all the volunteers who made sure the walks ran flawlessly.

Another group of volunteers, led by Steve Bysouth and Andrea Stewart, has been very busy through COVID in the production of videos featuring the history of Oakville. They have produced 38 videos over the past two years, all of which are available for viewing through our website. Some more recent ones feature the history of our older churches in Town.

We're happy to report that all 10 of these older churches (can anyone name them all?), now have one of our black and white historic building plaques – free of charge. We're on track to install a record 35 plaques this year.

We should be reopening the office in mid-January subject to the usual vaccination rules. Unfortunately, we won't be having our annual Christmas get-together this year.

Have a great holiday season and let's hope things are closer to normal in the New Year.

**JIM YOUNG, M.B.A.**  
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Direct: 289.259.0955  
Office: 905.842.7000  
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# George N. Molesworth, Architect

by Phillip Brimacombe

We are indeed fortunate to have a wonderful variety of historic homes in Oakville, many of them handsomely restored to their former glory by the owners. The Oakville Historical Society has for many years installed interpretive plaques on a lot of these residences with the permission of the owners. These homes enrich the historic legacy of our community.

A celebrated local architect and the designer of a number of these homes was George Nepean Molesworth (1885-1958). Molesworth was born in Toronto and attended Jarvis Collegiate in that city. After graduating with Honours upon completing his Senior Matriculation, he enrolled in the Department of Architecture at the School of Practical Science at the University of Toronto in 1907. Subsequently, Molesworth served a four-year apprenticeship in the architectural office of Eden Smith and Son in Toronto from 1908 to 1911. He then worked briefly for J.P. Hynes, a Toronto architect, prior to forming a partnership in late 1911 with architect Howard Bovell in Toronto. In late 1913, Molesworth invited Gordon M. West and H.F. Secord to form a new architectural partnership, again in Toronto.

From 1907, Molesworth was actively involved in the Canadian military, joining the Queen's Own Rifles. From 1911, he was a member of the 8th Mississauga Horse. Later, he gained his First Officer Certificate after passing the exams at the School of Instruction.

Molesworth re-opened his architectural office upon his return to Toronto in 1918 from his war service. The firm prospered for twenty years, working on commercial, residential, and institutional projects in the Toronto and Oakville

areas. Molesworth's fame was mostly gained from his firm's splendid designs for the palatial estate homes of prominent Toronto and Oakville businessmen. Among these were Sir Joseph Flavelle, E.R. Wood ("Glendon Hall" -1924 - now the Glendon Campus of York University, Toronto), Sidney Smith, and W. Ryrie Smith.

In due course, Molesworth brought his family to live in Oakville on Lakeshore Road East. The home was a brown-shingled, two-storey structure reflecting the popular Arts and Crafts style of architecture of the day. The residence was designed by Molesworth's firm, which was noted for its Arts and Crafts designs.



Symmes residence, 492 Lakeshore Road E.

The Arts and Crafts Movement had its roots in Great Britain during the Industrial Revolution in the mid and late 19th century. It began as a reaction to the de-humanization of people in the overcrowded tenements in the growing industrial



cities such as Manchester and Birmingham. The movement incorporated revolutionary artistic, ideological and political ideas which became a fashionable trend in Canada and the United States. To quote an observer of the time, the Arts and Crafts Movement, “was based on the function of a home as a shelter for the family, not as a banner building relentlessly trumpeting the owner’s status”. The Arts and Crafts style reflected a rustic, “homey” appearance. It incorporated such features as broad porches, exposed wood beams, and natural materials such as cedar shingles and hand-crafted brackets and posts. Stone and timber were used extensively in the construction of the houses. The style might have been described as “cottage-like” in appearance but it was popular for upscale residences in particular. It is claimed that Canada’s largest collection of Heritage Arts and Crafts homes is situated in the Wychwood Park community, south of St. Clair Avenue West in mid-town Toronto. One of these homes belonged to the late well-known academic, Marshall McLuhan.

In 1936, Gordon M. West left the Molesworth firm. Molesworth and Mr. Secord then worked together until 1945 in Toronto. In that year, they invited Harold Savage to become a partner. George Molesworth continued to reside in Oakville during the post World War Two years, commuting daily to his office in Toronto. He was very active in Oakville’s business and social life. That may explain why he secured more than a dozen commissions in our town between 1913 and 1950. George Molesworth died on August 14, 1958 in Oakville. His son, David H.G. Molesworth, was the successor in his late father’s firm. He was active in the partnership of Armstrong, Molesworth and Shepherd in Toronto commencing in 1958. David Molesworth died on March 15, 2021 at the age of 93.



Lambert/Smye residence, 17 Lambert Common



Addition to Maple Grove Public School

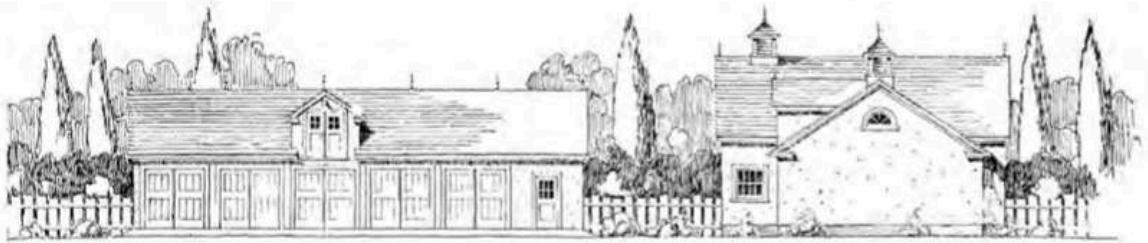
Today, the architectural firm of Armstrong, Molesworth and Shepherd is still active in Toronto’s architectural scene.

It is to be noted that Molesworth’s use of the Arts and Crafts design was applied not only to residential structures, but also to his institutional, and commercial projects as well.



VIEW FROM WEST OF IMPLEMENT SHED

VIEW FROM WEST OF STABLE &amp; STORAGE BUILDING



VIEW FROM SOUTH OF IMPLEMENT SHED

VIEW FROM SOUTH OF STABLE &amp; STORAGE BUILDING

FARM BUILDINGS FOR SIR JOSEPH FLAVELLE, BART., OAKVILLE, ONT.

*Molesworth, West & Secord, Architects*

Farm Buildings for Sir Joseph Flavelle, Bart., Oakville, Ont. Illustration The Journal, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. 1928

### **Oakville buildings designed by Molesworth, West and Secord**

- Independent Order of Foresters Orphans' Home, Bond Street (1907)
- "The Acacias" home, 573 Lakeshore Road West (1911)
- Brentwood Public School (1920)
- Lambert/Smye home, 17 Lambert Common (1925)
- Symmes home, 492 Lakeshore Rd. East (1925)
- Dr. Charles A. Page home, 334 Lakeshore Rd. East (1927)
- Farm buildings for Sir Joseph Flavelle (1927)

### **Oakville buildings designed by Molesworth and Secord**

- Addition to Maple Grove Public School (1938)
- Linbrook Public School (1938)
- Addition to Brentwood Public School (1947)
- Addition to Oakville Trafalgar High School (1948)

#### Sources of Information:

- Vertical Files Oakville Historical Society
- *Oakville and the Sixteen* by Hazel Chisholm Mathews
- *Oakville, A Small Town* by Frances Robin Ahern

Cover photo: "The Acacias" 573 Lakeshore Rd. W. Oakville (1911)

## The Person Behind the Plaque

# Sidney Copeland

## 384 Reynolds Avenue

One of the interesting things about researching a house is learning about the people who once lived in them. They helped to shape our community and 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 last resort for those living in poverty and many found themselves at their mercy on and off throughout their lives. Sidney and his brother Robert were discharged from the workhouse 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 south London.

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 city streets 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.

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



384 Reynolds Avenue

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 being patched up before being 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. He was transferred to Graylingwell War Hospital in Chichester, England and fortunately for him 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 "chauffer", likely due to the lingering war wound to his knee. The house was sold in November 1942 and Copeland moved 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.

## The Person Behind the Plaque

# George Sumner

## 145 William Street



145 William Street

Walking in old Oakville, you will see a house with the plaque '1833 The Sumner House' at 145 William Street. This cryptic sign references Constable George Sumner, who was an essential employee of the town for 35 years, fulfilling an impressive list of duties: enforcing the law, taking prisoners to the gaol in Milton, the care, lighting and heating of the town hall, taking tickets at the door of public functions, superintending all work on roads and

sidewalks including snow removal at the station before the arrival of the morning train. After one snowfall in 1868, it took Chief Sumner and thirteen men (at 10 cents an hour) five hours to remove the snow from this sidewalk. After one snowfall in 1868, it took Chief Sumner and thirteen men (at 10 cents an hour) five hours to remove the snow from this sidewalk.

As tax collector, Chief Sumner made out and delivered the tax bills, then collected the taxes from door to door. Repeated visits throughout most of the year were required to collect all the tax money. One evening he wrote in his diary, "I have been hunting up dogs and taxes. I get plenty of the former, but little of the latter."

In the spring, after the winter thaw, everyone in the town was required to whitewash their privy with lime. Chief Sumner inspected that this had been done, and provided the lime if necessary.

All of this information we have from Hazel Mathews' book, *Oakville and the Sixteen*. However, Chief Sumner himself kept a diary from 1867 to 1909, which included his thirty-five years as constable, giving many insights about small town life as seen through his unique perspective. His handwritten diary has been transcribed in the past into typewritten papers. Now we have many OHS volunteers transcribing this diary into a searchable electronic format, so that it can be accessed for research.



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# Ghost Walks

The weather (mostly) co-operated, ghosts appeared and guests were thrilled during our annual Ghost Walks, returning this October after 2020's cancellation. We sold 319 tickets (out of 320 offered) and above that Wendy Belcher led nine Zoom presentations.

Our appreciation goes to volunteer Ghosts Stewart Sherriff as Mr. Peter McDougald, Stephen Johnson as Father Ryan, Mary Beth Niebert as Mrs. Isabella Chisholm, Carol Gall as Mrs. Matilda (Tillie) Chisholm. Students who wandered the streets giving context to the related history did a fine job as usual. Thank you Mariam Baig, Adam Baig, Ava Consentino, Saniya Desai, Ava Diamond, Nina Healey, Brooke Nelson Muzzatti, Taylor Sam, Elizabeth Tomala. Photos Steve Bysouth



Stewart Sherriff (centre top) leads a Ghost Walk with Dearcroft Montessorri School students. Photo provided



Ghost of a Chisholm at Erchless Museum



Student volunteers Adam Baig and Mariam Baig



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# Membership

by Andrea Stewart, Marie Descent, Susan Bowen

We are very pleased to tell you that we currently have 234 members and 39 still to renew, for a total of 273. Surprisingly, there have been an unprecedented number of new members in the past year. We are pleased to welcome the following new members since we last reported in the June newsletter:

Mr. Dana Beeton, Ms. Erin Carley, Mr. Christopher Casale, Ms. Meghan Clynick and Zachary Gowanlock, Mr. and Mrs. Chris and Sheena Curran, Dearcroft Montessori School, Ms. Maya Hagag, Mr. John Hodgkinson, Mr. Howard Christian and Ms. Karina Torres, Mr. Robin Howarth, Ms. Emma Jarratt, Ms. Sharon Jiang, Ms. Kohli Puneet, Ms. Lilly Chrissy, Mr. Scott Loos, Ms. Janet Lucas, Ms. Kiera Mckay, Mr. Alasdair McNellan, Mr. Stephen Mehleretter, Ms. Julie Mitchell, Mr. Kevin Moltner, Rev. Sheila Murray, Mr. Edward Naftolin, Ms. Alyssa Nascimento, Ms. Emily Owen, Mr. Tyler Rockcliffe, Ms. Traci Stanton, Ms. Barbara Warren.

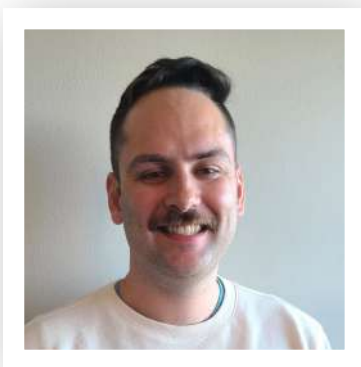
# Gardens

by Susan Wells

Work continues on the Museum Coach House just to the east of our offices at 110 King Street. Upgrades to the property has impacted access to our gardens and building.

The irregular flagstone path to the north and east of

us has been replaced by a walkway of smooth concrete pavers (at right) which is far safer for all types of mobility. We anticipate our south entrance will have a similar treatment. Our gardeners will have some work to do come Spring as a new entrance from King Street was constructed, removing perennial plants. They are up to the challenge though and our gardens will look just as lovely and vibrant in the Summer as they have been in the past.



Christopher Casale

I am Christopher Casale, a new volunteer with the Oakville Historical Society. Having studied history at the post-secondary level, I'm excited to learn more about my hometown. My work thus far has focused on digitizing the Sumner diaries, a set of journals written by the former Oakville Chief Constable George Sumner. He played a major role in the development of Oakville throughout his tenure as Constable in the late 19th century and his writings leave a detailed story of what life in Oakville was like back then. My current work with the diaries has me editing and formatting the digitized copies. In the future, I hope to consolidate all the diaries into one document, which will facilitate the historical society's ability to search through the diaries. My work has only been made possible by the assistance of past and current members of the Society.

# Trust the Process

## Presenting Oakville in the Second World War

by Madison Carmichael and Emily Ing

In 2020, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Second World War's end, and we joined Greg Munz to create banners about Oakville and Canada's contributions to the war. A year and two lockdowns later, the banners were displayed in George's Square on Trafalgar Road from November 10th to 22nd.

2020 saw us start this project with research debriefs in the Society library. In 2021, we moved into our respective homes and edited our novel's worth of research over Zoom meetings and then returned to the library come summer where we began a battle on a new front—tracking down photographs to present alongside our research.

We worked down to the wire and sent the banners to be printed just in time for Remembrance Day. We couldn't have done it without Sue Hobson, our outstanding fourth team member, who turned our scores of sentences into beautiful banners that were printed as a priority by Tarek Charif of Signarama. We also give thanks to Greg, who initiated this project, kept all of us motivated to complete the banners, and was a thought-provoking mentor.

Emily – My first introduction to the project was Nancy Erb Kee's "All Quiet on the Oakville Front" story. She recalled refusing to say goodbye to her father because she couldn't face his departure, which hit home for me how the war affected entire families.

Madison – In 1999, the Oakville Museum put on "Oakville at War," an exhibition with incredible stories to tell that now lives online. A personal favourite came from an interview with Joy Smith, who had to pour a bottle of rum she'd caught her recruits with down the toilet—such were the rules!—and she laughed, remembering that they cried about it for hours.



Visitors to George's Square observe Oakville Historical Society's banner dedicated to Oakville's involvement in the Second World War. Photo Greg Munz



Madison Carmichael, left and Emily Ing with The Second World War banner. Photo Greg Munz

# The *way* things were...



## Do you know?

This location?

The year the photo was taken?

*Look for the answers in our next issue!*



From September 2021 **The *way* things were...**

Three bas relief images at the entrance of Oakwood Public School, 357 Bartos Drive, Oakville represent the studies of anthropology, flora and fauna, and geography.

Built in 1952, Oakwood P. S. currently has students in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 5.

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