

Oakville Historical
Society
since 1953

Historical Society News

www.oakvillehistory.org



Our Boys of Summer

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A Note from the Society President

George Chisholm

If you didn't make it to the Annual Mayor's Picnic hosted by the Oakville Historical Society, you missed a great event. The weather co-operated, the music was great and the rest of the entertainment outstanding. On behalf of the Board, my thanks to the committee that organized it led by Susan Bowen, and our thanks to Mayor Rob Burton for picking up the tab. You may have noticed that the fountain at the office in honour of our volunteers has been completely restored. It looks great and should last for many more years.

A few weeks ago, some of the Board members attended the 99th Annual Ceremonial Review of 1188 Lorne Scots Oakville Cadet Corps which is sponsored by the Society. The Corps was formed at

Oakville Trafalgar High School in November 1924 but now meets at the Oakville Armoury. If you have any photos or memorabilia from the cadet corps, we'd love to have copies to help them prepare for their 100th anniversary celebrations.

Congratulations to Carolyn Cross who has recently been promoted to Supervisor of the Oakville Museum, and welcome to Chris Selman who has taken over Carolyn's position as Curator of Collections. We're looking forward to continuing our excellent relationship with the Museum.

I would also like to congratulate our webmaster, Stan Smurlick, for his leadership in the Society winning the Best Tour Experience Award sponsored by Visit Oakville.

Kudos

Congratulations to Abigail Garcia Hernandez as the recipient of the 2023 OHS Memorial Bursary, awarded this year in memory of Susan Wells. Abigail is a recent graduate of Abbey Park High School and will be studying Kinesiology in the fall. She has been a cadet for four years and achieved the rank of Master Warrant Officer. A published author, she was chosen to contribute to Project Unimaginable, an initiative offered through her school. Abigail holds both Canfitpro Personal Trainer Specialist and Fitness Instructor Specialist certifications. She has completed two high school co-op programs, one as a kick boxing instructor, the other as an assistant trainer.

Abigail has been an honour student since Grade 9, maintaining an average of 93-95%.

She was presented with a certificate at the Cadet Corps' Annual Ceremonial Review in June, and will receive a cheque from the Society in August.

The Society is very proud to sponsor the 1188 Lorne Scots Cadet Corps.



George Chisholm presenting the
OHS bursary to
Cadet MWO Garcia Hernandez



Oakville's Boys of Summer

Carol Gall (nee Wilson)
(picture front cover)

Earlier this year I received an email from OHS President George thinking that I'd be interested in having a look at an old Oakville Baseball Team picture. Upon opening the attachment, my eye was drawn to the top left ... a young left fielder: Doug Wilson, my Dad! Midge Philbrook had gifted the OHS a team photo of the OAKVILLE BASEBALL CLUB - 1947 WINNERS ONTARIO BASEBALL ASSOCIATION - INTERMEDIATE "B".

This prompted me to dust off the Wilson family's old "Memory Box" and there I discovered baseball flashes and crests, a well loved and used 'split finger' glove, a scarred baseball with Dad's printing: "FINAL GAME OCT 22 1947" plus a vintage gray Oakville Uniform hanging in a 'Garvey and Willmott' suit bag! More on the uniform later....



Photo courtesy of Midge Philbrook

Oakville was and still is a strong baseball community. The Halton County Baseball Association was established in 1920, although records can only be retrieved to 1944. The intermediate line up would field teams from Milton, Georgetown, Bronte, Acton, Campbellville, Dundas and Oakville. In 1984, it became the Central Ontario Baseball Association.

During the 1940s, Oakville still had a rural character and agriculture maintained a strong presence as the downtown core began to take shape. In 1947, the war had ended and families looked to baseball and sport for entertainment. South of the border, major league baseball was making history when Jackie Robinson's debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 15 officially brought to an end the league's colour barrier.

Oakville's home field was Wallace Park on Reynolds St, with wooden bleachers and an ungroomed outfield. Although not quite the field standards of today, Dad did say it made for "good baseball" acrobatic, breathtaking last minute catches and theatrical diving, tumbling misses. Pure entertainment!

The team's uniform was far from fashionable or even comfortable. The cloth of choice well into the 1940's was flannel made from a wool or a wool-blend. Can you imagine playing in a wool uniform during the hot, humid days of summer?



Doug Wilson's uniform
photo courtesy of Carol Gall

The first fielders in baseball played with their bare hands. The "split finger" glove that my Dad favoured (see cover photo) was introduced in the 1930's. Looking like a bear paw it provided some padding. The design of webbing between the thumb and forefinger created a pocket while leaving the other fingers unattached. This would allow the fielder to snag fly balls on the run and pick up grounders easily. I must confess I don't think it was much better than catching bare handed!

The three young mascots in the team photo intrigued me. They certainly did not look like the costumed characters that represent major league teams today.

After some snooping with current and former ball players, it would appear these mascots were young fan enthusiasts of the game or a kid brother of a player. They were the 'bat boys' or 'errand boys' for the team and may or may not travel with them to away games. Given what a superstitious group athletes are, they may have been pinned as the team's good luck charms!

As I read through the names in the picture, I could remember Dad reminiscing about many of them from their baseball days through to career changes, achievements and family life. I only wished I had listened better!

Cliff Post managed the family farm located at the corner of Chartwell and Macdonald. He also spent time encouraging and coaching his daughter Sandra Post in golf. She became the first Canadian on the LPGA Tour. The Post farm was the last remaining viable commercial fruit farm in the neighbourhood. In 1980 Town Council approved the property to be developed as Post Park, an active park for community sport.

Judge Jim (James) Black always had a keen interest in baseball and was named a life member of Halton County Baseball Association. An executive member of the Ontario Baseball Association, he worked with several Oakville Clubs. He was Mayor of Oakville 1952-56. In 1962 he was appointed Deputy Magistrate for Halton and later named a Provincial Court Judge.

Ollie Johnson was the best athlete in Oakville for several decades. Known for his speed on the track and baseball skills, Ollie won several competitions overseas and in the States. During playing days, both his teammates and players on opposing teams claimed he was the most difficult player to get out! In 1946 he was the past president of HCBA and in 1947 an executive member of the Oakville Baseball Association. Over his sport career and life, Ollie received many accolades and recognition for both his athletic achievements and his ongoing support and development of sport and baseball in Oakville.

As for Dad, 1947 was his final season. He worked locally at Long Manufacturing and General Stamping Aluminum Works, but it was the fire service and fire prevention that held his interest. He had been a volunteer fire fighter with Fire Chief Alf Hillmer since his early 20's. In 1957 he became the first full-time Fire Chief of Oakville, a position he held until retirement in 1976.

Thank you, Midge, for sharing a snap shot of early days of baseball in Oakville.



Midge's Memories

Brenda Chisholm

I was privileged recently to sit down to chat with Midge Philbrook. She spoke lovingly of her husband Frank and how he was recruited as a teenager by Bud Corbett to play ball for Oakville. Frank had played since he was a youngster, so when asked, he got on the Lakeshore bus in Port Credit, came to Oakville and walked up Reynolds St. to the diamond beside the present day curling club. He later recalled being impressed by the beautiful arch formed by the huge trees on Reynolds St.

Frank enjoyed his sports until going off to U of T for Pharmacy in 1951, and then on to medical school in 1954. Frank and Midge met at the wedding of mutual friends and married in 1956. Frank worked hard studying all winter, and in the summers he worked 12 hour days at the various pharmacies in town so the owners could vacation and spend time with their families. At that time, a pharmacy could not open its doors without a pharmacist on site, and Frank was happy to earn enough each summer to pay the family's bills through the school year. He went on to practise medicine in Oakville, and Cochrane Ontario, Kashmir, India and at the construction of the Mangala Dam in Pakistan. Midge says Frank had to become skilled at performing Ceasarean section births during his time overseas as malnutrition and multiple births caused women's pelvises to shrink and both mother and baby often died otherwise. They returned to Canada in 1967 and he worked as a Director in the medical research field until 1974 when he was elected as Member of Parliament for Halton.

Mayor's Picnic



After 4 long years, the Mayor's Picnic returned to Lakeside Park on June 11, with bands, Irish dancers, face painting, balloon animals, firetrucks, a juggling stilt walker, a toy train table, parachute games, hula hoops and a giant checker board!

Everyone had a wonderful time and we owe a big thanks to 1188 Army Cadet Corps for their boundless energy with set up and take down, the Town of Oakville staff and Mayor

Rob Burton for financial and physical assistance with picnic tables, tents, games and sound system. There was a terrific response of all ages from the public who turned out in huge numbers in spite of the cool, threatening weather. Mother Nature held off and we were cleaned up and tidied away before the rain came.

Our fantastic committee, headed by Susan Bowen, is already planning for next year!

We were delighted to have our Member of Parliament stop by the picnic for a visit. Minister Anand stopped to chat at the booths, signed our banner and sat for a photo with the members of the Cadet Corps. The cadets were excited to meet the Minister of Defence! The OHS was pleased to present her with a copy of our "Streets of Oakville" book.



Ghost Walks tell spooky tales of Old Oakville

The summer sun is shining but soon it will be time for the Ghosts of Old Oakville to again share their tales. Our annual Ghost Walks will run nightly (except Sundays) from October 11 to October 30. We have 2 walks per night, 6:30 and 8:00. Each walk is followed by refreshments in the Society office. Join us to meet roaming ghosts portrayed by local high school students, and of course, an opportunity to meet such Oakville luminaries as Rebecca Chisholm, Father Ryan, RK and Tillie Chisholm, Peter McDougald and other folk from 19th century Oakville.

Visitors From Far and Wide!

Phil Brimacombe

Have you ever been to Gabriola, British Columbia, Cesano, Maderno, Italy, Porto Alegre, Brazil, Munedje, Scotland or Mountain View, California? These are just a few places from which our visitors to the Oakville Historical Society have come over the past few years. Understandably, the large majority of our guests live in the United States, with Michigan, New York State, Florida, California and North Carolina leading the pack. In all, we have welcomed people from 21 states recently. One U.S. visitor reminded us that there are several communities named Oakville south of the border. One is in Connecticut, another is Oakville, New York (spelled with an “s”). Oakville is between Syracuse and Albany, New York, south of the Mohawk River. That community has connections with the Chisholm Family of Oakville, Ontario. Near Oakville, New York is Burlington Plains, New York, as well as Springfield, New York, Springfield is the former name of Erindale, an old community within present-day Mississauga. Number two on the list is England, followed by Scotland and Ireland. Recently we have had an increase in the number of visitors from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and South America. They have travelled long distances to visit relatives and friends. We have also had visitors from Colombia, South Africa, The Philippines, Iran, Turkey, Albania and Lebanon. As for Canada, our chief source of visitors is Quebec, most of them from the Montreal area with British Columbia in second place.



People are always impressed with our community of Oakville and the ongoing efforts to preserve our rich heritage and are impressed by the many historic plaques on our Heritage buildings, which have been produced by the Oakville Historical Society at the request of property owners. It is interesting to note that when visitors, especially from overseas, visit the four museums in Lakeside Park, they cannot get over the fact that you cannot see the far shore of Lake Ontario, nor that Kingston is over 200 miles away at the eastern end of the lake. They had never dreamed of a lake so large and are amazed when we inform them that Lake Ontario is the smallest of the five Great Lakes!



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Thomas House

The Thomas House is open for the season : Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, Saturday, Sunday and holiday Mondays through Labour Day from 1:30-4:00.

New volunteers (both youth and adult) are welcome. Training and costumes (if desired) are provided.



Save the Date!

Our annual Holiday Party will be held on December 1 at St John's United church. We have decided to try a new venue to allow more space for mingling and seated areas.



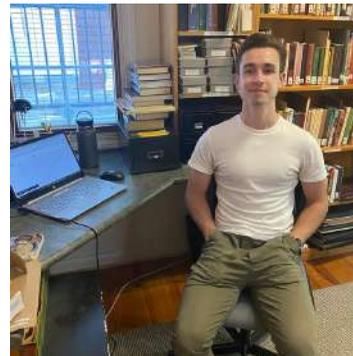
Meet our Summer Interns!



Lauren Willoughby is halfway through her Masters of Museum Studies degree at the University of Toronto and has an undergraduate degree in history from Queen's University. This summer she is working on digitizing the Sumner diaries, starting work on a new display for the fireplace room, adding more decals and historical videos on Lakeshore Road, organizing the archives at QEPCC, some accessioning and more!



Ryan Gravelle is our second intern for the summer of 2023. He attends Wilfrid Laurier University and will be entering the fourth and final year of his undergraduate degree in history this fall. He plans to continue his studies by completing a master's degree in a related historical field. Working at the OHS, he is completing a variety of tasks such as physical archival work, digitization of historical documents/photos, research for upcoming exhibits and much more! A lifelong Oakville resident, he is pleased to have the opportunity to learn about Oakville's history and aid in the continued preservation of it!



1931 Census Release

Janet Godber

On June 1st this year, Library and Archives Canada released the 1931 census to the public. The Statistics Act allows for the release of historical census records after 92 years. This detailed enumeration of the Canadian population of over 10 million people during the Great Depression has been eagerly anticipated by genealogists, scholars & historians. This census is valued as an important resource, providing a wealth of information on the family unit, the community around them and the country's economic status.

Library and Archives Canada has digitized the entire census and made it available on their website to browse. Ancestry.ca has used handwriting recognition technology to index the census and FamilySearch is in the process of reviewing it to ensure the accuracy of all fields. It is available for free on the ancestry.ca website, although one must open an account with them at no cost in order to access it.

With over 40 columns, questions include name, age, religion, ethnicity, occupation, and since it was taken during the early part of the Great Depression, for the first time there is an entire section dedicated to unemployment.

One of the new questions on the census was “has this family a radio” which gives a picture of telecommunications in Canada and provides some indication of how broadly and quickly information could be shared. During this era, radio went from being enjoyed by hobbyists to being listened to by the general public. Radios were a distraction from the hardship of the depression. Friends and neighbours would gather to enjoy news, music, radio shows such as Abbott & Costello, Amos 'n' Andy, and Foster Hewitt's broadcast of the play by play during Leaf games from his own gondola in the newly- built Maple Leaf Gardens.



"Home from School and On with the Radio" — CGE receiver in home use, 1931. (Public Archives of Canada, C-27888)

On comparison with earlier census records, this one reflects a time of transition from large farm families to smaller urban ones with fewer children, as many jobs shifted from agriculture to manufacturing.

After glancing through just a few pages, it isn't difficult to see the effect the depression was having on industry and families. In Oakville, many were either working a fraction of the year or not at all. Employees of the Tannery were some of the hardest hit as well as those in the building and roadworks trades. As people

struggled to make ends meet, luxuries went by the wayside. Edith Madden lost her job at a confectionary factory as did Margaret Soulis, a designer of ladies' wear. Women, who could no longer buy clothes for their families, looked to their pantry and began making clothing from flour sacks. Companies that produced these sacks realized what they were being used for and began printing designs on them for both adults and children. I wonder what Margaret Soulis thought about this new fashion?



It is fascinating to read the original handwriting on the pages, and one can almost picture the census taker hunched over his pen in someone's parlour or porch carefully jotting down the family's details, unaware that over 90 years later, their descendants and other folks would be poring over them with fascination and wonderment!

We must applaud Library and Archives Canada for their swiftness in making this census available to the public and Ancestry.ca for indexing it. You may wish to take the time to peruse it and perhaps you will find your family members and other interesting people in this snapshot in time.

The link to the non-indexed census at Library and Archives Canada:
<https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Census/Index1931>

The link to Ancestry where you are able to view the indexed census for free after opening an account which is also free: ancestry.ca



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The way things were...



Do you know...

The location and the significance of this picture?

From Spring 2023 **The way things were...**

We know very little about this charming photo, except that her name was Duchess and, upon close examination, it seems she was likely nursing a litter of puppies at the time. Perhaps she was ecstatic to be away from them for a bit!



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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