Oakville Historical Society
since 1953

Historical Society News

www.oakvillehistory.org



Downtown Oakville's Oldest Retailer

Volume 60 Number 2 **Summer 2026**

75 years in Oakville!

It all started with a determined mother-in-law!

In 1951 Robert Barrington's mother-in-law Fanny came to downtown Oakville and approached several businesses about renting space to her new son-in–law, a classically trained furrier from Vienna, Austria. Fanny found the perfect spot at Navy and Colborne (126 Colborne), but unfortunately it was occupied by a local bakery. Fortunately, the owner was no match for Fanny and by the end of the conversation he agreed to split the space in two and rent half of the shop to Barrington's. Robert Barrington took the leap and opened his store in, what was at the time, a very small town with a population of 6910. Robert often joked that Ford Motor Company followed him to Oakville in 1953!

Business was good and they soon moved to a bigger location at 107 Dunn Street. The Barringtons rented the apartment above the store and in 1955 brought home their first baby and the next generation of furriers, Paul Barrington. By this time, Downtown Oakville was a going concern and every dignified lady wore a mink stole to church on Sunday.



Robert, Founder of Barrington's



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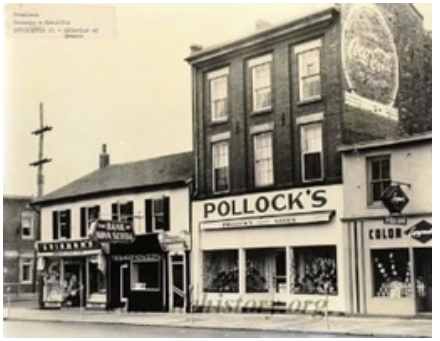


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In the mid 1960s, Barrington's moved to what was considered the new and happening end of town between Reynolds and Allan street. This was also the time when Colborne Street changed to Lakeshore Road and our new address was 338 Lakeshore Road East. By this time, Marilyn Monroe and all the Hollywood starlets were donning beautiful full-length mink coats. The stylish women of Oakville soon followed suit.



209 Lakeshore Rd circa 1977

In 1977, Robert Barrington stopped paying rent to landlords and purchased his own building. It is still our location today. The move to 209 Lakeshore Road East proved to be a wise decision...in the 1980s the town did a major streetscape renovation and created the town square, placing us directly in the centre of town.

At the same time, Robert sent his 15 year old son Paul to Vienna, Austria to study the fur trade under the renowned furrier Henrick. Paul graduated top of his class after a 4 year apprenticeship. This decision would shape the future of Barrington's for many years to come.

In 1992, Robert Barrington retired and his son Paul took over the business. Paul's wife Brenda joined the company and together they took Barrington's in a new and exciting direction, with the introduction of cloth, down filled and shearling coats and jackets. Soon after, they introduced a made-in-Canada private label coat collection that still thrives today. Barrington's has always aimed to make top quality outerwear and their reputation has spread far beyond Oakville.

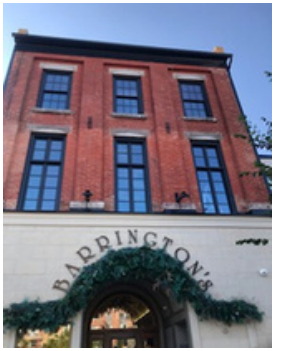
75 Years....

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In 2006, they also started producing and mailing a lookbook which is still anticipated by clients across Canada and began sourcing beautiful products from Europe. They still attend the Paris and Milan markets twice a year bringing unique items to the shop.

Daughters Brooke and Carly joined the family business in 2018, embracing the online retail world and now have a busy e-commerce site that ships across Canada. In 2025, Barrington's undertook a major facelift to the facade of their 166 year old building.





Barrington's, before and after the restoration

Working closely with Oakville's heritage department they used old photos as inspiration to restore the front to its original glory. They are thrilled with the finished product and the red brick building has become a charming focal point in downtown Oakville.

Throughout their 75 years in business there has been one factor that has made it all worthwhile and that is their amazing clientele. The Barrington family feels incredibly fortunate to have wonderful customers, many of them multi-generational.

"It has been such a pleasure being part of the Oakville community. we are proud to be the longest running retailer in Oakville. Thank goodness for Great Grandma Fanny's persistant fortitude." - Paul Barrington

Barrington's will host a 75th anniversary celebration open house on September 19 from 12-4 pm with door prizes, champagne and hand rolled sushi. You are welcome to drop in and celebrate with them.



Plant Donations



Does fall clean-up in your garden mean that you're splitting or removing perennials or shrubs? If so, please consider a plant donation to the OHS gardens. The volunteer garden committee (Susan and Averil Jany) would be delighted to have new plant material to add to the garden beds. Because of our shady location and variable soil quality, some plants typically do better than others.

Donations of particular interest would be:

Hostas	Bleeding heart
Ferns	Monkshood
Sedum	Toad lily
Astilbe	Rudbeckia
Heuchera	Echinacea
Phlox	

Please label donations and leave beside the garden shed. We'll do our best to give your plants a happy new home at OHS!







Two Summer Interns, Two New Exhibits!

Sophia Davidson

This summer, I joined the Oakville Historical Society as an archive student alongside my colleague, Aliya. Bringing a background in museum management, I am currently pursuing a diploma in library and information technology and am hoping to bridge my skills across both sectors.

One of our first projects was completing the Chisholm family display, which was started in 2025 by a previous summer student, Amanda Rundle. While Amanda had done the bulk of the research and designed the wonderful wall panels, our task was to select the archival materials and physical objects to represent the family members. As we quickly realized, it can be quite challenging to summarize a person's life or character in only one or two items. For me, a highlight was getting to root through author Hazel Chisholm Mathew's original research notes to place on display.

Reading her handwritten thoughts allowed me to appreciate the great lengths she went to in researching her book, including travelling to archives overseas and trekking through the underground flume of her family's old grist mill.

Another aspect of creating the Chisholm display involved writing interpretive labels and crafting custom object mounts. Using the supplies we had on hand, such as foam, we cut out and pieced together supports for objects such



Brock Chisholm's WWI compass and case

as a 19th-century schooner model and Dr. Brock Chisholm's WWI compass. Often, you won't have pre-made mounts on hand that perfectly suit each object for display, so some creativity and an X-Acto knife can go a long way. Our goal was to find the most visually unobtrusive yet secure way to display these objects within the specific spatial constraints of the wood and glass cases. Ultimately, creating the display presented two main challenges: maximizing the physical space available and balancing the volume of information we wanted to relay against what visitors can absorb without being overwhelmed. It is a fine line to walk and we hope we achieved a good balance.



Beyond displays, I greatly enjoyed the collections management side of the role, specifically the process of cataloguing archival material within the online database. For one of our projects, Aliya and I had the privilege of accessioning and transcribing a series of WWI letters sent by local soldier (Albert) Dudley Hitchcox to his fiancée, Minnie. To preserve the correspondence, we removed any damaging materials like paper clips, scanned each item, and encapsulated them within archival folders. Throughout this process, I not only improved my eye with reading 100-year-old cursive, but came to appreciate the

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Two Summer Interns...

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unique quirks in Dudley's writing and the steadfastness he maintained while on the front lines of France and while injured in England. I often found myself trying to envision where he sat as he wrote these letters and what his mindset was at that moment, which I think may be a common experience for those who do this work. The project came full circle when we met Dudley and Minnie's daughter, Mary, who shared the story of her parents' lives after the war and answered our many questions. This opportunity provided us with rare and invaluable context that, for many archival materials, is often lost to time, and it was wonderful to be a small part of further safeguarding that history with the Historical Society.

Aliya Yousef

My name is Aliya and I have a Bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of Toronto Mississauga. I will be heading to the University of Glasgow in September to pursue a Master's in Museum Studies after working at the Oakville Historical Society.

I spent this summer helping transcribe the World War 1 era letters from a soldier named Dudley Hitchcox, then photographing, accessioning and setting up a display of art by Oakville cartoonist Steve Nease.

The Hitchcox Letters was the first project Sophia and I tackled and it was fascinating to read what soldiers went through during the war and how they would reassure their loved ones. We read each letter, scanned them, accessioned them and prepared a document for the virtual exhibit on the website. The donor provided us with more photos of the couple, which we used for the online exhibit.



Mark Verlinden, Sophia Davidson, Aliya Yousef and Steve Nease

The biggest project I worked on was the Nease collection and exhibit. We had over 1,400 political cartoons and works of art to not only sort through for the upcoming exhibit, but to also photograph and accession. The first thing I did was catalogue all of the art and research the referenced events for more context, I then photographed every piece of artwork. From there, Sophia and I got together and mapped out certain themes to show in the exhibit.

We wanted the art to be relevant and to be understood by a wide audience which took a lot of trials and second opinions. The different categories we chose include Toronto sports, Oakville/Halton events, world events, Canada/US relations, the SARS outbreak, tributes and different political figures. We wanted a balance between serious and lighthearted topics to show the versatility and range of Nease's work. After a long process of selecting the artwork to be displayed, we came up with a simple design with minimal labels for the display. In the end, the exhibit looks fantastic and flows nicely, and it was a long but very rewarding project that taught us a lot about exhibit design and display work.

My work at the historical society has been incredibly fulfilling and I met a lot of amazing people during the summer. I am excited to apply what I have learned here in my future endeavours.

Editor's note: If you have the opportunity, drop by during open office hours and see these new exhibits.

Mrs Thomas Goes to Camp!

Carol Gall

As a continuation of the Grade 3 school visits in the spring, the Thomas House hosted 4 morning camp visits this July and August. We welcomed campers from the Canadian Caribbean Association Halton, the Halton Multi-Cultural Connection and the Oakville Museum camp programs. The Thomas House visit was part of a joint visit coordinated with Erchless and the Old Post Office.

The CCAH offers weekly camp programs to children throughout Halton ages 6 to 12.

The HMC attracts an older group or participants ages 11-17. English is not the first language of many and they have been in Canada anywhere from 6 months to 3 years.

The Oakville Museum offers a week long themed camp centred out of the Coach House for campers aged 4 to 8. The week of their visit was Buildings in your Community which was a great match with the design and features the Thomas House presents as an 1830s style farmhouse.



Campers learn about life in the 1830s

Overall we topped 114 campers plus leadership staff. This, combined with our other summer visitors, provides the Thomas House with a wide community exposure plus a learning experience of living in the early days of Oakville.

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Fundraising

Brenda Chisholm

The **yard sale** was postponed at the last minute to Sunday July 19 due to poor air quality and a terrible weather forecast. It was a good decision as it poured rain on the Saturday and we had tornado warnings. Fortunately, most volunteers were flexible and a hard-working team sprang into action, updating social media, sending out emails and changing signage. We had a fantastic turnout, perhaps the best ever, and sales were brisk with a profit of about $3400.00.
A huge thank you to everyone for their donations prior to the sale and assistance day of.

We decided to try a **bottle drive** for a limited time throughout the summer and the Christmas season. If you wish to participate, you can bring bottles and beer cans to the office at any time. There are bins beside the garden shed on King St. We will return them to the Beer Store when there is a good accumulation.

Our next fundraiser will be the **Fall Fair** to be held at the office on **October 3** from 1-4:30. We will have vendors, the office will be open to view the two new exhibits, and we always have a terrific tent full of home baking and preserves to sell.
To make this a success, we need donations of baking, preserves, knitting, crocheting and other hand made goods to sell.
Baking can be dropped off Friday October 2 at noon. Other goods, any Tuesday or Thursday afternoon prior to the fair during regular office hours. Email brendachisholm235@gmail.com with any questions. Thank you in advance for your support!

Speaker's Nights



On June 17, Henry Jelinek spoke about his family's flight from post WWII Czechoslovakia, their journey to Canada and the rebuilding of their lives and cork business in Oakville.

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 16
7:30 PM
COACH HOUSE - 114 KING ST



Shannon Kyles will present "What Our Buildings Say About Us"

Her latest book, The Story of Ontario Architecture, will be available for sale afterwards.

We are open:

Tuesday, Thursday and third Sunday of the month 1:00 -4:30

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Editor's note: the image on the front cover has been enhanced using Gemini to increase the resolution and delete extraneous detail.

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