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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2006

Volume 40: Number 2

SPECIAL EVENTS

- September 24, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. - Harvest Festival, Thomas House
- December 1, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. - Members Wine & Cheese, OHS Office,
110 King Street

PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

- September 20, 7:30 p.m. - *Tracing the History of Your Home*
By Mathew Wilkinson
- November 15, 7:30pm - *Inside Camp X*
By Lyn Philip Hodgson

HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS*

Month	Main Street	Heritage House	Trafalgar Rd.
June	Sun 11 th , 2 pm	Sun 4 th , 2 pm Sun 18 th , 2 pm	Sun 25 th , 2 pm
July	Wed 26 th , 7 pm	Wed 12 th , 7 pm	----
August	-----	Wed 9 th , 7 pm	Wed 23 rd , 7 pm
September	Sun 10 th , 2 pm	Sun 3 rd , 2 pm	Mon 4 th , 2 pm
October	Sun 1 st , 2 pm	Sun 15 th , 2 pm	----

* Two-hour duration

GHOST WALKS+

Month	Thursday 7:00 & 8:30 P.M.	Saturday 6:00, 7:00 & 8:30 P.M.
September	14 th and 28 th	-----
October	5 th , 12 th , 19 th and 26 th	21 st and 28 th

+ One-hour duration

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In late March, the Society held its Annual General Meeting at Knox Church. The meeting was well attended partly, because of the now-traditional potluck dinner. To those of you who attended, thank you both for attending and for providing the makings of a wonderful meal. For those who couldn't make it, you missed out. Harry Buxton and Mary Noad have both retired from the board and both will be very much missed. In appreciation of his many years of dedicated service to the board, the members were very pleased to appoint Harry as a Honourary Director. Harry Barrett, Evelyn Bullied and Jim Young have all volunteered to serve for another three-year term and I would like to welcome **Andrea Stewart** as a newcomer to the board.

At our board meeting in April the officers of the society were reappointed for the usual one-year term. I remain as President; Barb Savage remains as Vice-president; Jim Young as Secretary; and, Walter Jennings as Treasurer.

The Society is busy preparing for another summer. The **Thomas House** is ready to go. Pat Mack has taken over the job of scheduling Thomas House volunteers from Joyce Burnell. You don't have to be female to work at the Thomas House. I enjoy the afternoons I spend there and explain to visitors that Mrs. Thomas is out doing her chores.

Our ever-popular walks are set for this year as well. We are introducing our new **Trafalgar Road Walk** this year. It will start at St John's United Church; proceed up Trafalgar Road to Spruce, down Reynolds, through George's Square, along Dunn to Randall and back to St John's, where the usual tea will be served. This year we will also be trying some evening walks.

Preparations are underway for two important anniversaries. In 2007, the Town will be celebrating its **Sesquicentennial**. I have been appointed the Society's representative on the Citizen Task Force. In 2008, **Oakville Trafalgar High School** will be celebrating its 100th anniversary. If you are interested in serving on the steering committee or helping out, visit the school's website <http://oth.hdsb.ca/> or call the school at 905-845-2875

George Chisholm
905 842-5385
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

COVER PICTURE:

Interior of 'Medical Hall' and Dr. John Urquhart, Jr. in the 1920's

Health Care in Early Oakville

Like many other port towns that were entry points for immigrants in the 19th century, Oakville suffered periodic epidemics of virulent infectious diseases. Two doctors, who were father and son, served the community for a century by looking after the sick, operating a business and, participating in civic affairs.

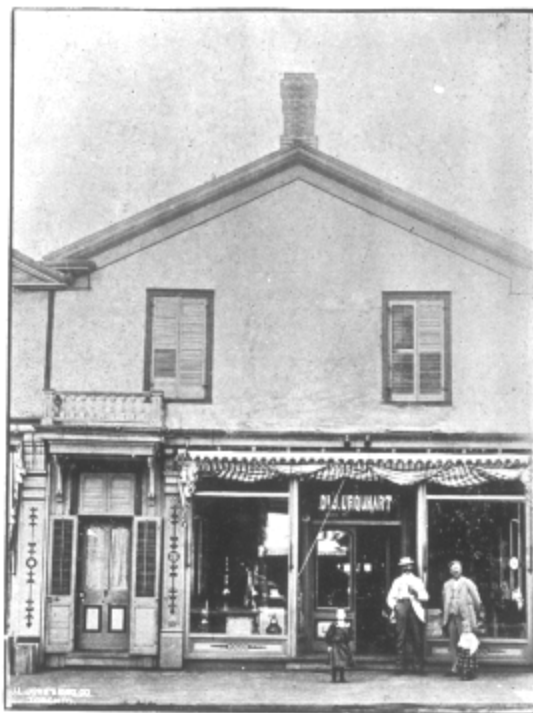
John Urquhart came to Canada from Scotland in 1830. He taught school in the Lake Simcoe area, but when the cholera outbreak occurred in 1832, he gave up teaching to help out in the hospital in Toronto. It was this event that prompted him to turn to medicine. In that period, those who were interested in a medical career apprenticed themselves to a licensed medical practitioner. John Urquhart followed this path. He studied at home using books provided by his mentor, and received on the job training while accompanying the doctor on his rounds, visiting patients in their homes and in hospitals. Traveling time between visits gave him ample opportunity to ask questions and to discuss cases. After two years experience among cholera patients, he applied to the Licensing Board and obtained his license to practice medicine.

The experience he gained while serving in Toronto was just the right background needed in Oakville, which was badly affected when the second outbreak of **cholera** occurred in the summer of 1834. It was the year of a large migration from Ireland and within a few weeks there were twenty-five cases. A group of residents formed a committee and adopted measures to prevent the spread of the disease. They appointed a group to inspect houses and outhouses, and recommended that homes be cleaned, fumigated and whitewashed with lime. They petitioned Lt. Governor Sir John Colborne for assistance and he declared Oakville an official Port of Entry. This meant that all passengers were checked for disease before being permitted to land and ships were to be quarantined if necessary. The Lt. Governor acted quickly to contain the disease and established Boards of Health in every port town, while providing financial help where necessary.

The Oakville Board of Health set up an isolation hospital on the west side of The Sixteen Mile Creek and appointed John Urquhart to be in charge. Newly arrived immigrants from Scotland and Ireland, who developed the disease on the ships that brought them to Canada, needed urgent medical care. They traveled in badly overcrowded and filthy conditions and were mostly confined in the hold of the ship for days without ventilation or hygienic facilities, an environment that fostered the spread of

infection. These same conditions were responsible for an epidemic of typhus, known as ‘ship’s fever’, a decade later when thousands escaped famine conditions in Ireland. Cholera returned again in the 1850’s and many deaths resulted in Oakville.

When the 1834 outbreak subsided, John Urquhart decided to stay in Oakville. In 1835, he opened the ‘**Medical Hall**’ on the south side of Lakeshore Road, which was then known as Colborne Street. It was a combination drug, grocery store, surgery, and residence. The drug store was large and lined with shelves and had stools for waiting customers. A business directory in 1851 listed him as, ‘chemist, druggist, and dealer in paints, oils, groceries, perfumery, etc.’ A newspaper advertisement in 1857 described his business as supplying doctors with ‘English, French, American drugs and chemicals and live leaches.’ He also imported dried fruits and nuts, pickles, sauces, and tinned delicacies.



Dr. John Urquhart's Medical Hall

It was here that his son **John, Jr.** was born in 1844 and who eventually followed in his footsteps. As a young man, he was trained by his father in the preparation of prescriptions and the manufacture of pills and tinctures. He measured powders and liquids on a brass scale and the ingredients would be bottled or wrapped in small white papers. His ambition was to study medicine and, in 1864, he attended Dr. Rolph’s Medical College, which was affiliated with Victoria College.

When his father died in 1867, he succeeded in the business at the age of 23 and put his medical education on hold for twelve years. He returned to medical school and obtained his degree from the University of Toronto, followed by post-graduate work at Edinburgh. In addition to his medical practice, he carried on with the operation of his drug store. He served the Town of Oakville in another capacity as Mayor (1888-1891 and 1898-1899).

His daughter, Mrs. McCleary, wrote about her father's part in the serious smallpox epidemic of 1907:

“Father was the one who recognized the first case of smallpox, and soon it had spread all over town. He had a ‘camp’ set up on the west side of the river, on the lakefront near **Holyrood**, and everyone who developed the disease had to be taken there until they were better. The patients were picked up one by one and driven through town by horse and wagon (resembling a ‘lumber-wagon’) to the camp where they were looked after. When people saw one of these wagons they knew it was a case of smallpox and took care not to go near. I do not know how many contracted the disease, nor how long the camp was necessary, because Father decided to take the precaution of sending me away, and I was out of Oakville when the epidemic was at its worst.”

Dr. John Urquhart, Jr. died at the age of 90 in the house where he was born. He was believed to be the oldest practicing physician in Ontario. ‘Medical Hall’ had carried on in business for almost a century and was one of the two oldest concerns in the town. The lifetimes of the two Dr. Urquharts had spanned a period of 131 years.

The Sunflower Solution

Another public health problem was malaria, or ague, as it was known then. The disease was very prevalent in Oakville. A common treatment was a medicine made of brandy, alum, sugar, nutmeg, oil of lemon and Peruvian bark, all of which was grated and steeped in boiling water. It was to be taken every four hours until the patient fully recovered.



Dr. John Urquhart Jr.

In an attempt to control the disease, the Oakville Council created a special committee in 1870 to make recommendations ‘on the sanitary condition of the marsh’. Although the disease was known to be associated with swamps and marshes, no one understood the connection with mosquitoes.

After studying the matter, the committee reported that it would be too expensive to fill in the marsh on both sides of the Sixteen Mile Creek. It did not believe that the planting of willow trees would have any effect and that it would be difficult to protect them from cattle and, from ice jams in the spring. The committee’s conclusion was, “that the most available plant as a preventative to malaria is the sunflower. It is of thrifty growth and easily cultivated for sanitary purposes in many places in the United States and invariably with most satisfactory results”.

When the problem was being discussed, it was noted that other towns had found that pouring kerosene on marshes was effective. One councilor killed this suggestion by objecting that the procedure would advertise the fact that the disease existed in Oakville.

Council accepted the committee’s recommendation and the Mayor issued a proclamation requesting that sunflower seeds be planted in gardens and all places on both sides of The Sixteen not frequented by cattle. An advertisement in the press announced the arrival of, “a supply of sunflower seeds for gratuitous distribution. The Sanitary Committee urges upon people of this town the importance of at once sowing these seeds extensively, as a remedy for malaria”. By the end of the century, the disease diminished and eventually disappeared.

May Isaac and Ernle Carroll

MEDICAL REMEDY FOR AGUE (Malaria)

R_x

½ pint fourth proof brandy
1 piece alum as large as a walnut
½ or ¾ lb sugar
3 nutmegs
2 oz Peruvian bark
¼ oz oil of lemon

Grate and mix together then add 2 quarts boiling water and let stand till cool.

Take ¾ gill once every four hours until the ague is off.



AROUND THE SOCIETY



White Elephant Sale

HATS OFF! to so many members who helped with the White Elephant and Bake Sale. Grace Schroeder did all the telephoning while Midge Philbrook, Maggie Leaver, May Isaac and, Ernle Carroll helped with pricing. Evelyn Bullied polished brass and, cleaned and sorted the jewellery for the sale. Unfortunately, we do not have space to mention everybody. It is a big project and successful only because of the many “*helpers*”.

Thanks also to Anne Hetherington for her baking and, Maggie Leaver for helping to clear up at the **Knox Meeting**.

Barbara Savage

Afternoon Teas

Summer is almost here and our program and dates of **Heritage Walks** are planned. The afternoon teas that follow are, an integral and delightful finale to these walks. A member of the board, who needs one or two extra pairs of hands, organizes each tea. If you can spare 2 ½ to 3 hours on a Sunday afternoon to help at one of the teas, we would be very, very grateful.

No baking is required (unless you want to). Help is needed to set up tables, serve the refreshments and wash up. Our visitors are always appreciative and your Board really does need your help. Please call me for further details at **905-337-3209** or, the office at **905-844-2695**.

Ann Reynolds

Finding Your Way Through The Maze: **Historical Property Research**

Have you ever been curious about your property's history? Who lived there before? What did they do? The clues are all around us -- if we know how to look.

This presentation (**Sept 20**) offers an introduction to conducting property research in our community: how and where to begin, what resources are available, and how to access information. Property research is, in a sense, a genealogy of bricks and mortar and land.

Matthew Wilkinson

[Adopt-A-Park/Trail Program](#)

With a personal note at the bottom wishing the Society well in 2006, Mayor Ann Mulvale sent a letter of appreciation to express her “sincere thanks” to Ms. Ann Reynolds and the Historical Society **“for participating in the Adopt-A-Park/Trail Program.**

This referred specifically to the Society adopting **Lakeside Park** (Old Post Office & Thomas House) and the “attention given to the area through the collection of litter and debris”. The Mayor appreciates the Society’s commitment and noted that, “ Your efforts, multiplied by similar volunteer empowerment, result in a town-wide endeavour that succeeds with the resources of dedicated people like those in the Historical Society. My thanks, and those of the entire town, go to each member of The Oakville Historical Society”.

The Editor

[The Thomas House](#)

The Thomas House was re-opened on Sunday, May 21st, the Victoria Day weekend. Under Ann Reynold’s supervision, the house has been swept and dusted to perfection in readiness for our wonderful interpreters, who have volunteered their time for May and June, with a few already committed for July and August. **A big thank-you from your new co-coordinator.**

As always happens, some people will not be returning due to various circumstances. We really appreciate all their contributions in the past and now we look to any new people with a love of Oakville history who might wish to become an interpreter. If you know of anyone in this capacity, have them call me. * **905-842-6977.**

Pat Mack

Artist in Residence

Fellow member, **Rod Adam**, our own “Artist in Residence”, has been spending a lot of time at the OHS these days. The result is a showing of his **watercolours**, some of which are based on records available from archived material.

The showing takes place at Season’s Restaurant on Lakeshore Road between May 20th and September 4th, 2006. **Everyone is welcome to drop by.**

The Editor

Treasures in an Old Chocolate Box

The Acquisition Committee has been given an interesting collection of documents by a Morden family member. The items were neatly folded into a chocolate box and, when opened, it was found that they mostly related to land acquisitions and mortgages -- between thirty and forty assorted documents. The earliest document was dated 1845.

In 1913 **Captain E.A. Morden** took a step to improve his milking stock by acquiring a pedigree cow of 1911 named “Abigail Beels”, a Holstein-Freisian, but she was transferred shortly.

In 1934 the Guardian Insurance Company of Canada issued an insurance policy for Captain Morden on April 26th for an “Automobile” at a premium of \$25.00.

But, perhaps the most unusual document was undated and headed, “Specifications of a dwelling house to be built by E.A. Morden, Esq. Oakville”. Pinned together were five typewritten papers with the most thorough details of construction and finish.

Where the house was built we do not know or, if it was ever put up. The collection of documents should make interesting reading and study, with materials perhaps figuring in a future Newsletter.

Margaret Buxton

[Solution to "The Way Things Were – March 2006](#)

From the March article, the 1940 picture showed **Mrs. T.R. Jarvis** in the “Broxstowe House”. She and her husband lived initially at Oakville, where Mr. Jarvis was employed in a partnership with a Mr. Ryrie, in a Real Estate and Insurance Business.

Harry Buxton

[The Secret Garden](#)

Planting will be well underway when you read this and, for those who have helped, your assistance is very much appreciated. There is still work to be done and we can certainly use the help of everyone to ensure this garden is ready to greet our visitors, whether or not you have a “green thumb”. Please contact me at **905-842-1977** if you can assist.

Jo Kleimeyer

[Talk on Ontario Architecture](#)

Those who attended the Public Meeting at Knox Church on April 19 were treated to an exceptionally interesting and well-presented talk on Ontario Architecture, illustrated extensively with slides. Our speaker was **Shannon Kyles**, a member of the faculty of Mohawk College in Hamilton.

Shannon has devoted much of her career to research on the styles and terms of Architecture. This research has included extensive travel viewing and photographing buildings and their features. The result is an exceptional fund of information on the architecture of Western Civilization, coupled with an entertaining presentation style and delightful sense of humour.

During a sabbatical leave from the College, Shannon developed a very comprehensive website to provide viewers with an appreciation of architecture both in Ontario and in the rest of the world. The website is in two parts and covers Building Styles and Building terms in a very detailed and interesting manner. Photographs on the website were taken by Shannon during her travels. If you missed the talk you will enjoy catching up via the Internet at www.OntarioArchitecture.com.

Walter Jennings

THE WAY THINGS WERE



- 1: Where is this house located?
 - 2: What was it used for and when?
 - 3: What changes were made to the building?
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