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

**SEPTEMBER 2006**

**Volume 40: Number 3**

## 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.
September	Sun 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm	Sun 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2 pm	Mon 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm
October	Sun 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 pm	Sun 15 <sup>th</sup> , 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 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup>	-----
October	5 <sup>th</sup> , 12 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup> and 26 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup>

+ One-hour duration

\*\*\*CALL 905-844-2695 FOR MORE INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As the summer winds down and your Society prepares for the fall season of Harvest Festival, Speakers Nights and Ghost Walks, I would like to report on some of the goings on that affect us.

The next time you visit the office you may notice some changes. A few months ago a **renovation committee** was formed which included Harry Barrett, Walter Jennings and I. In June, we presented a plan to the board. The office and boardroom are now much more usable and feature new areas for research. We continue to expand our use of technology.

Thanks primarily to the work of Mary Noad, Harry Barrett and Jamie Macrae we finally seem to be making some progress with the installation of our **Volunteer Memorial**. Under Mary's leadership a fountain was purchased a couple of years ago but several hurdles have slowed down the project.

The Town has hired a consultant to prepare an overall site plan for the **Erchless Estate**. At the time of writing we have not yet met with the consultant but Harry Barrett and I will be in the near future. A priority for us is the replacement of the dilapidated chain link fence on the north side of the property.

When the Town and the Society came to agreement on their roles in the protection of the Town's history, a **Museum Advisory Board** was created on which the Society had one seat. This board ceased to operate a few years ago but a new citizen's committee is being formed which will include a representative from the Society.

Work on the **Town's sesquicentennial celebrations** continues. In June, the Society and the Town's task force for the events hosted a brainstorming session at the office. This event was well attended by interested people from the community and several projects are now in the planning stages.

If you have comments or concerns about your Society, please contact me.

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
georgechisholm@sympatico.ca

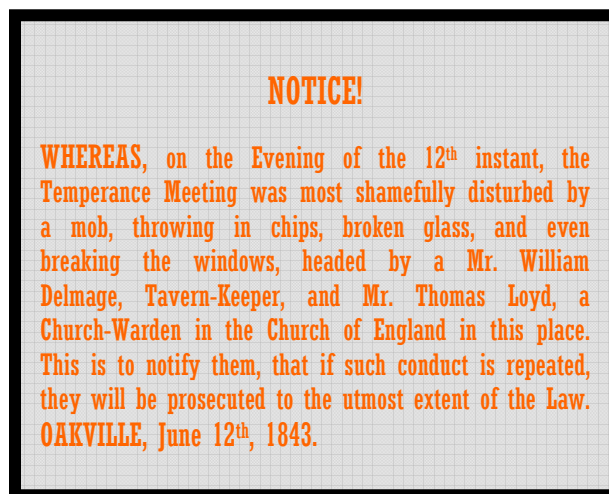
**COVER PICTURE:** Temperance Hall was built in 1843 and was the first Temperance Hall in Ontario. It was located at the corner of Trafalgar and Randal Streets, where Tim Horton's is now located.

## *Temperance Hall*

In the early days of Oakville, liquor was cheap and plentiful - consumed in large quantities. Life was hard and people depended on alcohol to get through the day. Drunkenness was common. After a while, there was a reaction and the **Temperance Movement** spread from the United States to Canada. In 1830 a Society was formed in the Township of Trafalgar. By 1834, the **Oakville Temperance Reformation Society** had been formed. The President was Justus Williams and the meetings were held in his store. The idea was to promote temperance rather than abstinence. Whisky, brandy and rum were the main targets of the movement.

There was a need for a hall where the regular meetings of the Society could be held. Justus Williams and Thomas Leach procured a lot on the southeast corner of Trafalgar and Randall Streets, where Tim Horton's now stands. The Hall, finished in 1843, was the first Temperance Hall in the province. R. D. Wadsworth, Secretary of the Montreal Society, attended the official opening. His purpose was to respond to a pamphlet against temperance that had recently been published. He especially recommended that there should be a "**cold water army**" for children that would encourage them to enjoy the taste of fresh water and avoid alcohol all their lives. This suggestion was not taken very seriously.

The following notice was published as a result of a public disturbance when the Hall opened:



The Hall was used for many meetings other than those of the Temperance Society. The Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church conducted some of their services in the Hall as they did not have buildings of their own until 1850-1851. The Salvation Army also had meetings as well as the **Town Band**, which used the Hall for rehearsals.

The first meeting of the Township of Trafalgar Council was held on January 31, 1850 in Temperance Hall. The Oakville Temperance Reformation Society had agreed 'to present the Councilors with the gratuitous use of the Hall', and it continued as the Township Hall for the next six years. When Oakville was incorporated as a municipality in 1857, the Society offered the Hall to the Town Council of Oakville.



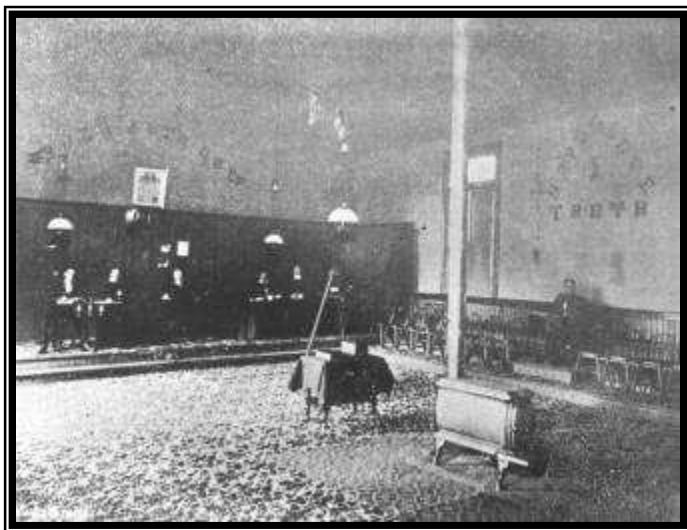
Mason & Hamlin reed organ built in 1874

It became known as '**the Town Hall**'. Some of the meetings may have benefited from a 'sober second thought'.

The Temperance Society was reorganized in 1869 as the **Royal Oak Temple**, No. 216. The members then called themselves **Royal Templars**.

On June 3, 1869, Queen Victoria's Jubilee was celebrated in Oakville. One of the features of the day was a temperance excursion from Toronto on board the *Rothsay Castle*, a famous steamer of the day. There were about five hundred Good Templars on board, who were met at the wharf by about one hundred Royal Templars from Oakville. A news item of the day reported that "it was a splendid sight to see a procession of over six hundred persons, composed almost entirely of young people, who declared themselves against the use of intoxicating drinks". The day was spent at **Beardsley's Grove**, where there were swings, games and all manner of amusements provided by the Town. This was a happy time for the Temperance Society of Oakville as people felt that they were gaining support in their drive against alcohol.

From the time that Oakville became a municipality, the licensing of taverns was a subject of much concern. In 1865, The **Dunkin Act** gave the counties the option of prohibiting the sale, but not the importation or possession of intoxicants. Halton County voted in favour of this by-law, but it was eventually thrown out on a technicality and licenses were again issued. There was a rising feeling throughout the province in favour of prohibition. The **‘Canada Temperance Act’**, passed in 1878 by the Ontario Legislature, was more generally known as the ‘Scott Act’. Liquor could be purchased only from a licensed purveyor for home consumption, but could not be sold in taverns or hotels. Halton County was the first county to support prohibition and became known as the “banner county”.



Interior of Temperance Hall  
The ‘motto’ on the right wall reads ‘Hope, Love, Truth’

For three years, Oakville held back, but on April 19, 1881, the new law was passed by a majority of 87. This decision may have been influenced by events at the Canadian Hotel that year. The two women, who were the proprietors, seemed unable to cope with the brawls that took place in the hotel, which disturbed the entire neighbourhood. Chief Constable George Sumner remarked “that it was pretty poor, as they are supposed to be ladies”.

When the Scott Act came into force, all the taverns and hotels were closed. People who came into town said that they would not come again. Peel, Wellington and Wentworth stayed ‘wet’ and pointed to Oakville and Milton as examples of the failure of prohibition. In 1888, the Oakville electorate voted to repeal the Scott Act by a majority of 179. After this was passed, the hotels gradually reopened and life in Oakville returned to normal. It had been a bitter time and it took a while for the different factions, pro and anti prohibition, to settle their differences.

On April 17, 1883, a fire broke out in the office of the **Standard newspaper**. When first discovered, it was fairly small. The fire brigade had difficulty in getting one

of the pumps to work and soon the fire was out of control. By 4 a.m. the whole block was in ashes. A request was sent to Toronto for help and a special train with a fire engine and a brigade of firemen were sent to Oakville. But, when it arrived, it was not needed. The accounts of this fire in the newspapers were greatly exaggerated and the fire department in Oakville was blamed for part of the trouble. The reason for this was that at the time of the fire, prohibition reigned in Oakville and those who were against it seized every opportunity to blame prohibition for any unexpected disaster. Because many offices were destroyed in the fire, the Temperance Hall was used as an alternative until they could be replaced.

**Electric light** was first used in Oakville on the occasion of the Royal Templar's 'camp'. This took place at Harbour Grove and was the largest temperance gathering held in Canada up to 1889. It lasted for ten days. All the provinces attended, with the exception of Nova Scotia. There were forty speakers and three Royal Revival Bands. The large dining hall held 1,200 people and the ladies of the WCTU served the meals. The lighting system, set up by the Kay Company of Hamilton, was the first time electric light was seen in Oakville.

With the defeat of the Scott Act, the influence of the Temperance Movement gradually faded. Temperance Hall was bought by the **Salvation Army** and was their headquarters in Oakville for many years. In 1970, the building was demolished and Tim Horton's took over the site. Although Temperance Hall is gone, it had a covenant, which said that no alcohol could ever be consumed or sold on that property, so the aims of the Royal Templars have not disappeared completely.

Ernie Carroll

### Board of Directors - 2006

The following are your elected Board of Directors for the Oakville Historical Society for 2006. Although they are elected to oversee the challenging task of leading our Society, they depend on our volunteers and others to fulfill their mandate. This newsletter is one method of letting the members know of the work being done. Any concerns you have regarding the Society should be directed to the directors for their attention.

Harry Barrett	Ev Bullied	Harry Buxton – Honourary
Margaret Buxton	George Chisholm - President	Jeff Jarvis - Past President
Walter Jennings - Treasurer	June Hitchcox	Andrea Stewart
Barbara Savage - Vice President	Jim Young - Secretary	Karen Wooley



## **AROUND THE SOCIETY**



### **More on Researching Your Property**

**M**any people are curious about their home and property – who used to live there, their occupation, when did they live there? We invite you to hear *Matthew Wilkinson*, our Knox Church Speaker on this topic. He will give clues on how and where to begin, what resources are available and, how to access information on **Wednesday, September 20 – 7:30 P.M.**

Our Society and the Oakville Main Library may hold information on your property and/or the people who have lived there. We are currently compiling individual file cards by street, then street number, on all available information on each area building - information that is found in books such as “Oakville and the Sixteen”, wills, marriage certificates, historical maps, photos of houses and individuals and, much more.

If your house proves to be 100+ years old, you are eligible for a **house plaque** and may wish to order one from the Society.

June Hitchcox

### **Historical Presentation**

**S**ecret warriors were trained to work behind enemy lines at **Camp X**, which was located on the boundary of Oshawa and Whitby. Dropped by parachute, they trained and organized resistance groups, who would sabotage and destroy enemy supply lines during WW II.

Mark your calendars to attend the Knox Presbyterian Church for a fascinating evening on **Wednesday, November 15<sup>th</sup> 2006**, when *Lyn Philip Hodgson*, the author of “Camp X”, will be telling us the true story of our secret warriors.

Barbara Savage



## Chills Down Your Spine

Come and join **Francine Landry Smith** as she leads a Ghost Walk through Old Oakville. It's spooky, spine tingling and lots of fun. Book early as last year we had to unfortunately turn people away. Call **905-844-2695** to reserve your place for this walk on the dark side of Oakville.

Bring along a flashlight and wear good walking shoes. And, remember to wear appropriate fall apparel for a evening jaunt into this offbeat look into Oakville's scarier past.

Refer to Page Two for dates.



Cost: Adults: \$12. Children Under 12: \$6.  
Sorry, the spirits demand cash only. No credit cards.

Barbara Savage

## The Thomas House – Summer 2006

The Thomas House opened on the May 24<sup>th</sup> weekend and, from then until our Harvest Festival on September 26<sup>th</sup>, our interpreters will delight the public with the history of the house and welcome visitors from all over the world.

A heartfelt thank-you to all our Mrs. Thomas' and Mr. Thomas', our spinners who shared their talents and, Ernle Carroll who hosted a group of youngsters from the summer programme. Once again the Thomas House had a most successful summer.

Congratulations.

Pat Mack

## The Secret Garden

The garden has been coming along but, unfortunately, Jo Kleimeyer fell and broke her hip, somewhat limiting her participation and leadership in the development of this beautiful asset of the Society. She is on the mend but her mobility is

restricted at this time. If there are any **volunteers** that can step into the breach and assist with the fall garden duties, it would be much appreciated. Please **contact** one of the directors or, Jo Kleimeyer (905-842-1977) if you can help.

Lance Naismith

### **Solution to “The Way Things Were” – June 2006**

**T**he photograph in the June issue is a residence at 72 First Street. It was built in 1855 and called ‘**Mapledene**’ by its owner, W. E. Hagaman, one of Oakville’s early grain merchants. In 1945, the Lion’s Club purchased the building, installed an elevator, and it became a temporary hospital, accommodating fourteen patients. The property was donated to the Hospital Association who operated the hospital until the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was opened in 1950. Its new owner removed the verandah and elevator in the early 1970’s. The current owners have recently restored the verandah.

May Isaac

### **Harvest Festival**

**D**on’t forget to come to the Harvest Festival on **Sunday, September 24th** at the Thomas House in Lakeside Park between 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. The many Mr. and Mrs. Thomas’ will be there as well as baked goods, preserves, **crafts for the children** and, free apple cider. The weather is usually sunny, a little cool but very enjoyable.

Barbara Savage

### **Between the Covers**

**A**mong our recent acquisitions are the book, “Royal Navy Wives, Widows, Sisters, Aunts and Daughters” and, a group of books called, “The Albertsons, Forsters, Sniders, Henney and Shains”.

The first one is the story of **Amelia Mary Haswell** who married Lt. William Pullen in the early 1800's and the subsequent "Navy women" until the current time.

The second group of books consists of stories about the **pioneer families** in the area of Sniders Corners and Wesley United Church, the area we know as Burnhamthorpe and Ninth Line.

If anyone with **library experience** could volunteer even one hour a month, it would be gratefully appreciated.

Ev Bullied

### Preserving the Present

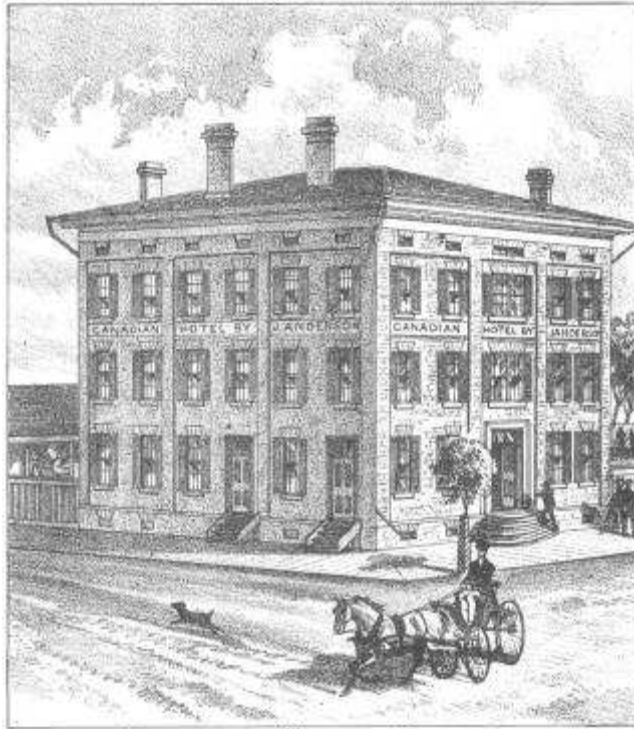
**M**ost who are involved in the Society, in addition to their own personal reasons, are there due to a love of the past - specifically Oakville. Not only preserving but being able to enjoy the **unearthing of Oakville's history** from diaries, old books, fading photos and crumbling documents and, sharing these discoveries with each other and the public.

It is nice to view our history through not only the eyes of the official historians, and politicians but reading it from the perspective of the average person who left a diary or old photo album. Remember though, these people lived the history just as you are doing now.

Unfortunately, all the **traditional physical methods** of gathering history are dying away with text messaging, email, digital cameras and, the storing of photos on computers that get dumped with every new hardware upgrade. The history of the average person will not be preserved. Maybe we should be trying to work out how to preserve this history and promote the preservation of everyday life, which is a window into life separate from the politically cleansed official histories. It is the history that you are **experiencing today** and, although you may not think it important in the grand scheme of things, people a few hundred years from now may want to see how you handled daily living.

Lance Naismith

## **THE WAY THINGS WERE**



CANADIAN HOTEL OAKVILLE  
JOHN ANDERSON PROP

- 1: Where is this building located?
- 2: When was it built?
- 3: What is its current name?

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