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

SEPTEMBER 2008

Volume 42: Number 3

SPECIAL EVENTS

September 27

“Harvest Festival” at the Thomas House, along with Doors Open.

December 5th

“Annual Wine and Cheese Party” at 110 King St.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS (7:30pm, Knox Church)

October 15th

“Gun boats on the Great Lakes”
– Cheryl MacDonald

An author coming to us from Nanticoke Ontario who specializes in Canadian history- The gunboats provided a sense of security after the Fenian raids into Canada.

November 4th

“An Evening with Mike Filey” – Mike Filey

He has written nearly two dozen books on various facets of Toronto’s past. For the past twenty years he has written a very popular column in the Sunday Sun called "The Way We Were". He can also be heard almost daily on AM740. **NOTE DATE CHANGE FOR THIS EVENT**

HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS SCHEDULE (2 hours)

MONTH	MAIN ST	HERITAGE HOUSES	TRAFALGAR RD
SEPT	Sun 7 th , 2pm	Sun 14 & 21, 2pm	Mon 1 st , 2pm
OCT	Sun 5 th , 2pm	-----	Mon 13 th , 2pm
STARTS	S/W corner Navy & Lakeshore	OHS Society Building 110 King Street	St. John’s United Church 262 Randall Street

GHOST WALKS (1 HOUR)

MONTH	Thursday/Tuesday 6:00,7:00 & 8:30pm	Saturday 6:00, 7:00 & 8:30pm	Dates that have a third Walk – 6:00pm are <u>Bold & underlined</u>
Sept	-----	27 th	
Oct	Thurs 9 th , 16 th , 23 rd & <u>30th</u> Tues 21 st & <u>28th</u>	4 th , 11 th , <u>18th & 25th</u>	

Note: Walks are \$12/ person

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This newsletter marks the end of a busy and very wet summer. Your Society continues to function like a well oiled watch. The Thomas House saw its usual crowds and quiet days. We had a very successful “**Bands in the Park**” and the office saw many visitors. I don't normally have the opportunity to spend much time at the office, but this summer I was working on some renovations to what was the back kitchen. It is amazing how busy the office is on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Judging by the number of visitors, researchers and volunteers, we are obviously doing our job well.

On 27 and 28 September, we will be very involved in the first annual **Oakville Doors Open**. With twenty venues in our first year, it's shaping up to be quite an event. We are the lead organization and are very pleased to have **Elizabeth Waldorf** as the event co-ordinator. **Barb Savage** is looking for volunteers to assist with the event. If you can help out, please call her at the office at 905 844-2695.

Drew Bucknall and his group have been making some progress with the development of plans for the future of the Society. We have a new and very powerful computer at the office and have recently upgraded our internet access. Training is ongoing. Our website has become an integral part of the operations of the Society. Many visitors are now booking spots on our walking tours online and the number of email inquiries continues to increase.

As always, if you have any concerns, questions or comments, please contact the office or me by email at president@oakvillehistory.org.

Oakville Historical Society E-mail
info@oakvillehistory.org

Archive Hours * Tues & Thurs –
1PM to 4:30PM at 110 King Street.

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

COVER PICTURE: Montage showcasing some “**Doors Open**” sites - prepared by Carolyn Naismith. Page two - Band Stand in Lakeside Park.

Doors Open Oakville

The first annual Doors Open Oakville event will be held September 27 to 28, 2008. Historical buildings, arts and cultural organizations, will be opening their doors free to the public - the event is part of a larger province-wide tourism initiative called “**Doors Open Ontario**”.

The Doors Open concept had its beginnings in France in 1984. From there it grew to 'European Heritage Days' in 11 countries. Today over 40 countries, worldwide, have initiated the program. Each year in Ontario, hundreds of historic buildings, natural spaces and heritage gardens – some of which are rarely accessible to the public – open for free as part of “Doors Open”. Many of the participating sites in Oakville will offer special activities such as tours, exhibitions and demonstrations. The guiding principle is to educate and inform the community about the importance of architectural, cultural and natural heritage sites.

Oakville is an ideal location for this event as it has such a rich history and many of its important architectural sites have been protected over the years, so that they remain a physical presence of the past for the present and the future. Oakville is also a town with great artistic and cultural resources, fostered through the years by individuals and groups, who are passionate about what they do and understand the value arts and culture bring to the quality of life in Oakville.

"The idea is that for one weekend, people from all different cultural and heritage institutions, open their doors to the public and give them a chance to see something



Media Launch – Doors Open (L to R)

Kevin Flynn MPP, Bill Nesbitt (Erchless), George Chisholm (OHS), Lindsay Williams (Ont. Trillium Foundation), June Cockwell (Oakville Community Foundation)

they wouldn't normally see," said **Bill Nesbitt**, Oakville Museum supervisor and a member of the "Doors Open" Oakville committee. "It is kind of a behind the scenes peek and I think people will be surprised at their own community and there's more going on in Oakville than they think. It is also completely free and run by volunteers, which is nice. We want people to see what a great breadth and depth of culture exists here."

The launch for Doors Open Oakville was held June 26, 2008, at the Oakville Club, itself an historic structure having started as a granary over a century ago. Among those in attendance were: Ontario Trillium Foundation representatives **Lindsay Williams** and **Gilmar Militar** and the Oakville Community Foundation vice-chair **June Cockwell** -- both organizations having donated funds to make the event possible, the president of the Oakville Historical Society, **George Chisholm**, and the Oakville MPP, **Kevin Flynn**. "It will give people a sense of the heritage and history of the town of Oakville, so we encourage people to investigate their community and see what we have to offer," said George Chisholm. "This is a great program and I know that this will show people across the province the cultural treasures and riches we have right here in our own neighbourhood," said Kevin Flynn. "It is tough to convince people that our heritage needs to be preserved, so I'm thankful to all our volunteers who made this event possible. Oakville has a remarkable history and a great collection of historical buildings and now we have an opportunity to showcase that to the rest of the province."

To date, the featured Doors Open Oakville sites include:

Oakville Museum at Erchless Estate	Schooner Anitra docked at Oakville Club
St. Jude's Anglican Church	Oakville Galleries in Gairloch Gardens
St. Jude's Cemetery	Merrick Thomas House
Amos Biggar House/The Cork House	Oakville's First Post Office
The Granary	Oakville Lighthouse
Palermo Schoolhouse	Sovereign House
Masonic Temple	John Bell Chapel at Appleby College
George K. Chisholm House/Canadian Sound	Oakville Historical Society Archival Collection and Libraries
The Kensington (green roof)	Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts
Turner Chapel Antiques	

[Erchless Estate](#)

This four-acre property includes the restored home of the founding family of Oakville, the Chisholm's, as well as a Coach House and Gardeners Cottage. In 1856 R.K Chisholm constructed a two-storey Custom House and the first Oakville branch of the Bank of Toronto. It is now home to the **Oakville Museum**.

Oakville Museum is a four-acre estate home and gardens set on the shores of Lake Ontario in downtown Oakville. The Museum preserves and interprets the town's history through the heritage and home of Oakville's founding family, the **Chisholms**. The Town of Oakville owes its existence to the vision of **Colonel William Chisholm** (1788-1842), an enterprising merchant and shipbuilder. In 1827, he bought 960 acres of land from the Crown at the mouth of the Sixteen Mile Creek on Lake Ontario to establish a port, shipbuilding yard and the village of Oakville.

Today, visitors can take a guided tour of Erchless, (c.1858), which is authentically restored to the elegance of its 1925 appearance. Visitors can also experience the **Custom House**, once home to a bank, general store and Oakville's Custom Offices, now housing the Museum's temporary exhibits with a beautiful view of Lake Ontario. Visitors may also enjoy a delightful walking tour of the estate grounds and gardens with a panoramic view of the Oakville Harbour. Across from Erchless is the Old Post Office - open seasonally.

Oakville Museum is owned and operated by the Town of Oakville, administered through the Recreation & Culture Department and is designated as a Category A Heritage Institution, holding objects of national significance.



Custom House

St. Jude's Anglican Church

St Jude's was established in 1839. The present building has been the church's home since 1883. Completed in 1896 the Bell Tower houses a set of 9 chime bells cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London, England for a cost of \$3,587. The tower clock was installed in 1906, and is wound by hand once a week.

St. Jude's Church began its life as a mission on August 12, 1839 when the Rev. Tom Greene arrived on horseback from St. Luke's (Burlington), with his sacramental vessels and robes in saddle bags, to celebrate the first recorded Eucharist. At that stage in its development,

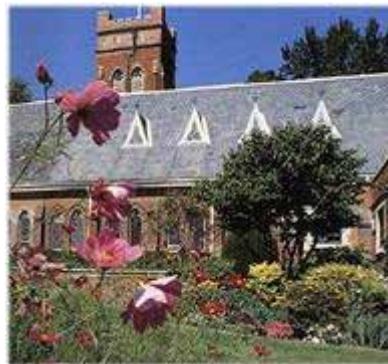


Oakville was a tiny, but lively village of some 500 souls. (Today, of course, it has multiplied over 200 times).



From 1842 to 1884, services were held in a frame building, once the property of early Methodists, which stood at the corner of Lakeshore Road and Thomas Street, site of the present Bank of Montreal. The present building has been the church's home since the first service on December 16, 1883, though many changes have been made. In 1887 the parish hall was completed to consist of what is now the main hall with a vaulted ceiling, featuring a beautiful Queen Victoria Jubilee window, the gift of a long-time warden,

Christopher Armstrong. The bell tower was completed in 1896. In 1924, the parish hall was enlarged by adding a large room and a kitchen to the west with three rooms and a small kitchen on the second floor as well as classrooms in the basement. The church itself was extended (in 1956) thirty-six feet to the north from its original wall (where the baptismal font is now located), and includes a gallery over the narthex. The parish hall had also been extended northward to provide office space and a new choir vestry. The sanctuary was enlarged by moving the communion rail to the steps of the chancel and the choir stalls to the floor of the nave.



[St. Jude's Cemetery](#)

In the mid 1800's, a plot of ground on the lake shore, about one mile west of the town, was purchased for a rectory and cemetery – now known as St. Jude's Cemetery. An addition was made in 1927 expanding the cemetery to 13 acres and the former rectory was moved to St Jude's Church. Many prominent Oakville settlers rest at this site.

St. Jude's Cemetery (on the Lakeshore Rd. across the Sixteen Mile Creek at Brookfield Road) has been the final resting place for many parishioners since the late 1850's, when the land was purchased for this purpose. In 1979, with the staffing management to run the cemetery placing a growing burden on the church, it was decided to surrender the property to the Town of Oakville, but the title remains "St. Jude's Cemetery."

[Oakville Galleries in Gairloch Gardens \(Og2\)](#)

Og2 is a public, contemporary art gallery located within a preserved Lakeshore estate and garden that date from the 1920's. The interior of the heritage building has been physically conserved and maintains climate and security controls to protect the exhibited art.

For Doors Open Oakville, visitors will enjoy Og2's exhibitions and a screening of *Paving the Way to Paradise*, an archive-based video documentary, produced by Og2, **Teresa Casas** and **Michelle Gay**. This documentary gives a brief, pictorial background

to the historical circumstances behind the design of **Gairloch Gardens**, while providing a larger historical context for development in Oakville from the turn of the twentieth century to present day.

Oakville's First Post Office

Originally located on the corner of Lakeshore and Navy St, this building was used as a post office from 1835 to 1856. William Chisholm was the first Post Master. The building was put to other uses after 1856 such as a wool storehouse, and after a second storey was added it functioned as a blacksmith's shop, a stable, a welders shop and lastly a leather storehouse. Located in Lakeside Park, foot of Navy Street (east side).



The Anitra Schooner

This classic wooden gaff-rigged schooner has been sailing out of the Oakville Club for 82 years under the **Macrae** family burgee for the entire time. Named after an Egyptian dancing girl, Anitra proved to be fast for her age. She flies some 100 racing pennants, including the esteemed 1939 Prince of Wales Cup. Designed by **Montye Macrae** and built in Hamilton in 1926, Anitra's 40 feet of oak frame and cedar planking has stood the test of time. Her rig, reminiscent of the old schooners of Oakville, is a pretty sight on Lake Ontario.



Anitra, with owner, Jamie Macrae

Amos Biggar House (Cork House)

Amos Biggar was a United Empire Loyalist and built his home in 1816, in the Classic Revival Style and is a good example of a Loyalist farmstead home. The house is one of the few that remain in Oakville from **the “Mackenzie Rebellion”**. The **Jelinek Cork Group** of Oakville has turned it into the Cork House, a museum and product showroom wrapped into one.



In 1808, before the town of Oakville existed, the Crown granted the land at 502 Dundas Street West to **Daniel Shawson**. In 1815 Mr. Shawson sold the land to a United Empire Loyalist named **Amos Biggar**. Biggar built the original rectangular section of this house in 1816. Single storey additions were added to either side of the 1-1/2 storey rectangular original section. These additions were probably built

by the next owner of the house, **Philip Box**. In 1853, the house was sold to **Jonathan Pettit**. Already standing in 1837, the house is one of the few that remain in Trafalgar/Oakville from the "MacKenzie Rebellion". In 1903, the farm was sold to **George King** who reared at least 9 children there. In 1936, the farm was sold to **Harriet Pierce Bunting** who then sold the land to **Taymouth Industries Limited** in 1949.

Recently, the town of Oakville passed a bylaw to save the house from being destroyed. In 2000, the home was moved from its original location to the corner of the property where it also received its new address - 2441 Neyagawa Blvd. The house is now home to **Jelinek Cork Group** and the **Cork House**. The home has been restored and many elements besides the structure remain in their original form.

[George K. Chisholm House](#)

The house was built in 1848 by its namesake, the son of Oakville's founder, **William Chisholm**. This 1½ story structure was one of the first brick buildings in Town. It is now home to local retailer **Canadian Sound**. There is a fine regency styled verandah with intricate trellises which wrap around the entire building. Some of this building's architectural features include a low pitched roof, a distinctive chimney, and a front door flanked by sidelights.



[Sovereign House](#)

This house is a solid, stately brick building that was constructed by one of Bronte's founding fathers, **Charles Sovereign**, in 1825. In 1988, under the threat of demolition, the house was moved to the Bronte Bluffs. Charles Sovereign built this house on the property owned by his father, Philip, one of Bronte's earliest settlers. Charles opened the first school in the area in 1815 when he was just 17 years old. After teaching for several years he became the first local school inspector. His collection of journals, which he kept from age 36 to his death at 87 and are filled with interesting facts of life in Bronte in the 1800s, are now housed in the provincial archives.



From 1910 to 1915, Sovereign House was home to Canadian author **Mazo de la Roche**. She featured the home, as well as other details about Bronte and Oakville villagers' lives, in her novel "Possession", which became the prototype for her successful Jalna series. Today Sovereign House is the home of the Bronte Historical Society.

[Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts](#)

The Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts was built in 1977 to address the needs of a growing community to have a live performing venue. Designed by Alastair Grant, a junior architect at Ron Thom Partnership, the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts was built as a 485 seat auditorium and 120 seat cabaret style studio theatre.

Home to the best local and international live entertainment right in the heart of downtown, the Oakville Centre has over 260 performances per year staged. Surrounded by fabulous restaurants and unique shopping experiences, the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts has been host to Juno award winning artists such as Jane Arden, Colin James, Andre' Philippe Gagnon, Al Simmons Leahy and international stars including Bob Newhart, Inti-Illimani, Tower of Power, Bill Cosby and many more. The Oakville Centre is also home to the Oakville Drama Series and The Oakville Symphony Orchestra.

[Oakville Historical Society Office and Archives](#)

Located on the north side of the Erchless Estate are, “**The Cottages**”. They were erected in the mid 1950’s when Hazel Mathews and Juliet Chisholm relinquished Erchless and the Custom House to Hazel’s son.

Now equipped with environmental control systems, the Cottages provide areas for archive storage, a library and display space to protect and share the documents of **Oakville’s history**.



Compiled and/or written by Elizabeth Waldorf

Volunteers:

For each site we will need 2-3 volunteers per day for the weekend of Doors Open Oakville, September 27-28, 2008. The event also has need of several interpreters for some of the sites, such as the Palermo Schoolhouse. Site information will be provided.

Contact:

Elizabeth Waldorf

Doors Open Oakville Coordinator

Doorsopenoakville@gmail.com

905.845.6601 x 5122

*To find out more about Doors Open Ontario call 1-800-ONTARIO (668-2746) or visit www.doorsopenontario.on.ca. Doors Open Ontario is a program of the Ontario Heritage Trust. The **Ontario Heritage Trust** is an agency of the Government of Ontario dedicated to identifying, preserving, protecting and promoting Ontario's heritage for present and future generations. Doors Open Oakville is generously supported by grants from the **Ontario Trillium Foundation**, which is an agency of the Government of Ontario and, the **Halton Healthy Community Fund**.*



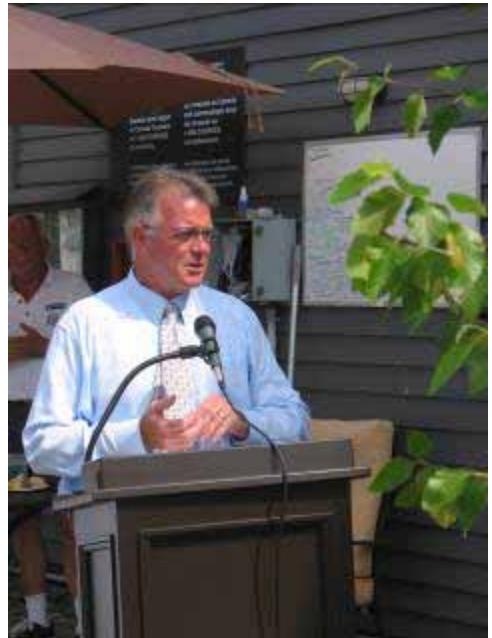
Oakville Lighthouse



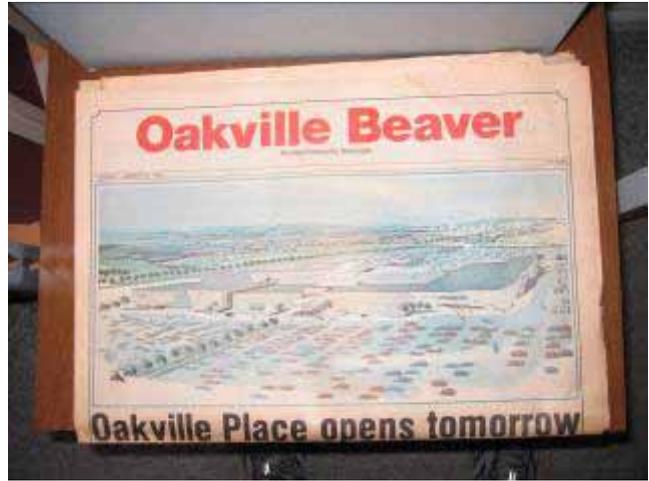
Palermo Schoolhouse



The Granary



AROUND THE SOCIETY



Solution to “The Way Things Were” – June 2008

The building is located in downtown Oakville at 234 Lakeshore Road East. It was built circa 1855/56. The building housed a series of hardware stores, beginning with **John McCorkindale** in 1856, followed in 1878 by **James Kelley**, who is shown in this 1897 photograph. His son-in-law, James McGregor, took over the business in the early 1900s. He stocked a variety of goods and had a tinsmithing and plumbing business as well. In the 1950s, Oakville Hardware operated their business in this building. The current occupant is **Prime Time Sports Bar**.

May Isaac



Note: One of the original stained glass windows (right) that was recovered from the building and now in the possession of Kelley’s great-great granddaughter, **Cathy Kelley**.

May Presentation

Author **Dorothy Duncan** gave a very informative and tasty presentation on “Pioneer Cooking”. Not only were the audience given an in-depth history of pioneer cooking in Canada, but their taste buds were tantalized with an offering of two types of pioneer cooking – produced as close to the original as modern ingredients allow.

The audience left with an appreciation of the hardships in preparing a meal and the types and variety of foods that were available to early settlers.



Dorothy Duncan (L) & Heather Davis

Lance Naismith

Community Spirit Award

Sponsored by the Oakville Beaver, the “**Community Spirit Awards**” was held at the Oakville Conference Centre, Holiday Inn (Highway 25), on June 11th, 2008.



Nominated by Carol Gall, with the nomination being supported by Barb Savage, George Chisholm and Marianne Hawthorne, our very own **Harry Barrett** was this year’s recipient.

Harry has continued to be involved in this community in a dynamic way and, a lot of us must thank him for his pursuit in making Oakville a better place to live. Congratulations on an award well deserved.

Mayor Bob Burton & Harry Barrett (R)

Lance Naismith



CONGRATULATIONS HARRY

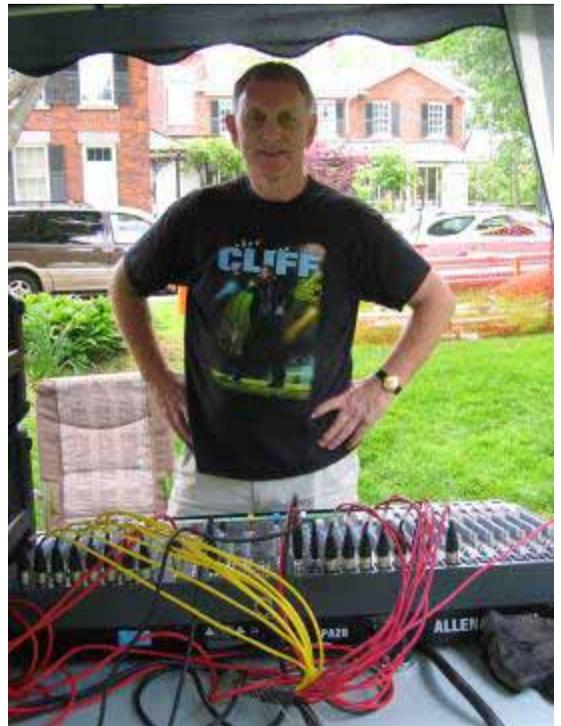
Concert in the Park

This years “Concert in the Park” was held under beautiful skies and, the waterfront crowd was totally entertained with the lively tunes of the “**Dixieland Band**” and the spellbinding melodies of the “**Oakville Wind Orchestra**”. Opened by our own Crier, Ian Burkholder, the crowd of music lovers enjoyed each others company, the weather and, having a lovely lunch while enjoying the music. Some even relaxed along the lakeside, quietly enjoying an afternoon of music while basking in the sun or, relaxing under a shady tree.



Pat Mack won first prize – Joyce Burnell's book on "Streets and Landmarks" for Best Hat and Costume and, **Gloria Niblock** won second prize for Best Hat, and received a gift certificate (\$25) to Bookers. Congratulations to both for helping make this concert a success.







From this:



To this:



WE ALL HAD FUN!!!!!!

[Cooking up a Storm at the Thomas House](#)

Following in her mother's footsteps (the late Mabel Wilson), Carol is cooking a chicken and greeting visitors at the Thomas House. On many Sundays and Monday holidays Mabel and granddaughter, Jessica, would welcome everyone too.

During ghost walk season, Carol becomes a pirate and entertains visitors with spine tingling tales.

Barbara Savage



[Here's to Harry and Margaret](#)

Harry and Margaret Buxton celebrated their 64th anniversary recently and an impromptu gathering of friends at the society occurred where we all shared in this happy occasion. I must admit that the chocolate ice cream cake was sinfully good. We are glad we were able to share this happy moment in their lives and look forward to their shared company around the Society.



Oakville Trafalgar High School – 100th Anniversary

Speaking of anniversaries, the Oakville Trafalgar High School recently held their 100th Anniversary with a social gathering and other events. One of our members, Evelyn Bullied had the honour of being the senior graduate that attended.



George Chisholm & Ev Bullied

History may be old news, but it takes people today to preserve it for our next generation. Without the help of volunteers, our local history will wither and die and the “**WHY**” a place developed will be lost to our future understanding.

Become involved in preserving what you and others have accomplished in Oakville and be a member of the Oakville Historical Society. It’s **your** history that will be preserved.

THE WAY THINGS WERE



Picture courtesy of Barbara Ellis

- 1: Can you identify the name of this sail boat?
 - 2: Can you identify the captain sailing her and the passenger?
 - 3: Where was the picture taken?
- ~~~~~

The Oakville Historical Society: 110 King Street, Oakville

Archive Hours: Tuesday & Thursday * 1:00 to 4:30PM

Tel: (905) 844-2695 Fax: (905) 844-7380 Website: www.oakvillehistory.org

Postal Address: P.O. Box 69501, 109 Thomas Street, Oakville, Ontario L6J 7R4