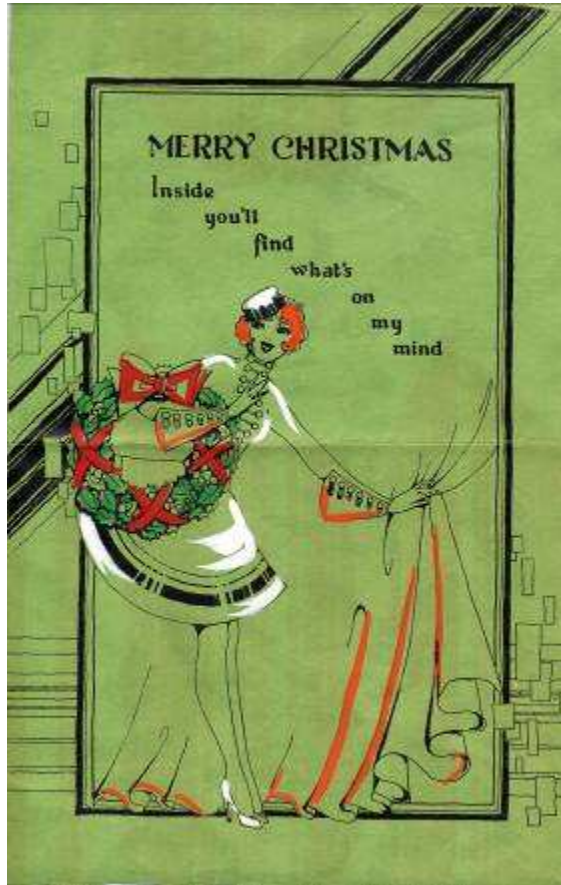


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*Preserving Oakville's  
Historical Heritage  
Since 1953*  
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THE OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2009

Volume 43: Number 4

SPECIAL EVENTS

December 4th, 2009: “Annual Wine and Cheese Christmas Party”
6:00pm to 9:00pm
110 King Street

March 14th, 2010: Annual General Meeting
Knox Church – 6:30pm - POTLUCK

WANTED

**“VICTORIAN” STYLE CLOTHING REQUIRED FOR GENTLEMEN
CONDUCTING OUR GHOST WALKS**

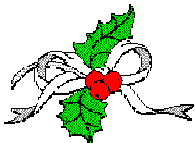
If anyone has any items such as “Morning Coats, Frock Coats, Tail Coats, pin striped or plain trousers, silk vests” – these would be greatly appreciated by the Society to add that authentic historical feel to our Ghost Walks for next year. If you can help, please contact Mary Davidson at the Society office.

Just a reminder - **Memberships are due** for renewal by December 31st. If you have renewed any time between September 1st and December 1st, please disregard this notice. If not, would you be kind enough to use the enclosed form to renew your **membership for 2010.**

Thank you for your continued support

Oakville Historical Society E-mail
info@oakvillehistory.org

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



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Some of you are aware that I retired from teaching in June after 30 years with the Halton District School Board, mostly in the Tech Department at Oakville Trafalgar High School. I thought that I would have more time to do some of the other things on my list. So far it hasn't happened, but it's only been a few months. Working on renovations at St John's has been my main focus recently, but my wife and I have a cruise booked for November. We'll be back in time for the **annual Members' Wine and Cheese**, which is set for Friday, 4 December. I hope to see you there.

Your newsletter editor, Lance Naismith, has recently overseen a fundraising lottery for the Society. As an employee of **Westjet**, he was able to arrange for the donation of two round trip tickets to anywhere that Westjet flies. The funds will be used to purchase IT equipment to help further our goal of automating our records and to make our material more readily available to the public. His Worship, **Mayor Rob Burton**, drew the winning ticket at the end of Doors Open. The winner was **Mr. Hermann Leiningen**.

Doors Open was a great success again this year and coincided with our annual Harvest Festival. I would like to thank all of you who volunteered your time to help out. **Barb Savage** is particularly deserving of our thanks, as she has worked as our representative on the committee for the past two years.

A couple of weeks ago we took delivery of twenty rolls of microfilm from the Church of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City. This microfilm covers the **Halton Registry** documents from the start of record keeping to 1958. We've been working on this project for some time. As we don't have the equipment necessary to view the film, we are in the process of working out a deal with the Oakville Public Library, so that they can hold it for us and make it available to the public. Those looking for information on property ownership in Trafalgar Township, Oakville and Bronte, will no longer have to make a trip to Milton.

In mid October, several members of the Society attended the third in a series of tasting events arranged by the Society and the Oakville Museum. This was a beer tasting held at the Oakville Centre for Performing Arts and featured **Bill Nesbitt**, Supervisor at the Museum. With the assistance of **Brenda Chisholm**, who looked after the food, Bill did a great job. Entertainment was provided by Oakville Ale and Sword, which performed two longsword dances and Tom Miller, who sang. Oakville Ale and Sword includes both your president and treasurer as dancers. To sum up the event, "a good time was had by all".

Have a Merry Christmas and a great New Year.

COVER PICTURE:

Christmas card sent to Mr. & Mrs. Ryland New,
Oakville, Ontario - postmarked December 25th, 1928

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

Freemasonry in Oakville

Secret societies!!! These two words conjure up pictures of darkened rooms, mystical spells, flowing capes and skullduggery at its finest. And, near the top of the list – **Freemasons**. Over the years Freemasonry has been treated as a secret society and to some, a society with a dark side. But Freemasonry is not a Secret Society, but a Society with secrets. For those who attended the **Doors Open** event and visited **Oakville Lodge #400**, you would have seen that Masons can be very open.

The UK Sibelius Lodge 9448 explains:

“To understand how Masons got the reputation as a secret society it is necessary to go back in history to the days when actual stone masons traveled the country from one job to another. This migration was usually done by an entire group of masons who were known as a lodge. These men would travel sometimes great distances to their next place of work and it was common for these stone masons to stay with other masons on their journey.

On arriving at their new place of work how would these masons demonstrate their skill? The answer is so simple it almost beggars belief but it worked. They demonstrated their rank and skill with secret handshakes and words.

Modern Freemasonry is directly descended from these early stone masons and to this day Freemasons demonstrate their skill in the 'Craft' by means of secret words and handshakes. Such secret words and handshakes are not given to the world at large but are normally only exchanged between active Freemasons. That is the root from which the idea that Freemasons are a secret society.”

The history of Freemasonry in Oakville, which is today proudly practiced within Oakville Lodge No. 400, has its roots in another lodge, a lodge closely associated with the founders of Oakville.

In 1827 **William Chisholm** bought the land upon which Oakville was developed. He was a member of **St. Andrews' Lodge No. 1** in York (Toronto) and to attend lodge

meetings, his trip via horseback took six to seven hours each way, thus making it a 2 day trip. His two sons **George King Chisholm** and **Robert Kerr Chisholm**, also joined.

By 1850, Oakville had become a thriving port and there was frequent trade with York. Masters of these ships and local members became members of **King Solomons' Lodge No. 22** in York. By 1857 George King Chisholm had become Oakville's first mayor and discussed the formation of an Oakville Masonic Lodge with other local masons. A petition was forwarded to the Grand Lodge and dispensation was granted to White Oak Lodge on January 11th, 1868. A Charter was issued at the July, 1868 Grand Lodge Convocation and was signed by Grand Master Most Worshipful Brother A.A. Stevenson. **White Oak Lodge No. 198** was now a reality.

Members represented all aspects of local Oakville society - from farmers to hardware merchants, mariners to saddlers and blacksmiths, physicians, custom officers and oil refinery owners.

William Chisholm was the lodge's first Worshipful Master and meetings were held on the 'Tuesday on or before the full moon' in the first lodge hall, located in **William Robertsons'** Hardware Store (S/W corner of Colborne St, later Lakeshore Blvd and Navy Street).

It later moved across to the Navy Block on the S/E corner and they rented the second floor over **John Barclays'** Dry Goods Store. As an aside, the Navy Block had been built by **William Romain**, who, in partnership with **Peter MacDougall**, later built The Granary.

The old adage of never talk about religion, politics or money, when on a social night out, was the bane of White Oak Lodge. During the latter part of the 1870's members allowed local politics to infiltrate the lodge and, because of the feelings of two members (one a Tory and the other a Grit), it became impossible to bring in new members. Each would "blackball" those affiliated with the other party. The last candidate initiated was **Samuel Armstrong** in September 1880.

A decision was made on January 31st, 1882, that the charter be surrendered and the last entry of this lodge was made March 31st, 1882. Within the minutes it should be noted that the members asked that another lodge be allowed to form within Oakville.

Thus, on November 16th, 1882, dispensation was granted to **Oakville Lodge U.D.**, which eventually was numbered 400 and its first regular meeting was held

December 19th, 1882. **John Kaitting** was the lodge's first Worshipful Master. The first candidate was William Biggar Chisholm, nephew of the founder.

On April 17th, 1883, tragedy struck when a fire broke out in the newspaper offices situated in the Navy Block. All was lost in the Masonic Hall, except for the saving of the records, thus preserving the early history. Temporarily situated in a building occupied by a Charter Member, **Thomas Paterson** at the corner of Colborne and Thomas Street, they moved into the rebuilt Navy Block, now called the **Romain Block** and the site dedicated on January 28th, 1884. You can see the fading outlines of Masonic symbology next to that of the Odd Fellow's symbols along the roofline today.



The Lodge prospered and enjoyed involvement in many activities, with contributions to various charities such as The Sick Children's Hospital and the Children's Aid Society.

In February, 1919 it was decided to investigate a new temple and, on July 2nd, 1919, the land at the n/e corner of Church and Thomas Streets was purchased and fund raising began in earnest to build a new Lodge. A member of the lodge, **Brother Connery**, donated the architectural plans and the building, was completed in the summer of 1924, with the first meeting held September 2nd, 1924, under **Worshipful Master Reg. M. Smith**.



Following WW II there was a growing interest in Freemasonry and eventually, the **Claude M. Kent Lodge No. 681** was dedicated October 12th, 1955 and **Trafalgar Lodge No. 712** in 1964. Both co-exist in the same temple as Lodge # 400.





The Romain Block today

History leaves impression on student

Kevin Liu - Kids Speak Out, School News, Appleby College, Senior 1

Published on September 11, 2009 in the **Oakville Beaver**.

With all the fervor caused by the new hit movie *Time Traveler's Wife*, it is understandable that time travel would be the newest infatuation on the ever-evolving minds of the average Oakville citizen.

Time travel has forever been measured as impossible and simply a mere component of unlikely science fiction novels. However, I am writing to let you in on Oakville's best kept secret, an opportunity to travel through time.

I am referring to the Thomas House Museum, where I work each Sunday as a tour guide for the Oakville Historical Society.

As a history enthusiast, this opportunity is one I will never forget. Each time I step through the wood-planked doors of the breathtaking 19th century farmhouse, I am transported back in time to the Canadian pioneer period.

The Thomas House is a small, white house with an unremarkable composition. The thing that separates it from other houses is that it is the exact diminutive white house that stood 180 years ago.

Merrick Thomas built this farmhouse in 1829. He was a prominent businessman, William Chisholm's (the founder of Oakville) brother-in-law and an important planner for the Village of Oakville.

The cabin is furnished with stunning antique artifacts, implementing the exact lifestyle brought to the area by Oakville's earliest settlers. Everything ranging from the grand stone fireplace to the old rope bed gives a wonderfully intricate insight into pioneer life.

When I was 10, I sat down in my first history class as a completely uninterested 10 year old. However, as I listened to my teacher, I felt a sense of wonder not possibly applicable to any other academic area. History gives the mind endless possibilities to imagine, dream and marvel.

As a member of the Oakville Historical Society, those possibilities are boundless. Each person I have worked with has an unparalleled passion for historical studies and what seems like all the time in the world to discuss it with an interested teenager.

With the support and guidance of mentors at the society, I will have the opportunity to publish my first book (a historical non-fiction on pioneer history, of course) this fall. Furthermore, with my historical background at the Oakville Historical Society, I was able to found the first international historical organization for teens, known as History Now.

Most people are exhilarated by glittery jewels and shiny objects while, admittedly, I am the exact opposite. I am most eager when explaining the usage of an old and rusted 1850s apple peeler or the correct way to grind grain with a flour sifter.

The Oakville Historical Society has been a wonderful resource that has made those opportunities possible. Whether it is the brilliant people or awe-inspiring relics, I am able to credit Oakville Historical Society with one of the most memorable aspects of high school life.

More information about the Thomas House Museum can be viewed at www.oakvillehistory.org . You can also visit www.historynow.ca .

Visit the OHS website at www.oakvillehistory.org for the enlarged and colour version of this newsletter and, explore the many informative areas of the website for event and tour dates.

AROUND THE SOCIETY



Solution to “The Way Things Were” – September 2009

Pictured were **Mr. and Mrs. C.G. Marlatt**, who owned the “Aggie”, named after Marlatt’s wife. He was a principal in Marlatt and Armstrong Tannery as

well as being Oakville's mayor in 1896-97 and, a commissioner with the Oakville Water and Light Commission in 1908.

Lance Naismith

Presentation

Robert Nichol -The Forgotten Hero of the War of 1812

Cheryl MacDonald and Bob Blakely, authors and historians with a strong interest in the War of 1812, were our guests at Knox Presbyterian Church in October. Dressed in historical costume, they gave a dramatic account of the life and death of Lt. Col. Robert Nichol of the Norfolk Militia who, under the command of his good friend, Major-General Isaac Brock, played an integral role in the War of 1812.

Cheryl, playing the part of Robert's wife, and Bob narrating the story, enthralled us with an account of Nichol's life; his heroic conduct during the war and of his untimely and mysterious end; he and his horse having fallen several hundred feet down the Niagara Gorge in 1824. The ghastly evidence does not seem to add up to the coroner's finding of accidental death, and Cheryl and Bob continue to sift through the records in order to find some answers to the mystery and to properly honour the life and achievements of this man and his contribution to Canadian history and politics, as war hero and MLA for Norfolk County.

Anyone interested in further reading, can obtain copies of Cheryl and Bob's book, **ROBERT NICHOL, FORGOTTEN HERO**, for \$5.00, through the Oakville Historical Society.

Andrea Stewart.

Future Presentation

On Wednesday, February 17th, 2010, the Oakville Heritage Society is proud to have as a guest lecturer, **Mr. Stewart Henderson**, who is with the Provincial Heritage Organization. At this time he will discuss heritage matters at the provincial level. This presentation will be at the Knox Church at 7:30pm.

Barbara Savage

Star Gazing at the Society

A clear sky, warm temperatures and good company - who could ask for more? A great night in August was had in Lakeside Park, when a joint effort was organized by the Royal Astronomical Society and OHS to gaze at the stars – celebrating “The International Year of Astronomy”. (Galileo first look at the stars 400 years ago)

We wish to thank those who brought the equipment and knowledge that allowed all the attendees to enjoy the star gazing, as well as those who purchased draw tickets for the **Westjet/OHS lottery**. A totally successful way to enjoy the evening with friends.

Lance Naismith



Merrick & Esther Thomas – AKA
Wendy Belcher & Phillip Brimacombe



Susan Wells - enjoying
the “HARVEST
FESTIVAL”.

Outreach

Three cheers for **Andrea Stewart** who led a choir of teenage girls from Czechoslovakia who were visiting St. Andrews Church on a walking tour of Old Oakville. Then, on the same day at night, she was in charge of the Ghost Walks.

Our Society thrives because of the many dedicated volunteers.

Barbara Savage

THE WAY THINGS WERE



1. Can you identify where this building is?
2. What markings were on the building?

Note – this colour edition is due to the generosity of our sponsors. Thank you.

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**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](http://www.oakvillehistory.org)**

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