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

MARCH 2009

Volume 43: Number 1

SPECIAL EVENTS

March 25th

“Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper”

*** Note time change: Knox Church – 6:30pm

PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

May 20th

Bring On The Bloomers - The Liberation of Women during Victorian Times. Speaker - Ken Weber

October 21st

The War of 1812: Speakers - Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nichol and Mrs. Nichol (in costume)

November 18th

The History of the Lorne Scots: Speaker - Rick Ruggle

Note: Evening programs all at Knox Church at 7:30pm for 2009, unless otherwise noted.

Have you started planning for the summer yet?

Don't forget to visit our website at

www.oakvillehistory.org and check out the upcoming **Heritage** and **Ghost** walk schedules.

New OHS Sunday Hours

To accommodate those members who are unable to visit the Society during regular hours, we will be open **EVERY THIRD SUNDAY** as well. If you would like to volunteer to assist, please contact the Society. It would be one way to get further involved in Oakville's history.

If anyone would like to be added to our "**HERITAGE EVENT**" email list, please email info@oakvillehistory.org. We interact with seven other Halton Heritage groups in order to promote all up-coming Heritage Events.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There was an excellent photo in a recent issue of the Oakville Beaver of **Harry Buxton** receiving a lifetime achievement award from the Lieutenant Governor for all his work promoting history and heritage with the Society. As with most awards, this one was well-deserved but should really be joint as he and Margaret have been a team for many years.

In January we offered a whisky nosing (tasting) in conjunction with the Oakville Museum. **Bill Nesbitt**, supervisor at the museum, did a super job and we are grateful to **Mr Con Constandis, CEO of Corbies Distillers**, who were our sponsors for the event. The tasting was the first in a series and each of those who attended had a special surprise at the end of the evening. In April we will be hosting a wine tasting event and later in the spring, a beer sampling. We hope that these tastings will become regular events. We are also starting to gear up for another busy season. **Doors Open** will run again in September and the first organizing meeting will be held later this week. You'll hear more about it in the near future. The **Annual General Meeting** is set for later in the month. I hope to see many of you there for our now-famous pot-luck supper.

Many of us were saddened to hear of the sudden death this past week of **Norm Sadler** at the young age of 66. A couple of years ago Norm, not a member at the time, took on the job of recreating our **web site** and has done a wonderful job. It has become a very important way for us to communicate with the public. Norm spent countless hours working on it and in improving our use of technology in the office. At the same time he got "hooked" on the history of Oakville. We will certainly miss him around the office and extend our sympathies to his family.

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: Picture of the "Coalhaven" in an unknown port, highlighting the unloading equipment.

“Bayanna” and Coals to Oakville

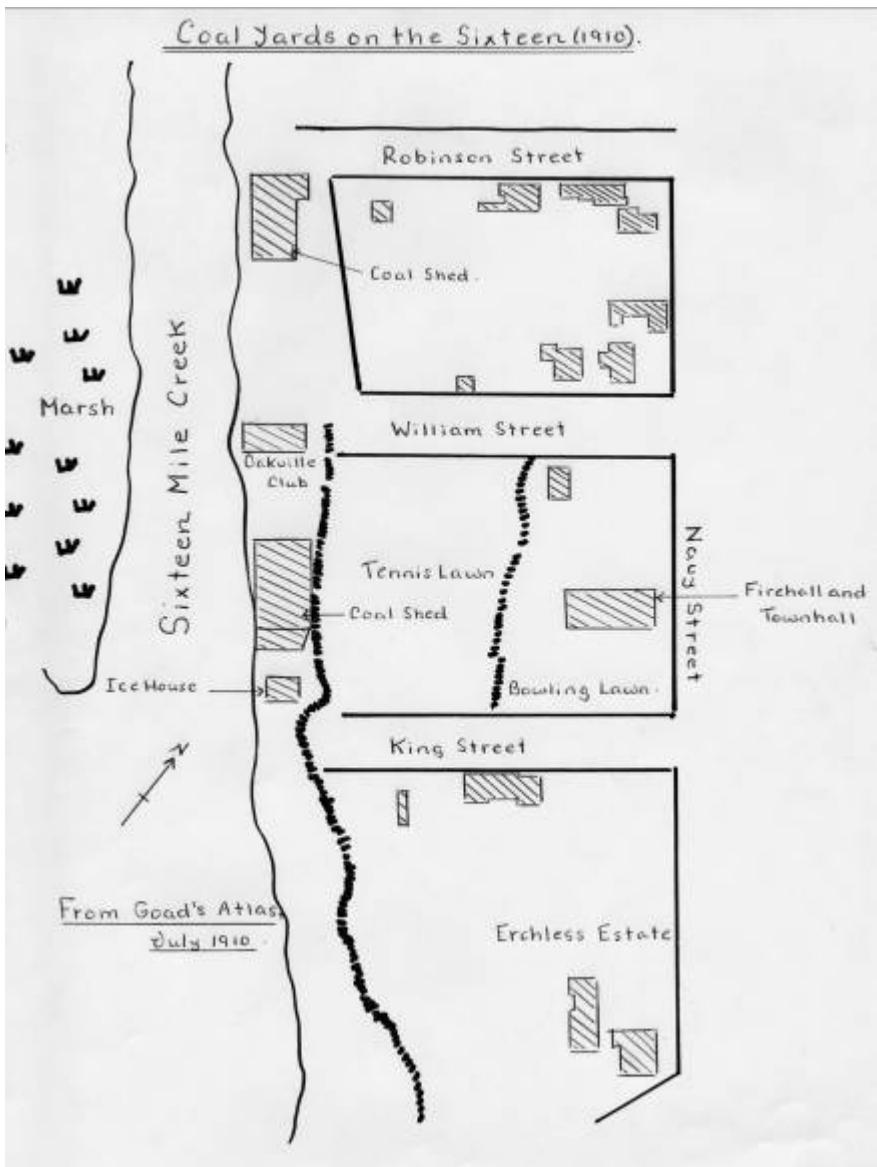
Remember the days when men, blackened with dust, delivered coal to homes and businesses? Companies like **Elias Rogers** and **Milnes** were synonymous with these deliveries in Toronto. In Oakville names like **Hillmer** and **McDermott** conjure up images of those times.

With the advent in the mid-1800's of coal burning stoves, furnaces, steam locomotives and other machinery fuelled by coal, the transport of this “**Black Gold**” from the Appalachian coalfields of West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, and especially Pennsylvania, became a vital trade. Coal was gradually supplanting wood as the main energy source for Ontario's homes and industries. The railways soon recognized the efficiency of coal in firing their larger engines, especially in light of the dwindling supplies of cordwood, as centuries-old tracts of timber fell to the axe.

Ontario was without its own coal supply. The nearest deposits were found in the states mentioned earlier. Coal could be delivered by rail, however it was expensive. The alternative was to be found with the many freighters and schooners plying the Great Lakes. They were able to cut costs by collecting cargos of coal at U.S. ports, such as Oswego and Charlotte (Rochester), New York and Ashtabula, Ohio, delivering them with considerable savings to Canadian ports like Oakville. The Pittsburgh, Shenango and Lake Erie Railroad Company had a line from Butler, Pennsylvania, in the coalfields near Pittsburgh, north to the Lake Erie ports of Erie, Pennsylvania and Conneault, Ohio. South-bound trains brought iron ore from the Lake Superior region south to the steel mills of Pittsburgh. Northbound trains transferred the coal in the empty freight cars northward. Another railway involved was the Pittsburgh, Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad. The coal ships traveled across Lake Erie, through the Welland Canals, to ports along the north shore of Lake Ontario. Coal from the ports along the south shore of Lake Ontario in New York simply crossed the lake to markets like Toronto, Oakville and Cobourg.

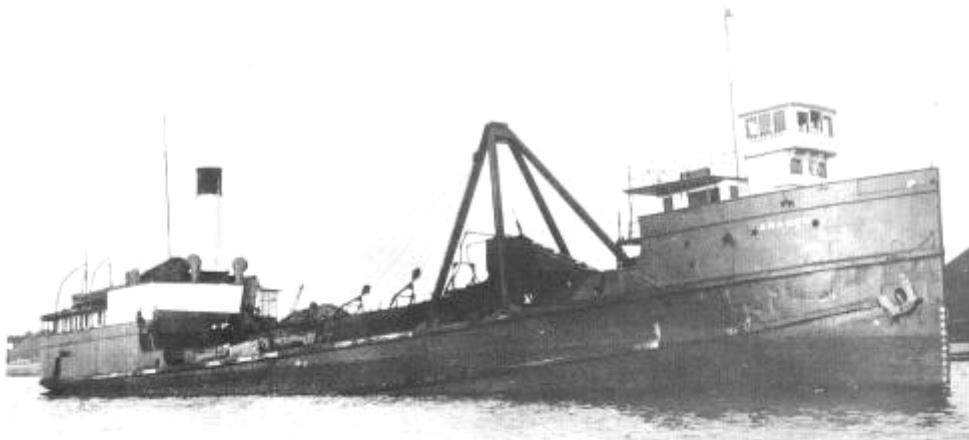
Upon arrival at the Sixteen in Oakville, the coal-laden steam cargo vessels and schooners would unload at the two coal yards on the east bank of the river, between Robinson and King Streets. The coal was unloaded by wheelbarrow from the schooners. In the larger steel-hulled vessels like “**Bayanna**” and “**Coalhaven**”, there were on-board conveyors to transfer the coal from the ship to the yard. A lot of our coal came across the

lake from Charlotte, the port for Rochester, New York. This coal was carried from the coalfields to the south by the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railroad.



The coal was piled separately in the coal yards as to variety and size for different uses. “Chestnut” and “Pea” sizes, for example, were used in household furnaces. “Cannell” coal was used in fireplaces. “Soft Coal” was used for heating in larger buildings. There were three coal, wood and ice businesses in Oakville prior World War

Two, operated by **Mr. Ford**, **Mr. Hillmer**, and the **McDermott Family**. Mr. Hillmer operated his business on the Seventh Line (Trafalgar Road), south of the railway tracks on the east side. Main Lumber later occupied the site. The coal from the **Marlatt and Armstrong Tannery**, on the west bank of the Sixteen, south of Colborne Street West (Lakeshore Road West), was unloaded by the tannery powerhouse, which had boilers and furnaces to supply steam and heat for the factory, then the largest industry in Oakville until it ceased operations in the mid-1920's. The steam locomotives, which pulled freight, inter-city passenger and commuter trains through Oakville, also required substantial amounts of coal.



ARAGON, in the colours of the Tees Transit Company, is seen in the Toronto Ship Channel in this 1945 photo by J. H. Bascom.



BAYANNA, complete with COLLIER's funnel and forward cabins, is outbound at Toronto Eastern Gap on September 11, 1960. Photo by the Editor.

One vessel which brought “coals to Oakville” for a number of years was the steel-hulled freighter “Bayanna”. She was a self-unloader, which meant that land-based equipment was not required. Such was the case with most of the smaller lake ports like Oakville. “Bayanna” had been constructed at Wyandotte, Michigan in 1896. She was 247 feet in length and had a 42 foot beam. “Bayanna” was powered by a triple-expansion engine. The vessel was registered at Cleveland, Ohio, and initially bore the name “**Aragon**”. Owned by C.R. Jones and Associates, she sailed under the colours of the Argo Steamship Company. Especially built for the Welland Canal service, she handled many cargos like corn, iron ore, coal and lumber. She was painted with a standard black hull, with white cabins and a black stack. Her boiler house was painted grey. After a short time on the Great Lakes, “Aragon” was transferred to the eastern seaboard of the U.S., where the vessel served in the lumber trade until 1916.

Many fascinating stories are connected with “Aragon”. In one incident in November, 1921, “Aragon’s” travels took her to Chicago, where she loaded 75000 bushels of corn for delivery to the Edwardsburgh Starch Company on the St. Lawrence River at Cardinal, Ontario. All went smoothly until “Aragon” cleared the Welland Canal at Port Dalhousie. Down-bound on Lake Ontario, she was confronted with a dense fog which blanketed the calm lake. She strayed from her normal course and eventually, on the evening of November 17th, she arrived in Athol Bay off Prince Edward County. Athol Bay was nowhere near her intended destination. Continuing on her journey, “Aragon” passed the infamous **Wicked Point**, an area of dangerous shoals, where other vessels had met their doom. However, she was too close to shore and she grounded on **Salmon Point**. “Aragon” summoned assistance from Kingston. The Donnelly Wrecking Company soon responded. As the Salmon Point area is completely open to the lake and provides no shelter along the shore, “Aragon” was in a precarious position when the weather began to worsen. The salvage efforts became complicated. To keep the ship from pounding on the bottom, her hold was flooded. Salvage work resumed. A small quantity of undamaged corn was removed from her hold before the Donnelly crews were chased from the exposed wreck by the inclement weather. Early the next year, **Mr. John Russell**, a well known Toronto shipping entrepreneur, took over the salvage efforts and succeeded in freeing the vessel.

“Aragon” was bought in 1922 by John Russell and **Robert Campbell** of Montreal, repaired and returned to service under the Canadian Flag. Five years later she was converted to a self-unloading sandsucker at Canadian Vickers Shipbuilding, Longue Pointe, Montreal. Older canallers like “Aragon” were becoming obsolete, replaced by a new generation of British-built vessels of the same size and therefore still able to negotiate the canals around the rapids in the St. Lawrence River.

In the 1929 Depression, the decline in the building trades, a leading to a slump in the demand for construction materials, caused “Aragon” to be placed out-of-service until 1941. In that year Tees Transit of Hamilton bought her. At this time the more modern British-built canallers were utilized to assist with the war efforts in the North Atlantic convoys, leaving older canallers like “Aragon” to fill the gap.

Another interesting episode in “Aragon’s” life took place in December of 1945. She was loading a cargo of coal at Sodus, New York, for delivery to the Soward’s coal dock at Kingston. Encountering an early winter storm on her outbound passage, she returned to Sodus. She waited several days for the storm to abate, and her supply of bunker coal was running very low. The vessel returned to the Sodus coal dock for re-fuelling. However, the temperature plummeted during the night, and by morning “Aragon” was frozen fast to the pier! She managed to break free, but on steaming into Lake Ontario it was discovered that she was taking water forward. The hole was plugged with a mattress, of all things, and she was able to travel to Kingston safely. She immediately unloaded at Soward’s dock, this process bringing the damaged plating above the water level. “Aragon” was laid up at Kingston and never again sailed for Tees.

George Davidson of Brockville purchased “Aragon” in 1945-46. He was connected with Coal Carriers Corporation Ltd. of Montreal, the operators of the freighter “Coalfax”, a frequent visitor at Oakville, bringing coal from U.S. ports. Davidson formed Bayswater Shipping Ltd. out of Brockville, and in the spring of 1946 “Aragon” joined “Coalfax” in the Lake Ontario coal trade, which included visits to the Sixteen. “Aragon” also carried cement on the Upper St. Lawrence River for the Canada Cement Company Ltd. of Montreal. At this time “Aragon” was renamed “Bayanna”, the latter part of the new name being chosen in honour of Anna McKinnon, the mother of George Davidson. The “Bay” prefix seemed to appeal to Davidson, as the other three vessels that his company was to own, were all given similar names.

Despite her self-unloading equipment and the raised hatches which she had been given, “Bayanna” was looking rather forlorn. Even her blue hull colour, with its white trim, and her blue, white and black stack design could not do much to improve her appearance. The only major recent improvement had been the addition of a new stack. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect was her little wooden pilothouse, which, complete with corner braces, squatted atop an equally quaint texas (the pilothouse). The whole structure was a bit loose after years of buffeting from the winds and waves of Lake Ontario, and had to be secured to the forecandle by means of a cable, which passed over the pilothouse roof, and was attached to the deck on either side, turnbuckles being provided to facilitate the occasional necessary tightening.

In 1960, “Bayanna” was re-fitted and continued in service until 1962. In that year she was stranded near Deseronto in eastern Lake Ontario, near the Bay of Quinte. After being towed to Deseronto, she was gutted by fire in May, 1964, and subsequently scrapped.

Many of you are familiar with the wonderful photograph depicting “Bayanna’s” cousin, “Coalhaven”, unloading in the Sixteen in the late 1940’s. It is quite remarkable that vessels like these were once able to navigate that far up the creek! With “Bayanna’s” demise, a career of almost seventy years had come to an end. After World War Two, gas and oil replaced coals, as they were cleaner and more energy-efficient. Not only had “Bayanna” faded from the scene, but also Oakville in her role as a commercial port on Lake Ontario

Phil Brimacombe

A special thanks to **Dr. Lorne S. Joyce**, Port Credit, for his assistance in the preparation of this article. His local knowledge of nautical history is a respected source.

The Society not only needs the help of many volunteers, but **your membership dues** are necessary to allow them to continue on with the work of preserving Oakville’s history for future generations. If you haven’t submitted your **2009 dues**, please use the enclosed form and show your support.

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

AROUND THE SOCIETY



Solution to “The Way Things Were” – December 2008

A major winter storm hit Oakville in December 1944 and the photo shows snow piled into high banks. The building is located at 216 Lakeshore Road East. At the time the photograph was taken, the building housed the **Oakville Post Office**. It later became the **Oakville Public Library**. The current occupant is the retail operation of **Tommy Bahama's**. To the right of the Post Office and set back from the street is Hitchcox Garage with a Model T Ford parked on the street. This site is now part of Town Square.

May Isaac

Ontario Heritage Trust:

Heritage Community Awards

Across Ontario, this program has served as a way of recognizing outstanding achievements in local heritage conservation. The winners from Oakville for 2008, members of the Oakville Historical Society, are as follows:

Lt. Governor’s Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement:

This award was presented to **Mr. Harry Buxton**, a Past President of the OHS on February 20th.at Queen’s Park

Heritage Community Recognition Award: Presented on March 10th at Oakville Town Hall to:

Lifetime Achievement	- Harry Barrett
Built Heritage	- Francine Landry
Cultural Heritage	- Barbara Savage
Natural Heritage	- Joyce Burnell

HERITAGE MATTERS

Michael Seaman, Manager Heritage Planning from the Town of Oakville, spoke to us on 18 February at our regular Knox presentation series. The town now has a staff of four involved in Heritage Conservation Planning; reporting to Michael are two planners and a heritage inspector. As well, personnel from Culture and Legal Departments and Clerical resources interact with Michael's department.

Enthusiastic about heritage matters, Michael was inspired, following a co-op assignment in heritage planning, to return to University to pursue a Master's degree in heritage conservation.

His presentation discussed the past, present and future of heritage in Oakville, going back to 1953, when OHS founder Hazel Chisholm Matthews, began to recognize the importance of our heritage buildings. We now have three heritage districts; Downtown, established in 1982, First and Second Street district, established in 1987 and Trafalgar Road, established in 1994. All properties in heritage districts are considered designated. A fourth district to be established would be downtown. Apparently 90% of the buildings along Lakeshore Road have been designated.

He cleared up some misconceptions about designation; designation applies only to the exterior and does not prevent changes, but provides a process to guide change. Far from restricting sales or resale value, there is strong evidence to the contrary. There is a strong market for heritage properties and people willing to pay a premium for them. Heritage conservation not only improves our quality of life, but enhances our sense of place, contributes to our economic health, provides exciting community spaces and reduces landfill. This latter point is most interesting; he said, "The greenest building is one that already exists". How sad it is to see the debris, some of it in perfect condition, ripped out of houses under demolition in the name of modernization, not to mention the destruction of beautiful, graceful old buildings.

We are indeed grateful to have the Town and Michael's department committed to heritage conservation.

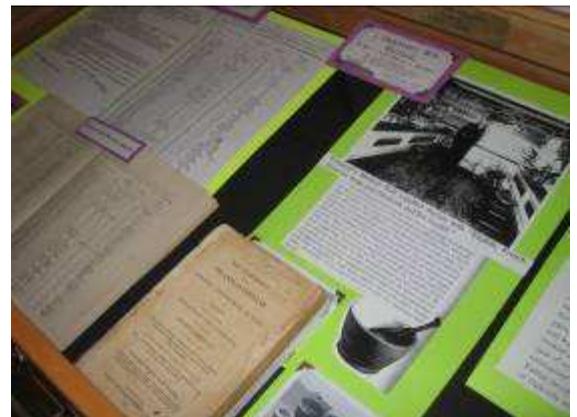
Andrea Stewart

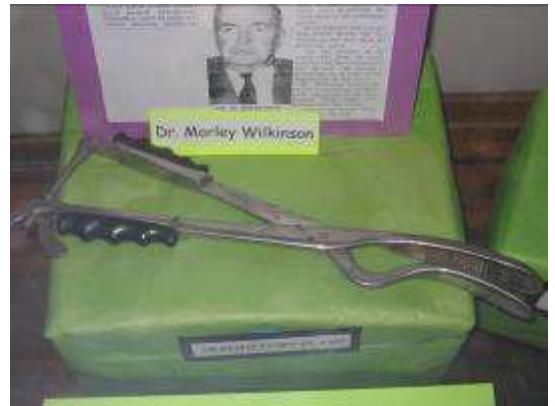
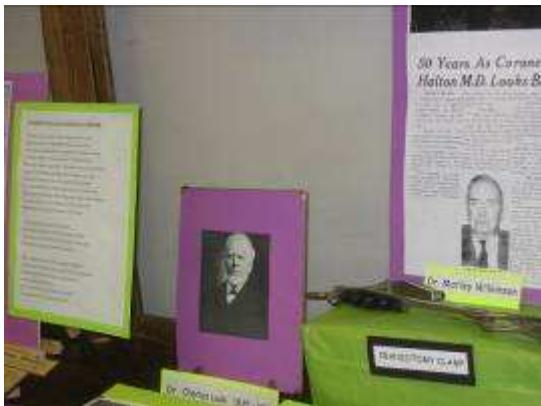
Health Care As It Was

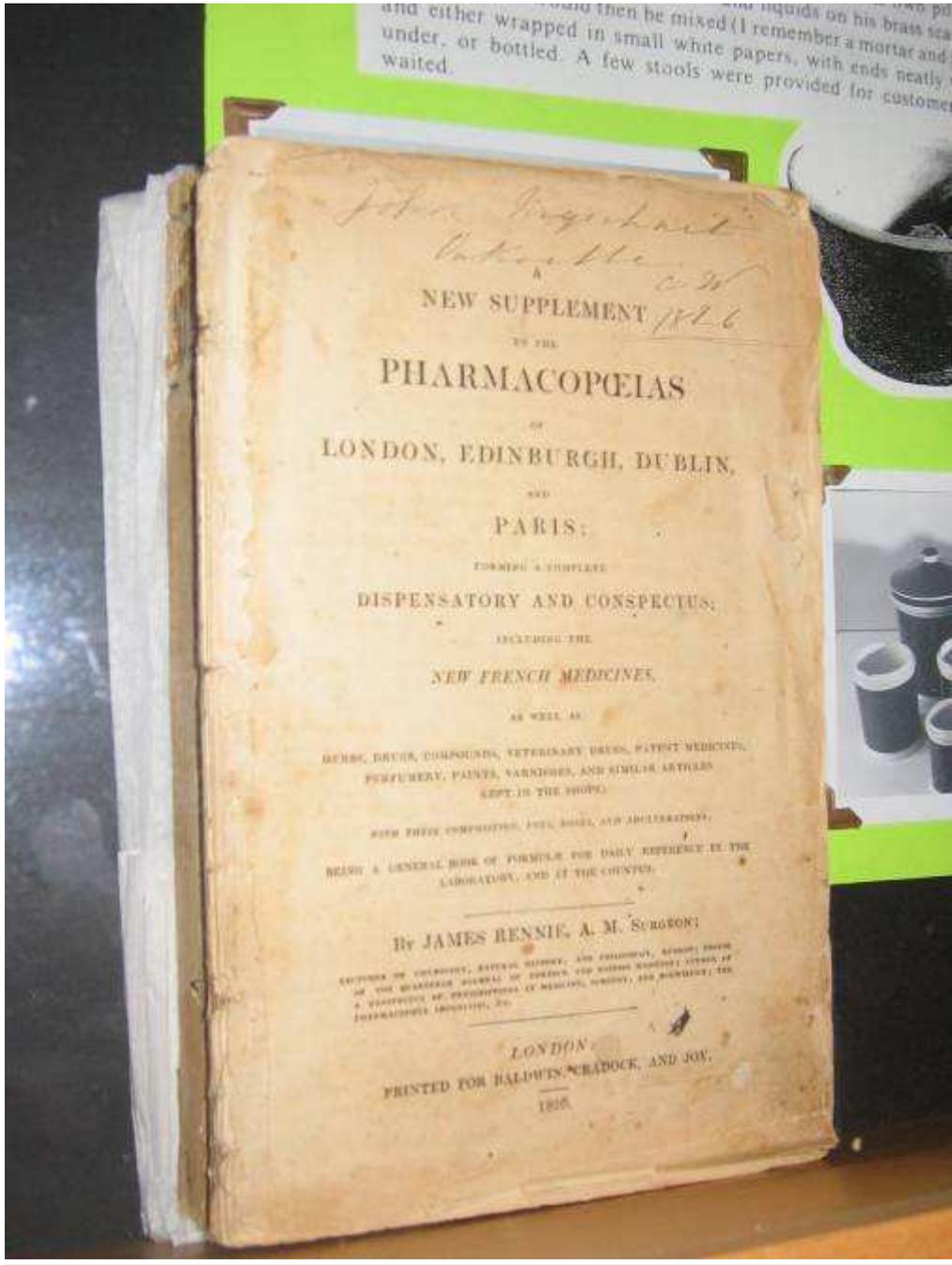
On display at the Society is a very in-depth and interesting display of health care in Oakville's past. This display, put together by Mary Noad and Rosemary Seeton is concerning health care (and its practitioners and practices) as it was from the early 1800s to the early/mid 1900s. Much of the textual material is drawn from Hazel Chisholm Matthew's [*Oakville and the Sixteen*](#). Go to our website for a view of the display or, better still, visit the Society and see it live.



L/R Mary Noad and Rosemary Seeton







THE WAY THINGS WERE



- 1: What was the name of the sawmill in the foreground?
- 2: What was stored in the last building (on the right) on the bank across from the mill?

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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)**

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