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

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

**Volume 43: Number 3**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### **September 26-27 Doors Open:**

The 2nd annual **Doors Open** in Oakville, co-hosted by the OHS, is planned for September 26th and 27th 2009, 10am to 4pm. There will be an information tent located at the Town Square in downtown Oakville and a brochure with a map will be available. The same sites as last year plus new ones will be open and they are all free to the public.

We need volunteers; even a half day would help. Telephone number is 905 845 6601 ext: 5019.

Our annual **Harvest Festival** will be held on Sunday Sept 27th at Lakeside Park. There will be a bake table, free apple cider, displays, crafts and games for the children.

The grand finale will be the drawing of the ticket to name the winner of the **WestJet** return flight for two anywhere that **WestJet** flies. (to be held at the Historical Society at 4pm on Sunday September 27th.)

**DO YOU HAVE YOUR TICKET FOR THE DRAW????**

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

## PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

October 21st                      *The War of 1812:* Speakers - Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nichol and Mrs. Nichol (in costume)

November 18<sup>th</sup>                      *The History of the Lorne Scots:* Speaker - Rick Ruggle

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

Have you started planning for the fall yet? Don't forget to visit our website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org) and check out the upcoming **Ghost Walk** schedules.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this, summer, or lack thereof, is starting to wind down. I'd say that our busy season is leading into a busy fall season. Truth be told, all seasons for the Society seem to be busy and getting more so. Two major events this fall: our very popular series of **Ghost Walks** and the second annual **Doors Open Oakville**. Both require help from our volunteers. If you can help out, please contact **Barb Savage** by phone through the office or by email at [vp@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:vp@oakvillehistory.org). Barb would be delighted to hear from you. In conjunction with the Oakville Museum, we also have the third in our series of tasting events taking place on **17 October**. This will be a **beer tasting** which will be held at the Oakville Centre on Navy Street. For further information, please email me at [pres@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:pres@oakvillehistory.org).

You may have noticed that our website hasn't changed in the past few months since the untimely death of **Norm Sadler**, our webmaster. We're very pleased to announce that **Mr Hugh Ramsay** has offered to take on this very important job. It will take him a while to become familiar with Norm's previous work before you notice any changes but it will soon return to being one of our major methods of communication with our members and the public.

I'm also happy to report that we are in negotiations with the Town to acquire space at the new **Queen Elizabeth Park Community Centre**. We hope this will allow us to move the archives out of our office and into safer space which will have fire protection. We will then have more space for research activity at the office. After all, most of our visitors don't require access to the original document.

As you start your Christmas shopping, please keep in mind some of the publications available from the Society including "Oakville and Sixteen" and "Oakville a Small Town". New to our publications selection are two of a series of shipwreck maps of the Great Lakes. We are only stocking the maps of Lake Ontario and Lake Huron (including Georgian Bay). For further information visit the Publications section on our website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://www.oakvillehistory.org).

Oakville Historical Society E-mail  
[info@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:info@oakvillehistory.org)

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

George Chisholm  
905-842-5385  
[georgechisholm@sympatico.ca](mailto:georgechisholm@sympatico.ca)

**COVER PICTURE:** Captain Sam Joyce. Local area fisherman and was also master of the Marlatt yacht, the Aggie. "He who rests in a calm must row in a storm".

## *Oakville and the Golden Age of Yachting on Lake Ontario (1870 – 1939)*

Standing on Oakville's Lakeshore Road bridge spanning the Sixteen Mile Creek, one can scan southward and view one of the finest small craft harbours on the Great Lakes. A forest of masts and sails belonging to a wide variety of sailboats associated with the **Oakville Yacht Squadron**, and the **Oakville Club**, slap away in the stiff breezes from the blue expanse of Lake Ontario beyond.

Notable among this fleet is the venerable "**Anitra**". This classic wooden gaff-rigged schooner has been sailing out of the Oakville Club for over 80 years under the **Macrae Family** burgee. Named after an Egyptian dancing girl, "Anitra" flies some 100 racing pennants, including the prestigious 1939 Prince of Wales Cup. Designed by **Montye Macrae** and built at Hamilton in 1926, Anitra's 40 feet of oak frame and cedar planking are beautifully maintained. This wonderful link to the past had joined the Royal Canadian Yacht Club in the late fall of 1926 and signalled the event by winning the Commodore's Prize (on time allowance) from the First Division in the last cruise of the season. Such accomplishments as we shall see were not at all uncommon for Oakville sailing craft!

From the 1870's to the Second World War, Oakville was often referred to as "**The Newport of Canada**". Wealthy Torontonians, like the Ryrie, Eaton, Cox and Flavelle families, built impressive lakefront estates along the lakeshore in Oakville and Trafalgar Township. Prominent Oakville resident and owner of the Marlatt and Armstrong Tannery on the Sixteen, **Cecil G. Marlatt** held several important positions at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club from 1907 to 1924, including Commodore. Marlatt was the owner of the R.C.Y.C.'s most famous boat, "**Aggie**", about which we shall hear more later.

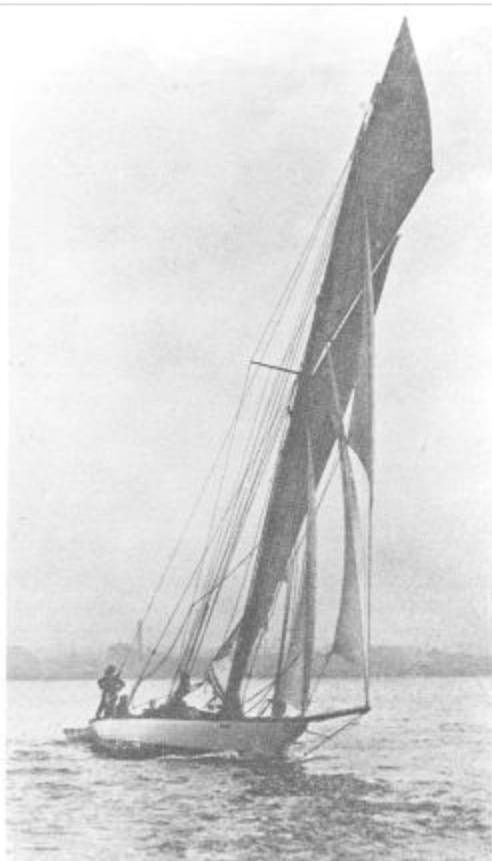
Another prominent local yachting family connected with the R.C.Y.C. was the Macrae family. **Hubert H. Macrae** served as the Vice-Commodore of the Club from 1925 to 1927. The **Chisholm** family was involved in sailing P. Class boats like the well-known "**Utalía**" and the "**Patricia**". Soon after its establishment in 1908, a close link developed between the Oakville Club and the R.C.Y.C..

Yachting had increased during the 1870's on Lake Ontario and a large number of yacht clubs sprang up on both the Canadian and U.S. shores. On summer weekends it was not unusual to see 50 or more boats from various clubs around the lake visiting the Sixteen.

Oakville also became the destination of many R.C.Y.C. races. Visiting yachtsmen built huge bonfires at night on the beach at the western entrance to Oakville Harbour. Despite some excessive partying at times, it is reported that the local townspeople were generally tolerant of the visitors. This feeling was undoubtedly enhanced over the years as yachts, built at **Andrews' Boatyard** at Oakville, began to distinguish themselves in races around the Great Lakes.

The names of **Captain James Andrew** (1844 – 1930) and his brother **John** (1846 – 1918) are synonymous with Oakville yacht-building. James and John had arrived as youths with their family from Dundonald, Scotland, in the 1850's. They had journeyed across the North Atlantic on one of the infamous "floating coffins" called the "**Crown**". After the usual wretched 6 week voyage, the family boarded the steamer "**Magnet**" at Montreal and eventually landed at Oakville, where they decided to settle. James and John ventured onto the Great Lakes at an early age as Seamen Apprentices, eventually becoming Master Mariners. About 1861 James journeyed across Canada, learning the shipbuilding trade. In 1887 the brothers saw the future in yacht-building and they set up a boat-building yard beside **Doty's Planing Mill** on the west bank of the Sixteen, just south of Colborne Street (now Lakeshore Road).

They began building racing and pleasure yachts for wealthy sportsmen, as the emphasis was shifting from weight, durability and capacity, to lightness of construction for speed. The boatyard soon developed a reputation for producing some of the best designed, fastest boats on the Lakes.



The "Aggie" – c. 1912

Upon his retirement in 1915, Captain James Andrew continued to live with his sisters in a house into which they had moved in 1891. The house still stands on the north side of William Street, just west of Navy Street, opposite Market Square.

The first and perhaps most famous sailing yacht to be launched from the Andrews' Boatyard, was "Aggie" on October 25, 1887. She was designed and built by James Andrew for Cecil G. Marlatt. "Aggie" was named after Marlatt's wife. This vessel became the most successful yacht under the R.C.Y.C. burgee, accumulating no fewer than 83 winning flags in the course of her long career! "Aggie" often tried, but never won the Prince of Wales Cup, however she did win the Queen's Cup in 1897, and almost every other cup in the club more than once. She had dimensions of 60 feet overall, with an 11 foot beam. The clock on "Aggie" was engraved "1<sup>st</sup>. September 1906" – also engraved, "Presented to H.M.C.S. Oakville, November 5, 1941, for the duration of the War." "**H.M.C.S. Oakville**" was a corvette, which had been commissioned at the mouth of the Sixteen in 1941. The binnacle was loaned to the Oakville Historical Society by **Art and Evelyn Bullied**. It was said that after 100 years the compass gave an accurate indication of north. On October 2, 1945, the Toronto Evening Telegram reported that, "*Today the Aggie is a total wreck, pounded to pieces at the Burlington Lighthouse.*"

More yachts were to follow from the busy boatyard on the Sixteen. In 1895 "**Winetta**" was launched. Owned by the well-known Toronto yachtsman, **Aemilius Jarvis**, the 64 foot yacht was the first R.C.Y.C. boat to use cross-cut sails. She won the Queen's Cup, the Prince of Wales Cup, and many other races on Lakes Ontario and Erie from 1898 to 1905. During World War One, her 9 ton lead hull was stripped for bullets for the war effort. By 1935 she had been re-rigged as a ketch and sailed from Toronto to the South Pacific, under the name given to her in a 1915 re-build at Oakville, "**Merrythought**". She was last reported in the New York City area in the late 1930's.



Canada - 1895

In 1896 James Andrew built “**Canada**”. He used white oak in her construction, by that time a rare variety of wood. He had salvaged the wood from the bottom of the Sixteen by the old log chute at the 6<sup>th</sup> Line and the 7<sup>th</sup> Line (now Trafalgar Road). “Canada” won the first Canada’s Cup race held off Toledo, Ohio, in 1896, against her U.S. challenger, “**Vencedor**”, of the Chicago Yacht Club. The next boat to slide into the Sixteen was “**Beaver**”. She had been designed by the well-known Arthur Payne of Southampton, England. She was defeated by the sloop, “**Genessee**” of Rochester, New York, in the 1899 Canada’s Cup race off Toronto.

The high-water mark of boat-building in Oakville was 1899, when a second vessel, “**Minota**”, was launched at Andrews’. Owned by a syndicate of R.C.Y.C. members, including George A. Cox and Joseph H. Flavelle of Oakville, she had been designed by Mr. H.C. McLeod, General Manager of the Bank of Nova Scotia. She lost out to “Beaver” as the Canadian entry into the 1899 Canada’s Cup, although she was



admired by many and was faster in light to moderate breezes. Two years later “**Invader**” (*to the left*) was launched and soon distinguished itself by winning back the Canada’s Cup off Chicago against her U.S. rival “**Cadillac**”, skippered by “**BathHouse**” Bill Thompson, later to become Mayor of Chicago. In 1903 the

R.C.Y.C. defended the Canada’s Cup with another of James Andrew’s creations, the cutter “**Strathcona**”. Mr. Norman Macrae had her built by Andrews’ after receiving her timbers from her designer, A.E. Payne. She quickly became known as “the fastest Canadian yacht afloat”, reflected in a long list of trophies to her credit. Prince of Wales Cup, 1903, Queen’s Cup 3 times, and the Lorne Cup 9 times! “**Zoroya**”, launched in 1905 along with “**Temeraire**”, also distinguished themselves, especially the former winning, among other trophies, the Fisher Cup, the Prince of Wales Cup 5 times in succession, and the Edward, Prince of Wales Cup. “Zoroya” later found U.S. owners, while “Temeraire” became a yawl, owned in Kingston and later in the Bay of Quinte.

The last two vessels built by Andrews' of Oakville were "**Crusader**" in 1907 and "**Ahmeek**" in 1914. R.C.Y.C. Vice-Commodore Frederic Nicholls had "Crusader" built from the designs of William Fife Jr. On finding problems with the boat, Nicholls brought Fife over from England to personally supervise the work of re-casting her lead ballast and re-modelling her deadwood to afford her more stability.

"Ahmeek", built by club subscription, was the finest P. Class sloop that had yet been seen on the Lakes. Of the raised-deck type, her mahogany hull "finished bright and girdled by a gilt arrow, and everything in her was of the best quality." Her early performances had given promise of ultimate success. However, World War One intervened.

In 1914, yachting crews were busy forming units in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. Yachting fleets were dismantled, swinging idly at moorings, or hauled out in the marine yards, allowing them to rapidly disintegrate. Like some of the best yachts, "Ahmeek" was purchased by Americans and found a new home at the Eastern Yacht Club in Marblehead, Massachusetts.

After the re-build of "Winetta" into "Merrythought" in 1915, the Andrews' Boatyard fell silent forever. A colourful chapter of the marine history of Oakville had come to an end!

Phil Brimacombe

**Your membership dues make this Newsletter possible**

Visit the OHS website at [www.oakvillehistory.org](http://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” – June, 2009

**B**uilt in 1936 “The Sixteen Mile Creek Bridge” or “King George Arch Bridge” was one of the finest bridges constructed by the Department of Highways in the 1930s. Arches were used extensively throughout the bridge’s design. The bridge itself is a two-span open spandrel concrete arch bridge, but even within the superstructure, many additional arches were used below the bridge deck. It is now under extensive reconstruction.

(<http://www.thekingshighway.ca/PHOTOS/QEWphotos6.htm>)

## Presentation



**O**n May 20<sup>th</sup>, we were very fortunate to have Ken Weber as our guest speaker. A very informative and entertaining talk – *Bring on the Bloomers – the Liberation of Women during Victorian Times*, was well received by those in attendance. Learning how the corset and bicycle had a role in woman’s emancipation was educational and humorous. Why you ask? One of the benefits of attending the talks!! Hopefully we will see you at the next one.

**Ken Weber** accepts a token of gratitude from one of our directors, **Karen Woolley**.

## Concert in the Park

We were blessed with lovely weather at this year's concert, which was opened by **Mayor Rob Burton**. The musical performances by our lively "*St. Pauls Dixieland Band*" and the medley of music by the "*Oakville Wind Orchestra*" gave the crowd a beautiful afternoon of relaxing music. We would like to thank those who attended for their generosity in buying the **Westjet/OHS Lottery** tickets. As well, we want to show our appreciation to the **Town of Oakville** and **Councillor Roger Lapworth** for their support in this event, without which it would not have been possible. Please make sure you note the date for next year's event, which is usually the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in June.

**Plan your picnic now!!!!**



L/R Harry Barrett, Mayor Rob Burton, Barb Savage

Lance Naismith







### Is it bad to be designated “Heritage”?

I guess it depends on whether or not you want to demolish a piece of Canada’s history to make a fast buck. There are a lot of rumours flying about concerning a heritage designation and it does not mean the end of the world for you and your home. You can make authorized changes/renovations and, there is proof that the majority of designated properties perform better than average or average in their value history trend when compared to non-designated. The “rate of sales” are not negatively affected and designated properties tend to resist down-turns in the market. And, there is a robust market for such homes. This was substantiated in a report by **Robert Shipley** and **Shannon Bernstein** called: *“Report on Research Concerning Trends in Property Values of Designated Heritage Properties in Several Ontario Communities”*.

Information submitted by Jamie Macrae



## Midnight Madness – We’re baaaack!!!!!!

For long term members of the Society, you’ll have memories of the hectic days of Midnight Madness on main street Oakville. Well, with a vengeance, the Society has returned to promote the Society and take the opportunity to sell our Lottery tickets. Well received by the crowd, we not only sold a good number of tickets but had a lot of people inquire about the society. The volunteers (too many to list for this edition) are to be thanked for their attendance and support and we hopefully will want a presence next year.

Lance Naismith



## Community Spirit Awards

A June evening was chosen by our Mayor and Town Staff to award Community Spirit Awards to various people who have contributed to our community in different ways. It is an honour that the Society has had another member chosen, **Barbara Savage**, for “*Heritage and History*”. Past persons honoured were Harry Barrett., Joyce Burnell and, the late Mabel Wilson and the late Alvin Duncan. Barbara is here with Mayor Rob Burton and supporters.



Marianne Hawthorne

## “Upcoming” Presentation

Cathy Ben Bow Plews has agreed to do her presentation **at the Society** on Thursday November 26th at 7:30pm. Come and hear about her visit to **Kenya**. Cathy purchased beads made by the women of Kenya (their only source of income). Once home she strung the beads, sold them and, sent the money back to Kenya to support **Insulin Dependent children**. Slides of the Diabetic Clinic in Kenya will be shown and beads will be for sale.

Barbara Savage



## ***THE WAY THINGS WERE***



1. Can you identify the man and woman?
  2. What business did he own?
  3. What yacht did he own?
- ~~~~~

**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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