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

SEPTEMBER 2010

Volume 44: Number 3

SPECIAL EVENTS

Volunteers Needed for Doors Open Oakville

Our third annual Doors Open is being planned for September 25th and 26th, 10am to 4pm both days. Lots of new sites and interesting events are being planned by our Committee. This is a wonderful family event free to the public. We also need volunteers to be at the different sites on one or both days.

Phone the Society and leave your name and phone number if you can help.

Also on Sunday Sept 26 we will be holding our Harvest Festival at Lakeside Park from 1pm to 4pm. Again there will be a Bake Table and games and crafts for the children. Come and join in the fun. Preserves and baking can be left at the Society Saturday and Sunday morning as the Society will be open for Doors Open. Money raised helps with expenses at the Society.

December 3rd

CHRISTMAS PARTY: 6:00PM – 9:00PM (110 King Street West)
ALL MEMBERS are invited to the Society for the Annual Christmas Party. Come and mingle with fellow Oakville history enthusiasts and enjoy a scrumptious spread provided by the Friends.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS & PRESENTATIONS

October 20th

The “Mississauga Disaster”. Slides and discussion.

November 17th

“Come down to the Sea in Ships”. A voyage in history with Phillip Brimacombe.

Note: Evening programs are at Knox Church at 7:30pm for 2010, unless otherwise noted. Please visit www.oakvillehistory.org for updates and new events.

**Wanted: Victorian style ladies hats and a top hat for ghosts and hosts.
Anyone with expertise in creating costumes for our Ghost Walks
CONTACT: Barb Savage 905-845-3620**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to report that this fall your Board intends to proceed with the development of a Future Plan with the assistance of a professional facilitator. This will build on the work done by Drew Bucknall, Karen Woolley and Lance Naismith. With the number of new initiatives and existing projects, we need to sort out where the Society should be in the future.

One of the new initiatives has to do with the former Queen Elizabeth Park School which is in the process of becoming a Community Centre. Once the renovations are complete, the Society will have about 900 square feet of storage and work space and the opportunity to work with the Museum on joint exhibits there. We hope to move the bulk of the archival collection to Queen Elizabeth Park where it will have proper fire protection. This will also free up space at the office for more research. Those who work out of the office will agree that space is at a premium.

Many have commented on the work being done at the Old Post Office next to the Thomas House. At this time it is up on blocks about 6 feet off the ground while a new concrete foundation is being put in. Once it is back to its normal level, work will commence on the building which will include a new roof. It hasn't yet been decided what will be inside the building but we hope to see joint exhibits featuring our archival items and the Town's artifacts. After all, what is one without the other? We are looking forward to working with the Museum on these projects.

Doors Open is fast approaching and many of you will be approached to help out as volunteers for the event. Barb Savage is our representative on the Doors Open Committee. This year the committee is assisted by a part-time co-ordinator, Lyne Mainville. In this, its third year in Oakville, the event continues to grow.

I would like to thank Pat Mack for her dedication over the past few years as Thomas House Co-Ordinator. The Thomas House has long been a major focus of the Society and Pat has done an admirable job in scheduling volunteers and keeping the building running well.

I would also like to congratulate the Town on winning the Prince of Wales Prize for Municipal Heritage Leadership. Barb Savage has put countless hours into nominating the Town for this award. We are very sorry to see Michael Seaman, the Manager of Heritage Planning at Town Hall, depart but wish him well in his new job as Planning Director in Grimsby.

Cover Picture: Daniel Fassler as young Robert Murray Thomas (standing in front of the Thomas gravestone – Robert Murray Thomas and wife's side).

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

Advertising insert artwork & compilation done by Carolyn Naismith.

GHOSTS

Shhhhhh!!!!

Can you see them?

Can you hear them?

Oakville's ghosts are returning.

Ghosts – do they scare you or intrigue you? Most people tend to associate ghosts with Halloween or haunted locales. But do ghosts really exist, and if they do, why are they here? Belief in ghosts or the spirits of the dead crosses all cultures, dating back to pre-literate times. Certain religious practices - funeral rites, exorcism, and some practices of ritual magic – were designed to appease these ghosts, these spirits of the dead.

Ghosts are often thought to be residual, leftover energy that is simply re-playing an event in time. Others feel that ghosts and spirits are souls that did not pass over into the next dimension - into the light - when their physical bodies died on Earth. Why? Perhaps they have unfinished business here on Earth with a loved one, friend or even business partner. Some souls may be afraid to move on to that next dimension because they fear what awaits them. Some may be unusually attached to their home or to an object that was of great importance to them while they were alive. Some may still retain the anger or sorrow that they took with them when they died. Perhaps they do not realize they are dead like the character in the movie, *The Sixth Sense*. Finally, some, like Rebecca Chisholm, like it here and just cannot bear to move on.

And in the fall, near All Hallow's Eve, the veil between our dimension and the dimension beyond is thinnest and ghosts apparently can come through more easily which is why there is so much paranormal activity.

There are different types of ghostly appearances. A crisis apparition is the appearance of a ghost, usually to a loved one, at a moment of great crisis or actual death. Typically, the ghosts appear only once to that person who may be many miles away at the time of the incident. Many apparitions are viewed repeating the same motions or scenes.

Some classic hauntings fall into this category such as the Brown Lady of Raynham Hall, who was always seen moving down a hallway with a lantern in her hand. Usually these ghosts pay little or no attention to the observer like the butler at Erchless who is heard and seen going up and down the front stairs.

Sometimes a haunting will consist entirely of the sound of footsteps, ghostly music or specific smells. The captain of a wrecked ship has been seen walking at the bottom of Chisholm Street between the marsh and graveyard still smoking his pipe and that smell of tobacco lingers.

There are also many legends of ghost lights, which are often said to be caused by someone's ghostly lantern or by a spectral train. Sometimes inanimate objects are said to be cursed or possessed. A particular piece of furniture will refuse to stay in place, even moving in front of the owner's eyes. The piano stool in the Paterson home does not like to be moved and when it is taken from the attic, there is much unexplained noise and activity there.

Poltergeists are the only spirits who leave immediate physical traces. Poltergeists are best known for throwing things about and producing rapping sounds and other noises. In fact, the word "poltergeist" means "noisy ghost" in German. Poltergeists often occur where there are children on the brink of puberty, and often interact with people. Which poltergeist tosses around papers at Erchless?

While ghosts are usually described as solitary essences that haunt particular locations, objects, or people with which they were associated in life, across the centuries there are stories of phantom armies which might be foretelling the

future or replaying the past, and stories of phantom ships such as the Flying Dutchman and the Mary Celeste.

But what of our Oakville ghosts? According to Joyce Burnell, long-time member of the Oakville Historical Society and author of Ghosts of Oakville and Boo Too, Oakville has only the



Robert Murray (aka Daniel Fassler) & Esther Thomas (aka Wendy Belcher) in front of Thomas family gravestone.

nicest ghosts, not scary and not threatening. Joyce collected Oakville ghost tales and published her first book in 1999. The Oakville Historical Society began its Ghosts Walks almost a decade ago under the inspired leadership of Francine Landry who assumed the character of Mary Jane MacDougald, daughter of William Chisholm. At the time, Francine lived in the MacDougald home. The ghosts of Esther Thomas (Wendy Belcher), Jacques the Buccaneer (Carol Gall) and Merrick Thomas (Philip Brimacombe) return annually to lead the Ghost Walks. Mary Jane retired last year to give Francine some much deserved rest from her hauntings. This year, Esther and Merrick's youngest son, Robert Murray (8 year old Daniel Fassler) will also be returning from beyond to help with the Ghost Walks. As well, Jim Young and Midge Philbrook may be 'possessed' by characters of old.

Those participating in the Ghost Walks have often added their own tales of ghostly encounters. One woman had met Alice, the ghost that frequents Oakville Centre, in the washroom of the Centre. She was delighted to hear the story of this ghost and relieved to have an explanation of her experience. Another woman saw a worker in old clothes in the sanctuary of St. Jude's Church during a break in a day-long workshop. When she asked what work was being done, she was told that there was no work, no workmen and, all doors had been locked when the workshop began.

The Society's Ghost Walks consist of a one-hour evening walk in October which starts at the Society Office on King Street. Ghost leaders share stories of Olde Oakville and the characters that lived, died and did not pass on. Each walk ends with refreshments at the Office. The Ghost Walks attract families and such groups as Beavers and Girl Guides. Cost is \$12 per adult and \$6 for those under 12. The Society also does ghostly bus tours during the day for residents of long term care homes.

Walks this year are offered from Oct 7 to October 28 on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. For specific dates and times, please phone the office (905-844-2695) or go to our website www.oakvillehistory.org. The ghosts ask that you phone for reservations.

Shhhhhh!!!!

Can you see them?

Can you hear them?

Wendy Belcher

Come join them! Anyone interested in helping with our Ghost Walks by hosting the evening or leading a walk may contact Barb Savage 905-845-3620

AROUND THE SOCIETY



Solution to “The Way Things Were” – June 2010

With the coming of the railroad in 1855, the harbour fell on hard times and slid into disrepair. It was sold to the Town of Oakville in 1874 for \$250.00. It was William Chisholm himself that established Oakville’s first shipyard on the south bank of the Sixteen Mile Creek, near the north end of Navy Street. The first ship built, in 1828, was a 50 ton, 80 foot two masted schooner named Trafalgar. Oakville built by James Andrew in 1896, the yacht “Canada” won the first Canada-USA race, now known as the “Canada’s Cup”.

Lance Naismith

Thomas House

After 5 years it is with mixed emotions that I give up the care of the Thomas House. However, I am extremely pleased to welcome Mary Davidson and Susan Wells who will continue to care for this historical structure.

I wish to give my heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers who helped make my job so much easier. I know you will continue to give your support to Mary and Susan. I do intend to continue as a regular volunteer when I am not travelling with my husband.

This house is such an important part of Oakville's history and I feel very privileged to have had a part in its continued use.

Pat Mack

Presentation – “Surely Not in Canada”

On May 19th, Mr. Ken Weber made a return visit to our Presentation Night and enthralled the audience with a very spirited and funny Canadian history lesson titled: “Surely Not In Canada”. With well researched historical vignettes, we learned the more “human” side of such Canadian historical figures as Sir John A. MacDonald



and William Lyon MacKenzie King. As well, we all learned about the impact of Canadian inventions upon world society. It was well received and we hope to hear more about our quirky Canadian history in the future.

Lance Naismith

Volunteers

Mary Davidson has been very busy researching our past history about ten people who have contributed a great deal to Oakville. She obtained their pictures from Mary Noad and then wrote a short history regarding each person. Pictures and history were then framed with help from Greg Munz. The pictures with history will be hung in the ten guest rooms of the Halton Inn, formerly the Gibson House and, each room will be called after the Historical person framed. For example: the Merrick Thomas Room.

Well done Mary!!

Congratulations to Heather Davis who has just completed 25 years of volunteering in the Thomas House!

Many people contributed to the success of the Band concert. Unfortunately we don't have room to mention everyone. However, Donna Starkey deserves special thanks for ironing all of the bunting decorations and Marianne Hawthorne for washing and ironing all of the tablecloths. Thanks again to Kopriva Taylor Funeral Home for loaning us 50 chairs for the Band.

Pat Mack is retiring from managing the Thomas House this fall in order to travel more with her husband Bill. They have done a great job and we will miss them both.

Our latest movie star is Phillip Brimacombe, who will be appearing in "Walking in the Past", a new history show from TV Cogeco that explores the history of Oakville, Burlington, Flamborough and Waterdown. Tune in this fall for a brand new perspective on the stories and events that shape our communities.

Pat Mack is welcoming day campers from Erchless to the Thomas House this summer during July and August to learn about pioneers and how they lived.

Phillip Brimacombe will be teaching Schooner days around our harbour.

Our volunteers have had a busy summer.

Barbara Savage

GHOST WALKS - OCTOBER			
DATE	6:00PM	7:00PM	8:30PM
Thurs 7 th		√√√	√√√
Sat 9 th		√√√	√√√
Thurs 14 th		√√√	√√√
Tues 19 th		√√√	√√√
Thurs 21 st		√√√	√√√
Sat 23 rd	√√√	√√√	√√√
Tues 26 th	√√√	√√√	√√√
Thurs 28th	√√√	√√√	√√√
\$12/ADULT, \$6/CHILDREN UNDER 12. INFANTS FREE *CASH ONLY*			
RESERVATIONS: CALL 905-844-2695			

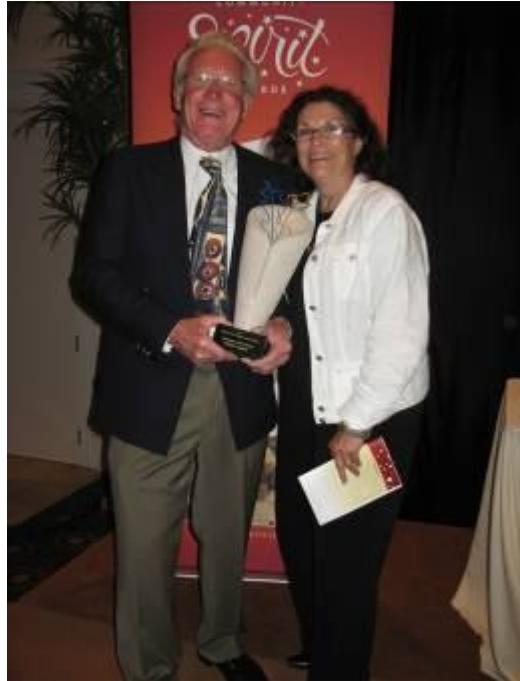
Community Spirit Award for Heritage

Long time member Jamie MacRae was nominated by Barb Savage and seconded by Harry Barrett for the Community Spirit Award for Heritage and, HE WON!!!

Congratulations Jamie.

It is an award well deserved for his many years of volunteering for the Oakville Historical Society and his commitment to Oakville's Heritage Community. Jamie's enthusiasm for Oakville's history is very apparent and not only will he assist and give advice on heritage restoration, he is heavily involved in the Society's plaque program.

His sailboat, the "Aggie" is also a piece of Oakville heritage, as is his house. Not one to hesitate in exploring Oakville's history, he is well deserving of this award. Thanks for your contribution to the understanding of Oakville's history and sharing those moments with us.



Jamie MacRae - wife, Jane Hawkrigg

Marianne Hawthorne & Lance Naismith

L/R: Harry Barrett,
Jamie MacRae, Jane
Hawkrigg & Barbara
Savage



HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS - 2010			
(All Walks commence at 2:00 p.m. – 110 King Street West)			
	HISTORIC HOUSES	MAIN STREET	TRAFALGAR
SEPTEMBER	Sunday 5 th	Sunday 19 th	Monday 6 th Labour Day
COST: Adult - \$10, Child - \$5, Family \$25 CASH ONLY			
VISIT http://oakvillehistory.org/html/walkTours.htm for tour descriptions.			
The Historic Houses & Main Street tours leave from and return to the Oakville Historical Society at 110 King Street, west of Navy. Enter from the park or from King St. Go to the south side of the building.			
The Trafalgar Road tours leave from and return to the parking lot of St. John's United Church.			
Tour duration is about 2 hours. Each tour is preceded by a brief talk on related Oakville history. Tea and light refreshments are served after each walk.			
Guides are OHS volunteers who are long-time local residents.			

[Welcome Aboard](#)

We'd like to welcome the following new members to our Society: Ms. Margaret Godefroy, Oakville; Mr. and Mrs. Carlos Fassler & Family, Oakville; Ms. Sue Hobson, Oakville; Mr. Benson Savage, Oakville; Ms. Barbara Lynn Taylor, Tonawanda, New York. We look forward to meeting you and sharing your interest in Oakville's history.

Andrea Stewart

[World of Antiques](#)

Jed Gardner, with a strong boost from the Oakville Historical Society, successfully launched The World of Antiques on TV COGECO. Says Gardner, "The quality of the production is excellent". We certainly lucked out when David Bartlett was assigned by COGECO to produce, direct, and edit the show." Gardner, though, credits the Oakville Historical Society with encouraging members to participate in the program. More shows are being scheduled and the response to the pilot has been very favourable.

Thomas House

I am, of course, assuming that all members of the Society have at one time or another, visited the Thomas House in Lakeside Park, a beautifully preserved piece of Oakville history, highlighting the lives of the Thomas Merrick family, an important person in the early development of Oakville, along with William Chisholm. We are lucky that we have volunteers who have learned the history, period customs and, even dress the part to give some realism to your visit.

Yacoub Husseini of *Yacoub Husseini Photography*, visited the Thomas House in July and photographed two of our volunteers (Wendy Belcher, Philip Brimacombe) in their period costumes. Our thanks to Yacoub for making a record of this and sharing the photographs with us.





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.





Milton Historical Society Visit

Members of the Oakville Historical Society were honoured to be guests of the Milton Historical Society, located at 16 James Street, Milton in the Waldie's Blacksmith Shop in July, 2010. They were given an overview of the Society, along with a history of the Society and its relationship to the Waldie Blacksmith Shop. After the presentation, a tour of the "WORKING" blacksmith shop was given, with the blacksmiths actively engaged.

Our thanks to those who arranged and gave the tour, along with those who are ensuring that the historical aspects of blacksmithing is kept alive.

A side trip was also taken to the Boston Presbyterian Church and Cemetery.

When Esquesing was settled in 1819, the area from the base line to the 15th Sideroad and from the 5th line to the 2nd line soon became known as the Scotch Block. Some of these settlers came directly from Scotland, but a great many others came via the USA. The first minister to come to this Presbyterian settlement was the Rev. Wm. Jenkins of Markham, who preached in June 1820 at the farm of Andrew Laidlaw on Lot 6, Con. 4. In 1821, a session was chosen of the following men: John Stirrett, James Laidlaw, Robert Shortreed, George Barbour, Thomas Barbour, George Darling, James Frazer, and John Creighton. A meeting was called on 4 March 1824 to consider the purchase of land for a church and burying ground. The appointed committee purchased one and a half acres from Andrew Laidlaw. At a meeting later that year, Malcolm McNaughton, James McLaren, Duncan Campbell, Andrew Hardy, and Jasper Martin were elected trustees for one year, and it was decided to proceed with the building of a church, a school, and dividing the cemetery into lots. From almost the beginning, the congregation was divided by different views concerning articles of faith and by the early 1830s a large and influential element had resolved to leave and start a new church. This group was to become the United Presbyterian Church just down the road. After years of being served by Missionary preachers, the Rev. Peter Ferguson was inducted as the first pastor on 11 April 1832.

The current church was built by James Smith in 1868, and is named after Thomas Boston. (Above taken from website of Halton Genealogical Society - <http://www.halinet.on.ca/sigs/ogshp/h/es06.htm>)







Historical Art Available

Michael Hitchcox, an experienced artist, is making available to the Oakville Historical Society a number of lovely prints depicting the Oakville and Bronte area. These are done in colour and would make an ideal gift or, addition to your home. Copies are available for viewing at the Society, with proceeds going to the Society to help with future plans.

Below are a couple of prints:



Bronte Harbour 'Fall Colours'

\$85.00



Bronte Harbour Winter

\$85.00

Picnic in the Park

On June 13th, the Society held its annual “Band Concert in the Park” at Lakeside Park. The weather co-operated and everyone had a fun time enjoying the company and the music. Those attending enjoyed some lively tunes by the St. Paul’s Dixieland Band and then an eclectic mix of music by the Oakville Wind Orchestra. Below is a visual record of the good times had by all.



From Left to Right: Adele Hurley, Pat Bailey, Susan Peacock, Tina Breckonridge, Liz Montegue, Ted Bailey, Aubrey Martin, David Peacock, Lori Hewitt
Back Row: Mr Marshall, Catherine Hurley

We have a lot of history in the above group, people who have put a lot of effort into not only the Society but promoting the Town of Oakville.

Adele Hurley and her sister Catherine have always been strong supporters of Picnic in the Park especially when we rented donkeys for the children to ride. Pat Bailey and her husband Ted worked very hard when the Society was being renovated. Susan Peacock and her husband David wrote the book "Old Oakville". Tina Breckonridge is a long time supporter of the Society (now 102!). Liz Montegue composed a colourful book of Oakville's Heritage Sites in an appeal for the Prince of Wales Award for Oakville. (ed. Which Oakville has won for 2010). Aubrey Martin, this years winner of the Best Hat Award. Lori Hewitt Donated an antique sideboard to the Society. Mr Marshall is a past president of the Society.











THE WAY THINGS WERE



1. Can you name this building and when it was built?
2. Who built this building?
3. Who laid the corner stone?
4. When was music allowed in the church?

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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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