

Oakville Historical
Society
since 1953

www.oakvillehistory.org

The White Oak

News from the Oakville Historical Society

Oakville's Hotels Pg. 4



Plaque Update Pg. 8



Speakers

18 April, Kelly Mathews, author of "Eaton Hall: Pride of King Township."

16 May, Cian Horrobin, Regional Co-ordinator of the Monarchist League of Canada.

21 November, Shannon Kyles, Ontario Architect.

Speakers Nights are held at St. John's Church, Corner of Dunn and Randall Streets. Enter from Randall. 7:30 pm. All welcome, donations accepted and refreshments served.

AGM

Join your fellow Society members Wednesday, 21 March at St. John's Church, 6:00 pm for a potluck supper, Annual General Meeting at 7:30. Voice your opinion on all Society matters! Run for office! Make a difference!

Thomas House

opens 19 May 2018

May to September weekends. Also Tue, Wed, Thur in July and August.

Contact us if you are willing to volunteer for an afternoon this summer.

Yard Sale

This year's OHS Yard Sale is on Saturday, 26 May from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm.

We are accepting donations now, particularly from people who are moving and want to get rid of good saleable stuff but no clothing or upholstered furniture please. Jamie Macrae and Jim Young can box it and pick it up from donors. Phone Jim at 289 259-0955 or the OHS office at 905 844-2695.



Jim Young and Harry Barrett prepare for the sale.

Mayor's Picnic

Last year many volunteers wore period costume and we had many favourable comments, so get your bowler and parasol out of the moth balls this June!

A note from the Society *President*

It's been fairly quiet since our last newsletter. Work continues on learning how to use Past Perfect, our new collections management software and we have gone live with our first online exhibit – The Munro Letters – which features over 180 letters to and from France during the First War. The letters were written by members of the Munro family, notably from Melville who served overseas, with a few by Brock Chisholm. All of the letters can be seen with transcripts and background information on our website. This has been a pet project of Mark Verlinden.

We're trying to make more use of our Facebook page. We started by posting photos of new plaques as we put them up. You'll see more about our plaques in this newsletter.

Some may have noticed the 2x4 which appears to be holding up the roof in the main room at the office. We've been plagued by leaks on one side of the skylight and a few months ago, when it was being worked on again, the rafters on one side of it broke. It turned out that the rafters were just a shell and the insides had been eaten by ants attracted by the dampness caused by the leaks. Once the weather gets better, the shingles will be

removed, an ice and water barrier will be installed over the whole roof panel, flashing and counter flashing will be installed and the roof replaced. The broken rafters will also be replaced. Our thanks to the Town for looking after this. We are also grateful to the Town for our annual operating grant which is intended to cover our utilities.

Later this month Greg Munz and Mark Verlinden will be showing off the work of the Society at a conference being put on by Halton Heritage Services. Over the past year or so we've developed an excellent working relationship with the staff of Halton Heritage. They've been an excellent resource in the preparation of our exhibits and in our future planning. We've been working on three projects with their assistance and with the help of the Town. Stay tuned for further information as these

projects develop.

There are so many things that we're working on and would like to work on but we do need the help of our volunteers. If you'd like to become part of that group, please speak up.

George Chisholm, President



Roof repairs needed

Early Town Was No Sahara

Pioneer Hotels Were Plentiful

It will probably come as a surprise to many that Oakville's first hotel is still a going concern after more than a century and a quarter. The Oakville Hotel, at the northeast corner of Colborne and Navy Streets is as old as the community itself. It was built in the winter of 1827-28 by William Young, its first proprietor, under an arrangement with the owner of the property, Col. William Chisholm, Oakville's founder.

Ah, Wilderness!

An incident that occurred while the building was being put up serves to show that Oakville was very much in the wilderness at that time. While men were raising the frame someone came running to the spot with the news that a bear had been treed by dogs a short distance away. Everyone stopped work and rushed to the spot, killing the animal with their axes and other tools. The bear's hide decorated the hotel's sitting room for many years.

One traveller who stopped at the Oakville Hotel in 1831 described it as being "two-stories high and very commodious, being provided with most of the comforts and many of the luxuries of the present day; to which is attached a most excellent garden of an acre and a half." A bed at the hotel at that time cost seven pence, breakfast nine pence, and dinner and supper a total of one shilling and two pence. Whiskey was sold at 3 1/2 pence a gill.

Added Gallery

William Johnson Sumner, who succeeded William Young as proprietor after the latter's death in 1831 bought the hotel in 1834 and made alterations to the building, including an addition of a "large commodious gallery." According to an announcement by Mr. Sumner it was possible from this gallery to see right across the lake to the town of Niagara, Brock's Monument, the spray from Niagara Falls, and some of the villages on the borders of Ontario. *Continues on Pg. 5*

Early Town Was No Sahara appeared in the The Journal, The Home Newspaper of Oakville and Trafalgar on June 27th 1957.

March 2018 Notes

- Colborne Street is now Lakeshore Road.
- A gill is 5 imperial fluid ounces or 142 ml.
- In 1857 the decision was made to introduce decimal coinage into Canada .
- The Oakville House building was taken down in September 1984 and replaced by a building that is similar in design.
- The site of the Royal Exchange is now Town Square, beside the still-existing old post office building.
- In the 1940s, the Hotel Gibson burned, and a new building replaced it called The Halton Inn, which in 2018 is no longer a hotel.
- The Frontier House building is still a private residence.
- Victoria House location is still a butcher.
- Murray House, no longer a hotel, holds businesses.

John Williams who took over the Oakville House in about 1852, added another storey to it in 1869. The hotel in those days was a favourite spot for farmers bringing their grain into town to sell. They would often entrust their money to Williams when they retired, and he had a number of secret caches around the building in which to hide it for safe-keeping. When the 20th Halton Battalion gathered in Oakville in the spring of 1868 for eight days' training, the hotel served as the officers' mess.

Favourite Resort

Another one of Oakville's old hosteleries still in operation is the new Murray Hotel on Navy Street, formerly the Murray House. This large brick building, originally known as the Canadian Hotel, was erected by John Williams, owner of the Oakville House, and was opened on December 15, 1857. It became a favourite resort for summer tourists who began to frequent Oakville from about 1870. The hotel fell into disrepute in 1881 when it was operated by two women and was the scene of drunken brawls. It was closed for some time under the Scott Act, which was repealed in 1888. Later it became the International Hotel. It had many different proprietors until 1896 when Murray Williams, nephew of the original owner, bought it and changed its name to the Murray House. Mr. Williams operated the hotel for 40 years.

COVER Three images show Oakville House: in 1897, during demolition in 1984 and the new building on the site in 2018.

Central Site

A hotel which vanished from the scene many years ago was the Royal Exchange, that stood on the south side of Colborne Street just east of George, on ground now occupied by the Public Library and a service station. Many citizens remember it as a long, sagging, badly dilapidated, roughcast structure, almost empty. It was built by William Uptegrave in 1831, and for many years served as the place for changing horses for the stage-coaches that ran from Toronto to Hamilton along the Lakeshore Road.

The Royal Exchange was bought in the 1860s by Joseph Boon, a bricklayer and contractor who enlarged it to almost twice its original size by building an addition to the west. Its next owner was Duncan Oliphant, a farmer, who purchased it in 1870. In 1888 James Arno took over the Hotel as lessee and almost completely refitted it. He installed a new bar with a big mirror surrounded by stuffed birds and animals, including a fox in a crouching position.

Continues on Pg. 6



Royal Exchange Hotel

Short Frontier

A hotel that lasted for only a short time was the Frontier House, established in a house at the south-east corner of Navy and King Streets. Its first proprietor was Jesse Belyea of Bronte. An announcement he published stated, "His hotel is the largest and his accommodations the best in Oakville. He has spared no expense in fitting up his house for their reception. Coaches always in attendance to convey passengers to and from boats." After 1860 the building became a private house once more. It is still in use.



Frontier House at 29 Navy St.

On the site of Knox Presbyterian Church at Colborne and Dunn Streets stood William O'Reilly's tavern. It was later known as Thomas Lloyd's Hotel. The proprietor used to keep a black bear chained to a pole in the yard. Sometimes the bear was fed live pigs, which it consumed to the accompaniment of horrible noises while a crowd of loafers looked on. Raccoons and other animals were also kept on the premises.

Opens With A Ball

Lloyd's Hotel was bought by George Baker, Oakville's first constable, who remodeled it in 1870 and renamed it the White Oak Hotel. It was re-opened with a ball on March 1, 1870. Baker ran the hotel until 1876. It was removed when Knox Church was built, about 1887.

Another fairly early hostelery was the Victoria House established by John Wray in 1860 in a house on the north-east corner of Colborne and Dunn Streets. One Sunday afternoon Protestant and Roman Catholic sailors engaged in a bitter fight outside the Victoria House with axe handles as the principle weapons and many were injured. During the greater part of the 1870s William Walsh was the proprietor. *Continues on Pg. 7*



Oakville Historical
Society
since 1953

HISTORICAL TOURS

Patricia "Trish" Sinclair
905 845-4030
jakpat@cogeco.ca

www.oakvillehistory.org

TCA

TURNER CHAPEL ANTIQUES

JED GARDNER

www.turnerchapelantiques.com

905.338.3252

37 Lakeshore Rd. W, Oakville, ON, L6K 1C8
turnerchapelantiques@bellnet.ca



Queen's Hotel 1897

About 1886, William Wynne remodeled the building, removing the verandah and changing the name to the Queen's Hotel. The hotel was closed about the turn of the century and later the building was rebuilt as a butcher shop.

The only temperance hotel in Oakville was Forman's Hotel at the south-east corner of George and Randall Streets. It was opened in 1833 by George Forman, a farmer on the Lakeshore Road East. The men who worked on the Temperance Hall 1843 used to have dinner there.

Temperance House

Forman's Hotel was taken over in 1850 by Charles Davis, a shoemaker, and re-named the Oakville Temperance House. It was taken over again in 1859 by Jacob Barnes, a blacksmith, who ran it under license with the new name of Halton County Hotel. It ceased business after the death of the proprietor in 1868 and the building was moved to the south-west corner of Colborne and George Streets. WO



Birks

This building at 146 Lakeshore Rd W., Oakville was built and owned by Birks jewellers as their first purpose-built store in Canada.

Erchless Museum

Welcome to the Town of Oakville's online collections. Feel free to browse, search or even create an account and gather your own collection of favourite objects.

<https://collections.oakville.ca/collections>



COMMUNITY FUNERAL HOME INC.

TERRY C. COOKE

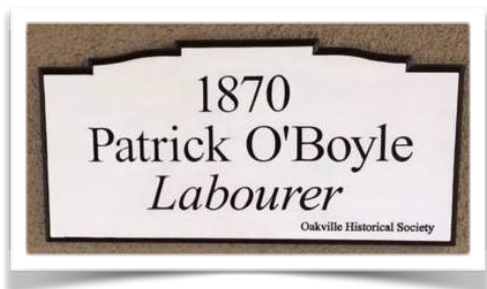
Managing Director

TEL: (905) 844-2600 FAX: (905) 842-2966

kopriva@eol.ca

64 LAKESHORE ROAD WEST, OAKVILLE, ONTARIO L6K 1E1

What's Behind A Plaque?



Research Committee

There are about ten of us on the Plaque Committee, Phil Brimacombe being the chair. Phil mentioned the other day that making two or three house plaques per year was considered very good and now we have way over twenty on the go with new requests coming in all the time. The way to securing a very attractive plaque goes though a trail, a road, sometimes with curves. When a house owner asks for a plaque it goes to the members of the Research Committee who determine when the house was built, its first resident, and occupation of that resident.

The way to securing a very attractive plaque goes though a trail, a road, sometimes with curves."

Research Committee member Nicole Léger is making a master inventory, alphabetically by street name and house number, going back to the 1960s, using all the information we can find at OHS and from family members.

She organized a large group to walk the streets to record and photograph which houses have a plaque. Rosemary Seeton who knows the archives well, researches to see if any information is known about the property. I help where I can.

Janet Godber a fairly new member who knows well how to search online, adds to the research. Jim Young, a local real estate agent has been very helpful in looking up the block and lot.

Without this dedicated wonderful group, producing plaques would not go nearly so well. Oakvillians and tourists who walk about, read the plaque information and slip back in history with the stories these plaques conjure up. June Hitchcox



What I do at OHS

Last August I joined the OHS and was fortunate to become a volunteer with the House Plaque Committee. After helping out for many years in areas where my kids were involved, it was time to turn the page and experience something different. Having an interest in local history and over 30 years of genealogical experience, the OHS was a perfect fit.

Working alongside June, Rosemary and Nicole, researching the older homes of Oakville and breathing life back into their early inhabitants is a rewarding experience. It is somewhat like being a detective. We pore over land records, fire insurance maps, census returns, books, diaries and pictures, but sometimes have to search in lesser known files.

Continues on Pg. 9



Janet Godber

One case was solved after locating an address in a passenger record, while another was solved by reading the service files of a WW1 CEF soldier.

Most of us know that Erchless was once home to the Chisholm family but would we have known the names of those ordinary people in the surrounding homes in town without the benefit of plaques being proudly displayed?

What a thrill for a homeowner to learn that their house was a former stable, or that it was at one time part of a notable tavern that was split into 3 sections with their portion being dragged from one end of town to the other, or that it was partly cobbled together by rocks gathered in a woman's apron and carried up the banks of the Sixteen. It speaks to the resourcefulness and character of those first homeowners. Perhaps they were not so ordinary after all. These people were the driving force behind the success of their community. They were shipbuilders, tanners, tailors, doctors, shoemakers & constables, to name a few.

Janet Godber

Speaker's Night

Ms. Geri Tino from ATA Architects spoke eloquently about her involvement with several prominent architectural projects in downtown Oakville. The current Anthropologie building was formerly Merchants Bank of Canada (later Bank of Montreal) and the first bank in Oakville. The addition echos the 1910 structure in a sympathetic way, keeping the horizontal lines on the same level while adding larger areas of glass befitting a modern structure. Another project is the Radial Railway building, erected in 1906 and abandoned when the Radial ceased to operate in 1929. The south part of the lot was severed, a new structure built there and an addition added to the top of the original building. The new building and Radial building additions are similar in design.

Ms. Tino hopes that restoring major historical buildings will encourage brand identity within the Town of Oakville.



ATA Architects' redesign of former bank building at 159 Lakeshore Rd. E., Oakville.

ATA Architects photo

Membership

Just a reminder that renewals for 2018 are now due. Enclosed with your newsletter is a membership form should you wish to renew by mail or in person. We can also process renewals online if you would prefer, using PayPal.

We welcome new members -

Mr. Andrew Harmgardt and Ms. Courtney Thompson, Mr. Angus Paterson, Mr. Eric Steinke, Ms. Betty Strong and Ms. Jane Watt.

A. Stewart and M. Descent, Memberships

Treasures in a Chocolate Box

The Acquisition Committee has been given an interesting collection of documents by a Morden family member. The items were neatly folded into a chocolate box and, when opened, it was found that they mostly related to land acquisitions and mortgages - between thirty and forty assorted documents. The earliest document was dated 1845.

- In 1913 Captain E.A. Morden took a step to improve his milking stock by acquiring a pedigree cow in 1911 named "Abigail Beels", a Holstein-Freisian, but she was "transferred shortly."
- In 1934 the Guardian Insurance Company of Canada issued an insurance policy for Captain Morden on April 26th for an "Automobile" at a premium of \$25.00.

But, perhaps the most unusual document was undated and headed, "Specifications of a dwelling house to be built by E.A. Morden, Esq. Oakville". Pinned together were five typewritten papers with the most thorough details of construction and finish.

We do not know if the house was ever put up. The collection of documents should make for interesting reading and study.



Discount for OHS Members

FOR ALL YOUR
REAL ESTATE NEEDS
JIM YOUNG
SALES REP
REALTY EXECUTIVES PLUS
LTD
BROKERAGE

cell 289 259-0955
office 905 337-7000

jimbobmba2000@gmail.com



**BLACK FOREST
PASTRY SHOP**

184 Lakeshore Rd. East
Oakville, ON L6J 1H6
T 905.337.1671

www.blackforestpastryshop.ca
john@blackforestpastryshop.ca

Please

visit our
advertisers

MACRAE & ASSOCIATES

RENOVATIONS
RESTORATIONS

JAMIE MACRAE

65 NAVY ST.
OAKVILLE, ON
L6J 2Z1

cell 905 399 6066

Interesting Facts About *Kissing* from 1936

Kissing is an art, and not a gift. Indeed, the whole practice of love is one of the most charming of the applied arts. No man or woman is born a perfect kisser or perfect lover.

Society, as now constituted, is sadly lacking in proper facilities for learning the technique of love and kissing. A hundred years from now, every well-equipped school will contain departments of Erotology, teaching theory as well as laboratory experiments. If I live that long, I expect to become at one leap a full-fledged professor in kissing. I may even rise higher.



In choosing a wife there are three rules which should be most rigidly observed.

First, be sure to choose a woman whom you can respect as well as love; secondly, the necessity of marrying a companionable woman; thirdly, make quite sure that she is domesticated.

To begin with the first: if a girl be ever too beautiful, ever so fascinating, if she is gay, frivolous, eager for amusements, she is unworthy of respect in the true sense of the word.

Secondly, the necessity of marrying a companionable woman: this is of the utmost importance, for the man who possesses a wife who cannot enter into his pursuits, or ambitions, or interests, who cannot converse on any subject, but the frivolous ones that delight herself, is as much alone, or even more alone, than the single man.

Thirdly, it is of equal importance that she should be domesticated, for a helpless, lazy wife is ruination to even a wealthy man; to a poor one she will simply be a burden. Be careful to scrutinize her personal appearance before deciding on the momentous question and, if there is even a semblance of carelessness or untidiness in her dress, pause and reflect.

What can be more delightful to a man to find his helpmate is an excellent manager, his home kept bright and clean, and all her duties discharged at the time they should be? There is no doubt that however strong an affection a man may have conceived for his wife before marriage, it will gradually disappear if he finds her neglectful of those home duties which ought to be the pride of every woman, scrupulously to fulfil.

The *way* things were



Do you know?

What this is?

What it is made of?

Where it is?

Look out for the answer in our next issue!



Back page, December 2017, showed c1960 Lorne Scots Cadets on a field exercise maintaining radio contact while taking a break.

Archive Hours:

Tuesday & Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 pm
Third Sunday of the month 12:30 to 4:00 pm

905 844-2695 www.oakvillehistory.org

110 King Street
Oakville, ON
L6J 1B1