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# The White Oak

News from the Oakville Historical Society



Leslie MacLaren Bailey with parents  
and Cottage Number 8



## LESLIE MACLAREN BAILEY'S MEMORIES OF COTTAGE NUMBER 8

Volume 52 Number 3

September 2018

## Speakers

21 November, Shannon Kyles, Architect. Shannon Kyles has been teaching History of Architecture at Mohawk College for 25 years. She took apart and restored a 1830s Regency Cottage. Shannon's approach is to popularize historic architecture, make people appreciate their wonderful old buildings, and they will be more likely to save them.

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

## November 11th 2018

The Armistice that ended the hostilities of World War I came into effect on the 11<sup>th</sup> Hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> Day of the 11<sup>th</sup> Month of 1918. One hundred years ago.

The Oakville Historical Society and the Oakville Museum, with the help of Halton Heritage Services, are in the early stages of developing a commemorative display to be installed in George's Square for this year's Remembrance Day ceremony. Greg Munz

## Oakville Ghosts Arise

Yes, Fall is here and our ghosts are rising to cross the threshold between their world and ours. You can meet them Monday through Saturday from October 15 to October 30 at 6:30, 7:15 or 8:00 pm. Among the ghostly (and always friendly) characters roaming the Oakville streets will be Esther Thomas; her sister Rebecca Chisholm (wife of Oakville's founder); Captain Robert Wilson who brought many American slaves to freedom, Alice, resident ghost of Oakville Centre, Margaret Urquhart wife of Dr. Urquart, Constable George Sumner, Peter McDougald, Mayor of Oakville and son-in-law of William Chisholm, Jacques who haunts the Murray House and Miss Andrews, sister of Captain Andrews. And, of course, there will be wandering ghosts who are portrayed by local high school students.

These now-famous Ghost Walks attract many participants. So, if you haven't come on our Walks, please join us. And if you would like to assume the character of a ghost, we would really, really like to hear from you. Wendy Belcher

## Doors Open Oakville

10 am - 4 pm, 29 September 2018  
OHS Offices, Thomas House, Anitra Schooner and more.  
<https://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca/>

## Christmas Party

110 King St. 6 pm, 7 December 2018  
Enjoy some festive fare and conversations with your fellow members.

# A note from the Society *President*

By the time you read this all of our summer help will be gone. Meghan Headrick, Julia Davis, Julia Rothfischer and Brodie Hobson have done outstanding work and the board wishes them well.

The broken rafters beside the skylight in the main room have finally been replaced. The roof and flashing were redone around the skylight and, at last downpour, there was no leak. Now we'll just have to do some paint touchup.

The Mayor's Picnic was its usual success. Our thanks to Marianne Hawthorne and all her helpers for making it such a success.

Please think ahead to next summer. We are in need of some new volunteers for the Thomas House. I spend a couple of afternoons there over the summer and it's very relaxing. Plus, you meet some really interesting people. No experience necessary.

Recently I replaced the plaque at the Thomas House. The old one read "1829, Thomas House". After some discussion, it was decided to change the wording to "Merrick Thomas, Village Planner" which is how Hazel Chisholm Mathews described him in Oakville and The Sixteen.

Our newest venture is a self-guided walk on Navy Street, from the Lake up to Robinson St and back. A YouTube video features new and historic photos and a voice track to help you on your way. All prepared by Mark Verlinden. It can be accessed on a cell phone by going to YouTube and searching for Oakville Historical Society.



Many don't know that we are the official sponsor of the local Army Cadet Corps which started at Oakville Trafalgar High School in 1924. In 1992, the cadet corps, which I commanded at the time, was looking for a new home because the Board of Education decided it no longer wanted to sponsor them. After some negotiation, the Society became the main sponsor with the condition that I join the board. Greg Munz and I attended their annual review in May and it was quite an event. A former cadet, LCol Mark Mahood, CD, was the Reviewing Officer and there were about 100 young men

and women on parade including their excellent band of about 30. Army Cadets is Canada's oldest and largest youth organization. The band will be performing as part of Oakville Doors Open, 29 September.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of long-time volunteer Ernie Carroll at the age of 102.

George Chisholm, President

# A Child's Wonderland

## Memories of Cottage Number 8

Story told through email by Leslie MacLaren Bailey. Written by Patricia Stephenson.



Leslie MacLaren Bailey  
with her parents Jo and  
Ken MacLaren aboard  
Lady Evelyn II

Only a few can claim to have lived part of their childhood in a cottage on the wooded grounds of the Erchless Estate. Fortunately, Leslie MacLaren Bailey was one of those children. In 1962, at age eleven, she stepped into what she calls “a child’s wonderland.”

“It was kind of funny how we came to live at the cottage,” she explains. Leslie’s parents Jo and Ken MacLaren were friends of Ruby and Monty Hart; they had met as mutual members of The Oakville Club. Leslie and the Hart’s daughter Ann, whom Leslie called “Posy,” began their friendship in fifth grade at St. Mildred’s-Lightbourn School. The girls shared quiet temperaments, colourful imaginations, and a zest for adventure. They were best buddies.

The Hart family lived in the grand two-story, red-brick, Chisholm ancestral home, called Erchless Estate. As a child, Leslie called it “the big house.” Monty Hart was the son of Hazel Chisholm Hart Mathews, and great-great-grandson of William Chisholm, the founder of Oakville.

“The grounds were glorious,” recalls Leslie. “Huge elms were everywhere with big,

sweeping garden beds around the house and down the hill to the harbour.”

For over a century, “the big house” perched well above the shores of Lake Ontario to the south and the Sixteen Mile Creek to the west. A red-brick wall, over six feet high, surrounded the north and the east sides of the estate. An arched doorway poked through the brick wall leading onto the grounds. Stone pillars framed a gateway at the north and east wall. Four acres of property, much of it hidden from passers-by.

On one occasion, while her family was visiting the Harts, says Leslie, “Dad was complaining about yard work,” as they lived on a large Lakeshore Road property. Furthermore, he would have preferred to live closer to downtown Oakville. Offering a solution, the Harts mentioned that one of their two cottages was for rent.

The cottages, known as Number 8 and Number 10, were located at 8 and 10 King Street (street numbers were later changed to 108 and 110). They sat at the northern edge of the estate, snug between the

Coach House and a hill that sloped down to the creek. Directly across the road from the cottages, a mere few strides away, was The Oakville Club. And as if by design, through the kitchen window of Cottage Number 8, the MacLarens' cruiser *Lady Evelyn II*, could be seen at its mooring on the Sixteen Mile Creek.

Perhaps the Harts never really thought that their friends would take them up on the offer, as it was made, says Leslie, in a "kind of joking" manner. But Jo and Ken were so taken with the little cottage, that they promptly listed their house for sale and moved into Cottage Number 8.

"The cottage was delightful!" recalls Leslie. "The cottage was divided by a hallway that ran through the centre, [a straight line] from the front door through to a French door that accessed the back garden." Crude flagstone flooring, flush with a hint of pale pink, typical of Port Credit stone, was laid in the hallway and the dining-living room area. "French windows faced onto the beautiful grounds with a massive elm right outside the living room window," she says. The cottage came with exposed wooden beams, a skylight that occasionally leaked, and an enormous red-brick fireplace that covered much of one wall – its smoke often lingering.

Cottage Number 8 was built in 1952 for Monty's Aunt Juliet; it featured elements of a Normandy-style cottage that Juliet was so fond of. Cottage Number 10 was built a year later for her sister Hazel, Monty's mother. The dwellings were constructed of used materials to give them an older appearance. They shared a wall and a roofline, but functioned as separate cottages.

Moving into a one-bedroom cottage may have been a concern for some, but not for the MacLaren family of three. The large carpeted bedroom came equipped with an oversized walk-in closet. That closet was converted into a bedroom for Leslie. "My parents bought a large Victorian wardrobe for their clothes," she says. "It's a good thing that I was still pretty young, because I had to go through their bedroom to get to the bathroom or anywhere else."

"It was a fun place to live," she recalls. "There was a lot of scope for imagination on that property [for two young girls]." And imaginative, they were: they played down the hill from her cottage, on the flood plain – among fallen trees, tangled branches and rose bushes, and woodland wild flowers. There were thorns and thistles



Sketch by Jo (Dode) MacLaren, *View through the Window of Cottage 8*, 1963

that plucked their clothing and scratched their skin, yet that didn't deter them from playing there, says Leslie. She took delight at finding flowers, particularly the roses that pushed their way up through the brush. Leslie thought of them as "beautiful surprises when they were in bloom." It was their favourite play area. The girls called it "the wilderness."

"The wilderness" was caused by the upheaval of Hurricane Hazel, she says. The force of its breath uprooted trees and caused raging waters to flood the creek banks. But, before the storm hit, the hill and flood plain were neatly groomed between gardens, sugar maples, red ash and willow trees.

A low stone retaining wall followed the creek, from "the wilderness" to a beach. "We played on the pebble beach and hauled some of the rocks up to the cottage to make a rock garden of our own," she says, "[leaving a trail of rocks] beside the rough, dirt footpath that lead from my cottage to the 'secret garden.'"

For two girls with a love of horses, the Coach House stables became a place where make-believe horses whinnied, and the pawing of metal hooves smacked the wooden floor of their stalls. Even though horses had not graced the stables for many years, a faint smell of horse remained. "The stalls were still

intact," says Leslie. "We loved playing 'horses' in them." And although Posy's grandmother Hazel and Aunt Juliet (Posy's great aunt) lived in the Coach House apartment, no one told the girls that playing in the stables was off limits. Yet, she adds, "I don't imagine that we were supposed to be there."

"The 'Sixteen' was an important part of our life," says Leslie. "Dad built me a plywood dinghy from a kit, on the front lawn of the cottage. . . . We rowed all around the harbour area, often with the Macrae twins, [as they rowed] *Anitra's* dory. Sometimes all four of us would row all the way to the old mill ruins, as far as the water was deep enough for a boat. We explored the channels through the reeds."

In wintertime, Leslie and Posy tobogganed down the steep hill that faced the Sixteen. Nothing could beat the thrill of sledding down through a clearing on that hill, she says, stopping just short of landing in the creek!

The MacLarens moved out of Cottage Number 8 in 1964. They left behind the Victorian wardrobe – but took with them a storybook full of memories.

## Local *History* Books

Oakville and the Sixteen The History of An Ontario Port by Hazel Mathews  
The definitive work on the history of Oakville, from its beginnings to post WWII. Members \$30.

Oakville: A Small Town (1900 - 1930) by Frances R. Ahern. A Companion to Mathews' book. Members \$10.

Available at OHS Offices.

*TCA*

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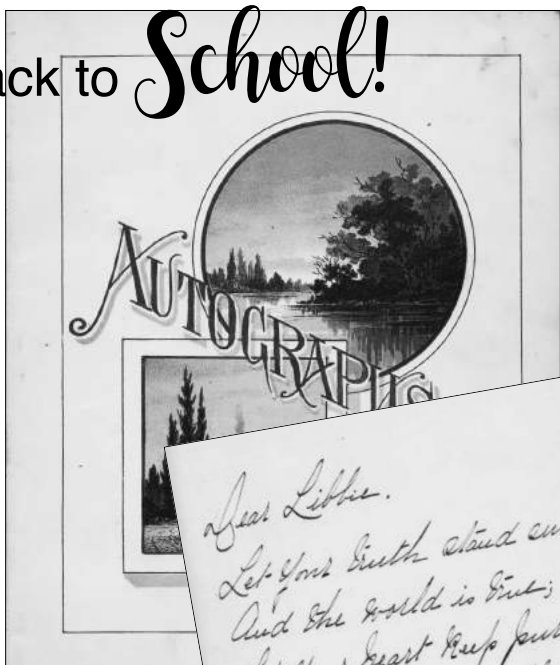
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# Back to School!



To Libbie,

If matrimony tempts you  
Commit it if you can  
But the longer you delay it;  
The better for the man.

Wm. Costello

Dear Libbie,

Let your truth stand sure,  
And the world is true;  
Let your heart keep pure,  
And the world will, too.

In the advice of  
Friend Lee



To Libbie.

May he who clothes the lily,  
And marks the sparrow-fall,  
Protect and save you Libbie,  
And guide you safe through all.

Oakville Nov 2/88

In the wish of  
your Friend  
Jack

To Libbie

Give for those that love you  
For those whose hearts are true  
For the Heaven that smiles always  
And the good you may do

Your Friend

Geo. C. Smith

Oakville  
Oct 19<sup>th</sup>  
1888

To Miss Whittaker

May your joys be  
As deep as the ocean.  
And your sorrows as  
Light as its foam.

J. J. Hewson

Oakville Feb. 12<sup>th</sup>  
1888

Never kiss by the garden gate,  
'cause love is blind, but the  
neighbours ain't.

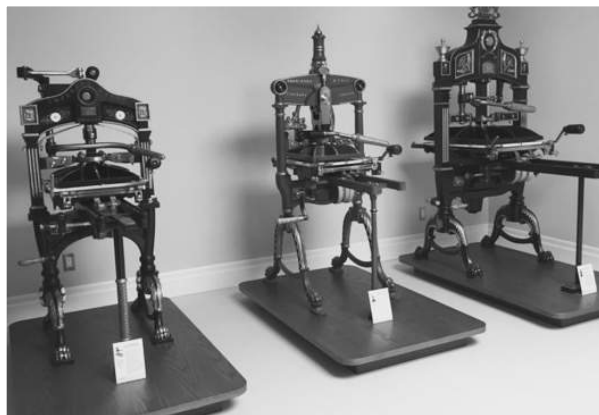
## Town Gardeners



The Town of Oakville maintains beautiful summer gardens. We enjoy the view outside our offices and appreciate the work that goes into planning and maintaining the grounds. When we invited the crew who looks after the Erchless Estate in for tea, we learned planning for 2019 has been submitted, plants are grown at the Town Greenhouses on Cornwall Road (visit them at Doors Open) and these people are a dedicated crew! Thank you assistants Emily Lonsway, Catherine Hnatuk, Maeve Crowne and Danielle Duvall, Gardener, Parks and Open Spaces.



## Doors Open



New to Doors Open Halton is Howard Iron Works Printing Museum at 800 Westgate Road, Oakville. Visitors will be captivated by a special collection of printing machinery, artifacts and ephemerae from the 1800s to mid 20th century. The Museum represents more than the printing industry, it showcases humankind's greatest accomplishments. It is a family-oriented event. Be prepared to learn and enjoy the fun facts about printing's place in the history of humanity. Saturday, September 29, 10 to 4 pm. Admission is free. Photo Janet Godber

The recently built Go Transit Control Centre at the corner of Trafalgar and Cornwall Road enlisted our help with providing photos of the Oakville Basket Company (closed 1984) which stood on the site. Similar to a corrugated image, this modern interpretation projects the old and new depending on where one stands. Best viewed at night.



## Picnic Prize Winners

The day was finally here. The *Anitra*, the oldest schooner on the lake, was anxious to escape her mooring lines and set out to show her young crew what she could do. Leyden Martinez and her sons Jose age 12 and Nelson age 9 met Jamie Macrae, *Anitra's* owner and captain, at the Oakville Club as arranged.

Being a former naval officer Jamie thought the new crew would appreciate a quick visit to RCNS *Oriole* which just happened to be tied up to the Oakville pier. It is the oldest ship still serving in the Royal Canadian Navy. This was starting out to be a great experience for the First Prize Winners at the Mayor's Picnic.

The crew was taught how to start *Anitra's* engine and was then tasked with steering her out of the harbour and onto the lake. The day was warm, the sky was a dull grey, the lake was calm and there was no wind. We were becalmed, drifting aimlessly with nothing to do.

To add a little excitement Captain Jamie thought he would have his new crew walk the plank. To his surprise they did not want to walk the plank but were quite happy to cannonball over the side and swim around the boat. The lake was cold but as they say, "It's nice once you're in."

Jamie, always a gracious host, provided his crew with a variety of refreshments (no rum was served) before heading back to the dock where *Anitra* was secured and readied for her next Lake Ontario adventure.

To show their appreciation the crew took Jamie to Lakeside Park to teach him how to skip stones. All in all it was a good day even without the wind.

Greg Munz



Jamie Macrae, Jose and Nelson



Friends Bahieh Hosseini and Ashley Farahany joined Buket Kanik with her children Aaron Kahraman and Daphne Kahraman on Peter Wells' yacht *Ruffian*. Aaron was a prize winner at the Mayor's Picnic.

## Membership

Membership totals 212 paid-up members. We would like to welcome the following new members since our March newsletter:

Mr. & Mrs. John Armstrong Ms. Janet Taylor  
 Mr. Curtis Bossi Ms. Julia Burnham  
 Mr. & Mrs. Steve and Judy Bysouth  
 Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Chalykoff Ms. Julia Davis  
 Mr. Curt Cumming Mr. Sean Fitzpatrick  
 Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Forsyth Ms. Tina Gilbert  
 Ms. Jennifer Graham Mr. Brodie Hobson  
 Mr. Christopher Houston Ms. Erin MacDonell  
 Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Macrae Dr. Robert Jones  
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Johnson and Terry  
 Murphy Ms. Paulin Ms. Erin MacDonell  
 Mr. & Mrs. Scott MacDonald Ms. Dia Frid  
 Ms. Sandra Onufryk Ms. Julia Rothfischer  
 Ms. Bonnie Sitherwood St. Andrew Parish  
 Mr. & Mrs. Laura Mutch & Matt Whyte

We trust you will enjoy the benefits of joining the OHS. Andrea Stewart, Memberships



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## Preserve Memories

The Oakville Historical Society's goal is to preserve and promote Oakville's heritage. This includes the collection, documentation and preservation of items having historical value to Oakville, Ontario. Often descendents have little interest in such items and not knowing who could benefit from photographs, letters and documents, put them to the curb on garbage day.

If you have items that might be of interest to others, please consider sharing them with the Oakville Historical Society. Family pictures, diaries, letters, recorded stories on paper or recordings, memorabilia and artifacts would be appreciated. These would be cherished by the society and shared with others to enjoy.

Contact us by viewing -

[www.oakvillehistory.org/contact.html](http://www.oakvillehistory.org/contact.html), email at [information@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:information@oakvillehistory.org), phone (905) 844-2695 or visit our offices Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, 1:00 - 4:30 pm and the third Sunday each month, 12:30 - 4:00 pm.

Stan Smurlick, Webmaster



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## Thomas House



High school student Angus Paterson, above, was a welcome addition to our group of seasoned Thomas House interpreters. He reports that he loves studying the past and in fact, recently participated in a history competition in Berlin. Our 2,706 visitors (to the end of July 2018) enjoyed hearing about Oakville's families from all generations.

The gentleman below, Mr. Skoog, visited one afternoon. As we opened our door, he stepped in and declared, "I visit here every year. I have a personal connection to this house...my father was born here." After the Thomas family, Mr. Skoog's father and family lived on the property, now the location of St. Thomas Aquinas School at Lakeshore Rd. and Dorval Dr.



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Oakville Historical  
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since 1953

### HISTORICAL TOURS

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# The *way* things were...



## Do you know?

What this plant is?

Where it was traditionally planted?

*Look out for the answer in our next issue!*



Our June 2018 issue featured three artifacts hidden in plain view.

Josef Petriska (1929 - 2015) who designed the 18 foot tall bronze oak leaf at Oakville Place (now at Town Hall) crafted the sculpture at left, located at his former home and studio, now Paliser Court. <http://www.josefpetriska.com/>

The Tradesmen's Entrance sign is seen peeking above a fence at the former Wakefield Estate, 2108 - 2134 Lakeshore Rd E.

An old wooden fence post is at the site of the former McCraney farm, 425 Fourth Line.

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

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