



Oakville Historical  
Society  
since 1953

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

# The White Oak

News from the Oakville Historical Society



*Happy Christmas 1894*

Volume 52 Number 4

December 2018

## Speakers

20 February 2019. Alan Ellis on "Thirty Minutes and Two Dead Generals - How the battle of Quebec changed the fate of North America"

English-born Alan Ellis graduated from Royal Holloway College (London University) with a First Class Honours in Mathematics. He received a commission in the Royal Air Force where he taught Mathematics and Physics in Training Command. Moving to Toronto, Canada in 1976 he enjoyed a long career in sales and business development in high technology sectors including computers, telecommunications and transaction processing. He is a life-long and avid student of history especially military topics. He is a member of the Royal Air Force Club and the Oakville Historical Society.

Held at St. John's Church, corner of Dunn and Randall Sts. at 7:30 pm. Refreshments served, donations welcome.

## Family Day

On 18 February 2019, our offices at 110 King St. will be open from 10 am to 4 pm. Drop in with your family, view our displays and talk to our enthusiastic historians.

## Christmas Party

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

## Publications

Two new brochures are at the Offices to enhance your walk around town.

- *The Walker's Guide to Old Oakville* has been updated to reflect changes to the streetscape. \$5.00
- *Self-guided Walking Tour of Oakville's West Harbour*. No charge.

Thanks to Andrea Stewart, Marie Descent and Donna Moran

## Oakville Library

Search local newspapers, including the Oakville Beaver, Daily Journal Record and many others. Browse their electronic collections of newspapers, magazines, journals, encyclopedias, eBooks, audiobooks, research reports, images and multimedia to research any topic.



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## Holiday Closing

We will be closed for the holidays:  
Monday, 17 December 2018 to 1:00 pm  
Tuesday, 8 January 2019.

# A note from the Society *President*

We have enjoyed another great year of ghost walks with the people of Oakville. Many people come every year to either meet up with their favourite ghost or catch a new ghost's presentation. Many, many thanks to all our ghosts, cashiers, caterers and other volunteers who make this event such an enjoyable success. Special thanks to Wendy Belcher, Mary Davidson, Marie Descent and Stan Smurlick whose behind-the-scenes organizing makes the walks happen. This is our biggest fundraising event of the year and we are pleased to say that it was a great success.

We had a special challenge near the end of the ghost walks. Suddenly, our toilet was not flushing well at all, despite our best plunging efforts. With so many people coming, many of them children, it is very important to have functioning facilities. The Region of Halton responded to our desperate call and came to the rescue at 4:00 one afternoon to clear a tree root from our sewer line. We enjoy the beautiful park setting of the cottages so much, I guess we have to put up with the occasional tree root!

We continue to receive some very interesting photos and other items for the collection, including a great picture of the inside of the Oakville Train Station, taken in May 1914. How do we know the date so precisely? A clever bit of sleuthing from Ralph Slayer who donated the photo: a calendar is hanging on the side wall of the station and you can see that May 1 is on a Friday. A quick Google search tells us that in 1914, May 1 was a Friday.

Later in November Iona McGraith, the Archives Advisor from the Archives Association of Ontario, will be visiting. We are getting organized to undertake the digitization of our document archive and before we start madly off in the wrong direction, we thought it wise to get some expert guidance on how best to tackle a very large and challenging job.

I am excited to announce that we will soon be merging this newsletter with the newsletter from the Bronte Historical Society. Our members will be able to enjoy an even broader selection of articles about Oakville and the Bronte Historical Society will be able to reduce the overhead associated with producing and publishing a separate newsletter.

Be sure to join us for the members' Christmas Party on 7 December at 6:00 pm. It is always a fun time and a good time to re-connect with other members and to view our displays. It is one way we can thank you, our members, in person, for your continued support.

George Chisholm, President

## MACRAE & ASSOCIATES

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## Chance Encounter Leads to Lifelong Friendship

In the early '90s when our honoured board member and former mayor, Mr. Harry Barrett was commuting to his job with the Ministry of Health at Queen's Park, he met one Jan Hieminga heading to his job at the Social Services Department. One day during their regular commute, Harry decided to try his few words of Dutch, to Jan's surprise. When asked where he'd learned the language, Harry replied that he'd served with the Second Division Artillery during the liberation of the Netherlands and, in particular, the city of Groningen at the end of World War Two to which a surprised Jan exclaimed "You liberated me!".



Harry Barrett as a New Recruit

Jan was a six year old child at the time and his family had suffered much privation having had all their livestock and crops confiscated. They were under serious scrutiny, their house having become a transit house, accommodating people of the underground trying to stay ahead of the Germans. He remembers the Germans raiding the house to look for men or confiscated goods.

It turned out that Harry's regiment had taken part in the liberation of the city of Groningen, one of the largest urban battles of the war for the Canadian Army. Harry had joined up at the early age of eighteen and saw service in the reconnaissance unit. He doesn't talk about the war and is reluctant to take credit for his services. However, Jan doesn't miss an opportunity to express his gratitude to Harry and to the many who made the sacrifice that

saved his life. He even conjectures that Harry may have been one of the soldiers his family took into their house following the battle.

Jan came to Canada from the Netherlands in 1967 and, having met his wife-to-be, stayed. He secured a job as a civil servant at Queens Park and following his retirement from the Government of Ontario, went back to school, found his calling and eventually became a minister with the Presbyterian Church. He is now the Reverend Jan Hieminga, Minister at Knox Presbyterian Church, Oakville. He is also Board Chair of a charity to help young people in the Jane-Finch area; *JaneFinch: Reaching Up*. His grown children and wife also lend a hand to Jan's good works.



Rev. Jan Hieminga,  
Knox Presbyterian Church,  
Oakville

In 2015 on the 70th anniversary of the liberation, Jan was asked to be guest speaker at a service of remembrance, in Groningen, of his grandfather who died in prison for his underground activities during the war. The liberation parade the following day was joined by Canadian veterans and restored army vehicles, the streets lined with people waving Canadian flags and children cheering "Thank you, thank you".

Andrea Stewart

Jan Hieminga has written about his World War Two experiences. You may read them at <https://www.oakvillehistory.org/>



## Remembrance Day Oakville 2018



The hostilities of World War One ended with the Armistice which came into effect at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of the year 1918. One hundred years ago. The Oakville Historical Society (OHS) with the support of the Town of Oakville put together a set of banners to be displayed in George's Square on 11th November this year. The objective was to illustrate Oakville's participation in the 'War to End All Wars' within the context of Canada's involvement.

Sue Hobson, who had worked on a major display for Halton Heritage Services, agreed to partner with Greg Munz, who has worked on a number of OHS displays, to produce the November 11 display panels.

The Board of Oakville Historical Society extends its heartfelt thanks, not only to its volunteer members who helped behind the scenes, but also to: the Town of Oakville for its financial and technical support; the Oakville Museum for

design advice and for supplying the fence sections used to support the display banners; Halton Heritage Services for facilitating planning sessions, printing of proofs and encouragement throughout the process; Harry Barrett who loaned the OHS a number of artifacts which were photographed for the display; the Canadian War Museum for expediting the approval for the use of photographs held in its collection.

Mr. Hee G. Yun, of Art Printing Studio located at 88 Lakeshore Road West, took extra care in digitizing two oversize photographs within tight time constraints

Mr Tarek Charif, of Signarama located at 1236 Speers Road, was patient in answering questions, providing advice and meeting our technical and time frame requirements.  
Greg Munz



photos Steve Bysouth (top) and Greg Munz (bottom)

# Lest We Forget



Welcome To Our Boys. Colborne St. (Lakeshore Rd.) c1919

When the Great War of 1914 to 1918 started many young men and women of Oakville joined regiments of their choice, but the majority of them went overseas with the Halton and Dufferin Regiment. This regiment, part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force was mobilized and went to Europe in April of 1917.

When the troop train on the 11th of April pulled out of Oakville Station almost every citizen of the town was on hand to wave good-bye and perhaps to shed a tear.

*The war of 1914 - 1918 had been believed to be "the war to end wars".*

Oakville's population at the time numbered approximately 2,500. Of the young people who joined up, sixty-four gave their lives at battles such as Ypres, Passchendaele, Amiens and Vimy. It was at what turned out to be the last battle of the Great War that the Canadians took Mons in Belgium.

The return of the men and women was a signal for elaborate celebrations in Oakville. Victory was the theme.

Later, in 1921 a subscription was raised for a commemorative monument to those who did not return. It was completed and dedicated in 1924. The Cenotaph at George's Square has since been the site of annual services of remembrance on November 11th marked by two minutes of silence at 11 o'clock.

The Toronto Star in its issue of November 11th 1918, with large black headlines, announced that the armistice was signed. The war of 1914 - 1918 had been believed to be "the war to end wars". Not so: the young men and women of Oakville responded in 1939 to 1945 to fight the Second World War. Seventy more names were added to the George's Square Cenotaph.



L/Cpl Agnes Forster Byers, Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC), Second World War



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# Entertaining Oakville, 1930s Style

Written by Harry Lessels in 1985.

In the thirties and before TV, garden parties were popular and enjoyed by the public. Of course, they were held for fund-raising by some clubs such as the Lions and Rotary, the money going toward a charitable cause. I might mention that the Rotary Club have been most generous in funding different projects in Oakville including the town's first Senior Citizen's Homes as well as gifts of equipment to the hospital. I write this as a non-member of any club knowing that other fraternities also help needy causes in town.

St. Andrew's Church on Reynolds Street also held yearly garden parties. The amusements would consist of variety show on a make-shift stage, games of chance and, of course, refreshments such as pop, hamburgers, hot dogs and etc. There were no carnival rides as we have today. The churches had fenced enclosures, if my memory serves me right, and the admission price was 25 cents. They would also sell draw tickets for a raffle in which the winner would win perhaps a radio, a very good prize then. The Lions Club held their garden party on the old Central School grounds, now the site of the Oakville Centre, Swimming Pool and Central Library on Navy Street. It was similar to the others although on a larger scale and a car would be given to some lucky winner who had bought the ticket which was drawn from the drum. Also as bingo became popular it was played not for money as it is today but for small household items such as lamps, china, kitchen wares, etc. Playing for money was unlawful then.

When the Fire Brigade was a Volunteer Unit and the Central Fire Station was at 181 Church Street, a yearly street dance was held. This was when it was a two-way street and traffic was light. The Brigade were allowed to rope off the intersections between Thomas and George Streets. Keeping the main fire truck out off the station and on a side street in case of an emergency, a few game stalls were set up, and some tickets would be sold for a prize of some kind. Part of the road was sprinkled with what I believe was French chalk on which I and others danced. The band sat on one of the large trucks which the Basket Factory kindly loaned. Yes, in some ways in the so-called "good old days" we did have fun.

2018 Notes: 181 Church Street is still standing, but no longer holds the Fire Station. As of October 2018, Church Street is two-way.



1947 Oakville Volunteer Firemen  
at 181 Church Street

# Ghost Walks



Olivia, Michelle, Katie, Katherine and Emilia, above left, floated through Oakville streets.

Brendan McCarthy and Anne Weeks, above right, play Jeremiah and wife Rebecca, from Belfast, Ireland looking to buy land in old Oakville for a ship-building yard.

Stewart Sherriff, left, as Peter McDougald, general merchant, and Mayor for six years. He died following a lengthy illness, which his doctor was unable to treat.

Stan Smurlick, right, in the guise of Police Chief George Sumner was spotted out haunting.



photo Susan Wells

3 photos Steve Bysouth



# Happy Hogmanay

Make sure your silverware is shiny, your clothespins are clean and telegrams to your "honey" are sent.

Long-time OHS volunteer Ev Bullied received the telegram at bottom right from her husband Art, December 31, 1943.

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## HOUSEHOLD HINTS

**REMOVING TARNISH**—To remove tarnish from silverware, wash and place in potato water and let stand for one hour. Then remove, wash, rinse and dry. It will look like new.

**MILDEW SOLUTION**—Boil badly mildewed linen in a solution of 4 tablespoons peroxide to 1 quart of water, using enough of the solution to completely cover the article. Boil gently for an hour or until stains are completely gone. Rinse and dry in usual way.

**WOOD STAINS**—For removal of stains on polished wood caused by hot dishes, a thin paste of olive oil and salt should be spread over marks and left to stand an hour, then rubbed off with soft cloth.

**TO WHITEN POTATOES**—When boiling old potatoes add one dessert-spoon of vinegar to water and they will keep white. This measure is for about nine potatoes. Increase as quantity is enlarged.

**TO SHORTEN COOKING TIME FOR BEETS**—Add a few teaspoons of vinegar to the water in which the beets are boiled. This will also keep their dark rich color intact. When tender, rinse in cold water and skins will then slip off easily.

A tea stain may be removed from china with moistened salt rubbed with cloth.

Salt and vinegar combined will restore polish to brass.

To beat egg whites quickly, add a pinch of salt.

Patent leather shoes and bags will stay shiny if you sponge with soap suds, rinse with a damp cloth, then polish with a dry cloth.

To flour fish, liver, etc., before cooking, mix flour and seasonings in a paper bag, then drop pieces in and shake well.

Wash clothespins in salt water solution before using. They will last longer and will not freeze on the clothes in the winter.

Old but clean powder puffs are handy for cleaning silverware. Use one to apply the polish; another to do the buffing.

Slip a rolled-up magazine inside trouser leg or jacket sleeve you are patching; let the magazine unroll, and it will hold the material smooth while you sew the patch in place.

Form 5211.

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Send the following message, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to

To Mrs Art Bullied, Halifax NS. 31  
Longuevue Apts, Oakville Ont. 43

Happy New Year honey  
best wishes to all as ever

TELEPHONED BY..... AT..... RECEIVED BY..... AT.....  
Art Bullied

## Speakers



Why was the Classical Revival (1820-1860) architectural style popular? Because increased world travel and newspaper illustrations informed planners. Why keep the original window frames in your old house? They age better than those of new materials. What is the best preserved town in Ontario? Cobourg. Shannon Kyles' audience, certainly found these facts interesting and she had many more to entertain us. She has been teaching History of Architecture at Mohawk College for 25 years, writes articles on historic architecture for *Arabella* magazine and is the Architecture Correspondent for CBC's *Fresh Air*. Shannon's approach is to popularize historic architecture: make people appreciate their wonderful old buildings and they will be more likely to save them. See [www.ontarioarchitecture.com](http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com)  
photo Steve Bysouth

Sarah Taylor runs a local Facebook page called Oakville Group - with a positive twist. Sarah's group with over 2,000 followers helps to support and promote local Oakville community groups and activities such as the Oakville Historical Society.

## Archivist

Susan Hodges, bottom, began working in the Archive at the OHS in September. She has a Master's degree in Library and Information Science with a specialization in Archives Management, and a passion for old documents. Currently Susan is working on developing a collection policy statement and will begin to develop the archival descriptions in the new year.



Oakville Historical  
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### HISTORICAL TOURS

Patricia "Trish" Sinclair

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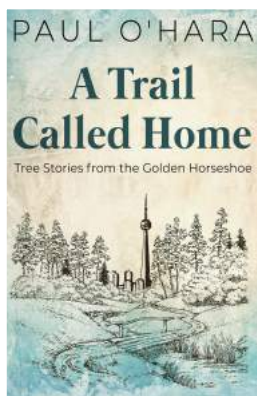
## Membership

Our total membership is now 226. We would like to welcome the following new members who have joined since our September newsletter.

Ms. Susan Bowen      Mr. Don Bowder  
 Mrs. Susan Hodges      Ms. Nicki Micevic  
 Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Mason  
 Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Morris  
 Mr. Tony Morrison  
 Mr. and Mrs. Neville Satterthwaite

Membership Renewals are now due. You may use the enclosed membership form and mail to OHS or use PayPal at our website.

Andrea Stewart and Marie Descent, Memberships



Trees define so much of Canadian life, but many people, particularly in the Golden Horseshoe area of Ontario, don't know that much about them. Granted, it is harder here: there are more trees that are native to this area than anywhere else in Canada.

The great storytellers of the landscape, trees are looking-glasses into the past. They speak of biology, ecology and geology, as well as natural and human history. Through a greater understanding of trees, we can become more rooted to the land beneath our feet, and our place in it. By Paul O'Hara, available 4 May 2019, OHS contributed research.

## Volunteer Required

The Oakville Historical Society has in the past been involved in putting on activities for young visitors. The Boating Display a few years ago included a number of age-appropriate activities such as: find the baby ducks, locate specific items in the display and solve a complex navigation exercise. There was even an art contest with some pretty good prizes. The most valuable was free registration for art lessons. The Mayor's Picnic has for the last couple of years included a sort of scavenger hunt.



Art Contest Winner

As the Oakville Museum arranges to have its summer program participants visit both the Thomas House and the OHS office display, the OHS wishes to enhance the experience for children and recruit a person with an interest in planning and overseeing children's activities. If you are interested or know someone who is, please speak to one of the board members.



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# The *Way* things were...



**Do you know?**

**Where these signs were located?**



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



From September's The *Way* things were...

Lovingly known as the Outhouse Plant, this heirloom selection of Coneflower is still seen in gardens today. Plants form a tall clump of bright-green leaves, bursting into colour in summer, when loads of fluffy double chrome-yellow daisies appear. This lovely bloom is in our garden, no longer hiding an outhouse.

## **Archive Hours:**

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

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