

Oakville Historical  
Society  
since 1953

# Historical Society News

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



## Dear Santa....

Volume 57 Number 4

Christmas 2023



## A Note from the Society President

George Chisholm

It was great to talk with so many of our members at the annual Wine and Cheese. This year it was held at St John's United Church where there was a lot more room. If you have any comments either way, please send them in.

Congratulations to all those involved with this year's Ghost Walks. We've received so many positive comments, particularly about the new booking and payment system.

The publication sale was again a success and brought several people into our office who had never before visited us.

After a long hiatus, we participated in the Oakville Santa Claus Parade. It was a lovely sunny day and the crowds were amazing. Thanks to Brenda Chisholm for organizing our participation and to those who walked in costume.

### Santa Claus Parade

Brenda Chisholm

Nine OHS members met early on a cold, clear November morning, well bundled under their costumes. We walked behind the joint Oakville Museum and OHS banner. One of the Three Little Pigs joined us at times! It was wonderful to see families, young and old lining the streets, waving and waiting impatiently for the official arrival of Santa! Many thanks to the Oakville Museum for facilitating our participation.





# Festive Gathering



Our annual “member’s only” festive gathering was held at St. John’s United church this year. The change of venue was well received and we heard many positive comments. Sincere thanks to Susan Bowen and her merry band of elves for organizing a delightful evening.



## Gone (ice) fishing...



Please be advised the office at 110 King St will be closed for the holiday season from December 15 to January 3. We will reopen for our regular office hours which are from 1-4:30 every Tuesday and Thursday and the third Sunday of the month beginning January 4. If you missed our publication sale in November and wish to purchase books, maps or playing cards, please contact us at [information@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:information@oakvillehistory.org) and we will try to accommodate you.

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# The True Meaning of Giving

( front cover)

The Society is proud to support an annual Christmas photo shoot organized and hosted by professional photographer Marcie Costello. This very special event raises money for deserving charities and offers families the opportunity to have a relaxed, intimate Santa visit and take home some beautiful memories. We have been supporting this event for 11 years and Marcie has donated funds to a variety of charities during that time. This single mother of three and full time university student closes her business for a week in November to prepare and transforms the entryway and fireplace room at 110 King St into a magical wonderland. She brings in trees, boughs, wreaths, lights and other festive decor to use as her backdrop to create a cheerful yet restful ambiance. Upon entering the building, one's nose is assailed with the very essence of Christmas, a cinnamon, citrus and clove concoction simmering on the stove that immediately warms your heart and whisks you back to a simpler time - memories of joy, excitement, childhood and bygone Christmases!

Over the years, Marcie has funded over 28,000 meals, both through food banks and Armagh House, a shelter for mothers and children. Donations are given in the form of money which allows the charity to use it where most needed. Clients are also encouraged to donate toys which are disbursed by CHUM Christmas Wish and Children's



Aid Society to foster homes. Last year she also supported the DARE program in Toronto which assists men living in shelters to deal with addictions, homelessness and mental illness. She is a true philanthropist who shows her gratitude by giving back to a larger community in need.

Almost half of her clients are on the Autistic Spectrum, or are considered sensitive, and a "mall Santa" experience is overwhelming and does not allow these children the time to relax and delight in the magic of the jolly old soul.

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Parents book 30 minute time slots with Marcie in our tranquil fireplace room and various props and toys are implemented to engage the childrens' attention. Several of her volunteers are on hand to assist, and Santa has a kind face, gentle approach and a real beard!



To quote Marcie... “everyone gives and everyone receives at this event, it’s truly magical”.

Isn’t that the very essence of Christmas?





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# Kiddie Kingdom



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How many words can you make from the following phrase?

Frosty the  
Snowman

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____



Festive Garland

This is an easy craft to do with children. Pop some popping corn (no butter or salt) and let it sit out for a couple of days. Give each child a large needle threaded with dental floss and a knot tied in the end. Thread raw cranberries and popcorn in whatever pattern you like. When the garland is complete, decorate your tree or mantle. Can also be hung outside for a festive, natural treat for our feathered friends!

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# The Short and Sweet on Shortbread Cookies

Susan Bowen

I like to think that, if Christmas had an ‘IT’ cookie, it would be the iconic shortbread. Shortbread originated in Scotland. Although it was prepared during much of the 12th century, and probably benefited from cultural exchange with French pastry chefs during the Auld Alliance between France and Scotland, the refinement of shortbread is popularly credited to Mary, Queen of Scots in the 16th century. The story of shortbread begins with the medieval “biscuit bread”. Any leftover dough from bread making was dried out in a low oven until it hardened into a type of rusk: the word “biscuit” means “twice cooked”. Gradually the yeast in the bread was replaced by butter, and biscuit bread developed into shortbread. Shortbread was an expensive luxury and for ordinary people, shortbread was a special treat reserved for special occasions such as weddings, Christmas and New Year. It is easy to imagine that the early settlers in Canada brought the shortbread recipe with them. Something to remind them of home – especially at Christmas.



## Signature Shortbread

Adapted from Gay Lea’s famous shortbread cookie

([www.gaylea.com/recipes](http://www.gaylea.com/recipes))

2 cups (500mL) unsalted butter, softened  
1/2 cup (125mL) fruit or granulated sugar  
1/2 cup (125mL) icing sugar  
1 tsp. (5mL) pure vanilla

3 cups (750mL) all-purpose flour  
1 cup (250mL) cornstarch or rice flour  
1 tsp. (5mL) salt

Using electric mixer, beat butter until very creamy. Gradually beat in sugars, beating until very light and fluffy. Beat in vanilla. In separate bowl, combine flour, cornstarch and salt. In four additions, using a wooden spoon, stir flour mixture into butter mixture, stirring well between each addition. Transfer dough to floured surface; knead gently for 3 minutes until shortbread holds together well. Divide into three balls. Wrap each ball with plastic wrap; flatten into discs and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Remove plastic wrap from one piece of dough. Flour work surface well and knead dough lightly for 30 seconds. Re-flour surface and top of dough.

(continued next page)

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Roll out dough until 1/4" (5mm) thick, constantly rotating to make sure it's not sticking to the surface and lightly dusting with flour. Cut out shapes, using a cookie cutter.

Preheat oven to 325F (160C) Transfer cookies to parchment paper-lined cookie sheets.

Prick each cookie with fork tines. Bake in centre of oven for about 15 minutes or until dough is firm and underside is lightly golden. Cool on pan on racks. Transfer to racks to cool completely.

Makes about 4-1/2 dozen cookies.



## Pomander Balls

Susan Bowen

Pomanders have always been seen as a symbol of good luck and health. Add some spice to your holiday tree with this Clove-Studded Orange Ornament. It's fun for the whole family (and it smells great, too).

### Here's what you're going to need:

1 Navel Orange

1 35" long 1/2" thick ribbon

Whole Cloves

Skewer or toothpick



### Here's how it's done:

Wrap ribbon around the orange, twisting at the base to divide the orange into quarters. Make a knot at the top and tie a bow.

Press cloves into exposed orange either randomly or in a pattern. If the rind is tough, poke holes with a skewer or toothpick and then insert the cloves.

Hang your pomander in a prominent location for all to enjoy!

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# Christmas with the Thomas Family

Brenda Chisholm

It is hard to imagine life before our modern conveniences, before cell phones, television, central heating, and even electricity!

If you have visited the Thomas house, you will have seen it has two rooms; one small bedroom and a larger main room. Merrick Thomas and his wife, Esther lived in the log cabin from 1829 until 1833. Their first child, Charles was born in 1830, a pair of twin girls followed in 1832, but sadly died soon after birth. They moved to a house in town in 1833 where their son George was born, then back out to the log cabin on the farm in 1838 where Rebecca, John and Robert were born. Imagine living in that tiny house all winter with five children!

Christmas day would have been a simple affair. Being farmers, there would have been livestock to feed, milk and bed down. The German custom of having a Christmas tree was not the norm; most homes were too small, and many settlers were of British, Irish and Scottish heritage. The house would be festooned with greenery, pine cones, nuts, berries and feathers. Esther would have cooked a goose or wild turkey with a mincemeat pie or plum pudding. Stockings were a real sock, hung on the mantle or bedpost. If the harvest had been plentiful, there would be small gifts for the children, perhaps a whittled figure or a corn husk doll, maybe even an orange. Gifts were generally handmade, knitted, embroidered or carved. Candy was homemade, flavoured with fruit juice or mint, and gingerbread men were moulded and shaped by hand. After the meal and gifts were enjoyed, the family would prepare to either receive friends or go out visiting. Music, stories, songs, games and dancing would be shared around the warm hearth.

These were simpler times, interspersed with hard work and heartache, but also joy, love and laughter.



# Fundraising

At the November Board meeting, it was decided that a fundraising committee be formed. The Society has relied heavily on the revenue from selling plaques in the past and has missed this income over the past two years. Our plaque maker is in business again, so if you know of someone in need of a new or replacement plaque, please be in touch. Realizing this will not continue to be a great revenue generator as time goes on, we are looking for other ways to raise funds. Our Ghost Walks and Yard Sale bring in some money, as do membership fees, but we recognize the need to increase our fundraising efforts. Accordingly, we will be trying a few new endeavours over the next year, and will be asking our members to spread the word and support us as able.

Our first event for the new year will be a **used book sale**. We will begin collecting donations January 4 on Tuesdays and Thursdays during office hours. If you have books or puzzles you can part with, please bring them down. Please clearly label anything you feel has significant value to ease pricing. The actual sale will be held in February. Hold onto your other yard sale donations for now as we have limited storage space.

We are always looking for volunteers to help with specific projects. If fundraising is of interest to you, or you have suggestions and/or ideas to share, please be in touch at [information@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:information@oakvillehistory.org) and indicate your area of interest.

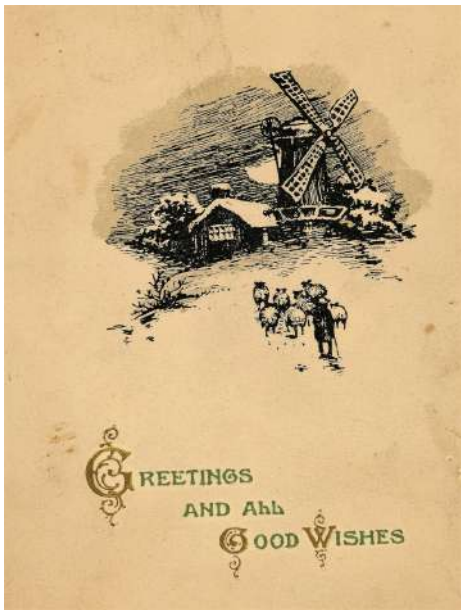


## Financial donations

If you would like to make a tax deductible financial contribution to our efforts, please ensure all payments are dated prior to Dec 31. Tax receipts will be issued in the New Year for yearly donations over \$20. Online payment can be made at [information@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:information@oakvillehistory.org) using the “Donate” button, or etransferred to [information@oakvillehistory.org](mailto:information@oakvillehistory.org). We sincerely appreciate your support.

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## Greetings from the past



This charming greeting card from our archives was sent on behalf of “Baby Cameron” from Tuxedo Park, Oakville, Ontario.



The Board of Directors would like to take this opportunity to wish you the very best for the holiday season.

**Editor's Note:** We are taking proactive steps to reduce postage and printing costs. Going forward, we will be sending out newsletters via email to all members who have a valid email address on file with us. Please watch for your Spring edition in your inbox.

### 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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