

Oakville Historical
Society
since 1953

Historical Society News

www.oakvillehistory.org

The Jewel in our Crown



Volume 58 Number 2

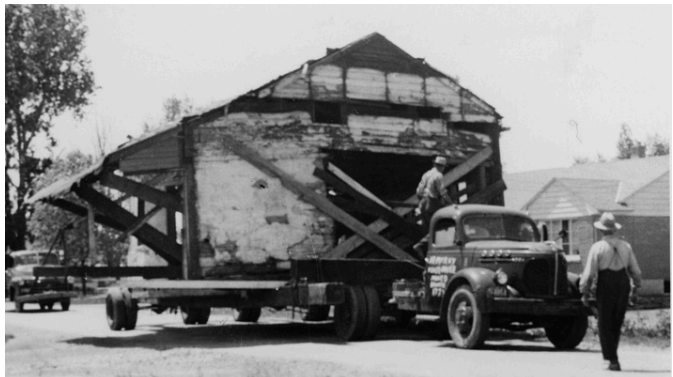
Summer 2024

The Thomas House - Preserving Our History for Future Generations

George Chisholm

The Thomas House has been the heart of the operations of the Society for almost 70 years. Until the Erchless Estate was purchased by the Town in 1977, the Thomas House and the Old Post Office were the home of the Society. Our curator worked there and the attic was used to store items that could not be displayed. Tens of thousands of people from around the world have visited to see what life was like in early Oakville and we frequently hear from visitors of the fond memories they have of the building from their childhood. I remember visiting it as a child.

Much work has been done to it by many volunteers since it was moved to the present site from its original location where St Thomas Aquinas HS is located.



Moving the Thomas House 1955

I recall when Harry Barrett, Harry Buxton and I replaced the siding in the 1990's. That siding was made from used ½” pine that came from McNamara the house wrecker that was on Ninth Line. The cedar shingle roof was professionally replaced two years ago.

After the Thomas family built their first home, bits were added to enlarge the building, but the original cabin is what has been preserved and is now on display.

We are very fortunate the original structure was never torn down or otherwise destroyed and the early founders of the OHS resituated, repaired and refurbished it for future generations to admire, enjoy and learn from.



Thomas House with additions on original site

A few years ago, I patched some of the window casings. This summer I've made new shutters, replaced pieces of bad siding, all of the window casings except for those under the porch and have made five new window sashes. The windows weren't original, they were replaced in the 50's, and also probably came from McNamara's. The upstairs windows were altered and installed sideways.

When I tried to install a new sill extension on one of them, I found a large nest of ants inside the wall. There wasn't much left of the rough sill under the window, so that became a more in-depth restoration. Much of the deterioration of the windows has been caused by water and dampness. When the house was moved to Lakeside Park, there were no trees, shrubs or landscaping. Today the lovely shaded parkland serves to hold dampness and moisture near the building. The Town has been very cooperative with requests to mitigate these factors, and we will be requesting some tree pruning in the near future. During one of our recent rainstorms, I observed the water run off the roof and straight down the walls of the building.

I have consulted with conservation experts and the only way to solve this problem and prevent future damage is to install eavestroughing. Although this would never have been considered on the building originally, it is not something we can avoid at this point.

Still to do: replacing the corner boards, placing stones around the foundation to prevent water from splashing up onto the siding, and painting the exterior. We think the interior of the building hasn't been painted since the 1950s and are consulting with experts to determine the most appropriate colour to use. The oxblood red paint on the front of the building is original and has been well protected by the porch.

Our Thomas House is getting so that it needs some major work. When it was built in 1829 it wasn't meant to last for 200 years. It was built for the Thomas family to live in when they first settled in the area, and families would build larger, sturdier homes as soon as they were able. We are very fortunate that the early founders of the Oakville Historical Society thought to preserve this unique piece of history for us.

Longer term and much more expensive work is needed to stabilize the building. The northwest corner has sunk considerably. Don Sutherland monitored this over the years, and the shifting seemed to have stopped for a time. Now we see that corner of the building is being held up by the stone chimney and there's a noticeable slope to the wall. The plaster in that corner is badly cracked. When the building was moved, stones were placed on grade (we think) and the house was put on them. Efforts to protect the Thomas House for future generations will require the work of experts. At our last Board meeting, a motion was passed to begin investigating what will be required to stabilize, repair and preserve the building. Stay tuned for further updates.

“Getting Schooled” at the Thomas House

Carol Gall

The Society was pleased to welcome 50 grade 3 students from Pinegrove Public School to the Thomas House on April 19. The OHS joined forces with the Museum staff to provide students with an experience that would support their Early Settlers curriculum. Stewart (aka Mr. Thomas) introduced the students to what daily life would be like for a child in



the 1830's and demonstrated how different it was to their life today. The porch provided a great space for Mr. Thomas to talk about the chores and responsibilities both girls and boys would have had and then allowed the children some hands on time: carding fleece, churning butter, scrubbing on a washboard and lifting the cast irons.



Inside the house, Mrs. Thomas talked about the history of the Thomas House, the family that lived there and explained some of the unique artifacts that were required for everyday living. Students rolled out Welsh Cake

dough and cut shapes that were placed on the hot griddle on the fire.

It wasn't all work and no play, though! Students had a try at the items from the toy basket... 'button buzzers', 'whimmy diddles' and 'whisper dolls', but the chamber pot always gets the biggest reaction!

New Members

Marie Descent

We would like to welcome the following new members and thank them for their support:

Mr. Nick Ahern	Ms. Joanne Lubbock
Dr. Charles Amirmansour	Mrs. Kristen McLaughlin, Heritage Planner
Mr. David Andison	Ms. Sandra Moshenko
Mr. Hassan Barakat	Ms. Emilia Nahdee
Ms. Liz Belford	Mr. Alexandre Nahdee
Mr. Rick Benson	Mr. Mark Rinas
Mr. Rishi Birla	Mr. Paul Roeser
Mr. Michael Casey	Mr. Simon Scott
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Casey	Ms. Rosanna Senatore
Arya Cokic	Mrs. Mary Jane Sizer
Mrs. Angelica Del Vasto	Ms. Hafsa Syeda
Mrs. Mariam Faizal	Mr. Rob Thacker
Ms. Shannon Fedurco	Ms. Kim Twohig
Mr. Jed Gardner	Kai Wallace
Mr. Reiner Jaakson	Bai Xiyuan

Help Needed

Do you have a few hours to spare in the afternoon? We are looking for volunteers to act as interpreters at the Thomas House. If you enjoy meeting new people and are interested, please contact the office asap. Training provided. Eligible for volunteer hours for high school.



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Fundraising

Brenda Chisholm

Yard Sale

Our annual yard sale will be held on Aug 10 from 9-2, with Aug 11 reserved as the rain date. A huge thank you for all the donations received so far, if you have anything for us, it can be dropped off during office hours until Aug 8.

We are always looking for volunteers to assist on the day of the sale, please contact the office if you have not helped in the past and you are interested.



Harvest Fest

New this year! We are planning a fall event to be held on October 5, selling handicrafts- crocheting, knitting, baking, preserves, woodworking, and other donated items at the Thomas House. If you are crafty or love to bake, please keep us in mind and let us know!



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Lorne Scots Regimental Museum

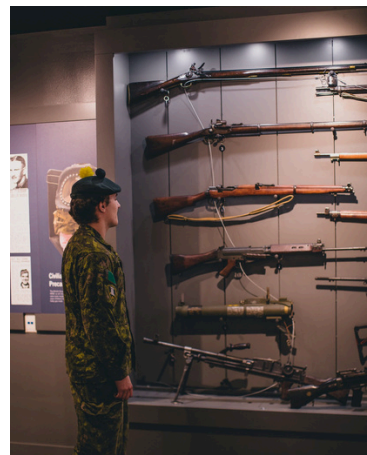


Front entrance to the Museum

On May 11, the Lorne Scots Regiment hosted the long awaited grand opening of their newly located museum in Brampton. Now housed in the Carnegie Library at 55 Queen St E, it is a labour of love that has been 5 years in the making. OHS Director, Stewart Sherriff was heavily involved in seeing this

project through to fruition. The museum boasts professionally curated displays detailing the regiment's service to the nation and around the world since 1866. Drawing members from Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regions, many residents of Oakville enlisted and served over the years.

The museum is open Wednesdays and Thursdays 12-8, Saturdays 8-4 and Sundays 12-4. Drop by for a visit, admission is free.



Our Summer Interns

We were fortunate to have several excellent candidates apply for our summer intern positions this year, so we decided to hire three students. This is mostly funded by Federal government grants. Stop in and say hello to them, they are happy to share about their various projects!

Isabella is currently pursuing her Master's in Museum Studies at the University of Toronto. She completed her undergraduate degree at Western University, where she attained a Bachelor of Fine Arts - Honours Specialization in Studio Art and double majored in Museum Studies.



Emily has an Advanced Diploma in Museum Studies from Algonquin College and is currently studying at York University for a History Undergraduate Degree. She enjoys the field of research, archives, and curatorial practices, and says her experience at the Oakville Historical Society has been wonderful; working on multiple interesting projects with great co-workers and volunteers.

Hermione was born and raised in Oakville. She is going into the third year of her history degree at Western University's Huron University after spending her first two years at Western's Brescia University College until its closure in May of 2024. She spends her time researching Oakville connections and examining donations to the Historical Society's collections.



The Day the Sky Went Dark

Brenda Chisholm

On Friday April 8, people of all ages and from all walks of life gathered at Lakeside Park to witness the total eclipse of the sun. We were fortunate to have been given several pairs of the special glasses, but not everyone was so lucky. It was an overcast day with complete cloud cover, so it was doubtful that the glasses would even be necessary, however, as the time approached, the clouds began to break up a little, and the shape of the sun could be seen through the glasses.



I had read that an eclipse can sometimes cause atmospheric disturbance, and this is what I was hoping for. As the moon moved in front of the sun, we waited for the darkness to begin. It seemed to take a long time for the sky to become dark, but when totality

was achieved, it was amazing! The entire park erupted with cheers and clapping, horns honked, people were hugging! Glasses were loaned to complete strangers so everyone could share equally in the moment. You can see the outdoor lights both at the office and across the creek that were on sensors automatically came on.



The office prior to the eclipse...



...and during the eclipse



The Great White Oak Love story



Steve Bysouth has created a lovely youtube video about the White Oak tree located on Bronte Rd. If you haven't had the opportunity to see it, here is the link!

<https://youtu.be/NM9DZRr8wB0>

What Is It?

Steve Bysouth



This is an early 19th Century English Georgian brass "Bottle" Spit Jack, Roasting jack or spit engine consisting of a tall, slender, cylindrical shaft with an arched hanging loop mounted on top of a larger cylinder containing a spring-powered mechanism that winds up with a key; a hook extends through an opening in the flat octagonal base plate and can be set to rotate both clockwise and counterclockwise for even roasting.

The maker is John Linwood of Birmingham, England. He is believed to

have started making roasting jacks around 1800 and registered his oak tree mark at the Birmingham assay office in 1807.

The invention of the clockwork mechanism inside this very fine roasting jack alleviated the need for a member of the kitchen staff to continually turn the roast joint of the day. It hung from above the fire and held the chicken or meat, turning it until the mechanism needed re-winding. It was a labour saving addition for the staff of an early Victorian kitchen and would have been used with the kitchen crane.

Come visit the Thomas House and see our version of this unique apparatus.



From the Archives...

A group of schoolchildren at the Thomas House in 1962, likely learning about “pioneer life” as part of the curriculum. It’s nice to know some things never change!

Editor’s note - last issue was the first that we emailed out to all members. This has resulted in saving about \$500 per year in postage costs, and we have received many compliments about the use of colour. If you wish to view our past newsletters in colour, please go to our website.

We are open:

Tuesday, Thursday and Third Sunday of the month 1:00 -4:30

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