

# NEWS and views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association

Vol. 41, No. 4

ISSN 0700-4427

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Visit our Website

www.simcoecountyhistory.ca



Preserving the Past,  
in the Present,  
for the Future.

## SCHA March Meeting

Now that winter is upon us (and in my opinion, it came a little early), the SCHA is in winter hiatus. We take a break from getting together during the worst of the winter weather, but we are looking forward to our March meeting which will help you to think of spring!

On Tuesday, March 18, John McKenty of Perth, Ontario, will join us. John is the author of *Canada Cycle & Motor: The CCM Story*. With its bikes in summer and skates in winter, CCM was a large part of what it meant to grow up in Canada.

John will provide a lively look at the history of this iconic Canadian company from its foundation in 1899 until its eventual demise in 1983. His presentation includes a number of historic photographs, as well as vintage memorabilia.

To take a trip down memory lane, or just to prepare for the meeting, visit <http://www.vintageccm.com/>, a colourful, informative website. John says that his book is far

from the final word on CCM. In fact, it is but the beginning and that's the reason for the website "Vintage CCM". It is his hope that the website will provide a place for everyone to add a word or two and a few photos of their own about CCM. For, in the end, it will take everyone to tell the whole story.



Have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. See you in March!

## SCHA 2014 Schedule

**March 18** – Author John McKenty, *Canada Cycle & Motor: The CCM Story*, at the **Barrie City Hall, at 7:30 p.m.**

**April 15** – Jeff Minogue at the **Barrie City Hall, at 7:30 p.m.**

**May** – Earle Gray at the Annual General Meeting - details to be announced in the March issue of *News and Views*.

## President's Ponderings

Now that the Christmas season is upon us we can at take a breather from the activities of the Simcoe County Association and look back and ahead for the New Year. As you may know we have combined most of our program this year with the Barrie Historical Association. This certainly makes the planning easier for both organizations and we hope that it will increase our average attendance. In September our own Dr. Brad Rudachyk gave us an entertaining presentation on the War of 1812 and the street names of Barrie. I thought I knew most of this but Brad came up with additional details and anecdotes about these fascinating characters that many of our early streets are named after.

In October we had the presentation by Aaron Kontkanen, winner of the Andrew Hunter prize, speaking to us about the career and life of E.C. Drury. Unfortunately I was in Ottawa for this

meeting but I understand it was an informative evening enjoyed by all.

For anyone who was present to hear Ted Barris in November, this was one of the most outstanding evenings we have had. Sponsored by the two historical associations and the Barrie Legion, Ted gave a lively and fascinating account of the The Great Escape, a truly Canadian story of ingenuity and bravery and not Steve McQueen and Hollywood. There were 200 people in attendance for his memorable address. We intend to cooperate with the Legion in bringing another speaker of the same calibre next year.

Looking ahead we will meet next March 18, 2014, to hear John McKinty's account of the history of the C.C.M. company that once dominated the market in bicycles and skates and then disappeared. John comes with the book he has published and a trunk full of artifacts. In the old

6 team NHL everybody wore C.C.M. skates except one player. Who was it? The meeting will take place at Barrie City Hall at 7:30 p.m.

On April 15 Jeff Minogue will speak to us on the Coldwater Reserve land claims and the \$300 million settlement that was finally achieved after years of arduous research and negotiations. I have heard Jeff's presentation and it is a story that is eye-opening and should be told and retold many times. The meeting will be in the Barrie City Hall at 7:30 pm

Finally, (with a date not settled yet), in May we will have a joint dinner meeting with Earle Gray as the speaker. Earle has published many books on Canadian history and has a fund of knowledge about little known interesting facts about Canada. On behalf of the Executive I wish the best of the season to all of you and we hope to see everyone in the spring.

### A New Feature for *News and Views*! Identify this mystery location



Can you identify the location of this bridge in Simcoe County?

The plaque reads Peace Bridge, erected 1927 by County of Ontario. So named to commemorate the bond of friendship between A.W. Grigg and John Agnew.

Contact the editor (see p. 1) with the correct answer and we'll celebrate your knowledge in the next issue!



## Simcoe County Historical Association Executive

Mark Fisher, President	728-3825	<a href="mailto:mwfisher2@hotmail.com">mwfisher2@hotmail.com</a>
Gord Harris, Treasurer	739-7649	<a href="mailto:gordon.harris67@gmail.com">gordon.harris67@gmail.com</a>
Ardis Harris, Corresponding Secretary	739-7649	<a href="mailto:ardis.harris@gmail.com">ardis.harris@gmail.com</a>

For Membership Information, contact

Earl Elliott, Membership Chair	734-9808	<a href="mailto:earl.elliott@rogers.com">earl.elliott@rogers.com</a>
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You are invited to submit photos and articles regarding your historical happenings in Simcoe County. Photos will be returned.

Mail to SCHA, Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M 4S9.

Deadline for the next issue is February 25, 2014

# SCHA Tour of the SS Keewatin

by Audrey Hanson

A small group from the Simcoe County Historical Association traveled by carpool to the museum ship, the S.S. Keewatin at Port McNicoll, in Simcoe County, at Georgian Bay. This event was our SCHA public meeting for September, held on Saturday, September 14, 2013.



On board, our tour guide, Allan, provided us with a wealth of information and quizzed us on Canadian history. Many of our membership have memories of ship and rail travel which made the museum ship tour particularly interesting. We discovered that Port McNicoll was a thriving company town for CP Rail when the main route to Western Canada was by train to the “Port”, while travel was then by ship across the Great Lakes to the lake head gateway and the west.

The entrance is the former cargo hold, but as we entered the passenger deck we were entertained by music from a baby grand piano, played by a Friends of the Keewatin volunteer. This created the mood of being on a live passenger ship! We continued on to view all the rooms and passageways of the ship. We saw lower and upper deck passenger rooms, even a honeymoon suite. The ladies’ lounge featured a silver tea service, a donation acquired but not original to the Keewatin. Throughout the tour we saw uniforms of former staff and original ship’s vitreous china and silver settings. The barbershop of the barber, who served for thirty years and also operated the small gift shop, is completely intact. The purser’s office and mail room were tucked centrally, by the main passenger entrance. There is a grand

staircase above this at one end of the upper stateroom area which leads to a deck not open at this time.

The upper staterooms were set up as decade rooms to show the changing styles of passengers and the prices of passage on the Keewatin at that time.

We climbed up a narrow ladder to the front deck of the ship where we viewed the enclosed upper deck that once was open but was enclosed when radar services were installed in later years. The ship’s bell, pictured below, was gleaming in the sun on this day.



We continued on through the fabulous dining room, the kitchens and service areas. There are photos of the Chinese workers who manned the kitchens with a connecting eating room of their own. One can see on the ship, some original ice boxes, but also more modern refrigeration. These areas have to be seen to be appreciated! We also saw the ball room on the aft deck with the beautiful original floor, and the smoking lounge lined with carved panels depicting all the countries of the British Empire of the era.

Finally, our tour guide took us to the lower hold of the ship to view the steam engines.

It took four huge boilers and some hardy, hardworking and intelligent men to run this ship. The ship ran on coal furnaces and generated her own electric power for lighting. The boilers are Scotch boilers by design, and are now partially cut out so one can actually see the old working system. These boilers provided high pressure steam to power the intricate machinery of the ship that still run today. We were privileged to hear the gentle rumble of these operating machines as they were powered by an electric motor for demonstration purpose for a few minutes.

The S. S. Keewatin is an Edwardian ship which received some updates through the years, such as a sprinkler system and extra fire walls. Launched in 1907, she was decommissioned in 1965, and now is a memorial to the steamship era, is in remarkable condition with many original artifacts, and she still floats! Built in Govan, Scotland, the Keewatin crossed the Atlantic for a life on the Great Lakes. She served for 57 years under 11 captains. She brought grain from western Canada and delivered many immigrants the opposite direction, with cargo including automobiles. To some, in later years, the Keewatin became a vacation venue, a childhood memory recalled by someone in our tour group.

The ship will open for the next season in 2014 on May 10. For more information about the Keewatin, its history, and plans for the future, see their website at <http://sskeewatin.com/>.

After a tour of the S. S. Keewatin, the SCHA group enjoyed lunch at the Sainte Marie restaurant just down the road from Port McNicoll. This location provided an early French-Canadian atmosphere perfect for recalling some memories that our tour had invoked. We had a great time!

*Photo credits: Daniel Byers*

## The War of 1812: reminiscences and recollections

by Jill Hynes

The following notes were compiled by the author for a presentation to the SCHA in October, 2011. This is the fifth and final installment of the series.

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We continue the story of Amelia Ryerse Harris

In May of 1814 we had several days of heavy fog. On the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>, as the fog lifted, we saw seven or eight ships under the American flag anchored at Ryerse, with a number of small boats floating by the side of each ship. As the fog cleared away they hoisted sail and dropped down three miles below us, opposite Port Dover. Of course an invasion was anticipated. Colonel Talbot was then in Norfolk, and he ordered all the militia to assemble the next day at Brantford, a distance of thirty miles, which they did with great reluctance, as many of both officers and men thought that an effort should have been made to prevent the Americans landing; but no resistance was offered.

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, the Americans burnt the village and mills of Dover; on the 13<sup>th</sup>, as my mother and myself were sitting at breakfast, the dogs kept up a very unusual barking. I went to the door to discover the cause; when I looked up, I saw the hill-side and fields, as far as the eye could reach, covered with American soldiers. They had marched from Port Dover to Ryerse. Two men stepped from the ranks, selected some large chips, and came into the room where we were standing, and took coals from the hearth without speaking a word. My mother knew instinctively what they were going to do. She went out and asked to see the commanding officer. A gentleman rode up to her and said he was the person she asked for. She

entreated him to spare her property, and said she was a widow with a young family. He answered her civilly and respectfully, and expressed his regret that his orders were to burn, but that he would spare the house, which he did; and he said, as a sort of justification of his burning, that the buildings were used as a barrack, and the mill furnished flour for British troops.

Very soon we saw columns of dark smoke arise from every building, and of what at early morn had been a prosperous homestead, at noon there remained only smouldering ruins. The following day Colonel Talbot and the militia under his command marched to Port Norfolk (commonly known as Turkey Point), six miles above Ryerse. The Americans were then on their way to their own shores. My father had been dead less than two years. Little remained of all his labours excepting the orchard and cultivated fields. It would not be easy to describe my mother's feelings as she looked at the desolation around her, and thought upon the past and the present; but there was no longer a wish to return to New York. My father's grave was there, and she looked to it as her resting-place. Not many years since a small church was built on a plot of ground which my father had reserved for that purpose; in the graveyard attached are buried two of the early settlers-my father and my mother.

So, this type of story was a cause to motivate many young men to continue in their cause to defeat the Americans. One was John Harris. In 1813 he was assigned to a force accompanying Sir James Lucas Yeo

to North America to fight the Americans on the Great Lakes. He served throughout the war, and was eventually appointed Master of the Prince Regent, a frigate nearly the size of the USS Constitution, carrying 58 guns. Following the end of the war in 1814, he was ordered to assist with a survey of the Great Lakes under Commodore Edward Owen. One of his first assignments was to survey the north shore of Lake Erie for a shipbuilding site. In the course of this work he arrived at Port Ryerse on April 10, 1815, where he met our author, Amelia, the daughter of the Port's founder, the United Empire Loyalist named Samuel Ryerse. She and John were married on June 28, 1815. If you want more of their story, visit Eldon House, in London, Ontario.

In military terms, the War of 1812 was inconclusive. The Americans burned York, and in retaliation, eventually the White House was set on fire by the British. The 1814 Treaty of Ghent, which ended the war, merely affirmed the situation prevailing before the war began. The treaty was silent on the issues of commercial rights that had led to war. When war between Britain and France ended in 1815, so did British interference with American shipping. A remarkable video by PBS states that true loss came only to the native population. They lost their ability to be one people living under one law. They became residents of either America or Canada, and no longer were their own views as a third nation on the continent given a voice. The war marked the end of the native campaign to drive back white settlers. The refusal of the British government to

press redress of First Nations' grievances with the Americans, who were in no mood to discuss it, ended all hopes of First Nation security. Having been instrumental in the successful defence of Canada, the warriors and their families lost their dream of an Indian homeland, and continued their decline into marginalization and poverty. Theirs is the most tragic story of all in the War of 1812.

One of the most notable results of the War of 1812 was an upsurge in American nationalism. At the war's conclusion a French diplomat commented that "the war has given the Americans what they so essentially lacked, a national character." The war also produced a new national symbol, The Star-Spangled Banner, written to celebrate Fort McHenry's survival of British bombardment.

As stated by PBS on their remarkable site The War of 1812, the end of the war brought a return to normalcy in terms of trade, and the renewing of ties of friendship and family. The end also brought out the tragedy that such a conflict could have arisen between peoples so closely bound. But some things were different. Great Britain, preoccupied with its European and world concerns after the defeat of Napoleon, had learned a new respect for the United States. For its part, there would be no more talk of a "mere matter of marching" to conquer Canada in Washington's corridors; the tough and dogged defence that had blunted American invasion efforts ensured that. And for the British North American colonies, the blurred lines that had marked the border with the United States had now become clear. The war ensured that there would be a different society, having fought for its existence, preparing the way for the building of a nation.

## The Andrew Hunter Award 2014

The Andrew Hunter Award is offered annually for historical research on Simcoe County, Ontario, written by an undergraduate student for a course in any university or college. In this seventh year of competition, we look forward to receiving many worthy entries for each of the two awards being offered.

Conditions: The entry shall be an essay between 3,000 and 5,000 words in length or a fourth year undergraduate thesis paper (no length restriction) on some aspect of the history of Simcoe County, Ontario, written in English or in French. The author must have been a part-time or full-time undergraduate student in a degree program at an accredited university or college at the time of writing. The essay must have been written to meet the requirement of an undergraduate credit course during the 2013-2014 academic year. The thesis paper must have been submitted for grading in the 2012-2013 academic year. Entries become the property of the



Simcoe County Historical Association and may be published as part of an essay collection.

Submissions: Essay entries shall be postmarked by April 21, 2014 and undergraduate theses shall be postmarked by July 31, 2013. Submissions will not be returned to the contestants. Papers must be typed in Times New Roman 12 point font, double spaced, and should not bear the instructor's comments or grade. Three copies must be provided. A cover sheet must list the author's name, address, phone number, year of study, school affiliation and department, and the name of the instructor for whom the paper was written.

Entries should be sent to:

The Corresponding Secretary  
Simcoe County Historical Association  
P.O. Box 144  
Barrie, ON L4M 4S9

Adjudication: Entries will be judged by a distinguished panel appointed by the Simcoe County Historical Association. The winner of the essays postmarked by April 21, 2014 will be announced as soon as possible. Contestants should keep the SCHA aware of their contact information.

Award: There will be two awards offered in Canadian funds, one for \$500 for the best undergraduate essay and one for \$500 for the best undergraduate thesis. The Simcoe County Historical Association may edit the winning entries for the purpose of publication.

The Simcoe County Historical Association is under no obligation to grant the awards. For more information, see [www.simcoecountyhistory.ca](http://www.simcoecountyhistory.ca)



*The SCHA  
acknowledges the  
financial support of  
the County of Simcoe  
and of the Government  
of Ontario through the  
Ministry of Culture.*



**Ontario**

# COMING EVENTS

## *of our Member Societies*

### **Alliston Historical Society –**

**contact Jackie Baillie**

705-435-5626 or

cknowles@rogers.com

Meet at Museum on the Boyne,

Fletcher Cres., Alliston 2:00 p.m.

Second Wednesday of the month

Feb.- June and October - November

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### **Barrie Historical Association –**

**contact Doug Hamilton**

Meet at Barrie City Hall – 7:30

p.m.

www.barriehistorical.com

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### **Collingwood District Historical Society – contact Joan Miller**

705-445-1119

Meet at Leisure Time Club, 100

Minnesota Street, Collingwood –

7:00 p.m.

www.historicallyspeakingcdhs.ca

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### **Essa Historical Society – contact Olive Lee**

705-458-9971

Meet at Thornton Library fourth

Saturday of the month except July,

Aug. & Dec. – 1:30 p.m.

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### **Friends of Historic Fort Willow – contact Gord Hanson**

fortwillow.com

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### **Genealogical Society – contact Linda Mitchell**

Meet at Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-Day Saints 79 Ferris Lane,

Barrie – 2:00 p.m.

www.simcoebogs.com

**Jan. 2** – Shirley Addy – Using the

new family search site

### **Huron Museum Huron**

**Ouendat Village – contact Jamie**

**Hunter**

549 Little Lake Park Road, Midland

– 705-526-2844

www.huroniamuseum.com

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### **Innisfil Historical Society –**

**contact Donna Wice**

Meet at Knock Community Centre,

10th SR at 9th Line, Innisfil – 2:00

p.m. www.innisfilhistorical.ca

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### **Museum on the Boyne – contact**

**Katie Huddleston-Naieb**

250 Fletcher Crescent in Riverdale

Park, Alliston – 705-435-0167

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### **Orillia History Speaker Series –**

**contact Daniel Byers**

Meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Orillia

Museum of Art & History, 30 Peter

Street South. – 7:30 p.m.

**Jan. 15** – William Leslie – Andrew

Tait

**Feb. 19** – Gary White – A Life of

Flying

**Mar. 19** – Lori Oschefski – British

Home children

### **Orillia Museum of Art and**

**History**

30 Peter Street South, Orillia –

705-326-2159

www.orilliamuseum.org

**Dec. 12-Jan. 11** – This is

Tomorrow – High School Art Show

**Jan. 16-Mar. 29** – Keesic Douglas

**to Feb. 22** – Cellar Door

**Mar. 8-Apr. 19** – 18<sup>th</sup> Annual

Women's Show

### **Penetanguishene Centennial Museum and Archives – contact Nicole Jackson**

13 Burke St. at Beck Blvd.

Call 705-549-2150

www.pencenmuseum.com

**Dec. 21 and 22** – Breakfast with Santa – reservations recommended

**Feb. 15** – Winterama

**Feb. 17** – Family Day

**Feb. 17-23** – Heritage Week

**Mar. 10-14** – March Break –

pioneer activities daily 1-3 p.m.

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### **Ramara Historical Society –**

**contact Cathy Westcott**

westcott.cathy963@gmail.com

Meet at Udney Community Centre,

2347 Concession Road 10 (east of

Orillia)

7:00 p.m. Third Thursday of the

month (except July and August)

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### **Simcoe County Museum – contact Kelley Swift-Jones**

1151 Highway 26, Midhurst –

705-728-3721 museum.simcoe.ca

**Dec. 9-Jan. 5** – Starlab

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### **Stayner Heritage Society –**

**contact Dorothy Millsap**

www.staynerheritagesociety.com

705-428-2540

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### **Tecumseth & West Gwillimbury Historical Society – contact June Chambers**

Meet at Tec We Gwill Hall, Newton

Robinson, 7:30 p.m.

Third Monday of the month

January-May and September-

November Call 905-775-7144 or

905-936-4086

**Jan. 20** – Annual Show and Tell