

# NEWS and views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association

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Visit our Website

[www.simcoecountyhistory.ca](http://www.simcoecountyhistory.ca)

# SCHA

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

## SCHA Spring Meetings

Theoretically, spring will arrive in a couple of weeks. At least we will be back to daylight savings. After this long winter, I'm sure you're ready to get back to some activities, and what better to start with than the story of CCM, featured in the last issue of *News and Views*. As noted below, this presentation will start our spring meetings on Tuesday, March 18. We look forward to meeting John McKenty.

In April, we will welcome Jeff Monague with the account of the Coldwater-Narrows land claim. This settlement stems from events that took place over 170 years ago in relation to land known as the Coldwater-Narrows reserve. The reserve was 10,673 acres in size and ran about 14 miles long by 1.5 miles wide, along an old portage route between present-day Orillia and Matchedash Bay on Lake Huron in Ontario. It also included a mill at Port Severn.

A Google search of Coldwater-Narrows Land Claim brings up a variety of documents from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, and the four First Nations

involved in the settlement. This presentation brings a historical dispute and its resolution up to the present day.

For our Annual General Meeting, the date has shifted a little earlier to April 29 as we will join with the Barrie Historical Association and conquer two AGMs with one dinner!

The tickets are ready to be purchased at the March and April meetings, and they are \$25.00 per person for roast beef dinner with all the trimmings including salad, dessert, and fruit punch. Dinner time is a little earlier than usual (at 5:30 p.m.) so that we will have time for two short business meeting agendas for the SCHA and BHA.

Once the formalities are covered, we will hear from author Earle Gray who was the editor of *Oilweek* magazine in Calgary for nearly 20 years. He is a former publisher, editorial consultant, speechwriter and has written for such publications as the *Canadian Encyclopaedia*, *Maclean's*, *Financial Post*, *Toronto Star*, *Canadian Business*, and others. He is the author of eight published books.

## 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 Monague of Beausoleil First Nation, *The Coldwater-Narrows Land Claim*, at the **Barrie City Hall, at 7:30 p.m.**

**April 29** – Annual General Meeting – Earle Gray, author of *About Canada*, at the **Midhurst United Church, 91 Doran Road, Midhurst, at 5:30 p.m.**

## President's Ponderings: Spring 2014

Given the heaps of snow and the continuing cold, one might query the title to my remarks. Yet hope springs eternal and by the time of our next meeting on March 18 matters should have improved in that regard. John McKenty's presentation on the CCM company will be well worth hearing at that time. On April 15 Jeff Minogue will speak on the \$300 million land claims settlement for the Coldwater Reserve, another fascinating story. And finally the AGM dinner on April 29 with Earle Gray, a noted author on little known aspects of Canadian history, will wind up our season. The dinner will be a joint meeting with the Barrie Historical Association so

members are encouraged to obtain your tickets as soon as possible as seating may be limited. This will also be the time to renew memberships for next year so we hope everyone will renew their memberships and try to recruit a friend or two.

Our Community Funding initiative has had several interesting requests this year. For example the Innisfil Historical Society is supporting the construction of a scale model of the "Emily May" one of the early paddlewheel steamships on Lake Simcoe. We have also continued to support the restoration of the portrait of Judge Gowan. This is a major project that was delayed until recently.

The *Barrie Examiner* printed an excellent front page story, with the full account on page 3 of this newsletter. Speaking personally, it was a real chore for Gary Owen to retrieve this very large and heavy portrait from the Courthouse on a cold, wintry day. Once in his shop, and viewed closely, obscure details could be seen that will all come to light when it is restored and the frame is refurbished. It promises to be a magnificent piece!

Finally, we have begun work on our program for next year. We hope to build on the successes of this year in bringing further excellent speakers and presentations for your enjoyment.

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## History gets real at Historic Fort Willow

Mobile devices have the ability to provide people with endless information everywhere they go. Volunteer Trevor Carter, a high school teacher with a passion for archaeology and history, and his students have put together a website full of interesting pictures and facts about NVCA's Fort Willow.

This content is designed to be accessed on a mobile device while at the Fort, using your own data provider. A special app creates "augmented reality." As you pass through various areas of the Fort, the camera on your mobile device shows the scenery while the app overlays

clickable photos and text. Drawings of what the original buildings may have looked like, the history of the people who used the Fort, and more are just a click away.

The two mobile apps currently available are called Layar and Junaio. Both are free to download.

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## Last month's mystery location



Although no one was able to identify the location of this bridge in Simcoe County, we are happy to provide the answer this month from Audrey Hanson.

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.

It is in Washago in front of the Old Mill, on Highway 169 as you approach Highway 11. The bridge crosses part of the old mill race. It is worth a visit and walk to see this confluence of the Black, Green, and Severn Rivers. Apparently Washago has about 11 road bridge crossings, plus several railway bridges within a 5-mile radius.

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## Simcoe County Historical Association Executive

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Earl Elliott, Membership Chair	734-9808	earl.elliott@rogers.com

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 May 25, 2014

# Restoration of the Portrait of Sir James Gowan

by Mark Fisher

The Barrie Historical Association is about to undertake a major new project for 2014 with the restoration of the large oil portrait of Sir James R. Gowan (1815-1909) that has been on display in the Barrie courthouse for many years.

The name of Sir James Gowan is largely unknown or forgotten in Barrie as is his former seven acre estate of Ardraven that once extended from Duckworth Street to St. Vincent Park, bounded by Kempenfelt Drive and Blake Street. Yet Sir James was one of Barrie's most illustrious citizens and a figure of national importance.

Gowan served as the first judge of Simcoe County from 1843 to 1883, a time that saw development from the primitive era of pioneer settlement to the growing aspirations of an urban centre. After 1885, as a member of the Canadian Senate, he continued to make a contribution until his retirement at age 92 in 1907.

During his long career Gowan acted as a friend, confidant and adviser to many leading politicians in establishing the legal system of early Ontario and Canada. Aside from his efficient administration of justice in Simcoe County he was a key figure in the establishment of the Crown Prosecutor system of 1857, the consolidation of the statute law of Ontario in 1859 and 1877 and the codification of the criminal law in 1892. He was also one of the three judges appointed to investigate the notorious Canadian Pacific Railway scandal that brought down the government of John A. Macdonald in 1873. His dedication to the legal profession was additionally evident in the 1855 creation, at his own expense, of the *Upper Canada*

*Law Journal* that eventually became the *Canadian Bar Review*, the preeminent legal periodical of Canada. Much of what we now know about Sir James Gowan is contained in a treasure trove of personal correspondence that includes 85 letters to Gowan from John A. Macdonald alone, in addition to many letters from prominent individuals such as Robert Baldwin, Oliver Mowat, John Sandfield Macdonald, John S. Thompson, J.C.C. Abbott, Lord Dufferin, Wilfrid Laurier and leading intellectuals such as George M. Grant of Queen's University and the controversial Goldwin Smith.

The Gowan collection was found in a Barrie law office by 12-year-old David McTurk in 1958 and narrowly averted destruction before eventual purchase by the Simcoe County Archives in 1999. Over that 40 year period the papers followed a twisted and convoluted path and were the subject of acrimonious debate, widely fluctuating valuations, and a flurry of lawsuits. It is a story richly told in a recent publication by the author entitled *The Gowan Papers*. Copies of the book are now sold out but more will be printed if there are sufficient orders. Copies may be ordered at [mwfisher2@hotmail.com](mailto:mwfisher2@hotmail.com)

As for the Gowan portrait itself it was originally commissioned in 1868 by the members of the Simcoe County Bar in commemoration of Gowan's 25 years on the Bench. It hung in Gowan's home of Ardraven for many years where it suffered the simple passage of time, to say nothing of exposure to the smoke of wood and coal fires, as well as coal oil lamps and gas lighting. In 1949 Gowan's great-

nephew, E.G.R. Ardagh placed the portrait on "permanent loan" with Simcoe County. It was gratefully accepted with due ceremony by E.C. Drury, the county sheriff and former premier of Ontario, followed by installation in the old Barrie court house. Subsequently it was moved to the present Barrie court house in 1977, but over the past 143 years its condition has greatly deteriorated and it is in danger of being completely lost.

The Gowan portrait is a very large painting, approximately 5 feet by 6 feet, with an ornate, gilded frame, all of which is in poor shape. It has now been moved to the premises of Gary Owen Custom Framing Gallery, located in Barrie. Mr. Owen is a qualified art restorer and is eagerly looking forward to working on this project.

The cost of the restoration is approximately \$15,000 from start to finish, with the majority of the funding contributed by the Simcoe County Council. Other contributors include the Simcoe County Law Association, the Barrie Historical Association, the Simcoe County Historical Association, the Strathy family and a number of members of the local judiciary. We have, however, run into some additional costs so it will be necessary to find some further funding.

Anyone wishing to donate to the preservation of this important part of our visual history may do so by sending a cheque to the Barrie Historical Association, Box 316, Barrie ON L4M 4T5. Any contributions will be gratefully received.

## Innisfil Veterans: November 11, 2013

by Donna Wice



Back Row: Hans Oesinghaus, Cecil Browning, Jack McMillan

Second Row L to R: unknown, Mehdi Imtiaz, John Battle, Ross Emms, Kenneth Atkinson, Stanley Dinney, Bert Hogg, Gordon Fralick, Norman Dent, Don Verdin

Seated: Charlie Reed, Elwood Webb, Tony D'Amelio, Harry Boyer, Shirlye Toro-Fralick, Allan Lennox, Bruce Prentice

Missing: Emil "Pete" Bileski

There was not a dry eye in the house as these living veterans assembled at the front of the Innisfil council chambers. No one knew this opportunity to see the veterans face to face would be so moving. What started out as a book launch for

*Innisfil Veterans: Their Lives and Memories* turned into a grand reunion and almost had the reverence of a church service; the event was very moving and memorable.

Book sales have been much higher than expected allowing the Innisfil

Historical Society to maintain the price of \$50.00. Books are available through the Simcoe County Museum, Innisfil Town Hall, and Through The Grapevine, Cookstown as well as [www.innisfilhistorical.ca](http://www.innisfilhistorical.ca)

## 16<sup>th</sup> Annual John A. Macdonald Dinner

by Dr. Dick Johnston

On January 11<sup>th</sup> the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual John A. dinner was held in Orillia at the Best Western Mariposa Inn. Our speaker was the 2008 Leacock Medal winner, Terry Fallis. A former speechwriter for Jean Chretien, his book, *The Best Laid Plans*, not only won the Leacock medal but also was the winner of CBC's Canada Reads (2011) and was the basis for the recent CBC TV six-part miniseries by the same name.

A special feature added to this year's dinner was the audience participating in a Re-Affirmation ceremony with a pledge of

Allegiance to Canada led by Madam Justice Peggy Eberhard of the Superior Court of Ontario. This was a very moving moment for most of the standing room only audience who, having been born in Canada, have never taken any sort of

vow or pledge to Canada. Plans for John A.'s 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner are underway for Saturday January, 10<sup>th</sup> 2015.



Sir John A. dinner committee chair, Dr. Dick Johnson, celebrated with the evening's guest speaker, Mr. Terry Fallis. Congratulations on this event and the projects and activities planned for 2015!

## New Simcoe County Book

by Jim Willis

*We Worship the Lord in Simcoe County Churches* by Eileen Murdoch

The settlement of Simcoe County began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest settlers gathered together in a home to worship, and whenever possible, held services under the guidance of a traveling clergyman of any faith. As more families arrived, church buildings of various faiths were built. Most early churches were plain and made from local materials. As villages and towns arose and residents became more prosperous, church buildings became larger and more embellished.

With the later migration of the rural population to larger centres, churches are often the only remnant of the past life of many hamlets and crossroads communities. Some continue as places of worship, their original architecture untouched. Some have been altered, often converted to other uses. Many are abandoned or demolished with a cairn erected to mark the location.

For over 27 years, Eileen Murdoch has travelled throughout Simcoe County taking pictures of these landmark places of worship. Her photographs are an important record of this legacy of church buildings. Take time to appreciate their meaning and architectural glory, past and present.

Eileen was raised in Guthrie, Oro Township, and has lived in nearby Barrie since 1977. For a long time, church buildings have held a fascination for her. She likes to walk around them, sit in a pew inside, feel the ambience, and, of course, take pictures.

Books are available from Rivendell Books in Wellington Plaza Barrie, Simcoe County Museum, or online at [www.barriehistorical.com](http://www.barriehistorical.com)

## 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



Andrew Hunter 1863 - 1940

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

Submissions: Essay entries shall be postmarked by April 21, 2014; the deadline for theses has passed. 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  
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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

### Barrie Historical Association – contact Doug Hamilton

Meet with SCHA – see page 1  
www.barriehistorical.com

### 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

### Apr. 7 – Jack McAllister – Down Memory Lane

### Essa Historical Society – contact Olive Lee 705-458-9971 teddylee1@rogers.com

Meet at Thornton Library fourth Saturday of the month except July, Aug. & Dec. – 1:30 p.m.

### Mar. 22 – Willard Kenzie – Municipal Life and Trails

### Apr. 26 – Wendy Graham – Mathew House

### May 24 – Essa Historical Society Celebrates 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

### Friends of Historic Fort Willow – contact Gord Hanson fortwillow.com

### Friends of The OPP Museum – contact Ellen Blaubergs

705-330-4178  
support@oppmuseumfriends.ca

### Sept. 5 – Pedal for the Past Fundraising Bike Ride – All proceeds will be donated to The OPP Museum

### Genealogical Society – contact Linda Mitchell

Meet at Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 79 Ferris Lane, Barrie – 2:00 p.m.  
www.simcoeboogs.com

### Apr. 12 – John Wright – Cemetery Transcriptions in Simcoe County

### May 10 – Sher Leetooze – Irish History

### June 7 – Ken Weber – Local History

### Huron Museum Huron Ouendat Village – contact Jamie Hunter

549 Little Lake Park Road, Midland – 705-526-2844 www.huroniamuseum.com

### Innisfil Historical Society – contact Donna Wice

Meet at Knock Community Centre, 10th SR at 9th Line, Innisfil – 2:00 p.m.  
www.innisfilhistorical.ca

### Mar. 15 – Councillor Lynn Dollin and Cookstown Old Boy Al Dawson – Reinvigourating Cookstown

### Apr. 26 – Bev Dietrich, Curator of Guelph Museums – Sitting Pretty: The History of the Toilet

### May – TBA

### Museum on the Boyne – contact Katie Huddleston-Naieb

250 Fletcher Crescent in Riverdale Park, Alliston – 705-435-3900 ext. 1802

### 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.

### Mar. 19 – Lori Oschefski – British Home children

### Apr. 16 – George Page – Orillia's Hydro Glen

### May 21 – Daphne Mainprize – Exploring Leacock's Mariposa

### Orillia Museum of Art and History

30 Peter Street South, Orillia – 705-326-2159 www.orilliamuseum.org

### Extra Events

### Mar. 21 – Mark Douglas – The Story of the Fish Fence

### May 8 – Carmichael Lecture with guest speaker Gertrude Kearns, Canadian war artist who was on duty in Afghanistan in 2005-2006

### Museum Displays

### to Mar. 29 – Keesic Douglas

### Mar. 8-Apr. 19 – 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Women's Show

### Apr. 3-May 31 – Life & Limb: 40 Views on the Body

### May 3-May 9, 2015 – World War

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

13 Burke St. at Beck Blvd.  
Call 705-549-2150 www.pencenmuseum.com

### Mar. 10-14 – March Break – pioneer activities daily 1-3 p.m.

### Apr. 19 – Easter Eggstravaganza

### May 9-June 30 – War of 1812 in Simcoe County travelling exhibit

### May 18 – National Museum Day – interactive pioneer activities

### 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)

### Mar. 20 – Brian and Penny Cotton, Green River Specialties – Salt and Pepper Collection

### Apr. 17 – Gay Guthrie – Antique Silver

### May 15 – John Gardner – History of Brechin

### June 19 – Box Car Meeting at Cecil Byers, 4100 Sideroad 20, just east of Uptergrove – Tour the box cars and explore Ramara's railway heritage on site

### July 26 – Yesteryears Celebration – more information in June *News and Views*

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

1151 Highway 26, Midhurst – 705-728-3721 museum.simcoe.ca

### to May 25 – Sport vs. Science

### Mar. 1-May 31 – Tap into Maple

### Apr. 23 – Simcoe County Regional Heritage Fair

### June 7&8 – Wheels and Tracks in Motion

### Stayner Heritage Society – contact Dorothy Millsap

www.staynerheritagesociety.com  
705-428-2540

### 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

### Mar. 17 – Marnie Parkin – demonstration and history of Knitting Machines