

NEWS and views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association

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Visit our Website

www.simcoecountyhistory.ca

SCHA

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

Spring Meetings

As you know, with many of our members vacationing to escape the rumoured winter weather, (which at the time of this writing has yet to materialize!) the SCHA takes a little winter break from regular meetings.

This year the break will last a little longer. We are going to enjoy two meetings in April instead of one in March and one in April. These will be followed by a late month AGM, once again with the fabulous food and atmosphere offered in Midhurst!

On April 12 our meeting with John Carter will be held in the Barrie City Hall Rotunda at 7:30. As is our annual habit, this is a joint meeting hosted by both the SCHA and the Barrie Historical Association. John Carter is well versed in the history of the Rebellion of 1837. His talk will focus not on the more famous stories we have often heard. Instead, he will bring us the details of the armed incursions from the United States into Canada that took place between December 1837 and December

1838. This resulted in the transportation of political prisoners to Van Diemen's Land. Come enjoy this new perspective on this time period.

On April 26, local historian Jamie Hunter will bring his research and presentation on Champlain. Jamie's work will assist us in celebrating the 400th anniversary of Champlain in Simcoe County.

Last but not least, the Annual General Meeting and dinner will take place on May 31 at the Midhurst United Church. Our evening's speaker will be Tom Villemaire who will bring to life his book *Colossal Canadian Failures* with particular attention paid to some tails from Simcoe County. (Not that we could ever be known for failures! Don't think about the Georgian Bay ship canal for instance.) Tom has an extensive website under his name and Historylab.ca. His engaging articles have been appearing in the *Barrie Examiner*.

SCHA 2016 Schedule

April 12 – 7:30 p.m. – John Carter – 1837-1838 – Barrie City Hall Rotunda

April 26 – 7:30 p.m.– Jamie Hunter – Champlain in Simcoe County – Barrie City Hall Rotunda

May 31 – time TBA – Tom Villemaire – *Colossal Canadian Failures* – Midhurst United Church, Doran Road, Midhurst

After a delicious dinner, we will hold our Annual General Meeting and elections, followed by Tom's presentation. More details in the March issue.

In Memoriam

by Jill Hynes

<p>Margaret Verbey was a long time member of SCHA. She resided at the Bob Rumball Home for a number of years and passed away on November 26, 2015. Margaret and her family generously designated the Barrie Christmas Cheer program and Simcoe County Historical Association as recipients of her memorial donations. We thank them for the contributions received in her honour.</p>	<p>On October 27, the SCHA lost a valued board member and friend with the unexpected passing of our past president, Helen Coutts. Helen's involvement with the SCHA took on many forms as a representative for the Springwater area and eventual role of president. Her ability to manage our resources and deal intelligently with our local government will be missed. Helen always encouraged our partnerships with our member societies throughout the county. Helen's ambitious nature always showed in the support of a new plaque, a new publication, or a great event to inform and entertain our members. My memories of Helen involve her regaling us with tales of yet another fantastic journey she was just about to take or had just returned from with Ron. Together they visited many corners of the world but always returned to their beloved Springwater.</p>
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Membership Renewals

This month, your renewal form for 2016 is included with this mailing.

Some of our members' fees (as well as those of a few member organizations) are currently in arrears. The SCHA would very much appreciate your support in renewing your memberships, since it helps us to defray costs such as printing and mailing out News and Views (which have increased considerably over the past year, thanks to rising postal rates). Any additional amount that you may wish to donate would also be gratefully accepted and receipted, and will help fund our monthly speaker series, Annual General meeting, the Andrew Hunter Award, and other local projects that promote a greater understanding of the history of Simcoe County and its individual communities.

Thank you from the Board of Directors



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



Simcoe County Historical Association Executive

Earl Elliott, Vice President 705-734-9808 earl.elliott@rogers.com
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For Membership Information, contact

Earl Elliott, Membership Chair 705-734-9808 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 or e-mail to Jill Hynes, Editor at mark.jill@sympatico.ca.

OMAH Events

Sir John A. Dinner Tickets

If you have been thinking about attending the eighteenth annual Sir John A. Macdonald Dinner at the Mariposa Inn on Saturday, January 9, 2016, be sure to drop by OMAH to buy your ticket(s) before they are sold out.

If you haven't thought about going to the dinner, but would like to escape the doldrums of winter, you and your friends need only part with \$55.00 per ticket for an evening of fine food, culture and entertainment in celebration of Sir John A.'s life and Canada.

The irresistible wit of our after dinner speaker, Dan Needles, that well known playwright and author, and

winner of the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour who was recently awarded the Order of Canada, our very own "Mayor of Mariposa", is



bound to dispel the blues with laughter as he fills us with pride and gratitude for being able to live in this great country.

You will also be doing something to help OMAH bring the programs and activities to the museum which so benefit our community. To be part of this traditional evening of pride and enjoyment, you must hurry over to OMAH to buy your ticket(s).

OMAH is open 7 days a week, Monday-Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday 1 to 4 p.m.

For more information, please call 705-326-2159.

Upcoming Orillia Speaker Series Information

Bob Bowles, local award winning naturalist and environmentalist and recipient of the 2012 OMAH Historical Restoration Award will be the guest speaker at the Orillia Museum of Art and History on Wednesday, January 20. The talk begins at 7:30 p.m.

Bob will speak about how the Kings and Queens and events of England over the ages have influenced the names of places, architectural design, laws and policies in Ontario.

It was Bob's research, articles and involvement in local history such as the reconstruction and restoration of Orillia oldest home the Regan House, and the history of development of the 4500 year old Native Fishing Weirs, a National Historic Site located at the Atherley Narrows between Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching, that made him realize how knowing the Kings and Queens of England helps

in our understanding of the New World.

The Orillia Museum of Art and History located at 30 Peter Street, South. Admission is free and all are welcome.

In celebration of Black History Month, Janie Cooper-Wilson will be guest speaker at the monthly History Speaker's Evening held at the Orillia Museum of Art and History on Wednesday, February 17. The talk begins at 7:30 p.m.

Over the past two decades Janie has made significant contributions to the preservation of African-Canadian History in Ontario. She is the recipient of the 2015 - 2016 OMAH Historic Reconstruction Award for her work to restore and develop the Oro African Methodist Episcopal Church National Historic Site located in Edgar, which was in danger of collapsing. She has been heavily

involved in all aspects of this crucial initiative, to ensure that the stories of the Oro Loyalist Black Settlement are preserved for future generations. Janie is a descendent of this settlement and her grandparents were married in the church.

Admission is free. All are welcome.



Celebration of the departure of the North West Mounted Police 1873

by Gord Hanson

On October 3, Collingwood & District Historical Society hosted an open house at the federal building at 44 Hurontario St. and aboard the Canadian Coast Guard vessel *Constable Carriere* which was moored in the Collingwood harbour a couple of blocks away. The event commemorated the departure of 150 North West Mounted Police from Collingwood by steamers *Chicora*, *Cumberland* and *Frances Smith* to Prince Arthur's Landing (now Thunder Bay) in fall 1873 to take up postings in western Canada.

The executive and members of C&DHS welcomed hundreds of visitors to the lobby of the marble-clad Beaux-Arts federal building under a stained-glass domed ceiling, then offered guided tours through the shipping registry, customs desk, municipal counter, police office and

2016 Marks the 150th Birthday of the Grey and Simcoe Foresters

1866, the year before Confederation, saw much worry about the need for defence of our territory, and concern about the Union Army of the U.S. turning its sights to the North, after the conclusion of the Civil War. A number of Canadian Militia regiments were born, several named for their counties, and the two founding regiments of today's Foresters came into being.

The Grey & Simcoe Foresters have in the following 149 years been a

Then & Now

Mr. George Dunbar contacted *News and Views* to provide this Then & Now image of Barrie's Dunlop Street (1910-2015) for our readers.

The old photo is from the Toronto Public Library and the recent photo is an image capture from Google street-view.

He likes to encourage local historians to originate more Then & Nows in their own communities. *News and Views* welcomes any submissions of this sort! Very interesting!

caretaker's apartment. Old photographs depicted the construction of the building 1913-15, and the departure of WWI troops from Collingwood, and last-century town industry.

In a separate room, police personnel and interpreters and photos revealed detail of early RCMP activity and the history of the mounties. There was a lot of bright red as RCMP officers appeared in dress uniform with their riding boots and flat-brim hats.

The writer was welcomed aboard *Constable Carriere* to learn about marine security enforcement from the coast guard and RCMP personnel there. The ship does border patrol and fishing-regulation enforcement during the navigation season from its base at Parry Sound in the waters of Lake Superior, Lake Huron and

strong and proud part of the Canadian Army. We have fought as a regiment, or as small groups and individual soldiers with other units, in the North West Rebellion of 1885 and every major conflict since. And should Canada need it, the regiment remains ever ready for new duties. Men and women from Grey, Simcoe and Bruce counties most often join the Foresters, our 'home team'. And now it is time to mark, honour and celebrate those past and present

Georgian Bay. The \$20 million vessel of 253 tons displacement is 43 metres long, can cruise 2000 kilometres at maximum 25 knots during 14 days of "midshore patrol Atlantic region" (all within 200 kilometres of shore) and has a complement of up to five officers and four crew including RCMP staff. She was built at Halifax's Irving Shipbuilding and placed in service 2013.

Thank you to C&DHS for its guidebook on this event (it is a keepsake) and its handling of this heritage celebration by knowledgeable executive/volunteers. It was my privilege to participate as an observer in the 100th anniversary of the federal building dedication, together with the departure of the NWMP from Collingwood harbour.

Foresters and their deeds and history.

Major events will include a Presentation of New Colours parade in Owen Sound in May 2016 with the Governor General of Canada, a Freedom of the City Parade in Barrie in June, publishing of an up-to-date regimental history for wide distribution to schools, libraries, etc. and other regimental events.

All of these occasions must be privately funded by the unit as taxpayer dollars are not involved.



A Site to Explore

In March 2004, with his trusty digital camera, Alan L. Brown set out to take a photo of each of the Provincial government's Ontario Heritage Trust plaques and create a page for each on his site, ontarioplaques.com

Then, beginning in May, 2009, he began adding all the Federal government's Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaques in Ontario to the site. The provincial and federal plaques are the only plaques he posts on his site. Although there are thousands of local ones erected throughout the province, due to time constraints and the fact it's just Alan running things, he has had to limit himself.

Using the menu at the top or bottom of each page, you can access the plaques by way of the Index, Subjects, Locations, Map, and Search links. As well, the menu gives you access to a list of Links to other sites and a link to send an Email.

In partnership with Evan Sepa, a GIS Professional, they have an interactive Google Map of Ontario which includes links to all the plaques on the site.

Note that all the historical plaques in the City of Toronto are not posted but can be seen on his other website, torontoplaques.com

Alan would like to acknowledge the work done by Wayne Cook on his website. Wayne has granted Alan permission to copy his plaque text.

Alan's photos are freely available to whoever wishes to download them. He does ask that the photos be credited to ontarioplaques.com.

To email Alan, use the address alanlangfordbrown@gmail.com. His motto is Discover Ontario's history as told through its plaques, and he has been helping historians and the general public do exactly that for over 11 years. Enjoy!

The Andrew Hunter Award 2016

The Andrew Hunter Award is offered annually for historical research on a topic pertaining to a Simcoe County, Ontario. In this tenth year of competition, we look forward to receiving many high quality essays worthy of publication for the award offered.

Award:

The \$500 award is offered in Canadian funds for the best undergraduate essay. 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 award each year.



Conditions:

Awards are given to high-quality entries 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 2015-2016 academic year.

Entries become the property of the Simcoe County Historical Association and may be published as part of an essay collection.

Submissions:

Undergraduate essay entries must be postmarked by **April 18, 2016**.

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.

Contestants should keep the SCHA aware of their contact information should there be a change in this information after submission.

Entries should be sent to:

The Correspondence 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 award will be contacted as soon as possible. Up to two prizes may be awarded. A digital copy of the winning essay will be provided to the SCHA by the award recipient.

David Thompson, Passing Through in 1822

by Ileen Sabean

When the Rev. Thomas Williams described the nine-mile portage in his memoirs, he referred to it as “an old highway” perhaps because there was so much traffic moving along it. In the summer months c.1824, and the years before that, he said the teams of oxen were on the road nearly every day for nearly two to three months. He went on to describe some of the men who travelled to the Upper Great Lakes using the portage, such as the survey crew under Captain Bayfield, Sir John Franklin on one of his exploration trips to the arctic and “one party coming south took my attention particularly, the principal of which was an elderly gentleman, named Thompson.” Williams explained his interest in the gentleman saying Thompson had been a member of the boundary commission and was the surveyor who established the border between Canada and the U.S. following the War of 1812. Someone told Williams he had been party to the relinquishing of the Columbia River Territory to the Americans.

Williams met David Thompson, one of Canada’s greatest explorers, as he passed over the Nine Mile Portage to access Lake Simcoe and the Trent River to Kingston on his way to Montreal in 1824 but this was not his only visit to the area. Thompson kept journals and wrote in them nearly every day. Although a perusal of all of his 61 journals has not been done, he visited the Simcoe County area more than once and the used Yonge St./Lake Simcoe/Nottawasaga route for several years while with the boundary commission.

It may be the trip through the county in June 1822 was his first as he

seemed less familiar with the area than in other trips. It began with the trek up Yonge St. after he left York. His party stopped for the night (June 6th) at Mr. (James) Fleck’s halfway house, 18 miles from York and 10 miles from Holland Landing (at Elgin Mills). Thompson commented the Carrying Place was hilly with light, sandy soil. On the next day, the weather being fine, he headed out. Three miles from Fleck’s, he purchased breakfast at Nathaniel Gamble’s home and carried on to the Holland Landing carrying place. The wagon was unloaded and the canoe placed in the “still water of the broads”. Reaching Lake Simcoe, he raised sail and continued along the left side of the lake to a point on which there was a good but deserted log house so he put in to a bay near the house. Thompson wrote that the weather “was very sultry and threatening” and a thunderstorm rolled in.

(Author’s note: The mention of this log house is intriguing. In early June 1822, there was only one resident of the left side of the lake and that was Frances Hewson, although there is a possibility Jacob Gill had a cabin at De Grassi point. Thompson got into the water at about 1 p.m. and took a break before 6, as at that point the heavy rain came down. It is possible to get to Holland Landing from Barrie and back again in one day so the question is how far did the men get along the lake before they were too tired to continue? Did Thompson and his party spend the next day in the Hewson home while the Hewsons were away and where were they? The fact they crossed Kempenfeldt Bay soon after leaving the cabin and the strong currents and wind suggests they stopped at Big Bay Point.)

Early the next morning the bad weather ended. Not wanting to enter the cabin, Thompson and his men spent the night outdoors but a heavy gale sprung up making travel difficult so they entered the cabin to dry their stuff out. He had his paperwork

brought up from the canoe and wrote a letter to Commissioner Billings and his wife. At around 1 in the afternoon, the wind abated and they went back down to the lake. They crossed Kempenfeldt Bay against a strong headwind and continued along the north side of the bay to the carrying place (near what is now Barrie’s Heritage Park).

Although there has never been a suggestion that First Peoples ever had any type of permanent settlement here, Thompson reported that he found three lodges of Chippewas at the site. He found few inhabitants around the lake but some had cleared enough land to maintain themselves. The carters (which may have included Williams) were at the other end of the portage and so he had to wait.

Thompson sent his son to bring the carters and the oxen back. They arrived fatigued and did not wish to transport his goods that day but Thompson persuaded them to load the canoes onto the wagon and some small items. On the next day, Monday June 10th, the first load went over the portage and Peter Robinson’s boat came up with three men. (Author’s note: Robinson himself was in Europe at the time.) Thompson was handed two small boxes to deliver to Lt. Bayfield and two letters for “others in the Navy”. It was a hot day and, considering the time of year, he wrote “as usual many muskitoes”. The road over which the wagons must travel was bad but Thompson deemed it could be made better. The difficulty of the passage and the uncooperative weather meant it was not until June 12th that he could set his canoe in Willow Creek and set off down the “narrow crooked brook”

to the main river. He stopped for the night about a mile upstream from the Montgomery Rapids and the next day portaged around the rapids, met up with Lieutenant B~(the name is illegible) and two batteaux with equipment or supplies for the 76th Regiment of Foot.

Thompson commented that between the rapids and the mouth of the river were many log houses “situated in a wretched sandy place with bare miles of loose sand close behind them”. He reached the mouth of the river on the 14th and set off in the direction of Penetanguishene. There being a strong headwind, he put up for the night at a sandy bay and was bothered by more muskitoes. A man was sent overland to Penetang to deliver the two small parcels and letters while the rest of the party headed out to the lake. He was hoping to forward any other items destined for Fort William by H.M.S Recovery and reached Drummond Island on the 26th. From there, he would head further west to the lands he was surveying that summer.

On October 19th, he was on his way back and struggled to find the mouth of the Nottawasaga River through a fog. He missed the opening and had to struggle back against a fierce headwind but at last on the next day made it inland. They battled their way up the river with heavy rains pouring down. It was still raining when they arrived at Fort Willow. Thompson complained they were poorly lodged there, the room they were given had no windows and they were obliged to light candles just to be able to see their food. With the rain, the carters were not able to cross the portage that day. The rain turned to snow as the crew struggled to get Thompson and his equipment across the Nine Mile

portage. On October 30th, they were ready to cross Lake Simcoe and, with a light sail wind, made it to Big Bay Point. They camped at the same spot where they had camped in June (with no mention of the cabin) and proceeded the next day to the west branch of the river. They struggled to find the settlements and had to return and take another channel while rain once again turned to snow. Not finding the landing, they were obliged to camp once more at the driest spot they could find.



David Thompson, image in the public domain

A gentleman from the First Nations found them and told them they should have taken the east channel and pointed out the way. They made it through the snow but found the houses deserted. Next, they encountered a man who was going to Yonge St. who got in the canoe with them and he lead them to the correct branch of the river to take. No doubt he was very relieved to find the Government Place and arrive at Holland Landing as he wrote “Thank God”. It had been a rough day with heavy snow and a cold wind as well as being out of provisions. They had their things carried up to Mr. Johnson’s place to dry.

He tried to find someone to take their goods to York but due to the snow and rain and reluctance on the part of those who had wagons, he was unable to agree to a price. It wasn’t until November 4th, that they were able to resume their effort to reach Kingston.

Thompson left his canoe at the Johnson’s in Holland Landing as he expected to take this route again the next spring. The weather being milder, he arrived at the end of May and was back paddling across Lake Simcoe on May 24th. This time, they were able to make it to the landing for the portage in one day. Mr. (Alexander) Walker brought them some butter and eggs. One of their canoes was leaky so they fixed it while the carters carried their supplies and equipment over the portage. By May 28th, they were ready to proceed to Willow Creek but the water was very high here and along the Nottawasaga River due to the heavy rain, which had been falling. They decided to remain the night and started out the next day. The camp was pitched in the same location above the rapids where they had camped on the previous year. They found a man at the houses near the mouth of the river and stayed with him to dine before carrying on to Georgian Bay.

No doubt a further reading of his journals will yield other accounts of visits to the area. The writing is difficult to read and some things I could not decipher. I remind myself that J.B. Tyrell, having had access to the original papers (not microfilm) 100 years before me, complained that the writing was difficult to read and that he was not able to make out every word. With luck, I will be able to obtain more in the near future.

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 February- June and October-November

Barrie Historical Association – contact Mark Fisher

www.barriehistorical.com

See SCHA 2016 Schedule on page 1

Coldwater Canadiana Heritage Museum – contact Elaine Scott

1474 Woodrow Road, Coldwater

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

Jan. 11 – George Daniels, local airman, will relate the history of aviation in the Collingwood area.

Essa Historical Society – contact Olive Lee 705-458-9971

teddylee1@rogers.com

Meet at Thornton Library fourth Saturday of the month except July, August and December – 1:30 p.m.

Friends of Historic Fort Willow – contact Gord Hanson

fortwillow.com

Friends of The OPP Museum – contact Ellen Blaubergs

705-330-4178

support@oppmuseumfriends.ca

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

Jan. 9 – Show and Share

Huron Museum Huron Ouendat Village

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

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 Ninette Gyrody

Meet on the 3rd floor of the Orillia Museum of Art & History, 30 Peter Street South. – 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 20 – Bob Bowles – The Kings and Queens of England and their lasting effects on Canada

Feb. 17 – Janie Cooper-Wilson – celebrate Black History Month

Mar. 16 – Professor Michael Stevenson – British philosopher and social critic Bertrand Russell

Orillia Museum of Art and History

30 Peter Street South, Orillia – 705-326-2159

www.orilliamuseum.org

to Dec. 26 – touch – 400 year anniversary of Samuel de Champlain's travels through Huronia, their context and influence

to Jan. 10 – The Man in the Little Black Dress

to Feb. 2 – OMAH High School Art Show

Penetanguishene Centennial Museum and Archives – contact Nicole Jackson

13 Burke St. at Beck Blvd.

Call 705-549-2150

www.pencenmuseum.com

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)

Simcoe County Museum – contact Kelley Swift-Jones

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

Dec. 19 - Jan. 3 – Visitors can learn about traditions that include six candles glowing and a spider in a pine tree. Programs are available Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., except for the days the Museum is closed. Activities are included with regular Museum admission. For more information, please visit the Museum website.

Stayner Heritage Society – contact Dorothy Millsap

www.staynerheritagesociety.com
705-428-2540

Tecumseth & West Gwillimbury Historical Society – contact Patricia Blackstock

Meet at Tec We Gwill Hall, Newton Robinson, 7:30 p.m.

Third Monday of the month January-May and September-November 416-247-6551