

# NEWSviews

*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.

## Annual General Meeting: May 31, 2016

SCHA celebrated yet another successful AGM in Midhurst. We welcome our newest member society, the Barrie Historical Archive. Below, SCHA president Earl Elliott presents Travis Doucette and Deb Exel of the Archive with a cheque to support their work.



Our speaker for the evening, author Tom Villemaire, (pictured below) informed and entertained with his topic of *Colossal Canadian Failures*, the title of his lighthearted book.



Earl Elliott reflected on the contributions of two of the SCHA's past presidents who passed away this year. Helen Coutt's obituary appeared in the Winter 2015 issue of *News and Views*. The following is a memoriam for Brian Baker, provided by members of the Innisfil Historical Society and an article Josephine Boos wrote many years ago.

Arriving from England in 1947, Brian was raised on his family's dairy farm on the 5<sup>th</sup> concession in Innisfil. At an early

age, Brian developed a keen interest in local history which blossomed into a writing career spanning decades. In 1961, he began a column in the Barrie Examiner called *Rural Routes*.

Brian dropped by with his negatives and typewritten story for his column weekly. He always had something interesting and a bright story and a laugh about some current happening in his life. Readers loved the column too. He wrote about subjects as varied as wildlife and plants, the changing seasons, hiking on the Bruce and Ganaraska trails, cadging a lift on a railway train, even poking around the remains of the Hog's Bay Trestle (He may have kept a little piece of the bridge, scavenged from the demolition site).

His photos shone a light on people and places from across the region. Sometimes they featured his son Jimmy, occasionally his wife Marg, and many times one of the succession of dogs in whose company he also revelled.

Brian often said that the best ideas for his newspaper stories would come to him while milking the cows on his Innisfil dairy farm. And he was always amazed at how some of his most popular columns were the ones that "were about nothing, really." There were stories that painted pictures about daily life on the farm and around his neighbourhood; they weren't news stories but they were little glimpses of life that truly resonated with all his readers.

Brian served as SCHA president from 1992-97 and was a member for decades. The SCHA provided a donation to St. John's Ambulance in Brian's memory.

## SCHA 2016 Schedule

**Plans for the fall will be in the Fall issue of *News and Views* available in September.**

## Sir John A Dinner celebration

by Donald Macdonald

After eighteen years of fine food in good company and a captivating speaker on a cold Saturday night in early January, the Sir John A. Macdonald celebration dinner has become both a tradition in Orillia and a continuing source of support for the Orillia Museum of Art & History (OMAH).

Pictured are Wally Bremner, Al Hutchings, Donald Macdonald, and Cheryl Behan of the dinner committee recently sharing the good news with Daphne Mainprize, chair of the Board of Directors for OMAH and Ninette Gyorody, executive director of OMAH, that the 2016 dinner generated \$5500.00 in surplus

funds for use by OMAH in its programs and activities that so benefit our community. Part of this surplus comes from the ticket sales to the sold out event, but it also highlights the largesse and community spirit of the sponsors of the celebration: C E (Ted) Burton Inc., John Mayo, Thor Motors, Mundell Funeral Home Ltd., Davenport Subaru of Orillia, Ron Johnston Insurance Ltd., Ellis Hearing Aid Service Inc., and The Shock Doctors.

The dinner committee is already hard at work on next year's dinner to be held on Saturday, January 14, 2017, when there will be a special speaker to coincide with the start of the sesquicentennial of the Confederation of Canada and that of the City of Orillia.

**Governor General's History Awards for Excellence**  
The Award's application deadline is July 15, 2016. The Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Community Programming recognizes innovative

projects that promote and encourage community engagement in history. Eligible projects include exhibits, preservation or restoration initiatives, oral histories, special events, or any

**Community Programming**  
other type of community programming. Projects should be completed within the past 18 months of the award deadline. Learn more at <https://can-his.fluidreview.com/>



*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, President

705-734-9808 [earl.elliott@rogers.com](mailto:earl.elliott@rogers.com)

Donna Wice, Vice President

705-436-2578 [mdwice@sympatico.ca](mailto:mdwice@sympatico.ca)

Gord Harris, Treasurer

705-739-7649 [gordon.harris67@gmail.com](mailto:gordon.harris67@gmail.com)

Ardis Harris, Corresponding Secretary

705-739-7649 [ardis.harris@gmail.com](mailto:ardis.harris@gmail.com)

For Membership Information, contact

Earl Elliott

705-734-9808 [earl.elliott@rogers.com](mailto: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](mailto:mark.jill@sympatico.ca).

## 2016 HERITAGE DAY SUNDAY, JULY 17, 2016 10:30 A.M - 4:00 PM

**Outdoor Hymn Sing and Interdenominational Service at 10:45 A.M.**  
*(Bring your own lawn chair)*

**BBQ Lunch, Afternoon Tea, Musical Entertainment**

**Silent Auction, Demonstrations, Displays and much more summer fun!**

Admission is by donation - All donations, BBQ lunch, Gift Shop sales, and Silent Auction proceeds help the Museum continue to grow!

We will be unveiling the newly restored Vic Connor's MB (My Boat – a wonderful vessel with a great local history) and one of our latest acquisitions – a Leatherdale Doctor's Carriage – will also be on display. Our silent auction fundraiser theme is “Homemade and Handmade” with a focus on items produced by our members and supporters.

Culinary historian Dorothy Duncan will be speaking about heritage foods (and providing samples); fly fisherman David Parker will be demonstrating this unique art in the Coldwater River that runs behind our Museum. and musician Dylan Lock (he is really good!) will entertain us.

Coldwater Canadiana Heritage Museum 1474 Woodrow Rd. (at Hwy 12) Coldwater, ON L0K 1E0  
[www.coldwatermuseum.com](http://www.coldwatermuseum.com)

### **Devon Tea and Tours of the Museum**

You are invited to the Museum for Devon Tea. Every Wednesday in June, July and August from 1-4 p.m. the main homestead building will be turned into a Tea Room. No reservations required. Special presentations have been scheduled every Wednesday.

### **Coldwater Steampunk Festival**

Aug. 4: 6-8 p.m. Vintage Car Show  
Aug. 5: 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Artists Flea Market  
Aug. 6: 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Heritage Performers, Artisan market, Costume Contest and more

Devon Teas are also available during opening hours Monday through Saturday, in the Maime Gray Tea Room and Gift Shop.

Self guided and guided tours upon request are available for the Coldwater Canadiana Heritage Museum.

The renowned Coldwater Steampunk Festival is held annually in the village of Coldwater.  
Three Locations: Canadiana Museum, Heritage Mill and Coldwater Road.

Please pre-book group tours using the contact form on the website at [www.coldwatermuseum.com](http://www.coldwatermuseum.com).

For those visitors who prefer to tour the site on their own, there is a self-guided booklet available from the Museum. Tour cost is by donation.

Please visit [steampunkfestivalcoldwater.webs.com](http://steampunkfestivalcoldwater.webs.com) or contact Suzy Burtenshaw [szybrtnshw66@gmail.com](mailto:szybrtnshw66@gmail.com) or Tel: 705-715-6950

## Congratulations to Dr. Daniel Byers!

Local historian, university professor, and SCHA Executive member Dr. Daniel Byers recently celebrated the publication of his book, *Zombie Army: The Canadian Army and the Conscription in the Second World War*.

### **From the publisher, UBC Press:**

*Zombie Army* tells the story of Canada's Second World War military conscripts: reluctant soldiers pejoratively referred to as "zombies" for their perceived similarity to the mindless movie monsters of the 1930s. As Byers argues, although conscripts were only liable for home defence, they also soon came to be a steady source of recruits for active duty overseas.

While Canadian generals were criticized for championing an overseas army too large to maintain through voluntary enlistment, inevitably leading to calls to send conscripts to Europe and a political crisis that almost tore apart the federal government, until now there has been little satisfactory explanation for why military leaders



pushed for (and politicians accepted) such a sizeable overseas force.

In the first full-length book on the subject in almost forty years, Byers combines underused and newly discovered records to argue that although conscripts were only liable for home defence, they soon became a steady source of recruits from which the army found volunteers to serve overseas. He also challenges the traditional nationalist-dominated impression that Quebec participated only grudgingly in the war.

### **Reviews**

"Under Canada's National Resources Mobilization Act of 1940, thousands of men were forced to serve their country. Byers ably brings to life the story of these conscripts, who they were, where they came from, and what happened to those who served and those who refused to do so."

J.L. Granatstein, author of *The Weight of Command: Voices of Canada's Second World War Generals and Those Who Knew Them*

"*Zombie Army* is a masterful account of compulsory military service during the Second World War. Byers skilfully links voluntarism with compulsion, home front to battle front, and political strategy to war fighting."

Serge Durflinger, author of *Fighting from Home: The Second World War in Verdun, Quebec*

Orders can be placed online at  
[http://www.ubcpress.ca/search/title\\_book.asp?BookID=299175030](http://www.ubcpress.ca/search/title_book.asp?BookID=299175030)

## Hello Bickerstaff and Goodbye O.D.C.V.I.

Come in and see OMAH's two new exhibitions featuring artefacts from our permanent collection! Both are on display until July 17.

Hello Bickerstaff is now on display in the Lounge Gallery and provides a sneak peak of one of OMAH's newest collections, a series of pen and ink drawings created by local artist Don Evans, aka Isaac Bickerstaff. This exhibition features highlights from Bickerstaff's career with cartoons from *The Orillia Sun*, *MacLean's Magazine*, *What's the Difference: A comparison of Canadians and American*, and

Bickerstaff's illustrations from the bestselling book, *Canajan Eh?*

OMAH is saying goodbye to O.D.C.V.I., Orillia's oldest high school, with an exhibition that features photographs, trophies and uniforms that were donated to

OMAH's permanent collection prior to O.D.C.V.I closing its doors in 2016. Over its 138 years, the Orillia District Collegiate and Vocational Institute (O.D.C.V.I) has rebuilt, expanded, and seen many notable graduates walk through its doors.



## IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK:



### THE ORO AFRICAN CHURCH

APRIL 30 TO SEPTEMBER 18

*If These Walls Could Talk: The Oro African Church* tells the story of the Oro African Episcopal Methodist Church National Historic Site, the African-Canadian settlers who originally built the church, and efforts by residents and governments of the Township of Oro (later Oro-Medonte) and the County of Simcoe to preserve the site since the 1940s.

The Oro African Church was built by African-Canadian pioneers who were settled in Oro Township by the government of Upper Canada (what is now Ontario) between 1819 and 1831. They were among the first agricultural settlers to colonize the area. Some of the African-Canadian settlers had fought during the War of 1812 in an all-black militia regiment called Runchey's Coloured Corps; during the Rebellion of 1837, others volunteered to help defeat William Lyon Mackenzie and his rebels. Some of the African-Canadian settler families remained in Oro Township

originally been established by African-American Methodists in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Located roughly at the center of the area inhabited by African-Canadian settlers, at the intersection of what is now the 3<sup>rd</sup> Line of Oro-Medonte and Simcoe County Road 11, the Oro African Church remained a hub of the local African-Canadian community until as late as 1930.

By the 1940s, however, the church had been abandoned and was at risk of collapsing. In response, notable Oro residents, including a former premier of Ontario, a retired early professor of psychology, a local school teacher, and members of the local Women's Institutes successfully lobbied the Township and County governments to save the building. Since then, the Township and the County have continued to maintain and improve the site, including major repairs to the church after it was attacked in 1981 by vandals in stolen

for as many as three generations before their community ultimately and mysteriously disappeared.

During the late 1840s, Oro Township's African-Canadian community came together to construct a church belonging to the African Methodist Episcopal denomination, which had

dump trucks, and successfully lobbying the federal government to have the church declared a National Historic Site in 2000. Since 1949, the Township has also helped organize periodic anniversary services at the church, which have been attended by notable provincial and federal politicians and African-Canadian leaders.

The exhibition will take place around the culmination of the latest effort by local residents and governments to preserve the site, when the church is expected to reopen to the public following last year's fundraising campaign by the Township of Oro-Medonte and a major restoration of the site funded by the Township, County, the Province of Ontario, Parks Canada, and private donations from across North America.

By focusing on the church itself, *If These Walls Could Talk: The Oro African Church* will use artefacts loaned from the Township of Oro-Medonte, the Simcoe County Museum and Archives, and descendants of the African-Canadian settlers to tell the story of the church and the people who built, worshipped, and were buried at it. Please join us in celebrating this ongoing story and the conclusion of its latest chapter.

This exhibition was developed by The Orillia Museum of Art and History (OMAH), in partnership with the Township of Oro-Medonte, the County of Simcoe, Simcoe County Historical Association and the Vaughan African-Canadian Association.

An exhibit catalogue is for sale at OMAH's gift shop for \$10.

# C O M I N G

*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

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## Barrie Historical Archive – contact

**Deb Exel** barriearchive@gmail.com  
barriearchive.ca

**Sept. 21** - Launch Event: Mayor's Seat  
– 7 p.m. – see website for tickets and  
details

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## Barrie Historical Association – contact **Mark Fisher**

[www.barriehistorical.com](http://www.barriehistorical.com)

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## Coldwater Canadiana Heritage Museum

1474 Woodrow Road, Coldwater  
[www.coldwatermuseum.com](http://www.coldwatermuseum.com)

**July 17** – Heritage Day – see page 3  
for details

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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](http://www.historicallyspeakingcdhs.ca)

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## Essa Historical Society – contact

**Olive Lee** 705-458-9971  
[teddylee1@rogers.com](mailto:teddylee1@rogers.com)

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

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## Friends of Historic Fort Willow – contact **Gord Hanson** [fortwillow.com](http://fortwillow.com)

**July 23-24** – Blacksmithing Course

Cost \$400 – contact Al Bristow at  
[drgnfly@vianet.ca](mailto:drgnfly@vianet.ca)

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## Friends of The OPP Museum – contact **Dave Osborne**

705-330-4178  
[support@oppmuseumfriends.ca](mailto:support@oppmuseumfriends.ca)  
[www.oppmuseumfriends.ca](http://www oppmuseumfriends.ca)

**Sept. 9** – Pedal and Run for the Past  
fundraiser in Midland – see page 4 of  
Spring issue

# E V E N T S

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## MuseumGenealogical Society – contact **Nancy Leveque**

Meet at Church of Jesus Christ of  
Latter-Day Saints 79 Ferris Lane, Barrie  
– 2:00 p.m. [www.simcoebogs.com](http://www.simcoebogs.com)

**Sept. 10** – TBA

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## Huronia Museum Huron Ouendat Village

549 Little Lake Park Road, Midland –  
705-526-2844  
[www.huroniamuseum.com](http://www.huroniamuseum.com)

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## Innisfil Historical Society – contact **Donna Wice**

Meet at Knock Community Centre, 10<sup>th</sup>  
SR at 9<sup>th</sup> Line, Innisfil – 2:00 p.m.  
[www.innisfilhistorical.ca](http://www.innisfilhistorical.ca)

**Sept. 17** – Lori Oschefski – British  
Home Children

**Oct. 15** – Innisfil Old Boys Panel –  
Growing up in Belle Ewert and Lefroy

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

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

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## Orillia History Speaker Series – contact **Ninette Gyorody**

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

**Oct. 19** – Rusty Russell – The  
cancellation of the Avro Arrow – this  
year's speakers will honour the 150<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary of Orillia and Canada

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## Orillia Museum of Art and History

30 Peter Street South, Orillia –  
705-326-2159 [www.orilliamuseum.org](http://www.orilliamuseum.org)

**to July 17** – Hello Bickerstaff and  
Goodbye O.D.C.V.I.

**to Sept. 18** – If These Walls Could  
Talk: The Oro African Church  
See page 5 for details

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

13 Burke St. at Beck Blvd.  
Call 705-549-2150  
[www.pencenmuseum.com](http://www.pencenmuseum.com)

**to June 29** – P.S.S. Remembers  
Exhibit

**June 30-August 31** – Archives of  
Ontario Tourism Exhibit

**July 1** – Events 11-6

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## Ramara Historical Society – contact **Cathy Westcott**

[westcott.cathy963@gmail.com](mailto: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)

**Aug. 18** – Summer Potluck – location  
TBA

**Sept. 15** – Ken Jones – History of  
Bayshore Village

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

1151 Highway 26, Midhurst –  
705-728-3721 [museum.simcoe.ca](http://museum.simcoe.ca)

**July 3-Aug. 21** – Summer Sundays –  
1:4:30

**July 5-Aug. 30** – Museum After Hours  
– 7-9

**Aug. 28** – Savour Simcoe – Food  
Tasting Event

**Sept. 16-18** – Quilt, Rug & Craft Fair

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## Stayner Heritage Society – contact **Dorothy Millsap**

[www.staynerheritagesociety.com](http://www.staynerheritagesociety.com)  
705-428-2540

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## 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