

# NEWS and views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association

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

## Our Annual General Meeting – May 17, 2005

Once again, our membership enjoyed an excellent meal, followed by a succinct annual meeting, including reception of committee and financial reports and election of the executive. We are pleased to announce that all members of the board but one chose to return to their posts. Mark Fisher will take on the job of Second Vice President beginning this fall replacing Susan Downs who has served with such grace and dedication for many years in this role. Thank you Susan, and welcome Mark!

At the Annual General Meeting, the Andrew Hunter Prize for university-level essays written on a Simcoe County topic was awarded. This year, the selection panel, consisting of Christina Austin, MA, Ellen Millar, MLS, and Jill Hynes, MA selected both a first prize winner and

a runner up. Both recipients are students of the History Department of Laurentian at Georgian in Barrie.

Kate Morris won the \$750 first prize for her paper entitled, *Noble or Savage? An analysis of historical native stereotyping*. Virginia Morrow received the \$250 prize for her work, *Women's Life in 19th Century Simcoe County: A comparison to the status of women in New France*. Both scholars presented well researched, unique topics for the competition.

For the remainder of the evening, we were enveloped in the early life of Madge Watt as Dr. Linda Ambrose, Chair of the Department of History at Laurentian University, shared some of the intimate details of her findings on this Simcoe County native daughter. Please see page 2 for details.



From left to right:

Virginia Morrow, Andrew Hunter second prize recipient, Dr. Linda Ambrose of Laurentian University, Instructor Marty Wood of Laurentian at Georgian, and Kate Morris, Andrew Hunter first prize winner for 2005.

## Dr. Linda Ambrose presents Madge Watt

by Ellen Millar

Currently, Dr. Ambrose is working on a biography of Margaret Robertson Watt, and considered titling her AGM speech “Simcoe County Girl Makes Good”. Dr. Ambrose prefaced the core of her talk with an overview of her subject’s background.

Madge Watt was born in Collingwood in 1868, and died in Montreal in 1948. She was at the helm when the Associated Country Women of the World was organized in 1933. In 1890 she was the first woman to graduate from the University of Toronto with a Masters Degree. After graduation, Madge taught at Parkdale Collegiate, a career which was short-lived.

Throughout her years at the University, as well as at Parkdale, Madge was a prolific writer. She contributed articles to the University’s *Varsity*, as well as many Toronto newspapers, including the *Globe*. Early in her career, Madge was appointed editor of the *Ladies’ Pictorial Weekly*, which had a circulation of 30,000. Following this experience, Madge was given the job of Women’s Editor for *Leslie’s Illustrated Weekly* in New York. According to a Toronto newspaper, Miss Robertson had a “high literary reputation”.

There are currently three approaches to historical biographies: first, worthiness; second, understanding of the context of the times; and third, the theory of the performed self.

Dr. Ambrose has selected the third approach for her study of Madge. She believes that Madge was a different type of writer at each stage of her writing career: as a student, journalist, and then a married woman with an international reputation.

Madge’s early works were written under the name “Gretta”. Dr. Ambrose gives Anita Miles of the Collingwood Museum the credit for confirming this nom-de-plume; in her own words, “Anita Miles is my hero”. While going through some acquisitions, Anita realized that the scrapbook she held was full of newspaper clippings by or about Margaret Robertson Watt, and by “Gretta”. Between them, Anita and Dr. Ambrose determined that the scrapbook had been compiled by Henry Robertson, a prominent Collingwood lawyer, and proud father.

Dr. Ambrose believes there to be three distinct periods in Margaret Robertson Watt’s writing career. She stated that, for the most part, Margaret Robertson Watt was a “New Woman”. Generally, a “New Woman” believed four things: 1) that women should have access to a higher education, 2) that women should have access to careers of their choice, 3) that women should take part in active sporting events, and 4) that the traditional definition of marriage was not necessarily good for a woman. Madge graduated with two degrees from the University of Toronto, worked as a journalist, and was active in a variety of sports. But on the fourth issue, Madge maintained a conservative view.

As a writer, Madge was most prolific during her career as a journalist. As well as writing literary reviews for *Saturday Night*, she wrote a series of columns for the *Globe*. One series, entitled “By the Fireside”, was about women and careers, and included articles on phrenology and appropriate career choices. Madge also wrote ten articles on “Sports for Women”, which were syndicated.

She also wrote short stories for the commercialized fiction market. Madge used humour to spread her feminist views on romance, engagement, and the power of women in love and marriage.

Madge was certainly not against the institution of marriage; in December 1893 she married Dr. Alfred Tennyson Watt and moved to British Columbia. The couple entered into the society life of Victoria for three years, and then Dr. Watt was appointed inspector of quarantines for British Columbia at William Head. From there Madge continued to be active in society and on the lecture circuit. As well, Madge was the book review editor for the *Victoria Times*.

As a married woman, Madge continued to promote women’s education, careers and sports, but she refused to entertain notions of marriage outside her own views of church or civil ceremonies based on Christian tradition.

After the death of Alfred Watt, Madge and her two sons moved to England. While there, Madge became involved in the affairs of rural woman, and actively promoted the contributions they could make to the war effort.

Dr. Ambrose has discovered that the theory of the “performed self” is very appropriate for a study of Margaret Robertson Watt. “Gretta” was a radical co-ed at the University of Toronto; Madge Watt was a savvy journalist; and, Mrs. Alfred Watt was a working mother. The three selves had similar characteristics, but each reflects distinct stages of the writer’s career.

## President's Message

In addition to holding public meetings, supporting events like the Historica Heritage Fair, and assisting in the erection of historic plaques, SCHA also contributes funds annually to worthy groups, institutions, and organizations.

One such project has been the authentic restoration of a Barrie Bell automobile. Approximately 40 vehicles were assembled in Barrie by the Barrie Carriage Company between 1916 and 1918. Only one Barrie Bell remains in existence. In fact, there are only two Bell automobiles left in the world today. The other is to be found in York, PA.

Recognizing the importance of restoring the vehicle, SCHA became an early financial supporter, donating \$1,500 to the Barrie Bell Restoration Committee over two years.

After almost a decade of persistence and dedication, the Committee completed the 1917 Bell in the fall of 2004. That October, the vehicle won first in its class in the prestigious Antique Automobile Club of America's Eastern Division Fall Meet at Hershey, PA.

For a first-time showing, this was a great accomplishment and speaks volumes for the care and expertise of this talented group of volunteers.

On June 4, the Committee formally transferred ownership of the Bell to the City of Barrie. Past Presidents Brian Baker and Doug Hamilton were on hand to represent SCHA. It was a very proud day for all concerned and SCHA is pleased to have been able to play a part in resurrecting a premier piece of Canadian automotive history.

Does your group have a project touching on the history of Simcoe County? Let us know how SCHA can help. The Barrie Bell is ample proof of what can be accomplished by volunteers working in partnership.

Have a great summer!

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## Historical Treasures at the Simcoe County Archives

by Virginia Morrow

The Simcoe County Archives is located on Highway #26, beside the Simcoe County Museum, and was opened in 1966. It was the first County archives in Ontario. There are many valuable resources stored there, for students, researchers, genealogists, and history enthusiasts. The archivists are all very helpful, and knowledgeable about what resources are there. They are fully prepared to explain to you how the archives work. There are many different finding aids, which assist researchers in finding useful information. A quick run through the descriptive finding aids can turn up potential resources that you would have never would have thought of on your own.

The archives houses an extensive map collection, much of which is part of the Norman Clarke Collection. Norman Clarke's family owned Clarke's Tannery, which had plants in Toronto and Barrie. Mr. Clarke was a member of various historical societies and travelled extensively.

While travelling, Mr. Clarke collected maps from all over the world. Many of them are of the Great Lakes area, with a concentration on seventeenth-century Huronia. Mr. Clarke researched about his maps and checked his references, to ensure that everything was correct. His notes are available to researchers, and are a valuable addition to the collection. Some of the maps are reproductions, many from the collection at the National Archives of Canada, but there are numerous originals as well. Mr. Clarke also made slides and took pictures of much of his collection. After his death, Mrs. Clarke donated the collection to the Simcoe County Archives, where they are preserved and able to be enjoyed by all.

The oldest map stored at the archives was created circa 1540, by Sebastian Munster, and is of the North Atlantic and Hudson Bay region. There is also a map of the world, created in 1608 by Mathias Quad, and a 1650 map by Nicolas Sanson, of North America. A map of New France, also

created by Sanson, in 1660, is one of the earliest Canadian maps in the collection. From the Simcoe County area, there is a surveyor's map of North Simcoe, created by J.G. Chewett and Thomas Ridout on February 12, 1808. Another interesting early map of the area is a surveyor's map of Penetanguishene Road, hand-drawn by Samuel Wilmot on October 23, 1811. That is just a small sampling of the many maps that are available at the archives.

The Archives also has information about buildings in Simcoe County, including the Wilson architectural drawings. There are plans from around the area, including the Bigwin Inn in Muskoka, and the Queen's Hotel, one of the beautiful landmark buildings in downtown Barrie.

Anyone with an interest in historical cartography or architectural drawings will find many interesting sources at the Simcoe County Archives, and there are many more hidden gems waiting to be used.

## Information Requests from Members and Readers

Re: Gunboats on the Great Lakes 1866-1868

My sister, Sandra M. MacDonald, and I are researching the history of three British gunboats stationed on the Great Lakes between 1866 and 1868 in the aftermath of the Fenian Invasion of 1866.

*HMG Heron* patrolled Lake Ontario; during the winters she was docked in Toronto.

*HMG Britomart* patrolled Lake Erie; during the winters she was docked in Dunnville.

*HMG Cherub* patrolled Lake Huron; during the winters she was docked in Goderich.

Although the crews saw no action during their two years in Ontario, the officers and men were very much involved in the social life of the communities they visited. They often hosted visitors aboard the gunboats, worshipped at local churches, participated in community events and celebrations. Some of the sailors ran afoul of the law and served time in local jails, but these were the exception. For the most part, the men of *Britomart*, *Cherub*, and *Heron* were welcome guests in the mid-Victorian towns they visited.

Sandra and I are planning to write a book on the social history relating to gunboats. Soundly researched and written in an entertaining style, the book will focus on the interaction of the officers and the crew with Canadians at a crucial point in our history, immediately before and after Confederation.

**We are looking for any information available on these boats, their crews, and their visits to various Canadian communities. Of particular interest are diaries and letters from this period; photographs of harbours or lighthouses as they looked in 1866-1868; as well as contemporary newspaper reports of village, township or county council reports relating to the gunboats.**

Romances probably developed between the men of the gunboats and local women, and we are also interested in any information about possible offspring.

These are the *approximate* number of days each gunboat spent in specific Ontario ports. Days when the boats were traveling between ports are not included in the count. The locations are listed in order of the most days spent in each place. While crew members would not have been allowed to leave the boats every day, they were granted leave on many occasions. (Specific information on when the boats were in each location, *as well as names of crew members*, can be provided via the e-mail address below.)

### Britomart

Dunnville - 535  
Port Dover - 90  
Port Stanley - 34  
Port Dalhousie (St. Catharines) - 10  
Chippawa (Niagara Falls) - 8  
Port Colborne - 7  
Frenchman's Creek (Niagara area) - 4  
Kingston - 3  
Fort Erie - 2  
Amherstburg - 2

### Cherub

Goderich - 597  
Prescott - 19  
Windsor - 14  
Collingwood - 5  
Sarnia - 5  
Port Stanley - 4  
Brockville - 3  
Bayfield - 2  
Kingston - 2  
Port Colborne - 2  
Southampton - 2  
Amherstburg - 1  
Niagara - 1  
Port Dalhousie (St. Catharines) - 1  
Sandwich - 1  
Whitby - 1

### Heron

Toronto - 647  
Kingston - 50  
Prescott - 19  
Niagara (on-the-Lake) - 10  
Port Dalhousie (St. Catharines) - 6  
Belleville - 4  
Brockville - 4  
Hamilton - 4  
Port Hope - 3  
Picton - 2  
Cornwall - 1  
Gananoque - 1

If you have any information, please contact Cheryl MacDonald, R.R. #2, Nanticoke, ON N0A 1L0, 905-776-2406 or [heronwood@execulink.com](mailto:heronwood@execulink.com).

Cordially,

Cheryl MacDonald

## Another Great Historica Fair at the Museum

Energy aplenty was available at the Historica Fair on Wednesday, April 27. The rain held off for the most part, and over 70 projects, contributed from ten different schools across the county competed for medals and awards for great achievements in historic learning and presentation.

Senior History students from Collingwood Collegiate Institute assisted members of the historical community in judging the projects. One National Fair delegate and four Provincial Fair delegates were chosen from the many exceptional entries. As well, six Laurier LaPierre medals and five Simcoe County Historical Association awards recognized exceptional projects from across the grade four through eight spectrum. The Hudson's Bay Company continued to supply the Explorers' Award for the best project on a Canadian explorer, and the Royal Bank of Canada sponsored the

Aboriginal Heritage Award for the best project on a topic covering Aboriginal history or heritage.



Jacquie Byers addresses the crowd and the award recipients at the conclusion of the Historica Fair.

Beyond the excitement of the awards ceremony, the students were treated to four different workshops provided throughout the museum grounds. The tales of Sir Sam Steele, told by the man himself, enthralled and entertained, while a group from Fort Willow provided a video on the history and development of the Nine

Mile Portage and the Fort. Inside the museum, the students experienced life in a long house and then pieced together a quilt for travelers on the Underground Railroad. This was a great day of honouring achievement and gaining a small picture of all that history can tell!

The students from Fort Willow Elementary try their hand with some Northwest Mounted Police weaponry after thrilling stories of daring deeds in the Yukon gold fields at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



## Orillia Museum of Art and History Update

by Dr. Richard Johnston

On Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, OMAH celebrated the 115<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary of Orillia native, and Group of Seven member, Franklin Carmichael. A festive affair took place at the Sir Sam Steele Building with a large birthday cake shared with everyone in attendance.

Carmichael is one of the first inductees into the Orillia Hall of Fame. As well, he is buried in Orillia at St. James Church cemetery.

As part of Museum Month for OMAH, Megan Bice, curator of the McMichael Gallery, gave a slide presentation lecture May 26<sup>th</sup> on Carmichael.



Megan Bice, left, chats with OMAH supporters Betty Wilkins and Peter Gill at the Carmichael Lecture at the new museum.

Lieutenant Governor James Bartleman officially opened OMAH on Friday evening May 6<sup>th</sup> with about

300 invited guests in attendance. Approximately two weeks earlier, a major downtown fire next door had threatened the very existence of the museum and the historic Sir Sam Steele Building. A brand new metal roof and a valiant attempt by the Orillia and area Fire Departments not only saved the building, but there was very little damage to the museum and the various exhibits including a recently loaned Franklin Carmichael.

All in all, May 2005 at the Orillia Museum of Art and History will always be a memorable month when Sir Sam "dodged a bullet"!

# Fort Willow Improvement Group

*Dedicated to the Preservation, Improvement, Restoration,  
and Promotion of the Fort Willow Heritage Site*

*Proud recipients of the 2002 Ontario Heritage Foundation Achievement Award*

Article No. 6 in a series for *News and Views*



## **Fort Willow: The McDouall Expedition of 1814: concluded**

by Keith H.J. Bacon

In the previous (fifth) article in this series I covered the McDouall Relief Expedition as it passed through Fort Willow on the way to relieve Michilimackinac.

This article features a military letter, a copy of which was found in the Simcoe County Archives, reporting the success of the expedition to the government in Britain.

Again try to take yourself back to the Spring of 1814 and imagine the difficulties of transmitting the letter and the time that it took to arrive at its destination by sailing ship from Quebec City to Britain.

**Extract from letter dated 18th May 1814, from General Prevost, Commander in Chief of British Forces in Canada, at Montreal, to the Right Honourable Earl Bathurst, British Secretary of State for War and the Colonies.**

My Lord,

I have great satisfaction in informing Your Lordship that Lt Col McDouall having constructed in the course of the winter on the Nottawasaga River thirty Batteaux of the largest class four of which have been armed with Cannonades he commenced descending that River with his flotilla to Lake Huron on his voyage to Michilmackinac on the 19<sup>th</sup> Ult with provisions, Naval Ordnance, Stores, and the reinforcements stated in the margin.

Royal Artillery

1 Non-Com Officer

10 Gunners

Royal Newfoundland

2 Captains

4 Subalterns

8 Sergeants

4 Drummers

120 R & File

Seamen

1 Lieutenant

20 Seamen

As it does not appear from any certain information which I have been able to obtain that the enemy have availed themselves of the protracted Winter in preparations for an attack upon His Majesty's possessions on Lake Huron in that an American Force has been pushed across Lake St Clair and up the St Clair River to intercept the reinforcements moving towards Mackinac from the Nottawasaga and the supplies which I have since forwarded by the Ottawa River, I encourage the hope that Lt Col McDouall has before this reached his Destination and placed the post out of all danger from the enemies views for its reduction.

(Signed) George Prevost

The above letter gives us a description of the expedition from the viewpoint of the Commander of British Forces in Canada. Some discrepancies in the various documents are inevitable. The departure date from Fort Willow of the 19th April vs Bulger's 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 30 boats vs Bulger's 29 are examples.

The expedition actually reached Michilimackinac on the 18<sup>th</sup> May, the day this letter was written.

Another two brief biographical notes may be appropriate here:

#### **The Right Honourable Earl Bathurst, Henry Bathurst, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl Bathurst**

- 1762 Born.
- 1783 - 1794 Member of Parliament for Cirencester, England.
- 1794 Succeeded to the Earldom.
- 1783 - 1789 Lord of the Admiralty.
- 1789 - 1791 Lord of the Treasury.
- 1793 - 1802 Commissioner of Board of Control for India.
- 1804 - 1812 President of the Board of Trade and Master of the Royal Mint.
- 1812 - 1827 **Secretary of State for War and the Colonies.**
- 1817 Invested as Knight of the Garter.
- 1828 - 1830 Lord President of the Council.
- 1834 Died in London, England.

#### **General George Prevost**

- 1767 Born in New Jersey.
- 1784 Entered British Army as Captain in 25<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot.
- 1794 - 1796 Commander on St Vincent in the West Indies.
- 1798 - 1802 Lt Governor of St Lucia.
- 1802 - 1805 Governor of Dominica.
- 1805 Created Baronet.
- 1808 Lt Governor of Nova Scotia.
- 1812 - 1815 **Governor General of Upper and Lower Canada and Commander of British Forces in North America. He was a suitable choice to take over the administration in Quebec as he spoke French and had Colonial Administration experience. As Governor he conciliated the good will of the French Canadians who had been roused to hostility by his predecessor Sir James Craig. He was held responsible for the failure to take Plattsburg NY in 1814 and recalled to England to face an inquiry in 1815.**

He died one week before the inquiry was scheduled to take place.

Sources for Biographical Notes:

*Macmillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography*

*Encyclopaedia Britannica*

The next article in this series will move us forward to 1815 when we review Commissariat Records of the supplies and equipment stored in transit at Fort Willow on their way North.

## Correspondence regarding Pioneer Papers

May 7, 2005

Dear Dr. Rudachyk and Ms. Millar,

I'm contacting you because we happened to come across the item 7.9 in your March Board of Directors Minutes (for the Simcoe County History Association) while we were researching on the web. [see 7.9 below]

From what was recorded there I get the impression that You (the board) were not over pleased that the *Pioneer Papers* was now in Public Domain and had been re-produced in both paper and CD format. We would (I believe) be the ones you were referring to who had made the CD format version available. If I may, I'd like to put the events leading up to that publication into context.

I had not heard of, or come across the *Pioneer Papers* until I saw a message on the Simcoe County genealogy list asking if anyone knew where a copy could be obtained. The individual said she had tried contacting your society, knowing that you had previously sold copies, but had received no reply. [Editor's note: upon investigation, there was in fact a reply that copies are no longer being produced by the SCHA at this time.] The only copy of the book she could find was one of the original publications and it was too expensive for her budget. Since filling such needs is one of our primary aims I decided to researched the situation, although I did not attempt to contact your society again in view of the lady's previous lack of success.

To cut a long story short, having assured myself that the copy of the book being offered for sale was an

original, would be in Public Domain, and that there was a reasonable chance that we could recover our costs, I purchased the book and produced the CD. The response to our making it available has been quite gratifying and in addition we have supplied retail copies to the Library and Archive Gift Shop in Penetanguishene and believe that they are also finding it to be quite well received.

Now, it is certainly not the intent of Archive CD Books Canada to "short change" or in any way cause harm to any of the many Canadian historical and genealogical societies. Just the opposite, we are anxious to work with them to further their aims, and we believe that we can do so to our mutual benefit. For instance, we would be more than happy to provide you with copies of our CD production of *Pioneer Papers* at our retail discount of 30% off our web site price. That would put your cost for the CD at \$19.60 Cdn. ea. plus taxes and shipping (at cost.) We do not impose any minimum quantities and our only condition would be that you are asked to agree not to retail to the general public at less than our web site price of \$28.00 ea. If you wished to make a special price for members of a closed group, i.e., members of your society, we would have no objection. The same conditions would also apply to any of the other nearly 2000 titles we have available in our on-line catalogue if your Society were interested.

We are aware that many Societies find themselves in a difficult financial situation in making reproductions of their holdings available because of the high cost of

the minimum quantities of more conventional paper publications. Our publication methodology allows us to serve low volume publication needs at a much more economical rate. Actually we prefer to work with societies and libraries in what we call a co-operative project where the library or society makes no contribution to the initial production costs at all.

This e-mail was not intended to be a "sales pitch" but I fear that is how it is turning out, so I will stop now and repeat the primary message that we regret if our publication of the *Pioneer Papers* has caused any "heart ache" within your association. It certainly was not our intention.

I would be more than happy to answer any question that may have been raised by the above.

Malcolm [Moody]

Archive CD Books Canada Inc.

Attn: Malcolm Moody - President

P.O. Box 11,

Manotick, Ontario, K4M 1A2, Canada.

phone: (613) 692-2667

e-mail: malcolm@archivecdbooks.ca

Canadian web site:

<http://www.archivecdbooks.ca>

*The 1974 edition of Pioneer Papers is available online at:*  
<http://www.ourroots.ca/e/toc.asp?id=2839>

Extract of Minutes from the SCHA Board Meeting of March 8, 2005:

### 7.9 Publications and Sales

Brad Rudachyk and Ellen Millar reported on the status of copyright on *Pioneer Papers*. From an examination of the *Copyright Act*, and recent changes to it, the Association can no longer claim sole copyright to *Pioneer Papers*. It has already been made available on-line, and a private entrepreneur has produced digital copies for sale.

## Great Variety for Tec We Gwil

by Helen Yielding

### THE EAGAN STORY: HISTORY OF A FAMILY

Nicholas Eagan probably had hopes for a bright future when he emigrated from Ireland in 1823 to the wilds of Upper Canada. That he succeeded is evident five generations later; his legacy in descendants, property and community still enlightens New Tecumseth.

Brothers Gerry and Pat Eagan traced their family in word, document and photo. They told of Nicholas' achievements in settling the land on Concession 3, building a brick house that still houses Eagans and raising a family, who in turn, raised families who farmed nearby. Mills in Keenansville and also on the home farm property were early businesses that prospered for a time. Electricity produced by the home millpond lit some of the homes in Tottenham in the 1890s.

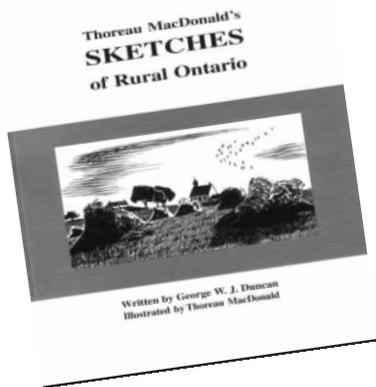
Education was a family value. Family members were and are teachers, entrepreneurs, business people, members of religious orders and progressive farmers. And at least two members, Gerry and Pat have a decided streak of Irish humour that sparkled through their personal stories. What a great evening of history and personalities!

### UNIQUE SKETCHES PROVIDE A UNIQUE PROGRAMME

Thoreau MacDonald – artist, book designer, farmer and early environmentalist – was an exceptional man. Son of prominent Group of Seven member, J.E.H. MacDonald, Thoreau realized in the

early 1930s that the simple rural life he lived in Thornhill was rapidly changing and that a record of this time needed to be preserved. His life and times, illustrated by his sketches was the subject of George Duncan's presentation to the Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Historical Society's meeting.

George Duncan is also an exceptional man. An architectural historian, writer and heritage planner, Duncan, in co-operation with Thoreau's great-niece, Susan MacDonald, has authored a book of interpretation and appreciation of some of Thoreau's evocative sketches of his surroundings. Visitors to Thornhill may see Thoreau's restored home and property, Four Elms, at 121 Centre St. and delight in the few remaining buildings and places that Thoreau so lovingly captured with his art.



Copies of Duncan's charming book, *Thoreau MacDonald's Sketches of Rural Ontario*, are published by The Ontario Historical Society and may be purchased through that organization.

### NAMES AND PLACES REFLECT LOCAL HISTORY

What's in a name? A great deal of history, according to writer and local historian Dorothy Cilipka. As a Bradford resident, Ms. Cilipka has a keen interest about the names of hamlets and villages in West Gwillimbury and New Tecumseth and she has researched the reasons for such names.

Early settlements were often named after founding families such as Fennel's Corners or Thompsonville. Since many immigrants hailed from Ireland, there is no surprise that Irish Town, Tuam or Colgan reminded settlers of their origins. Mount Pleasant denoted a geographical formation, as did Clover Hill and on the local rivers, dammed for the building of mills, settlements bore the names of millers – for example, Nicolston Mills after the Nicol family and Scanlon Mills after the Scanlon family. As well, famous people were recognized in local place names. Tecumseth, a native who fought for the British, was a 1812-14 war hero and Major Holland, Surveyor General, laid out the lots in this part of Upper Canada. Sir Francis Bond Head, Lieutenant-Governor, during the 1837 rebellion, is forever remembered by the hamlet bearing his surname on Highway 27.

Wherever you live in this charming part of our country, there is an historical tie to the past that should be recognized and cherished. Her revised book, *Holland Marsh: Heart of Canada's Vegetable Industry* is available.

## An Open Letter to the Members of The Ontario Historical Society

Re: A Noble home, neglected,  
March 5th, 2005, *Toronto Star*

As representatives of The Ontario Historical Society (OHS), we read with concern Roberta Avery's article on the Banting Homestead in Alliston. The Ontario Historical Society is a non-profit corporation that was founded in 1888 and we are very proud of the work we do to preserve Ontario's heritage. We would like to clarify a few points concerning the homestead.

The life and work of Sir Frederick Banting is recognized at the Banting House (a National Historic site) in London, Ontario. The Banting Homestead in Alliston was the place of his birth, not his home. It is also important to point out that the actual structure that remains on the property was not the original home in which he was born; that structure was torn down in 1925 and rebuilt using some of the materials from the original home. When Edward Banting bequeathed this property to the OHS in 1998, it was, unfortunately, in a state of disrepair. The OHS has tried to maintain this property to the best of its ability, although, as a not-for-profit organization, it does not have

the necessary resources to do so fully. The OHS has also tried to obtain recognition of the site's historical significance from government agencies and other historical organizations. These attempts were unsuccessful.

Currently, we are working with the province and the municipality of New Tecumseth to find the best solution for the property. Our most recent proposal was to transfer the main house, all farm structures, and a substantial portion of the homestead land to the Sir Frederick Banting Legacy Foundation, once it has been fully incorporated into a not-for-profit corporation. This offer was not accepted. The proposal essentially offered to give the Legacy Foundation 20 acres around the house to establish a diabetic camp and education centre for children. The proposal also offered to give the foundation a considerable sum of money towards the start-up of this project and also to cover the cost of restoring the buildings. Under this agreement, the rest of the land would remain in the hands of the OHS.

The final point we would like you to appreciate is the spirit of Edward

Banting's original gift to the OHS. He bequeathed the property in good faith, acknowledging that part of it could be sold in the future. In large part, his gift reflected his belief in our Society's ongoing work in maintaining and preserving Ontario's history and heritage.

We are proud of the important role the OHS has played in Ontario's history. We sincerely hope Ontarians understand and recognize the challenges associated with maintaining historic properties and that they continue to support us as we search for a solution to honour the Edward Knight Banting Homestead appropriately while continuing to pursue our broader mission throughout this great province.

Sincerely,

The Ontario Historical Society  
Brian Osborne, President  
Chris Oslund, Chair, The Ontario  
Historical Society Foundation  
Patricia Neal, Executive Director

Reprinted from the *OHS Bulletin*,  
Issue 149, April 2005 published by  
the Ontario Historical Society.

## Barrie Historical Association News

Entering its tenth year of operation, the BHA held its Annual General Meeting and Dinner at the Alladin Banquet Hall in April. The speaker for the evening was Major-General Murray, one of the three top aides to General Wolfe during the English takeover of Quebec City and the battle on the Plains of Abraham. He set the historical record straight by explaining that it was he, and the other two aides, who suggested to

General Wolfe the strategies that saved the English forces from defeat and took Quebec City away from the French forces. All present enjoyed an enlightening evening.

The Executive members for 2005-2006 were elected.

Past President: Al Cuzen (after four years as President)

Co-Presidents: John Bearcroft and John Trott

First Vice President: Kathie Van Drie  
Second Vice President: Bill Packham  
Secretary: Janet Panting  
Treasurer: Jim Willis

### SCHA Memberships

Memberships for 2005 are still available. Rates are \$10/individual, \$12/family. Send dues to Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M 4S9.

## Fort Willow Activities

by Bernie Longson

After approximately ten years of work by the Fort Willow Improvement Group, the reconstruction work at Fort Willow has generally been completed for this phase. We now are moving in to an operational stage of maintenance, tour organizing and additional research, in regards to this fascinating site.

The buildings have been outlined, palisades constructed, shelters with picnic tables built, information kiosks and signage erected, washrooms fabricated and the parking lot expanded. Local trails have been improved, with the more notable Nine Mile Portage Hiking trail between Barrie and Fort Willow being opened last September.

Fort Willow is a favourite stop-off now, for visitors both locally and from abroad. As a self-guided tour site, it is not unusual to find many of the “Tilley Hat Crowd” of birders, hikers, historians, photographers and others, moving throughout the site at any given time.

From this location hikers can access the North Simcoe Rail Trail, the Ganaraska, Trans Canada, and the Nine Mile Portage hiking trails. Located on the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority’s Minesing Swamp or “Wetlands”, it is a great location to “Get Up Close And Personal” with nature.

We have been fortunate in hosting an archaeological class from St Joseph’s

High School in Barrie. The students will be using the Fort as a “Live” classroom for future training. Another class, from Barrie North Collegiate, is utilizing the remote location, to study the Monarch Butterfly count in the fall.

The Simcoe County Historical Association has been closely involved in our endeavours since we initially started reconstruction of the site in 1996, as an initiative of the Midhurst Historical Society. We are very appreciative of the ongoing financial support and encouragement that we have received from SCHA over these years.

Fort Willow is located at 2714 Grenfel Road, in Springwater Township.

## OGS Accomplishments

Congratulations to the Simcoe County Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society on the completion of the 1891 Personal Census for Simcoe County transcription project. Over 60 volunteers, working over a 16-month period, transcribed, input and proofread the 82,601 entries on the enumeration sheets. The results are now available in 22 volumes, one for each Simcoe County Township, with a few separate books for some of the larger towns, plus an index volume of the complete census. Similar to the 1861 Personal Census, this transcription project is also available on CD. Prices and a list of available volumes can be found online at [www.simcoebogs.com](http://www.simcoebogs.com).

Reprinted from the *SCAN Newsletter*, Volume 23, No.2, May 2005 published by the Simcoe County Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society.

## In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we report the death on May 10, 2005 of Josephine (Bunny) Hamilton, the beloved wife of 54 years of the Past President of the Simcoe County Historical Association, Doug Hamilton.

We extend our sincere sympathy to Doug, his three daughters, and their families.

Bunny attended many events at Historical Societies/Associations with Doug throughout Simcoe County over the years.



Simcoe County Historical  
Association

## Archive contact details

Recently, the phone numbers for the Simcoe County Archives became aligned with the switchboard system of the County Buildings. Please update your records accordingly.

Simcoe County Archives  
1149 Highway 26

RR2  
MINESING ON L0L 1Y2

Telephone: (705)726-9300 ext. 1287

Telephone: (905)729-2294 ext. 1287  
(Beeton area)

Fax: (705) 725-5341

Email: [archives@county.simcoe.on.ca](mailto:archives@county.simcoe.on.ca)

Visit our Website

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

## Museum on the Boyne Request for Information

by Rachelle Clayton

The Museum on the Boyne is presenting an exhibit through July called *Inns and Outs – Bars, Hotels and Inns in South Simcoe* in conjunction with the traveling exhibit *A Noble Experiment – A history of Temperance*. During the compilation of research for the exhibit, a list of inns and such from the early 1800s until 1910 was assembled. This is the beginning of a wonderful research

tool, especially if it can be linked to the existing stagecoach lines of the time. The list of historic refreshment houses is by no means complete and truly needs the help of our area historical societies and other representatives of the past.

At present, the chart records the name, address, date established and date demolished of each location. As well, the name of the original

proprietor, any known history and comments are included.

The list has been forwarded to a number of historical organizations throughout the county and is housed in the Research Room of the Museum on the Boyne. It is available to anyone wishing to see it in the hopes that more details can be added.

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## C O M I N G                      E V E N T S                      of our Member Societies

### Innisfil Historical Society – contact Ross Wallace

Meet at Knock Community Centre,  
10th SR at 9th Line, Innisfil – 2 p.m.

September 10 – Antique and  
Collectible Auction Sale Fundraiser

September 17 – Regular Meeting

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### Simcoe County Museum – contact Gloria Taylor

July 3 - August 21 – Summer  
Sundays from 1 - 4:30

September 16-18 – Simcoe County  
Quilt Rug and Craft Fair – \$4

### Museum on the Boyne – contact Rachelle Clayton

250 Fletcher Crescent, Alliston  
Call 435-0167

July 1 – Canada Day Celebrations

July 9 – Breakfast with the Birds

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### Huronia Museum Huron Ouendat Village – contact Jamie Hunter, curator

549 Little Lake Park Road, Midland  
Call 526-2844

### Orillia Museum of Art and History – contact Sim Salata

30 Peter Street South, Orillia  
Call 326-2159

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### Penetanguishene Centennial Museum and Archives

13 Burke St. at Beck Blvd.  
Call 549-2150

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**Visit a local museum  
this summer!**

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## Simcoe County Historical Association Executive

Brad Rudachyk, President	726-7380 rudachyk@allstream.net
Christina Austin, Vice President	733-7740 allcanadian_elliott@yahoo.com
Mark Fisher, Second Vice President	728-3825 mwfisher2@hotmail.com
Peter Wiseman, Treasurer	725-0224
Jill Hynes, Corresponding Secretary	739-6220 mark.jill@sympatico.ca
Ellen Millar, Recording Secretary	726-9300 ext. 1287 emillar@county.simcoe.on.ca

### For Membership Information, contact

Bill Packham, Membership Chair                      739-0906 wpackham2795@rogers.com

Please submit photos and articles regarding your projects, meetings and coming events. We would love to hear from you. Photos will be returned.

**Deadline for the next issue is August 20, 2005**

THE ONTARIO  
TRILLIUM FOUNDATION



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