

NEWS and views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association

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Visit our Website

www.simcoecountyhistory.ca



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

Change of Plans!

Please take note! Our April meeting venue and topic have been revised as we were unable to coordinate our meeting time with the availability of Shaw's Pancake House.

Instead, our own Ellen Millar, Assistant Archivist, will present an overview of the Simcoe County

Archives, including such points as their evolution as the County Archives and the newly-launched searchable descriptions database of their holdings.

Please plan to attend on Tuesday, April 15 at 7:30 p.m. at the Simcoe County Museum.

SCHA Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, May 20, 2008

Stevenson Farms, Essa Township

This year, we have a new venue for our Annual General Meeting. Our Director-at-Large, Stephen Milne, will be our host and speaker for this evening. We will enjoy a wonderful roast pig dinner at the Stevenson Farms property, the Bed and Breakfast owned by the Milnes. The Farms are not only their home and business, but also a remarkable part of their family history.

In 1832 William Stevenson and his young wife Elizabeth Pringle settled on these lands having come from the Edinburgh Scotland the same year. Their original log home was replaced in 1850 by a 12 room frame house which was later renovated in 1927 by their illustrious grandson Theodore Loblaw, the founder of the Loblaw grocery chain. The house became a seasonal family retreat for Loblaw. After Loblaw's untimely

death in 1933, the estate was purchased by William J. Wood who ran a successful dairy and livestock farm. The farm has since passed down through the family to its current owners, Stephen and Susanne Milne. Stephen is the the thrice great grandson of the Stevensons, and will speak to us about Loblaw: The Reluctant Grocery King from Stevenson Farms.

Tickets are available at our April meeting, by calling Brad Rudachyk at 726-7380, or by mail to SCHA, Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M 4S9. The cost is \$30 for members and \$35 for non-members.

If you wish to contribute to our Silent Auction fundraiser, please let us know by May 1st so we can arrange for pick up of your item.

For a look at this beautiful venue, visit <http://www.stevensonfarms.com>.

President's Message

This will be the last time that I have the honour and privilege of writing to you in *News and Views* as the President of SCHA. I will be stepping down at our annual general meeting this coming May. After careful consideration, I have concluded that the time is right for a change.

SCHA needs the energy, ideas, and direction of a new President. Much has been accomplished over the past few years. Much remains to be done, especially in the areas of

membership, fundraising, and programming.

It has been my privilege to work with an outstanding executive and board of directors. Their care and commitment to SCHA and the history and heritage of Simcoe County has been enthusiastic and unwavering. Thank you.

I would be remiss not to mention the support given to me by you, our members. I very much appreciate the confidence you have placed in me, having acclaimed my presidency at

every Annual General Meeting since 2002.

Of course, this is farewell, not goodbye. I look forward to continuing to serve SCHA however I might as Immediate Past President as well as assisting the editor of this very fine newsletter, if she will let me.

In closing, thank you, for the opportunity that you have given me to serve you as your President over these past six years.

From the SCHA By-Laws, May 2000

4. DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS

4.1 The PRESIDENT shall:

- a) provide positive leadership for the Association;
- b) preside at meetings of the Association;
- c) be an ex officio member of all committees;

d) prepare an agenda for meetings, in cooperation and consultation with the Corresponding Secretary.

4.2 The FIRST VICE PRESIDENT shall:

- a) have the powers and responsibilities of the President in absentia;
- b) accept and perform such lawful duties as the President requests or delegates.

At this time, both positions are without nominees for the coming year. Please forward names for consideration of these or any of the executive positions to the

SCHA Nominating Committee, Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M 4S9.

A copy of the full constitution and by-laws is available upon request.



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

THE ONTARIO
TRILLIUM FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION
TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO

Simcoe County Historical Association Executive

Brad Rudachyk, President	726-7380 rudachyk@rogers.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

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

You are invited to submit photos and articles regarding your historical happenings in Simcoe County. Photos will be returned.

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

Deadline for the next issue is May 25, 2008

Another Great Heritage Day Celebration with the SCHA



Dorothy Duncan, our guest speaker, prepares the day's culinary delights.



Peter Wiseman, above, perfects his whipping technique, while our cookie baking contest winner, Ellen Millar (second from right) is congratulated by judges Earl Elliott and Mark Fisher, as well as Dorothy Duncan.



Dorothy instructs the group on the fine points of pioneer desserts.



The crowd enjoys entertaining demonstrations, fine food, and tales of Kate Aitken.



Orillia History Committee

by Dr. Richard Johnston

Our 10th Annual Sir John A. Macdonald Dinner sold out again this past January 12th. Richard Gwyn, past chancellor of St. Jerome's College in Waterloo, and *Toronto Star* editorial writer gave an excellent talk on "Canadians: Who We're Not" and the need to celebrate our wonderful Canadian heritage. Gwyn pointed out that in the USA, there is rarely a major political speech that does not cite or quote Jefferson, Washington, Lincoln or Adams; whereas, in Canada, the opposite is true. As reported in the *Orillia Packet & Times*, Gwyn proposed that one way to pay more attention to our history would be to Canadianize the May 24th holiday by renaming it Macdonald

Day. This idea was met by applause from the audience.

Hugh Gainsford, again attending as a guest of honour, spoke as well about

the importance of teaching Canadian history in our schools. This was an appropriate challenge from the great grandson of Sir John A.

H u g h G a i n s f o r d (l e f t) shares a conversation with speaker R i c h a r d G w y n (c e n t r e) and Alan Ross (r i g h t) at the annual Sir John A. Macdonald dinner.



The Gwillim Group's Project: Unveiling June 8

by Barbara Verney

The Gwillim Group's project to honour Elizabeth Gwillim Simcoe is progressing well. The bronze statue is in place at the corner of John and Barrie (Yonge) streets.



On December 18th, 2007, we held the Dedication Ceremony. All of the committee members were present, plus members of Council, and the community. The sculptor, Brenda Wainman Goulet, is very knowledgeable and spoke passionately about her subject. The Rev. Terry Whitlam stressed the importance of the ceremony. Finally the statue was dedicated by Barbara Verney to the Town to celebrate its 150th Anniversary.



Above: The dedicated committee whose hard work has brought a beautiful piece of art and history to their community.



On Sunday, June 8th, 2008, there will be an Unveiling Ceremony. The Honourable David Onley, Lieutenant Governor, and his wife, Ruth Ann, will be the honoured guests. A large tent and seating for the dignitaries will be located in the Post Office parking lot. We have plans to have Welsh music, an honour guard from the Queen's York Rangers, and an Indian Blessing. Refreshments will be served.

Prize-winning Play Portrays Local History

by Helen Yielding

Oscar winners and the Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Historical Society members have much in common. In 1993 this Historical Society won a Dorothy Duncan Award for the production of a video on local history. Just last week news of another triumph in recorded history was made known; a play commissioned by this Society, written by playwright Dalene Flanagan, won a competition for new plays submitted to Theatre Aurora's Playwrights of Spring festival.

In 1927 the village of Beeton was the centre of a series of events that included thefts, a child's death from a

gunpowder explosion, a homicide, a mystery burglar and the regular disappearance of cattle and pigs from local farmers. An investigative Toronto newspaper reporter, Roy Greenaway, broke a story about cattle rustling in the Beeton area that led to the discovery of a connection among these events. Subsequently, a police investigation uncovered a bizarre plot which led to the biggest trial in Ontario's history at that time and the incarceration of several local citizens.

Flanagan's sensitive portrayal of the shock and shame this trial caused in the small community of Beeton is both powerful and instructive. Her

writing skills have earned her the prize of a professional production of her play at Theatre Aurora for a six-night run in April.

If you are interested in local history, good drama or just great entertainment, plan to see Flanagan's play, *The Rustling*, on any of the following dates: April 3, 5, 11, 16 and 18 at 8 p.m. and a matinee on April 13 at 2 p.m. Tickets are available by calling Theatre Aurora at 905-727-3669. The theatre is located at 150 Henderson Ave. in Aurora, just west of Yonge St. For more details, see www.theatreaurora.com

The SilverShoe Historical Society

by Jane Cooper-Wilson, Executive Director

Our Mission Statement:

“To research, locate, restore, preserve, protect, honor and embrace the final resting places and the legacy of our esteemed Ancestors, who sought refuge and a new beginning in the wilderness of Ontario.”

Our objective is to secure affiliation and incorporation with other recognized organizations to promote our collective cultural heritage and multiculturalism.

In doing so, the S.S.H.S. is willing to partner with other organizations to facilitate projects that will bring about increased public awareness regarding the extensive, diverse and, hitherto, unrecognized and unwritten or missing history of Simcoe County.

The summer months of 2007 marked a major milestone in Black History with the Bicentennial Celebration commemorating the abolition of The Atlantic Slave Trade. The SilverShoe Historical Society chose this historical year to incorporate under The Ontario Historical Society and to signal implementation of Phase 2 of the reconstruction work at the Bethel-Union Pioneer Cemetery and Burial Grounds Site in New Lowell.

The S.S.H.S.’s Incorporation under The Ontario Historical Society became a reality in the fall of 2007 and was followed shortly after with our successful application for a Roots of Freedom grant, offered by The Ontario Ministry of Civilization and Immigration and in partnership with The Emancipation Festival, Owen Sound Branch and The Township of Clearview. This is the first time since the S.S.H.S. was organized in 1997 that we have requested any form of Provincial funding. To date, we had been solely dependant on the kindness and indulgence of Clearview

Township officials and private donations to cover our operating expenses.

Reconstruction work at the Cemetery and Pre-Rebellion Burial Grounds must continue. Phase 2 involves a substantial escalation in expenses. Increasing our membership database and the implementation of a major fund raising drive will be our organization’s starting point toward resolution of this on-going problem.

Memberships are \$10/adult per year and Junior Members, under the age of 16 are free. An S.S.H.S. membership card provides the holder with an opportunity to assist in making some important history-making changes that will have a substantial impact on future generations and, to have a lot of fun during this wonderful learning experience.

Visitors are visibly moved when they experience the natural beauty and spirituality that surrounds them at Bethel-Union Pioneer Cemetery (formerly known as Sunnidale Union, Est. 1855). (Although the Cemetery was not officially registered until 1855, graves in the adjacent Burial Grounds date back prior to The 1837 Rebellion.) This Cemetery is unique, in that it is one of very few, if not the only interracial cemetery of its kind, during a period in history when the burial of Aborigines and people of African descent were segregated in this country. Although, racism was not unknown, for the most part, the various cultures lived in a symbiotic relationship that extended to many interracial marriages. Therefore, these hardy pioneers made multiculturalism, a way of life, long before the word became politically correct.

Our visitors have the opportunity to take a guided walking tour of the site, where they are able to witness:

1. The Mass Gravesite of numerous residents who died during the scourge of epidemics, during the late 19th century and in the early years of the 20th century.

2. Typical fugitive slave gravesites that were designed to prevent desecration by possible slave catchers following the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

3. The Ancestor Tree that is a natural symbol of the wide-ranging migration of the Freedom Seekers in Ontario.

When Phase 2 is completed in Spring, 2008, our visitors will also have the opportunity to take a Memorial Walk into the past. There they will be able to witness some of the devastation that beset the Cemetery Site, in the years prior to 1997, when the S.S.H.S. was formed to advocate and protect this historic treasure trove.

We have some wonderful events planned for the future. Our Annual Spring Clean-up is scheduled to begin at 8:00 a.m. on May 31, 2008. This year the clean-up will be quite extensive, as we are anticipating a wonderful attendance at our Juneteenth Memorial Candlelight Service and Grant Project Unveiling Ceremony on June 21, 2008. More details will be available in the June issue of *News and Views*.

To learn more about the S.S.H.S. contact us at 705-428-6391, email janiew100@yahoo.ca or visit our website at www.silvershoe.ca (the website is presently being updated).

You can mail your donations and/or membership fee to

The SilverShoe Historical Committee
c/o J. Cooper-Wilson
P.O. Box 1571
7269 Hwy. 26
Stayner, ON L0M 1S0

From the mailbag

“Heaven was the word for Canada” CFHA Spring Conference

Greetings,

On Saturday April 5, 2008, the Canadian Friends Historical Association (CFHA) will be hosting their spring conference entitled “Heaven was the name for Canada”: The experiences of free Blacks, escaped slaves and the Religious Society of Friends at the historic Yonge Street Meeting House in Newmarket, Ontario.

The conference is designed to bring together researchers, historians, and other interested parties from what have been two distinct fields of historical examination: inquiry into the abolition of slavery, and inquiry into the history of Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada, respectively, for a day of sharing and celebration.

Summer student position at Oro-Medonte Township

From the Editor: This is an excellent opportunity for any university-level history students you know. The Oro-Medonte History Association requested the creation of this position, and the Township complied.

POSITION TITLE:

Seasonal Historical Researcher

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA AND JOB DESCRIPTION STATEMENT:

The Seasonal Historical Researcher shall be responsible for the research and preparation of a Historical Report, scanning photos and documents and for the delivery of tours at the Oro African Church, National Historic Site.

REPORTS TO:

Manager of Recreation and Community Services

We are delighted to have as our keynote speaker Christopher Densmore, Curator at Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College, Additional confirmed speakers include Karolyn Smardz Frost, Executive Director of the Ontario Historical Society, Rosemary Sadlier, President Ontario Black History Society, Gary Pieters, Co-Chair Committee to Commemorate and Memorialize the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Afua Cooper, Project Advisor for the Ontario Bicentenary Exhibition. Related historical associations and groups will also be in attendance. Due to the size of the meeting house, participation will be limited to about 65 people.

While the Quaker involvement in the U.S. struggle for abolition and efforts

to assist slaves is widely acknowledged, the role played by the contemporary Canadian Friends is much less well known.

On behalf of the CFHA I would like to invite you and members of the Simcoe County Historical Association to attend.

Thank you for your time with regards to this matter and I look forward to your participation.

Regards,

Andrew Cresswell
Social Science Department Head
Humberview Secondary School
135 Kingsview Drive
Bolton, Ontario L7E 3V8

Phone: 905-857-0771 x574

Fax: 905-857-7772

Email: andrew.cresswell@peelsb.com

RESPONSIBILITIES:

a) Responsible for researching and generating a report on historic properties within the Township of Oro-Medonte boundaries, utilizing documentation found within the Municipal Administration Centre and the County of Simcoe Archives.

b) Responsible for the scanning of photos and documents contained in the Oro-Medonte History Association files stored at the Township of Oro-Medonte Administration Office and developing an artifact catalogue.

c) Perform other duties as may be assigned.

KNOWLEDGE:

a) University Student pursuing a degree in history;

b) Sound knowledge and experience with computer software applications;

c) Strong organizational and time management skills involving attention to multiple deadlines;

d) Excellent oral and written communication skills;

e) Must be willing to work flexible hours including evenings and weekends;

f) Must have own transportation and hold the appropriate motor vehicle license (G) classification as outlined by Government Regulations.

Please forward your resume to:

Mr. Shawn Binns, Manager of Recreation & Community Services
Township of Oro-Medonte
148 Line 7 South, Box 100
Oro, ON L0L 2X0

sbinns@oro-medonte.ca

Resumes should be submitted by April 18th at 4:30 p.m.

TecWeGwil Happenings

An Evening of Historical Riches

The members of the Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Historical Society are incredibly wealthy, not in the monetary sense, but in treasures of things and memories. Under the guidance of George Phillips, many members shared their wealth at the annual Show and Tell meeting.

For example, two individual photos, each displaying several famous Canadian citizens from the mid 1800s, were prized possessions of Bob Evans and Vera Stoddart. Stuart Calhoun dialed in a radio station on his 1925 receiver. A unique Canadian board game based on successful bombing missions from WW2 was a valued family artifact of Tim Orlik.

The display of an 1884 newspaper, complete with advertisements, brought comparison shopping to a new level. This particular newspaper was used as padding in the wedding photograph of Isabel Abbott's grandparents. American politics were implicit in a button embossed with "Billy Possum", probably a reference to the Taft vs. Roosevelt election. June Chamber's button collection is a wealth of information in many ways. As well, a wealth of talent and memory was evident in a model sailing vessel created by John Northwood in his Grade 7 manual training project. And 7 year-old Kent Chambers is finding value and enjoyment in the 1930s Hardy Boys series of novels.

Three members, Betty Anderson, Betsy Flood and Judy Breckles reminisced about past experiences with friends and family. Judy's rendition of her aunt's famous song was a charming addition to her story. A "share the wealth" evening was enjoyed by all.

The Andrew Hunter Prize 2008

The Andrew Hunter Prize is awarded annually for the best essay on the history of Simcoe County, Ontario, written in a course by an undergraduate student in any university or college. In this fifth year of the competition, we look forward to receiving many worthy entries.

Conditions: Entries must be undergraduate essays between 3,000 and 5,000 words in length on some aspect of the history of Simcoe County, Ontario, written in English or in French. The author must be a part-time or full-time undergraduate student in a degree program at an accredited university or college. The essay must have been written to meet the requirement of an undergraduate credit course during the 2007-2008 academic year. Entries become the property of the Simcoe County Historical Association and may be published as part of an essay collection.



Submissions: Entries shall be submitted no later than March 31, 2008 and will not be returned to the contestants. Essays must be typed in Times New Roman 12 point font, double spaced, and should not bear the instructor's comments or grade. Two copies must be provided. A cover sheet must list the author's name, address, phone number, status, school affiliation and department, and the name of the instructor for whom the paper was written.

Entries should be sent to:

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

Adjudication: Entries will be judged by a distinguished panel appointed by the Simcoe County Historical Association. The winners will be announced in early May, 2008 with the presentation of the prizes to take place at the Annual General Meeting.

Prize: There will be two prizes offered, one for \$750 and one for \$250, in Canadian funds. 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 award a prize.

Video of Town's History a Visual Treat

A little nostalgia and a lot of pride were reflected on the faces of the members of the Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Historical Society as they viewed a video produced by their Society in 1993. *New Tecumseth: The New Town with a Long Past* won an award from the Ontario Historical Society for its visual portrayal of local history. It

included some charming interviews with long-time citizens and a brief account of the history of each of the hamlets and towns within an engaging storyline narrated by Betty Anderson. Even though this production was released 15 years ago, the video is still fresh and entertaining and it was a great way to celebrate the Society's 30th birthday year. It was also a fitting programme for February – Ontario's Heritage Month.

COMING

Alliston Historical Society –
contact Jackie Baillie 705-435-
5626 or cknowles@rogers.com

Meet at Museum on the Boyne,
Fletcher Cres., Alliston every 2nd
Wednesday except July, Aug. &
Dec. – 7:30 p.m.

Barrie Historical Association –
contact Val Brucker

Meet at Barrie City Hall – 7:30
p.m.

Apr. 10 – AGM – Alladin Banquet
Hall, 41 Essa Road, 6:00 p.m.

May 8 – Mark Fisher – Sir James
Robert Gowan and the Gowan
family papers

**Collingwood and District
Historical Society** – contact Joan
Miller Leisure Time Club, 100
Minnesota Street, Collingwood –
7:00 p.m.

Apr. 7 – Suzanne Ferri, Curator of
the Blue Mountains, Craigeith
Heritage Depot – “The Mary Ward
and the Moberly Connection”

May 31 – House and Building Tour
– Visit six of Collingwood’s
historically and architecturally
interesting buildings

Essa Historical Society – contact
Olive Lee

Meet at Thornton Library – 1:30
p.m.

Mar. 22 – Annual Reports and
Show and Tell

Mar. 29 – Margaret Baker – United
Empire Loyalists

Genealogical Society –
contact Claudia McArthur

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

EVENTS

Apr. 12 – Rick Roberts –
Researching Canadian Military
Records using Online and
Traditional Resources

May 3 – Lady Tevoit – English
Parish Registers

June 7 – TBA

**Huron Museum Huron
Ouendat Village**

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

Apr. 26 – Heritage Dinner

Innisfil Historical Society –
contact Ross Wallace

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

Apr. 19 – Peter Dickey – Dickey
Bee Honey

Midhurst Historical Society –
contact Alice Mitchell

Meet at Midhurst Library, 12 Finlay
Mill Road – Call 726-5940

Apr. 14 – Rev. David Adams –
Genealogy

Museum on the Boyne –
contact Rachelle Clayton

250 Fletcher Crescent in Riverdale
Park, Alliston – Call 435-0167

**Orillia Museum of Art and
History monthly meeting**

Meet at St. Paul’s United Church,
Peter St. and Coldwater Rd., Orillia –
7:30 p.m.

Apr. 16 – Lloyd Johnston –
Blacksmithing

May 14 – Heather Kirk – Mazo de
la Roche

**Orillia Museum of Art and
History** 30 Peter Street South,
Orillia – Call 326-2159
www.orilliamuseum.org

of our Member Societies

to May 3 – Symbols of Canada:
The Paintings and Quilts of Ada
Bruce Torrance

Apr. 12 – 1 p.m. – Curator’s Talk

May 6-25 – 14th Annual High
School Student Exhibition

May 8 – Opening reception 6:30-
8:30p.m.

May 28-Aug. 3 – 3rd Annual ODAC
and OMAH All-Ontario Open
Juried Art Show

May 31 – Opening reception 7:00
p.m.

**Penetanguishene Centennial
Museum and Archives**

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

Mar. 22 – Easter Eggstravaganza –
1-3:30

May 3 – Genealogy Workshop – 9
a.m.-4 p.m. – \$30

May 17-June 15 – ROM Star Lab

Simcoe County Museum

1151 Highway 26, Midhurst –
Call 728-3721

Apr. 30 – Historica Fair

June 7-8 – Wheels and Tracks in
Motion – 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Tecumseth & West Gwillimbury
Historical Society** –
contact Helen Yielding

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

Call 905-775-7144 or 905-936-3659

Apr. 21 – Dalene Flanagan –
Beeton Rustlers play reading
See page 4 for performance details

May 19 – 30th Birthday Party

June 8 – Heritage Train Trip and
Picnic