

# NEWS and views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association

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

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

## Congratulations Beautiful Barrie

The SCHA is pleased to announce that our nomination of *Beautiful Barrie, The City and Its People: An Illustrated History of Barrie, Ontario*, for the Fred Landon Award was a success. The Award honours the best book on regional history in Ontario published in the past three years.

Our own president, B.E.S. Rudachyk, shares the honour with Su Murdoch and Kurt H. Schick. The authors noted: "We are pleased and honoured to be this year's recipient from among a number of worthy regional histories. It is always gratifying to be recognized by one's peers. We undertook this project to highlight the vital history of our city and the many and outstanding stories of its people. This prestigious award makes *Beautiful Barrie* an even greater ambassador for the city. We are gratified by the strong sales since the book was released in October 2005

and expect that with this award it will soon be sold out." (Copies are still available at local Coles, Page & Turners Barrie, Manticore Books Orillia, and the Simcoe County Museum.)

The Fred Landon Award citation states: "As befits a great city, *Beautiful Barrie* is a book well conceived and well executed. It traces the history of Barrie from earliest times through incorporation as a town in 1853 and as a city in 1959 to its sesquicentennial in 2003. It is comprehensive in historical portrayal, elegant in writing, lavish in illustration, and consummate in design. In addition to the photographs, both old and new, numerous maps and sidebars and a timetable of events at the foot of each page help to unfold the story of Barrie and its People."

Congratulations on receiving the recognition this great work deserves.



From left to right:  
Kurt Schick, designer;  
Su Murdoch, author;  
Rayner McCullough, material source and project supporter;  
Brad Rudachyk, author

## President's Message

There is a saying in the literacy training world: "each one teach one." I would like to adapt that somewhat, changing it to "each one reach one." For some time now, attendance at our regular public meetings has flagged somewhat. To be sure, we have a strong core of the stalwart faithful; but, we don't seem to be growing. Certainly, we are not keeping up with the county's surging population growth.

What can we do? Is it the quality and variety of our speakers? Is it the day and time? Is it the fact that we have been trying to move about the county for the past while? Is it that *News*

*and Views* does such a great job in keeping us well-informed? Is it the average age of our membership? Is it a combination of all of these factors?

We can play the guessing game from here to eternity. Certainly, if you have any ideas, we would love to receive them. But for now, I would like to issue the challenge of "each one reach one." Just by coming out to our public meetings and bringing a friend will more than double our attendance.

As Simcoe County continues to grow at record rates, the pressures on our scarce heritage resources will increase. We will be asked to do

more and more with less and less. Your Association needs to continue to position itself to be able to meet the undoubted challenges of the future. The more we are, the stronger we are, and the better we shall be able to continue our important work of Preserving the Past, In the Present for the Future.

So, before we retreat to our summer havens, let's all mark down the third Tuesday of September, October, November, March, April and May. I look forward to seeing you and your friend.

Have a happy and safe summer.

## 2007 Andrew Hunter Prize Recipients

As part of our Annual General Meeting, the Andrew Hunter Prize was awarded to first and second place winners this year. Tyler Currie of Mount Allison University received the \$750 award for his paper entitled, "The Demise of the Huron and the Dispersal of Huronia". Our \$250 prize winner was Jim Norton of Laurentian University at Georgian in Barrie. His paper "Local Boy Makes Good: A Biographical Glimpse of the Life of Arthur Lower" discussed a more contemporary topic. Virginia Morrow, last year's first prize recipient, was available to do the honours.

We look forward to the presentation of these two fine papers at our September meeting. The Andrew Hunter Prize encourages undergraduate research on topics of historical note in Simcoe County.



Last year's winner, Virginia Morrow, presents Jim Norton with his award.

## Simcoe County Historical Association Executive

Brad Rudachyk, President	726-7380 rudachyk@rogers.com
Mark Fisher, Second Vice President	728-3825 mwfisher2@hotmail.com
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## 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  
August 25, 2007**

## Historica Fair 2007

by Virginia Morrow

This year's Simcoe County Historica Fair was another great success. Held at the Simcoe County Museum on Wednesday, April 25, Historica Fair was a chance for students from grades four to eight to create and share projects relating to Canadian history.

The students make a display, incorporating many different types of media, such as models, video, costumes, etc. They also must be able to explain their projects and share their information with others, including the judges. Prior to the County fair, many of the attending schools held their own Historica Fairs where 1100 projects were showcased. Projects from each school were selected to be displayed and judged at the Regional Fair.

This was the best year yet for the Simcoe County Historica Fair in terms of participation. There were 143 students from 23 different schools, from the Simcoe County District School Board, the Kempenfelt Day School, and the Mnjikaning Kendaaswin Elementary School.



Students arrived and set their projects up. Then, they met for the opening ceremonies which were attended by several local politicians, including Tony Guergis, the Warden of Simcoe County. The City of Barrie's Town Crier, Steve Travers, also performed for the students (pictured above with the Warden).

After the opening ceremonies, half of the students returned to their projects for judging, while the other half attended a workshop by the Mnjikaning Cultural Department; then the two groups switched.



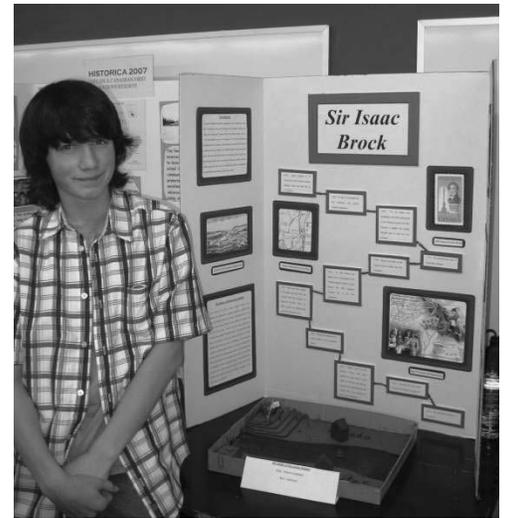
In the afternoon, the students were separated into small groups, and rotated to different workshops throughout the museum property. The workshops were presented by museums and organizations from throughout the county. The students all enjoyed the different activities, and were able to learn more about history while having fun.

Following the workshops, the students regrouped and attended the closing ceremonies for awards presentations. The projects were judged by students from Collingwood Collegiate Institute, who received training from the Gifted Resource Teachers of the Simcoe County District School Board.

Seven students (pictured right) represented Simcoe County at the Provincial Fair in Ottawa this past May. All participating students received medals in recognition of representation of their schools at the county fair; in all, nineteen students

received specific awards for their projects.

Carter Cairns (pictured below) will be representing Simcoe County at the National Historica Fair this July in Lethbridge, Alberta. He is a grade eight student at Innisfil Central Public School, and his project focused on Sir Isaac Brock.



Simcoe County Historica Fair 2007 was another huge success, thanks to the volunteers, teachers, parents, students, and sponsors. The Historica Fair is extremely grateful for the continued support and donations from the Simcoe County Historical Association. For more information, visit the following websites: <http://www.histori.ca/fairs> or <http://www.edselect.com/schistorica.htm>.



## SCHA Annual General Meeting - May 15, 2007

With the intention of keeping our membership interested, we attempt a new idea or two each year at the AGM. This year, we found a different venue, the Trillium Room at the Event Centre. As usual, 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 were re-elected to their posts. We look forward to working with Earl Elliott, our new membership chair. If you would like a copy of the annual report, please email the corresponding secretary at mark.jill@sympatico.ca (aka the editor).

As is our tradition 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 Ellen Millar,

MLS, and Jill Hynes, MA, chose both a first prize winner and a runner up. As noted on the second page of this issue, Tyler Currie and Jim Norton were our worthy recipients.

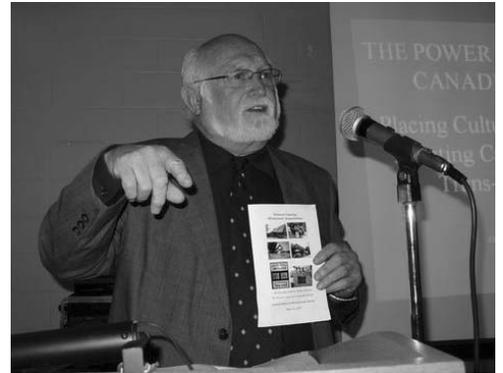
For the second year, a successful silent auction saw the exchange of many interesting pieces of merchandise among our members. Thanks to all those who donated, and even more thanks to those who put forward winning bids! Once again, this editor was foiled in her attempt to win the Millar fudge. I guess there's always next year!

Don Ross, of Manticore Books in Orillia, visited again with an astounding selection on his book table. Thanks for making the trip south Don!

For the remainder of the evening, we were visually and intellectually stimulated as Dr. Brian Osborne, past chair of the Ontario Historical Society and Professor Emeritus at Queen's University, shared some of

the intimate details of his research into the power of local history.

His dynamic presentation challenged the group to consider that all history is local; there is a constant struggle to maintain the importance and integrity of the past as memories fade and priorities shift.



His incredible collection of images, both Canadian and international, kept his listeners engaged throughout the presentation. As well, he related some unique stories that resounded with many of those present. Thanks, Dr. Osborne, for reminding us why we do what we do at SCHA.

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## Orillia Museum of Art and History Changes International Records

by Sim Salata

Orillia Museum of Art & History Director/Curator, Sim Salata, has succeeded in the first step toward righting an error in Canadian historical records – a discovery which will have far reaching effects for records across the country, including those of Library and Archives Canada, other museums, and historical sites. The error? The birth date of Canadian icon, Sir Samuel Steele, born January 5, 1848, not 1849, as widely accepted (and to which Steele himself attests in his autobiography, *Forty Years in Canada*). This will impact dozens of museums, websites and historical accounts nation-wide.

Steele's birth date has been an issue of debate since his death in 1919; indeed, it is even printed incorrectly on his gravestone in Winnipeg! The Dictionary of Canadian Biography, usually regarded as the most authoritative source of this type of information, gives Steele's birth date as January 5, 1849. It notes, however, that the date is also cited elsewhere as January 5, 1851 and January 5, 1852. Orillia's own Hall of Fame uses 1851.

Sam Steele was born at Fair Valley, near Orillia. He had a long and distinguished career that is still meaningful to the nation and its institutions today. Steele's early service

with the North-West Mounted Police – today's RCMP – where he built his reputation for tough fairness in the Yukon during the gold rush, is recognized as contributing to the foundations of that force. In 1900, during the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa, at the request of Lord Strathcona and the Canadian Government, Steele raised a regiment in Western Canada which he called "Strathcona's Horse". That regiment served with distinction under his command in South Africa, and remains today as Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), an armoured regiment based in Edmonton and

## OMAH Changes International Records – continued

currently serving in Afghanistan.

During the First World War, then General Steele, commanded Canadian troops in England where he died during the flu epidemic of 1919.

The birth date error was discovered in 2000 when Murray Cayley, an associate of the regiment, organized the hundredth anniversary visit of the “Strathcona's” to Orillia and Fair Valley – the home of their first commanding officer. It was Cayley’s intention to mark this Year 2000 Centennial visit by adding an additional plaque to the Steele memorial monument already standing at the Fair Valley site. National Parks and Historical Sites had presented the existing plaque in 1954 to the Orillia Historical Society.

Cayley found a letter from Sir Sam Steele’s son, Harwood, complaining of several errors of fact on that plaque, including the 1849 birth date. National Parks and Historical Sites then concluded that 1851 was correct and provided a replacement plaque using that date. That plaque now hangs, ironically, on the front of the Sir Sam Steele Memorial Building, in which the Orillia Museum of Art and History is located.

At this point Cayley concluded that a serious review of Steele's history was required and began to plan a full-scale new memorial monument, not only commemorating the regiment’s visit but also recording the accurate facts of Steele’s life and career. He was fortunate that his efforts came to the attention of the Department of National Defense. They offered generous financial support for the monument itself as part of their millennium commemoration; that, together with Cayley’s contributions and efforts, made possible the grand memorial now standing at Fair Valley.

In his search for material, Cayley received a tip from Mildred Walker that Steele’s original birth and baptism and his parents’ marriage records were in an old basement vault in St. James’ Anglican Church in Orillia.

After viewing these original documents, and receiving copies, Cayley wrote an article: “Happy Birthday Sir Sam Steele”, published on May 20, 2000 in the Orillia Packet and Times. In this, he not only documents finding these records and the correct birth date, but also puts forward explanations for the discrepancies and the confusion around his mother’s name. Steele gives his mother’s name as Ann MacIlan Macdonald but it is listed on the marriage and Steele’s birth/baptism records as Ann Johnston.

Cayley suggests that Steele, finding that over the age of 65 he would be judged too old to go overseas in World War I, altered the dates of his records to make him appear just 60. The one year difference in his biography may have been a slip of the pen.

In *Forty Years in Canada*, Steele writes that he was his father’s fourth son, and the eldest of the six children of the second marriage between Elmes Steele and Anne MacIlan Macdonald. Mary Garbutt, writing the history and family trees of the Oro-Medonte townships, points out that MacIlan is “John’s son” in Gaelic – Johnson or, later, Johnston with the “t” to differentiate themselves from other families. The Johnstons appear to have stemmed from the clan MacDonald on Islay at some early time, but there is no doubt that Steele’s mother was a local Johnston. Steele seems just to have preferred the Gaelic usage when writing his history.

In the spring of 2006, Cayley met with Salata to spend a day discussing Sam Steele’s history and visiting his home

site and the memorials. Salata was amazed to discover that, despite the article, all records she found on-line and in print were wrong. Cayley states that, “Nobody was interested when I tried to contact them back then.” Salata, thinking that the news might be better received from an established institution, began searching for Samuel Steele websites to correct. Contacting Library and Archives Canada, Salata began conversing via email with Vicki Steenhorst in Published Heritage who responded that “It is indeed a puzzle,” and that, “This reminds me of my grandmother, who was born in 1888. Out of the blue she received a small British pension, and notification from the pension office that she was born in 1886, not 1888 - so there were 2 years of “back pay”. She was pleased to get the money, but never acknowledged the extra 2 years!”

As correspondence continued, Steenhorst wrote, “As you can imagine, this change would be very far reaching in [Library and Archives Canada’s] sources and indexes.” Within five days of sending both the original copies and the newly transcribed copies of the documents from St. James’ to LAC, Steenhorst contacted the Library of Congress in Washington to alert them to update their authority files. Ten days later she wrote, “Just thought that you would like to know that the Library of Congress has, with amazing speed, changed the dates in the heading for Sam Steele, and that our changes are all in the works. Once again, thank you for forwarding all the related information to us.”

Little by little, in this age of financial cuts to museums, we, and our members, can still make a big difference, in the history of things.

## Summer Events at Local Museums

### Orillia Museum of Art and History Events

Bewabon and Travis Shilling:  
New Works

to September 3

The Orillia Museum of Art and History is honoured to host brothers, Bewabon and Travis Shilling, Chippewa artists from the Mnjikaning Nation, Rama.



Eliza – Travis Shilling

Bewabon, 30, is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design and the recipient of several prestigious awards, including The Sid and Lila Snache Memorial Award and The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation Award. Travis, 28, is a playwright, photographer and documentary film maker. Both have exhibited across Canada and internationally.

Parallax: The Scout Valley Project Belonging – A celebration of place

September 5 to October 25

Opening reception

September 13, 7 to 9:30 p.m.

Scout Valley has been the focus of an ongoing community debate since its sale to the City of Orillia in 1998; this 228 acre site is home to several different eco-systems, species trees and wildlife. Enduring/tenuous, Scout Valley has become a symbolic link to the existing environmental dialogue.

Four contemporary artists have shaped an ongoing connection to this fragile landscape, giving voice to the shifting relationship we as a community have to the land. In the tradition of Canadian landscape painting, artists Joanna McEwen, Juliana Hawke, Marlene Bulas and Prudence Smith have examined the nuances of the cultural and restorative role that Scout Valley plays in our vision of a balanced community.

*Judith Gibson-Vick, curator*

Orillia Festival of Banners Viewing and Auction

From May to October, 150 banners designed and painted by community members – from children to professional artists – will be displayed in downtown Orillia creating a colourful and unique cityscape for the viewing pleasure of local shoppers and tourists alike. In October, the banners will be taken down, cleaned and hung at the Orillia Museum of Art and History – anywhere and everywhere – for two days only, October 26 and 27. The banners will be auctioned off on Saturday, October 27 to the highest bidders in order to raise funds for next year's Festival of Banners.

# SCILLA

**Museum on the Boyne Events Call the Museum on the Boyne to register (705) 435-0167**

Walking Tours of Alliston

August 11, 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
(Tours offered every half hour)

Join Curator Rachelle Clayton on a trip into the past. She will take you on a guided walking tour to share your history and give you an appreciation of the architecture of Alliston. Make it part of your Potato Festival Celebration!

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Never a Day so Bright...

Kate Aitken's Beeton

August 18, 10:00 a.m. - noon

Come on a trip to the past as Curator Rachelle Clayton takes you on a walking tour of the buildings and history of Kate Aitken's Home Town Beeton as drawn from her Autobiography "Never a Day so Bright". All ages welcome! Tour departure location to be announced.

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Edwardian Tea

August 30, 1:30-3:00p.m.

Back by popular demand! Again this year Museum on the Boyne will be offering our Edwardian Tea. We will host Ontario Historian Dorothy Duncan as she discusses local celebrity Kate Aitken and her impact on Canadian Culinary History.

Tickets are \$10 museum members and \$15 non members. Copies of Mrs. Duncan's books will be available for sale and signing.

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**For children's programming information for both these museums, please see page 8.**

## SCHA Website Woes

For many months now, the executive of the SCHA has wrestled with the condition of our website, and various avenues we could pursue to rectify the outdated, incorrect information it contains. Since both time and expertise were in short supply in our own ranks, we decided to approach the County with a request at our annual visit in February.

At that time, we sought to have the domain transferred to the County site, a general clean up of the contents, and access provided to various executive members so that we can make the website current and useful. At the end of May, we received the following reply from the Performance Management Committee:

### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the request of the Simcoe County Historical Association to have the County host and support their web site be respectfully denied.

### BACKGROUND:

The Simcoe County Historical Association (SCHA) has approached the County to consider providing web site resources and staff support to establish the new web site. The County's Information Technology Department currently provides web services for our Member Municipalities, several County Libraries, the Georgian Bay Area Public Purchasing Co-Operative, and the Child, Youth, and Family Services Coalition. In the case of the latter two, the County is an active member of these groups. In total, we maintain over twenty different web sites.

The County's Museum administration was consulted regarding our

involvement with Simcoe County Historical Association and other similar organizations in order to understand the broader implications of supporting this particular request. It was identified that there are at least a dozen historical organizations operating in Simcoe County along with a number of specialized groups such as the Antique Sewing Machine Association, the Historical Construction Equipment Association, and the Simcoe County Arts and Crafts Association. While previous web hosting requests have been considered on their individual merits, the resource and work load implications of offering web services to all of these groups would be significant. It is important to establish a consistent approach for not only the current request, but for future ones as well.

County staff are therefore recommending that Council not support the request of Simcoe County Historical Association for free web hosting services. We believe that prior decisions to provide web services to selected organizations were based on either significant direct involvement of the County in those organizations, or in the provision of other information technology services, such as the Simcoe Community Access Network. The Simcoe County Historical Association is one of many historical organizations in the area and they are not unique in their relationship to the County.

One thing that can be easily done to support the Simcoe County Historical Association's on-line visitors is to establish a link to the Simcoe County

Historical Association's web page from the Museum's Partner Group web page. This would encourage interested visitors to the County's web site to explore related information on the Simcoe County Historical Association site and those of other historical groups.

### FINANCIAL ANALYSIS:

Should Council request that Information Technology staff establish a Simcoe County Historical Association web site, the initial costs have an estimated value of \$1,800 for initial set up and an ongoing annual value of \$2,320 for hardware, software, and support costs.

### PREPARED BY:

Brian Smith, Director of Information Technology  
Gloria Taylor, Museum Curator

At this point, we turn to you. Do you have some time and talent that you would be willing to utilize in the coming months to get [www.simcoecountyhistory.ca](http://www.simcoecountyhistory.ca) back on track?

Our plan is to have the site hosted economically, and to provide the ability to a few of our members to update with photos, news items, minutes, past issues of *News and Views*, listings of books released within the county, and most importantly, accurate links to all our partners through web address, email, phone or mail address. What better place for the wide world to find virtual access to Simcoe County's rich heritage than through the SCHA website? We aim to be a community-focused umbrella organization, and this goal will transfer beautifully to our website.

## COMING

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

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

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**Genealogical Society –**  
**contact Linda Mitchell**  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints  
79 Ferris Lane, Barrie – 2:00 p.m.  
www.simcoeboogs.com

**Sept. 8 – Dave Brunelle – Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Fencible Infantry**

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**Huronian Museum Huron Ouendat Village –**  
**contact Jamie Hunter, curator**  
549 Little Lake Park Road, Midland – Call 526-2844  
www.huroniamuseum.com

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**Innisfil Historical Society –**  
**contact Ross Wallace**

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

**Sept. 15 –**

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**Museum on the Boyne –**  
**contact Rachelle Clayton**  
250 Fletcher Crescent in Riverdale Park, Alliston – Call 435-0167  
www.allistonontario.com/MuseumonthetheBoyne.html

**Summer hours –**  
Tues.-Sun. 10-3:30

See page 6 for details on the following:

**Aug. 11 – Walking Tours of Alliston**

**Aug. 18 – Kate Aitken's Beeton**

**Aug. 30 – Edwardian Tea**

## EVENTS

**Call the Museum for cost details and to pre-register for the following:**

**July and August Wednesdays –**  
10-2 – Various Kids' Programs

**July and August three day camps Wednesdays to Fridays –**  
9-3:30 – Various Kids' Programs

**Saturday Events –**  
9-10 a.m. – 2-5 year olds  
10-noon – 4-8 year old

**Sunday Events**  
1-2 p.m.

My Grandparents Taught Me How

**July 8 – Household chores**

**July 15 – Fishing**

**July 22 – Ceremonial dress**

**July 28 – Quilting Bee**

**August 5 – Cars**

**August 12 – Childhood games**

**August 26 – Farming**

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**Orillia Museum of Art and History –**

**contact Sim Salata**

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

See page 6 for more details on the following events:

**July 9-Aug. 31 – Summer Art Camp for Kids**

**to Sept. 3 – Bewabon and Travis Shilling: New Works**

**Sept. 4-Oct. 25 – Parallax: The Scout Valley Project**

Opening reception: Sept. 13, 7-9:30p.m.

**Oct. 26 and 27 – Orillia Festival of Banners Viewing and Auction**

## of our Member Societies

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

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

**July 3-Aug. 31 – Summer Day Camp for Kids**

**July and August Sundays –**  
Evening Concerts – 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Sept. 29 – 11 a.m.-2 p.m. – Settler's Day, honouring the Dubeau family 6 p.m. – Beck Memorial Fundraising Dinner**

**Oct. 27 – 7-9 p.m. – Halloween Spooktacular**

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**Simcoe County Museum –**  
**contact Gloria Taylor**

1151 Highway 26, Midhurst –  
Call 728-3721  
www.county.simcoe.on.ca

**July and August – Summer Sundays**

**July 9-Aug. 24 – Kids' Summer Day Camps**

**Aug. 30 – Golf Tournament**

**Sept. 14-16 – Simcoe County Quilt, Rug and Craft Fair – \$4**

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**Stayner Heritage Society**  
Call Myrna Johnson 428-2540

**July 7 – Heritage Day in Station Park. Pancake Breakfast at Jubilee Presbyterian Church 7:30-10:30; Parade 11:00; Show in the Park 12:00**

**Aug. 18 – The Toronto All-Star Big Band in Stayner Arena – 8:00-midnight – tickets \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door**