

OHS BULLETIN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Issue 204

SEPTEMBER 2017

OWEN SOUND EMANCIPATION FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 155TH ANNIVERSARY



Festival organizers and guests pose for a photo with Lawrence Hill, the keynote speaker for this year's Emancipation Festival Speaker's Forum. From left to right are: Nathan Segal, Dorothy Abbott, Aly Boltman, Blaine Courtney, Lawrence Hill, Brent Courtney, Terri Jackson, David Sereda, and Rachel Taylor.

Daniel Dishaw, Communications & Outreach Coordinator
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Celebrating their 155th anniversary this year, the Owen Sound Emancipation Festival (OSEF) broke a Roxy Theatre record on August 4 for most seats filled at a summer weeknight event, nearly selling out the 400-seat auditorium. With Lawrence Hill as this year's keynote speaker, guests from across the province gathered to celebrate Emancipation Day with one of Ontario's most treasured authors. Though he spends most of his summer days working on new literary projects and spending time with family, Mr. Hill typically makes room in his schedule for one speaking engagement each summer. With the OSEF marking a special milestone in 2017, the world-renowned author was pleased to help make this year's festivities a big hit. Arriving early to sign books, he was greeted by a seemingly endless lineup of eager admirers.

During his address, Mr. Hill spoke about his current writing projects, the indelible legacy of his parents, and stressed the importance of the OSEF as a time to reflect on our history and celebrate how far we have come. He also took the opportunity to warn against smug finger-pointing and social complacency here in Canada, noting that we often like to think of ourselves as being above the problems facing our neighbours overseas and south of the border. Hill remarked that while slavery and segregation no longer exist, other forms of systemic racism and social injustice still plague our society. Hill's message is that "to be too self-satisfied is sort of an excuse to do nothing" and there is still work to be done.

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OWHN CONFERENCE AT NEW INDIGENOUS SHARING AND LEARNING CENTRE



The new Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre at Laurentian University.

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On June 21, National Aboriginal Day, Laurentian University opened its Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre in Sudbury. The Centre brings together students, faculty, and staff to enhance Indigenous education, advance understanding, and support the needs and aspirations of Indigenous communities. The Centre is the latest innovation to be implemented at Laurentian University following the Calls to Action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2016. The spectacular round room, inspired by the wigwam (the traditional building of the Indigenous peoples of this area), has four entry points that face each of the cardinal directions, and will be the inspiring venue for the Ontario Women's History Network Annual Conference, October 20-21, 2017, during Women's History Month.

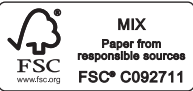
Appropriately, the topic of the conference will be "Indigenous Women and Education." The conference will open with a "Drum Song Blessing," followed by a "Teaching of the Water" ceremony led by Julia Petahmagahbow, Atikameksheng Anishinaabek community member. Saturday events include a workshop on "Using Indigenous Film and Images in the Classroom," a panel discussion on "Integrating Indigenous Women's Experience into the Classroom Following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report," and a performance of traditional jingle dress dancing.

Sheila Cote-Meek, Associate Vice-President, Academic and Indigenous Programs, will give the keynote address at the conference. She is quoted as saying that "Laurentian University has placed itself at the forefront of promoting Indigenous education and research, and also of fostering a welcoming atmosphere that encourages understanding and cooperation between students of all backgrounds." The upcoming Ontario Women's History Network Conference, in the brand new Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre, will reinforce that goal.

Established in 1989, the Ontario Women's History Network (OWHN) encourages the preservation, production, and dissemination of women's

'OWHN CONFERENCE' CONTINUED ON PAGE 8...

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CANADA



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Caroline Di Cocco, President
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It has been a busy few months for OHS staff and directors. There are many great events held across the province every month and we try to attend all that we can. I personally had the pleasure of joining the Amherstburg Freedom Museum for their Emancipation Celebration at Caboto Club on August 4. That same day, OHS Director Janie Cooper-Wilson delivered a presentation at the first annual Halton Freedom Festival, held at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington. OHS Communications and Outreach Coordinator Daniel Dishaw was in Owen Sound, celebrating the 155th anniversary of the Owen Sound Emancipation Festival. Daniel also joined the Ontario Black History Society for their Emancipation Day celebration at Queen's Park on August 1. A busy week for the Society!

OHS Executive Director Rob Leverty attended a number of events this summer to celebrate the achievements of our affiliated and member societies across the province. He delivered a presentation to the Huntsville Historical Society's Annual General Meeting, attended the Halton Black History Awareness Society's Halton Freedom Festival Art Exhibition, and joined colleague Janie Cooper-Wilson in Clearview Township at the Bethel Union Pioneer Cemetery to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the SilverShoe Historical Society.

I want to thank Trinity Theatre's Peer Leaders Youth Workshop for the important work that they do. We were pleased to have them visit OHS headquarters once again this year. It is important that we continue to lend our support and partnership to community organizations such as Trinity Theatre. I was delighted to see that this year's workshop provided students with networking skills and a professional portrait for their online profiles. Bravo!

Since its foundation, the Ontario Historical Society has enjoyed the patronage of Ontario's Lieutenant Governors. I am committed to maintaining that relationship, and so I am pleased to report that on August 9, OHS Executive Director Rob Leverty and I had a private meeting with our patron, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC OOnt, Ontario's 29th Lieutenant Governor. We met at Her Honour's office at Queen's Park and discussed the role of OHS, our current challenges, and the state of heritage preservation in Ontario. As a non-partisan, non-government organization, the Society cherishes the historical connection between OHS and the Office of



The Ontario Historical Society attended three events on the August 4-6 weekend to celebrate Emancipation Day. OHS President Caroline Di Cocco was pleased to join the Amherstburg Freedom Museum for their annual Emancipation Gala in Amherstburg. Pictured here (from left to right) are: Assistant Curator Lorene Bridgen, Curator Mary-Katherine Whelan, Board Secretary Phil Alexander, OHS President Caroline Di Cocco, and Amherstburg Freedom Museum President Monty Logan.

Ontario's Lieutenant Governor. We also thanked Her Honour for attending and speaking at so many events hosted by our member organizations across the province. You might want to consider inviting Her Honour to one of your upcoming events or celebrations.

Finally, I would like to inform our readers that the John McKenzie House Slate Roof Restoration Project has been selected as a finalist for Heritage Toronto's William Greer Architectural Conservancy Award, which recognizes building owners and stewards "who have undertaken projects to conserve or adapt a history building or architectural feature of a historic building within the municipal boundaries of the city of Toronto." Representatives from the Society will be attending the Awards Ceremony on October 23, where the winner will be announced. Congratulations to all the architects, tradespeople, building owners, and staff who have already been recognized through the nominations.

Thank you once again to all of our dedicated volunteers, members, and donors. I hope you enjoy the rest of the warm weather!

CEMETERY NEWS

Marjorie Stuart,
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The Ontario Genealogical Society and the Ontario Historical Society as "interested parties" under the *Funeral, Burial & Cremation Services Act* received Notice of Application for an Order to Close a Part of a Cemetery. This was a request to close a part of St John the Baptist Anglican Cemetery at 3027 Pierce's Corner (Parish of North Gower). An archaeological assessment required before construction on the decommissioned church revealed one unmarked infant gravesite. The burial was outside the boundary of the existing cemetery. Both societies agreed that this was a special situation and would not contest the closure on the condition that this removal and reinterment into the adjacent cemetery would not set a precedent for future closures. They asked that every effort be made to determine the identity of the infant and that their remains be reinterred close to family members.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2017. The Commission continues to care for the graves of 1.7 million men and women who served in World Wars I and II. These are located in 154 countries around the world. They maintain registers that help to locate names and service records.

The Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services has announced plans to ensure the Huronia Regional Centre Cemetery in Orillia will be properly maintained in a "thoughtful and respectful manner that will preserve the site's important historical legacy and the memory of those interred there." The planned work will comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

Dr. Gregory Klages, author and Sessional Instructor in the History Department at Guelph University was a guest lecturer at the Ontario Genealogical Society's 2017 Toronto History Lecture Series, "Forgetting and Remembering the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital." Dr. Klages outlined the establishment of the cemetery, the abandonment, and the extensive restoration efforts. A special support group sponsors annual reunions and provides an understanding of mental illness.

The trustees of the Shaver Family Cemetery in Ancaster have embarked on a project to restore this early cemetery. Dates on some of the stones indicate that the cemetery had been in use prior to 1848.

Renfrew Public (Thompson Hill) Cemetery in Horton Township is asking the public for help. They are seeking monetary donations, donations of unused plots, and new board members. The cemetery is maintained using the annual interest from the perpetual care trust fund, which does not meet the financial requirements of the cemetery. For more information, please contact John Steele at 613-432-7952.

Diane Clendenan and I, as Co-Chairs of the OGS/OHS Cemetery Preservation Committee, spoke at a breakfast meeting at Westview Presbyterian Church in Toronto. We also attended the One World One Family Conference in Oshawa. We are always pleased to speak to groups about cemeteries and preservation. Thank you to the special group of people who send me news of cemeteries and clippings. There are over 6,000 cemeteries in Ontario and it is hard to keep up with local news. Their input is greatly appreciated.

The OGS/OHS Cemetery Preservation Committee has submitted the names and locations of 882 known unregistered cemeteries to the Ontario Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and to the Bereavement Authority of Ontario. The names submitted are in counties and districts alphabetically from Algoma to Oxford. The Committee is currently amassing information for counties and districts from Parry Sound to York Region. The current estimate for these areas is 553 unregistered cemeteries.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Rob Leverty, Executive Director
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My last report to you was devoted to the critical role that volunteers play in preserving and promoting Ontario's history. When the OHS was founded 129 years ago by a group of local historical societies, it was of course volunteers who understood and embraced the importance of protecting this province's history. Well, it seems to me that we have come full circle, as governments at all levels continue to divest themselves of our heritage resources as quickly as possible—either by downloading them to the not-for-profit sector, by sale to private interests, or by simply demolishing them.

The OHS continues to incorporate not-for-profit volunteer historical organizations, allowing them to safely acquire lighthouses, buy churches and cemeteries, restore train stations, establish heritage districts, protect archival documents, and defend our natural heritage. *An Act to Incorporate the Ontario Historical Society, Assented to 1st April, 1899*, empowers the OHS to incorporate not-for-profit historical organizations for the public benefit. This piece of legislation, and the responsibility it gives the OHS, seems more relevant today than ever before.

Why? Because if volunteers do not organize to establish legal entities and take on these immense challenges, the history in their communities will be lost forever. As we have seen so many times before, if they do not save our history, no one will. Without their dedication and hard work, these vital connections to our history would be swept away.

A crucial part of our volunteer sector is commitment. Barry Penhale, OHS member and regular contributor to this newsletter, entitled his recent presentation "Commitment: There can never be too much." Barry stated that, "Though over a lengthy lifetime I have met a goodly number of famous people—the individuals that have often impressed me the most are the selfless volunteers who so willingly give of the time and more—and the bill rendered for their services is plainly stamped *gratis!*"

On that note, as the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Bruce Trail, I want to thank the more than 1,400 volunteers who donate their time and talents to the organization and its nine member clubs.

The BTC is a charitable organization that for five decades has been committed "to establishing a conservation corridor containing a public footpath along Ontario's Niagara Escarpment, in order to protect its natural ecosystems and to promote environmentally responsible public access to this UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve."

The Bruce Trail is the oldest and longest continuous public footpath in Canada. Volunteers from nine Bruce Trail Clubs are responsible for maintaining, stewarding, and promoting the trail—which is 895 km long, not including the additional 435 km of associated side-trails. The BTC is also one of Ontario's largest land trusts, responsible for the preservation of almost 11,000 acres of irreplaceable Niagara Escarpment landscape, each year adding more preserved land to the trail's conservation corridor.

For many decades, I have had a working farm in the Beaver Valley on the Niagara Escarpment. I have always allowed the Bruce Trail to have a public footpath through my farm. In 2000, I signed a conservation heritage agreement with the Ontario Heritage Trust, an agency of the Government of Ontario, to protect the natural wildlife corridor on the farm and give the BTC public access for a footpath in perpetuity.

Over the years, I have met hikers from across Canada and countries such as Germany, Japan, and Australia at the farm. It is like Doors Open but year round. And it is because of volunteer-based not-for-profits like BTC and the OHS—and their affiliated member organizations—that there are still publicly accessible heritage assets left in this province to attract people. Otherwise, as you well know, tourists and fellow citizens would not come to visit, learn, and enjoy themselves in communities across Ontario.

Finally, I want to share something with you from the OHS Honours and Awards Ceremony, held June 10, 2016. Upon accepting the 2016 OHS Carnochan Award, Paul Carroll delivered an inspiring speech. I was personally moved by his remarks, and so I would like to share them with you here:

"I want to express my appreciation to the selection committee; and, to OHS for its ongoing provision of the Honours and Awards Program. These annual presentations are significant motivators for those of us who receive them... And, they are strong signals in our home communities that support for the celebration and the preservation of our heritage is so important.

My formal involvement in heritage activity and preservation is now approaching some 50 years.



Photo - Daniel Dishaw

Many thanks to Hassam Munir (left), the Society's summer student employee for 2017, pictured here with Executive Director Rob Leverty. Hassam started with the OHS as a student volunteer, fulfilling his in-field placement requirement for Dr. Jennifer Bonnell's Public History course at York University. His skills and passion for history were a welcome addition to the OHS team in 2017!

My first major involvement was to stand, alone, in a County Council Chamber, as the then-youngest Reeve in Ontario, to speak against my County peers, whose collective intent was to demolish part of what is now the only designated Federal Historic Site in Huron County.

Over the decades that followed, there were several times when I also felt a need to stand alone. Often a single voice can give rise to broader support—and the issue of the day can be won. There is often conflict about what is important to preserve and to celebrate our heritage. But we must not shy away from it.

They can be fearful times, but they are imperatives. Many persons long associated with OHS will tell you that. For those who would follow in my steps, I urge that you also be courageous.

Sometimes you will prevail. Other times, you will fail. But you will never regret that you have tried. Thank you so much."

-Paul Carroll

Once again, I want to thank those of you who are on the front lines in the struggle to protect the public interest—defending, writing, researching, publishing, and showcasing our history and heritage.

As nominations for our 2017 Honours and Awards Program open on September 12, I want to remind all of you to take advantage of this opportunity to show your support and appreciation. Help us showcase the incredible work being done across this province to preserve our heritage by filling out a nomination form (included in this *Bulletin*). There are so many individuals, organizations, authors, and institutions that deserve our recognition. Thank you in advance for helping us acknowledge and celebrate their achievements.

NOMINATE EXCELLENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY WITH OHS HONOURS AND AWARDS

THE OHS WILL
BE ACCEPTING
NOMINATIONS FOR
ITS 2017

HONOURS
AND AWARDS
PROGRAM UNTIL
JANUARY 12



Do you know of a volunteer or professional working tirelessly to preserve and promote your local history?

Are you inspired by an excellent program, service, or exhibit offered by a local heritage organization, museum, or other institution?

Have you recently come across a book on Ontario's history that stands above the rest?

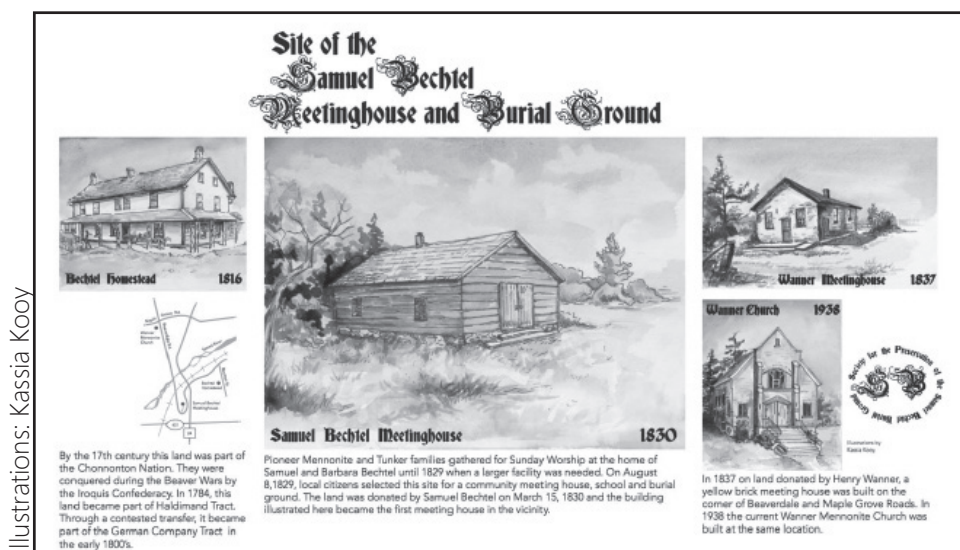
Recognize excellence in your heritage community today. Visit www.ontariohistoricalsociety.ca/awards or call 1.866.955.2755 to learn more.

A nomination brochure has been included with this edition of the *Bulletin*.

SAMUEL BECHTEL BURIAL GROUND

Trevor Bechtel, Society for the Preservation of the Samuel Bechtel Burial Ground
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A small wooden meeting house was built in 1829 on the corner of a farm belonging to Samuel Bechtel, near the intersection of Highway 24 and Highway 401. The site for the meeting house—which also the location of the school and burial ground—was chosen on August 8, 1829. The land was donated by Samuel Bechtel and his wife Barbara (Bauman) Bechtel, and became known as the Samuel Bechtel Appointment. The building was used until 1837 as a union meeting house for Mennonite and Tunker pioneers, and then as school until 1848. It was also used as a singing school and private residence. It was removed in 1870 and later destroyed in a fire.



A copy of the sign erected at the Site of the Samuel Bechtel Meetinghouse and Burial Ground in Cambridge.

In 1837, another meeting house was built one mile to the north at the corner of Beavertdale and Maple Grove Roads. The new meeting house, constructed from yellow brick, was named for its donor Henry Wanner. In 1938, the current Wanner Mennonite Church was built on the same site. In 1910, Anson Groh secured trees from the Forestry Department and the plot was planted and returned to forest.

In 1929, a plaque and cairn were placed at the site by the Waterloo Historical Society. At the unveiling ceremony, Anson Groh summarized the story of this plot of land: "This particular triangular plot of land of a little over one-half acre, which we are today marking with this plaque, has made the cycle of civilization in the last century. Cut out of the primitive forest,

it became the centre of learning and church service in the community and the final resting place for the bodies of their dead. Later when the territory was cut into organized school sections it was discarded and dilapidation set in." Nelson Bechtel was a church and school trustee at the time the monument was erected in 1929. He said, "We honour our ancestors who were pioneers of this community, especially for their integrity and for keeping and teaching the values of the Christian faith. They left a heritage that has been passed down through succeeding generations. A blessing worthy of our sincere appreciation. These pioneers built comfortable and substantial homes and were happy and content to have a home in Canada. However, they realized a system of education was needed. The first meeting house and school met those needs."

In October 1999, the Wanner Church received a millenium grant of \$700 from the city of Cambridge to help with the cost of repairing the historic plaque placed by the Waterloo Historical Society in 1929. The city of Cambridge placed two directional signs indicating the presence of the historic site. In 2011, the Society for the Preservation of the Samuel Bechtel Burial Ground (SPSBBG) was incorporated through affiliation with the OHS as a not-for-profit corporation with a mandate to ensure that the historic burial ground (circa 1830) be preserved and maintained in its original location. The plot has now been officially registered as a burial ground, offering it protection from future development interests.

In May of 2016, the SPSBBG erected a new sign at the site detailing not just the settler history on this site, but also acknowledging the First Nations who have lived in this region for centuries. The new sign (seen here in the image on the left) features watercolour renditions by Kassia Kooy that depict the significant buildings that bind together the history as it evolved at this historic site.



On August 16, the OHS met with Director of the Oshawa Museum Laura Suchan to discuss cemetery preservation issues in Durham Region and across Ontario. Laura has been working to protect and promote the preservation of local historic cemeteries in her community for many years, and she brings a great deal of passion and expertise to the table. The OHS looks forward to working with Laura on cemetery preservation in the future! Pictured, from left to right, are Rob Levery, Laura Suchan, and Heather Anderson.

...‘EMANCIPATION FESTIVAL’ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Canadian R&B artist Bobby Dean Blackburn poses at the keyboard before his performance at the Picnic in Harrison Park on August 5.

Among those captured by photographer Yuri Dojc are Blaine Courtney, Chair of the OSEF, along his brother Brent, sister Cindee, and Brent's daughter, Robbin McGregor; Dorothy Abbott, Treasurer of the OSEF and the Ontario Black History Society, who poses with her daughter Arja Pennanen Lytle; Bobby Dean Blackburn, the headliner for the 2017 OSEF Picnic and one of Yonge Street's R&B legends; and Steven Cook, Site Manager of Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site in Dresden, Ontario. In his article on page 6, Barry Penhale goes into greater detail about "North is Freedom" and the wonderful collection of human stories captured within.

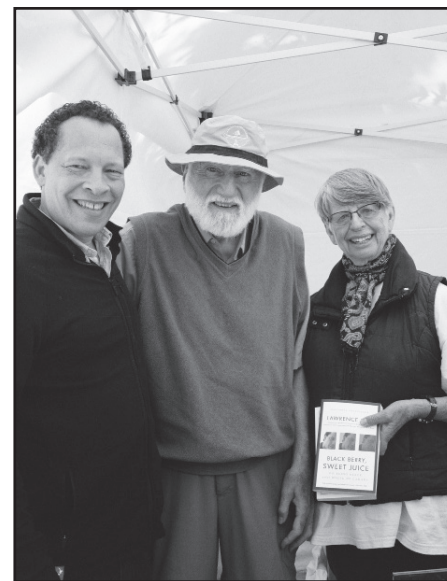
Established in 1862, the OSEF is the longest running emancipation celebration in North America, held in what was once Sydenham (now Owen Sound), the most northerly terminus of the Underground Railroad in Ontario. Over the course of three days, the Emancipation Festival featured a Speaker's Forum at Roxy Theatre (with Lawrence Hill); the Ancestor's Breakfast, Cairn Ceremony, and Festival Picnic in Harrison Park; and a Gospel performance and photo exhibition ("North is Freedom", by Yuri Dojc) held at Grey Roots Museum.

An incredible visual experience and a captivating approach to historical storytelling, "North is Freedom" is a collection of photographs featuring the descendants of those who escaped slavery in the United States and found their way to freedom here in Ontario.

The Ontario Historical Society was pleased to join friends and colleagues for this year's celebration in Owen Sound. It was a delight to see Ontarians gathering together to celebrate our history with such passion, excitement, and camaraderie. Jan Bell, an American cyclist, travelled by bicycle all the way to Owen Sound from Mobile, Alabama, to attend the Emancipation Festival. Friends and family of descendants also travelled great distances to reunite in celebration of the 155th anniversary of this historic weekend. Though the OSEF has been taking place since 1862, they were officially incorporated as a not-for-profit organization through affiliation with the Ontario Historical Society in May 2006.

OSEF Chair Blaine Courtney announced that he will be stepping down this year, making way for new leadership and new opportunities. The OHS would like to recognize Blaine for his years of hard work and dedication to this event.

For more information on the OSEF, visit their website, www.emancipation.ca. For more information on North is Freedom, visit www.facebook.com/northisfreedom/.



Barry Penhale (centre) introduced Lawrence Hill (left) at the OSEF Speaker's Forum on Friday, August 4. As long-time colleagues and friends of Hill's, Barry and his wife Jane Gibson (pictured above at right) set up a book table at Harrison Park on Saturday to showcase and sell the wide array of Lawrence Hill's past publications.

MUSEUM MILESTONES

Dr. John Carter
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For the past year I have been researching and writing a monograph about the steamer Ploughboy for the John R. Park Homestead. Casting about for primary materials, I contacted the Marsh Collection in Amherstburg. What a stroke of luck! The staff there couldn't have been more helpful, and I was quickly provided with information that I had never seen before. Read Eleanor Warren's article (below) to learn more about this wonderful institution.

On July 22, a bronze sculpture by prominent Canadian artist Frances Gage, was unveiled at the Gore Bay Museum's Harbour Centre. *Sleeping Mindy* is a 2/3 life-size portrait of the sculptor's dog Mindamoya. Ms. Gage began visiting Manitoulin Island in 1949 and named her dog after the village of Mindamoya. This significant work of art is now part of the permanent collection at the Gore Bay Museum.

The Coldwater Canadiana Museum in Simcoe County had another successful year. Many visitors came to see the special exhibit of 150 moustache cups, which were assembled as a tribute to Canada's sesquicentennial.

The Waterloo Region Museum in Kitchener, is featuring "Trailblazing Women in Canada, 1867 to Today." This exhibit explores what it means to be a woman in Canada throughout 150 years of history. It examines how women's roles have transformed politics, work, and everyday life. It is on display until January 7, 2018.

The Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre in Southampton, has received a total of \$120,000 from Ontario Power Generation, Bruce Power, and the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund to upgrade its First Nations Gallery. This new exhibit will feature interactive stations that depict five eras in the

history of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. The exhibit is expected to open for March Break 2018.

The Dufferin County Museum & Archives just issued an interesting publication entitled "Vintage Eats." An assortment of classic recipes dating from the 1870s to 1925—and selected from the site's archival collections—provides an insider's perspective on the wonderful world of food from Dufferin County's past. For more information about this amazing booklet, contact Vanessa Lio at archivesassistant@dufferinmuseum.com.

The Belle Vue Conservancy in Amherstburg recently received a \$100,000 grant from the Gatfield Family Foundation. This generous gift will help the Conservancy reach its goal of raising \$1 million to start the restoration of the architecturally and historically significant Belle Vue House. A special fundraising dinner and gala will be held on September 24 in Amherstburg. For more details about this project and the fund raiser, please contact info@bellevueconservancy.com or call 519-736-6947. Look for a comprehensive article about this important built heritage initiative in the next Museum Milestones column.



Tom Savari, The Manitoulin West Recorder

Sleeping Mindy, by Frances Gage has been gifted to the Town of Gore Bay.

THE MARSH COLLECTION SOCIETY

Eleanor Warren, Marsh Collection Society
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Many historians know that Amherstburg is one of the most historically significant places in Ontario. However, many may not be aware that there is a popular facility in this community that contains abundant sources for local history and genealogy research. This site is the home of the Marsh Historical Collection. This registered not-for-profit, charitable organization was created by the late John Marsh and his sister, Helen Marsh. Their family owned and operated *The Amherstburg Echo* (a weekly newspaper) for over eighty years.

During the mid-1970s, while I was employed at Fort Malden National Historic Site in Amherstburg, a significant part of the position was cataloguing its massive collection of photographs. This collection included many photos of early Amherstburg buildings, people and activities, which would likely be of great interest to *Echo* readers.



An archival collection of issues from *The Amherstburg Echo* is just one of many resources available at the Marsh Collection Society.

John Marsh was a weekly Friday afternoon visitor at Fort Malden National Historic Site during the time I was employed there. He had been one of the key players in its 1938 establishment. It was during one of those visits that the idea came about for a new weekly feature entitled "Those Were The Days." Complete with photos, dates, and descriptions (where possible), the column continued in the *Echo* until the late 1990s. I left Fort Malden in 1980, but my friendship with John and Helen Marsh continued. We often spoke about what could eventually happen to this important collection. He pondered the question for a few days, and discussed the matter with his close friend and attorney, Richard D. Thrasher, Q.C. After a great deal of thought and consideration, the Marsh Collection Society was established in 1983.

Sadly, Helen Marsh died in March, 1986 and John in February, 1993. On October 12, 1994, Jennifer MacLeod and I officially opened the Marsh Collection Society at 235 Dalhousie Street in downtown Amherstburg. By 1997, it had doubled in size, both in floor space and holdings.

Today, the facility contains a large collection of photos, books, documents, postcards, artifacts, and other items relating to the area. An extensive library boasts several shelves of books on a wide range of subjects, such as Amherstburg and Essex County local history, Black history, Indigenous history, genealogy, church records, marine and military history, the War of 1812, and so much more.

Researchers from local communities and abroad have made great use of the collection in recent years. Their interests are varied, but the most popular topic is genealogy. Our large marine holdings are also an important and well-used part of the collection.

Microfilm holdings include Canadian Census records for Essex County, assessment rolls, land instruments, and local newspapers—including *The Amherstburg Echo* and *River Town Times*. We have also published several books on local and marine history, some of which are available on our website. Our quarterly newsletter, *Reflections*, can be accessed on our website.

The Marsh Collection staff are currently engaged in digitizing our collections of artifacts, books, and photographs as we develop our new collections management database system. This database will be a great resource for researchers and will eventually be made available online.

Someone is always available to assist researchers/visitors from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday to Friday. Admission is free, but cash donations are always welcome. An income tax receipt will be issued for any donation over ten dollars.

For further information, visit our website: www.marshcollection.org, or email: research@marshcollection.org. Also, please like us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/Marsh-Historical-Collection-968976766461303/ You can contact us by phone at 519-736-9191.

BARRY PENHALE'S ONTARIO

HONOURING DIVERSITY

Barry Penhale

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I am a rather old white guy for whom history in the broadest sense has always mattered. Growing up in what is now the trendy Junction area of Toronto, mine was a very multicultural neighborhood. In truth, Maria Street, running parallel to Dundas Street and flanked by the railway yards, was long dubbed “The Street of All Nations,” and I have often said with pride and a smile on my face that I am a Gentile with my very own synagogue. I refer to Kneseth Israel Synagogue at 56 Maria Street, known locally as “The Junction Schule.” Many Jewish pals of my own age knew that site well and it was a regular occurrence to see their parents making their way to the synagogue after work. And this at a time when signs on many Toronto beaches and parks stipulated “No Dogs or Jews Allowed.” It was some time before young Barry truly understood why his beach excursions with Jewish friends were always out of the city. Obviously, some progress has been made since those days.

Our Junction neighbours, if not Jewish, were often of Ukrainian or Polish heritage. Many others were from the Isle of Malta, and to this day the Junction reflects the cultural influence of Maltese families. However, there was an almost total absence of people of colour in the city’s west end. But I well recall when our YMCA floor hockey team made our way downtown to the old neighbourhood known simply as The Ward to play a team comprised of young men of colour. They proved to be the toughest bunch we had yet faced and after the game ended we returned

to the Junction a very battered and humbled lot. No longer did we think that we were invincible! In hindsight, the experience was one that fostered respect and would ultimately encourage my later involvement with a multitude of people of African heritage and with issues of social justice.

The 1940s were more than wartime, war bonds, and rationing. Radio was not yet out of its golden age and one could be removed briefly from the reality of those difficult years by tuning in to the hockey games with broadcaster Foster Hewitt. West Toronto resident Turk Broda anchored the popular Toronto Maple Leafs in goal. That was also when Friday night fights had a huge following and everybody found themselves rooting for the “Brown Bomber”—the famous Detroit boxer Joe Louis, the World Heavyweight Boxing Champion. One had to be living then to appreciate the extent of his popularity and the inspiration he was for the men and women in uniform who found themselves battling even greater

foes. A few generations would pass before Wilson Brooks would become Toronto’s first Black principal, and Lincoln Alexander Ontario’s first Black Lieutenant-Governor.

The current scene of asylum seekers wearily crossing the Canadian border is eerily reminiscent of those individuals who much earlier arrived here via the Underground Railroad. That important period in our history continues to be recognized by the numerous Civic Holiday weekend events led by the granddaddy of them all—the Owen Sound Emancipation Festival, which just observed its 155th anniversary with spectacular success. In fact, our participation in the event inspired this article. The coming together of so many hundreds of people of diverse backgrounds to celebrate the freedom that thousands of African Americans found here was inspirational. Today, descendants of those courageous people who risked all to escape slavery can be found across our province. Some notable examples were recently featured in a major visual exhibition at Grey Roots Museum and Archives—a fitting windup to the 2017 Owen Sound Emancipation Day Festival. Titled “North Is Freedom,” the exhibit is a Legacy of the Underground Railroad project initially launched at the grand opening of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.



Photo - Courtesy of Grey Roots Museum and Archives

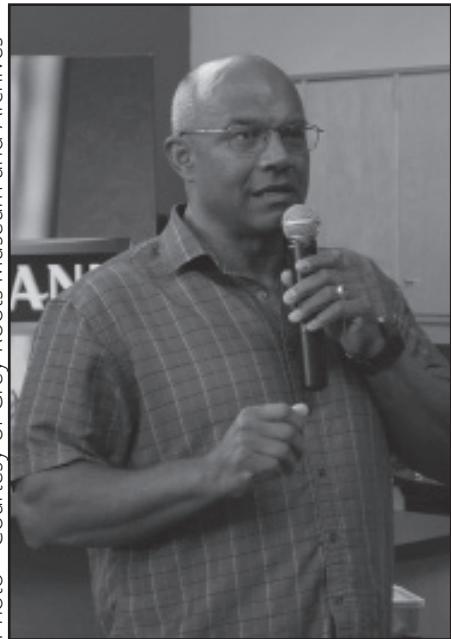
Traditional songs long associated with gospel music enthralled a huge turnout at the Moreston Village barn at Grey Roots. The enthusiastically received concert featured a stellar lineup of local musicians and singers.

on September 24, 2016. Each image (there are 24 on display) represents people of varying ages and complexions—all are Canadian to the core and proud residents of Ontario.

Among them are many remarkable individuals who have, over time, become some of my most valued colleagues and friends. Dorothy Abbott, certainly one to admire, is a genealogist and long-time treasurer of both the Ontario Black History Society and the Owen Sound Emancipation Festival (OSEF). Dorothy is the descendant of Addison Smith from Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The tireless chair of the OSEF, Blaine Courtney is part of a remarkable Owen Sound family whose ancestral roots are linked to Abraham Courtney, and who left slavery behind in Georgia to find freedom here via the Underground Railroad. His sister Cindee Courtney-Zidar is part of the Emancipation planning team as is his brother Brent, who was the first Black police officer to be hired by the Waterloo Police Department (1971). In 1856, having quarrelled with his owner on the Statten Plantation in Baltimore, Maryland, John Green fled and made his way to a new life in Owen Sound. Today, John’s great-great-granddaughters Pamela and Sherry Houston continue to honour his memory. The two women attach great importance to their ancestral roots.

There is an impressive and lengthy list of notable Canadians of colour across our province all of whom warrant attention and should be introduced to readers of *The Bulletin* in future issues. They include among others: historian Dr. Bryan Walls of Puce, a much respected former president of the Ontario Historical Society; Wilma Morrison of Niagara Falls who has given most of her long exceptional life to preserving Ontario’s black history; museum curator Shannon Prince and her farmer, author, historian husband, Bryan Prince. And of course, OHS’s indomitable Janie Cooper-Wilson, whose black ancestors fought in the War of 1812 and whose passion for preserving black history is legendary. Together this amazing group along with many others have enriched our Canada immeasurably. They are indeed a force to reckon with and their many contributions to our society are worthy of our recognition. We owe them a lot.

Photo - Courtesy of Grey Roots Museum and Archives



Outgoing Owen Sound Emancipation Festival chair Blaine Courtney welcomes visitors to Grey Roots for the official opening of “The North Is Freedom” exhibit featuring images of descendants of once-enslaved African Americans photographed by Yuri Dojc.



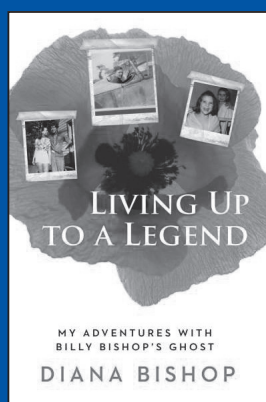
On August 4, OHS Director Janie Cooper-Wilson (right) posed for a photo with educator and historian Natasha Henry (left) after their featured presentations at the 2017 Halton Freedom Festival’s Speakers’ Forum at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington, Ontario. Janie discussed the ways in which communities and various levels of government can work together to preserve their local history. Janie drew on her own experiences preserving local history to shed light on the possibilities for other groups. Janie was a driving force in the restoration of the Oro African Church in Oro-Medonte and is the Executive Director of the SilverShoe Historical Society (SSHS), which just celebrated its 20th anniversary of working towards the preservation of the Bethel Union Pioneer Cemetery. The SSHS was incorporated as an affiliate of the OHS in 2007.

FROM THE BOOKSHELF

Dr. Cynthia Comacchio
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As we move steadily closer to the autumn equinox, the usual signs of seasonal change are already visible in Ontario: trees “turning,” days shortening (or nights lengthening!), breezes with that autumnal nip, cold mornings and evenings. For summer-lovers, these hints of what’s to come are all-too-soon, after what has been pretty much a ‘non-summer’ in these parts. Nonetheless, autumn brings with it the sense of new beginnings for many of us, with schedules and routines perhaps bent a little in the past few months now—like it or not—back on track. The books reviewed here today are an interesting mix, but each will happily fill the evening hours now that it’s getting too cold to be outdoors!

PLACES AND PERSONALITIES OF OUR PAST



Living Up to a Legend: My Adventures with Billy Bishop's Ghost

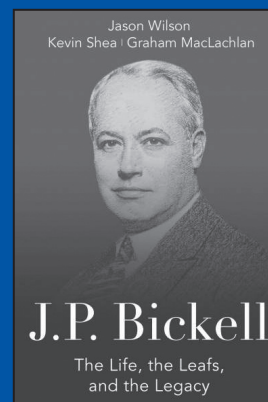
DIANA BISHOP

Toronto, Dundurn Press, 2017;
Paperback; 213 pp.
www.dundurn.ca

Even in a nation where learning our own history is not a major social-political objective, most Canadians at least recognize the name Billy Bishop. The subject of many stories and a significant number of biographies, Bishop is a historical figure with films, documentaries, countless websites, and an airport commemorating him. Diana Bishop is Billy Bishop’s granddaughter, and the daughter of the Second World War pilot and military historian Arthur Bishop. She has had a lengthy and impressive career as a television news reporter in Canada and for NBC News. She is also an independent filmmaker, having produced a well-received documentary about her famous grandfather in 2002, “A Hero to Me.”

As this open and honest memoir reveals, much of her childhood was spent “living up to a legend,” or at least trying to. The author was both fortunate and unfortunate in having two such exemplary individuals influencing her childhood days. Although not nearly as well known, her father Arthur was a stalwart and reliable Second World War pilot, an RCAF officer who flew Spitfires. He only shot down one German plane, but he constantly risked his own life to make the sorties to which he was assigned. He earned a measure of fame, enhanced by his father’s legend, but had to live the rest of his life constantly being compared to his father, the mythic Billy Bishop. Even more so than Diana, Arthur Bishop endeavoured to live up to the legend. While Billy Bishop died at the age of 62 (when the author was only three years old), his “ghost” “haunted” her as a child. “The way everyone talked about Billy (...) it was clear he was a God in our family, so I figured that even if I couldn’t see him, Grandpa Billy was always around anyway—like a ghost hiding in the house.”

What eventually caused young Diana more angst than having the ghost of her grandfather “always around” were the ways in which that ghost, Bishop’s larger than life history, and his assured place in Canadian history, represented a standard to which her father and all subsequent Bishops had to measure up—and could expect to be found wanting. At the same time, for a child growing up in a family that did not match the 1950s nostalgic ideal, “Billy was my centre of gravity and I counted on all the stuff I knew about him not to change. I needed to feel that something in my life would always be what I knew it to be.” Of course, leaving childhood behind brought her to the realization that things could not remain unchanged, and that a ghost, even a benign and famous one, could not serve as a “centre of gravity.” Ultimately this book is about how Diana Bishop began to understand and develop empathy for her father’s struggles—the struggles of many war veterans, the majority of whom kept their traumatic memories repressed and did not seek help for what was then considered shameful and unmanly. It recounts, with grace and sensitivity, how she stopped thinking of her father as the “anti-hero” in comparison to her grandfather, instead seeing him as heroic in his own right, if not as astonishing a hero as his own father. This is a compelling memoir that really captures the postwar domestic reality for many veterans’ families—few of whom then realized that it was not “just our family.”



J.P. Bickell: The Life, the Leafs, and the Legacy

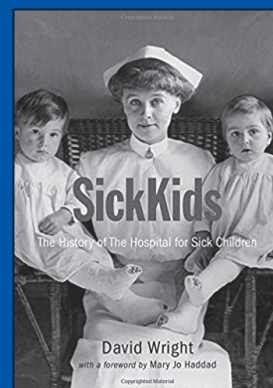
JASON WILSON, KEVIN SHEA, &
GRAHAM MACLACHLAN

Toronto, Dundurn Press, 2017;
Paperback; 238 pp.
www.dundurn.ca

John Paris Bickell accomplished much in his life and career—which coincided with Billy Bishop’s—in business, in philanthropy, and in the support and cultivation of the Maple Leafs hockey team. Moreover, he ensured that his contributions would continue by providing for the establishment of the J.P. Bickell Foundation upon his death in 1953. Yet who recognizes his name?

Bickell’s biography began as a personal project for one of his first cousins, who did not know him personally and knew little about him besides the family lore that depicted him as an admirable, cultured, generous, and astute businessman. Graham MacLachlan shares Bickell’s involvement in both business and hockey; it was their common interest in hockey that inspired him to pursue his cousin’s story. Bickell bequeathed the Leafs an award (the J.P. Bickell Memorial Award) for “outstanding service to the organization,” which fundamentally describes his own involvement with the team and his substantial financial support for its home—the historic Maple Leaf Gardens (now Ryerson University’s Mattamy Athletic Centre).

Once MacLachlan discovered just how connected Bickell was to the early twentieth-century Canadian business, political, and sports elite, he set himself to correct this “historical disservice to a man who ranks as one of the most important builders of Toronto’s institutional landscape, and, indeed, the modern Canadian nation”. With the involvement of historians Jason Wilson and Kevin Shea to add to his personal research, the fascinating life of this self-made mining magnate, a “son of the manse” from humble beginnings who became Ontario’s first and most important gold producer, his previously unknown story is compellingly outlined. It is remarkable that no previous biography exists; this one definitively fills in that gap with a well-written and well-illustrated account of John Paris Bickell’s life and times and, most importantly, of his central and “under-celebrated” role in city, provincial, and national society and business during his lifetime—and his remarkable influence continues to this day.



SickKids: The History of The Hospital for Sick Children

DAVID WRIGHT

University of Toronto Press, 2016;
Cloth; 480 pp.
www.utppublishing.com

The Bickell biography described above brings to light his remarkable provision (in perpetuity) for the SickKids Research Institute, which did not exist prior to the posthumous establishment of his charitable foundation. David Wright, McGill history professor and former McMaster Hannah/AMS Chair in the History of Medicine, details the official history of the world-renowned pediatric hospital from its modest beginnings as a charitable project. Wright tells the hospital’s story beyond the conventional chronicle of most commissioned histories, keeping, as he asserts, a “critical eye” on some of its policies, practices, and events—most notably the notorious headline-capturing series of alleged “baby murders” involving nurse Susan Nelles in the early 1980s. He gives readers a sense of the complexities surrounding SickKids’ genesis, the continuities grounded in its commitment to the health of children worldwide, and to its innovative research and development.

Drawing on the rich hospital archives—many never before examined—contemporary newspapers, photographs, advertisements, and medical writings (for both professional use, public education, oral histories of past, and current associates), this book is comprehensive without leaving the reader overwhelmed by a running litany of names and dates. Wright carefully contextualizes the hospital’s 1875 founding by an ambitious “ladies committee” drawn primarily from Toronto’s prominent families and motivated by a sense of feminine Christian duty. Their leader, Elizabeth McMaster, was quickly surpassed by John Ross Robertson, an important local publisher, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. Robertson’s generous funding of a hospital that was relying on precarious charitable donations

effectively gave him the reins until his death in 1918. Wright’s chapter on Robertson, one of those ubiquitous but shadowy historical figures, gives the “paper tyrant” his due without in any way slighting the heroic, if necessarily limited, efforts of McMaster and her “ladies”. Another “larger than life” figure who was central in the creation of SickKids, the famous “baby doctor” Alan Brown, is also intriguingly portrayed. The early twentieth century’s pre-eminent Canadian pediatrician—among the first to pursue this area of specialization, then in its infancy—Brown was hired by Robertson based on his brash avowal to halve the hospital’s infant mortality rate, which he succeeded in doing. He went on to serve as physician-in-chief for several decades, all the while making important contributions of his own to “scientific baby feeding” through long-running government consultancies at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels (including a prominent role in the Dionne Quintuplets story), and through publication of the first doctor-written childrearing manual (*The Normal Child*, 1922). He also played a significant role in the invention of the famous “mush” known as pablum.

This book meets all scholarly qualifications while remaining accessible and readable. The historical photographs alone, some full page in size, tell stories about childhood, social welfare, health, and medicine in the past. SickKids, as it is now known after a recent re-branding, has played an enormous role in the intertwined histories of all these.

If you know of any recently published works on Ontario’s history that specifically deal with local or regional history, please contact *Bulletin* Editor Daniel Dishaw at ddishaw@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca

A note to authors: Though we are pleased to accept your submissions for review, the timeline for publication in the *Bulletin* may vary. Due to a high volume of submissions, please be patient. We will publish a review for your book as soon as we can!



On June 29, the Ontario Historical Society hosted Trinity Theatre’s Peer Leaders Youth Workshop at John McKenzie House. The annual visit provides a great opportunity for students to learn more about not-for-profit organizations and how to discover their local history. This year, Trinity Workshop organizers set up a camera for professional profile headshots. Every student who attended now has a portrait to use on their LinkedIn profile and for other online networking needs.

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institutions and non-member individuals for \$42.00; and to non-member organizations and institutions for \$52.50. Membership inquiries should be directed to Christina Perfetto at members@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca.

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...‘OWHN CONFERENCE’ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and gender history in Ontario, with a special emphasis on the teaching and study of that history. The OWHN was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization through affiliation with the OHS in April 1990.

For more on the Ontario Women’s History Network, please visit <https://owhn-rhfo.ca>. For more information on the Ontario Women’s History Network Conference, see <https://owhn-rhfo.ca/activities>. For more information on the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre, see <https://laurentian.ca/news/islc-opens-at-lu>.



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