

OHS BULLETIN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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NOT JUST NUMBERS: REPRESENTATION AND IDENTITY IN THE CANADIAN CENSUS



Photo - Sophia Burke

In each round of Not Just Numbers, participants are given new materials to examine. In this photo, participants begin to explore historic census documents as a group.

Daniel Panneton, Not Just Numbers
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How do you use historical documents to engage an increasingly diverse Canadian public in a dialogue about representation and identity? The Toronto Ward Museum is attempting to answer that question with Not Just Numbers: Representation in the Canadian Census (NJN), an interactive game that toured Canada throughout 2017. NJN highlights the shortcomings of historical census data, while drawing attention to the presence of ethnic and religious diversity throughout Canada's history. Using primary documents such as Canadian censuses, participants engage with questions surrounding representation and identity that have both contemporary and historical relevance.

The game is structured around a selection of historical case studies that relate to an individual or family. These cases, researched by Project Lead Daniel Panneton, touch upon a variety of relevant socio-cultural topics, including religious identity, ethnic identity, national identity, indigeneity, LGBTQ2S+ topics, physical ability, gender, and class.

Participants are divided up into small groups, and each group is assigned a unique case. In the first round, the participants are given three clues about their subject (individual or family). The group is encouraged to speculate about who their subject(s) may have been, using only the limited information provided in the clues (name, occupation, religious

'NOT JUST NUMBERS' CONTINUED ON PAGE 4...

IN THIS ISSUE

NOT JUST NUMBERS	1
BRINGING THE ALEXANDER HENRY HOME	1
PRESIDENT'S REPORT	2
TRIBUTE TO MARY BEACOCK FRYER	2
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT	3
VALUES AND VISIONS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLING	4
MUSEUM MILESTONES	5
THE BELLE VUE CONSERVANCY	5
BARRY PENHALE'S ONTARIO	6
FROM THE BOOKSHELF	7

THE LAKEHEAD TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM: BRINGING THE ALEXANDER HENRY HOME



Photo - Paul Morralee

The Alexander Henry makes port at its new location in Thunder Bay. She was towed over 1,000 miles through the Great Lakes on her journey home to the Lakehead.

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Built on the mining, trade, and raw materials industries, Thunder Bay has a long and rich history with transportation. The newly formed Lakehead Transportation Museum Society (LTMS) strives to commemorate that extensive history, with a particular interest in preserving the historic vessels and vehicles that define the City's past.

Soon after incorporating through affiliation with the Ontario Historical Society (June 2016), the LTMS faced its first major challenge. In September 2016 the LTMS Board of Directors learned that a former Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker, the Alexander Henry, was to be scrapped or sunk.

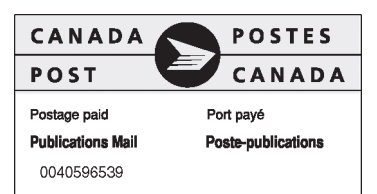
Built in 1957-58 at the former Port Arthur Shipbuilding Co. Ltd. in Thunder Bay, the Alexander Henry entered service on July 1, 1959, as an icebreaker and buoy tender for the Canadian government's Department of Transport Marine Service. She was transferred to the newly created Canadian Coast Guard in 1962. The Henry is 60.29 metres (197.8 feet) in length with a beam of 13.29 m (43.6 feet), a draught of 5.46 m (17.9 feet), and a massive derrick for lifting five-tonne buoys in and out of the water.

After a storied 26-year career, the Henry was de-commissioned by the Canadian Coast Guard in 1984 and transformed into a museum ship by the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes in Kingston in 1985. Unfortunately, the Canadian government sold the museum's property to a private developer in 2016, and the museum – including the Henry – was forced to move on. The massive icebreaker was then towed to a temporary docking site in Picton, Ontario.

A deal was reached with the Marine Museum shortly thereafter: if the LTMS would pay for the towing costs to bring the Henry to Thunder Bay,

'ALEXANDER HENRY' CONTINUED ON PAGE 4...

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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The OHS has much to celebrate as we begin to close the books on 2017. I want to reflect on some of our achievements this past year, starting with a very successful OHS conference in Thunder Bay during Heritage Week, 2017. The Society is proud to work with so many dedicated organizations and individuals across Northwestern Ontario, including the Lakehead Transportation Museum Society (LTMS). The LTMS's article on page 1 of this *Bulletin* chronicles their most recent achievement: negotiating the return of a decommissioned Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker vessel to its home in Thunder Bay. Impressive work!

On the topic of built heritage, the OHS has made some major improvements to increase accessibility of the John McKenzie House this year. Upgrades to the front steps and a freshly paved asphalt driveway provide safer access for persons with disabilities. The OHS has also seen a significant increase in rental requests for the John McKenzie House in recent months. We are proud to announce that community groups and local heritage organizations are using the house more and more, forging stronger ties between the community and this historic home—a crucial factor for ensuring the continued preservation of any heritage building. In order to better share the home's history with the community, the main conference room at John McKenzie House now features a small historical exhibit on the McKenzie family, their place in Willowdale's history, and the long process of restoration initiated by the OHS in 1992.

The Society is also pleased to reflect on our expanding partnerships with a few of the universities located near our headquarters in North York. The OHS served as a co-op placement for public history and public archaeology students from both York University and the University of Toronto in 2017. The Society is working on similar partnerships with local university history departments for the winter 2018 semester.

Our partnership with York University and the Archives of Ontario in 2017 was particularly rewarding. The OHS held its 129th Annual General Meeting in the York University Senate Chambers, and our OHS symposium "Active Archives: Bringing Ontario's History Online" was held in partnership with the Archives of Ontario on the York campus. The symposium was a big success, drawing a diverse crowd of students, genealogists, archivists, and historians interested in digital history. OHS Communications and Outreach Coordinator Daniel Dishaw also attended the Student Public History Conference at York. The OHS is committed to empowering the next generation of historians, and we look forward to maintaining that commitment in the new year.

Finally, as the OHS continues to look forward, we have recognized the pressing need for a more effective digital infrastructure. In order to better serve our members and subscribers, I am very pleased to announce that the OHS is now engaged in the creation of a new online platform. The Society was ineligible for funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to begin



Photo - Daniel Dishaw

At the 2017 OHS Honours and Awards Ceremony, OHS President Caroline Di Cocco (left) and OHS Honours and Awards Chair Ian Radforth (far right) presented the 2016 President's Award to the Township of Oro Medonte for the restoration of Oro African Church. On hand to receive the award were Oro Medonte Mayor Harry Hughes (centre left), and the Township's Communications Supervisor, Samah Othman (centre right). The Township of Oro-Medonte undertook a highly successful fundraising campaign to save the building which drew vital attention to the history of the early Black settlers of the area, many of whom defended Upper Canada during the War of 1812. Nominations for 2017 can be submitted at www.ontariohistoricalsociety.ca under "Programs".

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

building the platform designed under the OHS Reach project. However, the need is so pressing that we have begun soliciting private donations in order to move forward with Phase One, the construction of a new website with a new membership and subscriber management system. This new platform will greatly increase our effectiveness as an organization. Any donations toward this initiative would be greatly appreciated. Cheques dated in December will receive a 2017 charitable tax receipt. The OHS has engaged an innovative Toronto-based design agency that boasts extensive experience in working with not-for-profits. The process will begin with Phase One, with additional features to be implemented as funding allows. The Society's members and subscribers can look forward to many positive changes in 2018.

A TRIBUTE TO MARY BEACOCK FRYER

Daniel Dishaw, Communications & Outreach Coordinator
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Photo - courtesy of the Fryer family

The OHS was deeply saddened to learn that Mary Beacock Fryer passed away on October 29, 2017. An accomplished author, historian, and teacher, Mary earned an Honours BA in Geography from the University of Toronto in 1952 and an MA in Historical Geography from the University of Edinburgh in 1954. Upon returning to Canada, she worked as a teaching assistant, a map curator, and a town planner before beginning her career as an author in 1974.

Mary was Dundurn's first author, and went on to publish over 15 titles with the Ontario-focused publishing house. Her books have had a significant impact on Ontario's historical discourse and she leaves behind an indelible legacy of work for future generations to build upon. Mary's work was recognized with a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal,

presented in 2012 for her service to Canadian History.

Mary was a long-time OHS donor and member who contributed to the Society's events and programs over several decades. As the author of many books dealing with Canadian/Ontario history, Mary led several OHS workshops across Ontario. She was also a featured speaker at the Ontario Historical Society's symposium, "1,000 Years of History", where she delivered a presentation on the United Empire Loyalists, one of Mary's areas of expertise as an author and historian.

She is mourned by her husband of 60 years, Geoffrey, their children Barbara (John), Elswyth (Andrew), and Alex (Claudia), and their beloved grandchildren Caleb, Andrew, Adam, and Timothy. We would like to offer our condolences to Mary's friends and family.



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Rob Leverty, Executive Director
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In April 2003, I was driving the late, great Dennis Pollack, then Head Gardener of Black Creek Pioneer Village, to an OHS Heritage Gardening workshop in northern Ontario. South of Huntsville, Dennis insisted that I get off Hwy. 11 and directed me down a country lane. I still remember that the morning mist was slowly rising when we suddenly came upon a magnificent and memorable heritage site—a squared-log church.

Dennis and I spent a good half hour marvelling at this early Upper Canada church that somehow still survived on the “near-northern frontier of Old Ontario.”

As Elizabeth Luther writes in *Pioneering Spirit—Ontario Places of Worship, Then and Now*, “Built by the Wesleyan Methodists, the Madill Church was constructed of squared timbers on land donated by John Madill, in 1873. Each family in the pioneer congregation contributed two logs and assisted in the construction. Including the base, ten logs form each wall. . . Arched Gothic windows, unusual in this type of building, also give the Madill Church a jaunty, confident facade.”

Last July, before speaking at the Huntsville Historical Society’s AGM, long-time local heritage activists Allen and Tricia Markle wanted me to see a beautiful historic church that was threatened with demolition. Of course I agreed, but little did I know that it would be the historic Madill Church.

The current owners, The United Church of Canada, no longer had a worship-related use for the building, and wanted to divest itself of the building as soon as possible.

Neither the federal government nor the provincial government were interested in intervening. Although the Town of Huntsville did not want to acquire the church either, Teri Souter, Manager of Arts, Culture & Heritage for the town convened a public meeting on August 17 “to facilitate the formation of a stand-alone not-for-profit organization interested in assuming ownership of the Madill Church”.



Photo - Rob Leverty

Constructed in 1873, the Madill Church remains in excellent condition and has never been moved from its original location, just southwest of Huntsville, Ontario.

Also on November 18th, the OHS incorporated the Rella Braithwaite Black History Foundation. The foundation is named after Rella Marjorie Braithwaite, a descendant of the Wellington County pioneers that settled in the first African Canadian pioneer community formed in Upper Canada in the late 1700s.

Author and historian Rella Braithwaite is recognized as a stalwart of the African-Canadian community for the significant contributions she’s made to Black historical research and youth education over the course of her 50-year career.

The purpose of the foundation is to research, collect, preserve, and disseminate history and resource materials pertaining to the stories, lives, and experiences of early Black settlers who lived in the province of Ontario and across Canada.

In 2018, the Braithwaite Foundation hopes to launch a new website and expand their Black history resources by offering important historical information online. We are honoured that this new Black history foundation chose to incorporate through affiliation with OHS.

Earlier this year, the OHS also incorporated St. Mark’s Coptic Museum and the Deseronto & District Historical Society.

One of the biggest challenges the OHS now faces—I call it the tale of two societies—is that while we must continue to work and publish in print (and answer our phone), we must also upgrade and expand our online presence in the digital age as fast as possible to serve our members, subscribers, and the general public who wish to interact online with the Society.

The Society has been a publisher of Ontario’s history since 1899. We’re the only provincial historical society in Canada that still produces a scholarly peer-reviewed journal. *Ontario History (OH)* is published twice a year.

I am pleased to report that the Society has made the 2017 issues of *OH* available online through a new partnership with the not-for-profit Canadian scholarly publisher Érudit this year. Érudit’s online platform, consulted by over 1,100 subscribing institutions, now hosts both the Spring and Fall (2017) editions of *OH*, greatly increasing the journal’s accessibility and reach.

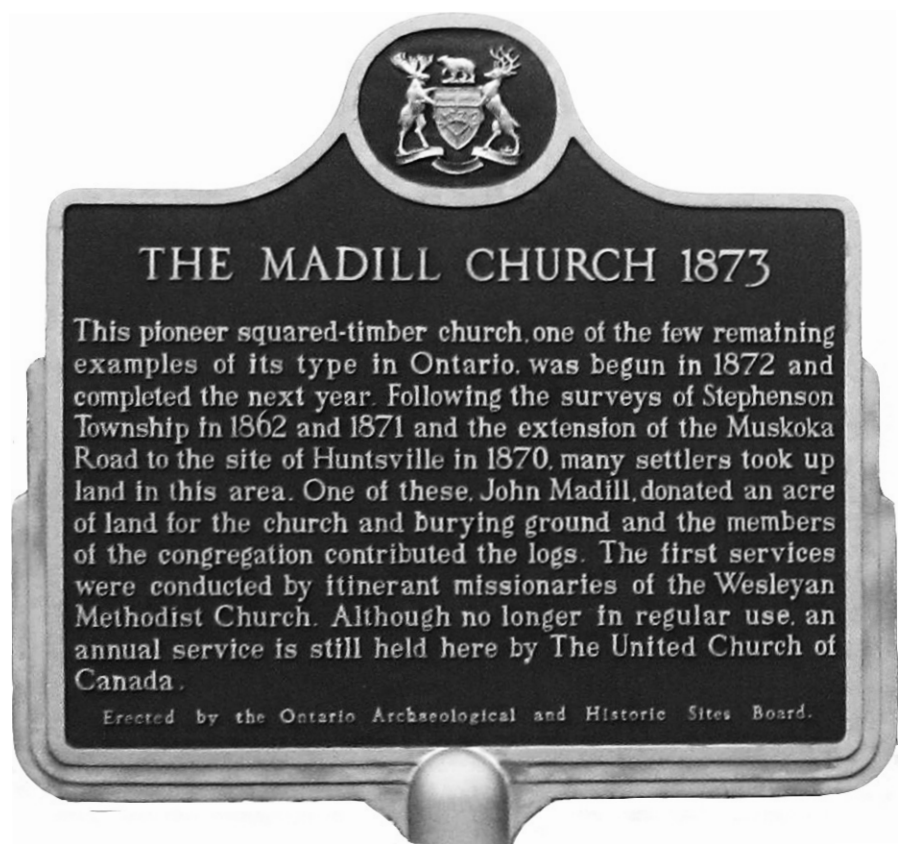
In addition, we have just been informed that Érudit has selected the Fall 2017 edition of *OH* as a highlighted publication in their latest “Month in Review” email campaign, under “History”.

I’m also pleased to announce that the Black history article in the 2017 *OH* Spring issue entitled “‘Justice was Refused Me, I Resolved to Free Myself’: John W. Lindsay. Finding Elements of American Freedoms in British Canada, 1805-1876” by Dann J. Broyld will be featured in Érudit’s February 2018 “Salon” email campaign, under the theme of “Afro-Canadians: Historical and Social Perspectives”.

That is exciting news to celebrate! Congratulations to *OH* Editor Tory Tronrud, *OH* Book Review Editor Alison Norman, and all the writers who submitted articles. I would also like to thank all the authors and publishers who submitted their works for review in *OH*, and all the scholars who conducted peer reviews, upholding *Ontario History*’s reputation for outstanding scholarly integrity and quality.

It remains a great honour and privilege for me to represent you and work on your behalf. The OHS exists because of you: our members, subscribers, donors, and volunteers. I am inspired by your dedication, your generosity, and your commitment to making Ontario a more decent and civilized place for all of us to live.

My warmest regards and best wishes for 2018!



Over the past ten years, the OHS has witnessed an unprecedented divestment of our irreplaceable heritage assets in communities across the province—often under the threat of deliberate neglect or demolition.

As members of OHS, you know all too well that unless our fellow citizens step forward and establish a not-for-profit corporation to assume stewardship and defend the public interest, these heritage legacies will be lost forever.

I am pleased to report that on November 18, the OHS Board of Directors incorporated the Madill Church Preservation Society (MCPS). This new not-for-profit historical organization will now acquire the church for a nominal fee and The United Church, to its credit, will transfer \$10,000 to the MCPS—funds originally allocated for the demolition of the church.

I want to thank everyone who worked so hard to save this provincially, perhaps nationally significant heritage site. I also salute OHS Director, Janie Cooper-Wilson, who worked the phones over the summer encouraging individuals to form a new legal entity that could take control of this irreplaceable log church. And of course, Dennis Pollack would thank you.

VALUES AND VISIONS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLING

Paul Axelrod, Enoch Turner Schoolhouse
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By Education, I mean not the mere acquisition of certain arts, or certain branches of knowledge, but that instruction and discipline which qualify and dispose the subjects of it for their appropriate duties and employments of life, as Christians, as persons of business, and also as members of the civil community in which they live.

—Egerton Ryerson, Superintendent of Education, Upper Canada, 1847

Ontario is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child. Learners in the province’s education system will develop the knowledge, skills and characteristics that will lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens.

—Ontario Ministry of Education, *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*, 2014

What is schooling for, and how have its goals changed over time? Do Egerton Ryerson’s views of public education in the 19th century have any relevance today? How have school design and architecture affected teaching and learning? Are contemporary schools socially and culturally equitable? Why do the arts matter in the classroom?

These and other questions are being taken up in a four-part series, sponsored by the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse Foundation in Toronto, which began in November 2017 and will continue in January 2018. The sessions feature presentations and panel discussions on a range of educational subjects. The series is designed for a broad audience interested in the past, present, and future of Canadian education.

Speakers include a wide range of educators, academics, and community leaders whose work, writing, and community engagement have enhanced our understanding of the schooling world.

Annie Kidder, Executive Director of the advocacy organization, People for Education; Steve Alsop, a science and environmental studies educator at York University; and Jonathan Kakegamic, Principal of First Nations Junior and Senior School of Toronto kicked off the series (on November 14) with an interactive discussion of the aims of public education. The session was chaired by historian Paul Axelrod, who set the context by recalling the origins of public schooling in Canada.

Session Two (November 28), entitled “Designs for Learning: If the Walls Could Speak”, asked how educational design, architecture, and the construction of schooling spaces reflect social values, community life, and

the interests of neighbourhoods. Panelists were Brenda Webster, Manager of Planning at Waterfront Toronto; architectural historian Shannon Kyles; educational historian and commentator, Josh Cole; and Martin Kohn, partner at Kohn Shnier Architects.

Public schools, ideally, encourage cultural diversity, social cohesion and equality of opportunity. Panelists in Session Three (January 16), “From Segregation to Integration?” ask how fully these goals are being realized. Willa Black, V.P. Corporate Affairs and Social Responsibility at Cisco Canada, will chair the discussion which includes: Jane Griffith, a historian of First Nations residential schooling; Funke Aladejebi, who has written about the experiences of African Canadians; Julia Palm, a doctoral student



Photo - Leonard Knott

Panelists pose for a photo at the first instalment of the four part series on education. Left to right are: Steve Alsop, Annie Kidder, Paul Axelrod, and Jonathan Kakegamic.

exploring the lives of LGBTQ students and teachers; and Karen Robson, a McMaster University professor who has co-authored a study on food insecurity in Toronto schools.

The final session (January 28), “Why the Arts Matter,” demonstrates the value and dynamism of arts education. Kathleen Gould Lundy, an arts educator, will lead a group of teachers through dramatic performances that will illustrate innovative teaching techniques that inspire and engage students.

Through informed and critical discussions, the series probes the possibilities and challenges of public schooling. All sessions are being held at the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, 106 Trinity St., Toronto, and begin at 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

The Enoch Turner Schoolhouse Foundation became an institutional member of the OHS in 2016. For information on how to obtain free tickets, go to www.enochturnerschoolhouse.ca.

...‘NOT JUST NUMBERS’ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

affiliation, etc.). In the second round, they are given three-foot-wide printouts of census entries that relate directly to their case. They are asked to explore the documents, mining whatever information they feel is relevant and drawing further conclusions about their individual. In the third and final round, documents such as photographs, letters, birth records, and maps are distributed. These documents give meaning and context to the often vague information provided by the census and the clues. After the final round, each group shares details about their case with the rest of the participants, highlighting what they found surprising or challenging about the documents.

Not Just Numbers debuted in 2017 as part of the Myseum of Toronto’s second annual Intersections Festival. Further editions were held at the Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa, the Toronto Public Library, the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax, and the Kingston Frontenac Public Library. NJN received funding from the Community Fund for Canada’s 150th through the Toronto Foundation, Ontario 150, and the Myseum of Toronto, and partnered with over a dozen heritage and community organizations. The Ontario Historical Society (OHS) joined NJN as a supporting partner. OHS staff also served as facilitators at a number of NJN events throughout 2017.

In 2018, thanks to support from the MacFeeters Family Fund, the Toronto Ward Museum will be developing an educators’ edition of Not Just Numbers, which will provide interested teachers with the instructions, case studies, and materials needed to hold their very own in-class events. For more information about Not Just Numbers, visit www.wardmuseum.ca/notjustnumbers.

they could purchase the ship for a few dollars. The catch was that the ship had to be moved out by July 1, 2017.

Saving the Henry became phase one of the LTMS’s goal of establishing a transportation museum in Thunder Bay. After months of discussions, negotiations, and fundraising, things started to move quickly after June 12, when the City of Thunder Bay officially allocated \$125,000 to assist the LTMS with the cost of towing the Henry home (\$250,000). Five days later, the tugboat Radium Yellowknife left for Picton to tow the Henry to Toronto where on June 20, the tug Salvage Monarch took over towing the Henry on the approximately 1,000 mile journey through the Great Lakes. She arrived back home in Thunder Bay on June 27, 2017.

The Henry was docked at a private facility until lease negotiations were finalized. On November 23, she was finally towed to her permanent, waterfront location on Pier 6 at Marina Park in Thunder Bay. Restoration work has already begun, and there is much to do. A number of the crew quarters have deteriorated significantly, and are being refinished. The LTMS and member organizations will use these rooms for artefact display and exhibition space, showcasing other areas of Thunder Bay’s transportation history.

The ship will also be used for tours, special events, and museum exhibition space. As the LTMS works toward the establishment of a Thunder Bay Transportation Museum, the Alexander Henry offers much-needed exhibition/programming space. A grand opening and re-dedication ceremony is planned for the spring of 2018, when the Alexander Henry will be open to the public.

MUSEUM MILESTONES

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The lead story in this issue of “Museum Milestones” comes from Amherstburg, in southwestern Ontario. Debra Honor explains the reasons behind and efforts towards saving and preserving Belle Vue House, an 1816 building of national significance. If you are interested in helping and supporting this worthwhile cause, please consider sending a donation to Michael Prue, treasurer of the Belle Vue Conservancy. Contact him at info@bellevueconservancy.com for further details. 100% of your contribution will be used for the core restoration of Belle Vue House.

2018 marks the 180th anniversary of the 1838 Upper Canadian Rebellion/Patriot War. To commemorate this, Windsor’s Community Museum has mounted a new permanent exhibit at the Baby House location, entitled “Windsor and the Canadian Rebellion of 1838”. Go have a look at this informative display when you next visit Windsor. In addition, a special rebellion-themed issue of the *Australasian Canadian Studies* journal will be issued in December. This volume features an introduction, five peer-reviewed articles dealing with various aspects of

the rebellion, and three book reviews. Contact journal editor Dr. Robyn Morris at robynm@uow.edu.au for information on how to obtain a copy of this special publication. Also, an extensive bibliography of published works relating to the Upper Canadian Rebellions of 1837 and 1838, which has been compiled by Chris Raible and myself, now contains over 7,000 entries. This bibliography is an expanded reference resource from the original bibliography, which was published in the Autumn 2009 edition of *Ontario History*.

Congratulations to curator Val Harrison and the staff and volunteers at the McCrae House in Guelph. An informative article by columnist Sonia Day appeared in the November 10 issue of the *Toronto Star*. Always nice to see an Ontario museum receive national newspaper coverage! Bill Poole will be leaving as Executive Director of the Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery in Waterloo, and this position will be posted in January 2018. Shelley Lucier has retired from the Sombra Museum, and Kailyn Shepley has been hired as the new curator at this Lambton County site.

Finally, I must sadly write of my dear friend Allan Anderson’s death. He had been actively involved with the Sombra Museum and the St. Clair Heritage Committee for many years. For the past three years, Allan and I, along with an editorial committee, have been working on a major publication about the Sombra Raids (a little known episode of the 1838 Upper Canadian Rebellion). This study will be published in Allan’s memory. His life was celebrated in September at a widely attended remembrance at the Sombra Museum. Condolences to his wife Jan and the Anderson family.

THE BELLE VUE CONSERVANCY

Debra Honor
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Between 1816 and 1819, Robert Reynolds, Deputy Assistant Commissary General at Fort Malden, built a beautiful home along the Detroit River that his wife, Thérèse, named “Belle Vue”. It has stood in the town of Amherstburg for 200 years as a solid reminder of our history. The building has been designated as historically significant by the federal, provincial, and municipal governments.

The federal government designated the house as “one of the finest examples of Palladian architecture in Canada”. True to Palladian style, the house is composed of three connected buildings. There is a large two-storey central block flanked by two smaller buildings, or dependencies, with one-storey rooms or “hyphens” connecting them to the main house. The house makes a long, low silhouette with low pitched roofs and tall chimneys. The large centre block was the main living space. It has a beautiful Palladian door with pedimented portico. Above it is a lovely Venetian window. Each dependency features a Palladian window set in a brick arch. The windows are all topped with winged keystones.



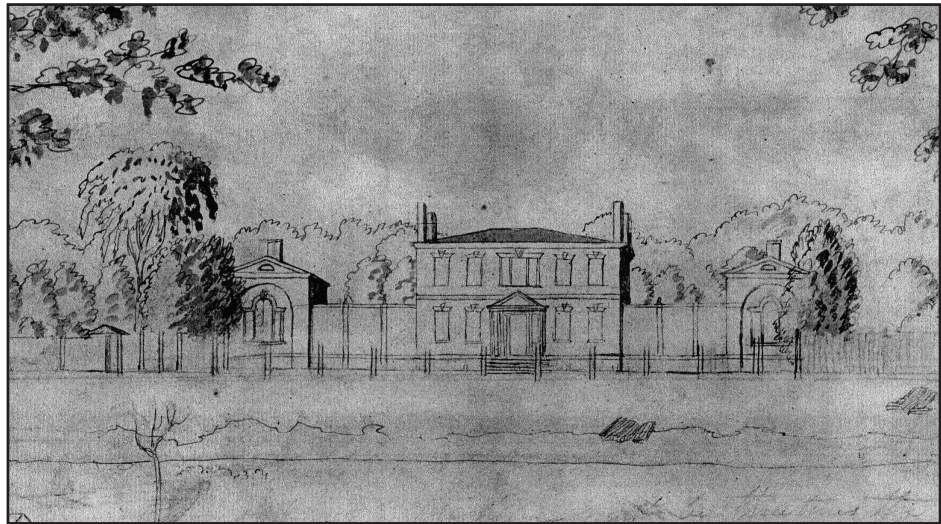
Belle Vue Veteran’s Home, 1946-1954.

Amherstburg was one of the major trading posts for the North West Fur Trading Company of Montreal run by James McGill. McGill had married a partner’s widow and raised her two sons as his own. One son, Thomas Hyppolite Trottier dit Desrivieres, married Thérèse Bouchette and they had one son, James McGill Trottier dit Desrivieres. But Thomas was killed in a “foolish duel” and Thérèse was left a widow. Thérèse then married Robert Reynolds a month after her sister Rose, married Robert’s brother, Ebenezer. As such, the Reynolds family became connected through marriage to one of the richest men in North America. This may explain how a commissary officer was able to build such a magnificent home.

Not only did Robert and Thérèse live in the house, but Robert also had two spinster sisters, Margaret and Catherine, who lived with them. In the family, Margaret was the oldest sibling and Catherine was the youngest, with about 20 years between them. Both were accomplished artists, painting landscapes of the Detroit River region. Margaret painted the 1813 scene of Amherstburg

that now hangs at the Fort Malden National Historic Site. Catherine Reynolds was an accomplished artist with a flair for architectural landscape sketches and paintings, like the one shown in the photo below.

For the past nine years, a group of concerned citizens has been lobbying to preserve Belle Vue for future generations. Through their hard work, the Town of Amherstburg came to understand the importance of this house and purchased the property in November 2016. The Belle Vue Conservancy’s mandate is to preserve the house through a partnership with the Town of Amherstburg and to raise the funds required for restoration.



Original drawing by Catherine Reynolds, 1816; owned by Mrs. H. M. Pendergast.

Please support our fundraising campaign. 100% of your contribution will be used for the restoration of Belle Vue. You will receive a full tax receipt and a Belle Vue gift. Visit amherstburg.ca/donate to help us open Belle Vue once again.

WELCOME NEW OHS MEMBERS

Since
September 2017

Peter Okonski	Rella Braithwaite Black History Foundation
Glenn Carey	Salt Springs Church Heritage Society
David Hill	Lambton College Library Resource Centre
William M. Kane	Colpoy’s Bay Women’s Institute
Trevor Parsons	Libraries for Nipissing University & Canadore College
Eric Payseur	The Friends of the Arnprior & District Museum
Érudit	Madill Church Preservation Society

BARRY PENHALE'S ONTARIO

COMMEMORATIVE TREES

Barry Penhale
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It came as no surprise when Jane and I excitedly shared word of our successful application for a commemorative Vimy Oaks Legacy tree with family and friends. It is well-known that trees and our forest heritage rank high on our list of things that really matter. We are understandably pumped with pride, especially because our tree is dedicated to two very special now-deceased gentlemen—the Bruce-County-born clergyman Andrew Lane (Jane’s Uncle Andy) and Welsh-born Tom Wilcox, who was a frequent visitor to Ontario. Andrew Lane served with the 43rd Battery Canadian Field Artillery, commissioned in 1916 by Lt. Col. David McCrae, father of John McCrae of “In Flanders Fields” fame. Tom Wilcox (Royal Artillery RA,TA) served in the Second World War in France and was a veteran of Dunkirk. Unknown to the Lane family until recently, their father had written poetry, including a special poem composed while at Vimy during the war. Upon learning of a nation-wide poetry contest in this 100th anniversary year marking the Battle of Vimy Ridge, Jane’s cousin Gordon elected to submit his father’s poem. The entire family was thrilled to learn that his poem, “Here on the Top of Vimy Ridge I Stand,” emerged as a co-winner.

The Vimy Oaks story is a very special one relating to what is generally regarded as one of the defining events in Canada’s history. It was in northern France from April 9 to April 12, 1917, that Canadian soldiers achieved what other Allied troops had failed to do—namely capture Vimy Ridge—overcoming great odds at the incredibly heavy cost of a known 1,600 casualties. Following the battle, one of the soldiers, Lieutenant Leslie Miller, picked up a handful of acorns on the scorched ridge and sent them home with the instruction they be planted on his father’s farm. Miller named the farm “The Vimy Oaks” and, all these years later, a number of majestic oaks can be seen on what is left of the farm property.

Beginning in 2014, a not-for-profit group known as the “Vimy Oaks Legacy Corporation” devised a plan to repatriate offspring of these oaks to France, to be planted adjacent to the Canadian National Vimy Memorial. They have also offered grown-in-Canada saplings for purchase by qualifying organizations and individuals. Many such trees have now been planted and stand as visible tributes to the fallen.

The decision to head to West Flamborough and pick up our sapling is one we are grateful for, otherwise we would have missed a unique slice of Canadian history. Nor would we ever have met the caring horticultural professionals entrusted as custodians of a tree like no other. The story of Connon Nurseries NVK is, I suspect, little known outside of the horticultural industry. It is the story of the vision and enterprise possessed in abundance by two immigrants to Canada—the founder, John Connon, a Scot from Aberdeen, and Cornelius Vanderkruk from Holland, whose family continues the operation today. The legacy of these two exceptional men is evident in the award-garnering, ever-expanding wholesale enterprises of almost 1,000 acres with three separate companies, all acknowledged leaders in their field. I discovered that Connon was in the military from 1916 to 1918, when the gardener from Waterdown served overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Force and earned the rank of major. Always addressed as Major Connon, he passed away in 1961 at age 89, a working partner to the end. How wonderful to know that the now huge company he had incorporated as the Connon Floral Co. Ltd. in 1906 has played such an important role in this Vimy anniversary year. A most appropriate choice!

The Vimy Oaks planted across Canada represent a unique addition to the landscape of our country. The Royal Canadian Legion (founded in 1926) and many caring municipalities and citizens have all played a part. On Canada Day, 2017, Branch 226 in Arthur, Wellington County, oversaw the planting of two Vimy Oaks at the community’s attractive and well-tended cenotaph site. This prominently located park and monument would likely not exist but for the wartime efforts of a group of area women known as “The Women’s Patriotic Association”. Their contributions made it possible for men (and sometimes boys) in the trenches of Flanders and France to feel remembered as they ripped into parcels of candy, cigarettes, and clothing. At war’s end in November 1918, the women, under the name of “The Women’s Memorial Workers”, forged ahead with their plan to acquire land and raise the necessary funds for construction of what was the first fieldstone war monument in the province. Local stonemason Ed Doherty worked with Toronto architect Major Gibson using fieldstone



Photo - Rudy Hartmann

Legion President Shawn Ankenmann (right) and *Victory at Vimy* author Ted Barris (left) at the War Memorial in Flesherton, Ontario, discussing the German mortar gun captured at Vimy.

from the area. A January 1923 edition of the *Toronto Star* stated, “It is a war memorial for which originality of design and beauty of conception cannot be equaled elsewhere in the province.” When, in 1930, the women’s organization turned the site over to the village, their generosity was accompanied by a whopping cheque for the time in the amount of \$1,100—earmarked for ongoing maintenance. This is but one example of many that prompted another *Toronto Star* feature article (Nov. 2, 1942) to label Arthur as “Canada’s Most Patriotic Village”. To this day, Arthur’s military record does the community proud. They have earned their village motto.

Our Vimy Oak has now taken hold and, with family and friends, we are anticipating an appropriate dedication gathering in 2018. It is a mere sapling at this stage but long after we have passed a massive awe-inspiring oak tree will live on as a silent tribute to those soldiers who fought to protect our freedom.

LARGER-THAN-LIFE STORIES, FROM THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW THEM BEST

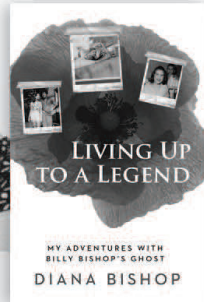
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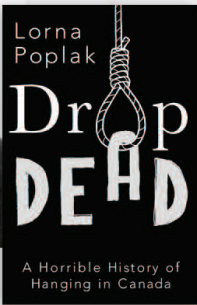
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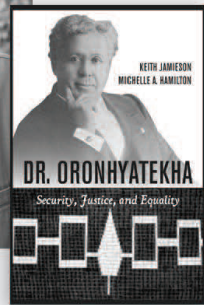
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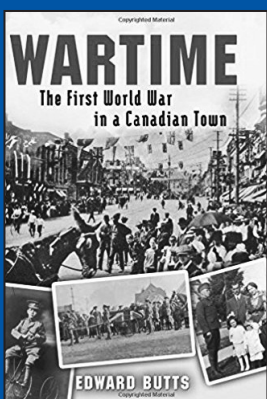
   
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FROM THE BOOKSHELF

Dr. Cynthia Comacchio
ccomac5702@rogers.com

Heading into the holiday season, when gifts take priority on many to-do lists, we can always rely on a traditional standby: books. Whether in digital or “old school” material form, they provide us with the sustenance we need on long, cold winter evenings when the 1000-channel television universe offers little of interest—a not-uncommon occurrence. The books discussed below are situated in particular Ontario towns and cities, but the stories they offer will make for happy reading for Ontario history buffs from all and any parts—or all and any readers who appreciate a fact-based story that is well told. They are offered here with best wishes to all in a season of diverse and glorious celebrations!

LOCAL HISTORIES FROM ACROSS THE PROVINCE



Wartime: The First World War in a Canadian Town

EDWARD BUTTS

James Lorimer & Company, 2017;
Paperback; 238 pp.
www.lorimer.ca

Wartime: The First World War in a Canadian Town is the latest work by Edward Butts, capturing what happened in Guelph from 1914 to 1919.

“There were lots of homes that had been affected by the war. Either somebody had been killed or somebody had been disabled,” says Butts, the author of over 20 books. “Guelph was a small town and everybody knew everybody.”

In total, 3,300 men from the Guelph area went off to fight in World War I and the names of 216 who died are listed on the cenotaph plaque.

Word of a loved one’s death was usually delivered by the Great Northwest Telegraph Company and it wasn’t uncommon for people who had someone away fighting to refuse to answer their door for fear it was bad news being delivered.

“People dreaded the sight of the telegraph boy on the street,” Butts says. “And if you went to visit someone you wouldn’t knock on their door, you would yell from the stoop instead.”

Wartime: The First World War in a Canadian Town started out as something completely different.

A project conjured up between Butts and Phil Andrews, the editor of the now defunct *Guelph Mercury* daily newspaper, saw Butts write a series of articles on the people behind the names on the cenotaph plaque honouring those killed in action during World War I. The book grew out of that.

“When you start researching, it’s no longer just a name on a plaque anymore. It’s a person that went here, that walked these streets, that went to GCVI and went to the local church,” Butts says.

Butts says publisher James Lorimer gave the go-ahead for the book, stressing that it should focus on the fact that Guelph’s experience during the war was representative of many small Canadian towns back then.

Butts spent hundreds of hours researching—at the museum, in the Guelph Public Library microfilm collection, interviewing descendants of war veterans, and going through letters mailed home from the front.

The book looks at the patriotic fervor that gripped the nation when war first broke out, and how it waned on the home front once the realities of war began to trickle back home.

Recruiters would shame young men not seen in uniform for abandoning their duties. Women handed out white feathers—a symbol of cowardice.

The book touches on the people that died and how those waiting back home were told of their deaths. He looks at what happened once they returned—many wounded ending up at the Guelph Reformatory, which was transformed into a place where recovering veterans could learn new trades.

“The constant worry back home was that loved ones weren’t going to come home or were going to come home maimed,” Butts says.

Still, life went on. Not all of it honourable.

Women had to replace men in the workplace, usually at lower pay and under the opinion that they were lesser workers because of their gender.

“People gave up good jobs to go off to war and families left behind often had to move in with relatives,” Butts says.

Fifty people who had settled in Guelph from countries the Empire now considered enemies were shipped off to detention camps.

There were shortages. White flour all but disappeared. Wood went to the war effort. Even pencils were scarce.

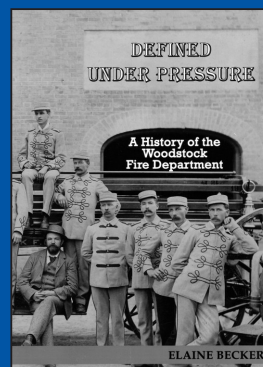
Guelph’s militia guarded key points, including the gas plant and key bridges. Plots to disrupt the war effort were discovered in other towns.

German-American spy Charles Respa even spent some time in a Guelph jail, hidden from those back in Windsor who might have had ideas of springing him from his cell.

Guelph, like many towns, celebrated the war a little early. An armistice was called to stop the fighting, touching off parades, though the official end to the war came a few weeks later.

“It was more subdued,” Butts says of the victory celebrations.

“It wasn’t as big of an outpouring of patriotism as it was at the beginning of the war. A lot of people had been affected.”



Defined Under Pressure: A History of the Woodstock Fire Department

ELAINE BECKER

Oxford Historical Society, 2016;
Paperback; 290 pp.
info@oxhs.ca

Defined Under Pressure commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Woodstock Fire Department, as old as Canada itself. The book and exhibit both entitled *Defined Under Pressure: A History of the Woodstock Fire Department* are a joint project between the Oxford Historical Society, the Woodstock Museum National Historic Site, and the Woodstock Fire Department to mark the 150th anniversary of the fire department being established in the old city hall, currently the home of the Woodstock Museum.

Elaine Becker is especially interested, and well-positioned to chronicle the department’s development to the present day, thanks to a very personal connection, one even deeper than her hometown roots. The book is dedicated to her grandfather, Graham Stafford Hayes. Hayes became chief of the Woodstock Fire Department in 1946, after 26 years of service. Sadly, he died later that year, probably of an illness related to his long career in firefighting. She never knew him, but the painstaking research she undertook for this project uncovered many of the details of his public life in service to his community. “Service”, in fact, is what this book is about, and more specifically, given its nature, the subject is service carried out consistently and dutifully under the occupational pressures unique to the hazardous work of firefighting.

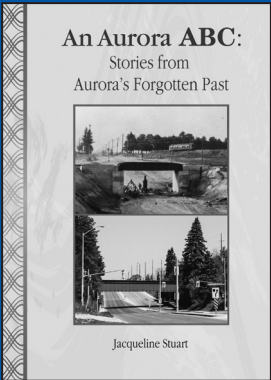
Becker’s own devotion to local history is demonstrated in her careful use of the local newspaper, the *Sentinel-Review*, as well as in the department’s own archives, most notably its daily logs, available from 1902. The first four chapters are a chronological history of the fire department, but there are also chapters on community interests of the department such as their work with the Salvation Army, which dates back to 1921, as well as the Victorian Order of Nurses.

Other chapters explore loss of life, deceased-as-active firemen, and a chronological list of fires.

The book got its name from the massive change that took place in the

department in 1881, when the city installed a water hydrant system and disbanded the former system that involved three departments and hundreds of volunteers.

Before it became a professional fire department, Becker said the organization was more like a social club, where firefighters would vote for their chief. Before 1881, there was a volunteer fire department; the introduction of a water hydrant system in Woodstock led to the creation of a paid department, Becker explains.



An Aurora ABC: Stories from Aurora's Forgotten Past

JAQUELINE STUART

Aurora Historical Society, 2016;
Paperback; 198 pp.
www.aurorahs.com

When it comes to Aurora history, Jacqueline Stuart is not just a local history who participates actively in the Aurora Historical Society, but is also, in fact, its first curator.

Disturbing and moving: two words that come to mind when local historian Jacqueline Stuart explains how she uncovered the story of a little-known Chinese immigrant who came to Aurora in the early 1900s and forged a successful career as a laundryman.

When he died in the 1930s, she found accounts of Aurora bigwigs saying he was a “well-respected” member of the community. But, would any of them have gone as far as to call him a friend?

Stuart suspects not, but his story can be found under the letter “I” for “Isolation” in her new book, *An Aurora ABC: Stories from Aurora's Forgotten Past*.

Set to be available to the general public at the end of the month, *An Aurora ABC* is published in association with the Aurora Historical Society and provides a unique look at the people, places, and things that made Aurora what it is today, stories that might be a little less conventional than your average Aurora history.

“A” might obviously stand for “Aurora” and detail how the Town got its name, but come “B”, all bets are off.

“This is part of my general wish to tell some stories that hadn’t been told, at length, anyway,” says Stuart, the Society’s former curator who retired in 2006, of the book that has been in the making for nearly a decade. “I didn’t want to go on about our first reeve and the obvious stories. When I heard about this

man in particular several years ago, I was struck by the notion of isolation.”

“[My first question in choosing my topics] was, did it interest me? The second thing in the back of my mind was, could I relate this story to something that people can see today so people who arrived in Aurora last week could drive around, see this building and read something more about it?” She says she didn’t meet that objective for all 26 letters, but the holdouts are no less interesting. One such example can be found in the commercial maps of Aurora versus their official counterparts. The commercial maps of a certain vintage often have the word “Cherry” overlaid on Aurora’s southwest quadrant with little or no explanation.

“Did people who lived down there talk about living in Cherry?” Stuart ponders. “I tried to find out some background on that.”

In her 25 years working at the former Aurora Museum, Ms. Stuart was tasked with carrying out research enquiries as varied as the people who came through the door or picked up the phone to call. Through the course of finding the answers to their questions, she would find interesting tidbits that she filed away mentally for later.

By the time she was ready to retire, she had decided that it was time to clear out the mental notebook and set it all down on paper.

A book wasn’t necessarily the intention, however, but the stories kept mounting. Aurora, she says, is not necessarily more “interesting” than any other growing Ontario community, but it has that indefinable extra something that keeps her coming back for more and delving deeper into its history.

“It is wonderfully satisfying,” says Stuart about sharing this history with readers. “I don’t want to sound too highfalutin about this, but it is not just personally satisfying, you think maybe someone else has acquired a little bit more interest in the history of the town, which might auger well for the future preservation or interpretation or exploitation in a positive way. Spreading the word is good.”

Also good: She thinks she just might have enough tidbits left over for a second book but, it’s just a matter of finding the time.

“The Society is delighted and honoured to play the role of publisher of this amazing book—the first newly written general history of our town in decades,” says Bill Albino, President of the Aurora Historical Society. “The word is getting out and the enthusiasm is fantastic. We have already bumped up our initial print run twice.”

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!

The *OHS Bulletin* is the newsletter of the Ontario Historical Society (OHS).

March issue copy deadline: **Friday, February 16, 2018.**

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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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