

# BULLETIN

THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LOCAL SOCIETIES COMMITTEE

40 EGLINTON AVENUE EAST  
TORONTO 12 ONTARIO

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## Editorial Comment

We were happy indeed, with the number of societies which sent us reports of their activities for inclusion in this edition of the Bulletin. We would, however, like to hear from the smaller historical societies. After all, we counted 107 organized groups across the Province and every last one of them must be doing something interesting.

A Committee of the Executive of The Ontario Historical Society has done some difficult and time-consuming work in clarifying the position of the Society under its Act of Incorporation. This seemed desirable, - even necessary - since a Select Committee of the government has been conducting an investigation into all aspects of Incorporation. By this time, all historical societies which are members of The Ontario Historical Society will have received an Information Sheet and a short questionnaire. Please DO NOT NEGLECT this. IT IS IMPORTANT that we have the information asked for. If you have mislaid your sheets, let us know and we will send you another.

## Weather

We are indebted to Miss Phyllis Higinbotham of Guelph for the following interesting extracts from letters written by Thomas Scott, paymaster, 70th Regiment, to his mother in Edinburgh:-

From Kingston, 28.10.1815 ... "you will scarcely believe me when I tell you that this is the pleasantest, most expeditious, and safest season for travelling. Wrapt up in your Furs and Buffalo robes you can sleigh it with a pair of good horses at the rate of Ninety miles a day for a fortnight on a stretch and neither the horses or the Traveller suffer from it, tho' exposed to a cold thirty degrees below zero, and when Icicles are hanging from the Horses' Noses as well as their breasts, and your own breath is freezing as it falls in dew upon your warm coverings".

From Niagara Frontier, 2.8.1817 ... "If we remain stationary here we shall not be so badly off - for I have got hold of an old and ruinous and inconvenient French chateau with all that regards the outward show and all that contempt for inside accommodation which is characteristic of French architecture - the sitting room, bedrooms and kitchen are so far separate from each other that it would require a small mounted express to carry a message from the kitchen to the Hall - but then we have a double tier of elegant terraces in front of the rooms ..... our house is delightfully situated on the banks of the Niagara about 15 miles from the celebrated Falls whose tremendous roarings intimate to us the approach of any change of weather."



The Annual Meeting, 1970

We hope that all our members are planning to attend The Ontario Historical Society Annual Meeting at Sault Ste. Marie next June. The historical society there already has plans well under way to make this meeting outstanding from every point of view. The Chamber of Commerce says that "Being in the middle of everything is nice, but what we're the middle of is the best part". Add to this meeting your friends, history sessions that will stretch your mind, true northern hospitality and loads and loads of beautiful scenery and how can you miss!

Watch for the announcements in Ontario History and in the Spring edition of the Bulletin, and plan now to spend at least part of your holidays with us.

Regional Historical Society Workshops

The Ontario Historical Society has been co-sponsor of two regional local historical society workshops this year with another scheduled for November. Representatives from eight historical societies from the St. Lawrence Valley and Bay of Quinte area met in the Blockhouse Museum at Merrickville on September 20th. Discussions ranged from the problems of building and cemetery surveys to those of small museums. A history consultant from the Department of Education answered questions about how historical societies might help in the study of local history in the schools. This workshop group will hold its fourth meeting next spring in Prescott.

In Peterborough on September 27th, representatives from six groups met at the Centennial Museum. They were given a detailed and practical demonstration on the use of the off-print process to improve the lay-out of their newsletters. After lunch at Trent University delegates discussed activities of historical societies which could not only interest present members but also attract new ones. The Orillia Historical Society will be co-host for the meeting in the spring.

On October 24th, the President of The Ontario Historical Society was the guest speaker at a meeting of the Ottawa Historical Society. The executive members of seven other historical societies in the Ottawa area were invited to be present and plans were discussed for a workshop to be held later at Carleton University.

From the A. A. S. L. H. Annual Meeting

During the sessions of the Annual Meeting of the American Association for State and Local History, at St. Paul, Minn., August 19-23, it was noted that the trend in local historical society activities is away from the management of the small, generalized pioneer museum. Instead, the local societies are centering their efforts on one of two projects. First, there is a strong movement towards setting up a permanent headquarters for the society, with space for library, and/or archives and rooms for meetings and administrative offices. Secondly, many of the smaller societies are attempting to preserve an historically and architecturally significant building in their areas. This building would be restored to its original condition as far as possible, and an attempt is made to tell the story of the district through the life of its first occupants.



As the small local historical museum field in Ontario is now almost at the saturation point, it might be advantageous for new societies to consider seriously this new trend in the United States.

#### Aurora and District Historical Society

This Society has acquired a collection of nearly 300 articles which, for the most part, originated in pioneer days of settlement of Newmarket, Aurora, Schomberg, area. They consist of tools, implements, household utensils and effects which came from houses and farms of early settlers; a few of them are of unique historical value relating to Upper Canada of the 1830's and 1840's.

The collection originally belonged to the late J. M. Walton, an ex-Mayor of Aurora, whose family settled in King Township about 1826. He maintained a great interest in the history of his native homeland until his death in 1945. The Society was indebted to the disinterested attitude of Mrs. Walton, and members of the Walton family, the generous attitude of the owner and a money grant from Aurora Town Council, without which it could not have found the means to meet the very modest purchase price and thereby keep these treasures in the area in which they were in use.

Ways and means to display this collection together with items previously owned by the Society are being explored.

#### Bruce County Historical Society

Bruce County Historical Society is, without a doubt, one of the most active of the Local Societies. Possibly this is because they keep their members involved in historical affairs. We enjoy reading the Historical Notes with accounts of publications, a plaque unveiling, plans for an August picnic and visit to the Huron County Museum, hints about a trip to do genealogical research in the British Isles and interesting excerpts from old articles. This up-and-coming society has now issued a very attractive Year Book. Its price of \$1.00 per copy seems very modest for the amount of information and entertainment which it offers. In his foreword, the President writes that the purpose of the 1969 Year Book "is to bring to its readers a brief sketch of Bruce County history and the achievements of some of its people".

This purpose has been eminently well realized and we offer our congratulations to all those who had a part in producing this excellent Year Book.

#### East Durham Historical Society

In their resumé of a highly satisfying year of varied activities, this society bewails the fact that it cannot afford to pay a fee for out-of-town speakers. This does not seem to have hampered the program committee, for an unusually interesting series of meetings was arranged, using the resources at hand. The topic of one meeting was buttons. A button collector brought part of her collection, and told the story of historic buttons. Another evening, the members



brought in old photographs, and the descendants of three local photographers gave accounts of their photographic ancestors. Then there were meetings devoted to talks on clocks, guns, railroads and the harbour at Port Hope. In May, when they were unable to arrange for a speaker, they borrowed an idea from Kindergarten days and had a "Bring and Tell" evening, when members brought historic items, showed them and told their history.

It is to be hoped that the Society can collect and publish these talks - possibly in the form of a year book.

#### St. Thomas - Elgin Historical Society

It is always encouraging to receive word of the re-activation of an old historical society. This has happened in St. Thomas, in November, 1968, when the St. Thomas - Elgin Historical Society was formed, taking the place of a Society which had been disbanded some years ago. St. Thomas is situated in historic Talbot country and several historically important buildings are either in the city or within easy distance from it. St. Thomas is also extremely fortunate in having a number of very fine local historians living in the city. When the Museums' Section held its Annual Workshop at the Elgin County Pioneer Museum in 1966, those present were greatly impressed by the richness of the history in the district. We predict an interesting future for this new Society, and wish it every success.

#### The Ontario Genealogical Society

The Ontario Genealogical Society held another very successful Seminar in May. The locale was Regis College, Willowdale, which offered ideal facilities for sessions and displays, for sales and meals, as well as lots of space for congenial conversation. The Toronto Branch was responsible for the arrangements and were hosts par excellence. Attendance was 165; interest was keen; the papers delivered were scholarly and useful. Next year's Seminar will be held in London, Ontario.

Membership in the Society is presently over 650, with about 130 of these resident in the U.S. Because of the migration patterns, people of Ontario may need to refer back to the American Colonies for family data and numbers of Americans look on Ontario as the "old country".

The Toronto Branch has embarked on a plan to record old cemeteries in the area - mainly York County. This, of necessity, is a good-weather project and the collating can be pursued later in the year. The London Branch is doing the same for Middlesex County, using the winter months to index birth, marriage, and death notices in the old London papers.

The O. G. S. President, Mr. A. Phillips Silcox, will be one of the speakers at the National Genealogical Society quarterly meeting in Washington, D.C., on November 15th, 1969.



### The United Empire Loyalists

For several years, the Loyalist Gazette Magazine has been published semi-annually (Spring and Autumn) by the authority of the Dominion Council of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. Each issue contains interesting information on United Empire Loyalist activities, reports from Association Branches in Canada, and book notices containing information of Loyalist interest. It is rapidly gaining in popularity across Canada and parts of the United States. A free insert can be put in the Loyalist Gazette requesting information regarding U. E. L. ancestors. All U. E. L. genealogical enquiries should be addressed to the Editor.

All those interested in the pioneer period of Canadian history are welcome as subscribers. Subscriptions of \$1.00 per year should be sent to Mr. Richard L. Mudge, 109 Spadina Road, Toronto 4.

### Fall Fairs

Possibly, by the time this Bulletin reaches you, the Fall Fair in your district will be over for this year. However, now is the time to start planning for next year. Has your Society ever considered taking a booth? This is a good way to get the Society before the general public and to do some very worth-while publicity. Maps, not necessarily valuable ones, make an attractive display. If you have published a local history, this is an opportunity to push its sale. If the people who staff the booth can dress in costume, or if you have an expert in one of the old crafts, who is willing to demonstrate, you are well away. Of course there should be some sort of literature, - a brochure or a mimeographed sheet - which can be distributed to those interested. This kind of advertising has been successfully carried on in the U.S.A. Volunteers from the Erie County Historical Federation received contributions at a booth at the Erie County Fair, August 15-23 for the restoration of the Wilcox House. Here, in Ontario, there have been historical displays at the ploughing matches. The York Pioneer and Historical Society, which operates the Scadding Cabin in the Canadian National Exhibition grounds, have found that it is not only a financial success but that it stirs up a great deal of interest in the public, and also among the members of the Society itself.

### Publications

We look forward to the arrival of the Peterborough Historical Society Bulletin every month. This Society is fortunate in having a professional editor who produces this Bulletin as his contribution to the work of the Society. At the Regional Workshop sponsored by the Peterborough Historical Society and held at Peterborough Centennial Museum and Trent University, part of the discussion was centered on publications, and especially on the production of a reasonably-priced news pamphlet such as Peterborough sends out to its members. Much interest was shown in the whole topic of publications, which ranged from the occasional issue of a volume of historical papers, through the publishing of an Annual Report on the work of the Society concerned, to the sending out of a monthly, or occasional mimeographed sheet of local announcements.



Publications should be a very important facet of the work of every Historical Society. To be preserved, history must be written, and who can write it better than the people who live with it? Also, a publication, however modest, is the best and easiest way of keeping a society in the public eye. It can reach a wide public and can make it aware that history is not a dull school-book subject, but an interesting and absorbing pastime.

Dr. Fred Landon

Members of The Ontario Historical Society and especially those in the London-Middlesex district will be saddened to learn of the death of Dr. Fred Landon on August 1st, at London, Ontario, at the age of 88. He was an outstanding historian and educationist, centering his academic career in the University of Western Ontario, where he was Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies from 1946 until his retirement. He was President of the London-Middlesex Historical Society, 1918-20, of The Ontario Historical Society, 1926-38 and of the Canadian Historical Association, 1941-42.

Among the many honours which were awarded him, he was the first recipient of the Cruikshank Medal, given by The Ontario Historical Society for his outstanding contributions to the study of History.

Major J. C. Boylen

Another friend of Ontario history passed away in Toronto, on August 15th, in the person of Major "Chance" Boylen. He was President of the York Pioneer and Historical Society from 1950 to 1952 and was associated with that group in various capacities over a long period of time. He was Secretary-Treasurer of The Ontario Historical Society, 1950-54 and never lost his interest in the work of the Society. He was appointed a member of the Toronto Historical Board when it was first organized, and in later years, in increasingly frail health, the meetings of the Board became his only contact with historical affairs. Those of us who knew him will miss him.

Gleanings

From Ohio State Society Echoes.

Hole collecting is the hobby of at least one Ohioan and a New Yorker. Mrs. Frank Myers of Georgetown, Ohio, collects termite holes, pieces of wood in which the insects have developed intricate patterns. Miss C. C. Ruku of New York collects woodpecker holes, according to the Tri-State Trader, a hobbyists' publication from Indiana.

From Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society Newsletter.

Mr. Walter S. Dunn, Jr., Director of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, speaking at the dinner meeting of the Congress of Local Historical Societies, at Amherst, N.Y., suggested that Local Historical Societies would do

well to take themselves out into the community and make themselves an interesting force, creating new programs, encouraging exhibits that feature minority groups, and encouraging groups of all kinds to ask the historical societies for resources and facilities to begin their own programs.

From Annual Banquet of The Ontario Historical Society.

Dr. Henry Brown, Director of the Detroit Historical Museum, speaking at the Annual Banquet of The Ontario Historical Society at Windsor, on June 21st, said that the local museum could be called the Export Department of the local historical society. As such, it is a reflection of the excellence, or otherwise of the historical society which must take every means possible to present an attractive and accurate product to the buying public.

From October Executive meeting of The Ontario Historical Society.

For several years now, Michael Power High School in Islington has been conducting a History Fair every spring. Various local organizations offer prizes for history projects and the competition has been keen. This year, the Fair is being widened so that students from anywhere in Ontario may take part. Dr. J. S. Moir, a past-president of this Society has been active as one of the judges and has been impressed with the quality of the entries. The Ontario Historical Society is happy to be one of the sponsors of the History Fair this year.