

BULLETIN

THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LOCAL SOCIETIES COMMITTEE

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On Answering Letters

One of the most discouraging aspects of trying to operate any Society comes when members and local groups do not answer letters. Just recently The Ontario Historical Society has encountered a good deal of silence from its member groups. Out of 95 affiliate and corporate member societies, only 55 took the trouble to answer the very brief questionnaire about incorporation status. This was, and still is, a very important matter for the individual society, but apparently about 43% of the societies to which the questionnaire was sent preferred to keep their status a secret.

In this same connection there is the matter of the Regional Workshops. Invitations are sent to about 12 societies in each area to send 2 representatives each to the Workshop to discuss affairs of mutual interest. What are we to think when 2 or 3 societies out of the 12 do not even acknowledge the invitation? Surely they could have the courtesy to reply that the date is not suitable, or that the society is dormant, or even that they do not wish to take part. But NO, - only silence. Naturally we assume that they are just not interested. It is no one's fault but their own if our silent societies receive no invitation to the next Regional Workshop.

The Regional Workshops

These one-day meetings are becoming increasingly popular with local historical societies. Many of the original groups are now planning second, third and even fourth meetings. The Toronto area group, which met for the first time at Black Creek Pioneer Village last November 21st, is now planning to meet again at the U.E.L. Headquarters in Toronto. New workshops are being started in London and in Hamilton. The general purpose of these meetings is to foster communication between the local societies in a given area. Two representatives from each society within an hour's distance from the centre are invited. Numbers are limited in order to promote free discussion, and it is hoped that the representatives will report back to their own societies any ideas that can be useful. Discussions range far and wide, - publications, programs, membership, finances, museums, archives. Ideas are exchanged and problems seem smaller when examined and talked out.

Setting up a workshop involves much organization and preliminary thought. Therefore the Chairman of the Local Societies Committee, Mrs. William Angus, will appreciate your prompt reply to her letters.

Country Trips

Every week for several years, the Saturday edition of the Toronto Telegram has contained a column entitled "Country Trips" written by Mr. Harvey Currell, Associate Editor of the Telegram, and a member of some years' standing in this Society. Mr. Currell's column describes a fascinating variety of short trips such as any local group could undertake in one day. About a year ago, in the spring, when the sap was running, the column told of a visit to a sugar bush and listed several addresses where people who wished to see maple syrup being made, would be welcome. Last fall, there was an account of a visit to an apple orchard. This was unusual because the visitor was given brief instructions on the technique of apple-picking, was then provided with a large paper sack and turned loose, - all this for a very modest sum. Just recently, Mr. Currell visited the Rittermere Studios and persuaded the owners to hold open house on a Sunday afternoon. Rittermere is famous as a center for the old-fashioned craft of rug-hooking and the studios are a delightful and fascinating spot in an old and historic district in Ontario.

Any local society planning a bus trip and wanting to go somewhere different, or to see something new would be well advised to look up some of the past "Country Trips" for suggestions.

Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society

No. 8 of Wentworth Bygones was published by the Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society in October, 1969. Containing a variety of articles ranging from Sieur de LaSalle to Dr. Tiffany of Ancaster and Blachford and Wray's funerals, it provides an entertaining selection of subjects. The following is taken from Mr. John Wray's article:- "It was not until May, 1917 that a second reference is made in the register to a motor hearse, and in that year it was used twice. One can almost see the shocked expression on the faces of the good people of Hamilton on seeing a funeral whisking through the streets of the city by automobile. During the epidemic of Spanish Influenza which reached its peak in Hamilton during the winter of 1918-1919 401 funerals were arranged by Blachford and Wray".

The early settlers of Glanford Township who received Crown Grants are listed by name, lot, concession and date of registry. This should be of interest to genealogists.

Etobicoke Historical Society

Etobicoke Historical Society reports a very successful post-Christmas festivity. On Saturday afternoon, December 27th, members were asked to bring spare decorations to Montgomery Inn and decorate the rooms. Then on Monday evening, there was a "Potluck" supper, when the women brought the food and the men made donations towards the cost of rolls, tea and coffee, etc. Each person was also asked to provide his own plate, knife and fork. After supper there was a guessing contest about the name and use of various pioneer articles, and two historical films were shown. Altogether it was a most enjoyable evening.

Etobicoke also reports that they have recently received two donations of \$1,000.00 each. They hope to use the money for some special projects in connection with the restoration of the Inn.

Seminars at Cooperstown

Advance notice has just been received of the Seminars in American Culture to be held at Cooperstown, N.Y. from June 28 - July 4 and July 5 - July 11. The subjects for this summer look particularly interesting. Some of those listed are: Furniture and Silver; Building Surveys; Architectural History; Museum Exhibits and Ladies' Crafts. Classes are given by authorities in the subjects and all is under the sponsorship of the New York State Historical Society.

Cooperstown is a small village at the foot of Lake Otsego in a scenic area of New York State and is a delightful spot to spend part of one's vacation. Besides the Farmers' Museum, where the seminars are held, there are other points of interest for spare time, - The Carriage House Museum; The Baseball Hall of Fame; a beautiful nature museum on the side of a hill and even a summer theatre not too far away.

From personal experience, we recommend these seminars highly. We only wished they had lasted longer than a week.

Lake Simcoe South Shore Historical Society

This enterprising society held its second Annual Meeting in the form of a Dinner at which a film on the life of Stephen Leacock was shown. The film was made by the local Grade 11 students, and since the Leacock Centenary takes place this summer, the Historical Society plans to centre some of its activities around the celebration.

One of several outstanding accomplishments of last year was the publication of five bulletins containing brief histories of the churches in the area. It is to be hoped that these interesting and informative bulletins can be continued.

The major undertaking of this Society for 1970 is to be an attempt to obtain the old Sutton Hydro Building and set it up as a community meeting-place and museum. This building was originally the depot for the defunct Metropolitan Railway, which ran between Toronto and Lake Simcoe points. It holds many fond memories for the people of the area.

Antique Show and Sale

From August 5th to 8th inclusive, next summer, the Lake Simcoe South Shore Historical Society will hold its 4th Annual Antique Show and Sale in the curling rink at the Sutton Fair Grounds. In addition to an exciting array of dealers, the Historical Society will have its own booth. Any historical organization which would like to have give-away brochures or application forms available to visitors at the booth are invited to send a supply to Mrs. K. C. Marsden, R. R. # 3, Sutton West, who will be glad to distribute them.

This Show is being held in conjunction with the 115th Sutton Fair and Horse Show, which is widely attended. Last year the Antique Show was a great success, both from a financial and an advertising point of view. In 1969 the Historical Society counted 3,500 visitors to the Show and in 1970, they are going all-out to make it the best ever. We heartily wish them every success.

Ontario Secondary Schools Historical Exhibition

This year The Ontario Historical Society is co-sponsoring the Ontario Secondary Schools Historical Exhibition to be held at 5055 Dundas Street, West in Islington, on Friday and Saturday, April 10th and 11th. All secondary school students in Ontario are eligible and encouraged to submit entries, and the public is invited to attend. There are no admission charges nor entry fees. Exhibits will be divided into categories illustrating Prehistory, Ancient History, Mediaeval History, African, Far Eastern, Australian and South American History, Modern European History, Canadian History, American History and Local History. The Board of Judges includes Most. Rev. T. Hunt, D.D., Suffragan Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto; Mr. Richard Bern, Consul of the United States of America; Mr. Donald MacDonald, Leader of the N.D.P. of Ontario; Mayor Edward Horton of Etobicoke and Controller and Mrs. Fred Beavis of Metropolitan Toronto. Judging of exhibits will take place on April 10th at 7:00 p.m. after which the exhibits will be open to the public until 9:00 p.m. Saturday April 11th. Awards will be presented on Saturday at 9:00 p.m.

All secondary school students are invited to compete for the valuable prizes offered and everyone is cordially invited to come to see the historical research work being done by the students of our Province and so to encourage the study of History by our secondary school students.

Further information for students or visitors may be obtained by writing to the Director of the Exhibition at 5055 Dundas Street West, Islington, Ontario.

Burlington Historical Society News

The Burlington Historical Society held its tenth Annual Meeting on January 14th, 1970. After the business was completed and the new Officers elected, it is the custom to declare the meeting open for "Members' Night" or "Narrative Night". Members are invited to try their story-telling skill by compressing into a ten-minute "time capsule" a recital of their journeys and adventures during the preceding year - either at home or abroad - at the same time providing the recital with a historical slant. This year there were descriptions of three trips, - to Tobago, to the Yukon and Alaska and a visit to Dunvegan Castle which was illustrated with historical road maps and news articles about the Highlands and the MacCrimmon school for pipers.

This kind of program participation is a splendid way to involve the membership of a Society, and we commend it to you.

Mississauga Historical Society

Mississauga Historical Society tells us that its January meeting was most interesting. Mrs. J. H. MacAuley spoke on "Antique Buttons" and brought along a generous sampling from her own collection to illustrate her talk. She said that one of the main enjoyments of her collection is being able to talk about it. In the course of her talk, she noted differences in design and values which meant that many buttons could be placed in a definite moment of history. For the March meeting, the Society is looking forward to an address on "Early Boating and Stone Hooking in Port Credit". The speaker will be Mr. Lorne Joyce.

Mississauga Historical Society is planning a most interesting summer for its Lewis Bradley Pioneer Museum. The official opening date will be May 1st.

In Memoriam

Members of The Historical Society who were present at the Annual Banquet of the Society in Windsor last spring will be shocked to hear of the sudden death, of a heart attack, of Dr. Henry Brown. Dr. Brown was the energetic and lively Director of the Detroit Historical Museum, which he had developed into one of the finest institutions of the kind in the United States. He was a good friend of Canadian historical organizations, and had been the guest speaker at many of their functions. He was a master of vivid expression, and we will not soon forget his description of a museum as the "export department" of the historical society. His untimely death leaves an empty place which cannot easily be filled.

What Happened to Thunderbolt?

Among the many and varied letters which come to The Ontario Historical Society is a recent one from New South Wales in Australia, concerning a certain Fred Ward, popularly known as Thunderbolt. Fred Ward, (1835-1870) was a notorious outlaw who was considered to be the Australian equivalent of Robin Hood and his exploits have become legendary in New South Wales. His official end came when he was shot and killed by the Constabulary and he was buried in a small town named Uralla.

In 1939, a book, "Captain Thunderbolt" was published which created public controversy. The author claimed that a wrong identification had been made and that Thunderbolt had escaped, had fled to Canada and had lived a respectable law-abiding life near Calgary. The claim was also made that Fred Ward was buried in a cemetery in Ottawa. This spring, May 16 - 24, a Thunderbolt Centenary week is planned for Uralla, so the letter from the Area Tourist Bureau arrives, asking us to do a complete research on Thunderbolt and to send copies of all vital documents.

This request raises a number of pertinent questions. Just how much time and travelling should our office spend on research of this kind for a commercial outfit who are not members of The Ontario Historical Society? Indeed, should we give our services free of charge to any non-member who takes the notion to write us? We are happy that the name of our Society is known as far away as Australia, but we do think that Calgary is a bit out of our province. We would be interested in any comments you care to make, either on the fate of Thunderbolt, or on the problems noted above.

Gleanings

The York Pioneer and Historical Society proudly announce that its immediate Past President and Treasurer, Mr. A. David McFall, is the only Canadian to have been granted an Award of Merit by the American Association for State and Local History in 1969. The Award was given for outstanding service to historical organizations in Ontario over a period of more than twenty years. The scroll is to be officially presented at the Annual Dinner of the York Pioneers on April 7th.

The Secord Homestead at Queenston has recently been purchased by the Laura Secord Candy Shops, Limited, of Toronto. It is to be authentically restored by them to appear as it was when the Secord Family lived there just before the War of 1812. The company is currently discussing the project with architectural firms and historical consultants to ensure a faithful reproduction of the homesite.

In a newspaper dated, May, 1867, there appears the following recipe. Take an egg and soak it for 12 hours in strong vinegar. This makes the shell soft and elastic. You can squeeze it into a fairly wide-mouthed bottle. Fill the bottle with water to which you have added enough baking soda to make a strong solution. In another 12 hours the egg will again be solid. Pour out the water, dry the bottle and you have a conversation piece to puzzle your friends.

In the Toronto Globe and Mail for February 13th, there appeared a picture of the replica of Henry Hudson's "Nonsuch" riding out a fierce gale in Bristol Channel. The original Nonsuch must have braved similar storms for it took 118 days to cross the Atlantic. The replica will make much better time on a larger ship, and will be one of the attractions at the Fur Trade Conference to be held in Winnipeg, October 1 - 3, 1970. We understand that its final home will be at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature in Winnipeg.

Sault Ste. Marie is making plans to welcome a large attendance at the Annual Meeting of The Ontario Historical Society, June 18 - 20. On the books are two rather unusual events, - a moonlight boat tour of the Soo locks and a trip to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. These in addition to interesting papers on historical subjects, and interesting people to meet, make this one meeting you really cannot afford to miss.

The Ontario Genealogical Society is holding its Annual Seminar at Huron College, University of Western Ontario, London, on May 8 and 9. At the time of writing this, the program arrangements had not been completely finalized, but one can rest assured that it will be another good seminar. If you do not receive your announcement and program in due course, information can be obtained from the Secretary, Mrs. J. D. Milne, Box 66, Station Q, Toronto 7.

Affiliated Societies are reminded that they are required by the terms of their affiliation to send to this office a copy of their Annual Reports for 1969. We are grateful to those Societies who have already done so.

Items of news about your Society and its achievements are always welcome. In fact, it is your contribution of news which keeps this Bulletin alive.