

BULLETIN

THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LOCAL SOCIETIES COMMITTEE

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From the President's Address - Annual Meeting, 1973

Next year, on April 1 to be exact, this society, under its present name and its present charter of incorporation, will be 75 years old. I believe they have been 75 useful and productive years. The O.H.S. has a long and honourable record in promoting and especially in publishing the history of Ontario. The society has published an historical journal on a regular basis since 1900, in which has appeared much of the best and most significant writing about Ontario's past which has been produced in Canada. The society has also published many documentary volumes, collections of articles, county histories and other historical works, of which the most recent is the new series of paperback books begun last year under the general title of "Research Publications in Ontario History". The society as well has constantly publicized Ontario's history in many ways; through its annual meetings, through its many public spokesmen, and through its liaison work with local historical societies and with schools throughout the province. The society has now a membership of nearly 2,000 and collaborates with over 100 associated local societies. The circulation of Ontario History is over 2,000 copies. Our museums section and our committees, such as those on local societies, publication and education consistently perform useful work.

What is really remarkable about the work of the society, past and present, is that all this has been done and is being done by a society of volunteers, a society which for many years had no full-time paid staff at all and which now has a permanent staff of only one full-time and one part-time person. I think we can be justifiably proud of our past.

I like this society as it is. I like our tradition of enlightened amateurism, of dedication, of voluntary service. I like the absence of bureaucracy, the absence of entangling relationships with government. I like these things, but I am not sure that they can be preserved intact. One thing I am certain about. Even if some central reorganization of the society should at some time in the future be necessary it will be a central reorganization only. The membership itself will, I am sure, always remain, as it should remain, a voluntary association of interested, dedicated people whose concern is purely and simply with the exploration and enjoyment of the history of Ontario and who will continue to make a fundamental contribution to the activities and the very nature of The Ontario Historical Society.

North York Historical Society

The North York Historical Society has a very imaginative project underway at the present time. In co-operation with the Borough of North York, the society is sponsoring "Preserve North York in Paint". Early in the year a list of historic sites in the Borough was drawn up and artists were invited to participate. Entries are to be judged by a panel, and an honorarium of \$25.00 will be paid to each artist whose work is chosen. All paintings are to be for sale, and the North York Historical Society will handle the sales and a 20% commission will be retained by them. It is expected that a large number of artists, both professional and amateur, will be interested in the project and will enter their work. The paintings will be exhibited and sold at the North York Public Library in Willowdale from November 2 - 30, 1973. The Borough of North York is a fast developing area and the demolition of its old buildings has become a problem for its historically-minded citizens. This project is an attempt to record some of its rapidly fading history on canvas before it is completely lost.

Peterborough Historical Society

After several years of negotiations, the Peter Robinson Papers have been returned to Peterborough and are housed in the Centennial Museum. Copies will be available to researchers as soon as possible.

The Papers consist of several boxes of record books and loose papers preserved by Peter Robinson, documenting the 1825 immigration to Peterborough, as well as some referring to the Robinson immigration to Leeds and Lanark counties. Applications from prospective settlers, ships' lists and details regarding supplies, land allotments, etc., all help to provide a picture of events leading up to the establishment of the Peterborough community.

Also in the Archives at the Centennial Museum is a collection of Rubidge Papers. Capt. Charles Rubidge (1786 - 1873) was one of the earliest settlers in Peterborough county. He emigrated to Canada and settled his family in Otonabee Twp. about 1820. He was active as a Government Land Agent, aiding the settlement of immigrants, Postmaster, Surveyor and County Registrar of Deeds in Peterborough. The Papers are composed of material relating to his various official posts as well as family correspondence.

Peterborough Historical Society is to be congratulated on its growing collection of original material.

Ontario Hydro Archives

Primary reference material on the development of Ontario Hydro from its inception at the beginning of the century is available in the Commission's Archives in Toronto. Ontario Hydro welcomes writers and students seeking help in their research and the staff finds adequate working space for visitors although no special research quarters have been established. In addition to their archival records, Ontario Hydro also has -

1. Minute books, charters and other records from former investor-owned electrical utilities which Hydro acquired.
2. Records on electric radial and street railways.
3. A collection of books and publications on Ontario history in the Library.
4. A collection of historical mementos in the Hydro Hall of Memory at Niagara Falls.
5. The Museum of Electrical Progress, where appliances and equipment used in the past are held on display, is open for tours by groups.
6. Ontario Hydro maintains and operates the electrical display at the Ontario Science Centre.

Oakville Historical Society

When the Women's Auxilliary of the Oakville Historical Society found that almost all their Hasti-notes had been sold, they began looking around for something different. They are now working on a calendar, to be in book form. It will feature sketches of Oakville Historical Society artifacts which have been used in displays in their museum. All sketches will be done by members of the "Drawing Committee" and the bulk of the work is now nearing completion.

Project "Green Thumb"

Project "Green Thumb" was begun by the U.S. Labor Department in 1966 under the Economic Opportunity Act. It is based on the belief that the community can benefit from the service of older persons. In New Jersey the Green Thumb Program has made outstanding contributions in the fields of conservation and historical restoration. Many historic sites have used the services of Green Thumb workers, all of whom are over 55 with a yearly income of less than \$3,000.00.

Recently a work crew began restorations on the headquarters of the Hunterdon County Historical Society, painting and doing general repairs. Another project in New Jersey is using five Green Thumbers to help beautify the towpath of the state-owned Delaware and Raritan Canal. They will make walkways, plant shrubs and trees, and construct benches so that residents can enjoy the old canal.

Green Thumb Services are free to non-profit organizations in the United States. Perhaps some similar plan could be worked out through the Canadian New Horizons Program of Grants for senior citizens.

The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Historical Society

At the Annual Meeting in Kingston, 1973, The Ontario Historical Society presented an Award of Excellence for outstanding contribution in the field of local history to this lively society. Mr. Lyall Manson, the President, accepted the Award. This local historical society, established in 1920, provides for its 200 members a full and varied program of talks, displays, bus tours and family history. The society operates a fine museum and is closely concerned in the preservation of buildings. To make the public more aware of its heritage, the society has produced a series of TV programs and has an active program involving students and encouraging the active participation of all its members.

Fees

There seems to be some confusion among our members about fees. Membership in The Ontario Historical Society is still \$5.00 per year, though how much longer we can hold it at that is a good question. A Family membership is \$7.00 per year and the best buy of all is a Life membership at \$100.00.

To be a member of the Museums Section, one must be a member of O.H.S. first, and then pay \$3.00 extra for the Museums Section Newsletter. A payment of \$3.00 alone does not give any membership. It is merely a subscription to the Newsletter.

The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

The Architectural Index for Ontario has been compiled by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario under a Local Initiatives Program grant. This Index consists of references to articles and illustrations of Ontario buildings and structures in selected periodicals. The buildings indexed span nearly two centuries from the early 19th century through the end of 1971, but, because of the development of architectural publications in this century, the bulk of the material falls between the late 1880's and 1971. Within the limits of the information given in the periodical sources, the references record the name of the building, its type, its owner or principal tenant, dates connected with the history of its construction, the architects or engineers responsible for its design, the name of the contractor, and the reference to the article or illustration which is the source of the information.

Many of the buildings documented in this fashion have been altered or destroyed so that the references should prove invaluable to those interested in local history or in planning and preservation. The Index is housed in the Fine Art Section of the Metropolitan Toronto Central Library at 214 College Street in Toronto.

Canadian Friends Historical Association

We welcome to our membership the Canadian Friends Historical Association. This newly-formed society has a three-fold purpose -

1. To encourage and stimulate interest and research in the Quaker heritage in Canada and to share in the discovery of Quaker historical and religious traditions.
2. To further the collection and care of Quaker records.
3. To encourage the use of Quaker records for historical research.

There is a considerable body of Quaker Archives housed at the University of Western Ontario. These are presently being inventoried and annotated with the expectation that a permanent inventory will be available for research purposes.

Another interesting project of this society is the plan to provide authentic Canadian Quaker costumes for the textile collection of the Royal Ontario Museum. This will not only fill a gap in the Museum's collection but will ensure the continuance of one facet of the Quaker heritage.

The Georgina Historical Society

In keeping with the recent re-organizations into Regional Districts, the Lake Simcoe Historical Society has changed its name to correspond with that of the new Region. It is now The Georgina Historical Society - a shorter and much easier name. This society held its 7th annual Antique Show in August. During the show, the famous Bick's collection of pickle cruets was on view. A copy of the 1898 Sutton Herald has been reprinted by the society to be used as gift wrapping. Besides being attractive as a wrap, it is fun to read. At 4 sheets for 25¢, it is proving a money maker.

Individual Activities

Discussions at the Regional Meetings held by The Ontario Historical Society for Local Historical Societies every spring and fall range far and wide, as anyone who has been present can verify. Last May the Oxford Historical Society co-sponsored the meeting for south-western Ontario at the Public Library in Woodstock. The question of individual participation in historical activities sparked some lively give-and-take and brought forth a number of interesting suggestions -

- Anyone can write his own account of an historic event. Once a start is made it is surprising how much there is to learn;
- Search out and write the story of your church, or your school, or your post-office, or even of your own house;
- Collect pictures or articles, old and new, of old homes and historic places in your locality;
- Keep a scrap book. It can be thematic or topical or general on almost any subject of interest;
- Collect something. It is astonishing how much historical background there can be in such everyday things as buttons;
- Trace your family history. This is certain to lead you far afield;
- Record the cemeteries in your area, especially those that are old or have not been used for some time;
- Help in the upkeep and policing of historical plaques or statues or memorials;
- Plan a trip to some historic site and act as guide, even if it is only for your own family or a few friends;
- Be a "Booster". Join your local historical society and become involved in committee work, in work parties, or in any activity where an extra hand is needed.

There is really no limit to the ways in which an individual can contribute to the continuance of our historical heritage. Everyone should have some project of an historical nature which he can work at and enjoy. The sincere worker will find not only satisfaction for himself but enrichment for his community.

Gleanings

The Erie County Fair at Hamburg, N.Y. awards prizes for local historical society exhibits. Points are awarded on the basis of historical accuracy, good design, selection of items, labels, presentation of local history and visitor interest. Does your locality have a Fall Fair? Could your society set up a prize-worthy exhibit?

As a change from the usual Bus tour, has your society ever thought of holding a Theatre Night at one of the several excellent summer theatres which operate across the province? Usually a group rate can be obtained from the theatre, which will enable your society to make a nice profit on the trip.

Several local societies have mentioned the annual "Hymn Sing" in their reports. Doon Pioneer Village tells of its third successful Rogationtide ceremony. This pre-Reformation service of prayers, liturgy and hymn singing ended in a symbolic planting of crops. Glengarry Historical Society reports that the annual hymn sing and picnic was considered to be the official opening of the Glengarry Scottish Museum at Dunvegan.

The 14th Annual Seminar on Glass was held at the Corning Museum of Glass during the week beginning October 15th. The lecturers were all well-known specialists who are either in charge of glass museums or who have done much research and writing about glass. This Seminar was especially directed to people who have had a good deal of experience in the field. Glass is a new bi-monthly magazine for collectors. It features notable collections and gives much historical background on collections and glass makers. It is profusely illustrated. For information write to: Special Publications, Inc., 5 Lincoln Court, Princeton, N.J. 08540.

Grey County Historical Society reports that a few copies of their excellent "New History of Grey" are still available. They sell for \$12.50 each and can be obtained from the Secretary, Mrs. Charles E. Thompson, at Heathcote. "Church Life in Grey County" is a mimeographed 26-page booklet. One thousand copies of it were sold by students, church groups and W.I. Branches. The Editor donated the profits from the sale to the society, and we are happy to note that this booklet is now a collector's item.

The Upper Canada Railway Society sponsored a special steam train excursion to Owen Sound, September 22nd., to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the completion of the Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railway. After the driving of a commemorative gold spike, the return trip to Toronto was made via Chesley and Hanover, with brief stops for picture-taking along the way. These steam train excursions are proving very popular.

Four pioneer family histories made for an interesting and lively program at one of the general meetings of the Norwich & District Historical Society. Each history was presented by a descendant of the original settler. At another meeting, the panel of four idea was used again most successfully. This time the topic was local cemeteries. Members gave accounts of a neglected Quaker cemetery; an unmarked negro graveyard; an old cemetery which had been closed; while the fourth speaker talked about the beginnings of the present village cemetery. All agreed that cemeteries were a fascinating source of social and historical data.

Late last spring, a coffee party was held in the Mississauga Central Library. Everybody interested in the past of Peel County and in the collection and preservation of local documents, photographs, maps and artifacts was invited to attend. Important items from the Library's Canadiana Collection, such as the Barnett scrapbooks, the Mary Fix papers and the Perkins Bull historical series were on display.

Uxbridge-Scott Historical Society decided to move the Hillson Carriage Shed to its museum grounds. Then the difficulties appeared. Clearances and permits were necessary from Township, County and C.N.R. authorities, as well as the O.P.P. Bell Canada, Uxbridge Hydro and Cable T.V. had to arrange to drop some 17 service lines and trunk lines to let the building through. A foundation had to be prepared to receive the building and much work had to be done to rehabilitate it for use. The society's Newsletter notes: "Faith

may move mountains - but it's also going to take some money to move our Carriage Shed; - we have faith it will be subscribed." We wish them every success.

Waterford & Townsend Historical Society is a new and very active group whose interests range through Bus trips, antiques, a flea market, the coloured settlers in Norfolk County, movies and guest speakers to collecting and displaying historical papers of early Waterford events. They meet in the Waterford Public Library, and in appreciation of the Library's support in providing a free meeting room and storage space, they donated four books, - the Norfolk County Atlas, 1870; Canadian Silver; Ontario of Yesterday; and Building with Wood. This sounds like an excellent exercise in co-operation.

Once again, Affiliated Societies are reminded that Annual Reports for 1972 are now overdue. The Report, together with a copy of any publications issued during the year are required by the terms of affiliation, as stated in the Act of Incorporation. If you have not already done so, please get your Report in as soon as possible.

This year we have received some very excellent Reports. Waterloo Historical Society sends its 60th - a mine of local information. York Pioneer & Historical Society's Pioneer is almost as old and is just as informative in the history of its area. Glengarry Historical Society sends its 12th annual volume, - a most attractive edition which is in print for the first time. We have mentioned the Report from the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Historical Society previously. It is an example of a carefully organized type-script which is not beyond the powers of any local group.

And here is a final comment from the Orillia Historical Society's "News"

"The good old days! the good old days!
We all so fondly speak of,
Which if they ever should come back -
We couldn't stand a week of."



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