

BULLETIN

THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LOCAL SOCIETIES COMMITTEE

1466 Bathurst Street

Toronto, Ontario M5R 3J3

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THE O.H.S. QUESTIONNAIRE: PRELIMINARY REPORT

In April, 1973, the Executive of The Ontario Historical Society sent a questionnaire to all its individual members. Over 56% of these (674 of 1194) responded. This is an overwhelming rate of response to a questionnaire. Further, some 20% of the respondents felt so strongly about the matters raised that they identified themselves. The Executive is studying seriously, the expressed interests and needs of the members. A brief summary of the members' response follows.

Who and what are the members?

One of the surprises of the questionnaire is how young the O.H.S. is. Only a quarter of the respondents are over 65. The rest are divided equally between the 25-45 and the 46-64 year age groups. A handful (3%) is under 25 years.

About two-thirds of the respondents are male. One quarter is female. The balance either don't know or didn't tell.

The largest group (30%) of the members are, or were before they retired, in business. University professors (18%) and teachers (17%) form the next biggest segments. Then there are a number of small (about 5% each) occupational groupings: doctors, engineers, housewives, lawyers, librarians and students.

Forty percent of the respondents live in Metropolitan Toronto. Half as many live in each of Western Ontario and Eastern Ontario. Yonge Street is the dividing line. Only 4% live in Northern Ontario. In fact the O.H.S. has almost as many members in the U.S. as in the north. There are as many members in Denmark and Rhodesia as there are in P.E.I. One in each.

The O.H.S. member has had a lot of formal training. Slightly over one third of the respondents has taken post-graduate courses. An additional 27% has had teacher or other professional training.

Length of membership and other historical interests of members.

Once you become a member of the O.H.S. you probably will stay. Of the members responding 27% have been members for over 10 years. The 5-10 year group shows 31%, while the juniors (under 5 years a member) comprise some 41%.

Not only are the members long lived in the O.H.S., they are indefatigable joiners of all sorts of other historical societies. The members responding to the questionnaire reported the following:

17% are members of the O.H.S. Museums Section
47% are members of a local historical society
14% are members of the Ontario Genealogical Society
26% are members of the Canadian Historical Association
31% are members of some other historical society.

Members' views on Society Activities

When asked to rank the possible activities of the O.H.S. the members chose to encourage the formation of new historical societies and publish books and articles as the two most important, by a substantial margin. It is, obviously, not coincidence that the two most active committees of the Executive are those of Local Societies and Publications.

The membership was not enthusiastic when asked if it saw a need for a new periodical publication in addition to Ontario History and the Local Societies Bulletin. Most respondents, who commented, prefer an improvement in the existing publications rather than the creation of something new.

Ontario History has a wide readership among the O.H.S. members. Members reading all of each issue account for 38%. Over 54% read part of it. Only 8% will admit to reading none. Once received Ontario History is kept close to home, 90% are read by the member and one or two others only.

Higher Fees and New Members

When asked for ideas on how to increase membership the members (43%) responded with a long list of suggestions. These range from more public relations to various plans to encourage younger membership to that 2% of the members who can see no reason to stimulate membership. The responses have been forwarded to the appropriate committees of the Executive for use in planning future activity.

On the subject of annual fees the members are willing to pay more. Thirty percent of the respondents will stand a 100% price hike. Another 27% will tolerate a 50% increase. Seventeen percent will accept a 25% increase. Less than ten percent of the response will accept no increase at all.

Annual Meeting

Four percent of the members always come to the annual meeting. Another seven percent come frequently. The infrequents amount to 22%. Then there is the silent majority of 64% who never come. Reasons for never or infrequently coming? The members responding stress inconvenient time of year, inconvenient locations and pressure of business in that order.

O.H.S. Questionnaire Development

By any standard this Questionnaire has been highly successful. The Executive now has available a wealth of material about the members' needs and wishes upon which to base future action and programmes.

A computer program has been developed which makes it possible to isolate and analyse the response of particular groups of members. This detailed examination of the Questionnaire response is still in progress.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

The local Societies Committee of The Ontario Historical Society has been laying plans for a series of Regional Meetings to be held in March and April of 1975. Three districts have already sent us invitations to hold meetings and these are being arranged. It is not difficult or expensive for a local society to host a regional meeting. All that is necessary is the provision of a suitable place where about 30 representatives of the historical societies in the area can sit and discuss topics of common interest. Also a place where luncheon can be obtained fairly easily should be recommended, - though everyone pays for his own lunch. The organization, invitations, speakers and all the paper work is handled through the O.H.S. office.

In the past, we have held regional meetings in schools, museums, church basements, private homes and even an old fort. We have eaten our lunches in cafeterias, motel luncheonettes, tea rooms and snack bars. North York Historical Society gave us a pioneer luncheon in Gibson House; Brantford Historical Society set up a beautiful buffet in its museum. Twice, we have had box lunches sent in and we had a picnic.

Usually the delegates like to see the local museum during the lunch break, so here is a chance to get some useful publicity and perhaps pick up a few helpful ideas.

If your society would like to host one of the regional meetings we would be happy to hear from you. Suggestions of topics for discussion are especially welcome, so tell us what you would like to talk about. The Committee is trying very hard to make these meetings useful to local history groups, - and to let people enjoy meeting others with similar interests.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BUFFALO

Every Tuesday evening from September 24th to November 26th, this University is offering a non-credit course on the historic sites and buildings on the Niagara frontier. This course will provide a brief history of Western New York as seen through area structures and sites. The emphasis will be on historical events, but social significance and architecture will be discussed where appropriate. Six to ten examples will be discussed in each lecture - each example standing as a vignette within Niagara frontier history. Slides of events and structures will be shown.

LOCAL CHURCH HISTORY AWARDS

The United Church of Canada will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 1975. It is asking that every church write its own story and is offering awards to be given on conference and national levels. Quite a number of very well-written histories, particularly those of older churches have already been published or have been included in a Tweedsmuir book. Here is an opportunity for a local society to initiate a new project. Write to Rev. C. Glenn Lucas, Archivist-Historian, Victoria University, 73 Queen's Park Crescent East, Toronto M5S 1K7, requesting the brochure which outlines the topics to be researched and included in the history. Then check the information for accuracy; gather any available pictures; add any interesting anecdotes from the older members of the church; put it all together and win an Award.

UXBRIDGE - SCOTT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

As everyone knows, Lucy Maud Montgomery became famous for "Anne of Green Gables". After she married the Rev. Euan Macdonald, they moved to Leaskdale which lies about three miles from Uxbridge and lived there for some fifteen years. In honour of the 100th anniversary of her birth, which occurs in 1974, the Uxbridge - Scott Historical Society commissioned Leaskdale artist Arnold Hodgkins to paint her portrait. A ceremony was held in the Music Hall of Uxbridge where the portrait was unveiled by her son. Everyone was invited and a number of the author's family, including two grandchildren were present. After the unveiling ceremony, the ladies of the Uxbridge - Scott Historical Society served refreshments, thus bringing to a close a very happy occasion.

LENNOX & ADDINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Lennox and Addington Historical Society has been fortunate in receiving two government grants for historical projects sponsored by the society. One was a cataloguing grant and three university students from the area have been working all summer in the Historical Room at the Museum, marking materials and recording information about them. The second grant was for cemetery recording. This was organized by a New Horizons group which is still seeking workers. A list of cemeteries and the method of procedure has been drawn up, but because the county has such a rich historical background and its old cemeteries are so numerous many more recorders are needed.

HASTINGS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

This lively society apparently does not believe in taking a holiday during the summer. Much of its activity is, of course, centered on "Glanmore" - the Hastings County museum, but much planning is going on for the Fall activities. One interesting facet is the Moodie Library at Glanmore. The society subscribes to a number of historical publications, including Ontario History, and visitors are invited to sink into a soft 19th century chair and relax over one of these publications. In addition, the society has scheduled a list of historical films for every Wednesday evening during July and August. Programs were made available and a good attendance was recorded.

The major part of the society's Archives Collection has been moved to the Canadiana Room of the Corby Library in Belleville. The move means that the manuscript material will be more readily available to researchers and students.

OAKVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

An event which is eagerly anticipated by all interested in local architecture and history, as well as those people who just like tours, is the Annual Autumn House Tour organized by the Oakville Historical Society and Women's Auxiliary. This took place on the last Saturday in September and was the usual outstanding success. A neat printed folder provided complete information about the places on the tour and included a map showing where to find them. Due to the good planning, the tour ran smoothly and visitors spent an informative and rewarding day.

GUELPH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

This busy society is the latest one to become affiliated with The Ontario Historical Society. It has continued its tree plantings in honor of local events; has had a very successful bus trip to the annual house tour at Niagara-on-the-Lake, and has set up an interesting program for the balance of 1974. Perhaps the society's most important project is the sponsorship of a history of Guelph, to be ready for Guelph's 150th anniversary in 1977. To help in the research, writing and publishing, a New Horizons Grant was obtained. A further Grant has come from the City with a promise of more to come in 1975 and 1976. Members of the society are to do the research in newspapers, pamphlets, books etc., under the direction of Prof. Leo Johnson of Waterloo University. As Prof. Johnson plans to meet with the researchers about twice a month, this will be an excellent opportunity to learn how to do historical research, and to learn the history of the city.

WOMEN'S CANADIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

An interesting project carried out by the members of this society has been the making of a replica of the Banner carried by the 3rd York Regiment in 1813. The original banner, which was blessed by Rev. Dr. John Strachan in the spring of 1813, hangs in St. James Cathedral in Toronto. Much careful research was done on both materials and workmanship before the actual work on the replica was begun. Finally a Social Meeting was held, at which members were invited to put in a "personal stitch". On July 2, 1974, the new banner was presented to the Toronto Historical Board for exhibition at Fort York. Further research disclosed that about 40 descendants of the officers who fought in the War of 1812-14 were living in or near Toronto. They were invited to attend the presentation ceremony and many did so. This unusual project aroused much local interest and its success was most gratifying to the society.

ORILLIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Any historical society worthy of the name should be alive to the problems and possibilities within its own area. This is where the Orillia Historical Society shines. In one of the interesting "News" sheets there appears a listing of community activities in which the society is taking an active part. Among these are noted - suggestions for the use of the Opera House and the old City offices; the provision of guide maps for walking tours and motor tours around Lake Couchiching; participating in surveys of old buildings and recommending their preservation when appropriate; encouraging local artists in recording old houses on canvas; assembling and preserving historical records; and last, but not least, joining the society and supporting it in its endeavours.

As we have noted in a previous Bulletin, it is worth joining the Orillia society just to get the "News". The front of the sheet is serious with announcements and reviews, but the reverse side is something else again. It has anecdotes, bits from old newspapers, quotes from historical writings, and often, just plain tall tales.

CONGRATULATIONS

The first Heritage Canada Awards were presented by Mme. Jules Leger to the 1974 winners at a ceremony in Government House. Among the winners for restoration was the Ermatinger House in Sault Ste. Marie. A travelling Award was won by O.H.S. Past-President Dr. Margaret Angus of Kingston. She will spend three weeks studying conservation in England.

GLEANINGS

An interesting little publication, - Spain '74 - comes to this office every so often. It is in English and gives a run-down on all sorts of things that are going on in the country. The July edition gives an account of the 23rd National Book Fair in Madrid's Retro Park. This year 177 publishing houses were represented. Many outstanding authors were present to autograph their works. The Fair attracted a very large public and sales were excellent.

Congratulations to Bruce County Historical Society on the new format of the monthly "Notes". The new size is convenient and the printed folder gives a very professional appearance. An added plus factor is that print is much more easily read than a mimeographed sheet.

Manitoba Museum of Man & Nature send us "Happenings". In addition to the listing of the regular displays, there is a schedule of movies. It is surprising how many good historical films are available today - and how few societies take advantage of them.

We are pleased to learn that the Prince Edward Historical Society has been re-organized and is functioning again. An active program committee is working and the result of their efforts has been most encouraging. At a Strawberry Festival in late June, some ninety new members joined the society.

The Mississauga Historical Society is tying in its program for the coming winter with the Port Credit Library, in a series of evenings described as "Holding on to History". The programs feature various facets of the Port Credit - Mississauga story.

The Glengarry Historical Society reports a very successful wine and cheese party sponsored by a local organization in aid of the Nor-Wester Museum. At least 200 tickets were sold and those who attended had a most enjoyable evening. This group also manned a booth at the Highland Games, is setting up a table at an Antique Show and Sale and is planning an Old Time Fiddlers' Contest.

Essex County Historical Association held its annual Fall meeting at Assumption Parish Church in Windsor. Father Lajeunesse conducted a lecture tour of the Church, dealing with aspects of the history of the Church from its foundation as a Jesuit Mission to the local Indian tribes. Refreshments were served in the Church Hall.

The diary of Timothy Rogers, the Newmarket area's first settler and the man most often described as the founder of the town has been returned to Newmarket. It has been presented to the Yonge Street Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends as a gift. It has been microfilmed by the Ontario Archives and the original will be deposited in the Quaker Archives at the University of Western Ontario in London. A microfilm of the diary will stay at the historic Yonge Street Meeting House.

Late last June, the Ohio Historical Society sponsored a tour for bicycle enthusiasts. The tour left Columbus on a Saturday morning, travelled along U.S. Rte. 40, - the old National Road, - to Zanesville. Participants enjoyed an ox roast near the Zane Grey Museum site and returned home on Sunday morning.

Most historical Societies will be filled with envy at the free publicity which the Waterford & Townsend Historical Society gets. They keep their activities in front of the public by announcing their meetings, free, on the two local radio stations, and by having a complete write-up of their meetings in the two local newspapers.

Happy birthday to the Women's Wentworth Historical Society which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. Early in June, this group sponsored a house tour in Hamilton. Seven homes were opened, - all within easy walking distance of each other in the Bay - Aberdeen Avenue area.

The Peterborough Historical Society Bulletin for October prints a letter from Dr. Hutchison to Richard Birdsall and comments on the speed of the postal service in 1845. The letter was written at Peterborough on November 12th, 1845. It arrived at Belleville on November 13th, was forwarded from Belleville on November 14th and arrived in Kingston on November 15th. Apparently next-day delivery isn't all that new!

The Ontario Historical Society's Research Publications has added another volume to its series. There are now 4 titles available, all in uniform binding and all at the uniform price of \$3.25 each. The 4 titles now available are,-

#1 - Ethnic Groups in Upper Canada: Burnet

#2 - Prohibition in Ontario: Hallowell

#3 - The Canada Land Company: Karr

#4 - Bishop Alexander Macdonell and the Politics of Upper Canada: Rea

Our Bank reports that it has lost a number of membership cheques which we had deposited to our account. If your cheque has not been cashed, we would be grateful if you would let us know.



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