

BULLETIN

THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LOCAL SOCIETIES COMMITTEE

1466 Bathurst Street

Toronto, Ontario M5R 3J3

No. 15

Fall, 1975

COMMENT

The Bulletin was originally designed to give news of the doings of local historical societies across the province. It depends almost entirely on the News-letters and Reports which are sent in to our office. Some societies send in material for almost every issue BUT there are many societies from which we never hear. Every group, no matter how small, has its own particular achievements and, who knows, your success may be an inspiration for some other society. A copy of the Bulletin goes to every member of O.H.S. and 3 copies go to all local societies that are members of O.H.S. Of these 3 copies, one is for the President, one for the Secretary, and the third is to circulate or go to any member of the local society who is especially interested. We send out approximately 2,000 of each issue all across Canada, as well as a number to the U.S. and Great Britain. One goes to Holland, one to a German University, and, this year for the first time, one goes to Moscow. So - you see the publicity we can give you.

You may have noticed that the list of affiliated societies on the back cover of Ontario History seems to be shrinking. It is! Affiliated societies are those who are incorporated under our Act of Incorporation and who MUST, therefore send us annual reports. If the annual reports do not come in, the affiliation is cancelled. It is just that simple. If a society has its own incorporation, that is fine and we are happy to have it continue as a Corporate member who receives all the benefits of membership in The Ontario Historical Society except the incorporation. It is quite likely that reports fail to come in because there has been a change in officers. One notice was sent out early in the year, and another will be going out shortly to all affiliates who have not sent in the reports for 1974.

AWARDS

At the Annual Meeting of The Ontario Historical Society at Thunder Bay last June, two silver Cruikshank Medals were presented. These were awarded for the best articles published in Ontario History during 1974. One medal went to Don R. Beer for his article, "MacNab and Sydenham" in the March issue. Mr. Beer teaches history at the University in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia, and has been doing post-graduate study in Canada. The other medal went to Winnifred P.J. Millar, a housewife in London, Ontario for her article, "George P.M. Ball: a Rural Business Man in Upper Canada". This article is of special interest to people in the Niagara area because of its connection with the Balls Falls Conservation Area.

At the same meeting the Local Societies Committee presented its Award of Excellence to the Norfolk Historical Society for its well-rounded program and its involvement in all aspects of the history of the community. The Committee found great difficulty in deciding on the winner since so many of the entries showed a very high level of achievement.

ORAL HISTORY AND THE LOCAL SOCIETY

A Workshop on Oral History and the local historical society was held in Ottawa on May 2 and 3 under the sponsorship of the Local Societies Committee of The Ontario Historical Society. Some 50 people registered for this workshop, eager to learn what others were doing and to improve their understanding of sound-recording technology.

Funding of oral history projects was a topic of obvious and great interest. The Explorations program and the New Horizons program were both logical sources of possible funding. The Explorations program is aimed at individual projects, whereas the New Horizons program serves retired people in groups of 10 or more. The North Lanark Historical Society and the Porcupine Camp Historical Society both spoke of their satisfactory experience in making use of the New Horizons funding. A variety of other sources, particularly local, were explored with participants telling of their varied experiences in obtaining financial support.

Interviewing techniques were discussed. Many participants with some experience in interviewing offered suggestions and all agreed that most important was to gain the confidence of the interviewees. Beyond emphasizing complete honesty between the interviewer and the interviewee, few strict rules for a successful interview could be laid down.

Many participants were aware that they were creating archival material for the future and thus a session was directed to the discussion of arranging, describing and preserving sound recordings in an archives. The academic research uses of oral history were explored in regard to folklore; in terms of ethnology; in respect to political history; and in regard to military history. A multitude of other uses of oral history were not neglected, such as the collection and use of such material in the educational system, and a whole host of exciting radio, television and mixed-media possibilities.

The conference was ably chaired by Dr. W.A.B. Douglas and participants and panelists alike went away surprised and stimulated by the breadth and sophistication of the oral recording which had been accomplished. Quite appropriately, conference proceedings were taped by the Public Archives of Canada, and can be obtained from there.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MAN

Canada's Visual History is a recently launched slide and text presentation that tries to bring our social and cultural history to life, both as it happens and as it relates to the present - in order to give a better understanding of contemporary Canadian society. Each volume of Canada's Visual History comprises 30 slides, both in colour and black and white, and a comprehensive bilingual booklet, researched and written by a noted Canadian scholar. The cost of each set of slides is \$15.00 and can be purchased through the Visual Education Centre, 115 Berkley Street, Toronto.

GLENGARRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The 14th Annual Volume of the Glengarry Historical Society has been received. On the cover of this excellent annual report, is an attractive line drawing of the Nor'wester's and Loyalist Museum at Williamstown, - one of the projects of this active society. In addition to several articles about the history of places in the area, there is a new and very interesting feature by Mr. Ewan Ross, entitled "12 Famous People from Glengarry". These are thumb-nail biographical sketches of Glengarry notables, and include such well-known figures as Ralph Connor, Bishop Alexander Macdonell, John Sandfield MacDonald and Grace Campbell.

Another project of the Glengarry Historical Society is the annual Wine and Cheese party at the Nor'wester Museum every August. No notices are ever sent out about it but the news leaks out over the local grapevine. Tickets are sold on a "first-come" basis and are limited in number. This year's party was eagerly anticipated and the tickets were sold out early.

ORILLIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Orillia Historical Society closed its 1974-75 season in June with a pot-luck supper at the home of one of its members. Our reporter informs us that after absorbing knowledge and culture for all the rest of the year, the end-of-the-season get-together was a great chance to socialize with all the nice people who belonged to this distinguished group. It was also a chance to bring less fortunate friends, so that they might see what fine people belong to a historical society. Members were asked to bring a chair, a favourite dish and \$1.00 to help defray expenses. Tea, coffee and punch were provided and mosquitoes were supplied at no extra cost.

CANADIAN FRIENDS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Last June the Canadian Friends Historical Association held its annual bus tour in the Norwich area, which has a strong appeal as a Quaker pilgrimage. The area was first settled early in 1810 by Quakers from Dutchess County, New York, and Meetings have been held there continuously since 1811. This year the members of the Quaker Meeting in Norwich, in co-operation with the Norwich and District Historical Society hosted the tour. The Museum (formerly the Meeting House), several old burial grounds and other spots of Quaker interest were visited. Quakers from the district, from their own family tradition, were able to bring alive the history of Quakerism in Norwich for their visitors.

SIR JOHN JOHNSON HOUSE

Glengarry Historical Society reports that the Sir John Johnson House at Williamstown is to be opened during the summer as a new branch of the Seaway Libraries. This house is thought to have been built about 1784 and was of sufficient historical importance that the Staff Research unit of the Historical Sites and

Monuments Board of Canada prepared an Agenda Paper on it in 1961. When The Association for Preservation Technology met at Cornwall in 1972, a visit was paid to the house during one of the bus tours. Each visitor received a bound survey of the house which had been assembled from the findings of several preservation authorities. This interesting report contained a brief history of Sir John Johnson and his business dealings; the historical background of the house and an architectural analysis of it, including architectural drawings.

It is most interesting to learn that this historic house is now being restored to serve a useful purpose in the community, and at the same time can be visited as an historic site by the travelling public.

NORFOLK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Norfolk Historical Society held a most successful Book Launching Party early in July. "The Cabinet Makers of Norfolk County" is a handsome, hard-cover book, lavishly illustrated. The first printing of numbered, signed copies was sold out in the first five days, and a second printing is presently under way. The Party was held at the Eva Brook Donly Museum in Simcoe where a special exhibit of antique furniture had been arranged. The authors, researchers and illustrators were present and autographed the books. Refreshments were provided for the more than 300 people who were present.

QUETICO - SUPERIOR UNDERWATER RESEARCH PROJECT

An authoritative report on the first 13 years of this project, conducted jointly by the Minnesota Historical Society and the Royal Ontario Museum has just been published. "Voices from the Rapids: An Underwater Search for Fur Trade Artifacts, 1960 - 73" is a very readable, often exciting story of a pioneer underwater research project that has received international attention. More than 90 illustrations help tell the story, and complete descriptions and lists of catalogued artifacts give the report added value for professionals in the fields of archaeology and fur trade history. Walter A. Kenyon, associate curator of anthropology and ethnology at the Royal Ontario Museum was the director of the Canadian portion of the project.

LAKE SCUGOG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In the fall of 1972, the York Pioneer and Historical Society held its annual bus tour in Port Perry. It was guided by Mr. B. Napier Simpson, an architect who had done considerable research into Port Perry's architecture and history, and who was enthusiastic about the town. For some reason, interest shown by an outside group often provides the little bit of leavening which stirs the town fathers to an appreciation of what they have. Since the visit of the York Pioneers, the Post Office Department has been persuaded to restore the old Post Office building instead of putting up one of its more modern designs. The Lake Scugog Historical Society is presently

engaged in a campaign to save the old Town Hall. It has been empty since the Dominion Corset Co. moved out 3 years ago. Now, the Town Council has given a group of private citizens a 99-year lease on the building, provided it pays all expenses involved in the restoration and maintenance. It is hoped to use the building for summer theatre and other community projects. It is also hoped that the town merchants can be persuaded to make their store-fronts compatible with the Post Office and the Town Hall.

All this shows what a properly organized bus tour can start.

WELLINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

This very active society reports a novel publicity idea. The Wellington County Historical Float was entered in parades at three Fall Fairs in the district; at two Centennial parades; at two Santa Claus parades; and at the International Women's Year Parade in Guelph. Creating the Float in the first place entailed much planning and much work but it was a worth-while project.

This society also reports that Century Farm signs are again available. If your farm has qualified since the original marking was done in 1967, or if you wish to replace a rusted sign, you may now do so. The signs cost \$7.00 and are available through the Junior Farmers' organization in your community, or at the County Agricultural Office. The farm must have been in the same family for at least one hundred years.

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Today's children brought up on Barbie dolls might be surprised to learn that their grandparents had an even wider variety of character dolls to provide entertainment. These were paper dolls of movie stars, kings and queens, boys and girls, and even quintuplets, each with a wardrobe of inexhaustible variety and design. The paper dolls are only one facet of the Minnesota Historical Society Education Division's latest museum lesson program entitled "Life in the 1930's". Minnesota History News notes that although this program is available only to elementary school children at present, it is hoped to up-grade it to secondary school level in the near future.

BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

During the months of July and August, this historical society offered a special program on pioneer life for the blind or any other handicapped persons. The program, at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. every weekday, acquainted the participants with many aspects of life on the frontier. They heard pioneer music, tasted cornbread and sassafras tea, handled pioneer tools and utensils, and took part in such activities as churning butter, grinding spices and carding wool. We commend this program to the attention of all local societies which operate a museum. It seems a logical and practical extension of the idea behind the Fragrance Gardens which have been set up in a number of places.

BRUCE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bruce County Historical Society reports that work on the new addition to the Bruce County Museum at Southampton is progressing and that it will likely be completed this Fall. An Archives unit is included in the new building. The furnishings, contents and the appointment of an archivist will be the responsibility of the Historical Society. Donations of documents, old books, letters, pictures, diaries, minute books, old newspapers, papers of any kind will be much appreciated. This Archives unit is the realization of a long-time dream of this society, and much effort has been put into it. We look forward to hearing more about it.

CHANNEN, EDWARD ROSS (Director, Simcoe County Museum)

Suddenly, at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Barrie, July 14, 1975 Ross's death brought profound sadness to his legions of friends across Canada and in the United States. As one talked with mutual friends, the recurring phrase seemed to be, "I feel particularly sad because". Each had a personal response to a special reflection of his many-faceted personality. Museum lovers saw his moulding of the Simcoe County Museum into one of the great regional collections; archaeologists, a colleague and an authority on Huronia; historians envied his insight into local history; former students remembered the new vistas he had opened to them. Then there were The Ontario Historical Society, the Sons of Scotland, the Rotarians, the Women's Institutes, his fellow workers, his neighbours and all those bus loads of school children with whom he seemed to have a special rapport. To his mother, his brothers and sisters, we send our deepest sympathy. Only his frail body has died. He, himself, lives on in his many achievements and in our hearts, for Ross was a truly great Canadian.

It has been suggested that the new wing of the Simcoe County Museum be named "The Ross Channen Memorial Wing", and that his portrait be commissioned and hung there. Anyone wishing to support the fund may make contributions payable to the Ross Channen Memorial Fund, addressed to Judge James A. Clare, Midhurst, Ontario, L0L 1X0. Receipts will be issued.

GLEANINGS

Last April, the Essex County Historical Association, in conjunction with the History Department of the University of Windsor, heard Mr. Alan Douglas give an illustrated talk on the life of Colonel John Prince and his influence on the development of the Windsor area. A wine and cheese party followed the address. An excellent attendance was recorded.

The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Historical Society announces that it now has available an Index of all names in Lunenburg or the old Eastern District. This book is not only a valuable source of material on the United Counties, but on the early life and people of Upper Canada as well. It costs \$2.50 and can be obtained from the society at Box 773, Cornwall, Ontario.

Our condolences go to the member of the Streetsville Historical Society who made a batch of very special cookies for the April meeting. Then the meeting had to be cancelled because of the worst snow storm of the winter. Everyone was disappointed!

Conservation Canada, Vol. 1, #3, contains a most interesting analysis of the importance of the hearth and its utensils to the pioneer Canadian home. The article is in French and is lavishly illustrated with pictures of what the early housewife used in the preparation of food for her family.

At its 1975 Annual Meeting, the Champlain Society authorized an increase in the number of its members. For those who are interested in joining, the annual fee is \$15.00 and applications should be made in writing to Mrs. Eleanor Cook, The Champlain Society, Royal York Hotel, 100 Front Street West, Toronto M5J 1E3.

You are fortunate if you have a Community College within reasonable reach. These colleges are very sensitive to the demands of the community and will try to meet any reasonable request, providing that you have a group which can make the request economically viable. Favourite courses offered are those in the various handicrafts, but with a little urging, courses in antiques and collectibles, furniture styles and refinishing, historic preservation and local history can be set up. There is an excellent course in museology presently being offered in one of the colleges, and in another, a very successful seminar in genealogy took place this last summer.

Welcome to the newly-formed Pelham Historical Society. Its very first effort was a Coffee Party and sale of "attic treasures" which put \$65.00 in the coffers. The group plans, very wisely, to confine meetings to three during the coming winter, but these three are to be worthwhile. We wish them every success.

In September, Simcoe County Historical Society invited the public to attend the unveiling of a memorial to Sir Frederick Banting at the farm home where he was born. The memorial is spherical in shape, representing the world-wide importance of the discovery of insulin. The memorial was erected by the Historical Society with the co-operation of Essa Township and Edward Banting, a nephew of Sir Frederick.

The Streetsville Historical Society invited the Mississauga Historical Society to a joint "Show and Tell" program as the September meeting for both societies. "Show and Tell" evenings have always been popular and this one proved very enjoyable. The active participation of members of both societies added to the interest of the meeting.

One of the most complete listings of community activities from September to the end of December, 1975, has just come from the Etobicoke Historical Society. It lists enough varied and interesting things to do that no-one need be idle this Fall. However, we were disappointed to find no mention of the O.H.S. Museum Section Workshop on October 16, 17, and 18.

Michigan Bicentennial Review reports funding for two projects in Detroit. It is to receive \$20,000 for a three-day Senior Citizen Festival featuring a parade, entertainment and special workshops and awards. The second grant to Detroit is \$30,000 to promote public awareness of the contribution of black composers of classical music from the 18th century to the present. Ann Arbor also receives \$20,000 for a teen-age student exchange program.

Weather Reports will begin giving rainfall in millimetres and snowfall in centimetres in September. We have become accustomed to hearing temperatures in Celsius. For a good family book on the history of measurement read Canada Goes Metric by Gerald J. Black - a Doubleday paperback.

Peterborough Historical Society is attempting to raise \$75,000 for the restoration of Hutchison House. Members started the campaign with an afternoon ceremony where cards with a sketch of the House and the words, "I saved a stone" were sold for \$1 each. Stands have been set up in various places in the city selling "stones" and publicizing the campaign.

London and Middlesex Historical Society have sent out two sheets. One lists the names and addresses of the officers and all the committees for the coming year. The other gives the program for 1975-6, - including the speakers and the times and places of the meetings. This looks like a useful and economical bit of organization.

We would like to remind our readers that An Index to the Publications of The Ontario Historical Society is available from our office for \$3.25 postpaid. This is a comprehensive index which many researchers are finding very useful.

Also available, at \$3.25 each, are copies of the four volumes of the Research Series

- Ethnic Groups in Upper Canada: Burnet
- Prohibition in Ontario: Hallowell
- The Canada Land Company: Karr
- Bishop Alexander Macdonell
and the Politics of
Upper Canada: Rea.

Any or all of these would make interesting and inexpensive gifts for an historically-minded friend.