

BULLETIN

THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LOCAL SOCIETIES COMMITTEE

1466 Bathurst Street

Toronto, Ontario M5R 3J3

ISSN 0078-4869

No. 18

Spring 1977

COMMENT

It is generally accepted that a lively membership is the life-blood of any historical society. If your society is fairly large and has an active program, there will be little difficulty in attracting new members. If your society is small and its few members are from a wide geographical area, then it is almost a foregone conclusion that there will be problems with membership. Regardless of the size of the society, every non-profit membership organization needs new members for a variety of reasons.

Obviously the social advantages of a well-attended meeting cannot be overlooked, and neither can the amount of revenue from fees. Fees are necessary to conduct the work of the society, and the more members, the more money to carry out society projects. We should try to set fees at a realistic level so that the society is not cramped for funds to carry out its work. Many local societies are still trying to operate with an annual fee structure of \$2.00 or \$3.00. Just recently, a group being newly organized wondered if a fee of \$1.00 per year would be too much to ask! Every society should sit down once in a while and look hard at its cost per member. With to-day's rising prices you may get a surprise.

The larger the membership, the larger will be the reservoir of experience and talent from which new officers and committee personnel can be drawn. It is not very inspiring to have the same leaders in the work of the society year after year, no matter how efficient they may be. A change of outlook and direction is as good for a society as for an individual.

How do we go about getting new members? There are almost as many ways of doing this as there are enthusiastic society members. The mass mailing of a flyer listing the benefits of membership immediately comes to mind. If a publisher can promote the sale of a book in this way, why would it not be a viable means of promoting membership in your society? A local society can use a personal approach. The "Every member get a member" slogan is a good one. Invitations to non-members to attend a special meeting is also good, as is the reverse idea of holding a special event for "Members Only". Several groups use the local newspapers for a series of articles about the society, and recently one or two local cable TV outlets have been happy to provide free time for an historical society to tell about its activities. Preparing an information brochure about the society, its history, its aims and objectives, and its programs is often useful. The brochure must be attractive and well-designed, and it should be the responsibility of one committee to supervise its distribution.

Once you have gained a new member, he must be made welcome. He should be sent a membership card and a letter of welcome from the President. Records of membership must be kept and be kept up-to-date. Seeking new members should be a regular part of the every-day activity of a society if we are to promote its well-being. A crash program may be effective at the moment, but does little for the society in the long run.

Much, much more could be, and has been, written about the membership problem. The American Association for State and Local History has an excellent technical leaflet, #37, "Recruiting Members for your Historical Society". This was issued as information and suggestions for small local societies and is highly recommended.

ANNUAL MEETING - 1977

The Annual Meeting of The Ontario Historical Society is being held at York University, just outside of Toronto, on June 17, 18 and 19. This year's meeting is being hosted by the North York Historical Society which is hard at work planning an interesting three days for our members. The papers being presented are generally relevant to the Toronto area, and when taken in conjunction with the bus trips, will prove most informative to all history buffs. The speaker for the Annual Banquet will be "Tommy" Thompson, Metropolitan Toronto Parks Commissioner who will talk in his usual entertaining manner about "Parks, Petunias and People". Mr. Thompson has become famous for his Sunday morning walks through the Toronto parks. Hundreds of people have taken these walks and have learned to appreciate the beauties of natural settings. We are looking forward to seeing all of you at York this June.

PRINCE EDWARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

At its January meeting, this society decided to sponsor an Essay Contest in the County Elementary schools. Essays were to be on an historical fact or place in the area in which the contestant lived. There were three categories, Junior, Intermediate and Senior, with two prizes in each category. At the March meeting, each winner and runner-up read his essay and received his prize. The essays showed a high degree of competence and much local information was added to the general knowledge of County history.

GRENVILLE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In order to recognize Heritage Day, the history department at South Grenville District High School organized a half-hour program based on local history in the Prescott and South Grenville area. The program was repeated twice during each 70-minute class period throughout the day, so that altogether 15 history classes were able to participate. First, one of the history teachers gave a brief overview of the history of Prescott in order to provide the background for a short series of coloured slides on the important old homes and commercial sites in Prescott. The concluding speaker in the morning was the Chairman of the Prescott Museum Board, while in the afternoon, the guest speaker was the Mayor of Prescott. Both speakers emphasized the importance of our Heritage and its meaning for the citizens of the South Grenville area.

MISSISSAUGA SOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

This society is right up-to-date with its programming. In 1932, on the site of the old Port Credit Brickyard, the Lloyd Refineries, now the Texaco Port Credit Refinery, was founded. To supply the new refinery with marine transportation, a fleet of barges, tugs and tankers was assembled. The fleet prospered but encountered all the problems that beset sailors from time immemorial. To-day the Lloyd tanker fleet is just a memory. Mr. Lorne Joyce, a specialist in local marine history, has assembled a wealth of information, some of which he personally participated in. This, he shared in the form of a slide presentation, at the March meeting of the society at the Texaco Refinery at Port Credit. A number of local residents recognized the names of the early tankers, which were part of a local fleet based at Port Credit.

ORILLIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The big event for the Orillia Historical Society in April is "The Raspberries Came in Haying Time." This is a drama inspired by the "History of the Sheas" by Wm. A. Shea. It is a developing story of a father-son conflict which, it has been said, captures "sympathy, truthfulness and compassion for its subjects." Interpreted by the North Muskoka Players it has been widely acclaimed in Huntsville and the surrounding area. The Orillia Historical Society is proud to sponsor this play. Tickets went on sale at the March meeting of the society.

KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Kingston Historical Society reports that, back in August of last year, the "La Salle Expedition II" en route, by canoes, from Montreal to New Orleans, re-enacting La Salle's 1681-82 voyage, came ashore at Kingston. There were 23 members in the crew. In the news recently there is a report that the coldest winter of the century has hampered their progress. River after river being frozen, they have had to resort to portage. Near Hebron, Indiana, they were walking in single file facing the traffic; a truck crashed into a small cattle truck, which careened into them. Four of the voyageurs were struck, three received broken bones and lacerations. Nevertheless, even with the extreme cold and the motor accident they are not behind schedule. This trip, whose members spent more than two years researching and preparing for it, was one of the more unusual and interesting bicentennial projects of the U.S.

GUELPH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The completed manuscript of "The History of Guelph" has at last been sent to the publishers and it is hoped to have delivery by the end of June. A flyer is being prepared to send out information about it. The February meeting approved the setting up of the Guelph History Foundation to handle the proceeds of the sale of the book. After all expenses have been paid, the income from the Foundation will be used to cover the cost of -

1. The society's publications,
2. The setting up and maintaining of the society's archives,
3. The erection of historic plaques,
4. The commissioning of paintings of Guelph Mayors, and other subjects of historical significance to Guelph.

BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newspapers and radio and TV newscasts are among the best sources for research in local history. To-day, newspapers are usually microfilmed, but little has been done to preserve the film of newscasts. About ten years ago, the Buffalo & Erie County historical society became concerned about the loss of this major source of local history. It made an arrangement with local commercial stations to get their news footage when they were finished with it, and during these ten years, the society has gathered together an invaluable collection of film detailing the daily events in the life of the community. During the last two years, the society's staff has been busy processing and cataloguing the more than 8,000 reels of film. The Director of the project feels that preserving newsfilm is an ideal activity for any local society which has access to a radio or TV station. Even if nothing can be done with the film at the present time except put it in storage, yet its wealth of information will have been saved and will be available for future use.

YORK PIONEER & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

At the February meeting of this society, Mr. Russell Cooper of Black Creek Pioneer Village gave a most interesting talk on his collection of canes and walking sticks. His unique collection contained many canes of dual purposes, such as canes which concealed swords and pistols, a cattle prod, a spirits flask and an umbrella. The poacher had one that turns into a fishing pole and the dandy had one which squirted perfume. A business man had one that folded out with an arm having a spirit level with which the height of a horse could be measured. There was even a cane for ladies which quickly produced a thin spike - a useful substitution for the hat-pin to brush off undesirables. It seems that all these canes probably developed from the oldest known cane - the shepherd's crook.

PICTURE BOOKS

Just recently, two beautiful picture books have come to our office. One is "Old Relics and Charming Retainers of Rural Ontario" by Jack Brooksbank. This is a personal record of the author's twenty years in Canada in the form of black and white line sketches of buildings which caught his eye. In his accompanying letter,

he says, "... this has given me a great deal of satisfaction that I have had an opportunity to portray something of the heritage and beauty of the buildings and structures that make this Province of Ontario a fine and beautiful place in which to live." Only 50 copies of this book have been privately printed.

The other handsome picture book is "Lambton County" published by the Lambton County Historical Society. It is made up of line sketches of old buildings in the County and pioneer artifacts, done in dark brown ink on buff paper by a local artist, Barbara Perrin. This most attractive book can be purchased from the society.

GLEANINGS

The announcements of meetings sent out by The Ancaster Twp. Historical Society are so attractive that they are well worth saving. The latest one shows a pioneer housewife operating a dash churn in the kitchen of her home. The society is very fortunate in having someone who can make the black and white line drawings used as a background for the meeting notice.

Etobicoke Historical Society reminds us that we are growing older. It notes sesquicentennial celebrations taking place at Christ Church, Mimico; the City of Guelph; the University of Toronto and the Toronto Cricket Club. Doubtless there are others.

Minnesota Historical Society is presenting eight "Adventures in History, 1977." Four of these are in Minnesota, one is to the high Arctic, one to the Gaspé and two to Europe. Anyone interested is welcome, but non-members of the society pay an extra assessment.

The Historical Society of Mecklenburg, U.C. presented an evening of films at Harbourfront in Toronto, in March. Four films were shown - all showing the part that German pioneers have played in the settlement and development of Canada.

Peterborough Historical Society reports the publication of "St. John's, Peterborough" by Prof. Elwood Jones of Trent University. This is a very readable history of the oldest parish church in the county of Peterborough, beginning with its earliest years as a mission and continuing to the present day. Anne Heideman provided the photographs which illustrate the book.

The Seminars in American Culture, held every year at Cooperstown, N.Y. have just been announced. A wide variety of lecture topics and "Hands-on" craft workshops will be held during the two weeks - July 3 - 9 and July 10 - 16. Information can be obtained from the New York State Historical Association at Cooperstown.

The Oakville Historical Society recommends three books as MUST reading. The Story of Bronte Harbour is a companion piece to The Story of Oakville Harbour. These two are \$3.00 each. The third is a spanking new walking "Guide to Oakville" which is only \$1.00. They can be obtained from the society at 168 Lakeshore East.

We have heard rumours of the recent formation of a Lost Villages Historical Society. Apparently its aim is to save memorabilia and historical information about the inundated area along the St. Lawrence river. We would be interested in receiving some definite information about this society.

The Oshawa Historical Society is off to an excellent start for 1977. In News Bulletin #35, there is a listing of the dates and programs for all of the year 1977. This is good planning which should pay off in increased interest and enthusiasm.

Seventh Town (Ameliasburgh) Historical Society reports an active year. They have reproduced and enlarged many old photographs of activities, homes and village landmarks, and have filed them for future reference. They also find that Pot-luck suppers establish an atmosphere of friendliness and interest before the main speaker takes over. The resulting increased attendance is gratifying.

Protecting Your Papers is the title of an illustrated information pamphlet outlining the services provided by the Public Archives of Canada in safeguarding that part of the nation's heritage that is recorded on paper documents. It is free and is available from the Public Archives in Ottawa.

A new Association has been formed named "The Association for the Development of Commonwealth Cultural Knowledge" (ADCKK). It aims to promote throughout Canada a better understanding of Commonwealth cultures, their needs and problems. The Association has outlined an ambitious and extensive program.

Ridgetown & District Historical Society sent all its members a survey questionnaire at the beginning of the year. It asked for information about the particular interests of the members in historical society activities, - all the way from participating in committee work to volunteering for the necessary tasks of typing and mailing.

The 1977 project of the Niagara Historical Society is to enlarge and improve the vault where documents, newspapers and old books are stored. Fire-proofing, insulation, air-conditioning, better lighting and shelving will be installed. Donations for this purpose will be welcome.

The Annual Meeting of the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Toronto will be at the Toronto Cricket Club in April. It will be a luncheon meeting. Last year members were fascinated in watching Toller Cranston practising while they lunched.

Although the Weston Historical Society is barely a year old, it is making its mark in the community. It has undertaken a campaign to preserve the old Carnegie Library building, and is planning a wide variety of fund-raising projects.

Vol. I, No. 1 of the Scarborough Historical Society's "Notes and Comments" has just come to hand. It is being launched in the hope that it will become the medium for recording much of the valuable source material in the possession of individual members, and that it will develop into an interesting and valuable journal of local history. The Editor of this promising new publication is Dr. T. F. Nicholson of West Hill.

If you have a Dominion Store in your neighbourhood and your members shop there, do get them to save their purchase tapes. One church we know about has obtained two wheel chairs with their tapes. Who knows? - you might be able to get file cases or display tables with them.

The Royal Botanical Gardens at Hamilton is starting a collection of catalogues of the nursery and seed trades. Old catalogues are of importance to researchers to show what was available and what the prices were. If you have any old seed catalogues, this is the place for them.

Members are reminded that, in addition to our Research Series, we have two other books for sale. The Index to Publications (\$3.25) is a useful guide to all the material we publish, including Ontario History. Preserving our Heritage (\$6.50) by Dr. G. Killan is a very readable account of the successes and tribulations of The Ontario Historical Society from its very beginning. Both are available from our office.