



OHS BULLETIN

34 Parkview Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario M2N 3Y2

— OHS Celebrates 110 Years! —

Issue 114 • 1998

Ontario Historical Society Celebrates 110 Years!

The Provincial Plaque presented to the OHS on September 4, 1988, erected on May 2, 1998 at the opening of the Society's new home at 34 Parkview Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario.

The foremost historical organization in the province The Ontario Historical Society originally called the Pioneer Association of Ontario was established on September 4, 1888 largely through the efforts of the Reverend Henry Scadding. It initially operated as a federation of local groups and was primarily concerned with the promotion of British-Canadian nationalism through the study of history. Reorganized in 1898 and incorporated with an expanded mandate the following year, the Society became increasingly involved in the movement to preserve archival records and historic sites. It also assumed scholarly pursuits, including a publication program, in addition to encouraging and co-ordinating the activities of local historical associations and museums. Today the Society continues its many efforts to preserve, interpret and publicize Ontario's multi-faceted heritage. Erected by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, Ministry of Culture and Communications.



John and Eva McKenzie relax at the front of their home.

The farm, the families and the future

The new home of The Ontario Historical Society is built on land that, in the early 19th century, would have been a forested hinterland surrounding the Town of York. In 1801 a Crown grant of 285 acres stretching from the newly surveyed Yonge Street to present day Bayview Avenue was deeded to Jacob Cummer, known as Lot 18, Concession 1, East of Yonge.

Jacob Cummer (1767-1841) had come to Upper Canada from Pennsylvania. Although his family was Lutheran, he became a Methodist, beginning in 1816 to hold church and Sunday school meetings in his log house on Yonge Street to serve the developing community of Willow Dale. Later he built a church, doing most of the work himself, and set aside two acres of his property for camp meetings. The log church was replaced by a brick church in 1856 with a spire built by his son. The brick church was demolished a century later.

Philip McKenzie (1824-1901) was an English immigrant, carpenter and cabinet maker by trade, who, in 1884 purchased a part of the the Cummer property. He moved his family into the old Cummer farmhouse, which faced Yonge Street between Parkview and Norton Avenue.

Philip took an active part in community life and was a Warden at St. John's Anglican Church, York Mills in 1888 when plans were made to reseat the church and change its layout.

When Philip died in 1901, his third son John operated the

farm. John married Allie Carson in 1902, however, she died the following year. His second wife was Eva Hill, who survived him. The McKenzie's specialized in Holstein cattle, raised pigs and kept poultry.

The "order book" for the years 1899 to 1920 contains many details about the farm and the livestock: a record of which cows were serviced by which bulls (one was named Sir Mercedes Johanna), dates of birth, and markings of calves. In 1909, a heifer calf is described as "all black except white spot on forehead, half front foot white, 3 white legs and half tail and white belly." Prices were recorded for animals and eggs sold, milk yields for cows, purchases of feed, seed, gravel, payments to hired men and to fellow farmers, and recipes for remedies including "Drink for cow that is off her feed." In the same book are the costs for when Allie McKenzie became ill in 1902 and 1903, including the expenses of a "Burial lot and fees, 2 photos and frames, [and] Monument."

When the McKenzies believed that conditions for agriculture had begun to deteriorate, the farm was subdivided for residential development; the Empress subdivision was registered in October 1912.

In 1913 construction began on a new house on a large lot to replace the farmhouse on Yonge Street. William McKenzie, John's older brother was in the lumber business and supplied some of the materials for the construction.

The same "order book" that had been used for recording farming activities was now used to record the costs of building the "new House" at 34 Parkview, the coach house and the stable.

Built in a style which has been identified as Queen Anne Revival, Arts and Crafts, and Edwardian, the house was commodious enough to accommodate Eva and John and their four daughters: Florence, Ethel, Gretchen, Jean and their domestic servants. A son Philip, born in 1918 completed the family. The old Cummer farmhouse was moved east of the new house and converted into a double house. William McKenzie occupied one of them.

When John retired from farming in 1920 he continued to keep two Jersey cows. The McKenzies had kept the brick milk house built in 1907, and in 1915 a brick stable was built. John joined his brother George in the Kingsdale Builder's Supply Company, a coal and lumber business close to Yonge Street.

In addition to his business interests and his growing family John was a life long member and several times Warden of St. John's Anglican Church (like his father), an active Mason, participating in the Paterson Lodge A.F. & A.M., Thornhill, Ontario, and a Trustee for Queen Mary School for over twenty-five years. The business closed in 1936 when John became gravely ill. He died on March 6, 1941 and is buried in St. John's Cemetery.

When John died, his eldest

daughter Florence took over the house. Florence was married to Frank H. Brown, who was Treasurer of the Township of North York from 1931 to 1967. The family sold the house in 1975, just four years before Florence's death. In the late 1980s air rights from 34 Parkview were transferred to an adjacent property. In return, 34 Parkview was transferred to the City of North York for \$1.

The proposal to build a ring road to relieve Yonge Street traffic placed this unique complex of buildings in a very vulnerable position. Delegations to the North York City Council persuaded them that the new road could be moved a few feet and the build-

ings survive. In 1994 the name of the block of Doris Avenue between Kingsdale Avenue and Parkview was changed to John McKenzie Gate, and in 1997 a new park built to the north of the complex at 34 Parkview was named the McKenzie Parkette.

The rest is history and will remain so, at least until July, 2018 as the OHS maintains this unique legacy from Ontario's rural beginnings, surrounded by the largest city in Canada.

We are grateful to Devon Peacock, a student at Earl Haig Collegiate, who volunteered to research the history of 34 Parkview, and to Dr. Jean Burnet who was his supervisor for the project and prepared this article.

The Ontario Historical Society
34 Parkview Avenue
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Miracle of the money

Dorothy Duncan, OHS Executive Director

The Ontario Historical Society celebrated its centennial in 1988 with an incredible series of events co-ordinated by Centennial Chair, Margaret Machell. The very scope and size of the centennial programmes highlighted a major challenge that the Society had faced for a very long time - the lack of adequate space for its headquarters.

During its 100 year history the Society had survived in attics and basements and other totally inadequate spaces where staff and volunteers had often typed with their gloves on due to lack of heat! In 1989 as John Bonser's term as President drew to a close and Colin Read's began, the Board of Directors moved the need for a permanent home to the top of its agenda. The search was on, and it led in many directions - to larger, more spacious attics and basements across Toronto and around the province, to historic properties in Milton and Barrie, and finally to the John McKenzie complex, two short blocks from our office at the time.

This was a property which the OHS had been concerned about for some time, and had made submissions to the North York City Council to save from demolition. The complex was to be demolished to allow for the construction of a new ring road. However, after submissions from many individuals and organizations Council relented and agreed to move the road a few feet west of the historic structures. Now a tenant was needed and the Willowdale Central Ratepayers'

Association encouraged the OHS to consider the location as its permanent headquarters.

On April 1, 1992, North York Council voted in favour of a motion by Councillor John Filion "that approval in principle be given to lease 34 Parkview Avenue to The Ontario Historical Society." On August 17, 1993 after 16 months of negotiation, we signed a 25 year lease with the City of North York. Our lease ends on July 31, 2018. Under the terms of the lease the OHS undertook all repairs and restoration of the structures, including the 1913 house, 1918 coach house, 1907 milk house, and 1915 stable. The OHS immediately insisted that all the buildings must be designated under The Ontario Heritage Act to provide a measure of protection for them in the future.

The City of North York had a comprehensive report on the property estimating the costs involved to meet all building and safety codes at approximately \$265,000. I remember well the meeting at which our Board of Directors heard this news. Several shook their heads and commented: "All we have ever raised is \$5,000! How will we ever do this?"

The first sign that a miracle was about to unfold was Marilyn Connell of Toronto coming into our office a few days later and presenting a very generous cheque on behalf of her husband Jim and herself commenting "We watched your presentation to Council on television and if ever



Preparing for one of the many sales held at the headquarters of the OHS. This book and garage sale was held June 3, 1995. Judy McGonigal and Jean Burnet are in the foreground and Jim Clemens and Meribeth Clow are in the background.

an organization deserves our support it's the OHS." James Clemens, OHS Treasurer, headed up a New Home Task Force that included Rowena Cooper, David Epstein, Ruth Keene, Marion Lick, Steven Price, Edith Saunders and the staff of the Society.

Our first **Book Sale** was held in the parking lot beside our office at 5151 Yonge Street on August 15, 1992 and \$1,300 was raised. This was the first of fourteen book sales to support the restoration.

In November, the Society held the first **Cook Book Caper** at the Gibson House and buyers came from far and wide to purchase new and used, historic and modern cook books, and food related items. This became a popular annual event raising over \$2,000 each successive year for the **New Home Fund**.

A flyer was designed inviting members, friends, supporters, anyone that we could reach to become **A Partner in Parkview** by buying a nail, a door knob, a door, a window; there was something for everyone, no matter the size of the budget. Our member's renewal letter encouraged them to donate as did our membership brochure and hundreds responded. Bags and pins with the OHS crest were offered for sale. **Notions and Nostalgia**, an annual fundraiser at Black Creek Pioneer Village was expanded and the funds channeled to the New Home Fund.

In 1992 we sponsored a **Christmas Card Contest** for young people between the ages of 6 and 16 and over 60 designs were submitted from across the province and we mounted a show of all the entries. Winners were: Karen Hough, Napanee; David Mancini, Hawkestone; Nicholas Moreau, Brampton; Dominique Rabideau, Vineland; Paula Schwebel, Willowdale and Doug Woods, Unionville. The winning cards were printed and offered for sale.

March of 1993 brought two

events: a **Silent Auction** of historic textiles, clothing and related books, and a gala **Victuals and Values** dinner and live auction hosted by Black Creek Pioneer Village. Auctioneers Frank and Ted Bennett of Unionville moved over 200 items. The generosity of Jean Agnew of Downsview, Penetanguishene and now Aurora, was an inspiration to other donors and over \$10,000 was raised. By April of 1993 the Fund had reached \$50,000.

Ruth Keene of Toronto, now Victoria, British Columbia, donated a queen size quilt in the Running Feather Quilting Design to be used for a **Lucky Draw**. On September 6, John Filion, our local councillor pulled Susan Lapell's name as winner of the quilt; Charles Truax, of Toronto and Judy Woods of Unionville were second and third prize winners. This was the first of our annual **Tea on the Verandah** fund raisers. Our total had now reached \$100,000.

We successfully applied for a jobsOntario grant to press on with the next phase of the work.

Preserve the Pudding! a series of three fund raising dinners was launched at Lord's Steak House in Willowdale in the fall of 1993 and eager diners joined us in preserving that vanishing dessert which had sustained our ancestors for over a century.

Dundurn Press of Toronto generously donated a quantity of **Garden of Dreams** by Edwina von Baeyer, and we mailed two copies to each of our affiliated societies. We suggested that each

society keep one copy for their library and that they use the other copy to raise funds for us. Another miracle - over \$10,000 rolled in from our affiliates from that initiative!

The spring of 1994 brought **We're Looney About Our Verandah!** An invitation was sent to neighbours, friends and supporters to cover our handsome (but needing repair) verandah with loonies. In return we gave all the donors a drill core sample to take home with them. The drill core samples were donated by good friends in Northern Ontario, the Museum of Northern History at Sir Harry Oakes Chateau in Kirkland Lake and the Highway Bookshop in Cobalt.


Over 300 visitors accepted our invitation to a **Hard Hat Tour** on Heritage Day, Monday February 21, 1994. Continuous tours of the house were given, showing the work in progress, and visitors for safety reasons, wore hard hats for protection.

In April the vans from Tippet-Richardson Ltd. rolled up to the door at 34 Parkview Avenue, bringing the OHS together from four locations spread across the city. We had arrived!


We soon learned that our new neighbours had a tradition of holding a **Giant Street Sale** each year on July 1. This fitted nicely with our fund raising efforts so we encouraged our members and supporters who had been generously donating books in the past to now bring us anything and everything - furniture, housewares, *continued on next page*




Guests enjoy tea while attending Cook Book Caper in December, 1994.



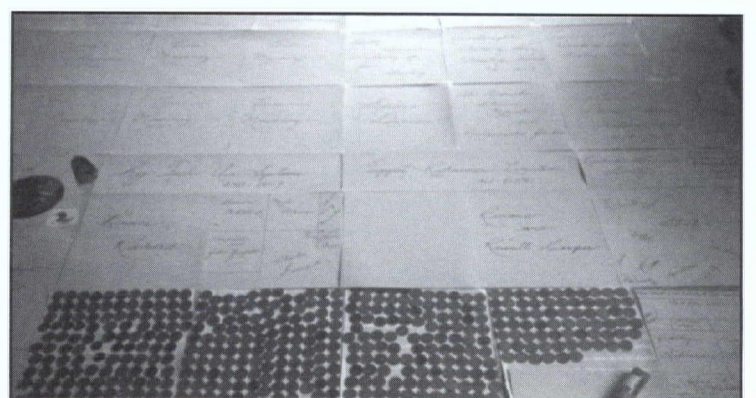
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Loonies on the Verandah at which \$11,000 was raised!

Miracle of the money, continued

toys, the works. Soon **Garage Sales** were being held in fine weather on the driveway and on our newly restored verandah, thanks to the loonies.

The Toronto Branch, Ontario Archaeological Society accepted our invitation to conduct an archaeological investigation and through the summer of 1994 Greg Purmal and Elise Sherman headed up the project so would-be purchasers at garage sales had a fascinating look at how the past can be uncovered and interpreted right in the neighbourhood.

September Soiree and Silent Auction in 1994 gave our supporters a relaxed evening of good food and fellowship, browsing and bidding on antiques and collectibles donated by our members.

Histories and Mysteries was introduced and continued in the fine tradition of our earlier book sales, but with the biggest selection ever.

Our **Tulip Tribute** on Remembrance Day 1994 commemorated the 50th anniversary of D-Day, Canada's role in the liberation of Holland, and gave everyone an opportunity to honour service men and women who had served around the world, by making a donation. The McKenzies had a long tradition of beautiful tulip beds stretching to Yonge Street so this was a very appropriate commemoration and fund raiser.

By February of 1995 we were poised to begin the third and final phase of the work which involved the repair and restoration of the coach house. We realized by now that the original estimates were too low, and when combined with extra work which we had chosen to undertake now

rather than later when it would be much more costly, our proposed budget had doubled.

Board member Mary Lou Fox of the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation on Manitoulin Island donated four items of **First Nation Art** to be used for fund raising: a hand made star quilt, a dream catcher, a shield, and a pair of hand made, fur trimmed moccasins. When the lucky tickets were drawn months later Theresa Thompson, Toronto; Lucy Banfield, Kingston; Barbara Kane, Willowdale; and Robert Surtees, North Bay were the lucky winners.

In 1995 a volunteer gardening committee was formed to draw up a Master Plan for the gardens and grounds. Committee member George Kapelos volunteered to prepare an entry for the **"Win a Dutch Garden"** contest from the magazine *Canadian Living*, which had been sent to us by Judy McGonigal of Sault Ste. Marie. Within weeks we learned that we had won 400 tulip bulbs. Once again, our gardens were going to bloom!

We began planning for a **Coach House Auction**, buoyed by the wonderful selection of donated collectibles and antiques from members and friends. We also experimented with an **Open House Sale** in November with a selection of pre-priced reproductions and historic items for sale, first-come, first-served and again we saw our entire stock vanish and the New Home Fund expand.

1996 brought us the sad news that one of our senior affiliated societies and a partner in many preservation battles and projects, the Women's Canadian Historical Society had made the decision to dissolve after a century of serv-

ice to the people of Ontario. The members chose to establish awards at several universities in Ontario and to make donations to several heritage projects including the final stage of our restoration. In appreciation the OHS named the Women's Canadian Historical Society Coach House in their honour.

The OHS successfully applied for an Organization Development grant from the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation to outfit the Coach House with the necessary equipment and publicize it as a rental facility across Ontario.

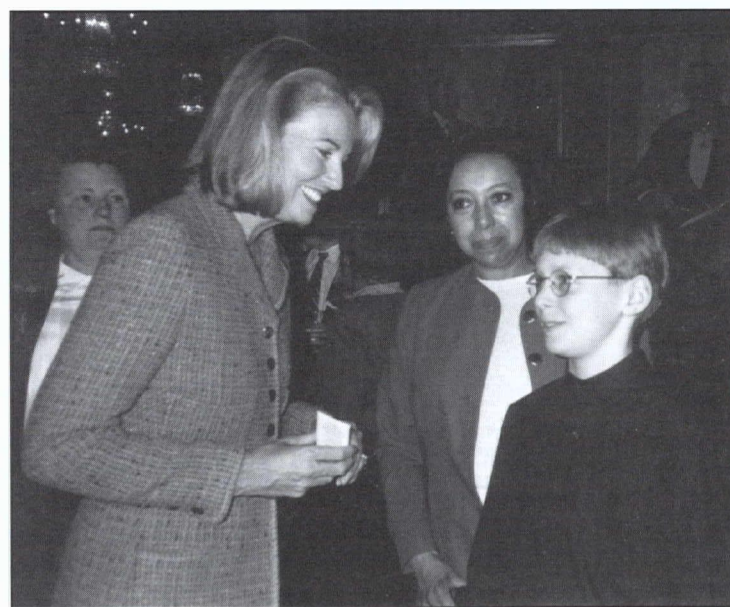
In the meantime, work was proceeding apace on the grounds and gardens and fund raising for this initiative included **Plants from Parkview** in 1996 and 1997.

Ruth Keene, Bill Hollowell, Willowdale, Carol and Sandy Agnew, Penetanguishene and Frank Bartoszek, Toronto donated four wonderful prizes for a **Silent Auction**: a Virginia Reel pieced quilt, a low back Windsor arm chair, a slat back side chair, and a Gourmet Continental Dinner for four. Over the next four months numerous bids arrived and in December we learned that Ellen Kimura of Toronto, Lorna Kruger of Palgrave, Judith McGonigal of Sault Ste. Marie and Barbara Truax of Toronto were the winners.

Preserve the Pudding! returned for the evening of February 14, 1997 and the newly restored coach house was converted into a dining room for the event. St. Valentine's Day in 1998 was celebrated throughout the house and coach house with the **Foods of Love**.

Little did we know when we began our fund raising campaign in 1992 that it would take over 50 events, over 1,000 individual donors, and donations from organizations, institutions, and corporations to achieve our final goal of \$485,000. To our delight and amazement our donors and volunteer workers never wavered in their commitment to this project. With good humour and incredible stamina our volunteers cleaned, sorted, priced, lifted, sold tickets, baked, served tea, planted, polished, weeded, and scrubbed while they smiled and donated hundreds of hours of work. Work that we could have never paid for! Thank you all - you have made a miracle happen!

Our initiatives continue with
How Does Your Garden Grow?
on Friday, May, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Geraniums, impatiens, perennials, containers, gardening books and many other items are for sale. On Canada Day, July 1 the **Giant Street Sale** takes place from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. We are accepting donated items. Mark your calendar and plan to attend these popular fundraisers.



Lieutenant Governor Hillary Weston, receives a bookmark from Adam Truax, member of the Young Ontario Programme and an OHS volunteer. Rosemary Sadlier, President of the Ontario Black History Society looks on. Adam designed two bookmarks for the society; one used to announce the Society had moved to 34 Parkview, and the second to advertise the Coach House Auction.

A tribute to OHS volunteers

Preserving Ontario's Heritage: A History of The Ontario Historical Society, written by Dr. Gerald Killan in 1976 is still, twenty years later, an incredible account of the preservice and dedication of countless individuals who established our Society and have shaped its progress through the years. During its 110 year history the OHS has been guided by many Boards of Directors, elected by the membership each year at the Annual General Meeting and coming together from all over Ontario on a regular basis to set policy for the organization. Countless volunteers have served the Society; as Board and Committee members, as speakers, workshop leaders, and conference organizers.

Today we continue to be blessed with a dedicated corps of volunteers, some as young as eight years old, who give freely of their skills and knowledge to

assist us. Artists, craftspeople, auctioneers, teachers, musicians, chefs, bakers, plumbers, painters, electricians, carpenters, and envelope stuffers.

With the initial concept of a Young Ontario Programme and the development of the resource *Discovering Your Community*, we drafted young people onto the Planning Committee so that we had direct input from the user group, ages six to sixteen. That committee received advice from Raymond and Becky Schofield, Colin Agnew, Douglas Turner, Adam Truax, and Daniel Brent.

As the Society moves into the new millennium and attempts to meet the needs of people of all ages and cultural backgrounds, it will be increasingly dependant on the volunteers of the future to help meet its goals and objectives. Its motto "From All For All," will, hopefully, stand the test of time.



Open House sale November 1995 with First Nations Art donated for a lucky draw in background.

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We're all pulling for the Coach House!



The Ontario Historical Society is raising money to restore the Coach House at our headquarters, the John McKenzie House in Willowdale. It's a challenge, but we're getting there, and your donations will help make the load lighter! Please send your contribution to:
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Bookmark, designed by Adam Truax.

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A restoration in progress

Robert Leverty, Restoration Manager

Late on the afternoon of August 17, 1993, we signed the 25 year lease for 34 Parkview Avenue. The next morning we began the restoration of the house, stable, milk house and coach house.

The first two months consisted of sorting the huge piles of unidentified junk and valuables in the four buildings. For weeks we sent enormous quantities to be recycled, to the toxic waste station and the garbage dump. During the sorting we found some real gems that would be crucial to our work including valuable oak doors and moulding and items that gave us historical insights into the buildings and the people who built them and lived in them.

By October, we had made a photographic and written inventory of the site before the restoration started. Winter was coming and we soon discovered that the boiler in the basement had completely rotted out and was quite dangerous. It was dismantled in early November and replaced by two new energy efficient boilers. The plumbers and pipe fitters worked miracles. We have kept the old house warm ever since.

From December 1993 to mid April 1994, we concentrated on the house. Since its interior was also designated under The Ontario Heritage Act, the work had to proceed with care and enormous patience. The main house was entirely rewired using as



This photograph which was given to the OHS by the McKenzie family was invaluable during the restoration of the coach house. It allowed us to replace the metal garage doors with wooden doors crafted like these original ones.



We inherited a rusted boiler which had to be immediately replaced.



Paynel Electrical Contractors Ltd. entirely rewired the main house and coach house.

many of the original fixtures as possible. We also had to meet the commercial building and fire codes by installing an outdoor fire escape, fire doors and exits, emergency signs and lighting. The basement ceiling had to be enclosed with fire rated drywall. This latter task was very challenging and almost provoked a mutiny.

We upgraded the security of the house with a new wireless alarm and fire system. All the rotten basement windows were replaced with reinforced glass blocks. A new wheelchair accessible washroom and ramp were created. The entire basement was given two coats of paint by hard-working volunteers.

Of course, we had some unexpected surprises and expenses. During our work, all the trees to the west of the house were clear cut for the development of the ring road. Those trees had protected, cooled and moderated the temperatures. It became apparent that the destruction of the trees would require us to install an air conditioning system. The instal-

lation of the duct work created an enormous challenge, and added considerably to the overall costs of the project.


While the adjacent ring road was being constructed, major plumbing problems in the house suddenly emerged. We were forced to dig up the basement floor and install new tiles and drains. We also discovered two

rotten and leaking chimneys. They were capped and the bricks were recycled for the next phase of our restoration.

By August 1994, the milk house was in desperate condition and obviously would not survive another winter. A plastic shelter was constructed to protect the public and allow the stone mason and *continued on next page*



Patrick Doyle and apprentice from Eire Stone Masonry Ltd. rebuilding the milk house wall inside a plastic shelter.



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The milk house was in sad shape before work began.

A restoration in progress, continued

his apprentice to perform their craft. The rotten roof was jacked up and suspended with supports. The leaning and crumbling front wall was dismantled. New foundations were created and the wall was rebuilt as it was originally. Rotten wood was replaced, the cupola was rebuilt and, just before Christmas, cedar shingles were installed on the roof.

In the spring and summer of 1995, the stable was restored to its former glory. The stone mason was busy again with new challenges. Paint and a new cedar shingle roof provided the final touches.

On September 27, 1995, we received our building permit for the coach house. The floor was demolished and the walls were stripped. For weeks there were long days devoted to removing the rubbish and debris. Plumbing pipes and insulation were installed before a new cement floor was poured. The winter of 1996 was bitterly cold and the electricians, carpenters, plumbers, and stone masons worked in difficult circumstances.

The inside of the coach house was completely rebuilt with a new furnace and air conditioning system. Steel beams were inserted to reinforce the walls and second floor. The outside of the coach house was restored exactly like the pictures the

McKenzie family had given us. Somehow we managed to meet our deadline of March 29th - we were installing the new light bulbs during the registration for our first workshop in the coach house!

In the fall of 1996, we had some small leaks in the roof of the main house. The new condominiums to the west of us created unexpected and powerful new wind tunnels. During the winter of 1997, shingles were literally flying off the house, then we were struck with a severe wind and thunder storm. Last summer, we were forced to reroof the house and coach house. Before the roofers arrived, the carpenters spent two weeks replacing rotten roof boards and repairing fascia and soffits. An army of painters took five weeks to scrape and paint the entire outside of the house.

During the Christmas holidays and early January 1998, we started some interior work in the main house. Wallpaper was repaired and the upstairs offices, kitchen and main hall were painted. The kitchen sink and stove were finally replaced. Drapes and curtains were custom made and hung. The interior work on the house will continue to depend on money and manpower.

Throughout our restoration work, we were very conscious that we were in a neighbourhood.



The McKenzie Family at home. Left to right: John and Eva in foreground, daughters Jean, Gretchen, Ethel, Florence, and son Philip.

Children play and go to school nearby. Our top priority was always public safety. Every day the buildings and grounds had to be constantly secured and safeguarded. And unlike the big developers in the area, we did not let our debris pollute the neighbourhood.

In conclusion, we didn't meet all our deadlines but somehow we did reach the finish line - a new home for the OHS. The battles over getting the two building permits are forgotten. Disagreements between some of the trades are forgiven. Now we should all count our blessings.

We met all the building codes while maintaining the integrity of all designated buildings. We honoured all the commitments in the 25 year lease and much more. No short cuts taken. The best materials were used. There were no accidents in the workplace.

All the individuals who re-

stored 34 Parkview should be proud of their contributions. Colleagues, workers and volunteers also donated countless hours of their time. I think the McKenzie

family would have respected your talents, admired your dedication and approved of your work.



The steel structural beam is installed in the coach house.



Carpenters celebrate installation of the coach house doors!

The restoration continues....

The OHS continues to research the families, structures and grounds that are all part of this changing landscape. The Society knew very little about this property when it became its headquarters in April 1994. Descendants of the McKenzie family donated papers and photographs as well as the original dining room table to the house. During the winter of 1995 the OHS established a gardening committee which has subsequently developed a master plan for the site. The restoration of the gardens and grounds is now in progress. When this work is completed, that will be another achievement to be celebrated!

Thanks to all of you for helping in the restoration of the John McKenzie House and Buildings at 34 Parkview Avenue

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Sarah M. Walker, The Costumemaker Studio
Wells Fargo Alarm Services
Ian K. Woods, Chartered Surveyor

From the OHS Bookshelf

Pat and Chris Raible, Editors

In recognition of one hundred years of publishing by the OHS of works relating to the history of our province, this "From the OHS Bookshelf" page looks back on that extraordinary legacy, rather than reviewing new books as we normally do.

Early OHS Publishing

The original Constitution of The Ontario Historical Society, adopted May, 1898, declared that a principal purpose of the Society was "publishing and otherwise diffusing information relative to the history of the Province and of the Dominion." For one hundred years the OHS has been doing just that.

At the time the OHS came into being, the various annexationist movements of the 19th century — each of which had urged union with the United States — were a thing of the past. There was, as Gerald Killan would write many years later, "no longer any serious question among Ontarians that the nation would survive as an independent entity on the North American continent." The turn of the century was an era of economic prosperity, and one of growing pride and patriotism. The 1898 organization of the OHS (from the ashes, as it were, of the Pioneer Association of Ontario, begun ten years earlier) was an important indication of an increasing Canadian consciousness of its history.

The first OHS publication, volume one of its annual *Papers and Records* appeared in 1899. Its purpose was to "preserve and circulate rare documentary sources, encourage the writing of history of a higher and more exact character, and generally stimulate interest in Ontario's past." In the course of the next few years, hundreds of pages of parish records, militia rolls, travellers' accounts, pioneer reminiscences and business account books were printed and thereby preserved.

Valuable as these documents were, "such volumes made up predominantly of primary sources," as Killan commented, "were not likely to send readers into paroxysms of patriotic fervour, which after all, was one of their aims." Thus, almost from the beginning, there was a tension between those interested in scholarly historical pursuits and those who wanted to celebrate our heritage in more popular ways.

Papers and Records Evolves

Early in the 20th century, the editors of the *Papers and Records* felt compelled to lighten the publication's content. They thus began to publish articles intended to foster patriotism and to increase the OHS membership. There were romantic descriptions of dramatic episodes in the heroic lives of Sir Isaac Brock or Mohawk chieftain Joseph Brant as well as epics of Loyalist struggles and pioneer strivings. Most such pieces were more the stuff of myth than of history. In fairness, however, the annual volumes also included essays that are still valuable today, such as Janet Carnochan's "The Count de Puisaye; A Forgotten Page of Canadian History," (1904) or E. A. Cruikshank's "An Episode of the War of 1812: the Story of the Schooner 'Nancy'" (1910).

During the years of the First World War, the annual *Papers and Records* continued to be produced, some as rather slim volumes although the 1916 issue was a substantial volume: William R. Riddell's lengthy biography of Robert Gourlay — a study which is still well worth reading. Over the years, Riddell and Cruikshank, neither one a professional historian, contributed many articles to *Papers* — Cruikshank 38, Riddell 45.

In 1919, University of Western Ontario academic Fred Landon made the first of many of his contributions to the *Papers*, starting with "Canada's Part in Freeing the Slaves" in 1919. A decade later, J.J. Talman authored "Church of England Missionary Effort in Upper Canada, 1815-1840" (1929), initiating his OHS publishing, an association which continued for many years.

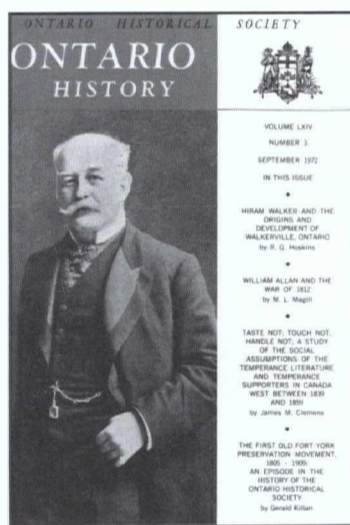
In the 1920s Cruikshank edited and the OHS published (and the Ministry of Education paid for) five volumes of the papers of Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe. Despite the hard times of the Depression the OHS managed to put out a companion set, three volumes of Peter Russell's papers. Cruikshank also edited for the OHS in 1934, *The Settlement of the United Empire Loyalists on the Upper St. Lawrence and the Bay of Quinte in 1784: A Documentary Record*.

If the Depression years were difficult, the years of World War II were even harder, for the OHS was evicted from its Normal

School offices in 1941 and not long thereafter from its next quarters in a Hydro building on Elm Street. Lack of storage space prompted the board, under the leadership of C. W. Jefferys, to send 1,000 sets of the Simcoe Papers to the pulp mill, half the original run of 2,000. Times were tough — in all of 1943, the OHS sold only \$13.80 worth of books.

News Letter and Ontario History

July, 1944 marked a significant change in OHS publication ventures: the *News Letter* was launched, under Landon's editorship. Sent to OHS members, local historical societies, government officials, and newspapers, the *News Letter* quickly became an important vehicle of communication for projects, programmes and proposals relating to local and provincial history. In 1947, the annual *Papers and Records* was totally revamped to become the journal *Ontario History*. Two years later, it was combined with the *News Letter* and became a quarterly publication.



For half a century *Ontario History* has published substantial articles on provincial history; many of them social history — written by scholars or by amateurs (in the best sense of the word). Each issue has also included comprehensive reviews of the most significant books. The journal has thus served both the needs of academia and the interests of a wider public. Indeed, it has been a vital resource for all who value careful research and professional analysis. In 1974 the OHS issued an *Index to the Publications of the Ontario Historical Society, 1899-1972*, and in 1993 *Ontario History: Index 1973-1992*, both essential reference tools.

Book Publishing

In the 1940s and 1950s, nearly all the OHS publishing energies were put into *Ontario History* (although a volume of John Strachan's letters, edited by George Spragge, was produced in 1946). The years leading up to the 1967 centennial prompted more ambitious publishing ventures, with *The Defended Border: Upper Canada and the War of 1812*, edited by Morris Zaslow (1964) and *Profiles of a Province: Stud-*

ies in the History of Ontario, edited by Edith Firth (1967). That same year, the OHS published Charles M. Johnston's *Brant County: A History 1784-1945*, a volume intended to be the first of an ongoing series of county histories, but none further was produced.

In the 1970s, the OHS published a series of "Research Publications," five previously unpublished graduate dissertations: Jean Burnet's *Ethnic Groups in Upper Canada*, Prohibition in Ontario by Gerald Hallowell, Clarence Karr's *The Canada Land Company: The Early Years*, J. E. Rae's *Bishop Alexander Macdonell and the Politics of Upper Canada*, and Peter S. Schmalz's *The History of the Saugeen Indians*. Alas, like other worthwhile OHS publishing ventures, the series could not be continued, although the OHS did publish, in similar typescript form, Gerald Killan's *Preserving Ontario's Heritage*, the history of the OHS from which much of this information was taken.

A decade later, in 1988, the OHS celebrated a centennial (its forerunner, the Pioneer Association of Ontario, was organized in 1888) by joining with Dundurn Press to produce a new collection of historical articles, *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario's History*. Although no hardbound publication has appeared since, from time to time the OHS has sponsored conferences on historical topics and thereafter published collections of the papers presented: *1837: Rebellion Remembered* (1988); *Consuming Passions: Eating and Drinking Traditions in Ontario* (1990); *The Simcoe Legacy: The Life and Times of Yonge Street* (1996) and *From Cathay to Canada: Chinese Cuisine in Transition* (1998).

Guides and Resources

In recent years, OHS publishing ventures have been designed as useful tools for schools, museums, historical societies, and community heritage groups. Many of these publications are still in print and available from the OHS office. Three comprehensive and practical resource book/guides are in large three-ring binders to help individual groups celebrate our heritage.

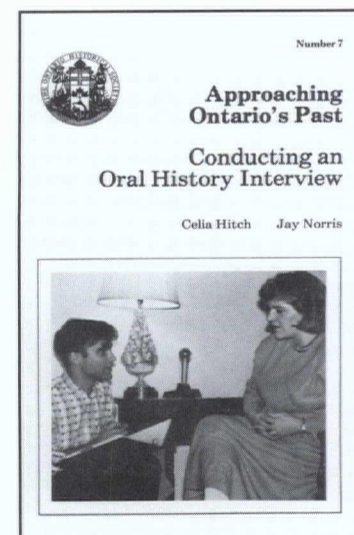
Discovering Your Community: Activities and Suggestions for Developing Local History Projects for Young People, originally published in 1984 by the OHS Young Ontario Committee in conjunction with the Bicentennial. In 1992 it was updated, revised and translated into French. Its aim is to help all those who work with young people — teachers, youth leaders, parents and interest them in exploring their own community's past and participate in history in the making. Sections focus on "Family

History," "Natural Environment," "Structures," "Food," "Clothing," "Artifacts," "Transportation & Communications" and "Crafts & Industries."

Hometown History: Highlighting Your Heritage is a guidebook for local historical societies and other heritage organizations. It begins with the basics, outlining the strategy for starting a new society, incorporating as a non-profit corporation, and continues with ideas for publicity, programmes and projects. It is full of useful ideas and checklists, from the introductory meeting to planning special events.

The third guide, *My Cultural Handbook*, resulted from the seminar "Canadian Holidays and Holy Days," presented at Black Creek Pioneer Village in 1993. It contains basic research material and first-hand experiences, suggestions for implementing programmes, and like the other two binders has an extensive bibliography and resource list. The loose-leaf format of all three binders permits the addition of supplementary materials.

The OHS has also produced a number of shorter but equally practical booklets. Some are aimed specifically at children and cleverly combine history with projects and games. These include *Breaking the Fast: All About Breakfast*, *What's for Lunch? Rainy Day Detectives*, and *Searching for Your Family's Past*. Others are of more general individual or society use. These include *Heritage Day! Heritage Week! Let's Celebrate!*, *Promoting the Past: A Handbook of Suggestions for Effective Historical Programming in your Community*, *Let's Get Organized ... Operating an Historical Museum*, *Researching Local Craftsmen and Industries*, and *Deck the Halls. Serve It Forth!* and *Let's Bake Bread!* are two delightful little books of 'receipts' for historical celebrations but are also adapted for modern methods and ingredients.



Yet another excellent set is the *Approaching Ontario's Past* series. These booklets were designed to provide practical or technical information and advice on such topics as setting up a LACAC, conducting an oral his-

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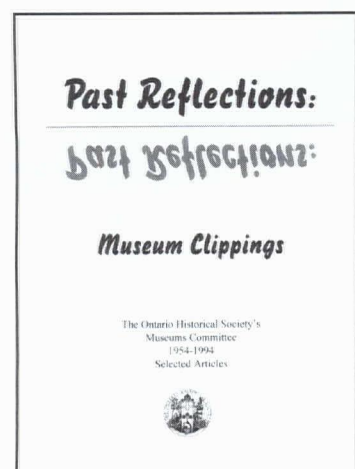
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From the OHS Bookshelf Continued

tory interview, researching artifacts, producing an audio-visual show, and actually writing history.



Museums

In the 1950s, the OHS recognized the need for recognition, assistance and support for the growing number of local museums in the province. The Museums Committee was created and it has since sponsored numerous conferences, workshops, and professional training sessions. It has also put out occasional publications. *Museums as a Business: The Business of Museums*, pub-

lished in 1990, was written by John Carter as a tool to assist smaller museums in their organization and promotion.

Past Reflections: Museum Clippings is an anthology of articles written over the 40 years of the work of the Museums Committee. It is much more than a backward, historical look, for many of the pieces are of as practical value today as they were when they were written. What museum curator would not benefit from Alan Douglas' 1964 discussion "Museum Ethics" or John E. Struthers suggestions for working with the news media, "Reaching the People who Reach the People."

Directory

One of the most useful of OHS publications has been its *Directory of Heritage Organizations and Institutions in Ontario*. First produced in 1989, it was soon expanded and revised. The most current edition contains addresses and telephone numbers of more than some 1,500 heritage groups, all arranged by region.

OHS publications currently available

<i>Discovering Your Community</i>	\$30
<i>My Cultural Handbook</i>	\$13
<i>Hometown History: Highlighting Your Heritage</i>	\$10
<i>Consuming Passions: Eating and Drinking Traditions in Ontario</i>	\$10
<i>From Cathay to Canada: Chinese Cuisine in Transition</i>	\$10
<i>The Simcoe Legacy: The Life and Times of Yonge Street</i>	\$7
<i>Ontario History: Index 1973-1992</i>	\$7
<i>Past Reflections: Museum Clippings</i>	\$5
<i>Promoting the Past</i>	\$4
<i>The Artifact: What Can it Tell Us About the Past?</i>	\$4
<i>Conducting an Oral History Interview</i>	\$4
<i>Writing History</i>	\$4
<i>Deck the Halls: Celebrating a Traditional Canadian Christmas</i>	\$4
<i>Serve if Forth!</i>	\$4
<i>Let's Bake Bread!</i>	\$4
<i>What's for Lunch?</i>	\$2
<i>Breaking the Fast: All About Breakfast</i>	\$2
<i>Searching For Your Family's Past</i>	\$2

Past issues and broken sets of *Ontario History* and *Transactions* are available. Contact us to discuss!

To order any publication, please send a cheque or money order payable to The Ontario Historical Society to The Ontario Historical Society, 34 Parkview Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario, M2N 2Y2. Payment must accompany all orders. All prices include GST, regular postage and handling in Canada. We do not accept credit cards. Minimum overseas order is \$25.

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Ontario History at 100 years

Terry Crowley, Editor, *Ontario History*

Through *Ontario History*, the Ontario Historical Society provides Canada with its second oldest continuous historical publication. In 1899 the Society began to print *Papers and Records*. This was only two years after George Wrong of the History department at the University of Toronto began the *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada*. Since 1922 the *Canadian Historical Review*, a publication of the University of Toronto Press, had served as a predecessor to that earlier national journal.

From the outset, the two sets of publications were as different as the organizations that had created them. The OHS had been founded in 1888 as the Pioneer Association of Ontario. The original name provides a clue to the early nature of the OHS even after the name that struck was adopted a decade later. Imbued with a profound sense of progress, early activists wanted to record the ascent of Ontario from rudimentary settlement to proud member of an industrial British empire stretching around the world. The pioneers needed to be given their due.

This orientation was expressed in the Society's early publications. Contributions were highly eclectic, much as the contents of most historical journals remain today. When I was doing research into those records, two things leapt out at me: the prominent role of women, and the attention paid to everyday life in the early days of agricultural settlement in the province.

One character came to fascinate me. Clementina Fessenden not only had an alluringly exotic name, but as I was later to find tramping around the Anglican church and cemetery in Dundas before having my investigation at the Hamilton Public Library stopped by an anti-Harris day of protest, Clementina Fessenden was 'she who would not have her age ever known.'

Clementina Fessenden was an ordinary Canadian who retains historical significance for two reasons other than her determination that no one know how old she was. Using the OHS as her base, Fessenden agitated for a flag day to spread the gospel of imperialistic patriotism. Eventually the letters she wrote, the articles she composed, and the speeches that she gave resulted at the end of the nineteenth century in the creation of Empire Day. This idea then migrated to Britain, but critics like Queen's University professor Oscar Douglas Skelton denounced the annual school exercise as no more than stuffing jingoism into young minds.

History mattered dearly to Clementina Fessenden. It promoted patriotism and lifted into humanity's realm a country small in the world's arena. In believing that history promoted patriotism, and her own Loyalist heritage in particular, Fessenden differed little from many seeking to expand the subject in any number of countries. Women and men worked together in the enterprise despite frequently thorny disagreements.

If Clementina Fessenden, the wife of an Anglican priest who eventually died in poverty, represented one stream, then George Wrong stood for another. Wrong's family background was equally obscure, but he had married the daughter of prominent Liberal and University of Toronto chancellor Edward Blake. No less an imperialist than Fessenden, Wrong was inspired by an Oxford University that he had viewed fleetingly one summer. He began the *Review of Historical Publications* to establish critical scholarly standards. Unlike the OHS's publications, the *Review* aimed at bringing Canadian history into line with developments originating in Germany.

In Fessenden the populist, and Wrong the university scholar, we see two strands among the history promoters that remain to this day. The university group, once very small and very struggling apart from its power through words, gained strength in numbers as post-secondary education expanded after World War II, particularly during the 1970s when the number of universities in the world doubled. The OHS and its journal gradually shifted in this direction. The editorial advisory committee draws on university

historians, but a conscious attempt is also made to enlist independent scholars.

Some would like to see *Ontario History* as a popular magazine, but the stumbling block has always been money. The English-speaking population of the entire country is smaller than that of either the state of New York or California. Even when writers for the journal are commissioned, as they seldom are, there is no remuneration. Volunteer commitment has kept the publication going, although severe cuts have recently reduced the journal to two issues a year rather than four.

The two strands of historical interest represented by Fessenden and Wrong continue to run parallel rather than being fully intertwined. Respecting these differences in the face of a larger world little interested in internecine quarrels or proclivities is critical to successful historical enterprise. Today only one half of the journal's subscribers also take Society membership. There would be no *Ontario History* without The Ontario Historical Society. The journal is only one of a number of programmes that OHS undertakes to advance historical interest in the province.

Ontario History today remains contested space as much as it was in the past. It strives to inform through providing the most insightful new provincial history intended to reach readers of varying backgrounds. While what results is not always to everyone's tastes, the journal's offerings attempt to appeal to a broad cross-section of historical interests. The expansive mandate governing *Ontario History* during its first century will need to continue during its second.

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- ♦ **Historical Research**
(See "Starting From Scratch" and "Upper Canada in the Making" in *Horizon Canada*, Vol. 2, # 22 and 23.)
- ♦ **Family History**
(See *OGS Seminar '85*, pp. 26-32.)
- ♦ **Corporate and Advertising History**
(See *DCB*, Vol. XIII, Cowan and McCormick biographies.)
- ♦ **Heritage Product Marketing Research**
(See "Marketing Food" in *Consuming Passions*, OHS, 1990.)
- ♦ **Built Environment and Cultural Landscape Analysis**

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“Deeds Speak” The Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Toronto

Jean Burnet

The Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Toronto (WCHS) was organized in 1895 and incorporated the following year with the motto “Deeds Speak” and the following goals and objectives: “The objectives of the Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Toronto are the encouragement of a study of Canadian history and literature; the collection and preservation of Canadian historical records and relics, and the building up of Canadian loyalty and patriotism.” The Society became an affiliate of the OHS and one of its staunchest supporters and allies in many preservation campaigns.

Seventeen extraordinary women founded the WCHS, led by Mrs. Sara Ann Curzon, the first president, and Miss Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon, the first secretary. Mrs. Curzon who had been born in England, was a gifted writer and worked to secure for women higher education in the

arts, science and medicine at the University of Toronto. She was also co-founder, along with Dr. Emily Stowe of the Women’s Medical College and the Toronto Literary Club, the first women’s suffrage group in Canada. Miss Fitzgibbon, a granddaughter of Susanna Moodie and of Col. James Fitzgibbon, a hero of the War of 1812 and the rebellion of 1837, was also a successful writer. Other charter members were writers, teachers, members of old Toronto families and daughters of OHS members.

The new Society grew quickly; there were 135 paid-up members by the first annual meeting, and 170 by the second. Members of both the WCHS and the OHS campaigned in the late 19th century for a museum of Ontario history and ethnology in the hope that Queen’s Park would subsidize a suitable building.

To highlight the cause the Canadian Historical Exhibition

was organized at Victoria College in Toronto in 1899. Artifacts arrived from across Canada and the exhibition catalogue ran to 150 pages.

The Women’s Committee worked tirelessly to ensure its success, as indeed it turned out to be, however a museum of Ontario history and ethnology was not created after all, and the WCHS began to collect artifacts, archival material and a library of materials important to Toronto and Ontario. Some of these were passed on to organizations such as the Royal Ontario Museum and the Ontario Provincial Archives, where they would be available to a wider audience.

The WCHS was concerned with the preservation and restoration of historical sites, joining the OHS in campaigning against commercial encroachment on, and demolition of, Old Fort York when it was threatened on several occasions between 1903 and 1962. For nineteen years, between 1934 and 1953 the Society maintained a museum collection of early 19th century furniture in one of the rooms at the Fort.

The Society was particularly concerned with the preservation of Colborne Lodge in High Park, the home of John and Jemima Howard that was closed from 1890 to 1927. A deputation to Toronto City Council persuaded them to grant \$4,000 to the Society to repair and restore the property. They continued to manage the Lodge with great care and affection until it was moved to the jurisdiction of the Toronto Historical Board, now Heritage Toronto in 1969.

The patriotic aims and objectives of the Society flourished during the Boer War, the First and Second World Wars and between the wars as the members did war work and constantly cared for war veterans, especially those afflicted with tuberculosis.

In 1955 the Society purchased a home at 153 Spadina



Lunch is waiting in the coach house for participants in the “Heritage Gardening Today: A Celebration of the Life of John Bradshaw” workshop.

Road to house it growing collections and as a headquarters for meetings, workshops and special programmes. It was here that the members worked with great dedication to embroider an exact copy of the Banner made in 1812 for the 3rd York Militia to present to the Fort as a Centennial gift in 1967. When in that same year the house was sold, the Society moved to temporary quarters at Bloor Street United Church and eventually to a fine suite of rooms at 40 St. Clair Avenue East where they continued to meet regularly to carry out their work.

Meetings featured lectures by members, honorary members and guests on historical topics. Many were based on original documents, letters, diaries and account books. Others involved research by members, other historians, and professors from the University of Toronto. From 1896 until the early 1930s many of these papers, not available elsewhere, were published as *Transactions* of the Society. They also published *Annual Reports*, in separate format and in combinations with *Transactions*.

The WCHS, born in the 1890s, found a century later that the members needed to review and re-evaluate their role in the 1990s. These discussions culminated in several decisions made

during their centennial year of 1996 including the establishment of three awards; at Queen’s University in Kingston, the University of Toronto and York University in Toronto. They also made the difficult decision to dissolve. Museum curators were invited to view the collection and choose appropriate artifacts from it for their own collections.

Several museum and historical projects received support funding. The library, some furnishings and artifacts, the *Transactions* and *Annual Reports*, and support funding was transferred to the OHS. The funding was used to complete the final phase of the restoration of the coach house.

The Board of Directors was honoured with this gift and named the building the Women’s Canadian Historical Society Coach House in recognition of their past accomplishments, their material legacy and the vision and drive that fueled this incredible group of women, and whose “Deeds did indeed Speak.”

For your century of service to the City of Toronto and to the Province of Ontario we are very grateful. For over a century you have made our world a richer and better place, and we hope that your contributions will continue to serve future generations.

Promise of the new century

Bruce Richard, OHS President Elect

Much is being made of the “Millennium Bug.” For businesses the programming anomaly strikes fear as they face the potential of computers crashing, and all of their memories wiped clean. For others, it is a technical challenge both detailed and trying; in which the solution will spell success and profit.

In both cases the “Millennium Bug” marks the recognition that our memories hold a vast amount of valuable information - that is unless they are wiped clean by the omission of a detail someone made in programming.

For the heritage community, fighting “bugs” is nothing new. We have been faced with a great many challenges both as individuals and organizations struggling to succeed amid consolidation and restructuring.

The last several years have been particularly difficult for all of those involved in sustaining our collective history. For the Society this has meant difficult decisions in choosing to continue programmes, consolidate services, reorganize staff, and yet continue to meet the great diversity of needs called for by those both in the heritage community and beyond. The implications of changes in funding, increased taxation, provincial restructuring and the general malaise we face has caused us all to wonder at our situation.

Yet in all of this there has remained a clear sense of the

importance of our responsibility in protecting our communities’ histories. The OHS has remained the “911” for the province’s past. The vital role of our history, as it sheds understanding on our present and future, remains a powerful tool for schools and communities alike. These rewards energize us, and renew our commitment to sustain our voice in the promotion and celebration of Ontario’s history.

Today we face our own millennium bug. Will we end the century with our collective memory wiped clean by a lack of support? Hardly. We face the beginning of a new century with the strength of the past as our resource. One of the greatest gifts of the millennium is the beginning of a whole new century of history, community and the pursuit of shared goals. We can take comfort in the fact that history does not disappear, it continues to grow. Better still, our past continues to expand as we celebrate more of the rich diversity of our communities and their contributions to who we are.

The solution to our millennium bug is a commitment from all those involved in the heritage field to renew their efforts to promote, protect and present to our communities the real value of our history. We must recognize the reasons why our past is important today and inspire the rest of our communities to envision it as part of their lives tomorrow.

ISSN 0714-6736

The *OHS Bulletin*, the newsletter of The Ontario Historical Society, 34 Parkview Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario M2N 3Y2, (416) 226-9011, fax 226-2740 will be published five times in 1998. There will be four regular issues, and this special issue celebrating the opening of the John McKenzie House. The copy deadline for the next issue is May 11, 1998.

Enquiries concerning submissions and advertising rates should be directed to The Ontario Historical Society, 34 Parkview Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario M2N 3Y2, (416) 226-9011 or fax (416) 226-2740.

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