



October 21, 2021

City of Thorold  
3540 Schmon Parkway  
P.O. Box 1044  
Thorold, ON L2V 4A7

Dear Mayor & Councillors,

On behalf of the Ontario Historical Society (OHS), I am writing today to show our support for our member organizations, The Thorold Museum and the Thorold and Beaverdams Historical Society, and to emphasize the important role the museum and its historical collection hold in your community, our province and our country.

The OHS, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation and registered charity. The OHS is a non-government group bringing together people of all ages, all walks of life, and all cultural backgrounds interested in preserving and promoting some aspect of Ontario's history. *An Act to incorporate The Ontario Historical Society*, assented to 1st April 1899 at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, authorizes the OHS to incorporate an affiliated society as a non-profit corporation.

The Thorold and Beaverdams Historical Society was established in 1894 and incorporated as an independent not-for-profit by the OHS in 1899 as one of our original member organizations, and is thus one of the longest-running heritage organizations, not only in this province but in Canada, with one of the oldest collections of artefacts of national significance. The OHS incorporated The Thorold Museum in 2019 to better care and advocate for the society's museum collection.

The OHS's experience over decades working with historical societies and community museums in Ontario tells us that The Thorold Museum cannot move forward without a permanent home. This home, either through owning a building or having a formal long-term lease, will ensure the museum's stability and will grant them better access to a whole range of funding options through the governments of Ontario and Canada, corporations, foundations, planned giving, and individual donors. *(See for example the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries' Standards for Community Museums [[http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/museums/museums\\_standards.shtml](http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/museums/museums_standards.shtml)], that must be met for museums to be eligible for provincial funding.)*

Needless to say, the City of Thorold already has a perfect precedent. The OHS incorporated the Friends of Beaverdams Church (FBC) in 2013, and soon after your City transferred ownership of the church and cemetery to FBC. This not-for-profit organization has independently assumed all capital and maintenance costs ever since, freeing the City from any financial liability. *(See attached: front page article in the OHS Bulletin, April 2021 Issue.)*

A new secure home for the Thorold Museum should preferably be close to downtown with good public access for tourists and school groups. The Board of Directors of Thorold Museum must have

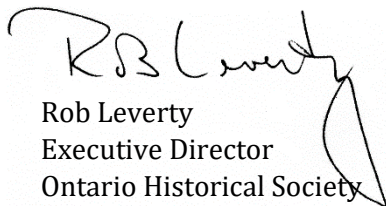
direct control over the space to properly display and store the artefacts and be able to establish the environmental and safety protocols needed to ensure this historic collection's survival.

It is important to remember that Ontario is unlike most provinces across Canada in that we have no provincial museum. Our tradition is that our history is displayed and stored in communities across our province. Therefore, the City of Thorold has a unique role to play in helping our fellow citizens protect not only *your* local history, but a collection of both provincial and national significance that tells the story of Ontario as a whole.

We know that progressive councils across our province have realized that museums and heritage infrastructure are critical to local economic development, maintaining a healthy community, and to attracting back tourism—more important now than ever as we recover from a pandemic. I hope that the City of Thorold will likewise show their support for their museum through direct and immediate action to establish a permanent museum site.

Thank you for your consideration on this important heritage matter.

Yours sincerely,



Rob Leverty  
Executive Director  
Ontario Historical Society

# OHS BULLETIN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ISSUE 216

APRIL 2021

## RESTORATION WORK AT HISTORIC BEAVERDAMS CHURCH



Photo - David Cowan

**David Cowan**, Beaverdams Church  
davidbcowan@sympatico.ca

The Historic Beaverdams Church is an 1832 wooden frame structure that was built in the two-storey New England Meeting House style by a group of Methodist Episcopal pioneers who arrived in the Niagara area near Thorold in the 1790s from New Jersey after the American Revolution. Their first services were held in the home of Hiram Swayze, a local farmer who eventually donated one acre of his land for a church and graveyard. The right for Methodists to build a church resulted from an act of 1829 "for the relief of religious societies" whereby trusteeships could be formed to own property and construct churches, hence the 1832 date for completion of their new chapel.

The first preacher was Dr. Egerton Ryerson, a young country circuit rider who eventually founded Ontario's education system and for whom Ryerson University is named.

The Friends of the Beaverdams Church, a not-for-profit incorporated by the Ontario Historical Society in 2013, has 145 energetic members who are in the process of restoring this architectural gem to its original beauty. The first step was to purchase the church and graveyard from the City of Thorold in 2014, and then restore the exterior in five steps: install a new roof;

**'BEAVERDAMS CHURCH' CONTINUED ON PAGE 8...**

## IN THIS ISSUE

RESTORATION OF BEAVERDAMS CHURCH	1
OHS WINS LG'S HERITAGE AWARD	1
PRESIDENT'S REPORT	2
ONTARIO HISTORY: SPRING 2021	2
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT	3
HEIRS	4
OHS & BAO PARTNERSHIP	4
MUSEUM MILESTONES	5
WILSON MACDONALD MEMORIAL SCHOOL MUSEUM	5
CEMETERY NEWS AND LETTER TO THE REGISTRAR	6
BARRY PENHALE'S ONTARIO: CHANGES ARE BREWING	7

## OHS WINS LG'S HERITAGE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CONSERVATION



**Daniel Dishaw**, Communications and Outreach Coordinator  
ddishaw@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca

The Ontario Historical Society (OHS) is thrilled to announce that on Thursday, February 18, the OHS accepted the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Excellence in Conservation for the "Digitization and Sharing of *Ontario History* Journal Archive."

*Ontario History* journal, formerly *Papers & Records*, is one of the oldest history journals in Canada, established by the Ontario Historical Society in 1899. From 2013–20, the OHS digitized the full text of over 2,000 articles and book reviews from 280 issues, making the archive the largest single collection of stories about Ontario's history. The journal's archive contains a wealth of original documents and new research, written by a range of prominent Ontario historians, and comprises one of the most important sources for the history of the province. Through digitization, *Ontario History* journal has been made available to a much larger audience, and it has also been safeguarded for the use and enjoyment of generations to come.

"The Society is honoured and privileged to have the work of our staff and volunteers recognized," said Dr. Michel S. Beaulieu, President of the Ontario Historical Society. "Their efforts to digitize the full text of over 2,000 articles and book reviews, ensure students, teachers, historians, researchers, genealogists, and anyone interested can access our archive of *Ontario History* articles, the largest single collection of stories about Ontario's rich history."

OHS Project Manager and Librarian Sarah McCabe accepted the award, commenting, "On behalf of the OHS, I was thrilled to accept the prestigious Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Excellence in Conservation. My involvement with the initiative to digitize and provide access to *Ontario History* journal began in 2015, under the Ontario Trillium Foundation grant-funded OHS Reach project. Building on previous work by my OHS colleagues, and in collaboration with the Board's *Ontario*

**'LG AWARD' CONTINUED ON PAGE 3...**

The Ontario Historical Society  
34 Parkview Avenue  
Willowdale, ON M2N 3Y2  
CANADA



OHS@ONTARIOHISTORICALSOCIETY.CA

ONTARIOHISTORICALSOCIETY.CA

/ONTARIOHISTORICALSOCIETY

@ONTARIOHISTORY





cemetery becomes an artifact rather than an original historical resource.” The Johnson Cemetery is physically and historically linked to its location as it was once part of Robert Johnson’s property. Closing the cemetery would destroy both the historical context and associated historical characteristics of the site. There is historical integrity in the monuments as a group, which could not be duplicated by moving the monuments to a larger cemetery where they would be lost amongst other monuments in a much larger space. It is always in the public interest to leave a heritage resource in situ. The historical authenticity of the cemetery would be destroyed if it were closed and the burials removed to Cooke’s Cemetery. The Johnson Cemetery has survived for over 160 years on this location and should be allowed to remain where it is.

3. “A move will enable the Property to be better and more fully used as part of the normal commercial development of the Town.”

The Johnson Cemetery was not an unknown cemetery and it is registered with the province of Ontario (License # CM-04761). It has clearly marked graves with prominent, well maintained markers, and the property is enclosed with an ornate iron fence, also of historical significance (believed to be the work of William R. Griffith, a famous local blacksmith). The owner purchased this property with the knowledge that there was a cemetery located on it and accepted a business risk in doing so. The total size of the cemetery is small, measuring 6.33 meters wide by 14.83 meters long for a total of 93.82 m<sup>2</sup>. The cemetery has little impact on its neighbours, and any planning for the development of the property could easily incorporate the cemetery. The private commercial interests of the property owner to develop the property is not a compelling enough reason to close the cemetery and disturb the burials.

Additionally, as one of the oldest cemeteries in Georgina Township, the importance of the Johnson Cemetery to the historical landscape of the community cannot be discounted. On March 3, 2021, Georgina Town Council unanimously agreed to

...‘WILSON MACDONALD SCHOOL MUSEUM’ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

music and plays and did magic tricks. Throughout his life, he often fell back on his musical ability to support himself. Around the time of the First World War, Wilson wrote a musical, *In Sunny France*, in which he starred. He took the play across Canada, using local amateurs and children in his cast.

In 1935, Wilson met and then eloped with Dorothy Colomy, a student he had met on his tour. Four years later, they had a daughter who they named Ann Meridian. Wilson MacDonald produced several poetry books in his lifetime, including *The Song of the Prairie Land* and *A Flagon of Beauty*. He died in Toronto on April 8, 1967, and was buried in St. Luke’s Cemetery in Vienna, Ontario.

Wilson MacDonald Memorial School Museum offers visitors a chance to experience the unique history of Haldimand County in our classroom setting, through exhibits, workshops, talks, and other diverse programs. The museum is located at 3513 Haldimand Road 3, Selkirk. You can visit our website at: [haldimandmuseums.ca](http://haldimandmuseums.ca).

move forward with the heritage designation of the Johnson Cemetery, as it meets the criteria for heritage designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, specifically items 2i, ii, and iii and 3i, ii, and iii as outlined in the Disposition; Georgina Heritage Advisory Committee (GHAC) Johnston (Johnson) Cemetery Designation Report (Re: Resolution No. GHAC 2021-0005). The Johnson Cemetery is important because as a landmark it has contextual value by being physically, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings, and it has historical value because of its direct association with a person that is significant to the community. The cemetery yields information that contributes to an understanding of the community it exists in.

Within the *Funeral, Burials and Cremation Services Act* (2002 SO 2002 c.33) provision is made for the registrar to order a cemetery to be closed if the closing is in the public interest (2002, c. 33, s. 88 (6)). Previous Provincial Tribunals examining public interest and cemeteries have considered safety to the public as an element of public interest. In the case of the Johnson Cemetery there is no obvious risk to public safety. The entire cemetery is also enclosed with a wrought iron fence that offers protection not only to the cemetery, but to the general public as well.

Our society places intrinsic value on cemeteries both culturally and symbolically. As places of collective memory, cemeteries reinforce community identity, strengthen feelings of attachment and belonging, and encourage the sharing of knowledge of the past. They are places people engage in public activity in and learn about the past. The Johnson family’s decision to choose this spot for their burials should be respected by leaving the cemetery in place. The private interests of the property owner should not be considered more important than the public interest. In the opinion of the OHS, the Applicant has not provided a compelling reason to legally close and relocate the historic Johnson (Johnston) Cemetery, and the application to close the cemetery should be denied.

**Laura Suchan, Co-Chair  
Preservation and Cemeteries Committee, the Ontario Historical Society**

...‘BEAVERDAMS CHURCH’ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

complete an archaeological study; replace the rubble foundation; replace all 26 windows with exact replicas of the originals; and finally, replace the original clapboards with similarly-milled wood. The cost was \$250,000, acquired through private and corporate donations as well as a series of fundraisers that take place each year.

The project now is to restore the interior in a similar fashion. The estimated cost will be another \$200,000 and will include the removal of the false ceiling that was added in 1879 to close off the second-floor balcony, the removal of various partitions that were added over the years, and new wiring and lighting that will emulate the original work and also meet contemporary needs. We have made a great deal of progress already, and the simple elegance of the finished product can already be visualized. We look forward to future uses such as weddings, art shows, musical concerts, and educational events.

The church was recognized by the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario in 1965 and designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* in 1994. Our website is [www.friendsofbeaverdamschurch.com](http://www.friendsofbeaverdamschurch.com) and our Facebook handle is Beaverdams Church 1832.

Donations are most welcome and can be made via PayPal on Facebook or to Friends of Beaverdams Church, 0 Marlatt's Road, P.O. Box 70, Thorold, ON L2V 3Y7.

THANK YOU DONORS!	Since November 2020	WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!
Alpema Foundation		Heather Armstrong
Laidlaw Foundation		Simon Ashley
Donald Smith		John Best
Sidney Down		Georgia Carley
Samuel Whyte		Lesley Cassidy
Gerald Weinberg <i>In Memory of Lore Weinberg</i>		James Charlton
Adrian and Suanne Miedema		Jon Fish
Victoria Strapells		Cynthia Fort
Steven McLarty Payson		Michael Fowler
Pamela Cain		Michelle Friedman
Robert Halfyard		Carol Hodgson
Patricia Kennedy		Ian Hundey
Chris & Pat Raible		Bob Kennedy
Richard Lucas		Liz Kerr
Naomi Norquay		Nellie Lanteigne
Water M. Goldsmith		Teresa Lobalsamo
Laura Suchan		Stuart Manson
Judy McGonigal		Jan McQuay
Tom Leverty		Vanessa Melle
Anonymous		Jim Molnar
		Nels Olson
		Aaron Quesnel
		Lynn Quesnel
		Jonathan Quint
		Lindsay Reid
		Reid Robertson
		Don Ross
		Stan Rycombel
		Laura Sayoie
		Shawn Selway
		David Shanahan
		Ron Shaw
		David G. Smith
		Susan Soderberg
		James Taite
		Glenn Taylor
		Reg Toner
		Diana Velasco-Clark
		Tarjana Vieira
		942845 Ontario Ltd
		The Friends of Fort York and
		Garrison Common
		Friends of Century Manor
		Friends of the Mindemoya Old School
		Friends of the Old Stone Mill House
		Heritage Colchester
		Myseum of Toronto

The <i>OHS Bulletin</i> is the newsletter of the Ontario Historical Society (OHS).	per year; member organizations, institutions and non-member individuals for \$42.00; and to non-member organizations and institutions for \$52.50. Membership inquiries should be directed to Heather Anderson at <a href="mailto:handerson@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca">handerson@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca</a> .
Next issue copy deadline: <b>Friday, June 25, 2021.</b>	
Reproduction of any content must be acknowledged as such: “Reprinted from the <i>OHS Bulletin</i> , (issue & date) published by the OHS.” All photo credits and bylines must be retained.	Inquiries about submissions and advertising: Daniel Dishaw, Editor, <i>OHS Bulletin</i> , 34 Parkview Avenue, Willowdale, ON M2N 3Y2 416-226-9011 <a href="mailto:ddishaw@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca">ddishaw@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca</a> <a href="http://www.ontariohistoricalsociety.ca">www.ontariohistoricalsociety.ca</a>
Views expressed by contributors and advertisers are not necessarily those of the OHS. The Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.	<b>The Ontario Historical Society Current Board of Directors:</b>
Types of membership in the Society are: Individual \$45, Institution/ Organization \$50, Life \$500.	<b>Executive:</b> Michel Beaulieu, President Serge Ducharme, First Vice President Kris Ives, Second Vice President Caroline Di Cocco, Past President Mark Plishewsky, Treasurer Allan Macdonell, Secretary <b>Directors:</b> Gabriella Colussi Arthur, Janie Cooper-Wilson, Jan Haskings-Winner, Eric Payseur, Nora Sawyer, Laura Suchan, Michael Dove.
Membership is open to all individuals and societies interested in the history of Ontario. The <i>OHS Bulletin</i> is sent free of charge to all members of the OHS. The OHS’s biannual scholarly journal, <i>Ontario History</i> , is available to members for an additional \$31.50	OHS Executive Director: Rob Leverty <i>Ontario History</i> Editor: Tory Tronrud