

OHS BULLETIN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ISSUE 210

APRIL 2019

LOCHIEL'S HISTORIC CATHOLIC CHURCH PRESERVED AS COMMUNITY SPACE



President Henriette Jeurond-Keusch (left) and Secretary Edna Lalonde at the 2018 Centre Lochiel Centre AGM at St. Alexander Church in Lochiel.

Henriette Jeurond-Keusch, President, Centre Lochiel Centre
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St. Alexander Church was built in 1851 in the small hamlet of Lochiel. It was the sixth parish to be built as part of the creation of the Diocese in Upper Canada. The Bishop Phelan chose the name St. Alexander because the cemetery was blessed by Rev. Alexander (Scotus) MacDonnell. Due to a lack of parishioners and priests, St. Alexander Church had to close its doors on June 1, 2014.

On June 19, 2014, a group of concerned citizens formed an organization with a mandate to protect the building and adapt it into a new community space. Within two weeks of that meeting, 140 people had signed up to support this endeavour. The Diocese agreed to transfer ownership of the building as soon as the group was incorporated.

We chose the name Centre Lochiel Centre and were incorporated in August 2015 as a not-for-profit through affiliation with the Ontario Historical Society. Centre Lochiel Centre has a long-term lease of 20 years less one day, renewable in 15 years. With a lease secured, Centre Lochiel Centre began to fundraise in order to restore running water, toilets, and a new septic system. A \$5,000 donation from the Stilwell Foundation helped to get the hydro back on and pay for all necessary insurance coverage.

In April 2016, we received our Charitable Tax Status from the Canada Revenue Agency. In August, we hosted a Pioneer Parade, involving roughly 30 floats and vehicles. The parade was followed by a Pioneer Mini Social at the Centre. This event featured live music, pioneer-themed games, and pioneer-themed prizes. With over 200 attendees, the event was a major success.

'CENTRE LOCHIEL CENTRE' CONTINUED ON PAGE 8...

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RT. HON. BEVERLEY McLACHLIN TO DELIVER KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT 2019 OHS AGM



Photo - Supreme Court of Canada, Roy Grogan

The Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada (2000–2017).

Daniel Dishaw, Communications and Outreach Coordinator
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The Ontario Historical Society is pleased to announce that the 131st OHS Annual General Meeting and Honours & Awards Ceremony will be held on Saturday, June 15, 2019, at Tyndale University College & Seminary in Toronto, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The AGM will begin at 1:00 p.m., with the keynote address to follow. We will then begin the 2018–19 Honours and Awards ceremony.

Joining us this year to deliver the keynote address is the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada from 2000 to 2017. Her Judicial career began in 1981 when she was appointed to the Supreme Court of British Columbia. Justice McLachlin was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia in 1988 before being appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada less than one year later.

Justice McLachlin is the first and only woman to serve as Chief Justice on Canada's highest court. She is also the longest serving Chief Justice in the court's history.

In June 2018, Justice McLachlin was appointed to the Order of Canada as a recipient of its highest accolade: Companion of the Order of Canada. Of the 2,094 Supreme Court judgments in which she participated, Justice McLachlin wrote 442. Throughout her judicial career, she has been involved with countless areas of Canada's legal system, including common law and civil law, and both private and public law.

The OHS is very pleased to present the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin as this year's keynote speaker. We hope you will join us on June 15 for this special presentation, and to celebrate our 2018–19 OHS Award recipients.

For more information about this year's AGM, please see page 4.

'AGM' CONTINUED ON PAGE 4...

The Ontario Historical Society
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CANADA



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Caroline Di Cocco, President
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The topic uppermost in my mind these days is the importance of articulating the value of cultural heritage. Having met with other representatives of the heritage community as well as members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario over the last month, this has stayed at the forefront of my thinking. It has heightened, for me, the need to communicate the importance of heritage so that it is not marginalized and is better understood by all people. I know deep in my bones that heritage is very important, the same way I believe many of you feel about it. But how do we communicate this to those who may have less understanding of its value?

Cultural heritage is the legacy inherited from past generations. It consists of tangible and intangible assets: 1) heritage landscapes such as buildings, townscapes, cemeteries, burial sites, archaeological sites, and natural heritage sites 2) artifacts such as books, documents, objects, and pictures 3) intangible assets such as languages, storytelling, traditions, and skills.

The responsibility for preserving, interpreting, animating, and presenting these assets rests on the current generation. Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in our understanding of where we came from, who we are today, and where we are going tomorrow. It provides a sense of place, increases tourism development, and is a driving force in our economy.

Across this province, thousands of people are doing work to strengthen and protect cultural heritage. Both those whose job it is to maintain the institutional work of heritage, and heritage enthusiasts and professionals who provide many thousands of volunteer hours to this sector. For example, the Ontario Historical Society consists of over 800 member organizations that represent a larger community of over 100,000 people involved in the work of protecting and promoting heritage in this province.

The OHS has legal responsibilities to its membership, is a publisher of the scholarly journal, *Ontario History*, and has a unique library collection of books focused on Ontario's history. The OHS provides a cost-effective insurance program for many groups, helps guide them in areas of governance, and works with many community groups to present their case to all levels of government or institutions when needed. It has been a steward of Ontario's history since 1888, and continues to carry out this role as the largest organization of its kind in Canada. Each and every year, the OHS incorporates several new historical organizations, assisting them in their own missions to protect and promote Ontario's rich history.

Unless we clearly present a case for the value of heritage at every opportunity—and to the decision makers at all levels of government—heritage will be relegated to a marginalized space and therefore more easily dismissed.

Heritage and its many thousands of supporters are a great success story we have to tell. The heritage sector has protected and conserved the history



Photo -Rob Levery

In June 2014, the OHS incorporated the Nine Mile Point Lighthouse Preservation Society (NMPLPS) to ensure that any divestment of the Nine Mile Point Lighthouse (1833) on Simcoe Island, adjacent to Wolfe Island, was in the *public interest*. The Nine Mile Point Lighthouse is a significant provincial and national historic asset and the oldest, continuously operational lighthouse on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes. Since 2014, NMPLPS has negotiated in good faith with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to acquire this lighthouse for the public benefit. On December 18, 2018, DFO announced that the transfer of ownership of the lighthouse property would be awarded to another group and not the NMPLPS. On February 22, 2019, the OHS joined the NMPLPS to officially support its presentation to Mark Gerretsen, MP for Kingston and the Islands, that DFO's decision on divestiture of the Nine Mile Point Lighthouse was not in the *public interest* as the NMPLPS would provide a higher level of protection for the historic lighthouse and year-round public access. Seen here in front of the MP's constituency office in Kingston are (left to right) Marc Seguin, Executive Director, Save Our Lighthouses, and members from the NMPLPS and the Wolfe Island Historical Society.

of so many communities across this province. That preservation provides a sense of place, and it also helps stimulate an economy that employs thousands, and to establish a cultural foundation that attracts businesses, professionals, and tourists to those communities.

Ontario has numerous not-for-profit heritage organizations with diverse and unique mandates. They assist communities to understand, conserve, and reflect the many facets of the province's cultural heritage. Within these organizations, there are many professionals and community members who are engaged in the stewardship and protection of this heritage across Ontario. We need to use our voices to protect what has been done, but it is just as important to continue to do the work that still needs to be done.

All of us who work so hard to contribute to heritage have a great story to tell, and we should all take pride in telling that story with clarity and with strength.

A TRIBUTE TO ROSS WALLACE

B.E.S. (Brad) Rudachyk, Former OHS President

Donna Wice, Secretary, Simcoe County Historical Association



On November 21, 2018, Harold Ross Wallace passed in his 89th year in Barrie, Ontario.

One might wonder how such a quiet, gentle, unassuming man came to live such an exemplary and superlative life. The answer is to be found in his deep and abiding Christian faith and its message of self-effacing active service.

Born on January 20, 1930, Ross had deep roots in Ontario. He was a descendant of Luke Brady, United Empire Loyalist, who came to Stormont County in 1784. He

was also a descendant of the Dalhousie Settlers who emigrated to Lanark County in 1819 and to Simcoe County in 1832.

Ross had an unabashed passion for preserving and sharing local and family history. He implicitly understood that each of us cares most about the people and places closest to us. Not one to sit idly by, Ross was a historian, genealogist, editor, writer, member, advocate, leader, counsellor, worker, attender, and supporter. He was also an avid supporter of the Ontario Historical Society, attending countless OHS workshops, Annual General Meetings, and supporting the Society's programs for decades.

Everything Ross undertook, he did with steadfast and enthusiastic commitment. The fruits of his efforts and leadership with the Simcoe County Branch, Ontario Genealogical Society, Innisfil Historical Society, Orillia Historical Society, Simcoe County Historical Association, and our own Ontario Historical Society—where he served on the Board of Directors from 2001 to 2004—will long survive his passing.

His longstanding devotion to service was tangibly recognized in 2012. Ross was the first person invested into The Innisfil Historical Society Wall of Fame. He was made an Honorary Life Member of the Simcoe County Historical Association. And, finally, the Minister of Citizenship & Immigration presented Ross with a 30-year pin for volunteerism with the Innisfil Historical Society.

Ross, the world is poorer for having lost you. But those whom you touched, and those who will continue to benefit from your work, are blessed for your walking and working among us.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Rob Leverty, Executive Director
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I am pleased to report that on January 16, 2019, the OHS Board of Directors incorporated the Maitland Mills Association in Huron County. Their mandate is to restore and reuse the historic mills located along the Maitland Valley Watershed in Gorrie (McGuire Mill) and Brussels (Logan Mill).

Congratulations to all the volunteers who worked so hard to establish this new not-for-profit corporation.

I would also like to thank Paul Nichol, the General Manager of Community Futures Huron at the Huron Business Development Corporation in Brussels, Ontario. It was a privilege to work with Paul over the last year on this incorporation initiative.

Since the financial collapse in 2008, we have faced an unprecedented and relentless divestment of our priceless heritage resources onto the not-for-profit sector. Paul Nichol understands this crisis and realizes that safeguarding our heritage assets is about economic development. Researching, documenting, writing about, protecting, promoting, and disseminating our history is critical to our economic future.

Paul neatly summarizes the work of our member organizations when he states, "As economic developers, we cannot afford to ignore the significant potential that comes from our cultural and built heritage. That is why Community Futures Huron has been supportive of the grass-roots efforts to preserve and maintain these historic mill sites in Gorrie and Brussels. Where some might only see liability, we see opportunity. These unique economic assets can be restored and re-adapted in ways that build the local economy through tourism, skills training, and community betterment."

Since January 2015, the OHS has incorporated 32 not-for-profit historical organizations: six in northern Ontario, four in eastern Ontario, four in central Ontario, seven in southwestern Ontario, ten in the GTA, and one provincial not-for-profit.

We remain committed to protecting Ontario's cemeteries. Marjorie Stuart and Diane Clendenan, Co-Chairs of the OHS/Ontario Genealogical Society (OGS) Joint Unregistered Cemeteries Committee, have finished researching and compiling lists of unregistered cemeteries for the Counties and Districts of Patricia, Perth, Peterborough, Prescott, Prince Edward, Rainy River, Renfrew, and Russell. On February 12, these lists were submitted to the Province of Ontario. The OHS has for years maintained that it is in the public interest that these cemeteries be registered as soon as possible by the Government of Ontario, since the Society has no notification or appeal rights with regards to the relocation of unregistered cemeteries.



On March 4, OHS Executive Director Rob Leverty met with Jon Radojkovic, Founding President of Ontario Barn Preservation. Jon and Rob are holding a copy of a motion to incorporate this new provincial organization through affiliation with the OHS. This new organization will address a significant issue within this province: our rapidly vanishing agricultural heritage. The OHS is thrilled to support Jon Radojkovic, an author, journalist, and barn restoration/repair specialist. Jon states that "in Ontario there is a crisis. On average, two to three heritage barns are being taken down per week, where the timbers are shipped to the USA to be made into flooring, and old barn board is valued at five-times the price of new. Ontario Barn Preservation wants to stop, or at least make people think about, what they are doing: demolishing some of the last original historic pieces of architecture from the 19th century." The OHS stands with Jon and fully supports the mandate of Ontario Barn Preservation.

The Society has just successfully completed its annual, independent, financial audit. Last year, OHS volunteers donated approximately 13,100 hours of time to the organization in support of its activities (12,400 in 2017). Thank you to all our highly skilled volunteers—we could never implement our provincial mandate without your dedicated and generous support.

In the December 2017 *OHS Bulletin*, I wrote about the incorporation of the Madill Church Preservation Society (MCPS) through affiliation with OHS. MCPS was established to prevent the imminent demolition of the Madill Church (1873) south of Huntsville. This story generated tremendous interest and feedback. So I am pleased to report that on February 1, 2018, MCPS became the proud owner of this historic church and in February 2019, President Carolynn MacKay informed me that they had just been granted Charitable Tax Status by the Canada Revenue Agency. Congratulations!

OHS SIGNS NEW LONG-TERM LEASE FOR JOHN MCKENZIE HOUSE AS OHS HQ

Daniel Dishaw, Communications and Outreach Coordinator
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Since saving John McKenzie House from demolition in 1992, the Ontario Historical Society has invested over \$1.1 million and countless hours of staff time to ensure that this valuable public asset is protected. Restoration work has now spanned three decades, and the historic home is in exceptional condition for a 116-year-old building that was neglected, boarded up, and set to be demolished almost 30 years ago.

John McKenzie House is one of the few heritage buildings in Willowdale that were protected from the rapid urban development that reshaped the social and architectural landscape of the neighbourhood. With a new slate roof and a fully restored interior, the house is available for rentals,



Seen here with a copy of the new lease are OHS ED Rob Leverty and Jeff Shewchuk, Project Manager, Real Estate Services, at the City of Toronto.



Slate roof restoration at John McKenzie House in 2016.

public events, Doors Open Toronto, private meetings, and more. In a part of the city where public space has become unfortunately scarce, John McKenzie House remains an indispensable public asset.

With our initial 25-year lease coming to an end on July 1, 2018, OHS Executive Director Rob Leverty began the process of negotiating a renewal of our lease in 2017. We are proud to announce that the OHS has now signed a new five year lease with the City of Toronto, with the option to extend for an additional five years to June, 30, 2028.

The OHS is pleased to continue our important work as stewards of John McKenzie House in Willowdale. We look forward to a continued partnership with the City of Toronto for many years to come!

MAITLAND MILLS ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED TO PRESERVE HISTORIC MILLS

David Blaney, President, Maitland Mills Association
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Two historic mills sit vacant along the same watershed in Huron County. Maguire Mill in Gorrie and Logan Mill in Brussels served their surrounding communities for decades before falling out of use and into disrepair.

Both mills are currently the property of the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority, but as with all conservation authorities, government cutbacks have left them with insufficient funding to adequately maintain the mills.



Maguire Mill in Gorrie, Ontario.

Fearing further dereliction, a group of concerned citizens set out to preserve and protect these historic structures. The Maitland Mills Association (MMA) was incorporated on January 16, 2019, through affiliation with the Ontario Historical Society.

The MMA intends to restore the Maguire Mill to a state suitable for public access, preserving and showcasing one of the very few wood-frame grist and flour mills left in southwestern Ontario. Originally built further up-stream in 1856, the mill was relocated to its current site in 1867, where flour-milling



Logan Mill in Brussels, Ontario.

equipment was installed. The machinery is mostly still intact today, though it has not functioned as a working mill since 1961.

Logan Mill in Brussels is an early poured-concrete structure built in 1915 by John Logan. This site had previously been home to a wooden mill, built by the Vanstone brothers in the late 1850s. The wooden structure burned to the ground on two separate occasions before the site was redeveloped with the concrete structure that still stands today. Although the original mill was a three-storey structure, John Logan opted for just two when he rebuilt. Logan Mill needs significant interior structural work before a final use can be determined.

Acknowledging the unfortunate reality that there is little financial support available for small museums or living history sites, the MMA is exploring the possibility of turning the two structures into living-classrooms for heritage restoration. Heritage restoration is an important profession that deserves greater attention and support. The MMA has engaged Dr. Christopher Cooper of Edifice Atelier to explore this potential adaptation.

I would like to acknowledge the work of John Hazlitt and Ted Turner—their book, *The Power of the Maitland*, proved to be a valuable source of information about the mills.

For those interested in helping with these projects, I can be contacted at Box 439, Brussels, Ontario N0G 1H0 or dblaney@ezlink.ca. David Blaney, President, Maitland Mills Association.

...‘AGM’ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

OHS AGM & HONOURS AND AWARDS
CEREMONY PROGRAM

JOIN US SATURDAY, JUNE 15, FROM 1:00 PM–4:30 PM FOR OUR AGM
AND HONOURS & AWARDS CEREMONY AT ALUMNI HALL, TYNDALE
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AND SEMINARY, 3377 BAYVIEW AVENUE,
TORONTO, ONTARIO.

12:45–1:00 PM — ARRIVE

1:00 PM — ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1:45 PM — REFRESHMENT BREAK

2:00 PM — KEYNOTE ADDRESS, RT. HON. BEVERLEY McLACHLIN

2:45 PM — OHS HONOURS AND AWARDS CEREMONY

4:30 PM — PROGRAM CONCLUDES

THIS YEAR’S KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY: RT. HON. BEVERLEY McLACHLIN, CHIEF JUSTICE OF
THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA, 2000–2017.

PLEASE RSVP TO OHS@ONTARIOHISTORICALSOCIETY.CA
OR 416-226-9011 BY FRIDAY, MAY 31.



Photo - Clik Clik Event Photography

OHS Communications and Outreach Coordinator Daniel Dishaw joined the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) for their annual Black History Month Kick-Off Brunch on January 27. At the brunch, Daniel met with Diana Braithwaite, Founding President of the Rella Braithwaite Black History Foundation (RBBHF), incorporated through affiliation with the OHS in 2017. Diana had the opportunity to present RBBHF's new project (in collaboration with the OBHS and Ryerson University) entitled #ShareTheirStory. This project features articles and videos that highlight the important contributions of five historic African Canadian entrepreneurs: Mary Ann Shadd, Newspaper Publisher and Activist; John Ware, Canada's First Black Cowboy; Rufus Rockhead, Nightclub Owner and Entrepreneur; Elijah McCoy, Inventor and "The Real McCoy"; and Viola Desmond, Entrepreneur and Equal Rights Activist. To learn more about the Rella Braithwaite Black History Foundation or the #ShareTheirStory collection, visit the RBBHF website: www.rellablackhistoryfoundation.com/.

MUSEUM MILESTONES

Dr. John Carter
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Laura Coady's article (below) describes the recent upgrade and improvement of the Corn Flower Glass Gallery at the Museum of Dufferin (formerly the Dufferin County Museum). In it, she explains what you will be able to see in this new exhibit area. If you can't visit the museum, then have a look at the Online Catalogue of Corn Flower Glass currently in the MoD collection. Visit the MoD website, www.dufferinmuseum.com, go to the "Collections" tab, and use the drop down menu to select "Search Collection," then click "Start Catalogue Search." Whether in person or online, you will enjoy this provincially significant collection of Ontario glass.

The SLATE (So Let's All Talk Education) Annual Conference will be held on Monday, June 10, 2019. Originally established for people working or volunteering in living-history schoolhouse museums, the 2019 SLATE Annual Conference will be hosted by the Lost Villages Museum, located at 16361 Laflamme Drive, Long Sault, Ontario (approximately 8 kilometres from Cornwall). A series of lectures will be offered at historic schoolhouses in the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and will feature visits to Upper Canada Village, the Lost Villages Museum, and the Nor'Westers and Loyalist Museum. For further information and registration details,

please contact Jim Brownell at jim.h.brownell@gmail.com, or call Jim at 613-534-2423.

The Ontario Barn Preservation (OBP) has just been established. This not-for-profit group has a mandate to protect the unique history of heritage barns across Ontario. Its aim is to identify, preserve, maintain, and promote historical barns, structures, and sites that are important to the history of the province, for the benefit, enjoyment, and education of the public. For more details about this new organization, visit www.ontariobarnpreservation.com. OBP is looking for folks from across the province to get involved. I hope you will become a member!

Chris Raible, Darryl Withrow, and I have tracked down a total of 146 prisoners' boxes made in 1838 by incarcerated prisoners of the Upper Canada Rebellions. Chris has identified 44 boxes held in the collections of 18 museums, libraries, and other public institutions. If you are aware of more of these boxes in institutional collections, please contact Chris at chrisraible1@gmail.com. Your input will help us to record and document these wonderful pieces of material culture, which constitute a significant part of Ontario's past.

The Billy Bishop National Historic Site recently held an unveiling ceremony for three original paintings by local artist Sherry Pringle. They feature images of Owen Sound's three Victoria Cross winners, Tommy Holmes, David Vivian Currie, and Billy Bishop. These new additions to the collection were kindly donated to the museum by Ted and Joanne Horton. Next time you're in Owen Sound, go visit this interesting site.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Dave Neufeld, who recently retired after 29 years as Education Coordinator at Doon Heritage Crossroads/ Waterloo Region Museum. Enjoy your fly fishing, Dave!

CORN FLOWER GLASS GALLERY AT MUSEUM OF DUFFERIN

Laura Coady, Curatorial Assistant, Museum of Dufferin
www.dufferinmuseum.com

In January 2017, the Museum of Dufferin (MoD), formerly the Dufferin County Museum and Archives, began a major renovation project to update and enhance various areas of the museum. After receiving a Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Grant, the MoD partnered with Lebel & Bouliane, Alula Lighting Design, and Ritestart Construction to plan and implement a new gallery for the extensive W. J. Hughes Corn Flower Glass collection.

In 1912, W.J. Hughes, a Dufferin County-born artisan and entrepreneur, developed a delicate floral pattern. He soon began hand cutting this corn flower design onto glassware with a homemade glass-cutting machine in the basement of his home. From these humble beginnings, he founded the Corn Flower Glass Company and transformed his simple design into a nationally recognized brand, treasured by Canadians for over a century.

The MoD's new Corn Flower Glass Gallery follows the story of the company, from W.J.'s childhood in Melancthon Township through 80 years of his company's success. And that's not all—the wider story is not just about one company. It's also the story of Dufferin County through eight decades of Canadian history. Decade by decade, visitors at the MoD can explore photographs of Dufferin County and iconic



Corn Flower Glass Gallery at the Museum of Dufferin.

recipes while following the evolution of the Corn Flower Company's production, period advertising, and artistic experimentation.

This new Corn Flower Glass Gallery displays over 200 pieces of genuine Corn Flower glassware along with artifacts from the factories, including one of the original glass-cutting machines. Every artifact has a unique and sometimes surprising story. This Candy Dish also known as an Art Basket, ca. 1930 is a perfect example. It's one of the few pieces of vaseline glass in the MoD's collection. Vaseline glass was once a very popular type of glassware, but this cheery glass hides an interesting chemistry behind it. Vaseline glassware contains low (and unharmed!) levels of uranium oxide, which gives the glass its bright yellow or green colour. Unfortunately, the uranium also made the glass radioactive—it even glows under ultra-violet light! Visitors to the MoD can see the glow for themselves in the new Corn Flower Glass Gallery by just pressing a button.

One gallery could not possibly display the over 2,500 pieces of genuine Corn Flower glass in the Museum's collection. So the MoD is thrilled to announce, that the Museum will also feature a new Online Catalogue. Every piece of Corn Flower glass in the collection, with detailed images and the full history of the objects will be made available online! The MoD's Online Catalogue is about more than just Corn Flower Glass. It will also feature the Museum's Sheet Music Collection, hundreds of historic photographs of Dufferin County, and other rare documents from the MoD's archives. Excitingly, this new online tool will change and expand over time, "Our Online Catalogue will keep growing. We'll be adding new items from our collection and archives all the time," reports Sarah Robinson, Curator at the MoD. The Museum of Dufferin is excited to invite everyone to explore and discover the stories of Dufferin County's past.



Museum Staff discovering the glow of Vaseline Glass under ultra-violet light.

Photo - James MacDonald Photography

Photo - James MacDonald Photography

BARRY PENHALE'S ONTARIO

CLIFF & ELEANOR WHETUNG OF CURVE LAKE RESERVE

Barry Penhale

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The eminent historian Margaret MacMillan suggests that it was probably former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan who, when asked, defined history as “one damn thing after another.” This definition strikes me most favourably and, besides, who am I to question any opinion offered up by so brilliant and erudite a personality as the remarkable Dr. MacMillan. The late Michael Bliss and Glengarry’s Royce MacGillivray—long-time OHS boosters and neither a “stuffed-shirt academic”—knew their history better than most. These legendary historians quickly learned while still young professors that history is indeed one damn thing after another. They would have appreciated my greatly valued Ojibwa friend Cliff Whetung (1918–2011) and his beloved wife, Eleanor Jean Irwin (1922–2010), whose lives were made up of one incredible story after another.

To this day, Cliff and Eleanor remain two of my favourite people and few could match their many noteworthy accomplishments—and could they laugh! From the time of my first visit to the Curve Lake Indian Reserve in Ontario’s Kawartha Lakes region, I was enthralled by the playfulness and the always present sense of humour this loving couple exuded. That still memorable first visit came at the time when Cliff—often described as a jack of all trades and master of all—was fulfilling (among other roles) the position of postmaster, keeper of the general store, fur trader, and farmer. This was also the time when he co-founded Canada’s first Indigenous-owned craft shop—leading to the now widely

A bond between us was formed right from the beginning and any return to Curve Lake was not only highly anticipated, but it was also a kind of homecoming. It was astonishing each time to see the growth in their business endeavours and to realize just how much their efforts mattered to both known and little known Indigenous Canadian artists and artisans. And for this individual, juggling broadcast and journalistic interests, there was always a story waiting for me, with humour galore. One such instance occurred when, upon arrival, Eleanor remarked that they had mentioned me by name just yesterday and had commented, “What a shame Barry isn’t here with his tape recorder.” All was not lost, however, as they got a message to Amos Irons, a hulk of a man who joined us still showing the effects of his almost nose-to-nose battle with a grizzly bear the day before. It turned out that he had gone in search of locally growing ingredients for traditional medical potions favoured by his grandmother. Discovering that he and Mister Bruin were occupying the same terra firma—he wisely took up a position at the top of a knoll. Each time the bear came up, he would strike the animal’s nose for all he was worth. This was repeated two or more times, with the almost spent Amos not sure if he was up to one more such encounter. But his opponent must have felt likewise and ambled off into the bush. When I asked Amos Irons what he believed had led to such an outcome, he looked at me with a grin, exclaiming, “I think it was the bad breath that got him!” This casually recorded, on-the-spot interview would not have happened if it weren’t for Cliff and Eleanor and the good-natured Mister Irons. The taped human interest item was carried later that same week over CBC radio. Yet another example that history is indeed one damn thing after another.



The family patriarch shown wearing his headdress, Dan Whetung (Cliff’s father), served as chief at Curve Lake from June 1913 to 1943.

Ontario was made richer by the presence of Cliff and Eleanor Whetung, and those of us who were fortunate to know them cannot but be grateful for the respectful way their children and now their grandchildren protect and nourish a rare family legacy. The son of Muriel and Chief Dan Whetung, fluent in both English and Ojibwa, Cliff travelled much of Ontario assisting his father with translation as a young man. An exceedingly kind person, he was known to tend a huge garden well into his advanced years, and his generous nature always found him giving away almost everything he grew. Concerned by the increasing destructive changes to the local environment, Cliff Whetung, at the end of a most productive lifetime, found himself greatly anxious for future generations.



The Whetung Ojibwa Crafts Centre at Curve lake attracts thousands of visitors from around the world every year.

Whenever blessed with a visit to Curve Lake, this writer always makes time to peruse the unique museum within the centre that has lovingly captured a sizeable portion of local Indigenous history. Here, rare photographs and treasured artifacts honour many of those individuals from the not-too-distant past, whose noteworthy contributions have enriched Curve Lake and environs. And as is my habit, there is always a glance in the direction of Cliff’s garden, as I exit the parking lot. In my mind, an inspiring image forms and I am reminded of a very special couple. They are walking hand in hand and laughing in their unmistakable joyous fashion. Their unique stamp on all they touched has left Ontario a richer place because of their time among us.



Photo of Cliff and Eleanor Whetung in the 1970s. A local girl born in Harvey Township, Peterborough County, Eleanor Jean Irwin was destined to meet and fall in love with Clifford “Cliff” Whetung. Marriage introduced her to a new way of life and to Curve Lake, the place she proudly called home. Initially she filled the important role of nurse for the reserve, to be followed by child rearing, and working alongside her husband.

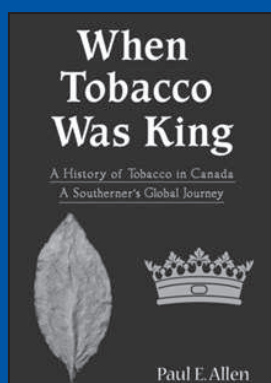
known and much visited Whetung Ojibwa Centre. But back in the early sixties when I made my earliest visits to Curve Lake, I discovered that Clifford and Eleanor were well underway with the transformation of what had been a fishing lodge into Whetung Ojibwa Crafts. Cabins once occupied by visiting anglers were now hives of activity—the new and rapidly expanding home of locally produced Indigenous art and crafts. Porcupine quill work, deerskin vests, moccasins, and carvings, which over time attracted national and global interest. Cliff and Eleanor’s pioneering entrepreneurship and seemingly tireless energy culminated in many important benchmarks for countless other Indigenous craft producers who would follow.

I vividly recall when I first encountered Cliff’s lively sense of humour. Having stayed for lunch, my pleasure with the food prompted me to ask him what it was I had just eaten. As it turned out, the delicious stew-like concoction proved to be “jshushk and jostung”—fried muskrat and fried bread patties. As publisher of *The Outdoorsman* magazine at the time and with a future issue in mind, Cliff kindly wrote down the full recipe when I requested it—gleefully starting with the words “First catch six muskrats.”

FROM THE BOOKSHELF

Dr. Cynthia Comacchio
ccomac5702@rogers.com

We were getting close to the winter solstice in the last version of this column; we have now just recently passed the spring equinox. Although it is certainly not unusual for March to be a blustery month, in Winnie-the-Pooh fashion, this one has seemed particularly so, perhaps because of the special “winteriness” of the season about to be relegated to memory. Or so we hope. But, in the end, isn’t that what spring is about? Hope for sunshine, longer days, shorter nights, warmer temperatures, budding flowers, trees and grass, and the opportunity to spend time outdoors without a shovel in hand and unencumbered by several pounds of down-filled outerwear and boots that were made for walking on treacherous ground. And even if spring brings more activity, it also brings a fresh crop of books about our history. Here are some to consider while enjoying more daylight....

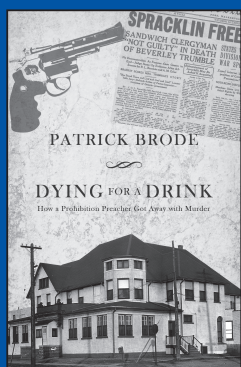


When Tobacco Was King: A History of Tobacco in Canada, A Southerner's Global Journey

PAUL E. ALLEN

Ottawa: Paul E. Allen, 2018.
Paperback; 266 pp.
www.amazon.ca

Paul E. Allen, it could be said, was born into tobacco. As he acknowledges, he took up tobacco history in large part because of his father’s involvement. His father, the North Carolina-born Edward Dupree Allen (1909–1988), dedicated the better part of his working life to the Canadian Leaf Tobacco Company (CLT), a subsidiary of the Virginia-based Universal Leaf Tobacco Company. In 1925, Ed Allen ventured to Chatham for summer employment cutting tobacco leaf, a job he returned to every summer until he was hired, just as the Great Depression began, to serve as a buyer for CLT. Certainly, the author succeeds in establishing the industry centrality of this relatively unknown enterprise that became the leading supplier to the famous (and important) Macdonald Tobacco Company of Montreal. Careful to begin his story with the disclaimer that he seeks not to “glorify the use of tobacco” but to explore its significance in the Canadian economy, both domestic and international. Allen’s history is consequently also personal. With his father serving as CLT’s president, Allen’s memories of growing up in Chatham include many of the industry’s North American investors and directors. The author is able to provide something of an “insider” view because of his family background, although he was never himself employed in tobacco (he is a retired teacher), both by recalling fascinating details of the senior Allen’s career and due to the kind of good fortune that most historians only dream of. An American historian who published a history of “the golden leaf” in the 1980s offered him a collection of taped interviews with Ed Allen that provided information and insights that he was able to use effectively in his own chronicle. Focusing largely on the years 1927 to 1972, Allen carefully demonstrates how tobacco cultivation, and the making, selling, export, and consumption of tobacco products, justified the plant’s socioeconomic status and the aptness of his title. At once a history of a particularly successful agricultural enterprise and a burgeoning modern industry, and a story of the rise and decline of a coveted leisure product later proven to be a serious danger to individual and public health, Allen’s book is also a family history, which makes for an intriguing read.



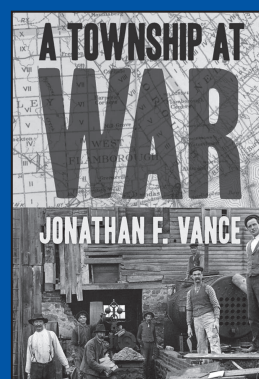
Dying for a Drink: How a Prohibition Preacher Got Away with Murder

PATRICK BRODE

Windsor: Biblioasis, 2018.
Paperback; 160 pp.
www.biblioasis.com

Patrick Brode might well be the best-known chronicler of Windsor’s twentieth-century history, some of which have been reviewed in these pages.

Putting his legal training to excellent use once again, Brode tells the story of a notorious local Methodist minister, the Reverend J.O.L. Spracklin, who comes to us through historical records as “The Fighting Parson”. Detailing a story that was much-covered, dramatized, and exaggerated in the Ontario press (especially the *Toronto Daily Star*), Brode explores why this prohibitionist clergyman deliberately shot and killed the bartender of an infamous Windsor tavern in November 1920. Even when Ontario was still dry, Spracklin was no ordinary man of the cloth; he was also a provincial liquor license inspector who, by the time that Beverly “Babe” Trumble was killed, had already built something of a reputation for his less-than-ministerly actions in confounding the purveyors of the demon rum. Particularly amazing is the fact that Spracklin was able to argue, despite his clear culpability, that he had acted in self defence, and he was consequently acquitted. But to many, including *Star* publisher and civic reformer Joseph Atkinson (long-dedicated to the prohibition cause) anything that the gun-toting minister did to uphold Ontario’s dry status seemed justifiable—even heroic—and the newspaper’s coverage of the case was supportive, as well as embellished enough to make for more newspaper sales. Not at all surprisingly, the local newspaper, the *Border Cities Star*, gave the Spracklin affair scant notice: too many local residents were furtively involved in the rum-running business. In his inimitable narrative style, Brode explores the various fascinating bits of Prohibition-era lore to uncover the historical facts of an episode in Ontario history that, even without the elements of local legend, remains a really fine tale.



A Township at War

JONATHAN F. VANCE

Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2018.
Hardcover; 308 pp.
www.wlupress.wlu.ca

Jonathan F. Vance is a much-decorated military history scholar whose forays into the cultural history of war and memory, especially his groundbreaking *Death So Noble* (1999), effectively opened the field of memory studies in Canada. In *A Township at War*, Vance turns to the history of the homefront in East Flamborough Township during the First World War, focusing particularly on Waterdown, a rural town that is now part of the Greater Hamilton region. Waterdown is also a home-town study, in that the author grew up there and his family has deep historical roots in the area. The viewpoint of a local boy who is also a highly skilled professional historian of war and society makes for a unique recounting of a particularly memorable chapter of the region’s early twentieth-century history. Drawing from many and varied documents that include letters, diaries, photographs, local publications, municipal, genealogical, military and family records, many never before examined, as well as interviews, oral histories, and passed-on township lore, Vance sketches a vibrant portrait of a township in its everyday experiences of the war. In doing so, he also situates this case study within the larger, and largely neglected, context of Canadian rural history in a time of transformation caused by sociocultural forces preceding the war. We get a sense of what made the township unique in its homefront activities but also what made its responses to the war part of the larger pattern in similar-sized communities across Ontario and very probably across the nation. What comes through most strikingly is a simple but crucial insight: what historians and others looking backwards see as noteworthy wartime events and issues might not have been seen that way by those who lived through them; nor were perspectives on such weighty matters as female suffrage necessarily universal. In sum, as he reminds us in his introduction, historians “must be sensitive to the voices they are reading...[and] put aside what we think historical actors should have thought or must have been interested in, and instead let them tell us what their concerns actually were.” Vance does this very capably, and the result is well worth reading.



HERITAGE TORONTO AWARDS:
NOMINATIONS OPENING SOON

The 45th annual Heritage Toronto Awards will take place October 28 at the historic Carlu. Community organizations are encouraged to submit nominations at heritagetoronto.org between April 23 and June 24.

Volunteers worked around the clock over the summer to remove the pews, paint, sand, and varnish the floors. Volunteers contributed over \$7,000 in labour. With the interior in much better shape, we planned our first event inside the church: our “Double the Fun” fundraiser featured two local bands and a silent auction sponsored by local artists. There were paintings, carvings, leather goods, jams, nuts, maple syrups, willow chairs, quilts, and all kinds of other artisanal products. We capped the event with a lavish lunch made by our members.

In 2018, the Stilwell Foundation gave us a very generous donation of \$60,000, which enabled us to install our septic system. We also finalized and approved the plans for the washrooms and dug the well. Every year, Centre Lochiel Centre is grateful for all monetary donations and thankful to our many volunteers. We continue with our successful fundraisers—we host fall dances, book sales, yard sales, raffles, 50/50 draws, and silent auctions. On September 21 and 22, 2018, we had our most successful fundraiser: two nights of “ABBA Revisited” that netted approximately \$10,000 in revenue and donations. On New Year’s Eve we also received an anonymous donation of \$10,000!

Our intention is to rent the space and begin hosting community programs and even more events. We want people to understand and appreciate the history of this building, while also enjoying it as a welcoming space for the entire community.

For more information, to become a member, to volunteer, or to donate, please do not hesitate to contact us at centrelochiellcentre@gmail.com or 613-525-0462.

Photo - Audrey Fox



At their 150th AGM, held at John McKenzie House on February 3, 2019, The York Pioneers and Historical Society (YPHS) made a generous donation of \$1,000 to the Dorothy Duncan Library Fund. The Society has been actively raising money to house and catalogue this valuable collection of resources since it was donated to the OHS in April 2018 by Dorothy Duncan. Pictured above are YPHS President Fred Robbins and OHS Project Manager Sarah McCabe celebrating the donation at John McKenzie House.

The *OHS Bulletin* is the newsletter of the Ontario Historical Society (OHS).

July issue copy deadline: **Friday, June 22, 2019.**

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Types of membership in the Society are: Individual \$45, Institution/Organization \$50, Life \$500.

Membership is open to all individuals and societies interested in the history of Ontario. The *OHS Bulletin* is sent free of charge to all members of the OHS. The OHS’s biannual scholarly journal, *Ontario History*, is available to members for an additional \$31.50 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 Cristina Perfetto at members@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca.

Inquiries about submissions and advertising: Daniel Dishaw, Editor, *OHS Bulletin*, 34 Parkview Avenue, Willowdale, ON M2N 3Y2 416-226-9011 ddishaw@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca www.ontariohistoricalsociety.ca

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