

OHS AWARD WINNERS CELEBRATED AT JOHN MCKENZIE HOUSE

STRATEGIC PLANNING & OUTREACH MEETINGS TO BEGIN IN EARLY 2025



OHS Award winners gathered at the John McKenzie House on November 2, 2024, for an official presentation ceremony and celebratory reception. From left to right are: Dr. Lianne C. Leddy, Reg Hunt, Alex McCubbin, Brian Phillips, Barbara Doyle, Bob Greenhorn, Grace Anyu Sun, Dr. Susana P. Miranda, Dr. Franca Iacovetta, Dr. Jon S. Dellandrea, and OHS Honours and Awards Committee Co-Chair Hans Bathija.

The 2023–24 OHS Award winners represent incredible achievements from around the province. Follow the links below to see the press releases celebrating each one of our winners. As always, the OHS is delighted to be recognizing a diverse range of communities and topics with our annual Award Program.

The winners for 2023–24 are:

AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

[President’s Award: Thousand Islands River Heritage Society: Mallorytown Glassworks Exhibit](#)

[Dorothy Duncan Public History Award: Kawartha Lakes Museum and Archives: Old Mill Exhibit](#)



The OHS Board of Directors is pleased to announce that strategic planning and outreach meetings will begin in early 2025.

Discussions and break-out group sessions at these meetings will help us draw on input and feedback from our members as we look to establish key objectives for the next four years (2026–29 plan). These sessions will also serve as networking opportunities to strengthen relationships throughout our network and within local heritage communities throughout the province.

Staff and Directors are very much looking forward to meeting with many of you as we plan in-person meetings for the new year. Though we would wish to visit every community we work with, time and resources for travel and accommodation are limited. A virtual meeting will be scheduled to ensure we hear from everyone who wishes to participate.

We have two meetings scheduled for January and February of 2025, with more details and subsequent meeting dates to be released soon.

SAVE THE DATE:

[Join us at the John R. Park Homestead in Essex on January 30, 2025](#)

[Join us at the Thunder Bay Museum on February 7, 2025](#)

More information has been sent out via email. Dates and locations are currently being worked out for two more sessions in March, 2025. Each attending member organization will have the opportunity to make a short presentation on their group’s mandate, current objectives, and most significant challenges. Please RSVP to ohs@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca so we can incorporate you and your organization.

‘OHS AWARD WINNERS’ CONTINUED ON PAGE 4...

IN THIS ISSUE

OHS STRATEGIC PLANNING & OUTREACH MEETINGS	1
OHS AWARD WINNERS	1
CHAIR’S REPORT	2
JOHN MCKENZIE HOUSE OUTBUILDING RESTORATION	2
VEGETABLE DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM IN PARTNERSHIP W/OHS	2
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT	3
ALBION BOLTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY CELEBRATES 50 YEARS	4
NEW PLAQUES BEING UNVEILED ACROSS CHATHAM-KENT	4
MUSEUM MILESTONES	5
A SHORT HISTORY OF PELEE ISLAND AND ITS HERITAGE CENTRE	5
BARRY PENHALE’S ONTARIO	6
DR. NATASHA HENRY-DIXON DELIVERS 2024 OHS KEYNOTE	6
FROM THE BOOKSHELF	7
MCKENZIE FAMILY DONATION TO THE OHS	8

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CHAIR’S REPORT

Dave Mowat, Chair, OHS Board of Directors
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As the newly appointed Chair of the Ontario Historical Society (OHS), I would like to take the opportunity to thank all who have supported me in taking on this role, and to everyone I have had the pleasure of working alongside to date. My interest in history stems from my childhood growing up with and hearing stories about my great-grandfather of Alderville First Nation, who in July of 1908 competed for Canada in the Olympic marathon in London, England. The stories were fascinating and, coupled with the photographs and newspaper clippings were available to me, his experiences between 1906 and 1912 gave me a look into not only early Canadian amateur sport, but the life of an Indigenous man taking on the world.

The story of my great-grandfather presented me with an opportunity to look further into the treaty, cultural, military, and settler history of Ontario, something I have never stopped chasing. With such influences as University of Manitoba historians/professors Ed Rae, Bill Brooks, and Fred Shore; lawyer/judge Murray Sinclair; Queen’s professor Brian Osborne; and my friend—and a cherished friend of the OHS—Don Smith, I can say my love of the study of history has been supported by so many strong and influential teachers.

Now with the OHS, I get to be surrounded by brilliant minds and a host of people dedicated to the preservation of this province’s rich history and vibrant heritage. In such a vast jurisdiction as Ontario, that richness and diversity is profoundly important in preserving and promoting our history, and in supporting the incredible network of local societies that do so much important grassroots work. As a First Nations person, I look forward to bringing forth elements of the important contributions of Indigenous history in this province as well. So let me say that I am honoured to be in this position and I look forward to the continued good work of all the good people pursuing that objective. History and the study thereof is a fascinating and important job because it keeps our feet on the ground, our eyes focused, and our minds sharp, and most importantly in the context of the OHS, it keeps the province stronger, knowing and understanding from whence it has travelled and evolved!

On that note, I want to thank immediate Past-Chair Kris Ives for all her incredible work over the past two years as Chair. I would also like to extend sincere gratitude on behalf of the Board of Directors to our outgoing board members, Dr. Michel S. Beaulieu, Dr. Allan Macdonell, Laura Suchan, and Janie Cooper-Wilson. During my time on the Board, they have all worked tirelessly on behalf of the Ontario Historical Society, each leaving their own mark on the Society’s long and storied history. As we look back on their impressive contributions, we also look forward with great excitement. The year 2025 will bring new opportunities and challenges, and we will stand on behalf of our membership every step of the way. It will no doubt be a busy year as the Board works toward the development



Photo – Daniel Dishaw

On October 25, the Ontario Historical Society joined the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) in Hagersville for the grand reopening of the historic Council House. Kudos to all involved in this impressive restoration project. Many of the original materials have been preserved, including original floorboards dating back to the 1882 construction. Pictured above at the reopening celebration are (bottom row, left to right) MCFN Councillor Erma Ferrell; former Chief of the MCFN and former OHS board member, Carolyn King; MCFN Director of Operations Arland LaForme; (top row, left to right:) Historic Council House Committee member Susan Robertson; MCFN Manager of Consultation Craig King; and MCFN Councillor Ashley Sault.

of a new strategic plan for the Society. I encourage you all to share your thoughts and concerns about our common issues as we work to move forward together.

In closing, let me wish each and every one of you a safe and secure holiday season.

-Dave

JOHN MCKENZIE HOUSE OUTBUILDING RESTORATION PROJECT



Restoration work at John McKenzie House began in early 2024 in partnership with the City of Toronto. These beautiful agricultural buildings were initially restored in the 1990s by OHS staff and volunteers after the Society saved the property from demolition. Pictured above, restoration experts work on restoring old growth wood elements and replacing the white cedar shake roofs in 2024.



The Milk House (left) was constructed in 1907 on the original farm before the John McKenzie House was built. The Stable (right) was built in 1915 to accompany the new home, now one block east of Yonge Street in Willowdale.

VEGETABLE DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM HELD IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE OHS



Roberto Castillo Elizond, NeighbourLink Food Programs Coordinator (left), and Jessey Njau, Zawadi Farm (right), show off fresh vegetables at the John McKenzie House in October. The NeighbourLink Vegetable Distribution Program ran out of the John McKenzie House Coach House every Tuesday afternoon from August 27 to October 29. Every week, Zawadi Farm dropped off fresh produce at the Coach House, where volunteers then packed bags of produce and delivered them to NeighbourLink clients in need.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Daniel Dishaw, Executive Director
ddishaw@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca

I want to start by thanking all of our members who have been participating in our surveys and supporting the early foundations of our strategic planning process. We conducted a communications and outreach survey earlier this year, and many of you were kind enough to take the time to provide thoughtful and engaging responses that will inform our way forward. Thank you! Staff have gone through all of the responses and addressed individual questions, concerns, and requests. Our summer student employee Faith Peter worked with the OHS team to put this survey together and analyze the findings. She also worked on a research project focused on OHS institutional members, recording details about your programs, objectives, and community events.

I'd like to recognize the support of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism for their support through the Summer Experience Program. I would also like to thank Young Canada Works and the Canadian Museums Association for supporting youth employment in the heritage field. Major thanks also go to Faith Peter for doing a fantastic job coordinating these programs and supporting core staff through the summer. We have all missed having Faith around the office since her return to the MMSt program at UofT.

It has been a busy year for the OHS staff and Board, and much of the work we have done in 2024 has set us up for an exciting and even busier 2025.

As noted on page one, staff and Directors of the OHS are gearing up for phase two of our strategic planning process: membership and community consultation meetings. As many of you know, our last strategic plan expired as we ushered in a completely unprecedented era in 2020 with the start of the Pandemic. So much has changed in these few short years, for the Society and for our membership alike. As we look to the future, a better understanding of how we can serve our members will be the top priority.

On that note, the Society worked diligently to respond to our members' requests for guidance on how to address Ontario's new *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act* (ONCA) requirements that took effect in October 2024. I'm very pleased that the educational materials and templates produced for our members were well received and helped many of our affiliates update and restructure their bylaws to be in compliance

with the ONCA and the OHS Act. As always, staff remain available to help any of our members seeking assistance with bylaws, governance, and administration.

As we continue to work on behalf of our provincial membership, we have also been very fortunate to enjoy great support for history at the local level at the historic John McKenzie House in Willowdale. Community members and local not-for-profits are using the property more and more for exhibitions and educational programming, and with that comes more opportunities for fundraising and support which can bolster our provincial mandate as well. We're so lucky to work with this expanding network of volunteers, advocates, and community leaders, including the multi-talented Stephen Boyle, Chair of the Willowdale Central Ratepayers Association (WCRA) and volunteer Artistic Director here at the John McKenzie House. The OHS is very pleased to have partnered with the City of Toronto and the WCRA to make much needed upgrades to the site, including new exhibition equipment and restorations to the historic agricultural outbuildings that remain in their original locations (pictured at the bottom left of page two).

Congratulations to Dr. Cynthia Comacchio on her appointment as the new Editor of *Ontario History*. I have worked with Cynthia for many years in my capacity as *Bulletin* Editor, and I'm thrilled she has agreed to take on this role. The Board of Directors and the *Ontario History* Committee held confidential consultations with key individuals and groups to develop a shortlist of potential editors. Those consulted included, but were not limited to, the current OH Editorial Advisory Committee, the OH Book Review Editor, members of the Board of Directors, previous contributors, historians specializing in the history of Ontario, and editors at major Canadian presses. Throughout these consultations, one name consistently came to the top of every list: Dr. Cynthia Comacchio. Congratulations once again, Cynthia! In her final "From the Bookshelf" column on page seven, Cynthia shares her own reflections on the new role. I want to echo her words of appreciation for everyone involved in the editorial and administrative process of our flagship publication.

I would also like to thank and congratulate Dr. Tory Tronrud for leading *Ontario History* through a period of unprecedented growth and success. Earlier this year, Tory informed the Board of his intention to retire as Editor at the end of 2024 after 20 years in the role. His leadership and contributions have made a lasting impact on the history of our flagship publication. Tory was presented with the 2019 OHS Cruikshank Gold Medal for outstanding service to the Society. On a personal level, I also want to thank Tory for all the support and assistance he has provided through this transition period. Staff and OHS Directors find ourselves continuously grateful for the generosity and dedication of our predecessors.

As always, our members, subscribers, and donors make all of our work possible. When I look at this list below, I see a growing network of concerned and caring heritage champions. Thank you so much for ongoing support. Everyone here at the OHS offices is wishing you all a safe and happy holiday season.

THANK YOU
DONORS!

In 2024

WELCOME NEW
MEMBERS!

Anonymous	Richard Lucas
Heather Anderson	Allan J. Macdonell
Anne Baillie	Sarah McCabe
Estate of James S. Bauer	Candice McCavitt
Michel Beaulieu	Madeleine McDowell
Robert Biggs	Steven McLarty Payson
Ellen Blaubergs <i>in memory of</i>	Marjorie McLeod
<i>R.B. Fleming</i>	Adrian & Suanne Miedema
George Bryant	Crystal Mulock
John Case	Pia Newell Santiago
Michael Chappell	Naomi Norquay
Helen Chimirri-Russell	Barry & Jane Penhale
Steven & Diane Clendenan	Robert & Kathleen Saunders
Kathy David	F. Brent Scollie
Hilary Dawson	Donald Smith
Kari Dehli	Marjorie Stuart
Daniel Dishaw	Thorold Tronrud
Michael Dove	Pat Walcott
Sidney Down	Samuel Whyte
Estate of Dorothy Duncan	Alpema Foundation
Audrey Fox	Blockthrough
Edith Geduld <i>in memory of</i>	The Tool Group of Canada
<i>Geoffrey E. Geduld</i>	Waterloo Historical Society
John E. Henderson <i>in memory of</i>	Willowdale Central Ratepayers'
<i>Cathy Henderson</i>	Association
Estate of Alfred Ronald Junkin	
Linda Kelly <i>in honour of Rob Leverty</i>	<i>In memory of Dorothy Duncan:</i>
Patricia Kennedy	
Paul R. King	Janet Cobban
Jenna Kirker (Beaulieu)	Linda Kelly
Carolyn Knowles	Pat Williams-Chung

Kerry Badgley	Nina Reid-Maroney
Heidi Bohaker	Steve Rogers
Larry Boone	Kegan Rumig
Iain Bruce	Kimberly Saunders
Sarah Campbell	Benjamin Savage
Laura Carlson	Jody Seeley
Richard Chambers	Carolyn Snider
Suzanne DeForest	Abbey Stansfield
Anastasia Dukova	Kelly Toms
Brianna East	Frank Treen
Garfield Emerson	Rosemary Wagner
C.J. Frederick	Matthew Warner
Erika Furney	Catharine Wilson
Barbara Gilchrist	Farley Wuth
Christopher Gismondi	Blake, Cassels & Graydon
Athol & Beth Hart	Friends of Historic Cargill
Natasha Henry-Dixon	Frontenac County Schools Museum
Jennifer Hoogewerf-McComb	Moore Museum
Douglas Hunter	Niagara Antique Power Association
Paul Huschilt	Nine Ships 1825 Inc
David Hyatt	North Dumfries Historical Preservation Society
Scarlett Janusas	Oakes Project: Heritage Arts & Tourism
Elizabeth L. Jay	Proverbs Heritage Organization
Lois Johnson	Redleaf Cultural Integration
Kait Kandray	Time Detectives
Joseph Kanoza	Toronto Heliconian Club
Patricia King	Township of Rideau Lakes
Jenna Kirker (Beaulieu)	UELAC Abegweit Branch
Teresa Lam	UELAC Assiniboine Branch
Ian MacMillan	UELAC Chilliwack Branch
Kenning Marchant	UELAC Edmonton Branch
Sean Mathieson	UELAC Manitoba
Yahir Mendoza	UELAC New Brunswick Branch
Daniel Montgomery	UELAC Saskatchewan Branch
Douglas Nesbitt	UELAC Thompson-Okanagan
Rob Norquay	UELAC Vancouver Branch
Melissa Plavins	UELAC Victoria Branch
Jennifer Ploeger	United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada
Robert Price	Wingham & Area Historical Society

ALBION BOLTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Nathan Hiller, Chair, Albion Bolton Historical Society
nhillerphoto@bell.net

A number of factors contributed to the forming of the Albion Bolton Historical Society in 1974. Canada had celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1967. The whole country was caught up in the fervor. Our history had come alive. The local newspaper, *The Bolton Enterprise*, had been publishing articles on century farms in the area. Many of the families highlighted in those articles had settled early in the 1800s.

In 1972, the village of Bolton marked its 100th year of incorporation. Local residents and businesses supported and contributed to a wide range of festivities that included many aspects of local history.

In 1974, the Region of Peel was formed from Peel County, which had consisted of five townships and several incorporated villages. The Region was divided into three new municipalities, the City of Mississauga, the City of Brampton, and the Town of Caledon. The Village of Bolton and Township of Albion were now part of the newly formed Town of Caledon. Councillors now represented Wards that replaced the previous township and village divisions. Many feared the historic names of Albion and Bolton could be lost.

Bolton was becoming a growing bedroom community for Toronto to the south. Development within the village and the surrounding farmlands was changing the landscape. Some historic buildings such as the Queen's Hotel and the Albert Street School were destroyed by fire and the Goodfellow Mill was demolished in order to build a road to a new subdivision. History was rapidly being lost.

The Rotary Club of Bolton sponsored the preliminary meeting to see if there was any interest in forming a historical society. The Albion Bolton Historical Society (ABHS) was officially formed in 1974. Harold Egan became the first chair, Beryl Goodfellow treasurer, Rowena Colman secretary, and Werden Leavens, Murray Hesp, and Heather Broadbent executive members.

Soon after being established, the society was asked to assist York University students with a geological survey of the historic landscape of Albion. We also helped the University of Toronto Anthropology/Archaeology Department on an archaeological survey of Albion. The Society played a role in establishing for Caledon the very first Heritage Evaluation of a Planning Study in the Province of Ontario. During these surveys and interviews, many family artifacts were shared; some were later channelled through the ABHS to the Peel Museum and Archives (PAMA) and the Royal Ontario Museum. Other local artifacts, ephemera, and photographs were subsequently donated or loaned to PAMA in order to preserve our local history.

Heather Broadbent, one of the ABHS founding members, was asked to represent the society at the Peel County Historical Society, later becoming its President in 1979. Heather also served as the 38th President of the OHS. The ABHS also helped establish other local historical societies in Caledon East, Lloydtown, and Mono Mills. Through the Bolton Centennial projects, the Rotary Club, with a Ministry of Culture grant and assisted by the ABHS, a film was created called *Albion Is, Was, and Will Be* by Neil Armstrong, a young filmmaker.

Other achievements and events include installation of permanent exhibitions and plaques around the Village of Bolton, historical bus tours, audio/visual presentations, school visits, community groups, and local events. The ABHS recently participated in and helped organize the bicentennials for Bolton, Caledon East, and Sandhill. With their knowledge and dedication, many of our members have gone on to hold positions on historical advisory committees and groups, such as Heritage Caledon, the TRCA, and the Ontario Historical Society.

Over the past 50 years, the Albion Bolton Historical Society has fulfilled its mandate to educate, collect, preserve, and present the local history of our community. We were pleased to celebrate this achievement on Saturday, June 22, 2024, at Rotary Place in Bolton. The event included historic displays, a silent auction, a time capsule, a presentation by Heather Broadbent, along with refreshments and entertainment.

For more information on how to get involved with the ABHS, contact Nathan Hiller at nhillerphoto@bell.net or 905-584-2801.



Program boards prepared by the Albion Bolton Historical Society.

NEW PLAQUES BEING UNVEILED ACROSS CHATHAM-KENT

Lisa Gilbert, Chair, Chatham-Kent Heritage Network
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Since 1998, when the single-tier Municipality of Chatham-Kent was created, we here at the Kent Historical Society (KHS) have seen the need for a heritage council of some sort, to coordinate heritage efforts in our geographically large municipality. Then, when our mayor, Darrin Canniff, gave his support for a plaquing initiative, we decided to stop waiting for someone else to do this, and that the time had come to take the steps to form this group ourselves.

To that end, the Chatham-Kent Heritage Network (CKHN) has been created and through that group, the KHS has begun to develop a plaquing network throughout Chatham-Kent. It took some time to get everything off the ground, but we have now completed Year Two of that initiative and are now beginning to work on Year Three. Twelve plaques with very diverse topics, such as Commercial Fishing in Mitchell's Bay, The Great Western Train Disaster of 1854, and the Highgate Mastodon have been unveiled in eleven months. We have plans for nine more to be unveiled in 2025.

These two developments have allowed heritage groups and individuals around Chatham-Kent the chance to get to know each other and also given us an opportunity to promote our heritage to visitors and our fellow citizens. The CKHN will hopefully become a permanent fixture in our municipality, and the plaquing project will continue for at least the next few years. The plaques have a QR code, and we hope to develop tours, virtual and otherwise, around them when there are enough of them to do so. Come and see us sometime and let us share our exciting history with you.



Co-authors of the plaque "A Smithy, A Sawmill, & A Saloon" Sue Marshall (left) and Julie Magerka (right) pose for a photo with Chair of the Chatham-Kent Heritage Network, Lisa Gilbert (centre left); and Kent Historical Society Director, Jim Gilbert (centre right).

... 'OHS AWARD WINNERS' CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

[Dorothy Duncan Public History Award Hon. Mention: North York Historical Society Youth Committee: Willow Theatre Project](#)

[Heritage Conservation Award: Friends of Hope Mill](#)

AWARDS FOR AUTHORS

[Fred Landon Award: Dr. Lianne C. Leddy](#)
Serpent River Resurgence: Confronting Uranium Mining at Elliot Lake

[Alison Prentice Award: Dr. Franca Iacovetta & Dr. Susana P. Miranda](#)
Cleaning Up: Portuguese Women's Fight for Labour Rights in Toronto

[Joseph Brant Award: Dr. Franca Iacovetta](#)
Before Official Multiculturalism: Women's Pluralism in Toronto, 1950s-1970s

[J.J. Talman Award: Dr. Jon S. Dellandrea](#)
The Great Canadian Art Fraud Case: The Group of Seven & Tom Thomson Forgeries

[Donald Grant Creighton Award: Dr. Dustin Galer](#)
Beryl: The Making of a Disability Activist

MUSEUM MILESTONES

Dr. John Carter
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In this edition of Museum Milestones, we travel to the most southerly museum in Ontario (in fact in Canada) to visit the Pelee Island Heritage Centre. Curator Kim Gardner contributed the lead article below. Pelee Island is just a short ferry ride from Leamington. Plan a visit and enjoy all the island has to offer, including the Heritage Centre. It is definitely worth the trip!

We have recently seen the retirement of various Ontario museum and heritage veterans. Topping this list of those with long service are Mike Baker and Scott Gillies, who have both put in 45 years. Baker was at Museum London, Fanshawe Pioneer Village, and then the Elgin County Museum. He retired there as Manager of Museums and Archives. Gillies served as curator/director of sites at Mississauga, Norwich, and Ingersoll. Laura Suchan spent 34 years at the Oshawa Museum in various capacities. She was also a director of the OHS and a member of its Museums Committee. Lois Garrity was curator at the Paipoonge/Duke Hunt Museum for 30 years. Beth Hannah was curator at museums in Brantford and North York before taking on the duties as Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Heritage Trust. Her tenure there was 23 years. She is closely followed by Kevin Thomas, who worked at Doon Pioneer Village/Ken Seiling Museum in Kitchener for 22 years.

Chris and Pat Raible, dedicated volunteers and avid supporters of the OHS, recently moved from Creemore, Ontario, relocating to Seattle to be nearer to family members. Thanks to both for their long interest in and involvement with the OHS. All the best to them in their new surroundings.

Congratulations go to Bryan and Shannon Prince of the Buxton National Historic Site in Kent County who were recently awarded the Order of Canada.

The Fashion History Museum in Cambridge has been its 20th anniversary. Negotiations continue with the City for an enhanced funding package and a renewed lease agreement. The Waterloo-Wellington Museum Cooperative is now in its 40th year. At one point, there were nearly 20 of these organizations throughout the province. Now, there are only a handful. Congratulations to members on the longevity of this group. Emily Joliffe has moved from the Billy Bishop Museum in Owen Sound to the Ken Seiling Museum in Kitchener. Kat Akerselet is the new Executive Director at the Oshawa Museum. Stephanie Conran has been hired as the Museum Manager at the Ingersoll Museum. Jean Mayo is now the curator of the Oliver-Paipoonge Heritage Centre, near Thunder Bay.

Early this summer, I was informed that the Northern Museum of History in Kirkland Lake was facing an uncertain future, and could be closed. Discussions and negotiations began in earnest in an attempt to save the site. Karen Bachman, Director of the Timmins Museum: National Exhibition Centre, has just provided me with some wonderful news: two local mining companies have come to the rescue of the Museum of Northern History, located in the iconic Sir Harry Oakes Chateau. Agnico Eagle, in partnership with Alamos Gold, have committed \$300,000 per year to help preserve the site. This three-year funding pledge will ensure that this important piece of local and provincial history remains open to the public. Plaudits to the two firms in creating a partnership with the Ontario Heritage Trust, the City of Kirkland Lake, and others to support this local history and museum resource in Kirkland Lake. Hopefully other corporate operations across the province will take similar action in their communities when the need arises!

I'm sad to report that Peter Styrmö, the second Museums Advisor to be hired by the Ontario Ministry of Culture, and who eventually became the Manager of the Museums Unit, has passed away. At the age of 96, Alan Redway, who was a great museum and heritage supporter in East York, has also left us. Alan was an alderman and Mayor of East York, an MP and cabinet minister in the Mulroney federal government, a noted local history author, and a long-time member of the East York Historical Society. Condolences to the Styrmö and Redway families.

A SHORT HISTORY OF PEELEE ISLAND & THE PEELEE ISLAND HERITAGE CENTRE

Kim Gardner, Curator, Pelee Island Heritage Centre
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Pelee Island is situated in the Western Basin of Lake Erie, Canada's southernmost lake. Just above the Canadian-American border at latitude of 41 degrees, Pelee Island is located a full 800 kilometres south of Vancouver, BC. The climate of the Lake Erie Islands Archipelago boasts the highest heat units in the country, and the longest frost-free season in Ontario.

Many factors have made the islands a place of wildlife diversity and home to a myriad of species rare to Canada. Almost one third of the vascular plant diversity of all of Ontario is represented on Middle and Pelee Islands. Carolinian Canada at its richest is found here. Rare insects, snails, mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians have come to comprise a neighbourhood of outstanding natural heritage. Glaciation left a variety of habitats for wildlife: wetlands, sand dunes, alvars (areas of limestone with a shallow overburden), and deep soils suitable to the trees of the Eastern Deciduous Forest zone. The shallow waters of Lake Erie reach relatively high temperatures in the summer months, giving the islands a microclimate typical of more southern locations, and a two-week longer growing season than the adjacent mainland.

Pelee Island is at the confluence of two migration routes – the Atlantic Flyway and the Mississippi Flyway. It is a significant stopover site for many species and is designated as a globally Important Bird Area (IBA) by the Canadian partners of BirdLife International – the Canadian Nature Federation (CNF) and Bird Studies Canada (BSC). IBAs are described as “truly outstanding sites of significance nationally or internationally and sites that are exceptionally important for birds.” Birds and waves have delivered a great variety of seeds over the years, and with the establishment of diverse plant communities have come a myriad of insects, amphibians, mammals, and more birds.

The idea of launching a museum was conceived in the autumn of 1987, when the Township Council invited suggestions for the use of recently abandoned buildings in the East Park Campground. The museum proposal was accepted and, through the generous support of the Township, the Heritage Centre was opened in the spring of 1988. In the following summer, the institution was incorporated as an independent not-for-profit organization, with its own elected Board of Directors. Ron Tiessen proposed the idea of founding a museum and thereafter became its first curator.

Here we are 26 years later, continuing to welcome visitors from around the globe. Over the years the Heritage Centre has participated in nature reserve planning with Ontario Nature, Carolinian Canada, Ontario Parks, the Essex Region Conservation Authority, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

In 2002 Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson, in partnership with the



Heritage Centre, initiated the Springsong, A Celebration of Birds and Birding event. Through this effort, hundreds of visitors were brought to Pelee Island, for birdwatching, for participation in the green Bird Race for the Botham Cup, and for the outstanding writers.

In 2007–2008, the Museum successfully established a permanent Carolinian and native tree nursery; planned and implemented an eco-bike trail network for the Island; and took the next steps in teaching young people, based on our inherited local traditions since settlement, about community and symbiosis.

In 2011–2012, the Heritage Centre launched 100 Gateways to Pelee. It is an outdoor, museum-researched, self-guided audio tour that takes you inside the local island experience. As you travel along with our map, you will enjoy fascinating stories of island history, folklore, personalities, nature, and island ways. All 97 stories were written by Ron Tiessen from information accumulated from his 25 years of research. Stories were recorded by island voices, with a wonderful surprise at the end!

Our newest exhibit, Pelee's Indigenous History, was launched May 2023. The focus of this project was to expand our current Paleo period exhibit and showcase a larger display of the many archived pieces we housed, all to create a more in-depth experience for our visitors.

Don't leave Pelee without a visit to the Heritage Centre! For further information, contact Kim Gardner or visit peleeislandmuseum.ca.

BARRY PENHALE'S ONTARIO

EXPANDED CANOE MUSEUM PROVIDES CANOE-EYE VIEW OF CANADIAN HISTORY

Barry Penhale

barry@naturalheritagebooks.com

That unmistakable symbol of Canada, the canoe (step aside, Mister Beaver and hockey) has long been a powerful source of inspiration for artists, poets, travel writers, and musicians. In greatly contrasting ways, a formidable group of contemporary Canadian artists have captured unique aspects of the canoe on their canvasses. Alex Colville, truly one of our most accomplished artists, created an artwork that remains a favourite of mine, which bears the title “Woman Carrying a Canoe.” I was introduced to Colville’s work in 1998, when I attended a McMichael Canadian Art Collection exhibit titled “In the Wilds: Canoeing and Canadian Art.” Those present for the run of the exhibition were treated to a myriad of ways many gifted Canadian artists had ingeniously integrated the canoe in their artworks. Represented in the eye-catching exhibition were paintings by a cluster of notable visual artists, including Michael Robinson, Blake Debassige, David Milne, and Gordon Rayner. Some, like Milne and Raynor, were themselves experience canoeists. Raynor’s paddling often found the artist on his favourite stretch of water, the Magnetawan River.

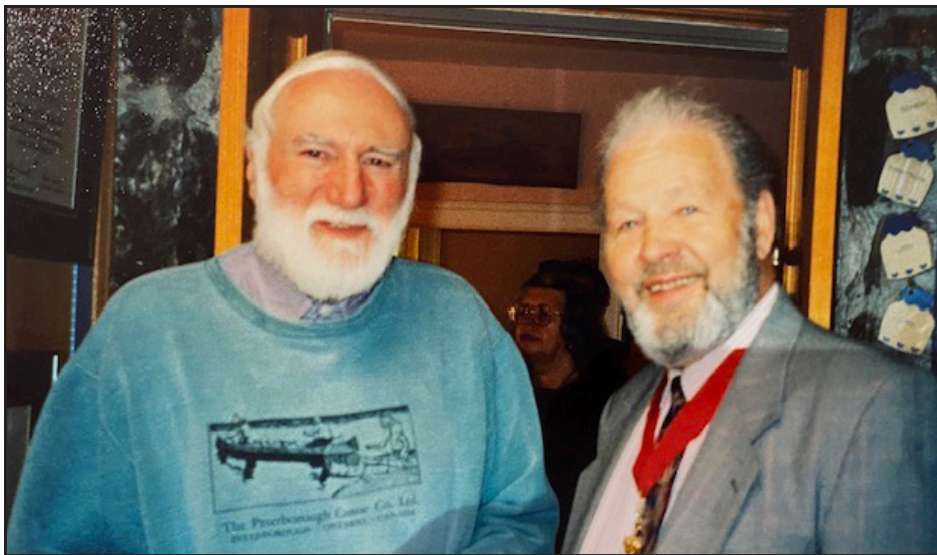


Voyageur canoe tour on Little Lake.

I would be remiss at this time if I failed to mention my admiration for a perhaps lesser-known artist, who was the Canadian Canoe Museum’s artist-in-residence at the time of our initial meeting. It was early in the museum’s existence, in a building formerly occupied by Outboard Marine, when I first encountered Neil Broadfoot and immediately discovered that he was skilled with both brush and paddle. As it later turned out, his marvellous illustrations of the time of the voyageurs were to grace the pages of a very special book by Richard Pope, a volume I was privileged to publish. The book *Superior Illusions* had two major book launches, one in Peterborough at the Canoe Museum, and the other in Thunder Bay at Old Fort William—both well attended by canoeing enthusiasts and fur trade aficionados.

With the opening of the newly located and much-expanded Canadian Canoe Museum in May, the canoe finally has the home it deserves, a world-class facility in which all Canadians may take great pride. The 20,000-square-foot Exhibition Hall offers a brand-new suite of seven major exhibits. But that is only the beginning for a museum that is anything but static, as there are countless other fascinating areas to explore. Visitors will find the canoes once paddled by such prominent Canadians as former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, singer/songwriter Gordon Lightfoot, and canoeist/filmmaker, Bill Mason. And the museum’s spacious new quarters mean it’s now possible to encounter the full collection of watercrafts, numbering upwards of six hundred canoes, kayaks, and paddle boats, many of which have come out of storage to be displayed for the first time. A huge part of this one-of-a-kind collection is due to one extraordinary collector. That remarkable individual is, of course, Kirk Wipper, a product of rural Manitoba and in his day a well-known professor of outdoor education at the University of Toronto. The powerfully built Wipper excelled as a skilled and highly competitive wrestler in university circles, and it was that particular sport plus other mutual interests that brought us together. A knowledgeable naturalist, Kirk was closely associated with children’s camping in Ontario, an inspiring counsellor who introduced countless youngsters to wild places and canoeing. For many who knew him, Wipper will be best remembered as the founder/operator of Camp Kandalore in the Haliburton region. It was during Kirk’s Kandalore years that he began to comb the country in search of watercraft, which he housed in a makeshift camp museum in rustic buildings, unfortunately lacking museum-like conditions.

Along with others, I was to witness the toll his collecting years had so obviously taken on Kirk, our very special friend, both physically and financially. We all breathed a sigh of relief when his formidable and historically important



The author (wearing a Peterborough Canoe Museum sweatshirt) appears with his friend and canoe enthusiast and collector, Kirk Wipper, in this undated photo.

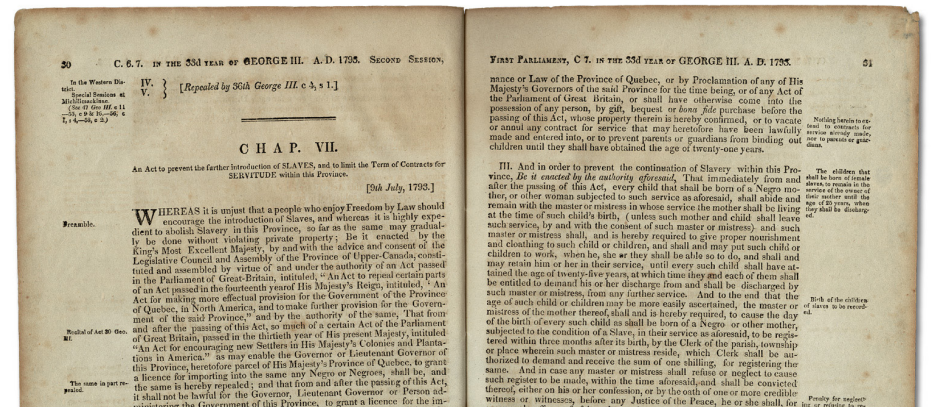
collection found a home as the show-piece that kick-started the original canoe museum. Credit is due a small group of people without whose involvement that museum likely would not have gotten off the ground. Among them are several with academic backgrounds and closely identified with Trent University. There are others, of course, but first and foremost Bruce Hodgins, John Wadland, John Jennings, and Gwyneth Hoyle need be acknowledged. Each was there from the beginning and deserves to be elevated to an honour role for their early commitment to the museum in its initial location. In particular, much overdue appreciation, I believe, should be conveyed to now-retired professor John Jennings. It was due to his endless patience and perseverance that an arrangement between Kirk Wipper and the museum came about. To many observers at the time, it was what today we would call a “win-win” situation.

And now in 2024, with the opening of the new museum that deservedly warrants national attention, a new generation of Canadians can become acquainted with many of Kirk’s treasures, now showcased in a Class A facility. A place where, as museum literature says, “You can walk in the front door and paddle out the back.” And as a bonus, visitors to the new museum’s gift shop just may find themselves seated on the Wipper Hearth. Should that be the case, I’d suggest a moment of remembrance would be in order to quietly observe the remarkable legacy of one special Canadian. And as one tours the newly purposed museum, keep in mind that Kirk Wipper’s passion for canoes can be found almost everywhere one looks – including upwards.

DR. NATASHA HENRY-DIXON DELIVERS 2024 OHS KEYNOTE



This year, Dr. Natasha Henry-Dixon delivered the keynote presentation: “The Paradox of Slavery and Freedom in 19th Century Ontario” at the 136th Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Historical Society. Natasha’s presentation explores her research on the development and maintenance of racial chattel slavery in colonial Ontario and unpacks the complexities of freedom for Black people during this time period. Her talk can now be viewed on the [OHS Youtube channel](#).



The 1793 Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada. Archives of Ontario/Statutes of Upper Canada, 3 George III, Cap. 7.

FROM THE BOOKSHELF

Dr. Cynthia Comacchio
ccomac5702@rogers.com

I'm writing this on a dark and stormy November day. November is a month of transition. Autumn flew with the leaves, and summer seems a distant memory. The weather is especially temperamental, though we can count on plenty of greyness and rain as precursors to worse. Even happy changes are seldom easy because transition inevitably involves a certain disruption.

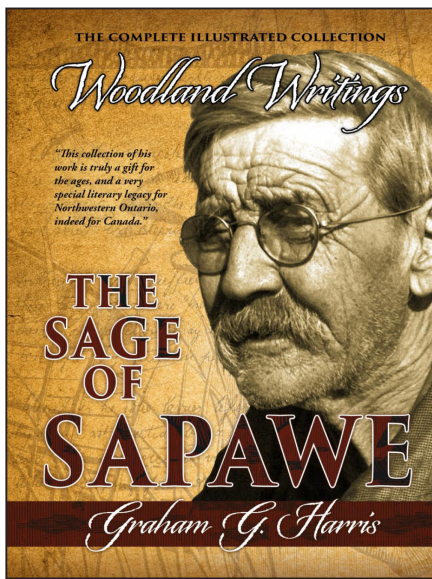
This sounds ominous, but the omens are not all so dreary. Many of you already know that there have been changes within the Ontario Historical Society, notably regarding our beloved journal, *Ontario History*. I am honoured and delighted to take up the post recently left vacant by the retirement of its long-standing editor Tory Tronrud, much as he will be missed. I met Tory when we served on the OHS board together, early in this century. When he took the journal's reins, I was very happy to serve as an editorial board member. He was ever the epitome of "the scholar and the gentleman," gently modernizing the journal. I learned much from him.

Now it's my turn to put that learning into practice. I'm pleased to have been appointed editor of *Ontario History*, though I have big footsteps to follow. That's the bright side of transition. On the other hand, I will have to relinquish this wonderful column. I have so enjoyed reading and recommending the books I received, the majority of which were local histories, self-published or produced by local historical societies. It is heartening to see how much our history matters to Ontarians, and I discovered many things I could never have known were it not for the "labours of love" that these works represent. "From the Bookshelf" will not disappear, so please continue to send your books to the OHS office. We will, however, be needing a new Editor for this column. I encourage anyone with a background in local historical authorship and publishing to reach out to the OHS about getting involved with the *Bulletin*.

So much has changed, so rapidly, where the compilation, publication, and circulation of journals is concerned. Much credit and appreciation are due not only to Tory but also to Book Review Editor Dr. Alison Norman, Ontario History Committee founder Dr. Michel S. Beaulieu, retired Executive Director Rob Leverty, current Executive Director Daniel Dishaw, and the indefatigable Sarah McCabe, Project Manager, Librarian, and wearer of countless other hats at the OHS. And, of course, the hard-working staff at the Society's headquarters in the historic John McKenzie House. I hope to live up to their example and serve our membership as efficiently and gracefully as they always have. And, of course, to my faithful From the Bookshelf readers and contributors, I thank you and I will miss you. You can always reach me at my new address: editor@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca.

And now, let's talk about books...

WOODLAND WRITINGS: THE SAGE OF SAPAWE



GRAHAM G. HARRIS

EDITED BY LOIS E. FENTON,
CURATOR, ATIKOKAN MUSEUM, ARCHIVES & HISTORICAL PARK

Atikokan Museum, 2023
<https://atikokanmuseum.com/product/the-sage-of-sapawe/>

Poet, writer, journalist, and chronicler of a proud community during its initial era of development, Graham Gale Harris (1878-1958) came to be known as "The Sage of Sapawe" in the northwestern town where he chose to live a simple life

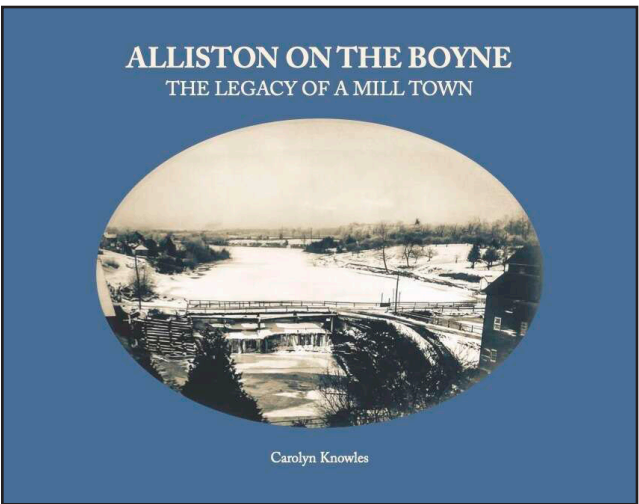
close to nature. There he put his observations to paper, drawing on an education in philosophy and literature that few pioneers could have shared, but always with a "common," though never condescending, touch that all could appreciate. He wrote essays, newspaper columns, and poetry that provide a rare, touching, and often humorous first-hand account by someone who not only knew and loved the land and its people, but also how to capture them evocatively in prose and poetry. Carefully selected and arranged by Lois Fenton, curator of the Atitokan Museum, with assistance from local historians and museum members, the resultant compilation brings together all his known writings for the first time. Fenton is to be credited with "finding" Harris, largely forgotten, despite his local standing, since his death in 1958. Even more, she and the good people associated with the project to erect a monument in his honour at his grave in Atitokan, deserve hearty endorsement for their work to uncover a vital part of Ontario history that might well have been lost but for their dedication.

Harris was born to a wealthy middle-class family in Highgate, in North London. Like many other educated young men of means, he made his way back and forth across the Atlantic several times, ultimately deciding to settle in Canada in 1905, staying awhile in Montreal, Toronto, and Fort William. After nine years in Fort William, he returned to England in 1915 and enlisted in the British Army at the age of 37. That was his last absence from Canada. When he was 50 years old, he finally settled in his beloved northwestern Ontario, in Sapawe, building himself a little cabin that would be his cherished home until his passing thirty years later. This "backstory" is itself thanks to the genealogical digging of the Museum's Pauline Tindale; little was known of his early life before now.

Judging by the number of writings republished here, which are simply his "known" writings, Gale was prolific and truly immersed himself in recording his thoughts and observations. By the 1920s, the *Port Arthur News-Chronicle* was publishing his column, "Woodland and Water," a title that reflects his passions for nature and the local environment. Considering the usual content of small-town newspapers of the time, which are mostly given over to brief, concise, reports of human events, his articles must have found an interested audience or the necessarily penny-pinching editors would not have featured them for so long. He wrote for the *Fort William Daily Times-Journal* during the Depression, chronicling its impact on northwestern Ontario as only an "insider" could. After the Second World War, while continuing to write poetry and essays for other venues, Harris made regular contributions to the *Atitokan Progress*, "Sapawe Jottings," and it was the donation of these issues to the museum that first sparked a genuine personal interest in Lois Fenton, persuading her to keep looking through regional archives and obscure publications, and to contact people who worked with him or otherwise knew him for their oral histories. The consensus seems to be that he was "unconventional" and "a character" among those who knew him personally.

Despite this later column's headline title, Harris at this time moved beyond his local focus to offer his perspectives on major historic events around the world. Although everything about Harris's personal history suggests that he would always have been interested in "the outside," I wonder if his larger purview is simply a sign of the times. The 1950s saw the Americanization of Canadian media, print and broadcast, especially with the advent of TV. Still, he never lost sight of what mattered most to him: his community, its Indigenous origins and white settlement, its environment built and natural, and its residents human and animal. This book is a remarkable find for all interested in the society and culture of northwestern Ontario as well as its literature and press during the early 20th century. As noted, proceeds from sales will support the building of a deserved memorial to mark his final resting place.

ALLISTON ON THE BOYNE: THE LEGACY OF A MILL TOWN



CAROLYN KNOWLES

The Alliston Historical Society, 2023
<https://allistonhistorybook.ca/purchase>

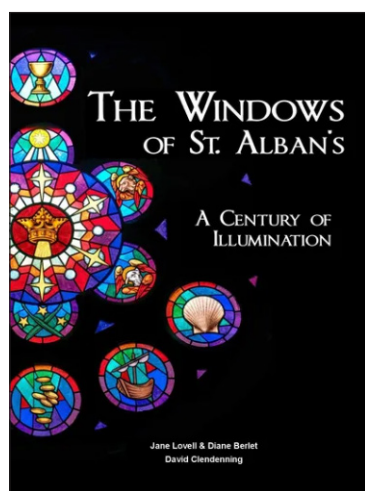
One of the founding members of the Alliston Historical Society (1991), Carolyn Knowles is very well-versed in the town's history. The AHS, in fact, was established the same year that saw the amalgamation of Alliston with neighbouring Beeton, Tottenham, and Tecumseth into the present-day town of New Tecumseh, and this lovely book traces the town's history from its pre-

'FROM THE BOOKSHELF' CONTINUED ON PAGE 8...

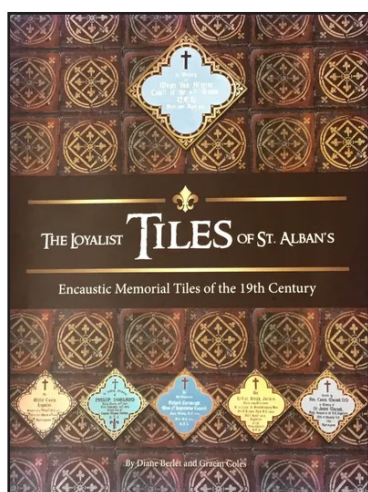
Confederation beginnings in 1847 to that date. The Society’s members were committed to writing its history from the beginning, to preserve its memory as its own separate town for a century and a half before the amalgamation. Because historical research and writing, especially for those with day jobs, is an extensive undertaking, it was not until 2008 that Knowles, then retired, was able to really immerse herself in the project. Her relatives were among the first settlers, and she has herself resided in the town for some seventy years.

The author’s immersion in archives, private collections, and publications of all sorts is evident in more than 300 pages of richly detailed and illustrated local history. Her use of local newspapers is especially impressive; they are an important source, especially for small towns with small archival collections, but their reading is slow and tedious. The town at least was blessed with its own newspaper as of 1862, first *The Alliston Star* and then, starting in 1910, *The Alliston Herald*, which took her to 1991. Not surprisingly, since it was conceived as a mill town, the mill gets its own chapter. Built by the town’s founder, William Fletcher in 1853, it was not reconstructed after it burned to the ground in 1911. But it still figures very strongly, signifying the town’s ambitious beginnings and its connection to its history. There are excellent discussions of local churches, schools, bridges of various sizes—all important to cross the Boyne River, especially once the hospital was built on the other side in 1928—and the impact of two world wars. Few pages are not graced with one or two photographs depicting local people, places, events, newspaper announcements and advertisements. The book is also thoroughly and professionally referenced and indexed, which will encourage those who wish to pursue historical “leads.” How fortunate for Alliston that one of its most dedicated residents and history society members should also be a fine writer and chronicler!

***THE WINDOWS OF ST.
ALBAN: A CENTURY OF
ILLUMINATION***



***THE LOYALIST TILES OF ST.
ALBAN’S: ENCAUSTIC
MEMORIAL TILES OF THE
19TH CENTURY***



AUTHORS: JANE LOVELL & DIANE BERLET

PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID CLENNENING & GRAEM COLES

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

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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 \$36.75 per year; member organizations, institutions and non-member individuals for \$47.25; and to non-

member organizations and institutions for \$57.75.

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Hume Media, 2023

<https://stalbanscentre.ca/membership/ols/products/>

These beautiful books were published with support from the Adolphustown-Fredericksburgh Heritage Society and the Friends of St. Alban’s, both OHS members. All proceeds from book sales will be put toward preserving the Church. They are worth reading for the illustrations alone. The colour plates of both windows and tiles are reproduced in their entirety, allowing the best possible experience short of being there to see them in person. I have no doubt anyone who looks at them will be tempted, as I was, to make a trip to see the magnificent St. Alban the Martyr United Empire Loyalist Memorial Church. Its historical significance is captured in its name alone, but its particular artistic and architectural design are an enormous part of that.

The authors briefly outline the history of the structure itself before delving into the history, design, and meaning of its 21 memorial stained-glass windows and, in the second book, meant as a detailed follow-up to the first, its 64 rare Minton encaustic tiles. Situated in Adolphustown, the Gothic Revival limestone church was designed by Joseph Power and Son and built in 1884 to commemorate the centennial of the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists to take up the lands they were allotted. The original idea was to honour those 21 settlers with individual windows, but only five had been installed when it opened. As a result, there is a fascinating mixture of styles in their rendering.

The remaining 16 windows were fitted over the next 12 decades. Although they complement each other, as the designers would have been mindful to do, they nonetheless have traits reflecting their own time. The 90-plus exquisite colour photographs, mostly by architectural photographer David Clendenning, are good enough reason to bury yourself in this book, but the authors strove to make this more than just a photo book. They also discuss the techniques used to make them, their imagery and symbolism, and the people and families they are meant to memorialize.

The second book is both an excellent stand-alone history and a corollary to the windows story. St. Alban’s was an ambitious undertaking for a small community, and its leaders decided to raise funds by offering for sale to descendants the individual encaustic tiles honouring their Loyalist forbears. In this way, both ancestors and descendants were being commemorated. The ordering and making of the tiles are described, and, once again, the photography is stunning. There are also brief accompanying biographical sketches for each tile might well nudge some to do further genealogical exploration. The tiles ultimately formed a frieze that is a Victorian-era visual history of the lives of the first Loyalist arrivals in the Quinte area, but, interestingly, they do not all commemorate Loyalists, and some of the Loyalists were not attached to Quinte. Some actually include later arrivals, and some are dedicated to other, non-Loyalist, settlers. This just adds to the wonder of it!

**MCKENZIE FAMILY DONATION TO THE OHS
AT JOHN MCKENZIE HOUSE**



OHS Membership Coordinator Heather Anderson (left) and Crystal Mulock (right), great-granddaughter of John McKenzie, are pictured above with the dining table and chairs that belonged to the McKenzie family, purchased from the 1911 Eaton’s catalogue to furnish the new home (completed in 1913). Crystal visited OHS staff at the John McKenzie House in October. Staff and community members were thrilled to receive the family’s most recent donation to Society: this set of six dining chairs to accompany the matching dining room table originally donated to the OHS by the family when the Society finished the restoration of the John McKenzie House in 1994. Heather and Crystal are both leaning on the head chair, affectionately referred to by the family as “Grandpa’s Chair.”