

NEWS and views

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Visit our Website

www.simcoecountyhistory.ca



**Simcoe County Historical
Association**

*Preserving the Past,
in the Present,
for the Future.*

Welcome to our "New Look" for News and Views

Thanks to our grant last year from The Ontario Trillium Foundation, and a little QuarkXPress training for our editor, we are trying a new style for *News and Views* this month. This is a work-in-progress, and your patience and constructive criticism are appreciated! Please let us know what you think with an e-mail to mark.jill@sympatico.ca or by dropping us a note at Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M 4S9. Keep watching for changes that we hope will be improvements in the issues to come!

*With thanks to
The Ontario Trillium Foundation
for their financial support.*

Dan Needles is Coming!

We have an exciting development for the SCHA Annual General Meeting. This year, our guest speaker for the evening will be Dan Needles, famous author of the five Wingfield Farms books. Mr. Needles is the recipient of the 2003 Leacock Medal for Humour for his most recent work, *With Axe and Flask: The History of Persephone Township from Pre-Cambrian Times to the Present*. For more information on Mr. Needles, visit www.wingfieldfarm.ca. Ask Santa for a copy of one of his works for Christmas!

The Annual General Meeting will take place on May 18th at the Bell Farm Road Banquet Hall, Barrie. Ticket information will be provided in the March issue of *News and Views*.

SCHA Programme Schedule 2003-2004

*Unless otherwise noted,
all events begin at 8:00 p.m.*

January 20, 2004

Dr. Conrad Heidenreich:
Huron Agriculture – an experiment
at replication *at the Parkview
Centre Barrie*

February 17, 2004 – Heritage Day

The War of 1812 *at the
Penetanguishene Centennial
Museum and Archives*
Start time 10 a.m.

March 16, 2004

Show and Tell *at the Simcoe
County Museum*

April 20, 2004

Christina Elliott: Simcoe County
Heroes Project *at the Simcoe
County Museum*

**May 18, 2004 – Annual General
Meeting** with Dan Needles of
Wingfield Farm fame *at the Bell
Farm Road Banquet Hall*

Plan to attend our 2004 Heritage Day Event

This year, our annual Heritage Week celebration will take place on Tuesday, February 17, 2004 at the Penetanguishene Centennial Museum and Archives, located at 13 Burke Street (at Beck Boulevard) in Penetanguishene. The theme for the day is The War of 1812, and we cannot imagine a better venue for the festivities! The day will begin at 10 a.m. and features lectures, a luncheon, and a museum tour. Carpooling can be arranged by calling 726-7380.

President's Message

Recently, my wife and I enjoyed a public reading of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. As part of the evening's very fine entertainment, the gentlemen of Barrie's Parkview Singers gave a rousing version of "Jingle Bells". As I listened from the gallery of Collier Street United Church, it dawned on me that this group of active seniors may very well be the last to have taken "a ride in a one-horse open sleigh." For them, sleigh bells are more than the lovely decorations so outrageously priced in today's antique stores.

It is easy to romanticize the past. Time has a way of wearing down the rough spots and filling in the potholes. Still, as a child of the automobile age, I often wonder about that subtle and unique work-a-day partnership between man and horse. What was it really like? After this generation has passed, who will be able to tell us – really?

As SCHA moves forward in the development of *News and Views*, we find ourselves with opportunity to publish new features. I think it would be fitting to publish a series of letters of reminiscences. At first, these might be focused on a seasonal theme. The next issue of *News & Views* will be published in March 2004. How about some recollections centering on "Spring on The Farm"? Do you have a fond memory or favourite story? Please share it with our editor, Jill Hynes.

I can think of no better way for our members to help preserve the past, in the present, for the future. On behalf of your board of directors, I wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Simcoe County Historical Association Executive

Brad Rudachyk, President	726-7380	dbsheritage@msn.com
Christina Elliott, Vice President	733-7740	celliott@innisfil.library.on.ca
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Ellen Millar, Recording Secretary	726-9331	emillar@county.simcoe.on.ca

For Membership Information, contact

Bill Packham, Membership Chair	739-0906	wpackham2795@rogers.com
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Does your society have an active correspondent who can provide reports on your activities? Would anyone like to be published? Could you provide us with a book review?

Historical groups are invited to submit photos and articles regarding your significant event. Imagine your society on the cover! Photos will be returned.

Deadline for the next issue is March 1, 2004.

Young Historians' Adventures in Simcoe County

Where Amy Went

N&V: Where did you go this fall for a fun time?

Amy: My mom and grandparents took me, with my sister, to the Simcoe County Museum for the Quilt and Craft Show in September. (Located on Highway 26, Midhurst)

N&V: What did you do there?

Amy: We looked at the whole Museum – all the great displays and lots of craft people with their quilts and toys and clothes. I loved the Native display with the canoe and all the skins hanging up in the tent. There were some beautiful quilts in the room at the back. I got to vote on my favourite one that looked like Cinderella's castle. It had such pretty colours.

N&V: How was the Craft Fair?

Amy: It was great. There were lots of things I wanted including a teddy bear and a neat apple that you could put things in. Mommy bought me a flannel nightie with lots of bugs all over it. We saw a lady who made beautiful dresses for babies and bigger girls. Laura and I want one each for Grandma and Grandpa's 50th anniversary next year.

N&V: What was the best part of your adventure?

Amy: There was an old fashioned games area outside the school they have. Grandpa showed me how to play with the hoop and stick. He is really good at it. He said it took him back to his days on Bond Street in Orillia before there was pavement. We also did a pine cone toss, and I made a nice bookmark in the schoolhouse.

N&V: What was the worst part of your day?

Amy: It wasn't really a worst. Grandma bought me a quilted Christmas dolly, but then I wanted a ring on the way out. Mommy said no cause I was spoiled enough. I cried and Gloria the museum lady laughed a little bit. (Amy had a slight case of the 'gimmes')

Amy hopes that everyone will take time to visit the Simcoe County Museum this Christmas season. She will have her next adventure at the Orillia Museum of Art and History some time she is in Orillia this winter.

This is a column featuring an interview with the editor's five-year old daughter who enjoys adventures at the museums of Simcoe County.

A Report from The Fort

By Doug Hamilton

History is alive and well here at Fort Willow. Students from the Harriet Todd Elementary School of Orillia paid a visit with a purpose. Their originally scripted presentation involved about 20 costumed performers, and they even brought their own audience by filling up the three school buses that brought them.

Among those present were members of the Fort Willow Improvement Group, representatives from the Simcoe County Museum, School Board officials, the Springwater Council, the Midhurst Historical Society, teachers, parents, and the staff of Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority.

The concise presentation involved the outing of a modern day family at Fort Willow; they encounter visions, punctuated by drum rolls and flute music, with aboriginals, courier de bois, missionaries, military forces, settlers, and finally members of the Fort Willow

Improvement Group. The theme that tied it all together was each group's differing perception of the real treasure or value of this site, which ultimately changed the family's perceptions.



This was an unforgettable experience. It was great to see so many live bodies present with a common purpose at the Fort. The teachers who inspired this deserve our appreciation. The Fort Willow Improvement Group who have restored this site should be congratulated. This is truly a lasting treasure trove of a site.



The participants and the audience all had a valuable and indelible learning experience. The preparation and participation will leave positive impressions that may well last forever.

Doug Hamilton is the Immediate Past President of the SCHA and a big fan of Fort Willow. The SCHA is proud to support the great work of preservation and education that takes place there.

SCHA Programme Highlights



October Meeting

The October meeting of the SCHA took place at the Simcoe County Museum. We enjoyed Charles Cooper who gave a slide presentation marking the sesquicentennial of the Ontario, Simcoe, and Huron Railroad Union Company, later known as the Northern Railway. Passenger service began in Barrie on November 11, 1853. Charles' wonderful collection of photos was expertly complimented by his broad knowledge and keen interest in railroading.

November Meeting

It is not often that we get to see history in the making. However, that is exactly what happened when Wendy Loevenmark and Bernie Longson gave an audio-visual presentation on the progress made by the Nine Mile Portage Working Group on November 18th at Simcoe County Museum.

According to the working group's vision statement: "The Nine Mile Portage Heritage Trail will be a vehicle of connection, past with present, water with land, urban with rural, recreation with discovery." Currently, the project is well into Phase II of an ambitious three-phase plan that looks to develop an off-road trail approximating as closely as possible the ancient Nine Mile Portage, running from the shores of Kempenfelt Bay to Willow Creek. In the meantime, the Nine Mile Portage Working Group protects the historical integrity of the Nine Mile Portage, generates revenues for trail research, construction, management and promotion, and promotes partnerships and public involvement in developing and linking of a recreational/historical trail to an established trail system.

Many look forward to retracing the steps of First Nations, French missionaries, fur traders, British soldiers and explorers, and pioneering settlers over the Nine Mile Portage Heritage Trail.



A Great Museum

by Bill Packham

The Barrie Historical Association took a group for a tour of the Base Borden Military Museum on November 20. The first stop was at the Aircraft Museum display in Hangar 11, where we were met by Major Jean Maurice Pigeon, 16 Wing CFB Borden Heritage Officer. He had a presentation in the theatre in the hangar, showing and describing the origin and history of Base Borden. The original base, which included 17 hangars plus support buildings and runways, was constructed in less than four months in the spring of 1917. The roof trusses are very impressive, and were raised into position by manual labour, not a crane. The theatre seats are from a retired Airforce Boeing 707 jet that had been used to ferry troops between Canada and Germany.



We then had time to roam around the building to view the many photo displays showing the history of Base Borden, and examine the vintage aircraft that are on display, which include a 1920's AVRO 504K biplane (above), a WWII vintage DeHavilland DH 82 Tiger Moth biplane basic trainer (next column), a Canadair CT-114 Tutor jet trainer in 1967 Golden Centennaire colours, a Canadair (Lockheed) T-33 (T-Bird) Silverstar advanced jet trainer from the '50's and '60's, a Link Trainer (the earliest form of flight simulator) from WW II, and numerous other interesting items.

From there we went to the main museum building which has displays of uniforms, models of transport and armoured vehicles, medals, and other items too numerous to mention. There is also a Vehicle Annex that we did not have time to visit, and numerous tanks and planes in outdoor displays throughout the base.



This was a very interesting and informative evening. Plan a visit with your whole family soon. Please call (705) 423-3531 for more information.

From The Mailbag

By Michael Millar, FRPSC

When the late Larry Whitby and I compiled our list of Post Offices in 1967, we were aware of the supposed existence of the Elsie and Engeddi offices from the writings of the late Max Rosenthal. The best that Max could do for a location for Elsie was that it was in Medonte Township and for Engeddi that it was the first name for Glencairn. Larry and I had some very serious doubts as to the veracity of the latter, except that it was listed in the Annual Report of the Post Master General for 1855, and no information as to the former. No examples of mail from either office have been reported to date (2003).

We think that Max must have arrived at the Engeddi conclusion from David Williams' "The Origin of the Names of the Post Offices of Simcoe County" published in the *Papers and Records* of the Ontario Historical Society in 1906. On page 25, Williams, in the section dealing with Glencairn, relates that Marshall Stephens, when he settled in what became the Glencairn village site, found that the area was known locally as "the hog's back" and, disliking that appellation, renamed it Engeddi.

While Williams was writing in 1906, or earlier, latter day historians now know that much of the information contained in his writings was inaccurate. The doyen of Simcoe County historians, Andrew Hunter, in his seminal work *A History of Simcoe County*, published in 1909, has no reference to

Engeddi in the section dealing with Tosorontio Township, let alone as its being the first name for Glencairn. Engeddi was established in October 1854, Glencairn ten and a half years later with Marshall Stephens as Post Master.

As an aside it is interesting to note that almost 140 years later, the Post Office is still in the hands of the Stephens family. It is my opinion that while Engeddi may have existed on paper, it never did open.

Neither Williams nor Hunter make any reference to Elsie. I note from Bob Smith's list that the other four Elsie offices were in Minden Township, Haliburton County and that the period between Elsie (1) – Medonte – closing and Elsie (2) – Minden – opening is one year and three months. This suggests to me a connection between the two. I wonder if a clerk in Post Office headquarters in Ottawa made a mistake and put down Medonte instead of Minden for the location of this office. Some more research is required, but at the moment – and after consulting with the holder of the largest collection of Simcoe County postal history material – I don't feel that this office ever opened, or at least if it did it wasn't in this county.

Mr. Millar kindly agreed to provide this information to one of the SCHAs correspondents who was seeking a greater understanding of the post offices of our county. We are grateful for the assistance of our local scholars on questions such as these.

What's on Top Matters

by Helen Yielding

It was a “hair affair – 19th Century style” with great style and flair at the October meeting of the Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Historical Society. Wendy Gale, dressed in period clothing and modeling a matching hairdo with an appropriate bonnet, let her audience in on the beauty secrets of our forebears. Wendy is program coordinator at the South Simcoe Pioneer Museum and an interpreter at Black Creek Pioneer Village.

In the Victorian era, the adornment of one's head was a fashion statement, an item of hygiene, and a measure of one's social status. Women's bonnets were designed to frame and flatter the face while house caps and nightcaps kept hair and furnishings clean. A sunbonnet belied lowly outdoor labour while a veiled bonnet denoted a stage in mourning. For men, top hats and smoking caps fulfilled the same purposes. From birth to death, from work to play, the head was covered.

Hair care, itself, was rather different from our modern times. Infrequent washing, regular brushing, and the application of macassar oil for shiny hair was the regular regimen. The latest hairstyles were advertised in fashion magazines such as Godey's Ladies Book and followed with eagerness everywhere. Wendy displayed curling irons, hair combs and hair pieces that were used to achieve the current styles. Of course, changes in hair fashions demanded changes in bonnet styles and many a frugal housewife would re-fashion her old bonnet to conform to the new look. Samples of headgear from knitted bonnets to feathered hats and infant caps illustrated Wendy's presentation.

All in all this presentation of bonnets and hair care as symbols of vanity, practicality, and status was delightful. Thank you Wendy!

Local Presbyterian Churches – A History

by Helen Yielding

Donald McGugan is the author of a book entitled *We Must Tell the Stories* on the history of the Presbyterian churches in West Gwillimbury. He was a charming and informative speaker at the September meeting of the Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Historical Society.

He told his audience how Scottish settlers fled the Highland clearances of Scotland and then, after the failure of the Red River settlement, moved to the highlands of West Gwillimbury in the 1820s. This “Scotch Settlement” prospered and one of their first acts was to build a place of worship now known as the Auld Kirk which recently celebrated its 180th anniversary of Presbyterian ministry.

Mr. McGugan then traced the relationship of local church history to the major social and political events of the following century. For example, a major schism in church doctrine in Scotland resulted in a division here in this new settlement. He told an amusing account of some Presbyterian members of the Bradford Battalion who set off to thwart the Fenian raiders in 1866. Fortunately, the raid was over before the soldiers arrived.

Later, the nation-wide issue of church union in 1925 resulted in great discussion and some dissent. An account of the diminishing salary of a minister throughout the depression spoke to the hardships faced by churches and their members during those years. And, with the advent of the automobile and changes in farm settlements, some of the longstanding churches were forced to consolidate.

As for the future, Mr. McGugan noted that the a new Presbyterian church, now under construction in Bradford, will soon open its doors. He wryly noted that the new building will cost \$1.5 million. Compare that to \$1000 cost of the Auld Kirk, built in 1823 and paid for before opening its doors. There will be many new stories to come, many new stories that must be told.

ORILLIA MUSEUM OF ART & HISTORY

The Sir John A. Macdonald Dinner

Guest Speaker

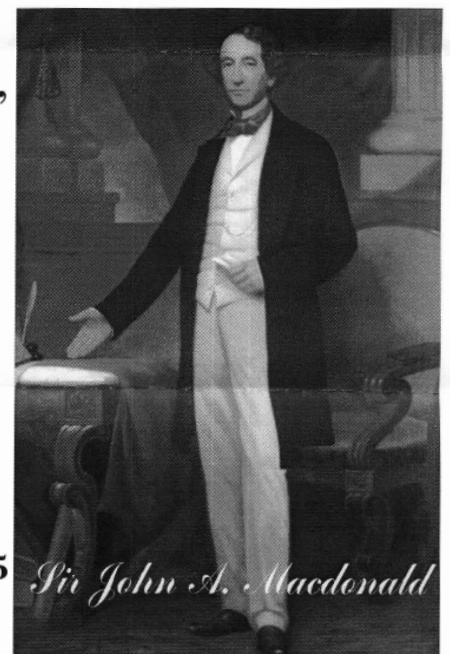
The Honourable Clyde Wells,

Chief Justice of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

Saturday -
January 10th,
2004

the
Travelodge
Hotel
(The Sundial)

For Tickets
Call
Al
Hutchings
705-326-4305



Sir John A. Macdonald

Medonte: A Township Remembered

is fresh off the press. After many years of research the 600 page book is now available. It contains more than 675 photos, 25 maps and 12 illustrations. There are numerous stories and anecdotes, some tragic.

"Medonte has such an interesting history," commented Mary Garbutt, the compiler of the book. "It had a thriving lumbering industry which gave way to agriculture. The overall dynamic has changed significantly over the years, and the book attempts to re-create an image of what once was." The main focus on the book is Medonte/Coldwater history to about 1910.

"Many families were linked by marriage," Garbutt continued. "Wherever the data was available, the book shows how the 225 families were related."

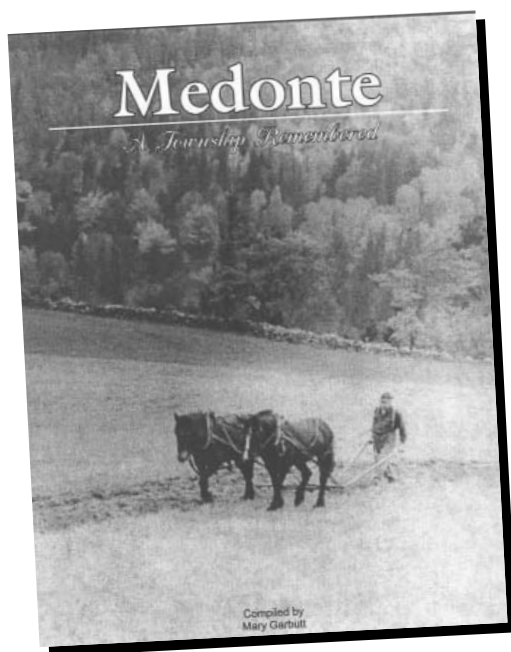
"The stories and anecdotes are universal in that although they are based in Medonte they vividly outline the challenges and tragedies that faced the early settlers in Canada. All who are interested in what life was like in our area 150 years ago will find them fascinating," commented Tim Crawford, the book's editor.

The liberal number of photos, maps and illustrations – over 700 in – all are a major feature. "It is fascinating to look at the photos to see the interesting faces. In addition the background of the photos shows old mills, old cars, horses, carts, etc. They provide clues as to what life was like back then," Mrs. Garbutt observed.

"It is difficult to present on paper complex family trees," stated Crawford. "We outlined the Medonte and Coldwater families in as simple a format as we could," he continued, "cross referencing wherever possible using about 340 links." In addition, the book has an extensive index with over 3,000 entries.

"We thought it important to include the First Nation's history, lumbering, and agriculture. In addition, there was an extensive railway system that once travelled through Medonte and Coldwater," he explained.

"Sketches have been made of the various rail road station complexes that existed. In addition, there are sketches of each village, showing them as they once were. These were compiled based on the memories of very senior persons. Had this not been done now, in another 10 years the layouts would have been lost forever," cautioned Crawford.



The genealogical data was compiled using a popular software program. Over 11,000 names have now been entered into the "Medonte database." The software enabled us to better link and cross reference the various families," explained Crawford.

The editor and the history committee vice-chairperson, Jadeen Henderson visited many homes in Medonte photographing selected snapshots from family photo albums. "We have compiled a photo archive of Medonte of over 1,000 images," commented Mrs. Henderson. "The book, the database and the photo archive will be available for future researchers."

Not all the names have been reproduced in the book, however. Branches of Medonte families that moved elsewhere could not possibly be included – the book is quite extensive as it is.

"The book could not have been written if it were not for the help of many people, Garbutt advised. "Members of families submitted family information and photos. A few contributors provided extensive information, supplying information on a number of families, and of the community or village in which they lived."

"I don't consider myself the author," she continued, "but the compiler. Certainly I did my share of research, but many others supplied extensive amounts of material," she concluded.

"The timing of the book launch is significant," commented Crawford, "the book will make a great Christmas present for Grandmother, or a keepsake for a grandchild, or a cousin out west or in the U.S. And people with roots in other townships will find the stories will still resonate."

The book is underwritten by the Oro-Medonte Council, on a cost recovery basis. It is the sixth book produced by the Oro-Medonte History Committee. Other books written by that committee are: *Old Knox Church*, *The Story of Oro*, *Kith 'N Kin* (now out of print), *The Hills of Oro and Other Pioneer Landmarks*, and *The Oro African Church*.

The book is available after December 10 for about \$39*, in Barrie at North County Books and Chapters; in Orillia at Manticore Books; in Coldwater at Home Hardware, in Midland at the Huronia Museum, the Simcoe County Museum and at the administrative office of Oro-Medonte Township on the 7th line (near the new Trinity Church).

* By the publication deadline the price had not yet been established by Council. This will be done when the final costs have been compiled.

C O M I N G E V E N T S of our Member Societies

Midhurst Historical Society contact Alice Mitchell

Meet at Library on Finlay Mill Road,
Midhurst - 7:30 p.m. - 726-7363

Genealogical Society contact Claudia McArthur

Meet at Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-Day Saints

79 Ferris Lane, Barrie - 2 p.m.

Jan. 10 - Great Moments in Your
Genealogy

Feb. 7 - Mike Dunk - Using a
Digital Camera in Genealogy

Mar. 6 - Jane McNamara - Getting
the Most Out of Your LDS Centre

Simcoe County Museum

1151 Highway 26, Midhurst
- call 728-3721 for information

Huronia Museum Huron Ouendat Village contact Jamie Hunter, curator

549 Little Lake Park Road, Midland
- call 526-2844 for information

Dec. 6 - Jan. 6 - Juried Art Show

Orillia Museum of Art and History contact Ross Wallace

Meet at St. Paul's United Church,
Peter St. and Coldwater Rd.,
Orillia - 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 10 - Sir John A. Macdonald
Dinner - see ad on page 5

Jan. 21 - Bob Brown - Phelps
Family and Foundry Innovations

Feb. 18 - Werner Jacobsen - HRC
Past and Present

Mar. 17 - Dave Town - History of
the Local YMCA

Barrie Historical Association contact Val Brucker

Meet at City Hall, Barrie - 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 8 - TBA

Mar. 1 - Alladin Banquet Hall -
Annual General Meeting

Tecumseth & West Gwillimbury Historical Society contact Helen Yielding

Call (905) 775-7144 or
(905) 936-3659 for information
Meet at Tec We Gwill Hall
Newton Robinson, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 19 - Show and Tell

Innisfil Historical Society contact Ross Wallace

Meet at Knock Community Centre,
10th Sideroad at 9th Line, Innisfil
Jan. 17 - TBA

**The
New Year
is
coming!**

It's time to renew your membership with the



**Simcoe County Historical
Association**

for the year 2004

**Please use the form provided
on the reverse of this page
and send it to our address at
Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M 4S9
Att: Membership**

**Thank you
for your continued support and interest
in our activities**

The Andrew Hunter Prize 2004



The Andrew Hunter Prize is awarded annually for the best essay on the history of Simcoe County, Ontario written in a course by an undergraduate student in any university. We look forward to receiving many worthy entries.

Conditions: Entries must be undergraduate essays between 3000 and 5000 words in length on some aspect of the history of Simcoe County, Ontario written in English or French. The author must be a part-time or a full-time undergraduate student in a degree program at an accredited university or college. The essay must have been written to meet the requirement of an undergraduate credit course during the 2003-2004 academic year.

Submissions: Entries shall be submitted no later than March 31, 2004 and will not be returned to the contestants. Essays must be typed in Times New Roman 12 point font, double spaced, and should not bear the instructor's comments or grade. Two copies must be provided. A cover sheet must list the author's name, address, phone number, status, school affiliation and department, and the name of the instructor for whom the paper was written.

Entries should be sent to:

The Correspondence Secretary,
Simcoe County Historical Association,
Box 144,
Barrie, ON L4M 4S9.

Adjudication: Entries will be judged by a distinguished panel appointed by the Simcoe County Historical Association. The winners will be announced in early May with the presentation of the prizes to be made at the Annual General Meeting.

Prize: There will be two prizes awarded, one for \$750 and one for \$250, in Canadian funds. The Simcoe County Historical Association may edit the winning entries for the purpose of publication. The Simcoe County Historical Association is under no obligation to award a prize.



Membership Application/Renewal Form for 2004

Mail to: SCHA, Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M 4S9

Mr. Mrs. Mr. & Mrs. Miss Ms. (Circle one)

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code: _____ Tel: _____

E-mail: _____

Individual/Institution: \$ 10.00

Couple or Family: \$ 12.00

Donation: \$ _____

Total Received: \$ _____

For Association use only - Card Issued () Computer Updated ()



**Simcoe County Historical
Association**

* A tax receipt will be issued for a DONATION of \$10.00 or more. Charitable Organization Registration No. 875683963