

NEWS and views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association

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

June 4th Waubashene Plaque Unveiling

The SCHA was pleased to partner with Paul Delaney and his hardworking heritage committee in the erection of the Christ Church Waubashene Memorial Church plaque. After many months of planning, the entire group enjoyed a day of history, memory and celebration.



Below:
Vintage dress and vehicles were welcome at the 125th Anniversary celebration at Christ Church, Waubashene

Above, left to right: Emma Fleury, Dr. Brad Rudachyk, Jim Curtis, Bev Jones, and David Fleury provided a grand flourish for the unveiling of the new, beautifully mounted plaque



Left: Paul Delaney, David Fleury, and Barbara Thiffault posed for a moment during the big day for the beloved church

Many thanks to Sanderson Monument Company of Orillia for their beautiful work in casting the plaque.

President's Message

On June 4th, it was my pleasure and privilege to extend greetings on behalf of Simcoe County Historical Association at the unveiling of an historical plaque at Christ Church/Waubauskene Memorial Church. Congratulations to the congregation as it marks 125 years of enduring Christian witness in their lovingly cared for heritage church. Congratulations, also, to Paul Delaney and his hard-working committee for a most enjoyable day. Your Association assisted in making our County's newest historical plaque a reality. We have a modest budget for installing historical plaques and it has been some time since we were able to help unveil one. Thanks to Brian Baker, Ellen Millar and Jill Hynes for their efforts in this important area of our work. Thinking about erecting a plaque? Please contact us.

Once again this year, your Association has been pleased to award the Andrew Hunter Essay Prize. Congratulations to our winner, Virginia Morrow. Last year, Virginia was our runner-up.

As well, this year's Historical Heritage Fair at Simcoe County Museum was a striking success. SCHA financially supports the Heritage Fair, and director Pat Elliott keeps us well informed. Once again, well done, Pat.

As SCHA continues working to fulfill its mandate in Simcoe County, it has become more and more apparent that more hands are needed. Does your heritage organization or institution have representation on our Board of Directors? We would be pleased to have your representative join us. Do you have

some spare moments that you could share with us as a volunteer? The commitment need not be an onerous one. Just knowing that we have members that we can call upon from time to time would be wonderful. Again, if you are interested, please contact us.

Plaques, essay contests, history fairs, meetings, newsletters, community partnerships: Simcoe County Historical Association plays a part in them all. Why not consider taking an active role in helping us "*Preserving the Past, In the Present, For the Future?*"

2006 Andrew Hunter Prize Recipient

From left to right:
Jill Hynes, SCHA
Andrew Hunter Prize
judge; Virginia
Morrow, 2006 winner;
Dr. Dan Byers,
Laurentian University
at Georgian; Dr. Marty
Wood, Laurentian
University at
Georgian; Kate
Morris, 2005 winner.



Happy Birthday Base Borden: 90 years young on July 11th!

The Base celebrated on the weekend of June 24-25 with their Armed Forces Day and Air Show. Watch for an exciting article next issue not only about the Base, but also the 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, by our own Bill Packham.

Simcoe County Historical Association Executive

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You are invited to submit photos and articles regarding your historical happenings in Simcoe County. Photos will be returned. Mail to SCHA, Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M 4S9.

**Deadline for the
next issue is
August 25, 2006**

The Village of Waubaushene 1871-1925

An Address to the Waubaushene Memorial Church, June 4, 2006

by Dr. Jim Angus

About 20 years ago, I started to research the history of the Georgian Bay Lumber Company. I soon discovered that there were people living in the area, and further afield, who were active during the heyday of the company's operations. There was Billy St. Amand. Billy had actually worked in the Port Severn mill as a boy of 14 years. He was there when that mill burned in August, 1896. There was Vic Conner who had worked in the Waubaushene mill and in some of the lumber camps during World War I. There was Clarence Russell whose grandfather and father had managed the company's stores. Clarence, too, had worked in the stores and had eventually taken them over. There was Frances Bettes Ritchie whose mother had operated the boarding house in Waubaushene. Frances had worked for a time as a stenographer for the company. There was Bob Thiffault, the greatest help of all. There were several more who came forward and volunteered information, mainly reminiscences of their own or their parents.

Nostalgia produced many myths and legends but few facts, so I was soon able to resurrect the soul of this once great institution but little of its corpus. Tedious digging in archives, libraries, and government papers gradually produced the facts out of which the skeleton of the company emerged. That terminated in the book *A Deo Victoria: The History of the Georgian Bay Lumber Company*. However interesting the technical-commercial achievements of the collection of sawmills that comprised the Georgian Bay Lumber Co., I shall

devote my brief talk to the social history of the village. I shall try to give you an idea of what life was like here when this church was built. It was the man, Theodore Buck, to whom this church was dedicated that set the standards of citizenship for Waubaushene and the other company villages.

At the time of Buck's death, Waubaushene had a population of about 500 inhabitants. There were two boarding houses accommodating 60 men and 23 houses accommodating 39 families. The appearance of order in this charming and neat little village was entirely due to the taste and energy of Theodore Buck. Strict rules of temperance were always maintained. No one could bring liquor into the village or lumber camps. The grounds around Buck's hillside home were beautifully landscaped with willow trees, flower beds and shrubs, setting the standard for residents in the smaller houses. Residents lived rent-free in the houses, but they were obliged to adhere to the rules. Each house was surrounded by a whitewashed picket fence, all the fences of uniform height. Behind the fences lay trim lawns and attractive flower gardens. The windows were covered with netting in the summer to protect from the swarms of mosquitoes that inhabited the place.

During the milling season Waubaushene was a busy place. After the Midland Railway reached the village in 1875, long trains of cars loaded daily in the lumber yard that had six tracks running through it. Schooners and barges were loaded at the wharf. The steamer *Magnetewan*



Dr. James Angus addressed the crowd during the plaque unveiling

called weekly on its scheduled trip around Georgian Bay, and the company's own schooner *Thomas C. Street* brought hay, oats, flour, salt pork and other items of food and equipment for the logging camps. Tourists, visitors and salesmen stayed in the 26-room Dunkin House hotel. It was a temperance hotel, named after Christopher Dunkin, a member of parliament who wrote the Canada Temperance Act 1864, known as the Dunkin Act. Guests paid \$1 a day for room and board.

Waubaushene was a company town. It operated a general store and owned everything except the Catholic church and the school. The company deeded a small lot to the Catholic diocese. The company built a fine little school, but it had no control over it. In order to qualify for the per-pupil grant paid by the provincial Department of Education, it had to become a public school with an

The Village of Waubaushene 1871-1925 continued

elected board of three trustees. A school section – S.S. No. 12 Tay – was established and the company sold the school board the small lot on which the school was located. The first teacher was Irene Day Purkiss who received an annual salary of \$275. The company paid the balance of the operating costs over and above the grants; consequently, this one-room school was one of the best equipped in the district.

Because it was a one-industry “company town,” no formal municipal organization was allowed to develop. All decisions regarding village planning and improvement were made by the company; however, the villagers were given a free hand in developing social activities. Each summer the churches organized family picnics. A committee planned regattas at which all kinds of races were organized, the double scull competition being one of the more popular.

Regular social, cultural, and recreational activities took place during the winter months. The company donated a piece of land on which a hockey and curling rink was built by private subscription. Through the years Waubaushene produced many fine hockey players, some of whom acquired national prominence. In mid-1880s a curling club was

organized. Each winter, a carnival was held, usually in February, featuring a costume parade, skating races, dog-team races and ice-boat competitions.

Waubaushene had a fine orchestra which held regular concerts in the community hall and played for dances in the rink. Travelling theatre groups frequently visited Waubaushene. Outside the church, which almost everyone attended, the most common social gatherings were house parties. Activities organized by the local elite were frequently reported in the newspapers. Parties usually featured music and what the papers called “innocent amusements,” including the popular parlour game “Proverbs”, a contest in which the participants were required to identify proverbs from clues provided.

In 1879 a branch of the Independent Order of Oddfellows (IOOF) was formed. Annual balls put on by the Rebekas – the female arm of the IOOF – were social highlights in the village. In later years a chapter of the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire (IODE) was formed as well as a branch of the Women's Institute.

When Arthur Murray – the last Dodge president – died in 1896, the company took over management of

his mansion, later known as the Palmer House. A social club with headquarters in the house was formed to organize a weekly dance. The house was also used for private parties and weddings.

In addition to donating the memorial church, the Dodges presented the village with a library and reading room. Josephine Dodge donated books from her personal collection.

Waubaushene was an attractive, friendly village and an ideal place to raise children. But like all good things it eventually came to an end. The company had been booming logs all the way from Blind River to the Waubaushene mill. In 1920, they ran out of logs and the mill was closed. The four to five hundred workers that the company normally employed were laid off and the 1,600 people in the once thriving village of Waubaushene lost their economic base. W. J. Sheppard, the last president of the company had the village divided into lots and sold. Some men obtained positions with Ontario Hydro; some became sailors on the Great Lakes steamships; some converted their homes into summer hotels; some guided tourists on fishing trips; some young men worked in other logging camps further north; many moved away. “The rest,” as they say, “is history!”

From the Mailbag

I hope that I may impose on you for a quick bit of Barrie economic history. Please pass this on if you know a better potential source. I am doing some work on co-op meat packing in Canada with specific interest in cattle processing, ultimately related to BSE. A sad history of failure, I am afraid. At some point in the 1930s,

Cooperative Packers of Ontario had a small to mid sized packing plant located in Barrie. It eventually was closed, due I imagine, to a lack of business success.

When was this business in operation? What type of livestock did it slaughter? Why did it go out of business?

Please contact me with any information.

Many thanks,

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Oro's Black History Celebrated

by Linda Langman

A dedicated group of local history buffs has been busy making certain Oro-Medonte Township's past is not forgotten. With Black History Month in February, the Oro-Medonte Historic Committee staged an exhibition at the Guthrie Arena on February 25th. Committee chairperson Sheila Kirkland was pleased with the attendance, as close to 200 people braved blustery winter weather to attend and view photographs, biographies, written accounts, and memorabilia.

Carter G. Woodson, (1875-1950) originator of Black History Month, once said, "Truth comes to us from the past, then, like gold washed down the mountains." Without accurate records, and the research and hard work of those dedicated to sharing our history, the past can easily be forgotten. Jadeen Henderson, vice-chairperson of the committee, has spent countless hours collecting information and artifacts, working hard to ensure that doesn't happen. "It's important for people to know the history, to learn from our mistakes," she said. For 16 years, Henderson has overseen and cared for the African church in Oro, where the early settlers went to worship.

Henderson ordered stamps through Canada Post picturing the historic church and received them in November 2005. These will be used to thank those who help preserve the church now and in the future.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, located at the corner of the Old Barrie Road and the 3rd Concession of Oro-Medonte, was built in 1849. It was declared a National Historic Site on June 15, 2003. During July and August, the

church will be open to visitors on Saturdays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Researcher and OPP officer Dave Osborne won the SCHA's Andrew Hunter award for his detailed summary of the black pioneer settlement in Oro, in his Canadian History course through Laurentian University. Geoff Booth, secretary of the Oro Committee, is his professor. Osborne's research shows the black immigrants who settled in Oro were probably freemen, and several were veterans of the War of 1812. By 1831, the black population in Oro was 97, reaching its peak of 151 in 1851. The black settlement in Oro was unique in that it was the only one sponsored by the government. Land was designated in 100-acre lots, for which immigrants would petition to obtain the land. The area east of Penetanguishene Road, namely Wilberforce Street, was the region used for the settlements.

A memorial of one black immigrant can be found in a forest in Oro. The tombstone reads:

Elizabeth Ann Moore, wife of Daniel E.A. Moore, died April 11, 1873 aged 20 years. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord for they shall find rest from their labours and their works do follow them. Laid to rest on her parents' farm in a tranquil forest on a gentle slope.

Some settlers who left Oro went to Collingwood to work at various jobs, in the shipping industry as porters,

others to work as chefs on the steamers, or to open a restaurant.Carolynn Wilson, a descendant through her uncle, Howard Sheffield, and her family, have established the Sheffield Park Black History and Cultural Museum in Collingwood. The museum is open to the public in the summer (call 705-444-1287). One treasure is an Underground Railway quilt. The Heritage Community Church provides programs and story telling. Wilson is happy to be linked with Oro and sent congratulations to Oro friends and community members who have maintained and protected their history.

The Clowes Women's Institute served refreshments to the crowd.

For more information on black history in Oro-Medonte, contact Sheila Kirkland at 705-487-3678.



Some Oro History Committee Members

Rear: left to right

Allan Howard, Jadeen Henderson

Front: left to right

Bruce Wiggins, Geoff Booth,
Sheila Kirkland

Ancient Water Management in Simcoe County

by Glenn Kearsley and Jason Nesbitt

Two years ago, while searching for traces of the nine mile portage across the forested highlands of Springwater township with SCHA member Bernie Longson, I was introduced to Mr. Adrian Gervais, a local landowner and historian who happens to have an archaeological site on his property west of Barrie. Mr. Gervais invited us back to his farm and showed us the location of this large 600-year-old Huron (or Wendat) village known to archaeologists as the Gervais site. Resting in silence under a blanket of fallen leaves, the Gervais site is situated on high, flat ground around the head of a deep, forested ravine. Visual inspection and testing by a number of archaeologists over the years has placed the size of the village to at least 4-5 acres in size. Villages of this size could have contained as many as eight or so longhouses inhabited by approximately 600 people.

As it happens, Andrew F. Hunter visited the Gervais site in 1906, exactly one hundred years ago, and noted in his site description that “springs of fresh water issue near the place” (1907:54). While no water is present today, evidence of these springs is visible in a number of small relic spring beds that run from the edge of the village at the top of the ravine down to a main relic spring bed below.

With his keen interest in the history of the Wendat peoples in Simcoe County and his exploration of the site over the past 30 years or so, Mr. Gervais has identified several interesting features around the edge of the site that are of archaeological interest. These features, which resemble dug out depressions in the

ground, are located directly in the pathway of several of the relic springs Hunter noted that used to trickle down the ravine just below the village. For years Mr. Gervais has theorized that these depressions were actually constructed by the Wendat villagers in order to collect spring water into easily accessible pools for their daily use. Not being familiar with any other accounts of such archaeological features, my colleague and I were very anxious to test this theory. It is well known that the Wendat chose the locations of their villages based on the proximity of reliable water sources (as they would live in these villages for 10-20 years), but examples where they modified or altered the watercourse itself to suit their needs have not previously been documented. And so, with our archaeological licence in one hand and Mr. Gervais’ permission in the other, a small test excavation was conducted in one of the features to determine whether it was human-made or the result of natural phenomenon (such as a tree being uprooted and overgrown – a tree throw).

While old tree throws are discernable throughout the ravine as slight bumps, or mounds on the surface of the ground, these features differ in that they are relatively large, oval depressions that are located in the path of the relict spring beds, and have held their physical appearance for over 30 years (A. Gervais, personal communications, 2004).

The feature that was excavated is located at the foot of the ravine below the village in the path of a small relic spring. At ground

surface it is a circular depression that measures 3.8 m north-south by 3.4 m east-west and reaches a maximum depth of approximately 75 cm at its centre. The east edge of the depression is bounded by a linear mound, or “berm” that runs perpendicular to the direction of the downhill spring flow. The berm is 1.7 m wide and 1 m high (Figure 1). Its position suggests that it would have blocked the flow of this smaller spring from reaching the main spring bed on the other side of the berm.

The test excavations confirmed that Feature 1 was man-made and not result of a tree throw. The soil profile shows that the bottom of the feature consists of a dug out trench that runs parallel to the berm and perpendicular to the direction of water flow (Figure 3). The trench is 36 cm deep from the surface of the depression and is characterized in profile by a homogenous dark black sandy soil containing lots of artifacts including 96 fragments of clay pots, one fragment of a clay smoking pipe and some fire-cracked rock that was heated by means of fire and placed in the water to warm it. Because of the decoration on two pieces of pottery we know that this “collecting pool” was used at the same time that the Gervais site was inhabited.

Based on its design and position, we hypothesize that the villagers dug out this portion of the spring bed and used the resulting mound of sandy subsoil to form the berm. Water from the spring flowed down the slope and into the depression where it was held for a time. It is probable that the water overflowed the berm and was likely a clean

Ancient Water Management in Simcoe County continued

source of water that was constantly replenished. While the base of the excavated feature was not culturally modified to retain water (i.e. clay-lined), its location at the foot of the slope in the path of the spring would have ensured that the soil in the collecting pool would have been saturated enough to hold the water. During the test excavation of the feature it was noted that the subsoil in the berm and underlying the pit was very fine-grained and compact lending further to its water retaining abilities.

In terms of calculating the approximate water volume of the feature, we can only provide a rough estimate here since the exact dimensions of the original feature had

been obscured by years of soil erosion/slumping, and the feature was not completely excavated for fear of destroying its original integrity. As such we conservatively used the surface dimensions of the feature to provide a minimum water volume. We estimate that the feature had a minimum volume of somewhere between 900-1,200 litres, (roughly the size of an average hot tub).

In conclusion, it is apparent that this feature would have acted as a collecting pool providing a reliable source of potable water for village consumption. Given the presence of a smoking pipe fragment and the pieces of fire-cracked rock in the bottom of it, other activities such as bathing may

have been associated with the feature. It is apparent that Mr. Gervais' theory...holds water (sorry), and that he has identified an important and, to our knowledge, previously unrecognized archaeological type of feature: the water collecting pool. We plan to continue documenting and mapping these intriguing features in the ravine and hope to visit the site during the spring thaw to photograph the features actually holding water. A more detailed account of this research has been published and is currently circulating in the archaeology community. Hopefully this research will help other archaeologists in identifying these features in the future.

Figure 1. Top view (above) and cross-section sketch of the Collecting Pool Feature.

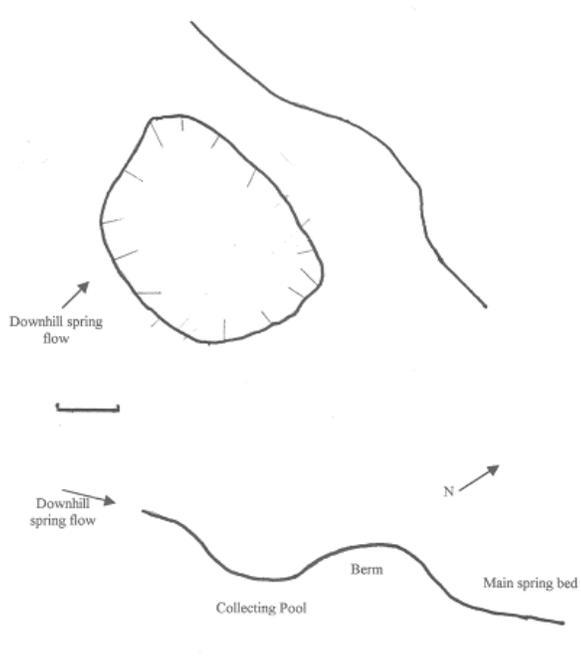
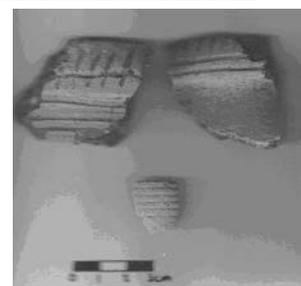


Figure 2. Test excavation in Feature 1.



Figure 3. Some pottery found in Feature 1 (the decorations on the pots help archaeologists date the sites they come from).



Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Mr. Adrian Gervais for identifying and bringing these important features to our attention and granting us permission to investigate them further. We would also like to thank Ian Dutcher and Chris Brown for their assistance.

References Cited

Hunter, Andrew F. (1907). Huron Village Sites. *Annual Archaeological Report, Appendix to the Report of the Minister of Education for the year 1906*:3-56.

The Cabin of Corporal Cannon

by Gord Hanson

This is the story of the reopening of Willow Depot, which appears to have been the subject of a watercolour done by Sir George Head depicting a residence (A Corporal's House in the Portage with a distant view of the Blue Mountain, Lake Huron 1825). This property is the southeast half of lot 14, concession 11 Springwater Township. It was likely the site of a first nations' encampment in the 1600s, then was a Northwest Company storehouse, later or simultaneously a military stores warehouse used by the British Navy during and following the War of 1812.

Corporal John Cannon commanded the depot garrison in 1815. His life there and his sudden disappearance are the subject of legend (apparently shots were heard by a visitor approaching the depot). When fully developed around 1819, the storage depot consisted of nine buildings: the Commandant's house, the visiting officer's quarters, the officers' kitchen, the barracks/cookhouse, the barracks/storehouse, the stable and two blockhouses. Just outside the garrison enclosure was a brick kiln to manufacture bricks for the stoves and chimneys of the wooden buildings.

Explorers Commissioner David Thompson in 1824 and Sir John Franklin in 1825 visited, and the property was viewed by settlers moving north on the portage from Kempenfelt Bay into the Collingwood area until the advent of the Sunnidale Road and the Northern Railroad. During the last half of the nineteenth century, the property and buildings deteriorated into ruin and decay, and few accorded the site significance after 1830. It was part of

425 acres of farmland gradually acquired by the McMaster family of Grenfell around 1902-1906. The McMasters severed the fort land of approximately nine acres (3.6 hectares) from their pastureland and conveyed it to Barrie Chamber of Commerce in the 1950s so that the historic lands could be preserved.

Around 1947, the Barrie Chamber of Commerce under the leadership of President Norman D. Clarke asked the University of Western Ontario, Indian Archaeology Department, to explore the "nine-mile-portage" trail that had been used as a land connection between the shore of Kempenfelt Bay at Barrie and Willow Creek (a tributary of the Nottawasaga River). Exploration and digging at the depot in 1959 was carried out by Elsie and Wilfrid Jury, and the writer understands that the Jury's notes and drawings may be contained in the Leslie Frost fonds presently possessed by Trent University. Premier Leslie Frost unveiled a plaque describing Willow Creek Depot in 1961.

In 1967, soldiers from Base Borden put up a palisade and assembled a "magazine building" as a centennial project; however, this wooden building was destroyed by fire. Barrie Chamber of Commerce conveyed the property to Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) in 1973 to be held as conservation lands. A fort cleanup group was conceived during the spring and summer of 1995 by Midhurst Historical Society (MHS); the first notation of the idea appeared in the executive minutes of MHS in March 1996, and a walking event to the site was held in May 1996 to publicize the objective of

preserving and protecting the original depot site. A steel gate was put across the site entrance road to prevent dumping.

Labour to clean the site and outline the fort perimeter was provided by members of Midhurst Historical Society and in part by Borden cadets and by Salvation Army "prison rehabilitation" crews. The Fort Willow Improvement Group (FWIG) was created in July 1996 as a volunteer arm of NVCA. In its first two years, FWIG volunteers cut, cleared and burned brush to make the site accessible and to "revive the spirit of Fort Willow". The group's achievements during ten years include: the creation of parking space for over 20 vehicles, signage kiosks, outdoor washrooms, picnic tables, a 16- by 24- foot shelter area, a workers' appalachian hut with wood stove, replacement of the stockade, creation of steps and handrails to adjacent walking trails, outlines of buildings inside the palisade enclosure, a pioneer garden enclosed by snake-fence with a rainwater recovery system to provide irrigation, a display with replica 36-foot batteau. FWIG has raised all funds for site improvements and has either bought or has been gifted materials.

The dream of fully recreating the original nine military buildings would require additional onsite security and would also probably require professional contractors. The property is under a management plan that permits low impact recreational activities and historical events, and promotes natural flora and fauna conditions. The Fort Willow Management Plan 2003-2008 sets out goals to preserve, protect and

The Cabin of Corporal Cannon continued

enhance a sustainable heritage site and conservation area for present and future generations, maintaining a responsible balance between ecological and heritage functions and human activities in compliance with the Ontario Heritage Act. The site is protected as archaeologically sensitive and limited archaeological exploration is conducted seasonally.

FWIG thanks NVCA and its partners and friends who have assisted with time, effort and materials in the site development over ten years. The FWIG volunteer group was honoured with an Ontario Heritage Foundation achievement award in 2002, with

recognition from NVCA in 1998, 2003 and 2004, from the City of Barrie in 2003 and from Springwater Township in 2004. The Springwater Heritage Committee recognized the group for restoration and development of the nine-mile portage in 2005. Visitors are welcome at historic Fort Willow thirteen kilometres west of Barrie just off County Road 28 (George Johnson Road south of Minesing) at municipal address 2714 Grenfel Road, Township of Springwater. NVCA remain committed to the revival of these historic lands. For a listing of events at the Fort Willow Depot or

further information visit the NVCA website or telephone the conservation authority at (705) 424-1479.

Sources of information for this article include *Simcoe Pioneer Papers, 1906*; *A History of Vespra Township*; *Forest Scenes and Incidents in the Wilds of North America*; *A History of Simcoe Township*; *The Nine Mile Portage from Kempfenfelt Bay*; Fort Willow Management Plan 2003-2008; Annual Reports Fort Willow Improvement Group 2000-2005.

SCHA Annual General Meeting

Once again, the SCHA enjoyed a delicious meal, good fellowship, and an acclaimed Executive and Board at the Annual General Meeting, held May 16th at the Bell Farm Road Banquet Hall. One highlight was the presentation of the Andrew Hunter Award to Virginia Morrow of Georgian at Laurentian University for her paper, "The Settlement Patterns of Specific Ethnic Groups in Early Ontario: Simcoe County as a Case Study." Next came the election of the Executive and Board for 2006-2007 (we would still like to fill the position of first Vice President if anyone feels led to join us.) The evening then took on a less scholarly, but very hilarious tone.

At one table in particular, the battle for a coveted batch of fudge caused some funds to be raised at our first ever silent auction. Many thanks to the donors and purchasers of some great books and items, and we look forward to round two next year, Reverend! Get cooking Millars!

From auctions to presenters, we moved on to the evening's speaker. Dr. Brian Osborne, our scheduled visitor for the night, was prevented from sharing with us when his number came up for knee replacement surgery! We wish him a speedy recovery and hope to see him in the coming months. Fortunately, our own Brian Baker stepped in with a terrific slide show of unique scenes and buildings that have left their marks in Simcoe County history. As many of these locations are inaccessible, or now destroyed, Brian gave us a glimpse of parts of our economic and built history unknown to many. Tales of seeing the "No Trespassing" signs on the way out of private property, and of long conversations and lunch with officials whose job it was to keep Brian out, kept the audience well entertained. We thank Marg for her part in showing and telling Brian's tales and keeping him on the right side of the law.



Mark Fisher, SCHA Second Vice President, presents the evening's speaker, Brian Baker, with a token of our appreciation for his entertaining presentation.

Reminders of War in The Great Lakes

by Mike McAllister

The day was bright and with few clouds, in the summer of 1940, a perfect day for flying, as Leading Aircraftman Johnson flew his Harvard over Georgian Bay, gazing down at “Giants Tomb,” the Island so named as the place where Ketchekewanna, the Indian god who had created the 30,000 islands, had laid down exhausted and died.

Looking again to his right he noticed two steamboats proceeding southbound in the steamboat channel. One can imagine the ships, *Collingwood* and *Royalton* looking a bit like toys from 4,000 feet, when the 650 hp engine started misfiring. The plane shook with each intermittent bang of the air-cooled radial engine, then as the two-bladed prop suddenly became visible, the only sound heard was the wind rushing past the cockpit.

LAC Johnson had left Borden earlier that morning, on a solo flight as part of his training in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

During WWII, Canada ran the BCATP, at large and small airfields across the country, training young airmen from all the Allied nations, as well as expatriate Polish, Czech and Norwegians who had escaped the Nazi war machine, to fly in many types of single and dual engined planes, learning to become navigators, bomber and fighter pilots, leading Winston Churchill to call Canada “The Aerodrome of Democracy.”

The type of aircraft that Johnson was flying was built by Noorduyn Aviation of Cartierville Quebec, under licence, to an American design (North American AT-6 Texan) and was a dual control single engined

fighter-trainer called a Harvard. At the outbreak of the War in September 1939, Canada had 14 of these aircraft as well as 256 other types which were mostly obsolete. At War’s end in 1945, Canada had the world’s third largest airforce, and, through the BCATP, had trained over 100,000 flyers.

Bill English, a seaman on the steamer *Royalton*, which was carrying a load of grain, watched as the shiny yellow aircraft glided silently towards the sparkling water of Georgian Bay. Spray flew into the air as the machine came to a halt just out side of Penetanguishene harbour, sitting at a slightly nose down attitude, due to the weight of the engine. The pilot climbed from the already slid back canopy, and out onto the wing.

Mr. English watched in disbelief as the *Collingwood*, ahead of his ship and much closer to the downed aircraft, steamed right on past, making no attempt to turn toward the plane, nor stop to put out lifeboats. Now the *Royalton* made for the downed plane and pilot with all possible haste, but on arriving where the plane went down, found only traces of oil and a few bubbles. This lack of action by the captain of the *Collingwood* caused quite some controversy at the time.

In the early summer of 1999, I was sitting in the sun porch of a cottage on Georgian Bay, enjoying the view, and reading a book called *Recollections – Township of Tiny*, where I came across the paragraph: “In strategic military maneuvers, the Tiny Marsh was used for target practice and during these years two Harvard war planes were reported to have crashed in Tiny waters. One

crashed in the Penetanguishene Bay and the other off the shores of Christian Island.” (Sharp intake of breath, followed by a whistle.) I have always been interested in Canadian history as well as aircraft, particularly those of WWII vintage, and here it looked as though two undiscovered wrecks were practically in my back yard.

After contacting the Township of Tiny about the book, I was referred to Carrie Moran, a reporter for the *Midland Free Press*, who then wrote an article about the downed planes, mentioning that the Toronto Aerospace Museum would be interested in locating and recovering these historic aircraft. I received two phone calls, on the Friday of the week that the article appeared in the fall of 1999, one from Mr. Bill English of Penetanguishene, who was a witness to one of the crashes, and a call from Dutchman’s Cove Marina, regarding an aircraft seen underwater. I spoke with Bill English at his home and then proceeded to Dutchman’s Cove where inquiries were made about this mysterious aircraft.

The following year, I again went to Dutchman’s Cove marina attempting to nail down the story and the location; at that time I also sought help from the military museum at Base Borden in my efforts of search and recovery.

In the spring of 2004, I was finally able to made contact with a marine salvor in the area who allowed me to view side-scan sonar images, scrolls showing the bottom of the lake in the Penetanguishene, Giants Tomb Island area. The images are generated by a computer from sound waves transmitted from a “towfish” which

Reminders of War in The Great Lakes continued

resembles a small torpedo and is towed behind the boat. The sound waves bounce back from the lake bed and any objects resting on it, and are received by the towfish at varying time intervals, depending on the distances of the various surfaces of the object from the transmitter/receiver thus allowing the computer to form a picture of the object below. GPS locations are shown on the scroll as well, and the

image quality is similar to that of a photocopy.

The images on the side-scan scroll which resembled aircraft were in two locations, one appearing to be an "X" approximately 25 x 25 feet.

After conducting three unsuccessful searches at the GPS waypoints, I managed to hook up with some like-minded individuals from the Canadian Harvard Aircraft

Association Recovery Team, a group of scuba divers, pilots and historians who are involved in locating and recovering aircraft which were used in the BCATP.

This spring and summer CHAA-Recovery will be conducting a search in Georgian Bay at the sites previously surveyed by Georgian Bay Wetwood, using magnetometers, and side-scan sonar, supplied by the company Ocean Scan Systems, as well as two sites in Lake Ontario. When located, a team of divers will descend to examine the wrecks. If any of these historic aircraft prove to be good candidates for restoration, they are likely to be raised, and transported to either the Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association in Tillsonburg, Ontario or the Toronto Aerospace Museum located on the grounds of the former Canadian Forces Base Downsview in Toronto.

For more information, please see: www.torontoaerospacemuseum.com and www.chaa-recovery.ca



Mike McAllister © 2005

Beautiful Barrie Presented to the Lieutenant-Governor

Earlier this spring, the *Beautiful Barrie: The City and Its People* team was pleased to present Ontario's Lieutenant Governor, His Honour James K. Bartleman with a copy of the book at his apartments in Queen's Park.

From left to right:

Kurt H. Schick, designer;
Rayner McCullough, consultant;
Su Murdoch, co-author;
His Honour; and
B.E.S. Rudachyk, co-author



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

Barrie Historical Association – contact Val Brucker

Be sure to check out the six plaques commemorating Barrie's history displayed along the waterfront.

Sept. 14 – Wilson West, Marine Archeology

Collingwood and District Historical Society

Meet at the Leisure Time Club, Minnesota St., Collingwood – 7 p.m.

Oct. 3 – George Czerney, History of *The Enterprise Bulletin* Newspaper

Huron Museum Huron Ouendat Village –

contact Jamie Hunter, curator

549 Little Lake Park Road, Midland – Call 526-2844

www.huronmuseum.com

Innisfil Historical Society – contact Ross Wallace

Meet at Knock Community Centre, 10th SR at 9th Line, Innisfil – 2 p.m.

Sept. 16 – Farms of Innisfil

Museum on the Boyne –

contact Rachelle Clayton

250 Fletcher Crescent in Riverdale Park, Alliston – Call 435-0167

www.allistonontario.com/MuseumonthetheBoyne.html

Summer hours – Wed.-Sun. 10-3:30

to July 1 – Simcoe's Legacy: Investigating 185 years of South Simcoe County

July 1 – Canada Day Celebrations 11:00-3:30

July 15 – Kate Aiken Exhibit Launch 7-9 p.m.

Aug. 26 – Edwardian Tea –

Whistle Stop Beeton – Learn about the life of Radio Personality Kate Aitken

Sept. 9 – From Here and Back Again – Transportation Exhibit Launch

Sept. 13 – Barn Raisings: An Armchair Tour of Ontario's Rural Built Heritage with a Ministry of Culture Representative

Senior Afternoons 1:30-3:00

June 29 – Senior's Tea

July 6 – How to Put on a kimono

July 13 – Mrs. A's Favourite Recipes

July 20 – And Now here's Mrs. A...

July 27 – Fabulous Fashions – Video of Alliston Historical Society

Aug. 3 – My Favourite Sweater or T-shirt

Aug. 10 – Our kitchen garden

Aug. 17 – Potato Farming – How did we become Ontario's Capital

Aug. 24 – Barns in our Area

Aug. 31 – How'd we get there – Transportation

July and August Wednesdays –

10-Noon – Kids' Program

Noon-2 – Taste of Summer

July and August Fridays –

1-2 – Kids "I Made it Myself"

2-3 – Kids "I Drew it Myself"

Orillia Museum of Art and History –

contact Sim Salata, curator

30 Peter Street South, Orillia – Call 326-2159 www.orilliamuseum.org

June 29 – Regarding the Lake: Paintings, Graphics and Selected Works by Charles Pachter

Opening Reception – 7:00-10:00 p.m.

July 3-Aug. 25 – Summer Art Camp for Kids

Penetanguishene Centennial Museum and Archives – contact Pierre Moreau

13 Burke St. at Beck Blvd. – Call 549-2150

www.pencenmuseum.com

July 1 – Canada Day Celebrations Noon-6:00

July 4-Aug. 25 – Summer Day Camp for Kids

July and August Sundays – Evening Concerts – 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Simcoe County Museum – contact Gloria Taylor

1151 Highway 26, Midhurst – Call 728-3721

www.county.simcoe.on.ca

June 28 – Museum Grand Opening – 9:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Ribbon Cutting – 10 a.m.

July and August – Summer Sundays

July 10-Aug. 25 – Kids' Summer Day Camps

Aug. 21-Sept. 4 – ROM Dinosaur Museumobile

Sept. 15-17 – Simcoe County Quilt, Rug and Craft Fair – \$4

to Dec. 31 – Archives 40th Anniversary Displays

Stayner Heritage Society

Call Myrna Johnson 428-2540

July 8 – Heritage Day in Station Park. Pancake Breakfast at Jubilee Presbyterian Church 7:30-10:00; Parade 11:00; Show in the Park 12:00

Aug. 19 – The Toronto All-Star Big Band in Stayner Arena – 8:00-midnight