

# NEWS views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association

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## Visit our Website

www.simcoecountyhistory.ca



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

## Amalgamation

Welcome to the members of the Barrie Historical Association who have decided to amalgamate with the Simcoe County Historical Association as of January 1, 2019. At the moment, the SCHA has a viable executive and over 80 members. Combined with the roughly 30 members of the BHA we can have one stronger organization that can act as a united voice for the preservation and celebration of our local history.

In order to encourage your participation in the amalgamated SCHA, all past members of the BHA will be offered a free membership in the SCHA through to the end of 2019. This means that you will receive online or by mail, if necessary, the newsletter of the SCHA, *News and Views*. On the other hand, if you wish to purchase a membership in the form of a donation, it will be gratefully accepted, since financial stability is essential to the ongoing success of the organization. This can be done through the SCHA website, by mail, or at any of our public meetings.

We enjoyed three successful meetings this fall, in particular the presentation by Ted Barris on the Dambusters, with over 100 in attendance. We hope that everyone will come out to enjoy our spring meetings in "Preserving the Past in the Present for the Future."

Mark Fisher  
President, Barrie Historical Association  
Vice President, Simcoe County Historical Association

Saturday, March 23, 2 p.m. at Grace United Church, 350 Grove St. E.  
AGM: A time to reflect on 2018 and plan for 2019  
Speaker: Michael Hill "History of the Mariposa Festival"  
Enjoy special desserts with your historical friends

## Simcoe County Historical Association Executive

Ted Duncan, President	tedcansher@sympatico.ca	705-326-9809
Mark Fisher, Vice President	mwfisher2@hotmail.com	705-728-3825
Deb Exel, Treasurer	deb@simcoecountyhistory.ca	
Donna Wice, Secretary	mdwice@sympatico.ca	705-436-2578

## For membership information, contact

Judith Banville                      membership@simcoecountyhistory.ca

*The SCHA acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Culture.*



## **President's Report** by Ted Duncan

This fall I have visited with some Member Historical Organizations in the County (as listed below). I am a member of two other Historical organizations. Also I met with others such as MPP Doug Downey to discuss history.

- Bradford West Gwillimbury Historical Association Board of Directors Meeting Oct. 9, 2018. I was given a tour of the Historical Presbyterian Church on the Scotch Line which was renovated by the Association.
- Alliston Historical Society General Meeting Oct.10, 2018. I listened to a speaker on the Holland Marsh, spoke about SCHA and had tour of the Museum on the Boyne.
- Collingwood District Historical Society Board of Directors Nov.15, 2018. I was welcomed by the Board and had a great discussion on local history.
- Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA): I attended a meeting at the Tiffin Centre for potential users of the Conservation Authority's properties. Such groups coming from Education, Environment and Social Agencies in the County were there. I brought the new idea to them that historical groups could use these properties too. It was an opportunity to connect with Simcoe County Tourism as well. I don't know where this might lead, but a report will follow from the NVCA.
- Ramara Historical Society (Member). I attend General Meetings and Speakers nights. I have become involved in a Barns of Ramara Photo survey project. The goal is to record in pictures all the barns existing in the Township.
- Orillia Museum Of Art & History Board of Directors (Vice-Chair) & History Committee (Member)

The Historical organizations that I have spoken to work hard to preserve their local history. Through speakers, they reach out to their members, bringing stories of that history to life. They try to protect the historical artifacts and archives that reflect that history. Collections are found in homes, sheds, barns, libraries and museums. The Simcoe County Museum and Simcoe County Archives hold still more of their history. Each organization does a great job, but in isolation.

At these meetings, we discussed how the SCHA can bring the historical organizations together through sharing at meetings, workshops, seminars, events and with newsletters. The SCHA can be a leading voice when talking to County politicians about history and can facilitate the coordination of the exchange of history information around the County. We can do so much more working together.

County historical organizations and their members can be part of this joint effort to preserve our history. We need your help, but I realize though, that we need a common project to help bring us together.

That is why I suggest we work on a County Barns Project. Barns are the Castles of Ontario and they are falling down. I propose that each Historical Society or Association in the County first do a photo survey so that we have a complete inventory of these historic buildings. Other activities concerning barns can follow this.

If you have people in your group or you know of someone that is interested in this project please contact me at the e-mail address listed in the SCHA newsletter. The interesting thing is, I believe, there are some people out there already doing it. I'd like to talk to them too.

I plan to continue to visit all member groups to

1. talk about how we can help them
2. talk about how they can help us
3. see what projects they have on the go
4. talk up Barns as a project that can appeal County wide
5. suggest that we organize a meeting to discuss a common goal or action

6. put a face to them concerning SCHA

7. see who they are too and tell them that they are not alone protecting our history.

Please e-mail to invite me to a General or Board meeting.

Thank You For Your Interest in History

## **Barn Photo Survey** by Ted Duncan

The County Barns Project is very timely.

An Ontario Castle as you see it from the Concession Road.



The Castle as you look back, further down the road.

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## **In Memoriam**

One of our Honourary Life Members, Ross Wallace, passed away on November 21, 2018. Ross was a proud descendant of Dalhousie Settlers who came from the Glasgow area of Scotland to Dalhousie Township, Lanark County, Upper Canada in 1819 and to Innisfil in 1832.

Ross became a member of the Simcoe County Historical Association in the late 1960's, and received the newsletter. But he was not able to attend any meetings until he changed jobs at the end of 1976 and began to work in Orillia. He

began to learn of other historical societies in Simcoe County and beyond. During his absence from Innisfil, the Innisfil Historical Society had been formed in 1972. Due to their weekend activities at the one-room school at Painswick during the 1970's, Ross was able to attend many open houses and fairs that they organized and presented. He became a member of the Editorial Committee for the Innisfil Historical Review to be published by the Innisfil Township Council in 1984. This required many meetings in 1983 and 1984, and Ross found

he was spending much more of his after work time in Innisfil than in Orillia. It was this situation that prompted his return to Innisfil full time and commute to Orillia to work for over 10 years.

The Innisfil and Orillia Historical Societies were some of his great interests, and Ross also served on the SCHA board for a number of years. Always a gentleman, Ross contributed his insight, knowledge and humour to any discussion at the table. His welcoming presence enhanced many meetings throughout the county.

## Upcoming OMAH Events

The Sir John A. Macdonald Dinner Committee is wrapping up preparations for the 21st annual Sir John A. Macdonald Dinner: A Celebration of Canada, being held at the Hawk Ridge Golf and Country Club on Saturday, January 12, 2019.

Guest speaker is Donald Smith, a highly respected historian, author and Professor Emeritus at the University of Calgary. He has made First Nations history his life's work and passion. His talk "John A. Macdonald and the First Nations" will review Sir John A. Macdonald's First Nations policy, a topic that today arouses a multitude of opinions.

Smith, who taught Canadian History at the University of Calgary for thirty-five years, brings an in-depth knowledge of the historical context of Canada's first prime minister. Macdonald, he emphasizes, was a man of his times, and the times are not ours.

Tickets for the dinner are \$60.00 each and can be purchased at OMAH. Payment by cash, cheque or credit card is accepted. Tickets sold out before Christmas last year so please call OMAH at (705) 326-2159 to ensure availability. We appreciate the support of attendees and our generous sponsors for this important fundraiser that supports OMAH's pro-

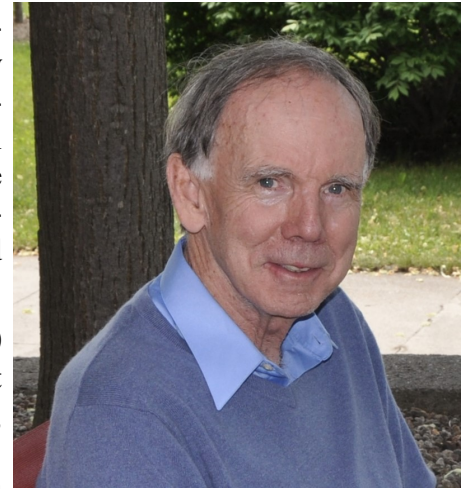


Photo credit: Mary Murphy

grams benefiting Orillia, the surrounding townships and Rama First Nation. Join us to hear a dynamic speaker and to enjoy good food and fellowship.

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## OMAH History Speaker Series Update

The OMAH History Speaker Series has wrapped up for 2018. It was a very successful year with great support from the community. Here is a glimpse of what is on the docket for winter 2019:

**January 16:** Evelyn Ross will share the personal story of her parents escape from the Nazis to freedom in Canada in 1943. Meeting in the Netherlands, Eugene Meth and Lutina Dirks fell in love and fled together when the Netherlands was occupied by the Nazis.



Evelyn's parents on their wedding day

It is a harrowing tale that she will share. Evelyn has lived in Orillia for almost thirty years. She had previously worked in the publishing industry in Toronto and

owned the downtown Orillia children's store Otter Tales and Toys for eleven years.

**February 20:** In observance and celebration of Black History Month, guest speaker Ann Harrison will talk about the Underground Railroad. Ann's interest in the Underground Railroad is a personal one as many of her husband's and her ancestors arrived in Canada via the Underground Railroad, a pathway to freedom. She shares this story with church groups, service clubs and school children so it can be understood and not lost. Ann is retired after a career in the nursing profession.

**March 20:** Acclaimed locally-born author Rachel McMillan will tell the story of author Lucy Maude Montgomery's experiences in Muskoka. Montgomery is renowned for putting Prince Edward Island on the world map, yet she spent most of her life and wrote most of her books

in Ontario. Rachel, a lifelong Montgomery enthusiast, will highlight Montgomery's special connection with Muskoka, her mentions of Orillia and her abiding passion for our Lake Country. Montgomery's book "The Blue Castle" is a personal favorite of Rachel's and is the only one of Montgomery's works set completely away from PEI. The book was inspired by her holidays in Muskoka and paints nearby Bala and Gravenhurst in beautiful detail. Rachel is the author of eight historical mysteries and three contemporary romances and has been featured in numerous publications, journals and in the *Globe and Mail*.

Admission is free to the History Speaker Evenings, though donations are appreciated. All are welcome. The OMAH History Committee extends thanks for your support in 2018 and looks forward to seeing everyone in the New Year.

## In Memory of the Postcard by Billy Courtice, Chair of the Barrie Historical Archive



*Wish you were here.* A simple sentiment that, at one time, was likely entirely overused. At one time, when distance was a real thing. When entering into someone's company, regardless of spatial separation, wasn't as easy as booking a cheap fight to any corner of the world. When our best friends, even from far-off places, weren't just a click away.

After all, there are very few instances today in which we *really wish* you were here. Between our Facebook timelines, Twitter feeds and Instagram stories, we know exactly what you're up to. We know how your parents are holding up, we know about the successes of your kids. Why the need to get together anyway? But less than a century ago, before commercial flight took off, or even less than three decades ago, before personal computers found their way into the homes of just about *everyone*—we truly wished you were here. And we let you know on the back of a postcard, which you might have received a week, or even a month later.

Lithography changed the face of postcards dramatically before the

turn of the 20th Century. The postcard, first emerging in Central Europe in the 1860s, was originally a business-focused medium, acting much like a business or appointment card. But soon, colourful, artistic renditions of notable landscapes, streetscapes, favourite cities and parks soon allowed us to show our recipients a snapshot of our lives at their most picturesque.

Today, many of us publish and receive these postcards every day—without a conscious thought. No longer are we required to select a card, share our thoughts and best wishes, sign, seal, stamp and stroll to the post office box to send it away. Instead, we capture our lives at their most extraordinary—and their most mundane—and share these images with all our friends online.

Our most memorable moments—an impossibly perfect day at Minnet's Point beach, the purchase of our first home, a 50th wedding anniversary—melt into the minutiae of otherwise forgettable days. There they are, sharing a spot on my cellphone alongside Tuesday's lunch (a rather pedestrian

turkey sub), or a blurry shot of the neighbour's pesky cat. And once they are launched from my device into the chaotic playground of social media, they are just as soon jettisoned from people's feeds to float in the vacuum of cyberspace, where they are immediately forgotten. Not the case with those old postcards though. People really hang onto those. They meant something to us when we sent them, so they ought to mean something when we receive them.



As members of the Barrie Historical Archive, they mean *plenty* to us. For us, they offer a look at colours not found in historic black and white photography. They put a name to a place, and a date to a moment in time that was otherwise not captured in a photo. They reveal places in Barrie that were once special to its residents, long-since gone. They mean plenty to Barrie residents, too. We have proof of it, looking at the dozens shared with us that have until now have been preserved for decades in special boxes, cases and cabinets.

Fortunately, many of these postcards have been donated and digitized for all to enjoy on the Barrie Historical Archive. And if you haven't joined us on the Barrie Historical Archive in a while: *We wish you were here.*

## History Lesson: Accessing the Tollendal Mill by Bill Warnica

In the 1800s, getting to the Tollendal Mill could be a precarious journey.



The only access, before a bridge was built over Lover's Creek, was by way of water or the Tollendal Mill Road. This road ran west from the Penetanguishene Road (Yonge Street), down a steep downslope, over the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) tracks and on to the grist mill on the west side of Lover's Creek. At the north side of the junction of the road with the GTR, a road also ran to The Gables.

The drawback with this route over the Tollendal Mill Road was that it had a steep slope down to the railway tracks at a curve in the tracks that a person could not see an approaching train from the south. Once a horse and wagon proceeded down the hill, often it would be too late to stop or backup in the event of a speeding north bound train. On more than one occasion there was a close call with a train, a few cattle were hit but nothing was done.

Nothing until August 19, 1892, when James McKee, a Singer Sewing Machine Co. employee, left Barrie on business, by horse and wagon for Tollendal.

Without seeing the approaching train, the slope of the road created too much momentum for James to stop in time. The 60-mile-per-hour northbound express struck the horse, killing it instantly and turning the wagon into splinters. Mr. McKee was badly hurt and died shortly after in the Barrie hospital, leaving a wife and seven children.



Innisfil town council decided something had to be done. On October 24, 1899 the township passed a by-law expropriating land from the Montgomery and Galbraith estates to straighten Tollendal Mill Road and built a bridge over the tracks.

By 1902 a wooden trestle bridge was built with loose planks for the road bed that rumbled like thunder when driven over. This solved some the problems with the train crossing on the road into Tollendal but vehicles still managed to crash through the bridge guard railing from time to time landing upside down on the tracks but with no more fatalities. The contract with the GTR had them paying a portion in maintaining the bridge.

By 1960, and after many years of use, the bridge badly needed costly repairs or even replace-

ment. By this time the GTR had merged with other rail lines to become the Canadian National Railway (CNR) and they wanted to find a way of avoiding the on going bridge expenses.

The CNR offered to build another road to replace thunder bridge, further to the west where there was no hill to deal with. The land west of the Tollendal Mill thunder bridge to the Allandale station, approximately a mile-and-a-half, was owned by the railway. An agreement was made to sell the easterly half mile, excluding the rail bed to Innisfil and to build a new road on the westerly edge of that purchased land. This would give a much shorter and safer route, now connecting Minet's Point with Tollendal.



In 1962 the thunder bridge was demolished at a cost of \$800. With Tollendal Mill Road now cut in two parts, the easterly portion remained Tollendal Mill Road. The westerly portion from the CNR tracks to Yonge Street was renamed Highland Avenue and later to Foster Drive after being annexed by the City of Barrie.

You are invited to submit photos and articles regarding your historical happenings in Simcoe County. Mail to SCHA, Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M 4S9 or email to Jill Hynes, Editor at [mark.jill@sympatico.ca](mailto:mark.jill@sympatico.ca)

## **“His Excellency’s Journey”: John Graves Simcoe Visits What is Now Simcoe County, Fall 1793** by John Merritt

On September 25, 1793, John Graves Simcoe, the first lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, left York at the head of a small expedition. At a time when Simcoe was primarily concerned with building new roads and military posts to defend the young province from the United States, the goal of the expedition was to find a good location for a military harbour on Georgian Bay and a good route for a road connecting that harbour to York. The expedition would take Simcoe and his men throughout much of what is now Simcoe County, give the modern names to parts of our county’s most prominent lake, and set in motion the early settlement of the area.

On his journey the 41-year-old Simcoe was accompanied by Captain Henry Darling, Home District sheriff Alexander Macdonnell, land surveyor Alexander Aitken, and twelve soldiers of the Queen’s Rangers led by Lieutenant James Givins, as well as Jack Sharp, the governor’s large Newfoundland dog. At the time of their departure York was just a compact, recently surveyed ten-block town site near where the Don River emptied into Toronto Bay. Planning to use the new town as the temporary capital of the province until his desired location at London could be established, for the past several months Simcoe had been living there with his family in a canvas tent inherited from British explorer Captain James Cook.

Led by several First Nations guides, the expedition travelled by horseback along the Toronto Carrying Place, a traditional First Nations trail that connected Lake Ontario with what is now Lake

Simcoe. Departing from the mouth of the Humber, they followed the trail far up the river, then east onto the Oak Ridges Moraine and north along the Holland River from its headwaters. On September 29 the expedition arrived at the marshy delta where the Holland River emptied into the southernmost bay of a lake French fur traders had named Lac aux Claies. Simcoe renamed the lake Simcoe after his late father, Captain John Simcoe of the Royal Navy, and the bay Cook’s Bay after the famous Captain Cook, who had served under his father in the 1750s.

From there the expedition boarded canoes and set out across the northern side of Lake Simcoe, passing the mouth of the lake’s westernmost bay, which Simcoe named Kempenfeldt Bay after his father’s friend Rear Admiral Richard Kempenfeldt. At the northern end of the lake the expedition portaged around the ancient First Nations fishing weirs that had inspired the lake’s former French name of “Lake of Trellises” and set out across Lake Couchiching, then up the Severn River and into Georgian Bay. Over the next few days, Simcoe carefully examined several bays along the south shore of Georgian Bay and identified a few potential harbours, particularly at what is now Penetanguishene.

By the time they were ready to return, however, the expedition had become lost. Fortunately Simcoe, a veteran of many forest expeditions during the American Revolution, was able to use his compass to reorient his men, and the expedition headed home the way they had come. Along the way they stopped at an Ojibway

village whose chief Canise (Great Sail), the son of a recently-deceased friend of the lieutenant-governor, gave Simcoe a beaver blanket and directions for a more direct route home to York from the mouth of the Holland River. During the second week of October, the expedition followed Canise’s route south from Lake Simcoe along the Holland River, then overland. By October 13 the party had reached the eastern branch of the Don.

By this point the expedition was running so short of provisions that they were beginning to contemplate eating the governor’s dog. Fortunately for Jack Sharp, on October 14, with only one day’s worth of provisions left, the party crossed the 4<sup>th</sup> Concession Line of York Township, the first road they had seen in almost three weeks. By 3:00 that afternoon Simcoe and his men had arrived back at York.

Simcoe’s expedition had several important consequences for the history of our county. It gave the modern names to Lake Simcoe and its two largest bays. It also identified the route for what became Yonge Street, which was eventually constructed along the route pointed out to Simcoe by Canise and, once completed, enabled the flow of settlers into much of Simcoe County. Finally, the expedition also identified Penetanguishene’s potential as a military harbour on Georgian Bay, and once a permanent military post was established there in 1818, it drew some of the earliest settlers to Simcoe County. For the history of our county at least, it was not an inconsequential journey.

## Coming Events of Member Societies

**Alliston Historical Society**  
Contact Jackie Baillie 705-435-5626 cknowles@rogers.com  
Meet at Museum on the Boyne 2 p.m.  
2nd Wednesday Feb-June, Oct-Nov

**Barrie Historical Archive**  
barriearchive.ca  
Contact Deb Exel  
info@barriearchive.ca

**Bradford/West Gwillimbury Historical Association**  
Bradford.library.on.ca/?page\_id=311  
Contact Bill Marks  
905-775-6179  
Meet at BWG Library 2 p.m.  
4th Saturday Jan-May, Sept-Nov

**Coldwater Canadian Heritage Museum**  
coldwatermuseum.com

**Collingwood District Historical Society**  
historicallyspeakingcdhs.ca  
Contact Joan Miller  
705-445-1119  
Meet at Leisure Time Club 7 p.m.

**Collingwood Museum**  
collingwood.ca/museum  
Contact Susan Warner  
705-445-4811

**Essa Historical Society**  
Contact Olive Lee  
705-458-9971  
teddylee1@rogers.com  
Meet at Thornton Library 1:30 p.m.  
4th Saturday Jan-June, Sept-Nov

**Friends of Fort Willow**  
nvca.on.ca/recreation/ConservationAreas/FortWillow

**Friends of the OPP Museum**  
oppmuseumfriends.ca  
Contact Matt Eade 705-330-4178  
support@oppmuseumfriends.ca

**Huron Museum/Huron Ouendat Village**  
huroniamuseum.com  
705-526-2844

**Innisfil Historical Society**  
http://www.ourstoriesinnisfil.ca/IHS-about  
Contact Donna Wice  
Meet at Knock Comm Centre 2 p.m.  
**Jan. 19** *John Wardrop* School Buses  
**Feb. 16** *Chad Bowman* Young Farmer  
**Feb. 18** *Family Day featuring games from the past*  
**Mar. 16** *Carolyn Morris* Children's Books

**Museum on the Boyne**  
Contact Katie Huddleston-Naieb  
705-435-3900 ext. 1802

**Orillia History Speaker Series**  
Contact Ted Duncan  
Meet at Orillia Museum 7:30 p.m.  
**Jan. 12** Sir John A. Dinner: see page 4 for details  
**Jan. 16** *Evelyn Ross* Fleeing from Nazi Europe  
**Feb. 20** *Ann Harrison* The Underground Railroad  
**Mar. 20** *Rachel McMillan* Lucy Maud Montgomery's Muskoka  
**Orillia Museum of Art and History**  
orilliamuseum.org 705-326-2159  
**to Jan. 6** *From the Ashes: Orillia's Fires*  
**to Mar. 24** *Legacy Landscapes* celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Couchiching Conservancy Land Trust

**Penetanguishene Centennial Museum and Archives**  
penetanguishene.ca/en/Museum.asp?\_mid\_=23034  
Contact Nicole Jackson  
705-549-2150

**Ramara Historical Society**  
http://ramarahistoricalociety.ca/  
Contact Cathy Westcott  
westcott.cathy963@gmail.com  
Meet at Udney Community Centre 7 p.m. 3rd Thurs Jan-June, Sept-Dec  
**Jan. 17** "What Is It?" ... Bring your mystery items for Show & Tell  
**Feb. 21** *Margaret Pomeroy* The History of Quilts includes Member Show & Tell of historic quilts  
**Mar. 21** Cool Collections Show & Tell – bring along your vintage collections to share with us!

**Simcoe County Branch, Genealogical Society**  
simcoe.ogs.ca  
Contact Nancy Leveque  
Meet at Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 2 p.m.  
**Jan. 5** *Steve Glover* WWI Simcoe County Soldiers

**Simcoe County Museum**  
museum.simcoe.ca  
Contact Kelly Swift-Jones  
705-728-3721

**Stayner Heritage Society**  
staynerheritagesociety.com  
Contact Tom Scholte  
705-517-5171

**Tecumseth & West Gwillimbury Historical Society**  
Contact Patricia Blackstock  
416-247-6551  
Meet at TecWeGwill Hall 7:30  
3rd Monday Jan-May, Sept-Nov

