

# NEWS **and** views

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Simcoe County Historical Association

Vol. 46, No. 1  
ISSN 0700-4427

## In this issue...

- Spring at SCHA .....1
- Kudos BHA ..... 1
- SCHA Executive ..... 2
- President’s Report ... 2
- John Tryon Story ... 3-4
- In Memoriam ..... 4
- Museum Wedding ... 5
- Carmichael Lecture .. 5
- Collingwood Event ... 6
- AMP Report ..... 6
- Spring at OMAH ..... 7
- Sir John A Dinner .... 7
- Coming Events ..... 8

Contact the editor, Jill Hynes at 705-739-6220 or at mark.jill@sympatico.ca

## Visit our Website

[www.simcoecountyhistory.ca](http://www.simcoecountyhistory.ca)



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

## SCHA Spring Speakers Series Details

On April 21 at 2 p.m., the songs, a capella quartet, from simple lullabies in earliest times to current trends in music. Join us at St. James United Church, 2230 Victoria Street, Stroud.

## Kudos to BHA!



Congratulations to the Barrie Historic Archive for receiving the Group Heritage Award, presented by the Heritage Barrie Chair and Acting Mayor.

## SCHA Spring 2018 Schedule

**April 21** 200 Year of Music, a shared event with Innisfil Historical Society and Barrie Historical Association at 2 p.m. at St. James United Church, 2230 Victoria Street, Stroud.

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



---

## **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**

Deb Exel      membership@simcoecountyhistory.ca

---

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

---

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

My term as President began last year in May. Since that time, our Board of Directors has worked to renew the Association.

They are

Donna Wice, Secretary;  
Mark Fisher, Vice-President and Speakers;  
Deb Exel, Membership, Finances and Internet;  
Judith Banville, Speakers and Banners;  
and John Merritt, Communication and Writing.

Thanks also to the help and guidance of Earl Elliott, Past President, and Pat Elliott. No organization can survive without the dedication of people willing to be part of a Board of Directors.

We received the John Graves Simcoe 150 Award for the years of service to preserving our County's History. This was our 126<sup>th</sup> year and we are proud of our work to preserve our history over that time. It took the dedication of many people over the years to make it happen. It still does!

We developed a Strategic Plan with four main Goals to improve our

MEMBERSHIP & FUND RAISING  
GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATION  
PROGRAMMING  
COMMUNICATIONS

It is an aggressive plan that just needs the people to make it happen.

We continued our Speaker's Program organized by Mark Fisher with help from Judith Banville. Our speakers bring our history alive. They are great storytellers. Hope you can come out this year to hear what we have for you. They will be great too!

September: Dave Town:

Orillia's Civil War

October: Catharine Wilson:

Rural Diaries

November: Steve Glover: 100th anniversary of Passchendaele

We continued our newsletter as well with our Editor Jill Hynes.

A big thank you to Jill for the dedicated work. Our plan is to send out all Newsletters by e-mail unless someone is unable to

receive it that way. It is too expensive by mail. It is important to continue this valued activity as our members look forward to reading their History Newsletter.

We continue to support the Writing of History with articles in the Simcoe Review for example. Thanks to John Merritt for looking after this. We are looking for stories on history from around the County to place in this publication and others. We need to tell our stories and this is a chance for readers around the County to hear them. We want to encourage our County's writers of History.

We want to continue to do what we do well and also promote membership, improve governance, and develop new activities to promote our history. Above all, we want to communicate our history to you.

Contact us if you can help in any way big or small. THANK YOU for your continued support of the SIMCOE COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION.

## **Wickedness in the Woods - The Story of John Tryon** by Mary Harris

*Mary Harris of the Barrie Historical Archive provides a deeper look into the hanging of John Tryon in Barrie*

For one hundred and two years, Canada hanged people. Murderers, rapists and those convicted of treason, including twelve women, took a walk to the gallows in cities all over this land. From 1860 until 1962, this was the law. The old Barrie Jail saw five men hanged and this is the tale of just one of them, John Tryon, the second prisoner to meet the hangman behind those limestone walls.

In the jail's long history, years or even several decades passed between executions, but for some reason, the first two hangings in Barrie both occurred in 1873. James Carruthers, a farmer from Ivy with an explosive temper made worse by drink, was found responsible for the sudden death of his wife and made the first climb up the wooden stairs at the Barrie Jail in June of that year. John Tryon would follow him in December.

The writing style in old newspaper articles is absolutely fascinating, in my opinion. The headlines and subtitles were always attention grabbers. **SENTENCED TO BE HANGED!** The reader could expect the story to reveal all sorts of juicy details – graphic details of injuries, witness testimony, idle gossip, speculation, hearsay, personal opinion and all sorts of curious tidbits that would never be seen today. The writer for the September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1873 edition of the Northern Advance described the



*The Barrie courthouse how it looked during that time.*

accused as “strongly-built shrewd looking man ... who betrayed considerable nervousness during the trial.” while his son, George Tryon, who was then co-accused, as a “pleasant looking young man ... certainly ‘the murderer’ was not marked in his countenance.”

The crime took place many miles from Barrie, near an isolated cabin on the shore of Commanda Lake in the Parry Sound District, where the Tryons were trying to eke out a living by trading furs and provisions with the local aboriginal people. The two men partnered with another man named Francis Fisher, who was a German immigrant who had lived for a number of years in New York State before coming to Canada. Mr. Fisher was to arrange all the trading, keep the house and do all the cooking while the other men spent their time hunting. The three met in Collingwood in September of 1872 and sailed across Georgian Bay aboard the passenger steamer *Chicora* to reach the North Shore area where they intended to

conduct their business.

On a cold and starry winter night, the partnership came to a sudden and horrific end when Francis Fisher was found dead several feet from the cabin. Robert McKee, a young man from a neighbouring cabin, would later testify in a Barrie courtroom that George Tryon came to his home and asked that he come quickly because he believed that “Fisher was killed and asked me to go and see.” Young McKee found the body of Fisher lying under several hundred pounds of deer meat that had been hanging from a pole stretched between two trees. It appeared that the dead man had been standing on a sled while attempting to cut a piece of meat for dinner with an ax, but the whole structure collapsed and killed him.

The next day, Robert McKee was sent to find some aboriginal men to help bury the body. They returned and buried Mr. Fisher. A few days later, McKee and the Tryons traveled to Parry Sound to report the death. It was not until early



## Wickedness in the Woods - The Story of John Tryon continued from page 3



*Closer view of the jail, showing lake facing balconies that no longer remain - neither does the view!*

April that anyone came to the little shanty in the woods to investigate the death, but the cold weather had preserved the body of Fisher quite well, so a lot of telltale evidence still remained. Even as the science of forensics was still in its infancy, it was quite easy for Dr. John E. White of Parry Sound to tell wounds made by falling meat and tree limbs from those made by an ax. John and George Tryon were arrested and charged with murder.

altercation, or ever knew the three men to ever have any quarrels among them. The most damning evidence came from the hundreds of dollars, in American, Canadian and in gold, found on the men when arrested, when no person could ever recall them having money of their own previously. In the end, the verdict was guilty and the judge gave them the only sentence he could – death by hanging.

No witness saw the final “I must sentence you as the law

directs, which is, that you, John and George Tryon, be taken hence to the place whence you came, and from thence to the place of execution on the day of 16<sup>th</sup> December next, and there be hanged by the neck until dead, and may God have mercy on your souls.”

On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, three days after their conviction, John Tryon requested to see Rev. E. Morgan of Trinity Anglican Church. He then confessed to the minister that the murder was all his doing, and that George knew nothing about it. He also said that his motive was not about hate, and not about greed over Fisher’s money, but a rather odd reason was given. He said that George’s wife was due to give birth in Barrie any day, and that George was going to be leaving him behind to go to Barrie. In John Tryon’s twisted thinking, Francis Fisher’s ‘accidental’ death was somehow supposed to keep George from going to Barrie.

George Tryon was freed and John Tryon kept his date with the hangman at the Barrie Jail.

---

### In Memoriam

Long-time SCHA member Doug Hamilton passed away on March 10, at the age of 89. Life in Barrie for Doug and his family involved his job as a science and history teacher at the high school level. An avid volunteer and lover of history, he found opportunity at the Simcoe County Historical Association as our President from 1997-2001, as well as an active role with the Friends of

the Simcoe County Museum. Doug was especially proud to be recognized as Barrie’s Senior Citizen of the Year in 2009 which was a well-deserved honour.

Always a gentleman, Doug was an informed, connected president, seeking ways to share his love of the county with his fellow residents. It was a pleasure to work with him. A man of sig-

nificant stature and presence, Doug contributed with enthusiasm to many SCHA activities and will long be remembered in historical circles.

There will be a Celebration of Life at the Steckley-Gooderham Funeral Homes’ Worsley Street Chapel on Sunday, May 6 from 2 to 4 pm. Words of Remembrance will be from 3 to 4 pm.

## Wedding at Simcoe County Museum by Donna Wice

When Innisfil residents Alison Somers and Craig Moyse were planning their wedding, they wanted a venue that was casual, relaxed and with a historical theme. Their choice was the Simcoe County Museum.



Alison, whose ancestors pioneered in Innisfil, has an interest in local history and is a frequent visitor and supporter of the Museum. So, on a sunny and mild October 21, 2017, Alison and Craig were married in the small pioneer church on the Museum grounds.

The wedding guests were free to tour the Museum and the many historical attractions outside at their leisure while the wedding party was having pictures taken. Some of the guests had never been to the Museum and remarked on what a "hidden gem" it really was, and planned on making a return visit.



The bride and groom were very grateful for what was a perfect setting for their special day.

---

## 2018 Carmichael Lecture by Mary Ann Grant

Renowned Group of Seven artist Franklin Carmichael was born in Orillia and is buried at St. Andrews-St. James Cemetery. An inductee into the Orillia Hall of Fame, we are proud of his contribution to Canadian art and his legacy of capturing the beauty of the local landscapes in his paintings. The Orillia Museum of Art and History (OMAH) hosts the Carmichael Art History Lecture annually to honour this legacy. The lecture is scheduled for Wednesday, May 9 at 7:30 PM.

The History Committee at OMAH is pleased to announce award-winning teacher/professor, artist and author Brian Harris as this year's guest speaker with his talk entitled "Canoe Lake and the Mystery of Tom Thomson." Tom Thomson died before the Group of Seven was formed. However, he had a huge impact on the future Group of Seven painters. The story and mystique around artist Tom Thomson's

death, one hundred years after his passing, still holds fascination.

The circumstances of Thomson's death at Canoe Lake were mysterious. Was it an accident, or was he murdered? Harris immersed himself in the history of Canoe Lake and Tom Thomson's story. He spent ten summers working at Canoe Lake and during that time he became familiar with the mystery and the lore that surrounded the death of Tom Thomson. He became friends with Canoe Lake resident artist Jack Eastaugh, who was involved with attempting to dig up the body of Tom Thomson in 1956. Harris's book *Canoe Lake*, looks at the influence that Canoe Lake has had on the Group of Seven, the mystery of Tom Thomson's death and his unexpected rise as one of Canada's foremost painters. An artist in his own right, Harris has captured the essence of Canoe Lake in his many paintings and has

internalized the beauty of the lake that drew Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven to it.

Perhaps you have heard the rumours of what happened to Tom Thomson on July 8, 1917. Now be prepared to hear from Brian Harris accounts of that fateful day that residents of Canoe Lake have passed on to their families. Please join us for a fascinating evening.

Harris's book *Canoe Lake* will be available for purchase at the end of the evening. In addition, Brian Harris will have some of his paintings on display and for sale. He will generously donate fifty percent of proceeds of any sale to OMAH. Tickets for the Carmichael Lecture are \$15.00 per person. Tickets will be on sale at the OMAH front desk effective Monday, April 2. Please call OMAH at 705 326 2159 if you have any questions.

## **Collingwood Meeting** by Joan Miller

On April 9, the Collingwood and District Historical Society meeting will have Jean Hutchinson, a local genealogist, author and historian, tell of the life of Agnes Macphail who grew up in Grey County and became Canada's First Lady Member of Parliament.

Agnes was a true pioneer of her day and her lasting influence affected the lives of those who followed. Agnes Macphail was

the first woman elected to the House of Commons (1921–40) and was one of the first two women elected to the Ontario legislature (1943–45, 1948–51). She was also the first female member of a Canadian delegation to the League of Nations, where she served on the disarmament committee.

Macphail was a founding member of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (the

forerunner of the New Democratic Party) and was an advocate for prison reform. As a member of the Ontario legislature, she championed Ontario's first equal pay legislation (1951).

This very enlightening meeting begins at 7 p.m. at the Leisure Time Club, Minnesota Street. Admission is CDHS membership or \$5.00. Coffee and cookies are supplied.

---

## **Simcoe County Archaeological Management Plan Steering Committee Report**

by Ted Duncan

Background: The *Planning Act* and the *Ontario Heritage Act* requires that municipal decision makers and planners be aware of all lands containing known archaeological sites or areas of archaeological potential, and that all decisions are made in accordance with provincial policies and regulations. Planning authorities should consider and promote archaeological management plans and cultural plans in conserving cultural heritage and archaeological resources, with the need to recognize, conserve and educate the public in regards to cultural heritage conservation, including archaeological features and sites. The *County* is undertaking the preparation and completion of a cultural heritage and/or archaeological management plan to assist in identifying sensitive cultural and archaeological areas including cemeteries and burials within the County. As a result, the County is undertaking to develop Indigenous Consultation Protocols to address the above-noted legislative re-

quirements and cultural heritage and archaeology policies.

Dr. Ronald Williamson gave us a background as to why the County is undertaking this Management Plan. This all stems from the "Truth and Reconciliation" process and the resulting changes in Ontario's Heritage Policies concerning the consideration of archaeological sites. First Nations have rights because they lived in the area and/or because of signing Treaties.

The Policy not yet in law puts forward the concept that First Nations will be consulted and must give "Free Prior Informed Consent" to development. This new part to the planning process is not clear as to how it would work. The County wants a plan to set protocols for the engagement of Indigenous Nations in this planning process. Both the Municipalities and the First Nations will understand how planning should work within the County. One of the difficulties is the capacity of First Nations to

have people in place and the money to deal with the massive planning situations they will face from Townships, Towns and Cities.

The Plan will map potential pre-contact sites (known and possible new sites). It will document potential historic sites (cemeteries, homestead sites). It will develop an archaeological model suggesting potential sites. It will outline the intensity of archaeological sites (archaeological resource potential ARP).

Discussions will be around Official Plans, Public Works, Zoning by-laws, Site plans, Plans of subdivisions and Variants. All Municipalities will need Heritage Policies in place and the people who understand them.

Another meeting of the Committee will occur in June to give feedback. By Fall 2018 it is hoped that there will be a potential model for the plan ready. Also draft plans, a draft report, draft planning legislation and a draft contingency plans will be ready for the County.

## **Spring OMAH Event** by Mary Ann Grant

OMAH hosts OPP Inspector (retired) Irena Lawrenson as guest speaker on May 16 at 7:30 p.m. with her talk entitled: Restorative Justice and its use within Ontario's Judicial and Indigenous Communities.

Restorative justice, a different way of addressing conflict and crime, has been part of Canada's criminal justice system for over 40 years, and yet little is known

about it. What is it? How does it work? Who is involved? Is it only available for Indigenous Peoples? Why may there soon be a resurgence? To learn the answers to these questions, join us on to hear Irena Lawrenson talk about her experiences with Restorative Justice within the judicial community prior to her retirement.

In 1974 Irena was one of the first

38 women hired by the OPP as an operational police officer. After a storied career, Irena has pursued her passions and interests in retirement, acting as a facilitator and counsellor in restorative justice in Orillia, while holding various board positions, including board president of Jubilee House.

The OMAH History Committee would like to thank everyone for a great 2017/2018 season.

---

## **Sir John A Dinner** by Mary Ann Grant

The Annual Sir John A Macdonald Dinner held at the Hawk Ridge Golf Club on Saturday, January 13 was a huge success.

The Dinner is a much anticipated social and cultural event in the life of Orillia. This was evident, with the largest audience in the twenty year history of the Dinner in attendance.

Over the years, in addition to celebrating the birthday and legacy of Sir John A, the Dinner has become a celebration of the Canada that has evolved because of Macdonald's vision and that of the other Fathers of Confederation.

Our keynote speaker, Sally Armstrong, the well-known journalist, author, human rights activist and recent recipient of the Officer of the Order Canada, captivated the audience with her thought provoking talk "Canada - Who Do We Think We Are". Armstrong spoke of how Canada has evolved from Macdonald's vision: a country of peace, order and good government, to a country that is respected worldwide. As a journalist, whose work has

taken her to war zones around the world, Sally has witnessed the pain, suffering and injustice that war has brought to the people.

Sally was very enthusiastic about Canada, but did not steer away from the controversy surrounding the legacy of Sir John A, nor did she ignore the initiatives afoot to remove his names from pubs and schools. Rather, she focused on how the strong foundation of peace, order and good government has given us, as Canadians, the strength and grounding, not only to accept that his legacy carries with it legitimate grievances that must be addressed if we are to live in harmony, but to recognize that the Canada he was so instrumental in founding has also imbued us with the moral courage to confront an injustice when we see it, and more importantly, to do something about it.

Seated in the audience as special guests were some Orillia High School students. They had attended the centennial ceremony at the Vimy Ridge Memorial last April and had observed firsthand what it meant to hear the whistle and

go over the top. As the generation to whom the torch is being passed, we can be sure that Sally's message about having the moral courage to confront an injustice will have a lasting impact.

This major fundraiser for the Orillia Museum of Art and History (OMAH) both from surplus proceeds from the Dinner and generous contributions from our sponsors, supports OMAH's general programs for the benefit our community. We are eternally grateful for that support. Our sponsors include: C.E. (Ted) Burton Inc, Ellis Hearing Aid Service, John Mayo, The Shock Doctors, Thor Motors Orillia, Subaru of Orillia, Ron Johnston Insurance Ltd and Mundell Funeral Home Ltd.

Members of the Sir John A. Macdonald Dinner Committee met with the Executive Director of the Orillia Museum of Art and History Ninette Gyorody recently to present \$6500.00 in support of OMAH.

Now, on to the search for a dynamic speaker for next year!



## 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

**April 12** *Throwback Thursday*

*Trivia Night* The Local Gastropub

7:30 p.m.

### Barrie Historical Association

barriehistorical.com

Contact Mark Fisher

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

**April 21** *200 Years of Music*

see p. 1

**May** Spring Dinner Details TBA

### 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.

**April 9** *Jean Hutchinson* Agnes

Macphail: Canada's First Lady

Member of Parliament

### 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.

**Apr. 21** *200 Years of Music* see p.1

### 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.

**April 18** *Dr. Michael Stevenson*

Stories in Bronze: Orillia's

Champlain Monument and

Indigenous (Mis) Representations in

Sculpture

**May 16** *Irena Lawreson*

Restorative Justice and its use

within Ontario's Judicial and

Indigenous Communities

### Orillia Museum of Art and History

orilliamuseum.org 705-326-2159

**May 9** Carmichael Lecture *Brian*

*Harris* Canoe Lake and the Mystery

of Tom Thompson

**April 21-Sept. 2** *Free Spirits: The*

*Mariposa Folk Festival in Orillia*

### Penetanguishene Centennial Museum and Archives

penetanguishene.ca/en/

Museum.asp?\_mid\_=23034

Contact Nicole Jackson

705-549-2150

### Ramara Historical Society

yesteryearscelebration.weebly.com

Contact Cathy Westcott

westcott.cathy963@gmail.com

Meet at Udney Community Centre

7 p.m. 3rd Thurs Jan-June, Sept-Dec

**April 19** *Gay Guthrie* Vintage

Cookbooks

**May 17** *Dr. Tom Garry*

Prominent People of Ramara

**June 21** *Fire Chief Dave*

*McCarthy* History of Ramara Fire

Services

### Simcoe County Branch, Genealogical Society

simcoe.ogs.ca

Contact Nancy Leveque

Meet at Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-Day Saints 2 p.m.

**April 7** *Linda Corupe* Strategies

to Overcome Genealogical Pitfalls

**May 5** *Sher Leetooze* Researching

in Devon and Cornwall

**June 9** *Fred Blair* War of 1812

### Simcoe County Museum

museum.simcoe.ca

Contact Kelly Swift-Jones

705-728-3721

**April 25** Simcoe County Heritage Fair

**June 9-10** Wheels and Tracks in Motion

### 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