

# News & Views

# SCHA

*Simcoe County Historical Association*

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### SAVE THE DATE!

Something very special is happening  
on September 10, 2022

## Movers and Shakers

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(705) 326-9809

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SCHA Box 144, Barrie, ON L4M4S9



## President's Report

Hello again and thanks everyone for your support of SCHA!

Our News and Views newsletter has been edited by Jill Hynes for over 20 years. She is a life member of SCHA and a former Board member. Jill has helped to hold together our Association through her work as editor, but she has decided to retire from the editorship because of her work at Georgian College. We will miss her at the Newsletter but she tells us that she will remain as a member. We all thank Jill for her support and work for the SCHA.

The thing is we are looking for a new editor. We have delayed getting out our Fall edition and so our next newsletter will be for the Fall/Winter. I must apologize for the delay as I said that I would look after it but got distracted with my other activities. It was put lower on my priority list and not done.

On the positive side of things, thanks to John Merritt , we gave out the Andrew Hunter awards for historical writing to three grade 10 students from Innisdale SS and Bradford High school (See John's report). Also our Speaker Series continued with a talk by Graeme Davis of the Simcoe County Forest Service.

Good things continue! We are still planning to have heritage business honoured in the spring after a Covid delay. The Barn project, photographing County barns, is still in progress. Amanda Wilce, Jan Blommaert and Mark Hall in Innisfil are working to complete the job there. Oro-Medonte, Severn and Ramara Townships are complete. I think other Townships may be done but I haven't heard. The pictures still must be organized to be put on-line and for the Archives in Midhurst.

The County is reviewing its Official Plan. We are trying to get across to the politicians that we need to have more protection for heritage buildings around the County. Thanks to Deb Crawford (see her report), our voice (although small when compared to the loud voices of developers) will be heard. All of us (and we care) should make our views known!

Simcoe County Historical Association is an organization that is in transition. Over the last 4 years a small group of us have worked to keep the Association relevant and functioning. We want to promote and preserve our County's History and we would like SCHA to be the connector of all the Societies and associations in the County.

## President's Report... con't

The County Connections group, representing some of our member organizations, had a number of Zoom meetings. There was hope that these meetings would bring us together more. We had some success but interest seems to be waning. Many of us seem to be tired and losing interest because of Covid. More than a few organizations have not met during covid or had few meetings.

We had hoped that a History Conference would bring us together, but Covid has caused us to cancel the event twice. We are looking to the Fall of 2022. A County Grant will help us bring the Conference to all of you. Thanks to our Secretary, Donna Wice, for her work getting us the Grant. It will help with not only the Conference, but the re-branding of SCHA.

We still need a treasurer. Deb Exel retired from the Board, but continues to look after our financial duties, social media, zoom meetings and the website. As I said earlier, we are a small group dedicated to SCHA's survival. We need members to step up if they want the organization to be there in the future. If the Simcoe County Historical Association has value for you, then we need you!

I don't want to sound too negative. There are lots of positives! Over the last little while we have had new volunteers join us on the Board and that is good. We are doing good things as you can see from the activities outlined above. I guess I just hoped for more! Thanks to all of you who are involved now. You are wonderful people who believe in what SCHA is trying to do.

We have another AGM coming up in the spring. We can't go on unless we get some more people to join our Board and take positions. Having said what I've said at this time, I'm letting you all know that I will not be running for President in 2022. I will stay on as Past President and take a lead in the Barn Project. I regret to have to do that, but I think we need new leadership and energy going into the future.

Ted Duncan;  
SCHA President 2017 - 2022



## Jill Hynes

The Executive of the SCHA would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the entire membership, to extend our thanks to Jill Hynes who is retiring as editor of our regular newsletter. Jill has been a professor of Communications at Georgian College since 2010 and has capably arranged, edited, printed and sent out our newsletter for an even longer period of time. We are greatly indebted to her for her past services to this organization.

**Did you miss our November Speakers Series?**


**Watch the replay video [here](#).**



VIRTUAL HISTORY SPEAKER SERIES 2022

### Yellowhead's Revolt

*How an Ojibwa Indigenous leader stood up to the white man and his fellow chiefs in a battle against residential schools*




In 1846 in Ojibwa, Indian agent Thomas Anderson held a 'Great Meeting' of 17 chiefs from across Southern Ontario to finalize a plan to solve the 'Indian Problem'. A big part of the plan was creating the first residential schools in Canada. Historian DANE TOWN tells this long-forgotten story of how Chief Yellowhead of Ramo stood defiant in doing what he felt was right for his tribe.

**SPECIAL ZOOM LECTURE  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, AT 7 P.M.**

To register and receive a link to the talk, Call Monica at 705 326 2159 or email [info@omahamuseum.org](mailto:info@omahamuseum.org)

The lecture is free, but donations to OMAH are appreciated



**UPCOMING IN 2022**

February 16: Fred Blair – Local Black Veterans of the War of 1812 (Black History Month)  
March 16: John Savage – Logging and Langford Mills

## What's in a Name?



It is a certainty that the first secondary school in Barrie was the Barrie Collegiate Institute although initially designated, in 1875, as the Barrie High School. At the time it marked the similar rebranding of all the local Grammar Schools throughout the province. From now on it was clearly established that education of the young would be non-sectarian, publicly funded and open to all. Four years later the Barrie High School moved into a substantial brick structure of six spacious rooms on Blake

Street. By 1880, however, with an enrollment of over 60 students and at least four teachers, it became a “collegiate institute”—a minimum of four rooms being the only other requirement. Barrie thereby joined the exalted ranks of such urban centers as Toronto, Kingston, Hamilton, Peterborough and Cobourg. Other population centers in Simcoe County—initially Orillia and Collingwood-- would soon follow Barrie up the educational ladder. Indeed, “collegiate institutes” became ubiquitous throughout the land.

Eventually, many Ontario graduates could wryly recount that they obtained their education as inmates of an “institution.” On the other hand, the “collegiate” label was suggestive of an advanced academic standard, especially when a fifth year, later known as grade 13, was added to the Ontario curriculum in 1921. In part this was done to save students the cost of a first year of university but it would appear that it was never equated as such unlike British Columbia where immense distance from the few universities of the lower mainland made it eminently sensible.

Of course, in the 1960s this also meant that an Ontario graduate, like myself, could hereby vault directly into second year at the University of British Columbia and thus acquire a four year degree in three. But in Ontario, the universities increasingly looked on grade 13 as a testing ground - in reality a “choke-point”- that supposedly insured high standards. In 1921 there was already a province wide system of grade 12 leaving exams—to say nothing of high school entrance exams until 1949. So if “junior matriculation” to graduate required such rigorous testing it followed that an even more strenuous set of exams were necessary to cap the fifth year or “senior matriculation.”

By the 1950s the “departmentals” had become a full-blown system, fraught with frayed nerves, where your academic future depended on a grueling set of nine one-shot-takes-all exams, each three hours in length. For those who came up short, there was the added ignominy of all results being published in the local newspaper each August. In the 1960s increasing expense, added to parental pressure and the unfairness of a system that barred the way for many to higher education, led to its abolishment in 1968.

On the plus side, however, there was the exalted status of being a “mature” student, in returning for a sixth year-- let alone a seventh-- “to complete my grade 13.” Leaving the educational womb and facing reality was sometimes difficult for those addicted to high school sports or the joys of the school band. Rebranded in 1988, as Ontario Academic Credits or “OACs,” grade 13 limped on, trying to be at least suggestive of a preliminary college year, but finally put out of its misery with its demise in 2003.

Established as early as 1871, the collegiate institutes were eventually characterized by “specialists” as heads of departments, with the lofty status of four year “Honour” degrees, in contrast to those who emerged with a lowly “pass” degree after a mere three years attendance at an Ontario university. The overall intent was to provide the appropriate education for students planning to enroll in the universities of the day, with their heavy emphasis on the arts and humanities. Initially, the more modest high schools were designed to provide vocational training but the rapid changes of the following decades soon blurred the distinction between the two streams. Yet only recently, did the Simcoe County District School Board replace the long-winded Orillia District Collegiate and Vocational Institute with the all-inclusive Orillia Secondary School.

Matters remained as such until 1948, when the Barrie School Board, responsible only for a single collegiate - as opposed to the Barrie Public School Board, responsible for elementary education -was amalgamated with the five surrounding townships of Innisfil, Oro, Vespra, Sunnidale and Essa. In recognition of this, it became the Barrie District Collegiate Institute, It was a touchy subject based on the old rural-versus-urban divide and the fact that education funding was still largely dependent on local tax assessments. Rural trustees were reluctant to pay for facilities utilized more by urban students than by their own children. At best, rural students were left in place with “continuation schools” that added grade 9 and 10 to the elementary curriculum, if an adequate teacher and space could be found.

The opening of Barrie North Collegiate, in 1957, at least gave some of the “inmates” an option as to which institution they would attend, but it took another decade for release with the establishment of Eastview Secondary School in 1968. Meanwhile the original BCI was simply rebranded as Barrie Central Collegiate until it was demolished in 2016. In Simcoe County only Stayner and Collingwood retain their original designation as a “collegiate institute.” Indeed, it is an obsolete term, fast slipping into oblivion with the

aged structures on which it is still emblazoned or giving way to the undistinguished “High School” or the now prevalent “Secondary School.”



Adapted from “Notes in Time, A History of W.A. Fisher and the Barrie Collegiate Band” by Mark Fisher, contact [mwfisher51@gmail.com](mailto:mwfisher51@gmail.com)



# The return of the SCHA Andrew Hunter Award

## By John Merritt

Last year marked the return of the Andrew Hunter Award for the first time since the closure of Laurentian University's history program in Barrie several years ago.

The award was originally offered to students of history at Laurentian's Barrie campus for best essay written on a topic in Simcoe County history. Now, the Andrew Hunter Award has been retooled for Grade 10 Canadian History students from participating Simcoe County schools. It is hoped that in its new form, the revamped award will continue to encourage local young scholars in their pursuit of history.

With the help of Brent Dyck, Canadian and World Studies Lead at Bradford District High School (BDHS), students from two schools participated in last year's award. Essays by participating students were submitted by their teachers with the students' consent. The winning essays were selected by the SCHA's Board of Directors.

Lavanya Chopra of BDHS won 1st place, Jordan Walker of Innisdale Secondary School won 2nd place, and Lisette Harrison, also of Innisdale Secondary School, won 3rd place.

Lavanya wrote her essay on the history of prejudice and discrimination in Canada because she wanted to shed more light on this topic, which she believes is not widely acknowledged. She enjoys painting in her free time and has had an interest in history since a young age.

Jordan wrote her essay on the history of colonialism in North America, partly inspired by the recent crises related to the history of our treatment of Indigenous peoples. She enjoys outdoor activities like sailing and camping.

Lisette wrote her essay on the history of anti-Black racism in Canada. She only recently became interested in history, inspired by the desire to dig deeper into contemporary issues of inequality in our society. She hopes to continue to expand her knowledge of history and the world and people around her.



Each winner was presented with a cash prize, an award certificate, and their choice of a local history book selected by our very own Donna Wice.

The SCHA will offer the Andrew Hunter Award again this year and is hoping to continue to grow the number of schools participating in this program. Any teachers interested in participating in this award can contact the SCHA for more information at [info@simcoecountyhistory.ca](mailto:info@simcoecountyhistory.ca)

# Oh Percy!

## By Mary Harris, Barrie Historical Archive

Part 1



From 1841 until the last prisoner was transferred out in 2001, a steady stream of characters and unfortunates came through the doors of the old Barrie Jail atop the Mulcaster St. hill. She sits there yet, a limestone castle filled with stories.

This is the tale of one of the rather colourful sorts who spent a little time as a guest of the Ontario justice system.

The Pelch name was well known in Collingwood a century ago, and not unfamiliar to the courtrooms of the county as well.

Several family members had brushes with the law over the years

but the most flamboyant of them all was most certainly Percy Pelch.

Percy Pelch first made a name for himself when he and a co-conspirator pulled off an audacious theft in late February 1911. The two young men brazenly helped themselves to the coats and personal items belonging to visitors to Collingwood's Maple Street Methodist Church who were enjoying some entertainment in the Sunday school room there.

Bold and quick as they were, Pelch and company were almost immediately on the radar of the local constables after the theft was discovered. The law quickly descended on the room, near the market, known to be rented by Percy Pelch and the Northern Advance of March 2 described the scramble that followed.

"When the police entered the place, they say there was considerable excitement for a moment. Percy Pelch threw a mattress out of a window, following it very quickly, while Bert made himself scarce equally as quick. Since, neither have been seen."

The hunt was on for the two light fingered fugitives who had dared to steal from folks under the roof of a church building. While no more mention of the mysterious Bert is made in the Barrie newspapers, it is clear that Percy Pelch was scooped up and incarcerated in the Barrie Jail in the weeks that followed.

Apparently, the living arrangements weren't exactly suited to Percy's taste because, on June 30, 1911, he saw his chance and bolted from the jail grounds while the jailer was distracted for a moment. What followed was a manhunt, a strange automobile ride, accusations of collusion within the jail, an investigation by the Inspector of Prisons and a new pile of charges.

Just after dinner, Percy had been brought outside to cut the grass on the grounds when visitors arrived at the jail. For some reason, Jailer Jonathan Sissons left Pelch unattended while he passed through his living quarters on the way to unlock the front door for the visitors. Within minutes, he heard shouting coming from the north side of the jail. A prisoner had just escaped!

Wiley Percy Pelch had escape on his mind for some time. Unnoticed until after his disappearance, the door frame of the jail wash house had been pried off and Pelch had retrieved his civilian clothes which he had been secretly wearing beneath his prison uniform for an unknown period of time. After getting clear of the jail, he discarded his jail garb and blended into the community.

The seemingly rather fit 24-year-old escapee sprinted to Midhurst where he caught a train.

... to be continued.

# **Simcoe County's MCR – Does it matter?**

## **By Deb Crawford**

Perhaps you have heard. With the passing of “A Place to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshow Office Consolidation 2020”, Ontario has established revised population and growth targets for the province. While this has been the process to manage growth in Ontario since 2005, this time around, Simcoe County has a separate set of expectations are part of the legislation.

Simcoe County is expected to see a 55% increase in population over the next 30 years.

In response, the County has embarked on a robust technical review of the various policies and master plans as well as consultation with municipalities, stakeholders, developers, and the general public to update and craft the revised County Official Plan from the updated municipal official plans. The process, the Municipal Comprehensive Review began in 2020 to meet the provincial deadline of July 2022.

Each of the 16 lower-level municipalities in the County will need to update their local official plans to accommodate their share of the revised targets and objectives. The cities of Orillia and Barrie, with their own set of targets and challenges, will submit revised plans directly to the province.

Each municipality is faced with different challenges generating comments that are supportive of or opposed to the options and the ramifications of those options over the past few months.

As a heritage advocate does it matter? The decisions that will be made concerning the amount of agricultural land that will be developed into residential housing over the next 30 years may very well change the natural and built heritage landscape of your community.

How that will change will depend largely on how local municipalities plan to deal with their share of the growth targets. “Intensification” doesn't have to mean destruction of existing buildings in our rural downtowns. Increased affordable housing stock doesn't have to mean single detached units on prime agricultural land. And progress and development shouldn't be accomplished by creating garbage for new landfill sites.

Unfortunately, the landscape of south Simcoe is guaranteed to change as settlement centres grow and roads are widened to accommodate more and more traffic.

As a heritage organization we support development which leads to affordable housing and employment opportunities in our communities. We do however feel that our built heritage should be preserved or re-used and not destroyed for the sake of convenience and shear profit.

There are many studies available within Ontario, Canada and the world that recognize the value of today's existing buildings from an historic and environmental perspective. This is an opportunity to embrace new ways to grow our communities while preserving what we have.

For more information and to keep up to date on the discussions and decisions that will impact on our natural and built heritage, look for updates and opportunities to participate in discussion at your local level and the county level. Contact your local municipality to find out more. Register with the County at the website to receive automatic updates: <https://www.simcoe.ca/Planning/Pages/MCR.aspx>

A copy of “A Place to Grow” can be found at:

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/place-grow-growth-plan-greater-golden-horseshoe#:~:text=A%20Place%20to%20Grow%20is,a%20high%20quality%20of%20life> .

## Membership Renewal for 2022

It's that time again – time to start renewing your SCHA membership!

Individual and group memberships in the SCHA are valid from Jan-Dec each year. This means that fees for all our members are due this January.

Remember that fees for individuals, couples, families and groups are all just \$20. You can pay online via PayPal or credit card [here](#) or mail a cheque to The Simcoe County Historical Association, PO Box 144, Barrie ON along with a completed Membership Renewal [form](#) with your up-to-date contact information. This will help us keep in touch and ensure that you continue to receive your newsletter.

Your membership fees help the SCHA continue to do what it does, from our speakers' series to Heritage Business and Andrew Hunter Awards programs to our Community Partnership Grants. Don't forget that SCHA members can also volunteer for our Board of Directors.

If you have any questions about your SCHA membership, please contact John Merritt at [member-ship@simcoecountyhistory.ca](mailto:membership@simcoecountyhistory.ca).

Thanks to all of you for your continued support of local history, and here's hoping 2022 will give all of us the opportunity to do more of everything – including preserving, promoting and appreciating the history of Simcoe County.

Thanks, John Merritt, SCHA Membership Chair

## Member Organizations

Please contact organizations directly for current information as regularly scheduled events or meetings may be cancelled due to Covid-19

Alliston Historical Society  
Box 88 Alliston ON 705-435-5626  
Contact [Carolyn Knowles](#)

Archives of Ontario Library  
Contact [Frank Van Kalmthout](#)

[Barrie Historical Archive](#)  
Contact [Deb Exel](#)

Bass Lake Rate Payers Association  
12 Ward Ave Oro-Medonte ON  
705-955-2262 [basslakera@gmail.com](mailto:basslakera@gmail.com)

[Bradford/West Gwillimbury Public Library](#)

Bradford/West Gwillimbury Local History Association  
Contact [Jan Blommaert](#)

[Coldwater Canadian Heritage Museum](#)

[Collingwood Museum](#)  
Contact Susan Warner 705-445-4811

[The Cookstown Community Development Team](#)  
Deb Crawford contact at 705-791-2051 or [Email](#)

Essa Historical Society

Essa Public Library  
[Contact](#)

[Friends of Fort Willow](#)  
Contact [Bryan Wesson](#)

Heritage Barrie  
Contact [Tomasz Wierzba](#)

[Historic Military Establishment of Upper Canada](#)  
Contact [David Brunelle](#)

Huronian Chapter, Ontario Archeological Society  
Contact [John Raynor](#)

Huronian Museum Box 638, 549 Little Lake Park  
Rd. Midland ON, 705-526-2844  
[huroniamuseum@gmail.com](mailto:huroniamuseum@gmail.com)

[Innisfil Historical Society](#)  
[Contact](#) Donna Wice

[Museum on the Boyne](#)  
[Contact](#) Katie Huddleston  
705-435-4030 x. 1802

[Orillia Museum of Art and History](#)  
Contact 705-326-2159

[Orillia Public Library](#) 36 Mississauga St. W Orillia,  
705-325-2338 [jturvey@orilliapubliclibrary.ca](mailto:jturvey@orilliapubliclibrary.ca)

[Ramara Historical Society](#)  
Contact [Cathy Westcott](#)

Simcoe County Archives  
1149 Hwy 26 Minesing ON, 705-726-9331  
[archives@simcoe.ca](mailto:archives@simcoe.ca)

[Simcoe County Museum](#)  
Contact Kelly Swift-Jones 705-728-3721

[Stayner Heritage Society](#)  
Contact Tom Scholte 705-517-5171

Tecumseth & West Gwillimbury Historical Society  
Contact: [Janine Harris- Wheatley](#)  
905-936-6549

Township of Essa [Contact](#)

Township of Oro-Medonte Heritage Committee  
148 Line 7 South Oro-Medonte ON L0L 2E0  
705-487-4003 [cathy.keane@oro-medonte.ca](mailto:cathy.keane@oro-medonte.ca)

Township of Tiny  
Contact [Pamela Zimmerman](#)