



ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 51, Georgetown, Ontario, Canada L7G 4T1
www.esquesinghistoricalsociety.ca

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Changes in the Fruit and Vegetable Industry in Halton and Peel Counties

by W.D. McIlveen

Most of the early farms in our general area boasted a small orchard that supplied the needs of the new residents. At one time however, the Region of Peel and



Halton supplied a large part of the local fresh produce required by the growing City of Toronto. Aside from the relative proximity, there were two main features which made possible the development of the fruit and vegetable industries in the southern parts of each county. One was the proximity to shipping on Lake Ontario. Docks at Port Credit, Oakville, Bronte, and Burlington made it possible to transport the highly-perishable goods on regularly scheduled ships. The second was the presence of highly suitable soils in the vicinity of the Lake. The area along the lake had fertile sandy soils that were derived from the beaches of former Lake Iroquois. The agricultural potential of these

Figure 1. Physiographic map showing the sandy soils in Halton and Peel. (Sandy soils shown as yellow)

lands was soon realized by the early settlers in the area. Sites more removed from the shore were generally less-blessed with soils suitable for horticultural production but transportation was a critical issue until these more distant sites were serviced by railroads in 1897.

Besides the productive lands along the Lake, there are two additional important areas where the soil was particularly desirable. One is an area extending southeast from Hornby. This area is presently devoted to nursery crops and some vegetable production and has seen relatively little



Figure 2. Illustration of strawberry pickers, Oakville, 1876, by William Cruikshank.

pressure for development of urban areas to the present. The other area which is nearer Esquesing extends from Norval through Huttonville to Churchville. That area had extensive areas of apple orchards and strawberry fields, as well as greenhouses, spinach, rhubarb, and other crops. Most of that area is in the process of urban development as the City of Brampton expands to occupy 'Brampton West'. A number of these operations have moved further away from Toronto. The fruit-producing area of Mississauga, namely Dixie and Clarkson, and Oakville to Burlington produced many different crops including apples, pears, strawberries, melons, tomatoes and other vegetables.



The more tender types of produce were limited to markets in Toronto and Hamilton or were sometimes sold at roadside stands. Apples in particular which could tolerate longer storage were exported as far

Figure 3. Remnant fruit orchard in Burlington, 2004.

away as England. Unfortunately, the fruit and vegetable production areas in south Peel and Halton were subjected to urban growth through the 1970s. These areas have very little remaining agricultural production but there are still vestiges of the former horticultural glory if one knows what to look for. There are still some remnant orchards (untended) and occasionally trees from the former orchards were integrated into the landscaping of residential properties. A similar fate awaits the



Figure 4. Remnant of an apple tree in urban residential area, Baltimore Road, Clarkson,

area around Huttonville.

Elsewhere, there are still a number of operations that continue as pick-your-own apples and strawberries (Fig 5). Some subsidiary industries arose to service the fruit and vegetable production. One was the need for containers. There were two substantial basket production facilities that

supplied not only the local area but other places as well. One was the Oakville Basket Company that lasted from at least 1890 to 1984 on Trafalgar Road in Oakville. The other was the Glover Basket Works which operated in Burlington from 1893 to 1966. As well, there were several canners and facilities that produced apple cider, mainly in Oakville and Burlington.

Perhaps it was inevitable that the lands involved would be turned over to a different land use (i.e. urban spread) based on economics. It is most regrettable that these lands with probably the best soils in all of Canada were or are being permanently lost from agriculture use.



Figure 5. Strawberry pickers, Huttonville, 2004.

Acton Fall Fair 1916 –Prize Winners –FRUIT

Snow apples: Percy Martin, Stella McLain. Baldwins: Neil Gillies & Sons, Percy Martin. Northern Spies: Neil Gillies & Sons. King of Tompkins: Percy Martin. Duchess: John R. Kennedy. Russet: Leslie & Pearen. Winter Apples: Neil Gillies & Sons. Crab Apples: Percy Martin, Andrew Crec. Fall pears: M.E. Turner, Neil Gillies & Sons. Winter Pears: Mrs. Geo. Havill, Leslie & Pearen. Plums, Lombard: Miss B.A. Gordon, Neil Gillies & sons. Gage: Percy martin, W.R. Wheeler. Bradshaw: W.R. Wheeler (Acton Free Press, 28 Sept. 1916)



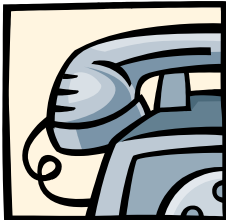
ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

2016

- Wed. 09 March **CHANGES IN THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INDUSTRY IN HALTON AND PEEL COUNTIES**
Join Dr. W.D. (Bill) McIlveen as he outlines the rise and decline of the fruit and vegetable industry in Halton and Peel over the course of European settlement.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Main Street, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 13 Apr. 2016 **THE STREET ARAB –BRITISH HOME CHILDREN**
Sandra Joyce, author of three books on British Home Children will speak about her search for her father’s family. She discovered that this child migrant scheme brought more than 120,000 children to Canada as indentured farm workers and domestics. Sandra will speak about the contribution of these migrants to our country.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Main Street, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 11th May 2016 **“THE CURSED FENIANS!”**
Local historian and author Rev. Rick Ruggle will revisit the Fenian Raids of 1866 and regale us with tales of their “attacks” on Canada and our response, leading to the formal organization of our militia.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Main Street, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 9th June 2016 **NORVAL VILLAGE WALKING TOUR**
Stroll through the streets of Norval village and learn about its history from life-long resident Kathy Gastle, former Mayor of Halton Hills and President of the Norval Lucy Maud Montgomery Society. Note the early start time of 7 p.m.
NORVAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 499 Guelph Street, Norval, 7:00 p.m.

RENEW YOUR 2016 MEMBERSHIP

Refreshments served from 7:00 p.m.



Stephen Blake	905 877-8251	President
Karen Hunter	905 877-7363	Treasurer
Dawn Livingstone	905 877-6506	Secretary
J. Mark Rowe	905 877-9510	Archivist
Jan Raymond	905 877-9172	Social
David Borrett	905 702-0737	Membership
Ron Raffan	905 457-7696	Webmaster
Ray Denny	905 877-3890	Publications

Society Notes

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

<www.esquesinghistoricalsociety.ca>

Send your e-mail to mrowe6@sympatico.ca or dawn.livingstone@sympatico.ca

EHS NEWSLETTER

John Mark Rowe prepared this newsletter with assistance from Karen Hunter, Dawn Livingstone and Rob Burnett. Submissions welcome.

Please consider an electronic newsletter sent to your e-mail address. Not only will you save the Society postage, you get to see the colour pictures!

MEMBERSHIP

We had 94 memberships for 2015-16. Our membership runs from February to February, so renewals are now due. The individual membership rate is \$20. The family or institution rate is \$25. Cheques payable to the Society can be mailed to our post box or payable by cash or cheque to our membership secretary, David Borrett at a public meeting.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

www.archives.gov.on.ca

EHS ARCHIVES

Your executive has decided to apply for a summer student this year and have submitted the application. He or she will continue with our work of updating our photograph collection and improving the selection of images on Halton Images as well as their descriptions.

Our Archives have been used by ASI writing reports for the McGibbon project and road work in south Esquesing.

Mark Rowe attended a workshop in support of the Credit Valley Trail project being planned by CVCA.

HALTON-PEEL OGS

Meetings are at Brampton Library, 65 Queen Street, East or Oakville Library, 120 Navy Street, at 2 p.m.

Mar. 20 – *Jim Leonard* – The Perkins Bull Collection, Brampton

Apr. 24 – *Sandra Joyce* – Belonging; sequel to her book on the British Home Children – Oakville

May 15 - Genealogy Road Show — chat with experts in different areas of genealogical research and family tree data record-keeping. **Georgetown** Public Library 2-4 p.m.

DEVEREAUX HOUSE

Open Thursdays 1-6 p.m. at 11494 Trafalgar Road, Georgetown. Watch for their Mother's Day Tea.

STREETSVILLE HIST. SOCIETY

Archives are open Sundays and Wednesdays from 1 to 4 p.m. at 4415 Mississauga road, Streetsville.

BRAMPTON HIST. SOCIETY

Heart Lake Presbyterian Church at 7:15.

March 17 – AGM and Heritage update.

April 21 – *Sarah Hood*, History of the Shirriff Food Company.

MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society meets at the Waldie Blacksmith Shop at 16 James Street on the third Thursday at 8p.m.

NASAGIWEYA HIST. SOCIETY

info@nasagiweyahistoricalociety.com

Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of March, April (Annual Meeting), May, June, July, August (BBQ), September October, November (Remembrance Day), December (Christmas Potluck).

TRAFALGAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

All events at former Palermo Schoolhouse, 2431 Dundas Street West, Oakville.

<http://www.tths.ca/events.html>

HALTON HILLS SPORTS MUSEUM

OPEN: Sat. 7-9 p.m. & Sunday 1-4:30 p.m. at Mold-Masters Sportsplex.

They are accepting nominations for the Sports Hall of Fame at jboyce3@cogeco.ca

The gala induction ceremony is on June 16th at the John Elliott Theatre, Georgetown.

TERRA COTTA HALL

Terra Cotta Community Hall rentals:
Contact Jen Lusby at 905-702-1056.

GRANDCHILDREN SOUGHT

My name is Terry Cockerell and I reside in Australia north of Sydney. I am the current owner of a 1936 Cord sedan that was originally purchased by Amos and Cordelia Mason of Bower Ave, Acton.



The attached composite picture shows the car and yours truly in front of the Mason's house which still stands in Bower Ave. The Post Office is next door to the RHS. I have been in contact with Jim Dills who was kind enough to supply the picture of the house.

I am trying to track down Amos and Cordelia's grandchildren. They had one son called William George Mason who was born in 1909. William married Edna Gibbons and they had four children called Richard, Frank, Judith and Jane. Hopefully they are all still alive. I would like to contact them.

Terry Cockerell tandgc@outlook.com

SUDDEN DEATH OF DENNIS BLAKE

Halton teacher Dennis Blake (1957-2016) died suddenly on 23 February at his home in Acton. Dennis was a presenter on postcards and a member of the EHS. His funeral was on 27 February.

L.M. MONTGOMERY BOOK CLUB

Join Deb Quaile, local author and member of the LM Montgomery Society, at a new book club featuring the works of famous Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery.

Meetings take place the third Thursday of each month (excluding July and August) starting April 21, 2016, 7 pm at the Carter Farm 9880 Winston Churchill Blvd. South, Norval.

Participants must register at immbookclub@gmail.com to be guaranteed a spot. April's meeting will commence with the first book Lucy Maud Montgomery published during her residence in Norval - and her first adult novel - *The Blue Castle* (1926). Themed refreshments to correspond with the literature will be served.

HALTON REGION MUSEUM

After a busy 2015, the staff at Heritage Services are looking forward to a productive 2016!

We've embarked on the development of an exhibition entitled *Who is Halton?* and are looking for your help in developing content. The exhibition is intended to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the founding of Halton County in 1816 and while it will discuss the history of the County and its historic people, we are also looking to hear the stories of current residents. Over the last month we have been conducting short interview sessions at local libraries across the Region; asking residents about their history and experiences living in Halton to capture their stories and memories for the exhibition. We hope the membership of the Esquesing Historical Society might be interested in sharing your stories and insight into the County's history.

If you have any questions regarding the project please contact Claire Bennett, Assistant Curator/Collections Coordinator at claire.bennett@halton.ca at your earliest convenience. We hope that you are interested in helping us with this exhibition and look forward to hearing from you soon. The survey can be found by following this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GB2LVYD>

Beyond Sit & Stay: Dogs In Our Service

(opens May 29th at the Halton Region Museum)
RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY

CREDIT RIVER RESTORATION

Have you ever wondered **what happens to Christmas trees** once they are put out on the curb? You may be surprised to learn, that some are used in stream restoration projects in the Credit River. Since 2008, CVC staff in partnership with the Region of Peel have collected Christmas trees curb-side.

As rivers flow, they naturally erode and deposit sediment creating a meandering path. Sensitive fish species like brook trout depend on cold, clean water. This occurs in well vegetated, stable streams where natural erosion processes have created calm, deep pools separated by faster moving currents in rapids. Some land practices such as the removal of plants and shrubs along river banks change these dynamics. That's where the old Christmas trees come in. CVC has been working on a stretch of river at Upper Credit Conservation Area in partnership with local stewardship organizations to narrow the shoreline that had been damaged by cattle. Using natural forces, trees are strategically positioned on the side of the river where sediments would naturally deposit. The many branches act like a net catching sediment. As a result the meandering path and natural width of the river are restored at a faster rate. The success of this project can be seen from the bridge at Upper Credit. In some areas, the river was 20 meters wide and has been narrowed by half.

Landowners with streams running through their property can affect water quality on site and downstream. Planting native plants and shrubs such as red-osier dogwood, white cedar and willow shrubs and maintaining an unmown strip of vegetation shades water keeping it cool and improves fish habitat.

-CVC Countryside Steward 20 Jan. 2016

MINI-GOLF TOURNAMENT

The Friends of the Halton Hills Library are sponsoring an indoor mini-golf day at the Georgetown Library to raise funds to support the Acton and Georgetown Library projects.

On Saturday March 19th golfing is available during library hours for \$5 /child and \$10 /adult. Just show up at enjoy golfing throughout the library!

Saturday evening will be a gala golf night with miniature golfing, hors d' oeuvres, cash bar and silent auction. Tickets at \$50 each can be purchased at either library. Admission is limited so buy your tickets soon. The gala evening begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Georgetown Library.

The Friends of the Library have supported the Esquesing Historical Society in the past.

AGM SUCCESSFUL

The Esquesing Historical Society had their annual general meeting in February and returned all the incumbent executive of the Society. Karen Hunter presented her financial statement and it was approved. The Archival Report can be found at http://www.esquesinghistoricalsociety.ca/arc_hives.html.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It is time to renew your 2016 membership in the EHS. Our year begins in February so prompt payment of the \$20 fee will ensure your newsletter subscription will continue to arrive on time! Payment can be made at our meetings or by post to P.O. Box 51, Georgetown, ON L7G 4T1.

THIS WILL BE YOUR FINAL NEWSLETTER IF YOU DO NOT RENEW YOUR 2016 MEMBERSHIP!

My father, Robert Joyce

By Sandra Joyce

www.sandrajoyce.com



Robert Joyce and daughter Sandra

It was a small funeral: the few friends left standing, the boys from the Legion, the Ladies' Auxiliary from my mother's church and us: my sister, my mum, overcome with dementia and a lost sense of time and occasion, and me. The hired piper played Amazing Grace, a stirring lament and The Maple Leaf Forever as the people shuffled forward to view carefully chosen pictures, dad's war medals and the urn.

After the service, we shared some soft drinks and small, neatly cut sandwiches. While Mum smiled and nodded in her fog, one milky-eyed old dear said to me, "Sad that none of his family could make it over from the Old

Country. Where was he from again?"

I looked at her, not wanting to answer. "He was from Scotland. The Lowlands." The rest was none of mum's friend's business. Especially not the orphanage where he'd been placed by his uncaring father after being placed in the Poor House as his mother was not able to care for him. Moving away quickly, I sadly realized that I knew very little about my dad's past and my heritage.

Sometime after he had passed my sister and I decided to find out a little more about this stocky, blue-eyed Scot, who'd always been careful with his words. This man, who aside from the few war stories he'd told us, seemed not to have existed before our family started.

We found his name on the steamship Athenia's passenger list, obtained in Halifax. It told us the sending organization was The Orphan Homes of Scotland. Our father, Robert, was fifteen, his brother, an uncle we had never met, was twelve.

To our surprise, on this list from 1925, there were a whole slew of other children who were being sent to do farm work. It also stated quite coldly that they were sent without a penny and were apparently healthy with no sign of mental defects.

When we contacted Quarrier's, which is what The Orphan Homes of Scotland (OHS) is now called, they sent us a packet of photocopied documents. The document 'surrendering' the boys to the OHS, giving them the right to send the boys to Canada, was signed by my grandfather. More surprising still was the fact that my grandmother was still alive at the time of signing, too. The document said that she had lost interest in the care of her children after her divorce in 1919.

We had discovered that our dad was part of a child migrant scheme, eked out between the British and Canadian governments, to send at least 100,000 children to work as indentured farm workers and domestics.

I had never heard of this immigration scheme before. A passion quickly developed in me, – to give a voice to these children who had been sent from the Old Country to the New, where instead of a fresh start, they were silenced by stigmatism and rampant eugenics.

And so, the five year research project for my novel, “The Street Arab – The Story of a British Home Child” began.

On a personal level, the research I did helped me to discover my father. It gave me the reasons for his peculiarities, his problems developing friends, the difficulties we had speaking to each other once I was adult.

And it also made me long for the family that I’d never known: the grandmother, who had still been alive until 1985, despite my father’s convictions that she’d passed away; an aunt and her family, who I had never known about, living near Glasgow and my uncle and his family, who are somewhere in Canada.

Dad was born in a place called Lochore, a town that was centred around a coal mine (and a loch). After the outbreak of the World War I and his father’s enlistment, my grandmother and her three children moved to Kirkcaldy, where they’d assumed they would be helped by family.

After the diagnosis of battle-induced shellshock, my grandfather was offered an apprenticeship as a tailor. But sometime between my grandmother’s move to Kirkcaldy and the return of my grandfather, the marriage broke down and they were divorced. All three children were abandoned at the Kirkcaldy-Abbotshall Combination Poor House by their mother.

Their father picked the two boys up to take them to The Orphan Homes of Scotland where they lived along with fifteen hundred others. The OHS was almost self-sufficient, complete with a laundry, joinery, school where the children received a full Scottish education (up to



age fourteen), hospital and magnificent church – Mount Zion. Boys were segregated from girls. They lived at least 30 children to a cottage, along with a “mother” and a “father”. Much like in regular home life, the older children took care of the younger ones. Although the children there didn’t have the love of their own parents and there were few luxuries, they were nourished, educated and safe. They were supported through the hard work of the Quarrier family and generous donations from like-minded philanthropists, groups of school children and the general public, touched by the plight of the poor little orphans (seventy per cent of whom had one parent still alive).

The real lottery came after arriving in Canada. Sent to distribution houses across the country by fifty-five child-care organizations, it was the luck of the draw that placed them in good homes or bad. They were children taken from their homeland, shipped across the Atlantic to a large, empty country where they lived on isolated farms and were indentured until they were eighteen.

Although we didn’t know much about his life on the Ontario farms, I do remember him telling us bitterly about being separated from his brother and how he wasn’t allowed to sit down with the family he was working for, not even to eat his dinner.

The abandonment, the loss of his family and the move to a country where he was made to feel he wasn’t wanted, made dad a solitary man. Yet, he tried as hard as he was able, to be a loving father and was a proud Canadian.

The biggest regret I have is that I didn’t know about any of these hardships until it was too late. Now, I can only look up and hope that the dedication of my book has reached him.

“Dad, if I had only known, before you went ‘up north’, what I now know. Love you and miss you.”

John Grafton, a Bernardo boy, who has for years lived with Mr. and Mrs. Jas. Laidlaw of Chinguacousy, was drowned in Snell’s Lake on Sunday, a week ago. The unfortunate boy was unable to swim. -6 August 1919, *Georgetown Herald*

Funeral services for John Miller Wilson -...Mr. Wilson was the son of the late John Wilson and Isabella Miller, Newcastle-on-Tyne, England, and was one of a family of three girls, Margaret (Mrs. Wardell), Susan (Mrs. Aikens) and Mary (Mrs. Bennett), and two boys; his brother predeceased him in his youth. He left England in the care of the Bernardo Home at the age of 13 years and was placed on Lot 17, Concession 6, Nassagaweya, spending his entire life in the same district. In 1900 he made a trip back home to see his family and in 1903 he married Hannah C. Player of Nassagaweya...Mr. Wilson was 69 years old last May. He was a successful farmer... He made regular yearly donations to Nassagaweya Presbyterian Church and the Bernardo Home.... -19 Nov. 1947, *Georgetown Herald*

