Students earn HSO heritage awards

The Historical Society of Ottawa was once again among the sponsors and award presenters at this year’s Ottawa Regional Heritage Fair, part of an annual, nation-wide educational program that instills an appreciation of history and citizenship in students between grades 4 and 10.

HSO President Karen Lynn Ouellette was on hand at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau to present certificates to the winners of two society-sponsored prizes — The Sir Richard William Scott Award and the Indigenous Sacred Chaudière Falls Award — for their superlative research projects.

Hundreds of young people participated in the April 24 event, which is linked to other regional heritage fairs across Ontario and is ultimately part of a national competition aimed at promoting greater historical consciousness among the country’s youth.

Nevaeh Sarazin, a Grade 5 student from St. James Catholic School in Eganville and a member of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, was awarded the Indigenous prize (including $100) for her project exploring the history of the Pikwakanagan community, located at Golden Lake near Eganville, about 130 km west of Ottawa.

Nevaeh was also the inaugural winner of the award last year for her project on the Pow Wows of Pikwakanagan.

The Scott prize (including $200) was awarded to Derek Strachan and Joseph Schmidt of Glashan Public School in downtown Ottawa for their project on the Rideau Canal, “Comment le Canal a-t-il impacté le Canada.”

Karen Lynn Ouellette, president of the Historical Society of Ottawa, presents a certificate to Nevaeh Sarazin, a Grade 5 student from St. James Catholic School in Eganville, east of Ottawa, and a member of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, while the moment is enjoyed by (left to right) museum president Mark O’Neill, Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson and Robert Hamilton, president of the Friends of the Canadian War Museum.
The Historical Society of Ottawa

PATRON: Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette
Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada

Founded in 1898 as the Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa, the Historical Society of Ottawa (HSO) is the oldest local history organization in the national capital area, responsible for the establishment of the Bytown Museum and the Colonel By Monument in Major’s Hill Park. It seeks to fulfill its goal of preserving and promoting knowledge of the city’s history by conducting monthly meetings with presentations, public outreach via website and social media, publication of pamphlets and this quarterly newsletter, semi-annual excursions, and other special events and projects. The HSO publishes the Bytown Pamphlet Series, each of which concentrates on one aspect of the rich history of Canada’s capital region. Pamphlets are distributed free to Society members and local libraries and are available for purchase at the address below.

Organizational structure

Board of Directors

The Society is managed by its members through a volunteer Board of Directors elected on a yearly basis at its Annual General Meeting each spring.

President
Karen Lynn Ouellette

Past President
George Neville

Secretary
Kathy Krywicki

Treasurer
Sharon Zoschke

Membership
Don Ross

Communications
James Powell

Publications
Randy Boswell

Special Events
Evlyn Paton

Regular Events
Dorothy Anne Phillips

Committees

The following volunteer HSO members and directors organize certain aspects of the Society’s activity:

Archive Liaison: Kathy Krywicki

Awards: George Neville

Membership Chair: Don Ross

Nominations: G. Neville, D. Ross

Publications: Randy Boswell

Refreshment Host: Dorothy Phillips

Regular Events: Ben Weiss

Communications: James Powell

Webmaster: John Reeder

All general correspondence should be addressed to:
The Historical Society of Ottawa,
P.O. Box 523,
Station ‘B’, Ottawa, Ont. K1P 5P6

HSO Email:
historicalottawa@gmail.com

HSO website:
hsottawa.ncf.ca

Membership Renewals:
For regular members of the Society, your renewal date is shown on your address label on this newsletter. Please check to see that you are up-to-date. If not, a renewal form is available to snip or photocopy on the last page of this newsletter, or just send a cheque showing your address and phone number.

Coming Events

Aug. 5 — HSO Book Club gathering, “Ottawa Stories” by former society president Cliff Scott, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Sept. 15 — Fall Outing: Vankleek Hill/Pointe-Fortune (See Sept. newsletter and HSO website for details, updates)

Sept. 25 — 1 p.m. Ottawa Public Library (Main Branch) Auditorium, 120 Metcalfe St. Speaker: Diana Pepall on “Bletchley Park’s Outpost in Sandy Hill”

*Beginning Sept. 2019, monthly meetings will be held on the last Wednesday of each month at the OPL Main branch auditorium

The Historical Society of Ottawa gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the City of Ottawa and the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.
History’s moral minefields

By François Bregha

How should nations commemorate their past? Why does Canada have far more buildings, public works and landmarks named after white Anglo-Saxon males than after women or Indigenous peoples? Does this pattern truly reflect our history? And, if not, how do we correct this situation?

These were some of the provocative questions that Dr. Betsey Baldwin asked us to consider at the Society’s April meeting. A part-time professor at the University of Ottawa and a principal in a historical research consulting firm, Dr. Baldwin specializes in Indigenous history. She argues that naming a physical location is more than a symbolic gesture; it is also a form of control as it may imply that certain people or views matter more than others, that a particular historical narrative deserves to be celebrated over another.

With the passage of time, we now pay more attention to unflattering chapters in our past, particularly our treatment of Indigenous peoples. The recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission has forced us to re-examine and repair this relationship.

We cannot change history but we can promote reconciliation, in part by renaming buildings or landmarks to recognize the presence of Indigenous presence in our region. Such renaming, however, can be politically difficult. As an example, Dr. Baldwin referred to the Pimisi LRT station at LeBreton Flats. To honour the historical presence of the Algonquins in what is now Ottawa, the City asked them to name the station closest to the Chaudière Falls, a sacred place for First Nations. This simple gesture, however, proved controversial; the City had to discard criteria it had applied to naming all other stations (e.g., simplicity of name, obvious reference to location). Some critics saw the gesture as tokenism. Not all Algonquins were satisfied. Such controversy, unfortunately, is a minefield for politicians and a powerful disincentive to open up an historical debate.

Dr. Baldwin devoted most of her lecture to the topic of Indigenous residential schools and current attempts to atone for past wrongs by removing from some public buildings the names of the people most responsible for these schools. These attempts have become enormously controversial as the public re-evaluates the historical place of individuals such as Sir John A. Macdonald, Duncan Campbell Scott or Egerton Ryerson. But such a re-evaluation is seldom easy: past leaders are not uni-dimensional and can have important achievements to their credit even as we criticize their handling of residential schools; apportioning blame to single individuals can mask the role of other decision-makers and institutions; taking past leaders to task for views that were widely shared at the time even as we condemn them today can lead to facile criticism; blaming the officials who misguidedly set up the residential schools rather than those who failed to provide adequate resources and oversight year after year may be missing the boat.

Clearly, there are no simple answers here and we should avoid rushing to judgment even as we accept the need to re-examine our past and acknowledge past wrongs. In her lecture, Dr. Baldwin made it clear that understanding history is important and that it is appropriate to change how we commemorate our past as this understanding evolves, but that we should not expect this exercise to be either simple or quick.
The good, the bad and the spooky

HSO News

In May 2014, when Dundurn released Cliff Scott’s book *Ottawa Stories: Trials & Triumphs in Bytown History*, readers were teased with the following pitch from the publisher: “Discover Ottawa’s tenacity in surviving great fires and diseases. Glide along the ice rinks of the ages, from the first formal skating rink in 1868 to today’s Winterlude festival around the world’s largest skating rink. Join Scott as he highlights the famous — as well as infamous — characters, triumphs and tragedies of Canada’s capital from frontier times to today.”

Historical Society of Ottawa members have a chance to do all of that and more at this summer’s HSO Meet the Author Book Club gathering — to be hosted at the author’s own Ottawa home on Monday, Aug. 5, the Colonel By Day holiday.

Cliff is a past president of the HSO and a founder of Ottawa’s annual heritage fairs for youth. He served in the Royal Canadian Air Force and the public service sector, and taught history at the University of Ottawa. Since 1992 he has been active in the voluntary sector, holding executive positions with the HSO, the Friends of the Experimental Farm, and the Council of Heritage Organizations of Ottawa.

What stories does the book tell? As Dundurn explains: “Ottawa grew into the capital city of today from humble beginnings. Early politicians peddled their agendas in back rooms, while their wives worked the politics of high society. Legendary local logger Big Joe Mufferaw might have been the real-life Paul Bunyan. Business titan and self-made man J.R. Booth built and operated three railways in Ontario and then married off a granddaughter to a Danish prince.”

The book also captures some of the spookier episodes in the city’s early history with a look at ghost stories of the capital.

The HSO launched its “Meet the Author” Book Club initiative earlier this year when a group gathered on March 16 to discuss *Victor and Evie: British Aristocrats in Wartime Rideau Hall*, written by society board member Dorothy Anne Phillips.

“My goal, through these book clubs, is to get to better know and to celebrate the authors among our membership, as well as other local authors,” HSO President Karen Lynn Ouellette said in issuing the invitation to society members.

The event, to be held at Cliff Scott’s home, is scheduled to take place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and will feature a potluck luncheon and discussion at the author’s home.

There are 12 spots available in total; those interested in attending should call 613-301-3744 to sign up and to receive directions to Cliff Scott’s home.

There are 10 hard copies of the book available, as well as an e-book, at Ottawa Public Library branches.

The gathering will begin with some introductory remarks from the author about his journey writing *Ottawa Stories*, followed by a potluck luncheon and then a question-and-answer session with Mr. Scott.

Copies of *Ottawa Stories: Trials & Triumphs in Bytown History*, can be purchased for $20.
Lessons for today from Howland

HSO News

David Raymont, president of the York Pioneer and Historical Society in Toronto, was the guest presenter at the May 31 HSO annual general meeting. He discussed the recently published memoirs of Father of Confederation Sir William Howland, the only U.S.-born political patriarch of this country.

Howland, born in New York in 1811, became a leading Toronto-area businessman before he entered the Province of Canada political fray before Confederation. He was a Reformer who eventually served as Minister of Inland Revenue in the first Liberal-Conservative cabinet of Sir John A. Macdonald after Confederation. He was later named Ontario’s second Lieutenant Governor, serving from 1868 to 1873.

Raymont presented Howland as an unheralded but key figure in Confederation because he resisted partisan instincts — and at a crisis moment in 1865 rebuffed Reform leader George Brown — to keep the dream of a unified Canada alive.

After Brown withdrew from a coalition that had brought Conservatives and Reformers together to seek Confederation, Howland refused to follow Brown into opposition and rallied fellow Reformers to the coalition’s cause.

Raymont concluded by calling Howland a far-seeing politician who emphasized the need for compromise among Canada’s constituent parts to maintain unity — a message relevant to Canadian politics today: “We have to remember what Mr. Howland was saying.”

HSO supports museum studies at Algonquin

By Ben Weiss

On April 25, it was my privilege to represent the HSO at the Graduate Showcase for the 3-year Applied Museum Studies program of Algonquin College (my alma mater!).

I had the honour of presenting this year’s HSO Award to program graduate Jessica Richard (see photo, right). Jessica’s work has included the invaluable preservation of local artifacts, including a forged chisel, in conjunction with Ottawa’s Cumberland Heritage Village Museum.

Jessica has a passion for paleontology and has volunteered with the Canadian Museum of Nature for the past three summers. Jessica was just one of many amazing students I had the chance to meet throughout the evening.

On display were the projects they had each completed interning with the various area museums, both national and regional. Their professionalism, knowledge and enthusiasm was in full evidence.

It is so exciting to see a new generation engaged and ready to keep our history and scientific studies alive — and so rewarding to know that HSO is supporting this excellent program.
Vivid portrait of early Bytown

By James Powell

At the March meeting of the Historical Society of Ottawa, members and guests were treated to a fascinating presentation by Grant Vogl, Collections and Exhibitions Manager at the Bytown Museum, on the contribution of the Irish to the building of the Rideau Canal and the establishment of Bytown, the small community that was “rebranded” as Ottawa in 1855.

Grant took a novel approach to this topic by focusing on the contributions made by individuals whose names appeared on the “McCabe List,” an 1829 questionnaire filled out by workers in Bytown for Lieutenant Colonel John By, the Royal Engineer in charge of creating an inland waterway designed to help Canada withstand a potential American invasion.

Forgotten for more than 150 years in the Colonial Office, the List was rediscovered by genealogist John McCabe in the mid-1980s. It provides details about the men, their backgrounds, and families. Of the 673 names on the List, 635 were Irish. Consequently, instead of being nameless “Irish labourers,” we can now identify the Irish of Bytown by name and occupation, and know who had children and who were literate.

Artfully combining this information with artifacts from the Museum’s collection, Grant was often able to put faces to names and identify the possessions of people, thus making the Irish immigrants of almost two hundred years ago even more real.

Grant noted that the McCabe List shows that the Irish were not just unskilled labourers—the “navvies,” who dug the Rideau Canal alongside French-Canadian workers, 16 hours a day, 6 days a week, in appalling conditions.

They were also master tradesmen, contractors, politicians and educators who became pillars of the growing community. William Tormey, born in County Tyrone in 1796, was Col. By’s Master Smith who operated a smithy on the bank of the Rideau Canal where the Plaza Bridge stands today. Amazingly, the Bytown Museum has a daguerreotype photograph of Tormey. Similarly, Nicholas Sparks, born in Wexford in 1794, was an entrepreneur who worked his way up from farm hand to one of Bytown’s leading citizens, owning much of what was later to become downtown Ottawa. Both Sparks Street and Nicholas Street are named in his honour. James Maloney, also from Wexford, was an educator who set up Bytown’s first school—Maloney’s English Mercantile and Mathematical Academy in 1827 for both boys and girls.

The legendary “Mother McGinty,” the hard-as-nails tavern owner of Corktown, the shantytown home of many poor Irish, who was born in Monaghan in 1803.

In sum, Ottawa owes a debt of gratitude to Irish men and women from all walks of life who not only constructed the Rideau Canal, but also built a thriving community from scratch out of the wilderness on the south shore of the Ottawa River.

To learn more about the early days of Bytown, and the men and women who settled it, visit Grant on his home turf at the Bytown Museum located at the Ottawa Locks of the Rideau Canal between Parliament Hill and the Fairmont Château Laurier.
SPEAKERS IN THE AFTERNOON:

WED SEPT 25, 2019 @ 1 P.M.
Diana Pepall
OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY
"Bletchley Park's Outpost in Sandy Hill"
Canada’s top secret WWII code-breaking unit.

WED OCT 30, 2019 @ 1 P.M.
Hunter McGill
SENIOR FELLOW, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA
"History of the Rideau Canal"
The legacy of our historic waterway.

WED NOV 27, 2019 @ 1 P.M. & 2 P.M.
Joanna Dean @ 1 P.M.
PROFESSOR, CARLETON UNIVERSITY
"Ottawa's Urban Forest"
The world that surrounds us -- hidden in plain sight.

Stephen McKenna @ 2 P.M.
AUTHOR, "GRACE & WISDOM"
"Chief Justice Patrick Kerwin"
Life & times of Canada’s 10th Supreme Court Chief Justice.

WED JAN 29, 2020 @ 1 P.M.
William Galbraith
AUTHOR, "JOHN BUCHAN – MODEL GOVERNOR GENERAL"
"Lord Tweedsmuir"
Soldier, spy, thriller writer, Governor General.

SPEAKERS IN THE EVENING:

WED OCT 9, 2019 @ 7 P.M.
François Bregha
SANDY HILL RESIDENT & HISTORIAN
"Prime Ministers of Sandy Hill"
Fascinating tales of the 10 PMs who lived in Sandy Hill.

THU NOV 14, 2019 @ 7 P.M.
Phil Jenkins
AUTHOR, "AN ACRE OF TIME", "RIVER SONG", "FIELDS OF VISION", "BENEATH MY FEET"
"50 Years of Ottawa: What I've Seen & Learnt"
Perspectives from writer & musician Phil Jenkins.

WED JAN 15, 2020 @ 7 P.M.
Robin Etherington
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BYTOWN MUSEUM
"The Bytown Museum’s First Century"
100+ years of telling our stories.

SPEAKER SERIES LOCATION:
AUDITORIUM OF OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY
MAIN BRANCH – 120 METCALFE ST
Doors open 30 minutes before. See you there!

Please visit The Historical Society of Ottawa website for any Speaker Series updates and to reserve seating for the Evening Speaker Series. http://hsottawa.ncf.ca
... and don’t forget to follow us on Facebook.
Bytown Museum revisits Boer War

By Karen Lynn Ouellette

On May 24th, I was thrilled and honoured to be among the fortunate few to be invited to the Bytown Museum’s opening of The Gallant Thousand: Ottawa and the South African War.

Thoughtfully curated by Grant Vogl, this exhibit highlights local men and women who became involved both abroad and here at home during this conflict — also known as the Boer War, fought from 1899 to 1902.

More than 7,000 Canadians, including 12 women nurses, served overseas during the war, according to the Canadian War Museum. What’s been described as “Canada’s first official dispatch of troops to an overseas war” cost 267 Canadian lives.

I was especially moved by the care that Grant — who is the museum’s collections and exhibitions manager — took in showcasing women’s contributions during the war.

Speeches were given by Grant, Mark O’Neill, President and CEO of the Canadian Museum of History and Robin Etherington, Executive Director of the Bytown Museum.

Guests were treated to local beer and wine, and a delicious cold buffet.

I’m sure most of our members remember Grant’s very popular March presentation to us about the Irish Canal Builders (see James Powell’s report on page 6), but did you know that Robin will be speaking to us at one of our very special evening presentations in January? Her Jan. 15 talk, to be held at 7 p.m. in the auditorium of the Main branch of the Ottawa Public Library, is titled: “The Bytown Museum’s First Century”.

I am very excited to see our two organizations continue to celebrate our shared history and I hope that we will collaborate even more in the future. I also hope that you all will get out to see this wonderful exhibit this summer!

HSO members tour historic Tucker House

HSO NEWS

On Friday, June 14, 18 society members took part in the society’s spring excursion to Tucker House, a well-preserved historic estate in rural Clarence-Rockland, just beyond the eastern boundary of the City of Ottawa. We’ll have a full report on the trip in the September edition of Capital Chronicle, but the early word from event organizer Jen Stelzer (front right of photo) indicates the trip was a great success, including a delightful tea and lunch, and an informative presentation from local historian Gilles Chartrand (front left).
Pamphlet explores Scott portrait

The latest issue of the Historical Society of Ottawa’s long-running Bytown Pamphlet series delves into the mysterious provenance of a lost-and-found portrait of Bytown’s first mayor, John Scott.

HSO board member James Powell’s exploration of the 19th-century portrait’s origins, rediscovery and restoration paints its own captivating picture of an important historical artwork that had gone largely unnoticed for many years. Then it was plucked from a collection of archival material in 2010 and identified as a portrait of Scott — head of Bytown Council in 1847-48 and 1850-51. Scott, whose short life (1824-1857) was the subject of an earlier Bytown Pamphlet by Tyler Owens, published in 2016, was born in Montreal and trained as a lawyer at Toronto’s Osgoode Law School. The young lawyer emerged as a leading Reform advocate after moving to Bytown in 1844, eventually serving as a representative to the provincial assembly as well as the first mayor of the future Ottawa.

As the pamphlet recounts in detail, restoration work by fine arts conservator Barbara Klempan not only stabilized and revived the torn and rippled oil-on-canvas, it also revealed the name of the artist behind the painting — William Sawyer — and the 1848 date when completed.

The latest of the HSO’s Bytown Pamphlets (No. 108) examines the portrait of early Bytown mayor John Scott. It is authored by society board member James Powell, the city’s popular “Today in Ottawa’s History” blogger (see p. 16). James previously co-authored (with Capital Chronicle columnist Bryan D. Cook — see p. 14) pamphlet No. 105, “When Ottawa Welcomed the Empire — Through a Yorkshireman’s Lens.”

HSO member and publications specialist Christine Jackson, acknowledged by the author for her “first-class editing of the manuscript.”

Pamphlet No. 108 should now be in the hands of HSO members, so the full, 24-page story is available to all. But, as the author states, many questions still linger around the 171-year-old artwork: “Other mysteries include who commissioned the painting and, most intriguing of all, how the portrait came into the possession of the Historical Society of Ottawa and the Bytown Museum.”
History ‘alive’ for Sandy Hill author

HSO member François Bregha recounts how he came to write a history of his Ottawa neighbourhood, Sandy Hill.

I started writing Sandy Hill Stories almost four years ago but didn’t know it at the time. Prime Ministers’ Row, a local initiative to celebrate Canadian prime ministers by turning Laurier Ave. East into a street museum had put out a call for volunteers to conduct historical research. Several of us showed up but the obligations of studies or full-time employment quickly thinned our ranks and very soon I was the only one left.

I started by focusing on the prime ministers who’d lived in Sandy Hill, the key justification for siting Prime Ministers’ Row on Laurier Ave., and was able to confirm that ten of them had, including four while in office. As my research progressed, I kept coming across both interesting individuals who had lived in Sandy Hill but had not been prime ministers (e.g., Sandford Fleming, Billy Bishop) and fascinating facts about the neighbourhood: did you know that Canada’s first golf tournament was played in Sandy Hill’s Strathcona Park in 1895? Or that Radio-Canada ran a TV soap opera in the early 1960s based in Sandy Hill?

I decided therefore to broaden my research and focus it on people rather than buildings (several architectural walking guides already exist). Where possible, I tried to emphasize what these people were doing while living in Sandy Hill rather than summarizing an official biography. Everyone knows who Sir John A. Macdonald was but how many had heard of his plugged drains that stank so badly that he claims they affected his health?

While I was careful to document everything I wrote, I was not striving to write an academic paper: there is a long list of references but few footnotes. In every case, I kept my articles short and tried to underline the personal and what the individual was doing when in Sandy Hill rather than career achievements.

Over the years, I have spent countless hours researching, including a number of false leads and dead ends that had been suggested to me (no, Kim Campbell did not live in Sandy Hill). I started with what I had at hand. As a long-time member of the Historical Society, I have an extensive set of Bytown Pamphlets that I was able to draw from. My wife, who edits the local community paper IMAGE, gave me access to 40 years of back issues, many of which included articles about Sandy Hill heritage. The Internet, of course, was always a valuable source to get started, by nailing down birth and death dates for example, or the highlights of someone’s life that I could explore later through books. Interestingly, while there are many political biographies around, there are few books or articles about businessmen, however rich and famous they may have been in their day.

The Ottawa Room of the Ottawa Public Library holds a lot of useful information about local history and I got to know its collection well. But there are limits to how much specific historical information a public library will hold and it is necessary to go to archives to find primary materials. Over the course of my research, I have visited six different archives and I am happy to say that all their archivists were always helpful.

The visit that stands out for me is one I made to the Oblates archives in Richelieu, Québec (south of Montreal). I was looking for information about a temporary hospital that had been set up at the corner of Cumberland and Laurier during the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic and had been led to believe that it might have been located in what was then the Juniorat du Sacré Coeur, a century old stone building still standing at that intersection (now part of the University of Ottawa). What I found was both disappointing and extraordinary.

“This research has given me a renewed appreciation of my neighbourhood.”
— François Bregha

The Ottaway Room of the Ottawa Public Library holds a lot of useful information about local history and I got to know its collection well. But there are limits to how much specific historical information a public library will hold and it is necessary to go to archives to find primary materials. Over the course of my research, I have visited six different archives and I am happy to say that all their archivists were always helpful.

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See AUTHOR on page 11
Bletchley Park’s outpost in Sandy Hill

HSO News

During the Second World War, a top secret civilian unit was installed in a Victorian mansion in Sandy Hill to carry out code-breaking activities. It was called The Examination Unit.

Diana Pepall will examine how the unit came to be set up, who was involved, what it accomplished, and its post-war legacy.

Diana Pepall is a graduate of the Masters of Library Science program at Dalhousie University. She spent the bulk of her career as a librarian and manager at the Ottawa Public Library. Since 2014 she has been researching, writing and lecturing on the Examination Unit.

Her planned presentation, titled “Bletchley Park’s Outpost in Sandy Hill,” will take place during the Historical Society of Ottawa’s first membership meeting at its new monthly gathering place: the Auditorium at the Main branch of the Ottawa Public Library, 120 Metcalfe St. The presentation will also initiate the HSO’s switch from Fridays to its new Wednesday afternoon meeting time: Wednesday, Sept. 25, beginning at 1 p.m.

Bletchley Park refers to the Buckinghamshire mansion that housed the British government’s main code-breaking unit during the 1939-45 war. It’s now a museum.

Author: Echoes of ‘long-ago society parties’

Continued from page 10

The Juniorat had never been a temporary hospital (that would have been a long-demolished building kiddie-corner from the Juniorat – something I found out only later). However, the Oblates who ran the Juniorat had kept a diary, including a day-by-day account of how the epidemic had affected their school. Even a century later, one could still be moved by the rising anxiety evident in the daily entries as the number of sick boys increased, eventually forcing the closure of the school. While the diary did not record any deaths among its students, a dozen did not return after the school re-opened.

If finding this diary was my most satisfying discovery, the most humdrum part of the research has involved hours checking street addresses in old city directories. Prior to 1940, these exist on microfilm only. While I got quite good at loading up individual spools of film into the viewing machine, this research is tedious, hard on the eyes and is not an activity I recommend to anyone.

Throughout, I received help from many quarters, including members of the Society. Marguerite Evans read an early draft and gave me comments. Randy Boswell showed me how to search old newspapers. Ben Weiss pointed out a mistake whose correction introduced me to a family I had not researched before. In addition, friends and neighbours gave me tips (and sometimes even supporting documentation!) that allowed me to pursue my research. I would never have been able to get this far without their help.

So, after almost four years, what do I have? Some 80 articles on notable people, places and eventsamounting to 50,000 words and including many photos. Most of this information is up on a page of the community association’s website (history.ash-acs.ca) so that it can serve as a community resource.

But, more than this, this research has given me a renewed appreciation of my neighbourhood, where I have lived for over 30 years. When I walk it, the houses “talk” to me. In my mind’s eye, I can see Mackenzie King walking his dog, the award-winning gardens beside le Cordon Bleu or hear the long-ago society parties at what is now the office of Amnesty International. It has made Sandy Hill come alive.

François Bregha will discuss the “Prime Ministers of Sandy Hill” at the Historical Society’s inaugural “Evening Series” presentation in the auditorium of the Main branch of the Ottawa Public Library, 120 Metcalfe St., starting at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2019.
President’s Report: ‘Seamless transitions’

By Karen Lynn Ouellette

Our Board has had another whirlwind few months. It seems that every time I blink it’s once again time to share with you all of our news!

I’d like to tell you more about just two of the many recent goings on. First, I’d like to look back on the years of service of the Directors who have retired from the Board this year – Ron Elmer, Grace Lewis, Erik Foisy, Jen Stelzer, and George Shirreff.

Our Society has enjoyed many fascinating, fun, and well-organized events courtesy Jen Stelzer and George Shirreff, Ron Elmer diligently provided our audio-visual support at our meetings, and Erik Foisy and Grace Lewis made sure all of our T’s were crossed as treasurer and secretary respectively!

Thank you all so very much for your hard work – we are all very grateful to you. As many of you know, Kathy Krywicki, Secretary, and Sharon Zoschke, Treasurer, will now dot our I’s and I would like to again welcome them on board and thank them — and their predecessors — for a seamless transition. These two ladies have taken to their tasks with great professionalism and prudence.

Next, I would like to look forward. What I am currently most excited about is how our committees are continuing to grow. Our Regular Events Committee, directed by Dorothy Phillips and headed by Ben Weiss, Anne Mc-

Lay, and Erja Kajosalo, has made invaluable contributions to our meetings and events. In particular, Ben Weiss has shown outstanding creativity and initiative and together they have done an outstanding job of organizing our transition to the Ottawa Public Library and for lining up an exceptional speaker series.

This revamped series includes double features, which offer more extensive meetings for those of our members who commute some distance to attend our afternoon meetings, and special evening presentations for students and working folk out there who can only attend post-workday.

We are endeavouring to alert members in various ways to the change in venue and meeting times beginning this fall. Please see and set aside the detailed schedule of presentations reproduced on Page 7 of this newsletter. Members should also have received a wallet-sized card of the coming year’s Speaker Series.

The first members’ meeting at our new location and time will be held Wednesday, Sept. 25 at 1 p.m. at the OPL auditorium, 120 Metcalfe St. At that meeting, historian and librarian Diana Pepall will kick off the 2019-20 HSO Speaker Series with a talk on “Bletchley Park’s Outpost in Sandy Hill” (see Page 11 for more details!)

And the first event in our new “Evening Series” of presentations will take place at the same location on Wednesday, Oct. 9, 7 p.m., with HSO member François Bregha’s “Prime Ministers of Sandy Hill” (see Pages 10 and 11 for more info).

Our Special Events Committee, directed by Evlyn Payton, is just getting started and has recently welcomed two new members – Grace McClellan-Crout and Sharon Rouatt. Thank you ladies! I look forward to hearing about our future outings and tours!

I am very confident that we are on the right track to making our Society even more well-known around town, to opening our arms to more members, including youth and working people, and continuing to fulfill our mandate as best we can.

I hope you all enjoy this edition of our Capital Chronicle, with numerous excellent contributions from many of our society’s Directors, Committee Coordinators, and Members.
Beginning in September 2019, the regular monthly meetings of the Historical Society of Ottawa will be held on the last Wednesday of each month beginning at 1 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Main branch of the Ottawa Public Library, 120 Metcalfe St. at Laurier Avenue.

The move marks the end of one era for the society — and the start of a new one featuring plush seating, top-notch presentation facilities and a more central location.

For years, the Routhier Community Centre in the Byward Market has hosted our regular Friday meetings (see top left, a scene from the HSO meeting on May 31, with past president George Neville at the podium). The OPL auditorium was given a successful test run in February (left), when HSO board member James Powell hosted the screening of a British TV program about the history of the Rideau Canal.

See you soon at our new home!

Call out for committee members (once again)!

We have introduced a new approach to organizing the Historical Society of Ottawa. We have set up a range of committees to help our Society in achieving its goals. Our committees are simply “teams” of two or three (but NOT too many) souls who work together to perform one or more tasks needed to facilitate monthly meetings, spring and fall excursions, award ceremonies, and other activities.

Example: HSO member “A” heads up the refreshment committee but recruits members “B” and “C” to assist him/her. “A” takes care of the January meeting but can’t come to the February meeting so “B” steps up. In March, both “A” and “C” bring refreshments while “B” is off.

Two is better than one! Remember our Annual Christmas dinner? Where did it go? Well by the last year it was held, only one HSO member was looking after it. She burnt out! It was dropped. No one else was available to take it on. With a team, this won’t happen. The membership may once again enjoy their turkey and some entertainment during the holidays.

We need you to join us as we further shape our committees:

• It helps us work better.
• It is social (go for coffee as you plan activities).
• It’s fun!

For more information on the committees and how best to volunteer, please contact Karen Lynn Ouellette, president of the Historical Society of Ottawa, at historicalottawa@gmail.com.
We have now fast forwarded a century from Arthur Bourinot to the ongoing controversies over the development of the islands of the Chaudière Falls. Indigenous land claims have waited for centuries and are still unresolved. Nevertheless, the landscape is being “gentrified” with luxury condominiums and boutiques set in manicured lawns and “multi-use” pathways, though the cyclists don’t seem to see it that way!

Selected relics will echo the industrial past. A public patio will enable viewing of the Ottawa River and Falls, powerful in the spring melt but otherwise a shallow raceway. Gone are the double-irises of an unfettered Chaudière which once, on watercolour paper, is said to have seduced a queen into choosing Ottawa as the capital of her North American colony. Dreams of the Falls’ revival have fallen on deaf civic ears….perhaps it will happen several centuries hence.

It is customary in this series to provide a brief synopsis of the life of the poet. Modesty and privacy make me hesitate to delve too deeply into my own murky past!

I was born in Hastings, UK, despite William the Conqueror, and spent my early youth in Egypt. I am an alumnus of Sheffield and McGill Universities and a disciple of Rachel Carson of Silent Spring fame. My mentor was Fred Roots, the polar explorer. A founding member of Environment Canada, I was for sixteen years the Director General of Energy Science and Technology for Natural Resources Canada and for another nine directed the government’s Energy S&T laboratories and contracted programs of the CANMET Energy Technology Centre. After a brief stint as a consultant in energy and environmental innovation, I retired to over-indulge with personal interests in Canadian and local history, genealogy, fishing, gardening, fine woodworking, and poetry — including traditional Japanese forms.

My authorship so far includes the biography and anthology of the 19th-century Canadian poet and first City Clerk of Ottawa, William Pittman Lett; a short biography of Ottawa inventor and businessman Thomas Ahearn; a history of Cumberland United Church seen through the lives of its clergy; and, jointly with James Powell, HSO Bytown Pamphlet No. 105 about a photographer’s view of Canada in 1903 when the issue of free trade was in formative debate.

I am a published poet and member of Ottawa’s KaDo haiku society; to my surprise I won this year’s Genjuan International Haibun Competition!

I am one of those weird types who loves cosmology, the physics of relativity and quanta, and the bluegrass banjo! My bride of 47 years, Tanya, and our two children, Emily and Josiah, are very patient with me!

I wrote this poem based on a visit with my friend, the Canadian haiku poet Grant D. Savage, to witness the Chaudière during the spring floods of 2019. The scene I portray reflects, therefore, the mutual feeding frenzy of two grumpy groundhogs. However, the sentiments run deep.

It is written as a haibun which consists of terse and direct descriptive prose, interspersed with three-line haiku, not repeating the prose but rather providing a deeper illumination of the situation. It is self-explanatory and not for me to critique. In Algonquin lexicon, Kitchi-Zibi is the Ottawa River and Akikodjiwan is collectively the Chaudière Falls and islands.
‘Akikodjiwan Lament’

By Bryan D. Cook

We drove to Akikodjiwan to greet Kichi-Zibi. A sad scene, thunder garroted by a concrete collar, cascade suppressed which once flung rainbows. Only spring melt overpowers the turbines, surges in baleful roil, mad-capped, joining tributaries and storms of climate change to swamp the lowlands.

melt and rain
a one-two punch
at sandbaggers

Ribbons of tar and concrete scar the ancient landscape. Our photographic ramble beside the willows and the geese path-raged by careening cyclists and joggers, their only goal measured in a fit-bit. There’s no tranquility, the War Museum bunkered in a swarm of faux shell holes, clear-cut bush; a bauble balanced on a concrete sail, military monuments where pioneers began their trek to Richmond.

turbine screen
winter flotsam
and an ice-hut

Concrete barriers, steel barriers, concrete, concrete; they’re working hard to build a yuppie condom with million dollar views above toney boutiques. They’ll have to gate it or unleash the guards, fearing the homeless and afflicted asleep in bushes, backpacks left to mark their nests during their daily drudge of beggary. Soon relic mills of lumber, paper and carbide will stand stark in barren lawns, fertilizer and weed-b-gone seeping into Kitchi-Zibi’s veins, cup litter instead of mushrooms, goose crap unchecked by fox and coyote.

glass patio
expense-account lunches
the homeless stare

A sky-line jumble of Lego blocks, their glass reflecting Parliament, Church and Court Supreme, systematic injustice, uncivil instruments of colonial suppression. Gone in flames the longhouse and tepee; defiant assertions of unceded rights, the sacred land now resting. How long must it sleep?

beads guns and blankets
can’t buy unceded lands
eempty pipe of peace
June 1967: Ottawa gets gift of royal swans

In Britain, there has been an association between the monarchy and mute swans (Cygnus Olor) that dates back to the twelfth century. Traditionally, the Crown claims ownership of all mute swans in open water in England and Wales.

Royal mute swans came to Ottawa in 1967, Canada’s centennial year, as a gift to the nation’s capital from Queen Elizabeth, who also doubles as “Seigneur of Swans.”

Ottawa’s swans arrived in the city in late May 1967, the culmination of careful planning on the part of Buckingham Place, Rideau Hall, the City of Ottawa, the federal government and two airlines. Arriving by plane at Uplands Airport, the birds — which had been specially selected from the Thames River by the Keeper of the Queen’s Swans — were placed into precautionary quarantine. At 4 p.m. on June 28, 1967, following speeches by Gov. Gen. Roland Mitchener and Ottawa Mayor Donald Reid in front of hundreds of guests, eight royal swans were released into the Rideau River just above the Rideau Falls on the grounds of the old city hall on Green Island. Two other pairs of swans remained at the “swan house” at the city’s Leitrim tree nursery for breeding purposes.

The swans were in place on July 1, 1967, Canada’s 100th birthday, ready for the Queen’s inspection when she and Prince Philip arrived at City Hall. The Ottawa Journal wrote that the swans, paddling from shore to shore on the Rideau River “enhanced a scene of calm and beauty.” Their “regal beauty complemented every natural and man-made fixture in sight.”

The graceful, long-necked birds were an instant sensation as they cruised the Rideau, stopping along the way to eat aquatic vegetation, as well as the odd tadpole, snail or insect. Couples quickly established territories along the river bank, and swans have inhabited the river during warm months ever since.

When the cold weather comes in late October, the birds are moved to winter quarters before being returned to the Rideau each spring.

Note: As of press time in early June, the city was studying a plan to move the swans to a zoo near Montreal.

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Membership Renewal Form

The Historical Society of Ottawa

Date __________________________ Renewal/New __________________________ No. Members ______

Name __________________________
Name (for mailing) __________________________

☐ Address Unchanged (Show Changes Below)

Street __________________________
Postal Code ______ Phone (res) ______ Phone (work) ______ E-mail __________________________
Address __________________________
Interest __________________________
(Activities?) __________________________ Volunteer? ______

Membership fees

Single $35/year
Student $10/year
Family $50/year
Single Life $350

Payment

Membership $ ______
Donation $ ______
Total ______

Charitable receipts for federal income tax purposes will be issued for donations.

Please photocopy and complete this form and mail it with a cheque, made payable to The Historical Society of Ottawa, to:

Membership, The Historical Society of Ottawa
P.O. Box 523, Station B.
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5P6