



Woodstock, Ontario

## Newsletter 2010 July



Photo 1

81 Perry St.

Photo by Eleanor Gardhouse

### Upcoming Monthly Meetings

- Tue Sep 14** **Annual Dinner Meeting**, 6:30 pm, hosted by OGS Oxford County, at South Gate Centre. Guest speaker Dr. Kevin James presents "Murder and Madness: an Ancestor in the Attic". Tickets \$22 for dinner & speaker, from our current shared offices at 12 Vine St, Beachville, 519-421-1700.
- Wed Oct 27** Laurel Beechey, Tillsonburg historian, will talk about, "Tillsonburg Nightingales, Oxford County nurses in World War 1".
- Wed Nov 24** Dr Elaine Becker presents an illustrated history of the Salvation Army in Woodstock.

Our meetings are usually held on the last Wednesday of the month from September to May, inclusive. Our regular meeting place is the Grand Hall of Woodstock Museum, NHS, at 7:30 p.m., except where noted. All are welcome.

**Index of Newsletter Contents Pg.**

Index, Committee Members, Address . . . .	2
Editor's Corner . . . . .	2
President's Message . . . . . Jim Groulx	3
Events since Last Newsletter . . . . .	3
Joe Boyle Day . . . . . Mary Jane Bennett	5
Dr Tillson L. Harrison – Hero or Rogue ....	5
. . . . . reported by Kathie Richards	6
Yukon Gold – Joe Boyle, Mining Locomotives & Giant Dredges – Pt1 reported by Chris Packman	7
A Tale of 4 Cannon . . . . . Chris Packman	9
Guided Walking Tours . . . . .	10

**Oxford Historical Society  
Committee Members**

Honorary President . . . . .	Ed Bennett
Past President . . . . .	Fred Freeman
President . . . . .	Jim Groulx
Vice President. . . . .	Kathie Richards
Treasurer . . . . .	Jack Hedges
Secretary . . . . .	Chris Packman
Membership . . . . .	Kathie Richards
Research . . . . .	Mary Liley
Archives/Architecture . . . . .	Eleanor Gardhouse
Director, Museum Liaison . . . .	Karen Houston
Newsletter/Computers . . . . .	Chris Packman
Director . . . . .	Mary Bennett

**Our Street Address**

12 Vine Street  
Beachville , Ontario

**Business Hours**

Mon to Fri – 10 am to 4 pm

**Our Mailing Address**

Oxford Historical Society  
Box 20091, Woodstock, ON N4S 8X8

**Phone:** (519) 421-1700

**Web Site:** [www.execulink.com/~ocbogs](http://www.execulink.com/~ocbogs)

**Email:** [ocbogs@execulink.com](mailto:ocbogs@execulink.com)

**History Archives**

We have atlases, biographies, business index, oral history tapes and court records.

In total, we have over 31,000 papers, documents and other items of local historical interest listed in our easy-to-search computer database.

**Editor's Corner**

**Photograph – Front Page**

Photo 1 on Page 1, "81 Perry St.", is one of a series taken by Eleanor Gardhouse of 31 Woodstock buildings that have been designated as 'Historic'. It was photographed for the Heritage Woodstock Committee.

The house was built by William Thompson, a partner in Thomson, Hayes & Co., about 1875. Typical of other homes in that period, it is a two-story double brick building with arched windows and a hip roof. Originally, it had a wooden verandah along the entire west and south exposure.

In 1883, Mr Alexander Riggs McCleneghan and family lived there. He was a Major in the Oxford Rifles militia. In 1855, he founded and became editor and publisher of The Times, a Woodstock paper. The Times operated until 1902, though McCleneghan sold it when appointed the sixth postmaster of Woodstock in 1873. As postmaster, he was responsible for the construction of three post office buildings, including that at 500 Dundas Street, now Woodstock City Hall.

**Sources:**

"Architectural and Historical Properties", Heritage Woodstock  
"The Village that Straddled a Swamp", Doug M Symons.

**Annual Joint Dinner Meeting  
Tuesday, Sep 14, 6:30 p.m.**

Speaker Dr. Kevin James presents

*Murder & Madness  
An Ancestor in the Attic*

At South Gate Centre.

191 Old Wellington Street S, Woodstock

Get there early to get a parking spot

Have **you** got your ticket yet for this event?

It promises to be a fun evening, organized by our friends in the OGS Oxford County Branch

**Cost:** is \$22 per person  
Includes Turkey Dinner and Speaker.

**Tickets:** 12 Vine Street, Beachville,  
Mon-Fri 10am - 4pm  
or phone 519-421-1700  
or mail: [oxford@ogs.on.ca](mailto:oxford@ogs.on.ca)

Chris Packman

## President's Message

I must start my message by acknowledging the passing of one of our members, Ruby Bryce (2010 Jun 2). I will miss Ruby. She was a very nice person, and we used to kid each other often. She always dressed nicely, and was always a pleasant person whenever I spoke to her. Rest in peace, Ruby.

Although we are still waiting for the start of construction on our future location, the Governor's house, work has started on the County's proposed changes to the Old Registry Office (Friday Jul 2).

Doors Open was a success, according to a report by Kathie Richards. I regret that I was not available to help out as a guide, due to prior commitments.

Our Society will have a booth display at the Woodstock Fair again this year. If you have suggestions for displays, please let us know.

Chris Packman and I are starting the project to transfer our taped OxHS interviews on to digital CD's, and DVD's. We will keep the tapes, since we are not sure which medium will survive longer.

Congratulations to Doug and Cathy Symons. Our Executive approved their Honorary Memberships.

Word today is that the old Capitol Theatre, 385 Dundas Street, will be torn down: its roof has collapsed. There is a lot of entertainment history in that building. I remember many years ago going to a few Travelogues. There was an elderly gentleman playing the piano, and he always played a song called "Jerusalem".

In the early days, the silent movies had a live piano player accompanying the movies. The piano player did not know anything about the scenes in the movie till he arrived at

the theatre, and watched the movie. He would play different music to fit the scenes, such as sad, dramatic, scary, happy, and even music for the Keystone cops chasing a truck. His music would make the movie much more enjoyable.

I remember when my kids were small, and TV was poor in the summer. They would watch an action movie, and I would turn off the sound, because of bad language. I would then put on an old silent-movie-type piano record to accompany the movie, and the kids would laugh till they cried. The music somehow made every scene amusing.

For the past two years, we notified the Legion that we would like to place a wreath and be part of the Nov.11 ceremony at the Cenotaph. During the ceremony, though, our Society name was not called to place the wreath. A couple of weeks ago, the problem was finally resolved. An employee at the Legion informed me that we had to buy a wreath from the Legion, and each September fill out an application to be part of the ceremony. The wreath must stay at the Legion year round, and each year we must pay \$50 for our Society to be recognised at the ceremony. At our next Executive meeting, we will discuss if our budget will be OK to meet this yearly expense.

The Springbank Cheese Company Ltd, 201 Winniett St., near the old railway station, is celebrating 50 years in business this July. We hope to photograph and file the history on this company. The owner, Frank Hemsworth, has given me verbal permission to gather such information. On July 17, this company will have an open house in the afternoon hours.

Stay cool, and enjoy a healthy summer.

Jim Groulx

## Events Since Last Newsletter

### Recreation and Leisure Fair, Goff Hall, Sunday Mar 7

The Society again had a booth to promote itself and its publications, at the Sports and Recreation Show (1 to 4 pm), staffed by Jack Hedges and Chris Packman. [Entry omitted in error from the April newsletter.]

### General Meeting, Wednesday, Apr 28

#### Topic: The 1900s Yukon – Joe Boyle's Gold Mining Operations; Steam Locomotives & Giant Dredges

Guest speaker, Dave Gould, a man fascinated by exploring old mining camps, towns and trains, illustrated his talk about early gold mining in the Dawson Creek

area with an excellent set of mostly early 1900s photographs. Dave is now restoring one of the narrow-gauge steam locomotives (Number "1") built in 1904 and used in Joe Boyle's mining operations. (Story on p.7.)

### Joe Boyle Day, Saturday May 8

Despite miserable weather, a brief commemoration was held at Col. Joseph Whiteside Boyle's graveside in Woodstock's Presbyterian Cemetery. Jim Groulx again acted as Master of Ceremonies. Afterwards, those attending quickly removed to Woodstock Museum, NHS, to dry out, warm up, and enjoy light refreshments provided by the curator, Karen Houston. (Story on p.9)

## Events Since Last Newsletter (contd.)

### General Meeting, Wednesday, May 26

**Topic: Hero or rogue? Dr. Tillson Lever Harrison ... four wives, never divorced; a Canadian honored by the Chinese**

When Jim Groulx introduced guest speaker Laurel Beechey, Tillsonburg historian, he noted she had received a Citizen of the Year Award from the Chamber of Commerce for her work in wild animal recovery. During earlier phone conversations, she mentioned she has two pet skunks, though both are “de-sprayed”, and she is locally known as “the Skunk Lady”.

Laurel then gave an intriguing talk about Dr. Tillson Lever Harrison, one of Tillsonburg’s more colourful past residents, illustrated with digital slides.

### Old St Paul’s Anglican Church, Founders’ Day, Sunday Jun 6

On behalf of the Society, Mary Liley and Cathy Bechard attended this year’s Founders’ Day commemoration at 10:30 a.m. Cathy noted there was quite a heavy downpour of rain during the service – which fortunately quit before they went outside and laid a wreath on the Vansittart Grave.

### Annual Car Trip, Lucan Area Heritage & Donnelly Museum, Sat Jun 12

A group of 13 members and friends met to car-pool in the car park behind Woodstock Library, then set off at 9:30 a.m. for the Lucan Area Heritage & Donnelly Museum. Its collections are now in a new building, at 171 Main Street, Lucan, and there we met at 11:00 a.m. with Laura Garner, its new curator.

Laura gave us a guided tour of the Museum, and a good overview of the events during and after the night of February 3, and early morning hours of February 4, 1880, when a local Vigilance Committee massacred 5 members of the Donnelly Family. Laura guided us around other exhibits in the Museum, then gave us a tour of a log cabin on the Museum grounds with a similar floor plan to the original Donnelly cabin. It was furnished with donations and loans from community members. After the murders, the original house, on Roman Line, some miles south of Lucan, was burnt to its foundations.

Ray Fasakas, a local lawyer now retired, became fascinated with the event and a subsequent trial of Vigilance Committee members that went nowhere. The eye-witness account by a survivor of the massacre and fire, a 15-year boy, was discounted by the jury of townsfolk: he was too young.

Fasakas studied and wrote about the case and, over time, built up a large collection of related maps, papers and other material. This is now on permanent loan to the

Lucan Museum.

The Museum also houses maps, pictures and artifacts about the Black families that briefly lived in the area and worked to build the London to Goderich road (now Highway 4), before Irish immigrants settled there from about 1840.

Our tour over, we had a good lunch in the O’Leary’s Pub, across from the Museum, and returned to Woodstock by late afternoon.

### Car Free Sunday, Jun 13

Dundas Street was closed from Vansittart and Wellington between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Sunday Jun 13. Only foot-traffic and bicycles were allowed, part of an encouragement by City Council to get residents to actually walk, and perhaps get to better know the downtown stores and facilities. Unfortunately, all the stores stayed closed, though the few restaurants that were open did a good business in coffee take-outs.

Most activity took place around Museum Square, where Kerrie Gill of Woodstock Museum had set up a tent and a croquet game for kids on the grass. Many children cycled up and down the closed street, took part chalking on the pavement, or played simple games provided by the Museum, and other local organizations.

The adults, and any tots trapped in baby carriages, watched demonstrations put on by a local dance school, and by a Thai Chi group. On behalf of the Oxford Historical Society, I shared part of the Museum’s tent (thank you) and helped distribute brochures on self-guided local walks.

Gary Baumbach, Woodstock Library’s new Chief Librarian (and one of our members) had a nearby table to promote the Library. I admired his pleasant, active promotion of the Library’s excellent programs and its Book Club to passers by, in between the interesting conversations he and I were having.

### Eve of Doors Open Oxford, Friday, Jun 25

In the Great Hall of Woodstock Museum, at 7 p.m., curator Karen Houston opened an evening hour of music, information about Doors Open Oxford, and light refreshments, all to mark the eve of Doors Open Oxford. The Music was provided by about 9 members of Woodstock Winds, introduced by Kathie Richards.

At 8 p.m., OxHS members Murray Coulter and Kathie Richards led separate groups (totalling nearly 50 persons) on a guided “Spirit Walk” around some of the nearby historic public buildings. Murray wore the same smart bowler he had worn in Oct 1990 when playing the detective in a play about the famous 1890 murder trial of

## Events Since Last Newsletter (contd.)



**Photo 2**

**Murray Coulter leads a Spirit Walk, Jun 25**

Photo by C. Packman

Reginald Birchall. Both the trial and the 1990 re-enactment were held at Woodstock's Town Hall (now Woodstock Museum).

### **Doors Open Oxford, Saturday Jun 26**

Members of the Society acted as guides for three walking tours past many of Woodstock's historic public buildings. All tours started from Woodstock Museum, NHS, at 10 am, noon and 2 pm. Although rain had been forecast, happily the weather was dry and not too hot.

### **Impressive Homes: First Public Walking Tour, Monday Jul 5**

It was a warm day, and already about 30 Celsius when a group of 14 of us first assembled outside Woodstock Public Library at 10 a.m. We were waiting for a walking tour past "Impressive Homes" led by Kathie Richards.

It was the first public walking tour in the "Impressive Homes" series that the Oxford Historical Society now has available, on request through Oxford Tourism.

Before starting out, Kathie was interviewed by Elliot Ferguson and Hugo Rodrigues from the local Sentinel-Review newspaper. A good review of the tour appeared the next day, in the July 6 issue.

Kathie led the group along Hunter Street to our first pause, at the corner of Vansittart Avenue, to look at 47

Vansittart, an attractive Edwardian style home, built by Alexander Watson. Watson owned Vulcan Foundry, once a few doors down, where Faith (formerly Chalmers) United Church now stands.

Our route took us north on Vansittart Avenue, east along Admiral and then south on Light Street.

Doug Richards was in the group, carrying supplies of water and cups, for which some were later grateful.

We passed graceful homes in large treed lots, all built with taste and money, as Kathie described their architectural highlights plus tales of the former mayors, councillors, doctors, lawyers, and business owners who had once lived in them. Among the more memorable were Dr Maddock, who almost fought a duel with another doctor over a disputed medical diagnosis; Bernadette Smith, the City's first woman mayor, equally at home driving a tractor as she was reining herd over the all-male city councillors; Thomas Willson, the inventor of calcium carbide, used in acetylene welding and early lighting.

Kathie had researched and written guide scripts for both this walking tour and for the walk past Woodstock's historic public buildings, a walk which premiered during Doors Open Oxford, Sat Jun 26 (see above, left).

Chris Packman

## **Joe Boyle Day 2010**

by Mary Jane Bennett

The weather was just as wild as Joe Boyle. Members and friends of the Oxford Historical Society assembled in the howling wind and rain at precisely 11 a.m., Saturday May 8<sup>th</sup>, at Joe's graveside in the Woodstock Presbyterian Cemetery.

The President and Secretary of the Oxford Historical Society were there as well as Ron Ludington, a former city councillor and member of the original Joe Boyle

Repatriation Committee. A few of us in attendance, however, looked like we could have stepped off the streets of Dawson City Yukon during the gold rush days that made Joe Boyle so wealthy. We waited, but the Romanian guests of honour did not arrive. After five minute, the mayor drove up and surprised us all. Then President Jim Groulx made a short but meaningful speech.

### Joe Boyle Day 2010 (contd.)

Jim mentioned how we often forget to honour our local heroes, not only Joe Boyle, but also people like Ed Bennett, now at Parkwood Hospital who was honoured in Toronto as a local hero in 2006.

Mayor Michael Harding heartily agreed. "Woodstock often seems hesitant to proclaim their heroes," he said, adding that Woodstock's Bernadette Smith was the first [elected] female mayor in all of Canada. Mayor Harding also noted that, during her time as mayor, many of the city's historical buildings were saved from demolition, including today's present City Hall.

The ceremony was brief, the weather furious, and after a photograph we all quickly retreated to our cars and to the warmth of the Woodstock Museum. The curator, Karen Houston, had left a welcoming luncheon beautifully arrayed in the Education room.

As we were winding up our luncheon, including a discussion of historical sites throughout North America, our guests arrived. Aurel and Maria Cojocuru had been delayed by torrential rains and a stressful drive. At our request, Aurel sat down with us and shared his knowledge of Romanian history during the First and Second World Wars. Many of us were familiar with the history of Romania during the First World War due to Joe

Boyle's involvement, but we were interested to learn more about Romania's history during the Second World War, since this was also the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Victory in Europe) Day.

When asked how he had started to visit the grave of Joe Boyle in Woodstock, Aurel explained that he had arrived in Canada in the spring of 1983. At that time he was avidly reading the Toronto newspapers, searching for work, and stumbled across a two-page spread about Joe Boyle with a large heading 'Saviour of Romania'. As he had never heard of him, and since he came from Romania, he was immediately interested to learn more about Joe Boyle. That led him to Ed Bennett.

Aurel and his wife, Maria, became friends with Ed and his wife, Lee, and enjoyed a mutual friendship for many years to come. That friendship with the Bennett family continues to this day. Also, visiting Joe Boyle's grave each year "connects us to the old country as well," said Aurel.

Woodstock is richer for the yearly visit of the Cojocarus and their friends over the years, and for people like Ed and Lee Bennett. Woodstock benefits from people who care about their community, take pride in their local heroes, and believe in preserving the town's past to enrich its present and future.

### Dr Tillson Lever Harrison Hero or Rogue? Talk by Laurel Beechey, May 26

Reported by Kathie Richards

Tillson Lever Harrison was handsome, romantic, an adventurer and performed an heroic rescue in China. He was the great grandson of George Tillson, grandson of E.D. and Mary Ann Tillson. His mother, Harriet Tillson, was an artist and socialite who married Henry Bailey Harrison, a Parkhill banker, on Oct. 3, 1879. Their son Tillson was born on January 7, 1881.

In April 1884, Tillson's father, Henry, was accused of embezzlement at his bank. On August 8, 1891 Henry married another woman in Ottawa. Hattie was granted a divorce in 1892. Henry served in the U.S. army in the Philippines but went AWOL and was sentenced to Alcatraz.

As a youth, Tillson was rebellious and a troublemaker—once locking his grandmother in her bedroom. In 1894, he was enrolled in Upper Canada College in Toronto, but after one year ran away to join the Oxford Rifles. He was returned home when it was discovered he was underage. He and another young lad ran away to the U.S. to fight in Cuba, but was again returned home. In 1901 he moved to New York and joined the U.S. Army Engineers, claiming to be 21 and that he was born in New Orleans.

He was sent to the Philippines to build roads. While there, he became ill with cholera and decided to become a doctor. On Dec. 1, 1901 his grandfather E.D. Tillson used his powerful friends and paid \$120 to purchase an honourable discharge for Tillson since he was underage. E.D. Tillson died on Jan. 31, 1902.

In 1903, Tillson enrolled in the U. of T. Unknown to his family, he married an 18 year old girl named Sybil Edna Wilkins on Sept. 1, 1905. In 1907, he passed his medical exams and, after graduation, he and Edna went to Alberta where he treated Cree Indians in Lammerton and Lac St. Ann.

On July 2, 1907, he went to the U.S. via Niagara Falls. By 1908 he was in Spokane then Sumas, Washington and by Oct. 1908 was in CULDESAC, Idaho. On May 14, 1909, Edna gave birth to their daughter Rosalind. In April 1910 he was in Fruitland, Idaho, then he went to the Nevada gold fields and by July 1910 he was in Drewsey, Oregon. One day he would be a rich man then the next day he was poor. At one point he left Edna and his daughter with his mother, Harriet, while

### Dr Tillson Lever Harrison – Hero or Rogue? (contd.)

he was a travelling physician in China, Mexico and Samora.

By January 1913 he was back in Drewsey, Oregon, where he was a doctor, pharmacist, mayor, land developer and rancher. Becoming restless, he left his family there and went to London England to do post-graduate studies in obstetrics and gynaecology. He was with the French Foreign Legion in Belgium, then in December 1914, he married wife #2, Eva Zambounis, a nurse, in Southampton. They returned to the United States stopping for a time in Seattle, Idaho, Utah, New Mexico and settling in El Paso, Texas in 1915. At one point he was Chief of the Medical Staff of the Mexican revolutionary, General Pancho Villa.

In July 1916, he was in China then by Dec. 1916 he was back in Canada. On Feb. 14, 1917 he joined the Canadian Army Medical Corps and listed both his wives on payroll records, Edna in Portland, Oregon, and Eva in New York City. He wrote love letters to both wives. His second wife, Eva, had a reputation of being a spy, believed to be for a forerunner of the CIA, and was under army investigation. She ended up running a bordello in New Mexico. With the Canadian Medical Corps, Tillson was stationed at a French hospital where he tended the needs of the Chinese Labour Corps, and learned their language and customs.

He was a captain in Egypt when he married his third wife Filomena Abela on July 1, 1918. He deserted her within 2 years. She died in 1991.

He set up a medical practice in Constantinople where he tried to elope with one of his patients, who was the wife of a Turkish officer. In April 1922, he was deported to Canada but ended up as a slave in Morocco. He was in Ireland in June 1922 and by January 1923 he was treating Welsh coal miners in Great Britain. At age 52, he married wife #4, Eva Olwen Bowen in 1923, and they moved first to Mexico then Venezuela. When he separated from Eva O., she applied for his army pension and found out about his other 3 wives. She decided to sue, which set Tillson off Caribbean island hopping, trying to avoid her.

Edna, wife #1, was a free lance writer in Chicago and

daughter, Rosalind, was an actress in L.A. In 1935, Edna was looking for work in San Francisco. Tillson sent her letters which were whining and begging for money. On March 26, 1935, he was in Jamaica, then went to the Cayman Islands and then to Panama when he heard daughter Rosalind was ill. Rosalind was married in San Francisco on May 14, 1937. Tillson got to L.A. by boat on Sept. 4, 1937 then went on to Seattle. In July 1938 he was in Nevada then left for China. A bank in Trinidad was after him for a debt he owed and Eva O. was still pursuing him.

In China, he did medical relief work with the Chinese Army. From 1941 to 1946, he was surgeon on a British supply ship. At the end of WW II he was 65 but subtracted 7 years from his age to qualify to assist the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration from Aug. 27, to Oct. 27, 1946. One of his heroic exploits was to hide 90 (left-wing) students in a barge and, wearing an American officer's uniform, convince the (right-wing) officials not to inspect the barge, thus saving the lives of the students.

On Dec. 4, 1946 he set out from Shanghai with a trainload of much needed supplies; the train was delayed at each of its 20 stops due to repeated inspection. After completing one delivery, he returned for a second load but could not continue past one of the receiving hospitals and died of exposure on Jan 10, 1947.

During his life, Dr. Tillson Harrison spoke six languages, participated in seven wars and had four wives.

His daughter Rosalind has said that she was interviewed by George Lucas and Stephen Spielberg and that her father's life was the inspiration for the Indiana Jones movies.

Although virtually unknown in Canada, Dr. Tillson Harrison is honoured in China with a statue to him in Shanghai, and a school and a hospital bearing his name. In 1988, the Chinese government held a huge ceremony to commemorate the centenary of his birth. Brian Mulroney sent a letter to the Chinese ambassador commemorating the event – without clarifying the actual year of his birth.

### Yukon Gold – Joe Boyle, Mining Locomotives & Giant Dredges, Part 1 of 2

Talk by Dave Gould, Apr 28

reported by Chris Packman

Dave Gould, our guest speaker, talked of many trips he'd made to old towns, mining camps and other relics. In 2005, he learned of a small mining locomotive, once used in Joe Boyle's 1900-era gold mining operations in the Yukon, then rusting on Vancouver Island. Making a long story short,

Dave bought it. It is now stored at the Ontario Steam Heritage Museum, in Puslinch, Ontario, where Dave has since been gradually restoring it.

The Yukon's Klondike River area was unknown to

## Yukon Gold – Joe Boyle, Mining Locomotives & Giant Dredges (contd.)

most until gold was discovered there in 1896, on a tributary, Rabbit Creek: soon renamed Bonanza Creek. However, its remoteness allowed the miners already in the area to make fortunes before heading south and triggering the Klondike Gold Rush a year later. Within months of that, tens of thousands of stampedeers headed for the Klondike, many of them unaware of the perilous journey ahead.

In, June 1897, Woodstock's Joe Boyle visited Juneau as a boxing promoter, with boxer Frank P. Slavin. After hearing about the recent gold discovery up north, the two now headed for Dawson City.

Dawson City had been established in 1896 at the junction of the Klondike and Yukon Rivers. In one year this small settlement had transformed into a bustling mining town of a few log structures and many tents. The population of Dawson City reached close to 30,000 in 1898 but by 1899 the rush was over and the town's population plummeted. But despite this, it had grown into a modern city, the seat of territorial government for the new Yukon Territory. The City of Dawson was incorporated in 1902, with a population of just under 5000.

After Boyle and Slavin arrived there in 1897, they worked for others then themselves; explored the Klondike and Yukon tributaries in the valleys of the surrounding low hills, and staked out and registered claims on land not already taken up. Despite the success of the earliest gold miners, the land was generally too poor for quick profits to be made. The government brought in a system of "land concessions": areas of land that one leased. Lessees had the sole right to mine for gold, and paid an annual rent plus a percentage on the value found.

Klondike area gold was widely dispersed in "placers" (Spanish for 'deposit') or pay-dirt layer, a few feet thick, usually following the beds of ancient streams that had once washed over gold bearing rock. Now it lay under up to 20 feet or so of permafrost.

Boyle and Slavin formed a partnership, and jointly applied in 1897 to the Canadian government for a lease on a huge tract of land along the River Klondike. Getting approval took until late 1900, despite Boyle making several personal trips to Ottawa to chase the process along. He also looked for financial backing, without much initial success. While waiting, Boyle and Slavin continued prospecting and staking out claims in likely places such as Bear Creek, until their partnership was dissolved by

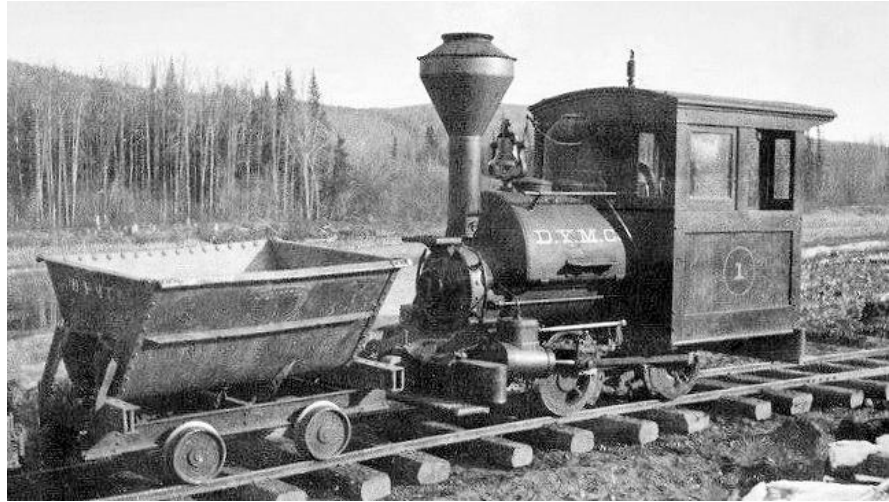


Photo 3

D.Y.M.Co. Loco # 1

Copyright Dave Gould\*

(\*Used by permission)\*

mutual consent, in May 1899.

Boyle's Klondike lease, Number 18, was approved in Dec 1900. He now had a huge land grant but, without enough funds for a dredge, continued less productive washing methods to separate gold from muck.

In 1902, the Detroit Yukon Mining Company (DYMC) purchased a concession on Hunter Creek in 1902 and began operations there the next Spring, using two Thew steam shovels to remove the overburden prior to hydraulic mining. One of the directors was Sigmund Rothschild, of the banking family.

In April 1904, DYMC purchased two claims on Bear Creek, near Boyle's concession, moved the two steam shovels there and hired James Elmer to supervise operations.

James Elmer also managed dredge operations for the Lewes River Mining & Dredging Co. on Bonanza Creek. This company actually operated the first dredge in the Yukon, with 3 1/3 cu ft buckets: on Bonanza Creek in 1899. James Elmer was known as "the father of dredging", and many of the photos shown by Dave were part of James Elmer's personal collection.

DYMC's own shovel pit operation at Bear Creek lasted just for the 1904 season. To keep water out of the pit, several large pumps operated at 8,000 gallons a minute. The Thew steam shovels extracted approx. 33,500 cubic yards of dirt from an area of approx. 60,000 sq ft to a depth of about 25 ft, filling small side-dumper railway cars.

The cars were moved by hand or horsed to an incline track where they were hoisted up to a wash plant. In the wash plant, the ore cars were emptied into a hopper that fed a large perforated and slightly inclined revolving tube



## Yukon Gold – Joe Boyle, Mining Locomotives & Giant Dredges (contd.)

of metal, called a “trommel”. As the gravel passed through the trommel it was subjected to a high-power spray of water to help separate the gold-bearing material. Fine material, including placer-gold, passed through the holes in the trommel onto gold-saving tables where it was collected in a series of ripples on coconut mats. All the material too large to pass through the holes in the trommel emptied into a hopper and was carried to the tailings or waste pile, using a self-dumping bucket.

Around June/July 1904, the DYMCo purchased a total of 24 ore cars and four identical saddle tank steam Locomotives, Photo 3, from the H.K. Porter Company,

Pittsburgh, which arrived in Dawson.

In a deal with Boyle in Oct 1904, the Detroit company founded the Canadian Klondike Mining Co. (CKMCo) to take over the Boyle Concession (nearly 40 sq. miles of land centred on a 6.5 mile length of the Klondike River). In exchange, Boyle got \$250,000 in shares (a one-third ownership) plus \$250,000 money from the new company's future profits.

**End of Part 1 – To be Continued in October issue**

## A Tale of Four Cannon

By Chris Packman

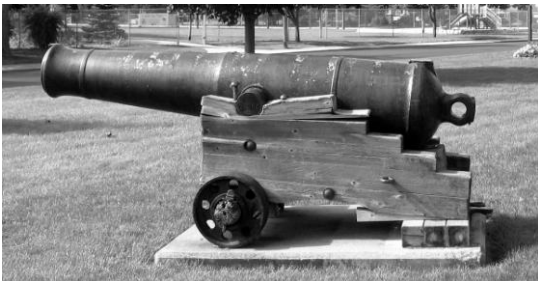


Photo 4

**Three photos of right-hand Cannon, Oxford Court House Lawn, Sep 10, 2006**



Photo 5



Photo 6

**Close-up, right hand support**

Back in September, 2006, I saw children seated or playing on top of one of the two cannon on the front lawn of the Oxford Court House, Photo 4 (the right hand gun, as viewed from Hunter Street). Then I went home fast to get my camera. I wasn't interested in taking their pictures – just the cannon, and its rotting gun carriage, Photo 5 & 6. Before it fell over, that is, with maybe a child underneath.

The iron barrel of that particular gun weighs over 3 tons. How do I know? Well each cannon has engraved text on its top surface, readable when viewed from the breech (the opposite end to the muzzle). The right-hand cannon is marked with the numbers 65-2-13, Photo 8, which is the total weight of the iron gun barrel in hundredweight (cwt), quarter cwt and pounds (lbs).

Since each hundredweight equals 112 lbs, and each quarter equals 28 lbs, a little arithmetic shows that the right hand cannon (65-2-13) weighs 7,349 lbs. One English ton is 2,240 lbs, so the iron gun barrel, weighs about 3.3 tons: not something you would want to have fall on your foot, or on little Charlie or little Jane. Engraved below the weight is 1843, the barrel's year of manufacture, in England.

Anyway, to get back to my story. I took pictures of both cannon on the Oxford Court House lawn, showing how disintegrated their wooden carriages were, then emailed the pictures to the County with a note about my concern.

Nothing happened until maybe a year later, when the two cannon vanished from the scene, together with another two at the NW end of Victoria Park. The two in the Park were mounted on crumbling supports of brick and concrete, also in sad need of repair. Whether or not it was my emailed pictures that triggered the cannons' disappearance, at least they were gone.

Then last year, the four cannon reappeared, nicely repainted: two on new gun carriages on the Court House lawn, Photo 7, and two on new brick and concrete mounts in Victoria Park.

The cannon were part of a group sent to Canada during the mid-nineteenth century for sea defences at a time of strained Anglo-American relations. The fortress at Halifax got five in 1856, and Fort York,

### A Tale of Four Cannon (contd.)

Toronto, got seven in 1862. Towards the end of that century, the cannon became obsolete and were donated by the Canadian Department of Militia and Defence to be placed in civic parks throughout Canada.

Until the nineteenth century, cannon usually fired round shot - solid cast iron spheres - and were described by the weight of the shot fired rather than by its diameter as guns are today. A solid cast-iron ball weighing 68 pounds has a diameter of about 7.8 inches and, as solid shot, would be fired from a gun barrel of slightly larger bore, eight inches, the bore of the guns on the Oxford Court House lawn and in Victoria Park.

All four cannon would be described as 68 pounder, weighing 65 cwt, muzzle-loading, 8-inch smooth bore, "shell guns"; and all are over nine feet long (actually, 122 inches tip to tip). Curiously enough, the left-hand gun on the Court House lawn is marked "66-0-14". Perhaps "about 65 cwt" was in the original weight spec.

Between 1834 and 1862, Britain's Royal Arsenal ordered 4,145 of the model to be made, for land and naval use. Their maximum range was about 3000 ft. For naval use, the metal trucks (wheels) would be replaced by wood

ones (less danger of making sparks near any spilled powder on deck).

It used to be important that the gunner know how heavy the gun barrel was, because it determined how much gunpowder he would need to push down the barrel (in a bag), then some wadding, then the shot to be fired.

When a gun is fired, half the energy released goes to pushing the heavy barrel back (cannon were then restrained by thick ropes) and half into pushing the lighter projectile forward. A gunner's mate soon learned to stand beside and not behind the gun. Gunnery tables, worked out in experiments by each country's military test establishment such as Woolwich Arsenal, London, England, would note the right amounts of powder to use for different types and weights of barrel, and the type and weight of shot used. Any illiterate gunner would be told the results and have to remember ("or you'll end up a batman waiter," as an RAF officer once threatened a class I was in).

#### Sources:

OxHS archives, Folder "History Quiz #151", FC215.02  
"An introduction to British Artillery" by S. James Gooding, Historical Arms Series No. 4



Photo 7 Restored Cannon, on right of Court House Lawn



Photo 8 Weight & Year made

Photos 4-8 by Chris Packman

### Guided Walking Tours – a fund raiser for Oxford Historical Society

Would you like to learn more about Woodstock's history?

The Oxford Historical Society is offering guided hour-long walks past either Woodstock's 10 **Historic Public Buildings** or the **Impressive Homes** on Vansittart Ave. and Light St.

To arrange a tour, please phone Tourism Oxford at 519-539-9800 Extension 3355. The cost is \$5 per adult. There is no charge for children under 13 when accompanied by an adult.