



Woodstock, Ontario

Newsletter 2012 July



Photo 1

82 Wellington Street

photo by Eleanor Gardhouse

Upcoming Monthly Meetings & Events

2012

- Tue Sep 11** 6:00 pm Dinner meeting at South Gate Centre, hosted by OGS Oxford County. Guest speaker Glen Stott will talk about Oxford County's involvement in the War of 1812. (Details on page 3)
- Wed Oct 31** Eleanor Gardhouse presents "A History in Stone"
- Sat Nov 24** 10 am - 4 pm Spirit of Christmas Homes Tour
- Wed Nov 28** Jack Hedges presents "Women in the War of 1812"

Our meetings are **usually** held on the last Wednesday of the month from September to May, inclusive. Our **NEW** regular meeting place is the **Woodstock Public Library, at 7:00 p.m.**, except where noted. All are welcome.

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**Oxford Historical Society
Committee Members**

President	Jim Groulx
Past President	Fred Freeman
Vice President.	Kathie Richards
Treasurer	Jack Hedges
Secretary	Chris Packman
Membership	Kathie Richards
Research	Mary Liley
Archives/Architecture	Eleanor Gardhouse
Museum Liaison	Karen Houston
Newsletter/Computers	Chris Packman
Publicity.	Dr Elaine Becker

Our Resource Centre Street Address

82 Light Street
Woodstock, 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

Email: 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 is of 82 Wellington Street, Woodstock, and was photographed by Eleanor Gardhouse for the Heritage Committee

This Neo-Classical house and a separate coach house at the rear were built in 1860 for the family of Jennet (McDonald) and Homer Pratt Brown in 1860. The house sills and supporting lintels were metal and made at Woodstock Foundry. Homer was an active member of the Masonic Lodge: there is an emblem of the Eastern Star, as a window, in the pediment above the front door. Squared pairs of Doric pillars frame the front porch, which shelters a rectangular transom and side lights. The transom and side lights are divided into many rectangular lights. Decorative brackets in pairs repeat and add symmetry to the design. The design of the transom and side lights is repeated on the inside of the small vestibule. Each window has a decorative lintel, but above the front hall window is a larger stone lintel with an English rose on each side of acanthus leaves. Small brackets of acanthus leaves support the lintel.

Homer Brown bought the property from Edmund Deeds and Henry DeBlair in October, 1854. He had come to Canada with his parents in 1835. In 1844, he became a partner with the Woodstock Foundry, 515 Dundas Street.

Membership for 2012!

Standard membership, Jan–Dec is \$20
Family membership, Jan-Dec is \$25

Brown was a member of the town Council, Mayor in 1861 and County Treasurer for many years. After his death in 1908, Dr. and Margaret Sinclair purchased the property. The large front living room was divided into a reception and office for the doctor. In 1950, Harvey and Edna Naylor purchased the property from the Sinclair estate, and returned the rooms to their original use.

Source:

“Heritage Woodstock, Architectural and Historical Properties,” pub. by Woodstock Museum NHS.

Collateral Damage

In May, Doug Gagel gave an illustrated talk on a book he'd written of his dad's experiences, mainly on the Russian Front, in the German army during World War II. I had more than an historic interest: I was a kid in rural England during that time of barrage balloons, darkened windows, air-raid sirens and hiding under the stairs. My late wife, Helga, was then a little girl in Kiel, Germany, an important port and shipbuilding city, heavily bombed during the war. She also had stories.

Chris Packman

President's Message

It has come to my attention from others in the community that there is much support for re-vitalizing the old downtown section of Woodstock. Recently, my wife and I attended an art show in Simcoe, accompanied by Cathy Bingham. She recently attended a meeting where everyone seemed unanimous in searching for solutions to make the downtown district more appealing to locals, and tourists.

With the recent scorching hot days, my thanks go to Kathie Richards for conducting Heritage Tours for the Oxford Historical Society. These tours are fundraisers, and the funds help with our expenses.

Marilyn Whyley and I are researching the names and locations of persons living in Oxford North, Oxford West and Oxford East in the year 1812. This information relates to the War of 1812-1814. Also, Jack Hedges is researching events from the same time period. If anyone can provide information, it would be appreciated. Speaking of the War of 1812, some say the Americans won; some say the Canadians (the residents of British North America) won. Some say it was a war between the Americans and the British only. Some say the First Nation peoples were the only ones to lose, and others say it wasn't really much of a war. We do know that a lot of folks suffered in many ways and, as usual, it was the average citizens who suffered the most. In 1815, many Militia members asked for compensation for damages to their homes, crops and livestock, but received only a portion of their damages.

The fence around the Vansittart gravesite has been restored, and looks wonderful. Some of our members offered assistance of various kinds along the way, of which we are proud.

Our new monthly meeting location, in Woodstock Library, seems to be attracting a few new faces. Our Executive meetings are still at the Woodstock Museum, where Karen Houston is very supportive.

On July 15th, our Society will have a booth display outdoors at the Elmhurst Inn from 11 A.M. To 5 P.M. The show is called the "Oxford Summer Arts Festival". Free admission. Drop by if you are free to do so. We will have books for sale. Also, in late August, the OxHS will have a booth at the Woodstock Agricultural Fair and a display about the War of 1812.

Well, time to start the second phase project of converting more of the OxHS. cassette interviews that were recorded many years ago to modern digital form, before age makes the tapes unplayable. These interview tapes are mostly from the 1970s: the oral histories of local productive and interesting individuals. We have recently re-started making interviews, but with digital recorders.

See you at our annual combined dinner with the OGS Oxford County Branch in September. Tickets are available at our office.

Jim Groulx

Annual Dinner Meeting, Tuesday September 11

OGS Oxford County Branch and Oxford Historical Society

Place	At South Gate Centre, 191 Old Wellington Street South, Woodstock	
Time	Social 6:00 pm	Dinner 6:30 pm
	Speaker 8:00 pm	
Topic	Speaker Glen Stott talks about Oxford Involvement in the War of 1812	
Cost	Turkey dinner and speaker \$25	Speaker only \$15
	Cash Bar	

Tickets and registration (must be before Sep 7, 2012) available at the Governor's House, 82 Light Street, Woodstock.

Call 519-421-1700 or check website www.ogs.oxford.on.ca

Events Since Last Newsletter

In Memoriam.— Gibson B. Stephens, d. 2012 Mar 26

Longtime member "Gib" Stephens, 90, passed away on Monday, March 26. A quiet, pleasant man, he owned and operated the Stephens Barber Shop for over 40 years: at 7 Reeve from 1960-66, then at 507 King.

He was a founding member of the Oxford Philatelic Society and a long-term member of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 55, Woodstock.

In his early 20s, he served in the United States Marine Corps, seeing action in the Guadalcanal Campaign (1942 Aug-1943 Feb) when the mainly-US forces stopped Japanese expansion in the Pacific; and in the Battle of Iwo Jima (1945 Feb-Mar), a key Pacific staging post for the later US invasion of Japan.

Sources: Sentinel-Review Thursday, 2012 May 24; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guadalcanal_Campaign; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Iwo_Jima; Vernon's Woodstock Directories

General Meeting, Woodstock Public Library, Wed Apr 25 Topic: Folding Money - From Playing Cards to Polymer

Fred Freeman, our past president, opened his illustrated talk on the history of Canada's paper money by speaking of the correspondence course he has produced that introduces young Canadians to the fascinating story of Canada's money.

The Chinese were using paper money going back to 700 A.D. However, when Marco Polo mentioned this after coming back from visiting China in 1298, Europeans said it was ridiculous and wouldn't work.

In 1656, a group of Swedish investors got together, opened a bank and produced bank notes. However it didn't really take off.

The first paper money in North America was issued in 1685 by the French Governor of Quebec. Supply ships from France had not arrived with coins to pay the soldiers, and local merchants had a lot of merchandise they wish to sell. In desperation, the governor gathered up all the playing cards in the colony, cut them into four, put a value in the corner, and used his royal stamp to make them official. When the ships finally arrived, the card money was exchanged for coins. The same thing happened again over the next 70 years. One of the locals decided to make counterfeit money cards, but was caught. As punishment, his hands were tied behind his back for a three-year period. After that, his arms were useless.

Paper money has its pros and cons. When gold, silver and copper for coins are in short supply there is no shortage of paper to print paper money. It is cheaper for banks and governments to print paper money than mint metal coins. Higher and higher denominations can be printed, and paper money is more convenient to handle

and transport. Its greatest disadvantages are: paper money can be counterfeited; banks and governments have been tempted to keep printing more paper money than they had tangible assets to back it up. [A "bank note" was once a promissory note to the holder that the paper can be exchanged on demand for its printed value in gold and silver. Currently, each country's banknotes are backed only by trust in its respective government.]

In 1792, nine Montréal merchants formed the Canada Banking Company but it soon failed because the legislature did not grant it a bank charter. In 1817, the Bank of Montréal opened as a private bank and issued banknotes, but did apply for a charter, granted in 1821. Other banks followed. Early bank charters did not limit the value of banknotes a bank could put into circulation, other than specifying that the bank's total debt was not to exceed three times its paid-up capital. Acts of bank incorporation provided that all banknotes would be redeemable on demand in gold or silver legal tender coin.



Photo 2 **1935 \$20 Bank Of Canada** submitted pix

In Canada's earliest days, the banks became a major source of paper money. By the late 1800s, over hundred banks were issuing paper money in Ontario. Not all were honest, or financially stable enough to redeem customers' money when the economy slowed, and their shareholders lost much of their investments.

The Molson family succeeded not only in brewing but also in banking. In 1837, Mr. Molson had a \$25,000 issue of banknotes made up in denominations of one, two and five dollar bills, and went to New York City, looking for backers for a new Molson Bank. The Molson Bank proved very successful, and during its lifetime issued bank notes for one, two, three, four, six and even seven dollars. Then the Bank of Montreal bought it out in 1925.

Canada had no standard currency until Confederation, with British shillings and pence mixing with US dollars and cents, Spanish and French coins; and with government-set exchange rates to keep everyone's accounts straight.

Some of the banknotes that Fred showed - those issued by the Gore Bank, Hamilton - had face values marked in both dollars and English shillings. One dollar banknotes, for example, at one time were also marked five shillings.

Events Since Last Newsletter (contd.)

The Bank of Toronto was a very profitable bank that decided to buy out the Bank of London, Ontario. Four days before this event happened, London's manager absconded with \$25,000. The Bank of Toronto cancelled the deal, but still sent auditors to London to check. They reported back that acquiring the bank was still a good deal. The Bank of Toronto now offered a lower price to buy the Bank of London, which was accepted. However, the latter's original investors still lost a lot of money.

From 1840 and until Confederation in 1867, Upper and Lower Canada were united into one as the Province of Canada (the two parts renamed West and East Canada). Fred showed its very first banknote, labelled "The Province of Canada". In 1848, the Province was in bad shape financially, with expensive projects on the go like construction of the Welland Canal, to bypass Niagara Falls. European banks refused to lend it any more money. So the Province brought out a debenture, paying 6%, and over the next few years raised money that way.

Fred spoke of the "shin plaster", a 25 cent banknote. He related how, during the American Civil War, George Washington couldn't afford to pay his soldiers with coin money, so he paid them with 25 cent notes. These were not accepted by shopkeepers, so the troops stuffed the worthless notes into their boots to stop them chaffing.

After the American Civil War, American 25 and 50 cent coins dropped 5% in value relative to Canadian coins but were still accepted here at face value. By 1870, there was such a glut of them in Canada that Sir Francis Hincks, Finance Minister (and our MP for North Oxford), took measures to collect them, ship them back to the US and/or send them to England to be melted down. In addition, he ordered the first silver coins for the Dominion of Canada from the Royal Mint in London and also had 25 cent notes, "shinplasters", printed for use meanwhile. To make their use accepted, the Canadian Government promised to reimburse the banks in gold when they turned in any of the shin plasters. Over \$4 million of the notes were printed. They proved so popular (adults often sent the 25 cent shinplasters through the mail as gifts to child relatives) that there were several more printings of them, with a last reissue in 1923.

Also in 1870, Hincks began to ease the banks out of issuing paper money by bringing in a law that only the Federal Government was allowed to issue one and two dollar bills. He extended the law in 1880 to include all banknotes up to four dollars. However, only after 1945 were Canadian banks completely barred from issuing banknotes.

The Bank of Canada was formed during Depression years when there was a need for Canada to have a central bank to handle international accounts. It was formed in 1934 and issued its first series of Bank of Canada bills in 1935: \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100,

\$500, \$1000. The \$20 was Fred's favourite, featuring the young Princess Elizabeth. Collectors called it the Shirley Temple bill, Photo 2.

The first issue was printed separately in English and in French. This caused problems, so the next sets were bilingual, as today.

The \$50 note of one later issue was nicknamed "Newfie Firing Squad". Its design featured a ring of mounted RCMP officers facing inwards. It was withdrawn.

A 1954 issue was nicknamed the "Devil's Face Notes" after people noticed the illusion of a devil's face in the hair of the Queen's portrait on the notes of all denominations: \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, \$1000. The image was corrected and a new set issued in two years.

Fred spoke about the new plastic polymer bank notes. Nowadays, a complete set of Bank of Canada banknotes only has five denominations: \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100. So far, only \$100 and \$50 polymer notes have been issued, with the other values to follow. Fred said that some paper money experts he has met wonder how the plastic notes will handle heat.

Ontario Archives Workshop, Sat May 12

The Workshop was held in the Grand Hall of Woodstock Museum. About 16 persons attended morning and afternoon sessions given by Stewart Bowden, Outreach Officer from Archives of Ontario. At 10:30 am, Stewart presented "Lights, Camera, Archives": film clips from movies in the archives produced by the Government of Ontario, starting in the 1920s. Subjects ranged from health promotion, tourism and education. Stewart was an excellent speaker who often added his own humorous comments, extra to any audio provided by the film clips.

At noon, Curator Karen Houston arranged an official buffet lunch to mark the opening of the Museum's latest exhibit, "Mad about the Town", the history of controversy in Woodstock. In pictures and text, but without taking sides, the displays covered a surprisingly wide range of local issues that had stirred civic emotions during well over a century.

An afternoon presentation by Stewart completed the day: "Doing Research from a Distance", a session on how to access the Archives through the Internet, for those unable to actually visit the Ontario Archives in Toronto. Both presentations were well received and netted \$295 for the Society. Thanks are due to Mary Liley and to Karen Houston for their work in arranging the Workshop.

In Memoriam – Eileen Whitehead, d. 2012 May 22

A long-standing member of the Society, Eileen Whitehead passed away peacefully at Caressant Care

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on Tuesday, May 22, at 87. She was a member in 1968, 44 years ago, and signed the Minutes of that year's AGM on Jan 16, as Recording Secretary. During the three years following, she was the Society's Treasurer.

Eileen was predeceased in 2008 by her husband, W.B.R. 'Bev' Whitehead, who was also a member of the Society. A gracious and very active lady, Eileen was a charter member and past Regent of the Wingate's Raiders Chapter of the IODE. She was also a charter member and a Chair, of OGS Oxford County Branch. Inurnment was at the Woodstock Anglican Cemetery.

Source: Sentinel-Review, Thursday, 2012 May 24, P.9

General Meeting, Woodstock Public Library, Wed May 30 Topic: Führer, Folk and Fatherland (illustrated)

Murray Coulter introduced guest speaker Doug Gagel. Doug was born in a small town in Michelau, Bavaria, in the south of Germany, in November 1946. It was a year after the end of World War II and the return home of his father, Albin, and the family was struggling to survive. By 1952, Albin, looking to establish the family somewhere else, managed to emigrate to Pickle Crow, Northern Ontario, to work in the gold mines. He made enough to send for his wife and son Doug. Doug's brother was born there later. Finally, Albin resettled the family in London, Ontario. Doug authored a book, Führer, Folk and Fatherland, about his father's experiences in WW2, which Murray found an incredible story, well worth reading.

Doug held up a copy, saying it was a true story that took the family 12 years to put together. "My brother and I were sitting in the kitchen, complaining about something. Dad (Albin) asked what we were complaining about. He said we lived in the greatest country in the world; had all kinds of freedoms; didn't have to go into the Army and we shouldn't complain about living in a free country. When he was our age he was fighting for his life in a foxhole in Russia. My daughter asked him to tell us about it. At first reluctant, he began talking and I suggested he write it down. A week later, Dad gave me 51 handwritten pages which I said he might wish to expand upon. Eventually, I would get him to talk, hit record on my recorder, then later type it up. I'd give him sections to read, which twigged new memories. Four years later we had a 900-page manuscript." Added time was spent in research and editing, making the story of general rather than just family interest, and a publisher was found.

In Michelau, Bavaria, the town square was surrounded by a town hall and three pubs. Nearby, was the house in which Doug was born. Doug said it was a good place to grow up. The Bavarians didn't take Hitler very seriously at first. The book's title, meaning the leader, the people, and the fatherland, was at first a patriotic slogan of the things you should make sacrifices for. Then things became very, very serious and Führer, Folk and Fatherland became a cynical expression.

Doug said that part of what fueled World War II was the Treaty of Versailles after World War I. The terms of the Treaty were very harsh. Germany lost territory in the north, south and east; and all of its colonies. The hardest part was the reparations, and the blockade by the British and American navies around Germany from 1915/16 to about 1919, in which many Germans starved to death. The Treaty's legacy allowed Hitler to say, "I will restore Germany's pride. I will restore Germany to a great nation".

After Hitler was elected; put everybody to work; got rid of crime (not government crime – harder to detect), he was actually supported by a lot of people during his rise to power, because he did everything good: until he started his war. He got the Rhineland back, and Sudetenland back. Then Hitler began negotiating with Poland to get the Danzig corridor back, and England promised that if he invaded Poland to get it back, England would declare war.

In 1939, Albin Gagel was drafted into an artillery unit for two years of compulsory army service. Then Hitler invaded Poland. World War II started and Albin had to stay until it ended. When his unit was sent into France in 1940, the army used bicycle soldiers and all the supplies and all the artillery were horse drawn. At first, Albin hated horses: smelly ugly things that you had to clean up after, all the time. For Albin, not much happened in France, expect for one dramatic artillery battle.

After that, in March 1940, Albin, now promoted to corporal, was sent to Narvik, Norway, north of the Arctic Circle, in charge of one of four gun crews. Narvik was an important port for Hitler, for shipping out iron ore from Swedish mines. Earlier, after fierce battles between Allied defenders and invading German forces, the Germans won, the Allies pulled out and any Norwegian troops had simply been allowed to go home: there was no reason to expect revenge attacks from them.

For Albin, there was either too much or not enough daylight, and guard duty quickly became tedious. Fraternising was discouraged and, anyway, the locals ignored the German occupiers. Then Albin got sent to Russia in Jan '42, and Narvik didn't seem so bad.

His first stint was right in the siege of Leningrad (now again named St. Petersburg). He was there for about two or three weeks under bitterly cold conditions for which the German army was ill equipped: coats too thin; inadequate gloves; steel nails conducted cold through boots, and caused frostbite. Forgetting to wear a warm cap under a steel helmet could be fatal, as the cold seeped in to numb the brain.

Then he was sent south to Orel, SW of Moscow. He marched to this area, always just behind the fast advancing German front; not seeing actual battles, just the detritus of past fighting, and dead men and horses

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that his battalion had to bury before they could stop anywhere.

In losing a battle for Stalingrad, Aug 1942 - Feb 1943, the German army lost so many officers that anybody with education and smarts was sent back to Potsdam, for officer training. Albin was one of those. Now an officer, Albin met and fell in love with Gisela, an attractive young factory-worker from Brandenburg, near Berlin.

In June '43 he was now posted to the infantry, joining a battalion on the Russian front, in the Kursk Salient (SW of Moscow) in time for the largest battle in the history of mankind: 941,000 Germans (and their allies) versus over 2 million Russians. In a battle lasting six months, involving thousands of tanks, artillery and planes, initial casualties were 224,000 German and 433,000 Russian.

Albin was actually in fighting near Kharkov. It exchanged hands four times during the battle: he saw it burning for hours, as the defeated Germans marched away at the start of what was now their long retreat.

After the officer in charge of his company (90 men) was killed, Albin took over. During the retreat, he and his men took part in a series of ferocious battles against seemingly countless Russian infantry supported by tanks. His actions earned him an Iron Cross, first and second class, though by then he was too weary to care.

At this time in the German army, you left the battle front in one of three ways: dead; captured, which could mean dead because of rumours of how Russians treated prisoners; or wounded seriously enough that you could leave. Flesh wounds were patched up and you returned to the fighting.

A month later, Albin was wounded, a rifle bullet breaking both bones in his right forearm. When darkness came, he and his men withdrew to rejoin their battalion. After reporting in, he walked off to find the medic station, exhausted, delirious and singing. He was grateful to the Russian soldier who had shot him. "His bullet in my arm was my ticket out of hell".

Dimly conscious during several days of train travel and of sleep punctuated by nightmares, he reached a hospital in Warsaw. It felt great to get clean, lose his stinking clothing, and especially its cargo of Russian lice. Operations and a year-long recovery period followed: to restore some mobility and function in his otherwise useless right hand, but again making him useful to the army. During that time he got army permission for a week's leave to marry Gisela. They wed in Michelau, on a sunny day in June, 1944.

Albin was returned to the Russian Front, in April '45, the war almost over, in charge of something called a Marsch [march] Company. Hitler's government had collected old men, or air force or navy men of the now-defunct air-force and navy; put them all together; and called them

soldiers. They had rifles and shoulder rocket launchers. The launchers made a puff of smoke when fired, making their user an immediate target: it was a suicide weapon. Anyway, Albin led this company on the continued retreat from the Russians.

Albin felt there was no way they were going to win against the advancing Russian army. So he told his men, "Just keep your head down and you don't have do anything". Near Görlitz, Germany, he briefly left his Marsch company to look for a missing squad of his men, but was captured. Using his smarts, he escaped, but was again a prisoner of the Russians on May 8 when news came of the war's end. Not believing the Russians would release anyone, he escaped during their celebrations, and reached Brandenburg only to find Gisela had already left for Michelau. The Russians arrived. He was again captured, spent some time in a labour camp, but escaped once more.

Eventually he reached Michelau, now in the US controlled zone, and found his wife. Thanks to a friend, now a clerk at an American army base in the city, he got his discharge paper from the Americans. He was lucky.

Doug: "I went back to Germany in 1996 to talk to Dad's brothers, my uncles. Two of them were captured by the Americans, and their story was awful. The history you get to hear all the time is that the Russians were beasts in the way they treated the German prisoners and the Americans were the good guys. Dad's story is the opposite. The Russians treated them just fine. Most professed that they didn't want to be there any more than he did. In fact the Russian soldiers would share cigarettes with you and ate the same foods."

"But his brothers were in a camp near Coburg. The American prison camp was just a field [surrounded by a chain-link fence and armed guards]. And unless you had a tent, you slept in a hole in the ground. ... 750,000 German soldiers were starved to death by the American army [in POW camps while waiting for discharge papers]. You never get to hear that on TV or especially not Hollywood movies."

"Postwar Germany was also pretty grim for civilians because the USA's Morgenthau plan had taken all the industries out of Germany, including the food producing industry. Many people starved in Germany from 1945-48, until the Marshall plan came in [to provide money to rebuild all non-communist countries in Europe as a bulwark against the Russians]."

"But I'm going to actually stop on a better note. Dad got a job as an auditor for Revenue Germany, a desk job. He was really, really sharp with figures. ... And he was doing quite well, everything was okay. In 1952, they closed the Berlin wall. Remember the Berlin airlift, and all that? My mother said, 'I've had it up to here with

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warfare ... [and] ...these military obsessions in Europe. I want to find a country where I never have to see my son in a uniform', that's me. And I really like that."

And they started life afresh in Canada.

Annual Car Trip, Saturday Jun 9

To: Waterloo Region Museum & Doon Pioneer Village

Seven people signed up to go, and we met at 09:30 to carpool in the car park behind Woodstock Public Library. Under dull skies, we headed east along Highway 401, exiting at Homer Watson Boulevard. The site of the museum and village was then only a few kilometres north. Admission for seniors was \$8 (plus tax).

It was raining hard on arrival, so we stayed in the very interesting two-year-old Waterloo Region Museum in the morning, wandering around its historical displays from early pre-European times up until recently. After lunch, we toured its exhibit of the evolution of local science and engineering progress (including RIM) that was impressive. The museum had much to see, and some of the group planned to return.

The Ontario Historical Society was holding its annual convention in the museum, resulting in the lunch counter and hall being closed at noon while OHS was served. The staff was very helpful: we were able to buy sandwiches and drink, and were led to a small classroom to eat. After the rain stopped, we visited the adjoining Doon Village. The village has fewer buildings than we saw last year in Fanshawe Pioneer Village, with less equipment in them. However, although the buildings on display were built at different times, 1914 was chosen as the period represented by the Amish attire of the guides,

and the furnishings and equipment within the homes, businesses and farms buildings on view.

The museum and village were set within a 60 acre plot. The village itself, and a small attractive church and real cemetery (relocated to allow road works elsewhere) on its edge, were in connected clearings, pleasantly surrounded by tall trees and bush that emphasized its rural setting. We finished by driving back to Woodstock in brilliant sunshine.

Old St. Paul's Church Founders' Day, Sun, Jun 10

Mary Liley and Karen Houston represented the Society on Founders' Day at Old St. Paul's. It was well attended and the service was good. The guest minister gave a history lesson on Woodstock, though noting that a 10 year dispute between Capt. Andrew Drew and Rear Adm. Henry Vansittart was not mentioned in the church's official history [Editor: a dispute that only the ended when Vansittart died, March 14, 1843, after a fall from his favourite horse].

Book Launch, Thursday, June 21

Topic: Formosa Mission Reports, G. L. MacKay's Life in North Formosa 1868 – 1901

There was a book launch and reception at Woodstock Public Library at 2 PM for a very large book, "Formosa Mission Reports, Series 1, G. L. MacKay's Life in North Formosa, 1868 - 1901". The book, of 1200 pages, is the first of a series containing the mission reports to the Presbyterian Church in Canada from the first missionaries sent to North Formosa, notably George Leslie MacKay. Over 30 people attended, including members of both the Oxford Historical Society and OGS



Photo 3

Doon Village General Store – in 1914 period costume

photo by C. Packman

Events Since Last Newsletter (contd.)

Oxford County.

George Leslie MacKay began mission work in North Formosa on December 31, 1871, combining medical, educational and evangelistic efforts to introduce Christianity. This first volume, Series 1, includes the mission reports of MacKay and other missionaries up to 1901 (the year MacKay died). It contains information about his interactions with the people of Taiwan, their response to him and his message, and the problems involved in initiating a Christian mission. Two future volumes will cover the years up to 1923. The original documents were microfilmed, then two co-editors, Louise Gamble and Chen Kuan-chou, spent over 18 months of ten-hour days to

transcribe text from the microfilm for the Series 1 volume. The text was often barely legible due to the age and past handling of the originals.

The officials present included Albert Yao, principal of Taiwan's Tamkang Middle School, and others of a delegation from Taiwan. It was Yao who first had the idea to transcribe into a book the regular reports that George Leslie MacKay sent back to the Presbyterian Church of Canada on the progress of MacKay's missionary work in what was then Formosa. Oxford County Warden Don McKay and one of the co-authors, Louise Gamble, were also present and spoke during the ceremony.

Chris Packman

War of 1812 in Oxford County

by Jack Hedges

On November 4, 1814, an American raiding party led by Brig. Gen. Duncan McArthur consisting of 650 volunteers and 70 Indian allies arrived in Oxford in secrecy. Their plan was to destroy or steal any livestock, food, household materials and crops that could be used by a British Army and militia on a military campaign against Detroit. Their other goal was to proceed to Burlington Heights to connect with an American army from Niagara to attack that British position.

This would be the largest raid in Oxford and fortunately the last. Oxford saw no battles, but the settlers did experience a number of raids at great domestic cost and the menfolk were involved as militia in most of the war's major campaigns.

The raids came via the Stage Road as it is called in Oxford. Originally, it was part of a timeless Indian footpath called the Detroit Path that ran from Burlington Heights to Detroit. It was the route that Governor Simcoe took when he was exploring the peninsula for its suitability for settlement and deciding that the middle forks of the Thames (London) would be the provincial capital and the upper forks would be a town plot (Woodstock). This was the main corridor to the whole western peninsula and would take on a whole new importance upon the arrival of the Ingersoll family.

Thomas Ingersoll and Rev. Gideon Bostwick of Great Barrington in Massachusetts accepted an offer to petition a township on the Thames in 1793 and were granted Oxford on the Thames. This was a settlement program from Governor Simcoe as a means of bringing people into the area. The death of Bostwick left Ingersoll as sole township proprietor. He was required to bring in 40 families to be given 200 acres of land at 6 pence an acre. As people arrived, Ingersoll took on the task of having surveys and roads built at his own expense. He created the stage road from the Thames to the Grand River to accommodate new

settlers and the transport of goods. Originally, the Detroit Path traveled from the east through Oxford Centre and across country to Beachville, where it crossed the river and continued west. Ingersoll's new route would be the present line of Hamilton Road, King Street, Karn Road, to the Dodge Line and then continued across as the present Stage Road, now interrupted by Hwy 401.

Ingersoll's financial situation worsened by 1804 as he was not adequately reimbursed for the money he had invested in roads and surveys. He left the area in 1805 to operate a government house on the Credit River, but his two sons were involved in the war and his daughter Laura Secord would become a national heroine.

The Detroit Path would take on even more importance after the Battle of Lake Erie. On September 10, 1813, the British Naval squadron under Commander Robert H Barclay was defeated by the American Commandant Oliver H Perry. This was most unfortunate for General Proctor at Fort Malden. His supplies and reinforcements were transported to the fort by water, but now that the Americans controlled Lake Erie he was at a great disadvantage. He decided, much to the dismay of Tecumseh, that he would abandon the fort and escape up the Thames. He had only 900 regulars and William Henry Harrison had several thousand American troops, so, with an agreement with Tecumseh that they would fight at a later time, the British moved out of Malden to the Thames. At Moraviantown they took a stand on October 5, 1813 but were seriously defeated with Tecumseh killed in action. Proctor took flight with his army in pursuit on their way up the Detroit Path through Oxford and onto Burlington Heights. The next year, in March, the

War of 1812 in Oxford County (contd.)

Battle Of Longwoods would prove to be another British defeat, and with limited troops and a bigger and more important military front in the Niagara area, the British regulars were needed there. Thus protecting the settlers in the peninsula was basically left to the militia.

The Americans were very aware of the power vacuum that was on their doorstep. At first they concentrated on the lower Thames but as time went by they became more bold and started moving further east where homesteads had not been pilfered. The first raid in Oxford was in April 1814 when Andrew Westbrook, a turncoat, brought a raiding party and captured Major Sykes Tousley, a militia leader, to take back to Detroit. Westbrook was originally settled in Delaware but a conflict with Thomas Talbot and his great disappointment in obtaining a lower rank in the militia than he felt he personally deserved caused him to switch sides. Eventually, on one raid he burnt his own homestead and moved his family to Michigan. He was a valuable ally to the Americans as he knew his way around and was familiar with the militia situation. He also had a significant ownership in lands about the London area including Oxford. He even burned his own grist saw mill in Centreville to keep it out of British hands.

In August 1814 Westbrook returned to Oxford as a guide under the leadership of Lieutenant William Service and a party of Michigan Rangers. Besides their destruction and thefts of settlers' property, they concentrated on the militia. Approaching the home of Enoch Burdock they were met with gun fire from Mrs Burdock. In the resulting skirmish Mr. Burdock was wounded and his home looted. They captured Captains John Carrol, David Curtis, and Ichabod Hall, looted their homes, and either stole or destroyed their livestock. The raiders proceeded back home but were ambushed on Commissioners Road, on a hill just east of Byron, by the Middlesex Militia.

Unfortunately, Westbrook traded horses with John Carrol, putting the latter on a well-recognized pinto that drew the fire of the militia, killing Carrol. The Americans

escaped by hiding in the woods and in the morning quickly returned to Detroit.

The last raid was that of McArthur and after the others he still preyed on the settlers for what he needed to feed his large force and horses and also anything else they may fancy. His threats of harsh treatment to anyone who went ahead to warn of his coming was not a deterrent to two farmers. George Nichols and Jacob Woods left the settlement at 3 AM to go to Burford to alert the militia.

Another settler, Bazely, informed McArthur not only about Nichols and Woods but also other militia leaders in the area. The two farmers were completely burned out and Nichols had to hide in the woods until the danger passed. Bazely would later be taken to Ancaster and charged with treason.

McArthur would go on to the Grand River only to be turned away by high waters and some British regulars and Six Nation Indians on the other side. He retreated only to go south where his large force would defeat the militia at Malcolm Mill (Oakland, then a part of Oxford) and proceed to destroy Waterford, Simcoe and other communities before returning to Detroit.

The war ended with the Treaty of Ghent in the Netherlands. The settlers of Oxford, as with the other communities throughout the western peninsula, did not do battle directly, but they suffered loss of the materials that made their subsistence possible, especially if the raids were in the autumn when they had no means to replace what was lost before winter. Many, but not all, would be compensated for their losses after the war but the dislocation of their life could only be traumatic. What they did learn was who their enemies were and who were their friends; and that memory stayed.

Resources:

Old Oxford is Wide Awake; Brian Dawe 1980
No Smiling Path; Catherine B. McEwen 2004
Greater Evils; Glenn Stott 1998.

Spirit of Christmas Homes Tour, Saturday Nov. 24, 10 AM to 4 PM

by Kathie Richards

It is only July, but there are less than 160 shopping days left until Christmas! Do you need some new ideas for decorating your home? Take part in our Spirit of Christmas Homes Tour on Nov 24!

Encourage your friends to purchase tickets to make this fundraiser a success!

Members are also asked to take a morning or afternoon shift staffing the homes. If you have not already signed up for a spot, please contact Kathie Richards at 537-7743 to add your name. Thanks for your help!

Tickets are now available for our tour of 5 homes on Vansittart and Devonshire Avenues decorated for Christmas.

Tickets cost \$15.00 and can be purchased at our office or at the following locations:

Merrifield's Book Shop

Quality Hotel

Thyme on Fifty Nine
(in Dean Michael's Restaurant)