



Newsletter

Lake Scugog Historical Society

Spring/Summer 2015

President, Paul Arculus • Secretary, Bill Minors • Treasurer, Daphne Naassana • Editor, Wendy Hatherley

President's Message

It is certainly a relief to see the warm weather arriving after the coldest winter in memory.

Last November we all shared in the sadness of the passing of a former President of the Lake Scugog Historical Society, Mavis Brodie. Mavis was our President in 1999-2000 and was played a key role on the museum's "Olde Tyme Gardeners." Mavis was a member of a group that established the flower and herb garden just behind the Lee House at the museum. She had been in ill health for a few months and passed away peacefully on November 4, 2014. A large crowd attended her funeral and then her burial in Pine Grove Cemetery in Prince Albert.

Last month, February, after a year of planning, Marilyn Pearce once again organized a highly successful Antique Show. Our profound thanks, to Marilyn, and to all those who helped her. The funds raised will help us to continue to move forward with more historical projects.

On Saturday May 2, the Whitby Doors Open event is placing particular emphasis on the Port Whitby Port Perry Railway. Some homes of people involved with the railway and the former Whitby Junction Railway station will be open as part of the event. At the Whitby Marina there will be a large display of the railway; models, photos and other artifacts related to the railway, including the Scugog and Port Perry section, will be on display.

175 years ago the Anglicans of Cartwright Township gathered to worship in the homes of the faithful. This year, 2015, they will be celebrating this anniversary and have a number of events planned. I have written a history of the church and its community and will be launching the book at the church on the evening of Friday May 15. You are all invited.

The Lake Scugog Historical Society awarded its first bursary to a deserving student this past fall. The award was handed out at the Port Perry High School annual Commencement exercises in November 2014. The bursary of \$1000 was awarded to a student going on to post secondary education to study history, heritage or museum studies. The bursary this year was awarded to Hannah Polonski of Port Perry who graduated from PPHS and is now attending Trent University and is majoring in history.

Once again, your executive is planning an interesting set of events for us in the year ahead. I hope to see you at many of them.

Cheers
Paul Arculus
President of the Lake Scugog Historical Society

Open Meetings

**Wednesday, April 15,
7:30 p.m.
"Nostalgia Night"
Meeting to be held at the
Heritage Centre, 1655
Reach St.**

**Wednesday, May 20,
7:30 p.m.
Lynn Hodgson,
"The History of Special
Operations in Canada"
(after our AGM at 6:30p.m.)
Meeting to be held at
St. Johns Presbyterian
Church, 319 Queen St.**

**Sunday, June 21,
2:00 p.m.
Paul Arculus
"Fame & Fortune"
Pinegrove Cemetary Walk**

Cemetery Walks

This coming year the Lake Scugog Historical Society will be involved with two Cemetery walks. Paul Arculus will host our own walk at Prince Albert Cemetery, Sunday, June 21st, at 2:00 p.m. This walk will be held rain or shine.

The walk is entitled "Founders, Fame, and Fortune." The walk will focus on the community's founders and on those who helped to establish the economy of this region as well as those who went on to fame and fortune beyond Scugog. This walk was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances last year. There is no charge for the walk, but a hat will be passed at the end for voluntary donations to the Lake Scugog Historical Society. Prince Albert Cemetery is located on Jeffrey Street, off of Old Simcoe Road, south of Highway 7A and the meeting place is near the United Church.

The second walk will be held Sunday, September 13, at 2:30 p.m. and will be in conjunction with St. John's Anglican Church in Blackstock, celebrating their 175th Anniversary. Paul Arculus will host this walk. For more information: stjohnsblackstock.com

Also, in celebration of St. John's Anglican Church Anniversary Celebrations on Friday, May 15th, at 7:00 p.m. there will be a book launch "Blessed are They," A History of the Church and Parish of St. John's.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

We have a number of members who have not yet renewed their annual membership; please fill in your forms, or drop into Books Galore and More, on Perry Street and renew there. You can also renew with Wendy, at the next meeting. Ask for your membership card from Wendy when you renew as well, if you haven't received it yet!

Local History

In 1883 and 1884 our town was devastated by fires that totally destroyed the downtown core of this community. Within weeks, the streets were thronging with architects and tradesmen as the town quickly began to rebuild itself. Within a few months some buildings were completely rebuilt and open for business. Within a year, the entire downtown core was a thriving pace of business and enterprise and brand new buildings.

A reporter from the Toronto Globe, the predecessor of today's Globe and Mail, heard of Port Perry's remarkable recovery and came to see the miracle for himself. The Toronto Globe of October 2, 1886, carried a three page spread containing his report and drawings of most of the important places of business, social gatherings and homes of the community. Here is what he had to say:

"Port Perry is a large and prosperous village, soon to be incorporated into a town, beautifully situated on the west bank of Lake Scugog, in the County of Ontario, 40 miles by rail from Toronto. The Whitby, Port Perry and Lindsay branch of the Grand Trunk railway runs through it, and it has navigable water communication stretching over 100 miles to the north-west and north-east. Lake Scugog is a very fine sheet of water, some 20 miles long and from 4 to 6 miles wide, abounding in fish and water-fowl of various kinds, and forming a very paradise for sportsmen who frequently come from distant sections of the province and of the United States to enjoy the fishing and shooting.

In 1883, and again in 1884, the place was devastated by fires which swept away the entire business portion of the town thus involving a loss of nearly \$500,000. Such, however, were the pluck and enterprise of its inhabitants that what threatened to be an irreparable calamity was converted into a substantial blessing. Within a few months of the day that saw Port Perry in ruins and ashes the town was rebuilt in a style of architectural beauty and good taste never dreamed of prior to its destruction, and certainly not to be found elsewhere in the province in any town of double or even quadruple its size.

(cont'd)

Two large brick hotels and some 28 to 40 brick stores, all more or less ornate in design and all furnished with plate glass fronts, grace the principal streets, and others are in process of erection. The public buildings and the better class of private residences are exceptionally fine - notably so in the case of the schools, the Town Hall and the market.

Some ideas of the rapid growth and of the importance of Port Perry as a business centre can be gleaned from the fact that although scarcely a score of years have elapsed since it was a mere county hamlet, it now possesses ample buildings and grounds for the accommodation of the District Central Fair, and has two newspapers, six churches, public and high schools, a Mechanic Institute [the equivalent of today's library], Masonic, Oddfellows, Foresters, Orange and Sons of England lodges, a foundry, a saw mill, a grist mill, three planing mills and sash and door factories, an elevator, marble works, soda water factory, two carriage factories, a hay pressing establishment, two furniture factories, a falling and carding mill, pump works, etc.

Its business men are public spirited, live, go-ahead people, determined to ensure the prosperity of their town. They offer the highest possible prices for produce of all kinds and are prepared to sell their goods at the smallest living advance or cost. Civil, obliging and anxious to please they have by consistently pursuing this policy secured a large and over increasing trade and are drawing distant customers from the immediate neighborhood of even larger and more pretentious business centres.

Port Perry is year by year increasingly becoming the chosen place of abode of retired farmers and men of means and such others as desire to reside in a healthful neighborhood and to secure for their families superior facilities for obtaining a good education.

The market is well supplied, living comparatively cheap, the society good, the surroundings beautiful, the schools unsurpassed in the province, the water everywhere abundant and excellent, and the air, owing to its great elevation - some 800' or 1,000 feet above the level of Lake Ontario - is of unequalled purity and salubrity.

Taken all in all, Port Perry is a beautiful, thrifty, pleasant place, abounding with attractions for transient summer visitors and offering more than ordinary inducements to would be settlers. It is rapidly growing and is destined to become more and more important in the near future."

Such is the Port Perry of today.

RECAP OF OUR UPCOMING MEETINGS:

The Lake Scugog Historical Society will be holding a "Nostalgia Night" on Wednesday April 15th. At this meeting members and the general public are encouraged to bring historical artifacts to show and discuss. The Scugog Shores Museum's Curator/Director, Dr. Amy Baron will be on hand to show some of the Museum's more unusual artifacts and comment on others brought in by the public. The meeting will be held at the Heritage and Archive Centre on Reach Street, at 7:30 p.m.

Lynn Phillip Hodgson, popular author of *Inside Camp X*, and other related works will be the guest speaker at the Lake Scugog Historical Society's May meeting on Wednesday, May 20th. Recently, Hodgson has been an advisor and consultant on the popular tv series *X-Command*. The series follows the events and lives of those involved in Whitby's world famous World War 2 spy training camp. This CBC spy-drama series draws heavily on the research carried out by Hodgson on his numerous Camp X books. Hodgson, also a former Scugog Councillor, will have copies of his books for sale and will be available to sign them. The meeting takes place at St. John's Presbyterian Church on Queen Street in Port Perry on Wednesday May 20 at 7:30, after our Annual General Meeting.

"Scugog - The Early Years" and "Out Of The Ashes"

In this and future newsletters we will occasionally reprint excerpts from books written by J. Peter Hvidsten. The Lake Scugog Historical Society thanks Peter very much for permission to use the stories and photographs previously published and we hope you will enjoy the two excerpts below on the development of the waterfront area in downtown Port Perry.

New wharf constructed at Port Perry's lakefront



During the early 1870s, Port Perry's lakefront was a disgraceful mess. The mud infested shoreline and dirty water was cluttered with rubbish, creating not only an eyesore for the village, but a health hazard to its residents.

With the Port Whitby and Port Perry Railway now entrenched into the economy of the village, the railway company began work in the spring of 1873, which would not only clean up the despicable mess, but also add to the commercial viability of the railway and steamships.

Under the capable leadership of Mr. B.R. Kimball, superintendent of the railway, large crews of men began construction of a wharf which would stretch more than 300 feet out into Lake Scugog.

The permanent wharf was constructed by building a crib of timbers off shore in the lake and then filling the space between the crib and the shore-

line with brush. Next the crews set to work with a dredger outside the timbers, throwing the dirt removed from the lake on top of the brush. This method of construction allowed them to raise the level of the wharf as high as desired, creating a 320 foot structure along which the company laid railway lines.

Steamships bringing lumber and other products to Port Perry, or picking goods up for delivery to Lindsay and other points north, were now able to dock right along side of the wharf to meet rail cars waiting to load or unload their cargos.

An article in the *Ontario Observer* in Nov. 1873 reported "when completed an area of 320 feet by at least 300 feet will have been transformed from a disagreeable, sickly looking puddle, to a clean, comfortable, valuable yard and most convenient wharf."

Reprinted from Scugog – The Early Years by J. Peter Hvidsten, with permission

The Wharf and Dockhouse

Construction of the government pier at the foot of Queen St. started in June 1914 and was completed in Sept. the following year, with a change house for bathers. The 210' long pier took 4,405 bags of cement, 381 loads of gravel and 958 loads of stone to complete.

The lakefront was a very popular spot for swimming during the 1920s and 1930s and council installed a springboard at the end of the pier for the pleasure of bathers in 1924.

In July 1938, the newly formed Port Perry Lions Club built a new diving platform on the pier.

The 'dockhouse', as it became known, was used as change rooms for swimmers. The inside was divided into two sections, one for boys and the other for girls.

The dockhouse was not built directly on the cement pier, but on wooden piles alongside the dock on the north side, and over the years it required repairs on many occasions.

In the spring of 1958, ice crushed the decaying pillars causing severe damage to the building. As the ice melted, it began to sag badly, spelling the doom of the unique little house on the pier.

Council tendered for the removal of the 44-year old 'dockhouse' and it was removed from the end of the pier in March 1959, where it had stood like a beacon since 1915.

Views of the Dockhouse, from top right, photo taken from the lake; centre view of the dockhouse from the shoreline; bottom left, from Palmer Park and bottom right, a view of the back of the dockhouse.



Reprinted from Out Of The Ashes by J. Peter Hvidsten, with permission

HERITAGE CENTRE & MUSEUM NEWS

General Information:

Address for Heritage Centre: 1655 Reach Street, Port Perry, (2nd Floor)

Address for Village: 16210 Island Road, Port Perry

Contact information: Amy Barron or Rebecca Blundon, 905-985-8698, ext. 103

museum@scugog.ca

www.scugogshoresmuseum.com

Heritage Centre Exhibits: “From Little Acorns Mighty Oaks Do Grow”

April 18 – May 17: University Students Showcase

May 24 – June 21: RH Cornish Showcase

Join us at the Heritage Centre as we showcase the local artistic talent of some of Port Perry’s younger residents.. Who knows where the next great talent will come from? And they may in fact be right under our nose.

Two back-to-back exhibits will demonstrate the progression of art from school age up through university. From April 18th to May 17th we will host an exhibit put on by past high school art students now in university and college. Matt Condie and Rachel Callan, recent graduates of Port Perry High School, have helped to organize this art show of fifteen past art students who have continued to develop their skills in their present post-graduate programs. Then, from May 24th to June 21st, students of R.H. Cornish will take a turn showing how the first seeds of art grow in our local children.

Opening events:

Saturday, April 18th and Sunday, May 24th

1:00 – 4:00

Free admission to openings. Light refreshments.

Dates of Future Museum Events to Note:

47th Annual Canoe the Nonquon (June 6)

Dog Days of Scugog (July 18/19)

Pioneer Day (August 9) this year will include free pony rides for the kids.

Driftwood Theatre (Aug 15/16) New for this year: two performance dates. Show will be Hamlet.

Murder Mystery (Sept 11) “A Knight of Murder”, medieval themed

Children’s Old Fashioned Christmas (Dec 6)

Watch for the next Newsletter in September/October, 2015.

*Lake Scugog Historical Society
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