

Heritage on the Hill

The Richmond Hill Historical Society, P.O. Box 61527, 9350 Yonge St., Richmond Hill, ON L0C 0C9

www.rhhs.ca

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President: Andrea Kulesh, E-Mail: r.hillhistsoc@hotmail.ca

September / October 2011



President's Jottings

From the desk of Andrea Kulesh



Greetings everyone. I hope you had a wonderful summer and didn't suffer too much with those record high temperatures. I hope you were all thinking of me sitting in my 1860's costume at Black Creek Pioneer Village during the hottest summer days I can remember. How about you? Have you any memories of really hot, never-ending summer days that didn't let up - in the days before air conditioning? Lying in bed at night, not moving so that you could pretend there was some air moving over you.

How did we cool off then? Well, perhaps a cooling bath before bed, a summer's evening swim, cooling drinks or paper fans. Some families had electric fans that looked like airplane propellers. These were some of the things that kept us cool. Those of us who lived in the country were lucky. We were surrounded by farms where there were actual summer breezes, and no cement towers or paved areas keeping in the

heat. Richmond Hill and the surrounding areas were mostly agricultural lands, not cement tunnels or unending paved areas for many blocks - just nice green farm lands for as far as the eye could see.

Whenever I went bike riding in my neighbourhood there was a farm in every direction. All of us kids in the Langstaff/Richvale area were very upset when Langstaff High School was built, because it took away one of our play fields. The "jail farm" property was green as far as the eye could see. My Mum would have skinned me alive if I had ever crossed Yonge Street to play in the fields there. I was also not allowed to go north of Carville. But she never told me I couldn't go south. So south I went in the summers to the Thornhill outdoor pool for lessons, flying on my bike down the hill near the Thornhill Golf Club. That kept me cool.

Sure, I was getting annoyed at work every time a visitor asked me if I was hot sitting in my costume and commented on

how hot the "pioneers must have been in their layered clothing."

Of course the Stong family, who settled the land where Black Creek Pioneer Village is now, were definitely hot when they were cutting down trees, pulling up stumps and plowing and planting, but what was the point of complaining - what could they do?

The conditions that exist now in the Toronto area didn't exist in the early 1800's. The temperature was never anywhere close to what it was this summer. That doesn't mean there weren't hot days - just **better hot days**: summer days when the air was clean with the smell of wafting breezes over green lands and lots more trees. Richmond Hill was completely surrounded by farmlands. This is our agricultural heritage. Oh, the memories of those much better hot days

Here's hoping for a great autumn.

Enjoy!

Upcoming Events

September Meeting

September 19, 2011

Our speaker will be John McIntyre who is curator of Sharon Temple National Historic Site. He also works as a museum consultant and lecturer. He chairs the Hillary House Restoration Working Group of the Aurora Historical Society and is a member of the Town of Aurora Heritage Advisory Committee.

His subject will be "Collecting Our History": a look at over a century of collecting by private collectors and by the Aurora Historical Society, leading to today's Aurora Collection and the collections at Hillary House National Historic Site. This informal, illustrated talk will look at how a community's collection got started and the wide variety of artifacts and documents it contains today.

October Meeting

October 17, 2011

Our own member, Marj Andre, will be

speaking about the beginnings of her informative website called www.OnRichmondHill.com. Her efforts have resulted in an ongoing information calendar that Marj updates regularly. Marj's contacts are many and she also sends out useful snippets of historical information separately and highlights special events. Marj Andre is the first person to begin such a successful endeavor about our Town of Richmond Hill. The current and cultural events she records will one day be part of our rich history.

Crime and Punishment in Upper Canada

Cameron Knight

The Mary Lou Griffin Local History Collection is pleased to present a four part lecture series on the themes of crime and punishment in Upper Canada (1792-1840). The series will explore the history of criminal justice in Ontario, study specific trials, investigate early court records and enquire into the existence of organized crime.

Interested persons are asked to pre-register at the Central Library's Full Service Desk.

Nineteenth Century Ontario "Crime Timeline"

Professional genealogist and published author, Janice Nickerson, will walk you through the process of criminal justice administration in 19th Century Ontario, from the discovery of the crime through the investigation and adjudication to the final punishment. In the process, the following sources will be examined: newspapers, government correspondence, coroner's inquest files, prosecution records, court minute and docket books, judge's bench books, jail and prison records.

Saturday, September 17, 2011

Richmond Hill Central Library

Meeting Room A/B

10:30am to 11:30am Admission: \$5

The Trials and Tribulations of Moses Winters

Moses Winter was a member of an early Etobicoke family who in 1831 was convicted of the crime of buggery and sentenced to be hanged, but was he guilty as charged? Though justice in Upper Canada could be harsh and swift, it could also be tempered with mercy. Librarian Guylaine Petrin will present her research in this trial which includes three petitions for mercy. The programme will reveal how court cases and the accompanying petitions can be used to reveal the lives of our ancestors.

Saturday October 29, 2011

Richmond Hill Central Library

Meeting Room A/B

10:30am to 11:30am Admission: \$5

Early Assize Court Records of Ontario

Presided over by a judge of King's Bench, these courts were usually held annually, especially in districts other than the Home District, and were travelling courts, sitting in the administrative capital of each district. A part of the Courts of Assize was the Court of Oyer and Terminer and General Gaol Delivery which dealt exclusively with criminal cases. Linda Corupe, a researcher and author, will explain why this court is titled so, describe the kinds of cases one would find there and the procedures involved in holding court session such as selection, legal representations etc. A number of specific cases will be highlighted.

Saturday November 26, 2011

Richmond Hill Central Library

Meeting Room A/B

10:30am to 11:30am Admission: \$5

Organized Crime or Youthful Folly?

Local History Librarian Cameron Knight will chronicle the depredations of a band of young ruffians who were active in and around Markham Village in the early 1830s. Were they operating along sectarian lines, were their motives political and did they evolve into the dreaded Markham Gang that was to terrorize rural Ontario in the 1840s? Mr. Knight will examine the demographics of the three main perpetrators: Emmanuel Tomlinson, Morrison Porteous and Eliakim Whitney in an attempt to make sense of their crimes.

Saturday December 10, 2011

Richmond Hill Central Library

Meeting Room A/B

10:30am to 11:30am Admission: \$5

Experience with Quick Sand

Chet Wilson

I worked for Bill Farren. He had the gas station and store at Snowball Corners at Dufferin and Aurora Road. Bill owned their family farm south of Snowball on Dufferin St. On the east side of the road he pastured cattle for the summer.

Dry weather dried the pond. Bill hired a backhoe to dig the pond deeper. They ran into quick sand. After digging they fenced it in until it settled. But through the night the cattle broke down the fence. I came to get my machine to go to another job. I found three cattle in the pond. They couldn't move so I called Bill and got some neighbours to help us.

Two of us got into the water to hold up the cows' ears. If they get water in their ears they would drown. So we held up their ears form 8:30 to twelve o'clock. You had to keep on the move with your feet as suction would pull them in. We had to make a tripod out of poles and hired a tow truck. We used a strap saddle around the cows' belly. Five of us had shovels. When we lifted a cow each person dug one leg as well. Even the hair on the tail had to be dug out!

We got two cattle out safely but one died. The owner of one of the trapped cows was happy to have a new calf in the Fall. After that day was over, we were all BUSHED!



Condolences

We were sorry to learn of the passing of Ivan Hillaby in June. Our sympathy goes out to Flo and her family. Ivan was a member of the McConaghy Old Boys and a veteran of World War II.

Jim and Avonelle Monkman Honoured

Our Society recently received a donation of \$200.00 in recognition of Jim and Avonelle's generous contribution of time and commitment over many years to the York Chapter of The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario. The Executive would also like to acknowledge that Jim and Avonelle have been very valuable members of our Society and without committed volunteers like Jim and Avonelle our Society would not be as successful as it has been and remains to be so. Congratulations Jim and Avonelle and thank you for the very generous donation.



April 7, 2011

Richmond Hill Historical Society
P.O. Box 61527
9350 Yonge Street
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L4C 0C9

1231 Ramara Road 47
Breachin, ON L0K 1B0
705-426-7550

Attention: Ms. Andrea Kulesh, President

We have chosen to honour Jim and Avonelle Monkman at our April Annual General Meeting with plaques and an honorary membership signifying their long-term commitment to the York Chapter of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario.

Our board of directors has also motioned to donate \$200.00 to your organization in recognition of Jim and Avonelle Monkman's generous contribution of their time and commitment over many years. Jim served our organization as Auditor from 1993 to 1996, as a Director from 1997 to 2010, on the first Marketing Team as of 1999, as President of the York Chapter from 2001 to 2004 and as an Officer and Treasurer from 2007 to 2010. In addition, Jim has served on the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario from 1999 to 2010 and as Website Administrator for many years. Avonelle has served in the role of Publications Coordinator for York Chapter for many years and as well, served as Director of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario from 2000 to 2010.

We are saddened they have resigned from active service with our organization, however we are extremely fortunate to have had their time and their valuable commitment to the York Chapter and also to our parent organization, the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario.

Sincerely,

Don Miller. President



Thanksgiving and Harvest Festivals



Did you know that our Canadian Thanksgiving is older than the American Thanksgiving? The first European to celebrate a Thanksgiving in North America was the English privateer, Martin Frobisher. He was grateful for his safe return to modern day Newfoundland in 1578 after his third unsuccessful attempt to find the Northwest Passage. This was a one-off celebration, as was the better known American Pilgrims' Thanksgiving at Plymouth in 1621 which was held to celebrate their successful harvest.

Thanksgiving ceremonies and Harvest festivals were separate occasions until fairly recently. A Thanksgiving was held to commemorate a special event. In 1763 the citizens of Halifax held a Thanksgiving to mark the fact that the Seven Year's War had ended and that New France had been handed over to the British. The first Canadian national Thanksgiving was observed in 1872 to celebrate the recovery of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) from a serious illness.

Harvest Festivals are annual events that must date back to the origin of agriculture. Farmers would give thanks to the Creator for a bountiful harvest. The First Nation Peoples had been observing ceremonies of thanks for a long time before the arrival of the Europeans. The Green Corn Festival, which is still observed today, highlights the importance of the corn harvest. The green corn is the fresh, ripe corn which is ready to eat. After the festival, some corn was left on the stalks to ripen further and later be dried.

As the different European groups settled in North America, they brought their own Harvest celebrations. Traditionally, once the harvest was safely gathered in, a festival was held. This would be during the Harvest Moon which was the full moon closest to the Autumn equinox. The local church would be decorated with fruits and vegetables from the harvest and thanks would be given for God's gifts. There would be a great feast afterwards.

The foods served at this feast, so well loved by us, would have been strange to the early settlers. The turkey, squash and corn were all introduced to the settlers by the Native Peoples.

The Americans did not establish their national Thanksgiving Day until 1863. Abraham Lincoln set the last Thursday of November as the date. But it still was not an annual event until 1941 when F.D. Roosevelt signed a bill making the fourth Thursday in November the holiday.

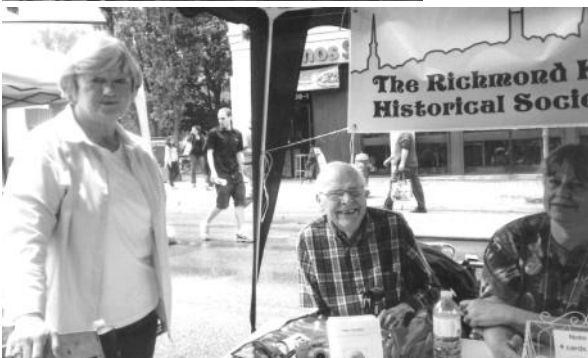
The Canadian Thanksgiving Day was declared a national holiday in 1879 to be celebrated on November 6th. After WWI, Armistice Day (later Remembrance Day) was established on November 11th and for a while the two holidays were celebrated together. On January 31, 1957 Parliament declared that the second Monday in October would be "a Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed."

Richmond Hill Heritage Village Day 2011



Our Society had a stall again this year at Heritage Village Day. As seems to be customary on HVD, it rained - but not enough to wet our spirits! The Executive would like to thank everyone who came out to help.

Our presence at HVD is important to highlight the activities of our Society



and to help keep Richmond Hill's heritage alive.

Top left: Dinah Cruse Hunter and Greg Hunter.

Bottom left: Cheryl Butler, Bill Schurman, Joyce Horner

Top right: (seated) Bill Schurman, Joyce Horner, Tom Kulesh

Bottom right: Flo Schurman at Richmond Hill United Church

Pictures by Val Firman



Richmond Hill Heritage Centre Advisory Committee

As of June 22, 2011, Marilyn Hancey replaced Bert Hunt as the Richmond Hill Historical Society's liaison with the Richmond Hill Heritage Centre Advisory Committee. Marilyn has been a long time volunteer and a paid employee at the Heritage Centre and is very keen to be included in one more aspect of the Centre. She will attend five meetings per year on behalf of our Society and report back to us regarding the issues presented at the meetings. Marilyn will remain on the committee until the next municipal election.

We would like to thank Bert Hunt for his contributions as the previous liaison officer.

Character Community Award



Linda Clark was recently given a Town of Richmond Hill Volunteer Achievement Award for her work with the Richmond Hill YMCA. The citation read: "[Linda] has been a generous contributor of her skills to the 'Strong Kids' campaign, and regularly brings a sense of order and calm to a very busy and hectic work day." We would like to congratulate Linda also and to thank her for all her work for the Society. Well done!

What Do You Remember About 10165 Yonge Street?



I am the heritage and urban design planner and am trying to conduct some background research for a property located at 10165 Yonge Street. We have been informed that the property was once a dance hall prior to its renovation in the early 1950s. Unfortunately, our planning files from this period are spotty and so I don't have any information to confirm this. Any information relating to the history of the building would be greatly appreciated

Matthew Somerville MCIP, RPP, LEEDAP
Heritage and Urban Design Planner
Town of Richmond Hill
Telephone: 905-771-5529

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93 Years Young and 70 Years Strong

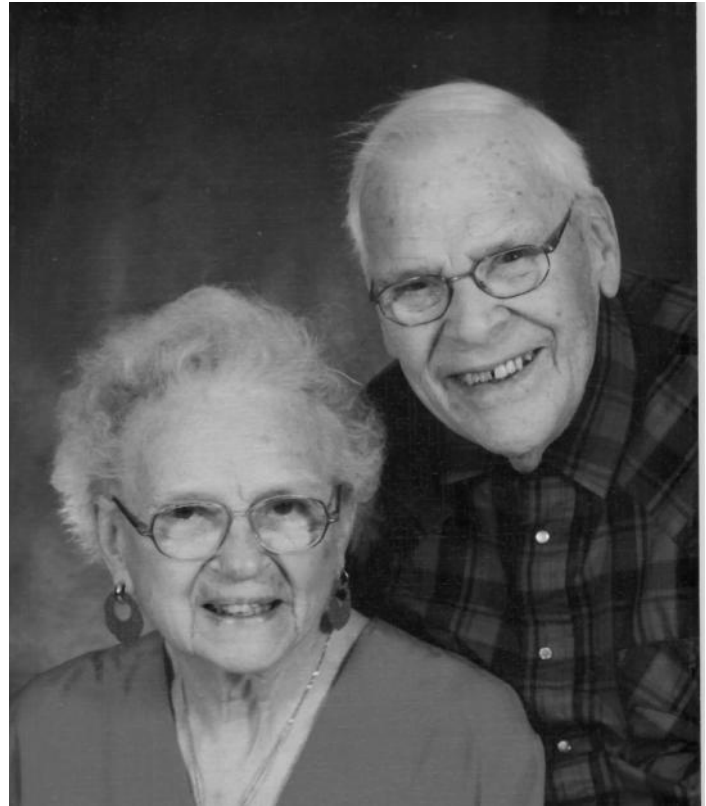
Flo Schurman

Willem and Florence Schurman were married December 10th, 1941 at Richmond Hill United Church by the Rev. Claude Brethen with a small reception following at the home of my Grandmother Emma Tyndall and Aunt Annie Tyndall on Richmond Street.

Bill left for the armed forces the beginning of February 1942 and then Rivers, Manitoba and then Terrace, British Columbia. I followed in time for our first anniversary. Paul, our first born, arrived April 12th, 1944, at a Mission Hospital at Hazelton, B.C. Bill was on a draft for overseas but failed his medical. In Spring 1945 Bill was posted to Ottawa. When the war ended Bill was discharged and we lived in Richmond Hill. At that time he worked for Lauder Glass's Meat Market. Three more sons were born to us at Mrs. Stanford's Nursing Home in Richmond Hill. More finances were needed and Bill changed occupations and began selling General Insurance. Zurich was one of his companies and we met Harvey Rempel, who was a field supervisor for Zurich, recently at Richmond Hill United Church where we are members.

We moved to Aurora where Bill sold life insurance for Prudential. We lived there for 27 years. Our two daughters were born there.

We are often asked how we managed to stay together for 70 years. We both had parents who quarreled and we vowed to try to live harmoniously and never go to bed angry. We are thrilled to be able to love each other and never have a serious disagreement.



Bill Schurman celebrated his 93rd birthday on Sunday, August 14th, 2011, at Richmond Hill United Church. Bill and Flo decided to celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary, which will actually be on December 10th, at the same time since so many family members and friends had travelled from as far away as B.C and Holland to be there.

They have been members of the Historical Society for many years and are still actively involved in the Society.

We send them our warmest congratulations on this amazing double achievement.



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