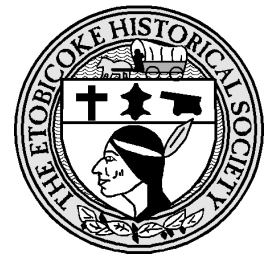




The Aldernews

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"Preserving Etobicoke's History and Heritage"



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ETOBICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Richview Library's Local History Room

A treasure of local history right here in Etobicoke

by Brenda Rolfe, Staff Librarian

Tucked away on the second floor of the Toronto Public Library, Richview Branch, at 1806 Islington Ave (north of Eglinton), is a hidden jewel for those researching the history of Etobicoke, Toronto, and Ontario.

The Local History Collection began in the 1960s, when staff began collecting material on Etobicoke history. Renovations in 1985 allowed the collection to be consolidated and housed in its own special Local History Room.

The collection reflects the historical development of Etobicoke and includes material related to the Greater Toronto Area (and Ontario, when relevant). It is quite eclectic, having been developed primarily through book and document donations. Though never intended to house ar-



Richview Local History Room: Quiet, spacious...and a wealth of materials

chival material, nonetheless, the collection has many unique components:

The Tweedsmuir Collection of minutes, scrap books, photo albums, and other memorabilia, was donated in 1990 by the Richview Women's Institute (founded in 1914). Other donations have included selected documentation of the Eatonville and Lambton Mills Women's Institutes.

...(see **Richview**, p2)

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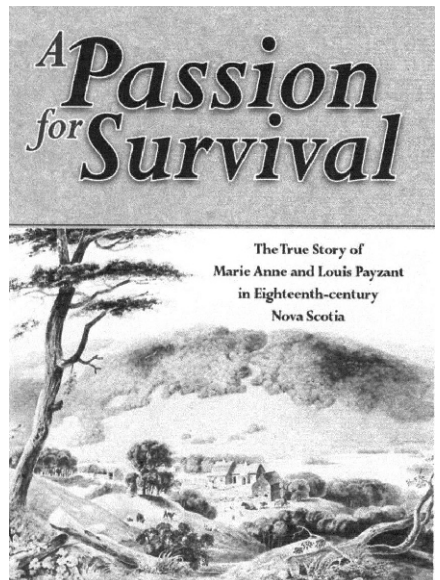
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WELCOME BACK!

MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**Thursday, 23 September
2004, 7:30 pm, at
Montgomery's Inn**



Linda Layton, author of
A PASSION FOR SURVIVAL

Author **Linda Layton** presents the fascinating story of researching her family history, from Huguenots escaping French religious persecution on the island of Jersey, to Louis and Marie Anne Payzant's hard life in colonial Nova Scotia and Québec.



Huguenots (Toronto Reference Library)

Richview Library (...cont'd from p 1)

The Etobicoke Historical Society's Oral History Project, from the early 1980s, provides access to the memories of many residents growing up and working in Etobicoke's various communities. It is indexed by personal name, community and areas of interest. Newsletters and other publications of the EHS and other historical societies are on file, from the *Aldernews* to the *York Pioneer* journal.

Robert Home Smith is well-known as the developer of the Kingsway and Humber Valley Village. The Home Smith collection of photographs comes courtesy of the Toronto Reference Library. Other important ephemeral and published material has been acquired to round out this collection.

Diana Sythes donated an album of photographs of Humbervale, from the late 1800s to 1954, to complement her book, *Humbervale: A Story of an Early Community in Etobicoke*.

Stories of early pioneer settlers, such as the Grubb, Silverthorn and Stonehouse families, and farms such as the Eaton Farm, are kept here.

The estate of Dr A H Richardson donated a wonderful collection of provincial conservation reports, which includes the very well-used volume devoted to the Humber Valley. There is a substantial collection of reports related to the development of Pearson Airport over the years. The SWEAP collection (Solid Waste Environmental Assessment Plan) documents the beginning of Toronto's waste reduction and recycling plan.

The collection includes a substantial assortment of historical maps and atlases. Local newspapers have been indexed almost continuously since 1950, providing access to local issues in planning, transportation, education, policing and elections. Perhaps more importantly, they provide the detail which might flesh out a history of a school, church, cemetery, business, shopping mall, sport, or sports team.

A Vertical File (VF) is a time-honoured library term referring to a collection of wonderful bits and pieces of information which defy placement anywhere else. VFs are often repositories of real treasures. The Local History VF has material on a

wide variety of topics, many similar to those covered by the newspaper indexes. Highlights include the brochures of candidates running in federal, provincial and municipal elections; articles related to the debate on establishing a Level-4 virus laboratory in Etobicoke; material on the



Interesting and diverse items in the files

Humber River, the Lester B Pearson International Airport and Etobicoke's various villages and communities.

There are voters' lists from 1958 to 1997. Unfortunately, privacy laws now prevent us from keeping those issued since 1997. We receive Community and City Council agendas and committee reports, which we keep for varying lengths of time (three years for Etobicoke-York Community Council). Though Toronto by-laws are readily available on the City's website, we are beginning to receive the printed version of these. We are keeping by-laws of the old City of Etobicoke for historical purposes.

Lately, most donations to the collection have been government documents, generally at the municipal level. While they may lack the immediate cachet of the early stories of people, places and events, future users may well consider them important historical documents. Donations of relevant materials are always welcome.



The Local History Room may be accessed during regular library hours by enquiring at the second-floor information desk. Come see a little of your community's history!

President's message

Gregory P Wowchuk,
P Eng

Preserving history in a booming Toronto

The Etobicoke Historical Society is mandated to preserve and promote Etobicoke's history. A very large--and visible--part of our history exists in our buildings and in urban structures such as roads and parks. While few would suggest all old buildings should be preserved for eternity, I think most citizens would appreciate having at least some examples of historically significant architecture in their own community as a form of "living history". Readers of the *Aldernews* are well aware of preservation efforts such as those on the Richview pioneer cemetery and the Mimico railway station.

In my column last month, I made reference to the "astonishing" rates of growth we are experiencing. According to the census, Toronto's population grew *four per cent in four years* (1997 to 2001)! I was surprised to learn that population in some areas of Etobicoke, namely north of Highway 401, on both sides of the Gardiner Expressway east of Royal York Rd, and the Humber water-front area, grew by between *20 and 94 per cent* from 1991 to 1996! This growth is fuelled by immigration and our aging population, both of which need and seek out the services available in big cities such as Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver. In response, city official plans have been amended to promote "densification".

As a consequence of this growth, not surprisingly, there is a building boom of unprecedented scale. In the 1950s, a many areas of Etobicoke were converted from farms or open space to suburban homes and streets. Now, however, developers have to remove what is on the land to put in something bigger and denser. Roads have to be widened and extended. Utilities are installed.

...(see **President's message**, p 3)

My Memories of Lunness Road

by Marion Pyper

My parents, William and Marion Patterson, moved from Toronto to Lunness Road in the fall of 1923. I was two years old.

Lunness Road-- north of Rimilton Ave--consisted only of six homes at that time and was not a through street. On the west side, looking north, there was a family named Shutter, then our place, and Eddie Sandford's family. On the east side, there were the Ruthvens, Hudsons, and, on the corner of Rimilton Ave, the Langdons.

My father, being a steamfitter by trade, and my grandfather, a plasterer, were a great help in the building of our home.

It was the Depression, and a lot of homes were left uncompleted. People ended up living in their basements, which had been covered over to keep out the weather.

There were also a lot of frame-and-tar-paper homes, heated by a wood stove with a pipe out a hole in the wall to the outside. The pipes would get red hot and result in a fire. Families were losing what little they owned, and were left homeless.

With so many disasters, and along with grass fires, it was quite evident that something had to be done.

In 1931, a Volunteer Fire Brigade was organized and a board of Trustees was chosen, consisting of William O'Connor, Robert Johnson (Secretary) and William Patterson (Chairman).

John O'Connor was the first Fire Chief. A small fire hall was built on



(Photo from Alderwood Walking Tour)

the east side of Lunness Road, just north of Horner Avenue.

I can remember to this day being terrified when the siren would sound in the middle of the night. My father would jump out of bed, pull on his clothes (which were always laid out, at the ready), and run to the fire hall.

My father did not have full movement in his left leg, because he had received a wound to his knee in the War. It made it difficult for him to run, especially in the winter, with snow and ice to contend with. After a couple of bad falls, he realized he would not be able to continue as a volunteer.

Today, there is a much larger fire hall on Lunness Road, with the equipment and manpower ready to tackle an emergency, and the residents of Alderwood can feel secure that if an emergency happens, help is close at hand.

The small fire hall on Lunness Road, with its caring volunteers, was the first step towards the peace of mind we enjoy today and was a major step forward for our Community. I feel it has been too long overlooked and deserves to be acknowledged with a plaque in recognition.

Commemorating Etienne Brûlé

by Robert Given

Étienne Brûlé is the title of a recent book by Gail Douglas from Altitude Publishing, which my wife, Joyce, got for me. Gail taught elementary grades for ten years, then was a small newspaper editor, and since then, has written over a dozen romance novels. (Brûlé led an adventurous life which easily could have been the basis of a novel).

Brûlé left Champlain on what is now called Lake Simcoe on September 8, 1615, and with twelve Huron braves, went up the Holland River, then portaged to the Humber River. They followed the Toronto Portage Trail along the Humber to Lake Ontario. On September 9th, Brûlé became the first European to see Lake Ontario and the later site of Toronto. Brûlé continued on to the Susquehanna River and the Andastes tribe in Pennsylvania.

...(see **Brûlé**, p 4)

President's message (...cont'd from p 2)

A consequence of this exceptional population growth and finite real estate is that the need to preserve heritage buildings and artifacts frequently conflicts with the plans of politicians and property developers. Stories of bulldozers turning graceful and sound historic buildings into rubble are legion: This summer, sections of artist William Armstrong's house in Thornhill were "renovated" *without a permit*. In Mississauga, 160-year-old McLeod House was levelled for part of the Churchill Meadows development. The 19th-century Massey-Harris office on King St W has been converted into trendy loft condos. 93-year-old Willoughby Avenue Baptist Church, in the Keele/Annette area, was demolished in mid-June despite being designated a historic building by Council.

Even if city politicians are successfully lobbied to come to the rescue of a heritage building, the best City Council can do is designate as a historical site and delay demolition for up to 180 days, to allow a relocation or other plan to be drawn up. (This is what is happening to the Mimico train station.) The Willoughby church wasn't so lucky; designation is not official until published in a local newspaper. The church *was* designated by Council, but the owner acted quickly to level it just before the designation was published in the Star.

Other approaches, such as zoning changes, are impractical, because developers simply can go to the Ontario Municipal Board and have the zoning by-law quashed.

There *is* hope on the horizon, however: Ontario Culture Minister Madeleine Meilleur is moving to give municipalities the power to prohibit such demolitions, with fines of up to \$1 million for offenders. The provincial government also is reviewing the powers and role of the OMB.

In the meantime, we citizens should volunteer with local preservation boards, which advise Council on preservation matters. Dresden, Germany, lost its heritage after being flattened by WWII bombing; *we*, however, have a choice. We can write and phone our MPPs and Councillors to say we *don't* want to pass on a monotonous, sterile Toronto to our children.

Brûlé (...cont'd from p 3)

In 1923, Humber Bay built a new school on High Street, and called it *Brulel School*. Roman Catholics objected, quoting Recollet brother Gabriel Sagard saying Brûlé was "very vicious in character and much addicted to women." The Protestants also complained because he was French and Roman Catholic. The name was removed from the outside.

On October 30, 1957, the present Étienne Brûlé School opened at 50 Cloverhill Road, in Humber Bay. At the time, the old residents had quite a chuckle at the reversal!

In 1967, the Centennial of Canadian Confederation, the Etobicoke Historical Society erected a number of metal-framed plastic historical plaques, from Mimico and Long Branch, north to Thistletown and Claireville. (Unfortunately, for a variety of circumstances and reasons, many of the plaques can no longer be seen, or have been removed.)

For our Étienne Brûlé memorial, the Etobicoke Reeve and Councillors contributed a six-foot-tall boulder, on which is engraved the EHS's message: "From a nearby spot, Lake Ontario was first seen by a white man, Étienne Brûlé, on September 9, 1615." This blue-paint-spattered memorial, in South Humber Park, can be seen on the east end of the berm along the north side of the Humber Sewage Treatment Plant. Go north on High Street from the Queensway. Take the broad path from the third house on the east side of High Street, north of Whitworth Avenue, and walk east along the berm.

The Aldernews is a publication of the Etobicoke Historical Society. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of the Society. Authors are welcome to submit articles of interest to our members for consideration and publication.

The EHS is a non-profit corporation devoted to the preservation and sharing of Etobicoke's history. Donations are gratefully accepted, and receipts for income-tax purposes will be issued.

The EHS is affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society.

The Etobicoke Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Libraries Branch, of the Government of Ontario.

Board of Directors Report

Your Board of Directors continues to meet over the summer. Its meeting on September 9th heard that a phoning campaign by the Membership Secretary has helped clean up the membership records and should result in renewals and new memberships.

Our resident Historian, Bob Given, reported on a trek through the Humber Treatment Plant woods, along with the Manager of Surveys and Mapping of the City of Toronto, in search of the six-foot-tall Brûlé monument (see story on p 3). The monument was located, overgrown with vegetation, at the east end of the berm north of the plant.

The sudden resignation of Director Alex McKenna was accepted, with regret.

A committee was struck to search for a qualified and interested Treasurer. Over a dozen résumés already have been received via the CGA web-site.

The EHS is considering participating in a "re-plaquiring" at the south-

east corner of Albion Rd and Islington Ave. This is one of numerous locations in Etobicoke where plaques have been placed over the years and disappeared due to property renovations or vandalism and theft.

EHS membership records are being computerized and new name badges for the membership meetings will be printed. The Membership Secretary will continue to phone past, new, and prospective members.

The EHS will participate in the quarterly insert by the Arts Etobicoke in the Etobicoke Guardian, and will send a delegate to the annual general meeting of Arts Etobicoke.

A motion to donate toward the fundraising project by the First Canadian Parachute Battalion to purchase the Victoria Cross of Cpl Fred Topham (who lived in Etobicoke after the war), was not passed. There was some concern that Topham was a *Leaside* resident before the war, and also that the medal would not be located in Etobicoke should it be purchased by the Battalion.

COMING EVENTS:

Thurs 23 Sept 2004: Commemorating 400 years of permanent French settlement in North America, the Ontario Heritage Foundation invites you to attend the unveiling of plaques recognizing *Samuel de Champlain's* explorations in Ontario. Etienne Brûlé Park, northeast of the Old Mill, 2:00 pm. RSVP to 416.314.4902 or e-mail rsvp@heritagefdn.on.ca.

Thurs 23 Sept 2004: Etobicoke Historical Society: Linda Layton on *A Passion for Survival*. A look at her Huguenot ancestors in colonial Nova Scotia and Québec. EHS meeting, Montgomery's Inn, 7:30 pm.

Fri 15 Oct 2004: *Hurricane Hazel*: Heritage York has a video (DVD and VHS) of recollections and records of that weekend fifty years ago. See it as a guest of the Toronto Humber Yacht Club on Humber Valley Rd, off Riverwood Pkwy, north of Stonegate Shopping Centre. 7:00 pm.

Sat 16 Oct 2004: *Hurricane Hazel was no Lady*: Marjorie Mossman of the Etobicoke Historical Society and

Mary Lou Ashbourne of the Weston Historical Society lead a heritage walk, starting at Cruickshank Park (Weston Rd and Church St), to the Weston Lions Arena displays (one block SW of Weston Rd and Lawrence Ave W. Commemorate the lost swing bridge and Etobicoke's Raymore Drive, east of Scarlett Rd, where homes were swept away and 36 residents perished. 10:00 am.

Sat 16 Sept 2004: *Hurricane Hazel Plaque Unveiling*: Madeleine McDowell, the Humber Heritage Committee, and the Ontario Heritage Foundation will unveil a plaque in King's Mill Park, on the Etobicoke side of the Humber River, under the Bloor St viaduct. Walk or drive south from Old Mill Rd. Light refreshments will be served, followed by a history walk to the Dundas St bridge and back. Copies of the commemorative video (see above) will be available. 1:00 pm.

Thurs 28 Oct 2004: Steve Pitt, a Hurricane-Hazel baby and author of *Rain Tonight*, commemorating the 50th anniversary of Hurricane Hazel. EHS meeting, 7:30 pm.