

The Burlington Historical Society GAZETTE

Collection Highlights and Artifact Stories from Halton Heritage Services

For a number of years Halton Heritage Services has been supporting the preservation of Halton County's History.

The Halton County Museum was established in 1962. At the end of 2016, the Halton Region Museum site in the Kelso Conservation Area was closed to the public.

In 2014, Regional Council adopted a new Master Plan for the Museum transforming it into Heritage Services, to support regional heritage organizations and institutions, and care for Regionally owned heritage assets. The facility is still used for staff offices, workshops and collections storage and research services are available by appointment.

In July 2025 a decision was made by Halton Region Council to permanently close Heritage Services before 2025 year end and deaccession and auction off its 30,000 artifacts, photographs and archival documents.

Burlington Historical Society is fortunate to have our presenters for September from Heritage Services: Katie Anderson, Learning and Engagement Specialist, and Kylie Robins, Collections and Engagement Assistant from Halton Heritage Services



Both Katie and Kylie have a strong interest in history and its preservation. Katie is from Cambridge and is now living in Guelph. She

was inspired by a history teacher to pursue museum education and first started working as a high school volunteer at Doon Heritage Village in Kitchener.

Kylie, who grew up and still lives in Georgetown, has always loved learning and visiting museums. In university she became interested in pursuing a career in history and heritage.

Katie and Kylie who will share some of their achievements and what the next steps are for local heritage.

<i>This month:</i>	<i>In this issue:</i>																				
<p>Monday, September 8th, 7 pm Centennial Hall, Central Library</p> <p>Join us to hear more about Halton Heritage Services</p> <p>Everyone is welcome</p>	<table> <tr><td>President's Message</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Local Business celebrates</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>BHS Executive</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Membership Report</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Social Media Report</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Crime does not pay</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>The Town Bell</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>Burlington Mayors</td><td>6&7</td></tr> <tr><td>From the Archives</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>Membership Form</td><td>8</td></tr> </table>	President's Message	2	Local Business celebrates	3	BHS Executive	3	Membership Report	4	Social Media Report	4	Crime does not pay	4	The Town Bell	5	Burlington Mayors	6&7	From the Archives	7	Membership Form	8
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Unless noted otherwise, all photos are from the Burlington Historical Society Archives.

BHS Members will receive the BHS Gazette and other communications and can unsubscribe at any time info@burlingtonhistorical.ca. Information contained on our website, newsletters and publications is printed in good faith and for general purposes Editor: Joan Downey

President's Message *Don Thorpe*

Welcome back and I hope you had an enjoyable summer. It certainly was a warm one.

Your Historical Society has been very busy since we last met in May. On June the 21st we had a crew working at the Loyalist Cemetery and another group helping St. John's Anglican Church celebrate their 190th anniversary. At the end of June our posters were displayed at Heritage Week.

During Heritage Week we were present in the Burlington Centre, completed two walking tours, held a trivia night and presented at the Heritage Fair at the Central Library.

Thanks to all you fantastic volunteers for your time and effort.

Trivia Question: I grew up on a farm on Maple Avenue and rode my bike down Maple Avenue to go to elementary school. What was the name of the school I attended until Grade 8?



Heritage Week 2025 - Opening ceremonies at AGB



The very popular Trivia Night at BPAC



A pop-up at Burlington Centre



Another walking tour with leader Alan Harrington



A 2025 'work day' at Union Burying Ground



A walking tour at Greenwood Cemetery

Thanks to those who supplied photos of our events, including Pat Taylor, Len Collins, Don Thorpe and others.

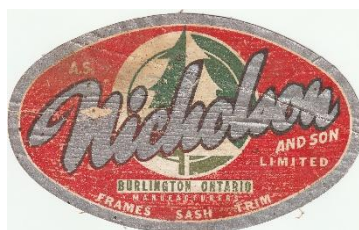
And, many thanks to the volunteers who made Heritage Week 2025 such a great success.

Local Business Celebrates a Milestone *Joan Downey*

There were a number of variety stores in old Burlington. Most are long gone. One which is still providing service to local residents is **Ontario Variety**.

Amid the high rises, near the west end of Ontario Street is a little variety store – Ontario Variety. Recently, owners Ed and Ada celebrated 50 years of operating this business.

Originally run by a Mr. Sanderson (Sandy), the store shows up in the 1971 Vernon's Directory at 1325 Ontario Street, tel.no. 634-3495.



Sandy made sandwiches for workers at A.H. Nicolson's. When Sandy went blind he still ran the shop from his garage. People gave him exact change.

Eventually Sandy had to retire.

Then Ed's dad took over in 1975. Eventually, Ed and his wife Ada took over and been there ever since.



Newspaper photo ca 1975, thanks to David Craig



In honour of their continued service, a certificate signed by Mayor Marianne Meed Ward, was presented to them during the recent walking tour of the area.

They couldn't make it to the Heritage Week opening ceremony (the business needed them), so tour guide Alan delivered the certificate to them. They were really

tickled to get it. They are getting it framed to hang in the store.



A stop on the recent walking tour - Photo Len Collins

"I went back and bought a lottery ticket from them - because you JUST KNOW that will be a winning ticket", Alan.

Congratulations to Ontario Variety!

Officers (Elected)		Directors (Appointed)		Convenors (Appointed)		Archives Volunteers
President	Don Thorpe	Programs	Alan Harrington	Greeting Cards	Jennifer Kemp	Peggy Armstrong
Vice President	Nicola Thomson	Archives	Joan Downey	Heritage Burlington	Alan Harrington	David Billings
Secretary	Pat Taylor	Webmaster	Wayne Murphy	Social Media	Jennifer Kemp	Chris Gain
Treasurer	Joan Downey	Membership	Pat Taylor	Publicity	Jennifer Kemp	Jennifer Kemp
		Newsletter	Joan Downey		Nicola Thomson	Brenda Lee Luciw
Past President	Jane Ann Newson	Event Planner	Pat Taylor	Image Specialist	David Craig	Gwynneth Richardson
		Outreach	All			Pat Taylor
						Nicola Thomson

Membership Report *Pat Taylor*



Membership dues received from now until the end of this year will be considered a 2026 Membership.

In 2025 we had a total of 92 members:

Seniors 59

Adults 9

Families 12 (24 people)

At the September meeting I'll be at the membership table to say hello and to assist with renewals.

Social Media *Jennifer Kemp*

After a very hot summer our numbers are up. Perhaps people were choosing to remain indoors and out of the blazing sun.

Facebook-	1516
Instagram-	564
X-	66



In addition to the above social media, keep an eye on Burlington Today www.burlingtontoday.com. The "Then and Now" section features a number of local stories.



Proof that crime does not pay *Nora Gilbert*

The astuteness with which Lieut. Col. William Kerns conducted his business as an early Burlington Merchant is seen in a story related by an old-time resident.

When Col. Kerns was a young clerk in the store of which he later became owner, a wiley customer purloined a pound of butter and placing it in his stove pipe hat, made to go out the door.

Perchance it was a practical joke on the Colonel. But the latter turned it nicely when he persuaded the customer and erstwhile friend to go to the back of the store for a chat beside the wood stove. In the cosiness of the room

and warmth of his seat beside the stove, the butter began to gradually ooze out from beneath the hat and trickle down the features of the gent to Col. Kerns' satisfaction and intense amusement while the squirming guest did not have to hold a dandelion under his chin to determine whether or not he liked butter.

And so the practical joke petered out. It is believed the young man did not try another on his military friend..



The Town Bell *Joan Downey*

This article was originally published in the March 2013 BHS Gazette, repeated here with an update.

The Town Bell, commissioned and erected in 1894 in the bell tower of the Village Hall on Elizabeth Street, experienced a few ups and downs before being installed in its present location.



Town Hall & Fire Hall, Elizabeth Street, ca 1915

The Hall, built by the Sons of Temperance, was sold to the Village in 1883. The bell was used to summon volunteer firemen, and was also rung to mark the times for the working day: at 7 am, noon, 1 pm and 6 pm. For fires it was pealed more rapidly.

The first bell ringer, James Powell was hired for \$50 per year. Later the job was added to the duties of the town hall custodian. One of the last bell ringers was Arthur Turcotte, who lived nearby at Elizabeth and Martha Streets.

In the 1950s, when the Hall was sold by the Town to the Boy Scouts, the bell was removed from the tower and stored at the Boy Scout camp on Twiss Road, north of Lowville. One night the bell was stolen from the camp. The police were notified right away; when an officer on patrol noticed a car heavily weighted down, he forced it to stop.



Afterwards the bell sat for years behind the Works Department building until William Gilbert, Chariman of the Library Board began a fund-raising effort to restore it and install it by the Library building on Elizabeth Street. When the new Central Library on New Street was built in 1970, the bell was moved again to its present home beside the north entrance.



The inscription engraved on the bell identifies the Commissioners as “Geo. Blair, Geo. Renton, O.S. Colbrain, P.N. Ogg, Jos Allen, Clerk and Treas. THOS ATKINSON, REEVE”.

The manufacturer was BUCKEYE BELL FOUNDRY / THE E.W. VANDUZEN CO. CINCINNATI’. Buckeye Bell Foundry began in 1837 and operated under the E.W. Vanduzen name from 1894 until 1950. The bronze Vanduzen bells were designed and reshaped to produce a tone superior to the tones of Buckeye Bell rivals. Since the Burlington Town Bell has been silenced for some 60 years, it seems a shame that its chimes were never recorded.

2025 Update

Our bell is on the move again!

On July 23rd it was moved to temporary storage until early spring 2026 when it will be installed outside Burlington Fire Headquarters, 1255 Fairview Street.

This site was chosen to align with the Fire Department’s firefighter memorial, honouring both the bell’s historical role in emergency services and the contributions of the firefighting community. Being the town’s first “fire alarm” it deserves a place along side this memorial.

We look forward to seeing the bell on display in its new home

Burlington Mayors – Part IX *Joan Downey*

Edmund Holtby (May 1871-27 March 1950)

Burlington Mayor 1929-1930



Edmond, born in 1871, was one of 7 children born to Thomas Holtby and his wife Charlotte. The family was living in Driffield, Yorkshire, England. Thomas was a local brewer, employing 7 men. Edmond grew up and went to school in

Driffield and in the 1901 census he is living in a nearby town with his sister, Charlotte. They have 2 servants, Harriet Boddy & Sarah Jackson.



<https://driffieldtowncouncil.gov.uk>

In 1902 he married Harriet Boddy. Over the next few years they had 3 daughters. In 1910 tragedy struck and Harriet died, likely as a result of childbirth complications. Edmond was left with a baby and 2 young children. However, the 1911 census shows 4 servants in his house, one who's occupation is listed as Nursery/Governess, so it would appear he had plenty of help with child minding.

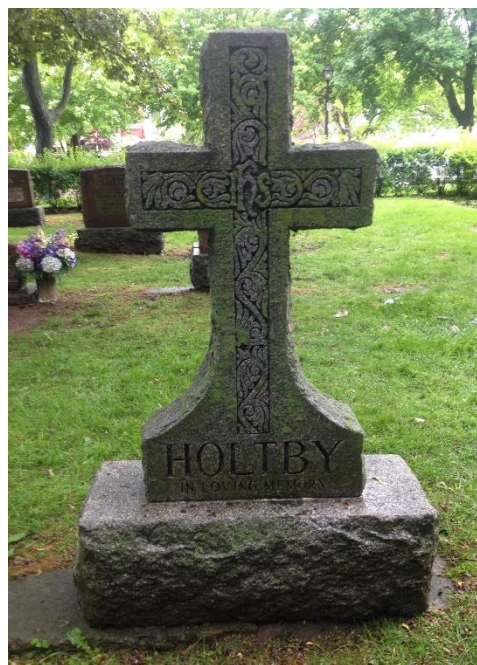
In May of 1912 Edmund married his wife's younger sister, Jane Elizabeth Boddy. Later that year, Edmund, his wife Jane and three daughters arrived in Quebec aboard the Corsican. They lived in Winona at first and moved to Burlington in 1918, settling at 46 Water Street on the north side of Lakeshore Road, west of Locust Street.. In Canada the family grew by 2 more daughters.

Today that area on Lakeshore Road bears no sign of any private residences. In an interview in 1980, their daughter Mae Holtby Milne reported that landowners on the north side of Lakeshore Road had to maintain the land on the south side. She gave the Holtby part of the park land to the town. (Spencer Smith Park)



The Holtby family on a outing

Edmond Holtby died on Monday March 27 1950 and is buried in St. Luke's Cemetery. Jane Holtby died 18 May 1954 and is also buried in St. Luke's.



www.findagrave.com

The following is taken from his obituary in the Burlington Gazette:

Edmond Holtby, one of the town's best known and esteemed citizens, passed away at his residence, 31 Hurd Ave., on Monday evening, after a lengthy illness. Mr. Holtby took an active interest in the affairs of the town and community. He served the town as Mayor, Reeve, and Deputy Reeve, and was also chairman of the Water Commission, on which board he was most active for many years. He also sat as a member of the Inter-Urban Area Board when it was first created some two years ago. He was secretary-treasurer of the High School Board for 25 years and always kept himself well versed in educational matters. A member of Burlington Lodge, A.F. & A. M. for many years, he served as Chaplain for the past ten years. He was a member of St. Luke's Anglican Church and was a lay reader and lay delegate to the Niagara Synod. Being a devoted Christian, Mr. Holtby conducted a Sunday school at Strathcona, being superintendent for many years. He was greatly interested in his garden and its beauty and was active in the Horticultural Society, being Past President. Mr. Holtby was a member of the Public Library board and also served on the Suburban Area Planning Board. Mr. Holtby was always community minded, and whenever the opportunity arose for service in any branch of community life, Mr. Holtby could be counted on to lend his assistance.



Burlington Town Council 1929

An interesting note appeared in the Burlington Gazette, 19 June 1929

Mayor Holtby's term

(Burlington felt obligated to go with daylight saving time because Hamilton had decided that they would do so.)

Proclamation – Daylight Saving

I hereby proclaim that at 12 o'clock midnight on Wednesday the 19th of June 1929, the Town Time will be advanced one hour, and so remain until 12 o'clock midnight, 2nd September 1929 (Labour Day) and I respectfully request that all citizens conform to this change and advance their time one hour at 12 o'clock midnight on Wednesday the 19th day of June 1929.

E. Holtby, Mayor

Archives Report Joan Downey

Volunteers have been busy this summer with scanning and adding data for more online collections.

Of special interest is the **McMillan Diaries** collection. These are the original handwritten diaries of Frank McMillan (1885-1966) who owned and operated a farm on what is today Greenwood Drive. The diaries cover farm and family happenings from 1915 to 1961 with some gaps.

I suggest before you look at the individual diaries that you click on the introduction link at the top of the page. Here are comments from Alan Norton, Frank's grandson. Alan donated the diaries to BHS Archives a number of years ago..

<https://digitalarchive.bpl.on.ca/browse-by-collection/list/collections/88>

Happy reading!

At the request of IKEA, Alan recently led a tour of the Union Burying Ground for a group of employees. In preparation for that tour we have just completed a new brochure. Union Burying Ground. Pick one up at our next meeting.

Also at the end of August, Chris Gain and I met with members of the Joseph Brant Hospital and picked up many boxes of memorabilia regarding our hospital's auxiliary 1959-2018. – everything from the 1959 trowel for laying the cornerstone to the financial records for the gift shop.



There is a lot of information to go through and categorize but look for a collection online in the fall.



Burlington Historical Society

Preserving Burlington's History for Today and Tomorrow

Membership - 2026

Date: _____

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/Town _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email address: _____

Membership Dues

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal
☐ Family \$40.00 ☐ Adult: \$30.00 ☐ Senior \$25.00

☐ Yes, as a **new** BHS member I wish to receive the Gazette newsletter and other e-communications and understand I can unsubscribe at any time.

Volunteer

Are you interested in volunteering with the Society? Would you like to help us in preserving the history of our City? Tell us a bit about your talents and interests – info@burlingtonhistorical.ca

Donation

I wish to make a separate donation to the society in the sum of _____

A Tax Receipt will be issued for all donations totalling \$25.00 or more

The Burlington Historical Society is a registered charity # 119217693RR0001

Mail completed form and remittance(s) to:

The Burlington Historical Society
Membership Convenor
PO Box 93164
1450 Headon Road
Burlington, Ontario L7M 4A3

Make cheques payable to The Burlington Historical Society

OR

e-transfer funds to
info@burlingtonhistorical.ca



If you are a new member or there are changes to your contact information, please email the completed form to us at the above email

OR

Leave it at the Membership table at any General Meeting

www.burlingtonhistorical.ca

info@burlingtonhistorical.ca

www.facebook.com/burlingtonhistory