

The Burlington Historical Society

GAZETTE

Special COVID-19 Pandemic Edition

What a strange time. We are in the midst of a lockdown to try to stop the spread of a virus for which there is no vaccine. Businesses are closed. Schools are closed. Public meeting places and recreation areas are closed. When we do have to venture out for essentials we are all wearing surgical gloves and masks.

Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer, a woman we had never heard of before, is on our TV screens giving us daily updates. We are also getting daily updates from Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau and Ontario Premier Doug Ford.



The more we attempt to follow the guidelines and keep practicing “social distancing” guidelines the sooner this will be over. We all need to bear in mind though that the people providing essential services deserve a bit of respect from us. Remember, you are not the only one affected and a bit of patience goes a long way when dealing with the grocery clerk or the cashier at the pharmacy. They are putting themselves at risk in order to provide a service to you.

<p align="center">Join us for our next Public Meeting Date: TBA Burlington Public Library, Central Branch At 7 pm</p> <p align="center">Everyone is welcome. Speaker TBA</p>	<p><i>In this issue</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr><td>President’s Report</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Membership Table</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Voortman’s Cookies</td><td>3-5</td></tr> <tr><td>An Update</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>From the Archives</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Jail is condemned.....</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Days of yore.....</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>BHS Executive</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>BHS Membership form</td><td>8</td></tr> </table>	President’s Report	2	Membership Table	2	Voortman’s Cookies	3-5	An Update	5	From the Archives	6	Jail is condemned.....	6	Days of yore.....	7	BHS Executive	7	BHS Membership form	8
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 <p align="center">Our meetings are free and we encourage people to drop in to enjoy our speaker. If you like what you hear, consider becoming a member.</p>																			

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 Report *Joan Downey*

I am having an unusual run as President. Our 2019 AGM was postponed until March, so my 2019 term ran from March until December – 10 months instead of the usual 12.

Now in 2020, I am again serving as President and we have effectively been shut down from late March until SEPTEMBER 7TH. So, for 7 months, we will have been in limbo.

The Burlington Public Library closure until September has a huge effect on the BHS. It has resulted in the cancellation of our April, May and possibly September meetings. The BHS archival collection is housed in the History Room of Burlington Public Library. Our only access to our Archives is the same access available to all – the Digital Collection. (And, of course, the few files we have at home.)

If you would like to look at old pictures and you haven't already checked out the Digital Collection - go to our website <https://burlingtonhistorical.ca/>. then click on the "Archives" heading in the band across the top. You will note, near the bottom of the Archives page **Search the BHS Photo Collection Online** – click on that and you're in. To make your searches more efficient, I suggest you use quotation marks around your search term, eg "Brant Inn". You may be surprised at how much information you can find.

I sincerely hope that we will be back to normal in September and be able to schedule a public meeting for some time during the month. I look forward to seeing you then. Enjoy the summer!



Membership Table *Pat Taylor*



Most of our society revenue comes from Membership Dues. If you have not yet had a chance to renew for 2020, please do not forget to do so.

Although we are not able to provide our usual interesting public meetings, we will continue to provide the BHS Gazette and our Facebook page is updated often with interesting photos and info.

Thank you

Burlington Businesses



VOORTMAN COOKIES *contributed by Pat Taylor*

Brothers William and Harry Voortman were born in Holland in the village of Hellendoorn – a village of 4,000 people with 14 bakeries. Their father was a baker. In 1948, the father and his four sons (Mrs. Voortman had died in childbirth) immigrated to Canada settling in Hamilton. Harry was just 14 years old.

Photo www.voortman.com

In 1951 William and Harry decided to go into business together – into a business they knew something about. They decided to go into the bakery business. They used the back room of a small house in Hamilton for making pumpernickel honey cake - a Dutch favourite. William was responsible mainly for the baking; Harry did the selling - with little success. Then, they tried pies and doughnuts. Still not enough sales. In 1956, using a second hand cookie machine, they ventured into cookie making in a building at 245 Young Street, Hamilton. Speculaas cookies, a spice cookie that could have included cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cardamom, mace, cloves and white pepper, became a top seller. Later, they were the most recognizable but sadly not the best seller. But as a 'salute' to their heritage they continued to make them. In Holland, they are still a favourite cookie at Christmas.

It took five years for a Canadian grocery chain to give them shelf space.

In 1961 the brothers moved their cookie bakery to a new 18,000 sq. ft. plant at Appleby Line and the North Service Road. The plant has been expanded five times since then. A new marketing strategy called the 'Cookie Hut' was introduced in 1981. The Cookie Hut contained loose cookies that customers could mix and match, as they desired.

A big change took place in 1987 when William wanted to retire. Harry bought him out!

Wafer cookies, wrapped in cellophane were introduced in 1990 along with the 3" roll package of cookies that became distinctive Voortman packaging.

The company provided a bus to pick up some of the employees in Hamilton and the Halton area. These employees were mainly older women, not born in Canada who, following old traditions, had never learned to drive. But, with these numbers decreasing the company proposed, in 1996, withdrawing the service. The workers nearly went on strike over it.

By 1998, the plant was 200,000 sq. ft., had 10 ovens 180 ft. long, about 420 full-time employees and was using computerized systems. 20 million cookies could be baked daily from a choice of 40 varieties. Voortman had its own fleet of tractor-trailers to deliver product across Canada and the United States. Cookies to Puerto Rico were shipped in containers.

Sugar free wafer cookies were launched in 1998. A new line of sugar free cookies followed.

In the early 2000s, research into the use of trans fatty acids that were used to extend the shelf life of baked products, was raising concerns in health care circles. It was felt that they contributed to heart disease, diabetes and Alzheimer's disease. Lynn, Harry Voortman's daughter, was a naturopathic doctor practicing in Oakville. She raised her concerns about the use of trans fatty acids in Voortman cookies with her father. She felt so strongly about this that she admitted in an interview that she had stopping eating the cookies. In Nov. 2003 Voortman's announced that their products would be trans fatty acid free by March of 2005 - and "taste even better - and be healthier". Since they already made sugar free cookies, this was a logical step. They won two industry awards for eliminating the trans fatty acids.

In 2004, with much fanfare, Voortman Cookies were given the honour of being the first company to fly the new Burlington flag.



Hamilton Spectator Oct 2015

Voortman cookies are known as a 'Challenger' Brand – they are visually distinctive; have a loyal customer base; and meet the needs of what the consumer values. They use real ingredients – whole grain oats, coconut, almonds; no artificial flavours, colours, high-fructose corn syrup or trans fatty acids. To quote from their website: "When it comes to taste and quality, having real bakers makes a difference. It's their passion and creativity that make our cookies delicious." Harry Voortman 'walks the line' every day to keep in contact with his employees. In 2015, the company still had about 400 employees making the 20 million cookies a day, but now they had over 50 regular varieties and 20 seasonal.

October 2015 saw the biggest change the company had experienced - at least at the management level. The company was sold to a private equity firm, Swander Pace Capital. This firm agreed to the assurances that Harry Voortman wanted – that the plant would stay in Burlington, and the current management team and employees, if they so desired, would be kept on. Several hundred distributors, who operated as independent businessmen, were to be maintained. This last one was very important to Mr. Voortman.

Harry personally addressed the employees, at each shift change, about the changes that were going to take place.

When the sale was completed Harry would stay on in an advisory role, maintaining his office in the office tower beside the plant. He still planned on visiting the retail store on Saturday mornings. He kept ownership of the land and the buildings. Harry's son Ed reported that each employee would get a cheque, "a substantial cheque" when the deal officially closed. Swander Pace Capital was partnering with Voortman cookies to build on the Voortman market share, distribution system and product varieties. What followed was a brand relaunch with a new logo and packaging and the bakers developed new recipes with updated flavours.

It was reported on December 2, 2019 on 'businesswire' that Hostess Brands Inc. would acquire Voortman Cookies Limited for approximately \$320 million (C\$425 million). The acquisition was completed early in January 2020.



www.insidehalton.com

Harry was named to the Halton Business Hall of Fame. In a Hamilton Spectator article of 20 August 2002, reflecting on his career, he had some advice for those just starting out: he advised “against boys 17 and 18 going into business with no money at all and working 14 – 16 hours a day, because of all the other things they’d miss out on in life.”

And, just in case you’re interested the retail store is on the west side of the building and is open:

8:45 – 5:15 Monday to Friday
9:00 – 3:00 Saturday



An Update *Alan Harrington*

At our March 2019 public meeting our speaker was Ron Foss, the grandson of George Foote Foss, the designer and manufacturer of the Fossmobile, Canada’s first automobile.

Ron lives in Burlington and the kick-start for this project was when he made his FIRST presentation on it at our BHS meeting. We gave him a few dollars (a speaker fee) and I think one of our members gave him something and that got the thing rolling. At the time, about all he had was an oil can - now the car is almost complete.

The following email from Ron was received recently:

As a family this will be one of our proudest moments regarding the Fossmobile story . The Canadian Historical Association has just released their Spring 2020 newsletter, titled, "Intersections". On pages 27-29 is the Fossmobile story, written in both official languages..This newsletter is sent to a wide distribution of Canadian historians, including Universities, Libraries, Museums etc.

https://cha-shc.ca/_uploads/5e82124d98656.pdf

Note: If you are watching the counter at the top of the page the article can be found on page 35.

From the Archives *Pat Taylor*

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT

When I was doing some research recently— in the files on the Village of Freeman, and the Freeman family, I came across the 1953 obituary for a 93-year-old lady who had been married to a 'Freeman.' In the entire obituary her first name was never given!

Then I found the obituary for her husband from 1932. In that it says, "survived by his wife and three daughters." The only one mentioned by her first name is the unmarried daughter.

Thank you, thank you, thank you suffragettes for working to make us 'persons',

Since the husband and wife were both interred in Greenwood Cemetery we know from their records that her maiden name was EMMA Ghent.

You never know what you might discover while volunteering for the Archives.

Pat Taylor



Burlington Gazette, 18 December 1946

Jail is Condemned – Must Have Caretaker

Burlington had some distinguished visitors on Thursday afternoon last, when the provincial inspector of jails and the county sheriff visited what is supposed to be the local jail under the police office in the town hall. The conditions he found there he termed as amazing and added there was not a worse jail in the province of Ontario. He deplored the unsanitary conditions and gave the town "just so long to clean up or else". In addition he insisted there must be a steady caretaker. The matter was discussed at council on Thursday evening and the police committee were instructed to secure the necessary man. We understand, "Jimmie, the sheriff" a familiar figure around the jail a few years ago, has returned to become caretaker of the jail.



Burlington Gazette, 15 January 1947

Sheriff Approved Jail

Sheriff Wm. J. Robertson, was present at the meeting (town council) and advised council that he had made an inspection of the town jail and was now satisfied with its condition.



**Start the New
Year Right**
and buy your
**Groceries at the
Post Office Store
Port Nelson**

Geo. E. Brown
Phone 19, Port Nelson

This photo shows the beginning of Pine Cove Survey, at the corner of Guelph and Lake Shore Roads, Mr. G. E. Brown's store and Port Nelson Post Office. Mr. Brown keeps an up-to-date store here, where general wants can be supplied, in addition, the Burlington merchants make regular deliveries as well as those of Hamilton. The delivery of ice, milk, coal, etc., also being equal to that of the city.

BHS Archives

Dates for the images are unknown but check out the car and the phone number!

Looking east along Lakeshore Road, showing hydro lines and sidewalks beside the road. The automobile may be W. D. Flatt's, and the chimney in the background to the right of the car must be that of Lakehurst Villa. Grocer G. E. Brown's delivery wagon and several family members or bystanders in front of the store, which was on the southeast corner of the intersection. The sign on the store reads: "G. E. Brown / Port Nelson / Post Office / & / Grocery". The sign at the left advertises "Pine Cove Survey / For choice building lots". (W. D. Flatt's "Lake Shore Surveys", 1912.)

Burlington Historical Society Executive

Officers (Elected)		Directors (Appointed)		Convenors (Appointed)		Archive Volunteers
President	Joan Downey	Programs	Alan Harrington	Greeting Cards	Anne Wingfield	Peggy Armstrong
Vice President	Vacant	Archives	Joan Downey	Phone Committee	Elizabeth Baldwin	Josie Hammond
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Treasurer	Vacant	Membership	Pat Taylor	50/50 Draw	Frank Armstrong	Dorothy Kew
Past President	Jane Ann Newson	Newsletter	Joan Downey	Publicity	Jennifer Kemp	Dobrila Kinn
		Outreach	Joan Downey			Chris Mallion Moore
						Donna Ryan
						Pat Taylor
						Russ Woodley



The Burlington Historical Society

Preserving Burlington's History for Today and Tomorrow

Membership - 2020

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email address: _____

Membership Dues (check all categories that apply)

New Member Family: \$40.00 Senior: \$25.00

Renewal Adult: \$30.00

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

Join our volunteer team – please circle your interest(s)

RESEARCH - 50/50 DRAW - COFFEE - BYTES OF BURLINGTON - ARCHIVES - NEWSLETTER – OUTREACH -
MEMBERSHIP - SPECIAL PROJECTS – GENERAL MEETING GREETERS – EXECUTIVE – DIRECTOR -
TELEPHONE COMMITTEE

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

OR

Leave it at the Membership table at any General Meeting.

Make cheques payable to The Burlington Historical Society.

www.burlingtonhistorical.ca

info@burlingtonhistorical.ca

[www.facebook.com/burlington history](https://www.facebook.com/burlingtonhistory)