



The Burlington Historical Society

GAZETTE

Our March speaker is Trevor Parkins-Sciberras

A Transit Historian, Trevor is currently producing a book series focusing on "Then and Now" photography.

From his start in Toronto promoting the history of the TTC, he has moved on now to exploring the rest of Ontario's transit history.

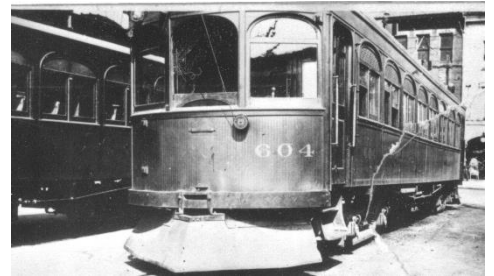
Trevor uses his cycling, photography and vintage photo collecting hobbies to fuel his publications.

He is also a volunteer at the Halton County Radial Railway where Hamilton's last streetcar is preserved.

We get to hear about photography and rail travel – how lucky is that?



A radial railway car crossing the high level bridge & car # 604. Photos courtesy David Craig



<i>This month:</i>	<i>In this issue:</i>
<p>Monday, March 11th, 7 pm</p> <p>Centennial Hall, Central Library</p> <p>Join us to hear Trevor Parkins-Sciberras</p> <p>Everyone is welcome!</p>	<p>President's Message 2</p> <p>Charles Davidson Saga 3&4</p> <p>A Found Book, W.E. Brecken 5</p> <p>Maypole sap time 6</p> <p>Membership Report 6</p> <p>Social Media Report 6</p> <p>BHS Executive 6</p> <p>From the Archives 7</p> <p>Membership form 8</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 Message *Don Thorpe*

Help needed from our membership:

We need your assistance in getting our membership and guests out to our speaker meetings. Would you please let us know what we can do to improve attendance. You can do so in person at our meetings or email us at info@burlingtonhistorical.ca. Hope to see you at our next speaker meeting on March 11th at 7:00 pm. We will have a special gift for you.

March Calendar

March 8 is **International Women's Day**, which is a day that not only celebrates the achievements of women and the progress made toward women's rights but also brings attention to ongoing struggles for equality around the world.

March 10 is the start of **Daylight Saving Time**, which begins at 2:00 A.M. Don't forget to "spring forward" and set the clocks one hour ahead, or you may find yourself an hour late to everything!

March 10 also marks the start of **Ramadan**, which begins at sundown. In Islam, Ramadan is considered a holy month when a month-long, sunrise-to-sunset fast is observed.

March 15 is the **Ides of March!** Legend surrounds this ill-fated day. Beware the Ides of March!

March 17 is **St. Patrick's Day**. According to folklore, folks wear a shamrock on St. Patrick's Day because the saint used its three leaves to explain the Trinity.

March 19 brings about the **March equinox**—also called the **vernal** or **spring equinox** in the Northern Hemisphere—marking the beginning of spring. In the Southern Hemisphere, this date marks the **autumnal equinox** and the beginning of fall. On this day, the Sun stands directly over Earth's equator.

March 24 is **Palm Sunday**, the Sunday before Easter and the last Sunday of Lent.

March 31 is Easter Sunday. (May 5 is Orthodox Easter.)

Born in March? Appropriate for someone with a spring birthday, people born in March have sunny temperaments. They score highly on what's called the hyperthymia scale, which means they possess a general optimism that helps them look past the bad.

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8th

At exactly 2:04 pm EDT, a total solar eclipse will begin in Burlington and end at 4:31 pm EDT. At 3:19 pm EDT, the Sun will be completely blocked by our Moon as it passes between the Sun and Earth, darkening the skies as if it were dusk. In the case of clouds, it will be as dark as the middle of the night. Totality will last 1 minute and 28 seconds. You can view the eclipse directly without proper eye protection **only** when the Moon completely obscures the Sun's bright face. Ensure your safety with ISO 12312-2 labeled solar eclipse glasses, pinhole projection or Number 14 welder's glasses (Amazon offers the ISO glasses)

In any given location on Earth, a total eclipse happens only once every hundred years.



Trivia Question: What year was the Zimmerman House built?

Charles Davidson Saga by Ron Danielsen

John Davidson Senior (1794-1852) was born in Grimsby, England in 1794. He, and his wife Hannah (1803-1880) immigrated to Canada around 1830, with their infant son, also named John, who was born in 1827. The elder Davidsons are buried in Mount Vernon Cemetery in Burlington.



John Davidson Sr., & Hannah Davidson on headstone Mt. Vernon Cemetery

John Davidson (1827-1916) was a nurseryman. He founded John Davidson and Sons in 1874, growing nursery stock, largely fruit trees, for the rapidly expanding fruit growing farms in Southern Ontario. John married Jane Hilton (1833-1893) in 1850. They had three children, Charles (1854-1933), William (1858-1950), and Harrison (1861- 1929). Charles married Minnie Allen in 1885 and worked at the family nursery. Harrison became a veterinary surgeon, had his practice in Toronto, and married Carrie MacDonald in 1889. In 1892 Harrison moved to Walla Walla, WA, U.S.A. and hence was not in Burlington at the time of the events described herein.



Charles Davidson as a young man

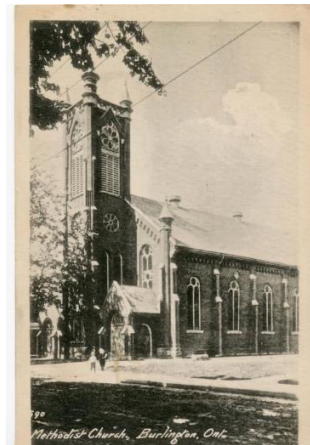
William worked at his father's nursery in the early years. When he married Annette Hancock in 1898, he had his own nursery business in Peterborough.

John's oldest son Charles, the subject of this article, handled the sales side of the business. Charles spent the winter on his horse drawn sleigh traveling to fruit growers in Southern Ontario, taking orders for spring delivery. Charles was a highly respected member of the Methodist Church, where he played the organ, and gave a great deal of his time to serving the church and the Burlington community.



Charles Davidson in his sleigh preparing to go on sales calls

Charles and Minnie had five children, Marion (1886-1893), Pearl (1889-1981), Allan (1898-1975), Constance (1902-1999), and Leslie (1904-1916). The gap between 1889 to 1898 is explained by the events about to be revealed.



Methodist Church (BHS archive photo)

John Davidson and Sons was successful, selling tens of thousands of fruit trees every year. But, like many farming enterprises, the nursery business was seasonal. The great majority of shipments took place in April, after the frost was out of the ground, and before the trees were in leaf. The costs of grafting, cultivating, and tending the tree stock went on for much of the year.

The trees were four years old before they could be sold. As soon as the frost was out, in March, workers dug tens of thousands of trees from the nursery rows, bundled them in tens, and then replanted the bundles in huge trenches in the “packing ground”, to be rapidly pulled out when picked up by the fruit farmer customers. All the trees were shipped in April with payment taking place thirty to sixty days later. With so much cost incurred before revenue was received, cash flow was always a problem.

Four economic downturns took place between 1876 and 1896, putting stress on almost all businesses. The one that added to the storm clouds gathering over John Davidson and Sons, was the collapse of the London Barings Bank in 1890*. Orders secured by Charles over the winter of 1891-1892 were no doubt below expectations, yet the production costs were not diminished.

To generate needed cash in the early spring it was customary for farmers to sell sales orders to the bank at a discount. The bank would then receive the funds from the buyers after delivery of the goods.

When orders did not meet expectations, it was commonplace to create some fictitious orders, to inflate the order book sufficiently to generate the cash needed in the lean months of early spring. These fictitious orders would be redeemed from the bank before due using cash generated by deliveries, and the bank would never know they were not real.

Charles Davidson sold fruit growers’ orders to the Bank of Hamilton. Some of these orders were fictitious. His intent was to redeem the false orders from the bank before they were due



Bank of Hamilton, 1890

For some reason, perhaps the weak economic conditions, the Bank of Hamilton decided to verify, with the purchasers, the orders deposited by John Davidson and Sons. The fictitious orders were discovered, amounting to a total of approximately \$7,800.

Charles was aware that the Bank of Hamilton was scrutinizing his orders. On Sunday evening May 15, 1892 he played the organ at the Methodist Church. The next morning, fearing prosecution, he made the fateful decision to flee, boarded a train and departed for El Paso Texas. He then crossed the border to Juarez, Mexico. Charles thought he would be safe in Mexico until the matter of the false orders could be settled and he could safely return to Canada. He was mistaken. He should have stayed in El Paso. At that time, there was no extradition treaty for fraud between Canada and the United States, but this was not the case with Mexico. A treaty between Mexico and Great Britain included applicable extradition provisions.



Juarez, Mexico in 1890s

Meanwhile, John Davidson ran the nursery business in Charles’ absence, possibly assisted by his second son, William.

After Charles’ departure, the Bank of Hamilton confronted John Davidson who voluntarily granted an assignment of receivables in favour of the bank for \$40,000, far more than enough to cover the false orders. This should have settled the matter and allowed Charles to return home. However, possibly as a warning to others, the bank decided to hunt him down, prosecute him and bring him to justice. The Bank of Hamilton hired the famous (or infamous) American firm of Pinkerton Detectives to find and apprehend Charles.

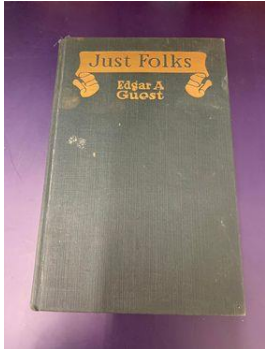
*footnote at end of series

.....to be continued.....

A Found Book and the Story of William Ernest Breckon

“Wheat King” by Jennifer Kemp

I was recently sent a message from a member with a photo of an antique book he had found in Waterdown. Inside the front cover was stamped with the name W. E. Breckon, Freeman, Ont. I was aware of Breckon Family history in East Burlington, but not in Freeman. This prompted me to do a bit of research.



Thornhill Farms and Farminghouse, at 5355 North Service Road, was built in 1854 for John Sr. and Isabella Breckon. They emigrated from Yorkshire in 1830 and took up a 100-acre grant of land north of what is now the QEW and west of what is now Burloak Drive. The log house they built in 1830 was replaced by this house, where their son Wesley and grandson William E. Breckon were born. The house was owned in 1974 by Lely Ltd. And occupied by Mr. Ken Clark, Lely Manager. It was demolished ca 2000.



5355 North Service Road

William Ernest Breckon was born March 8, 1893 in Halton, Ontario. His parents were Wesley and Delilah Breckon. He was one of six children. He married Susan

Rachel Atkinson on January 5, 1921, in St. Catharines, Lincoln, Ontario. He settled in Nelson (Freeman), Burlington, Ontario.

William (known as Bill), was a grower of registered seed grain for 15 years. He was the founding President of the Halton Crop Improvement Association in 1942.

In 1954, William Breckon of Burlington became the first Ontario farmer to win the World Wheat Championship at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair with his Genesee grain grown on his Nelson Township farm. Breckon's widely acclaimed world championship, was the first for an Ontario farmer and the first for winter wheat. He led the winter wheat class seven times before becoming “wheat king” in 1964. Mr. Breckon served as Director of the Royal Winter Fair for 7 years. He was inducted into the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame in 1986.



William Breckon was also a Jersey breeder, he was a director and chairman of the Toronto Milk Producers Association, and a founding member of the Ontario Whole Milk League. He operated his own dairy in Bronte from 1933 to 1938.



He was an active member of the community, serving the Nelson Township School Board as chairman or trustee from 1943-1956. A new school (formerly on Tuck Drive) and park were named in his honour. A

historical plaque still stands on the property of Breckon Park.

William Ernest Breckon died July 24, 1985 at the age of 92. He is buried in Appleby Pioneer Cemetery, Burlington.

From a letter from a servant girl in Upper Canada to a friend in Ireland *submitted by Pat Taylor*

But what flogged all that I had ever seen was making sugar out of a tree. Not a word of a lie I do tell you. You take a big gimlet and make a hole in the tree (a maypole, I think they call it) and out come the sugar like sweet water thick like. I remember when you and I thought a sugar stick was a might good sort of thing, never thinking I'd lay my eyes on a sugar tree.

Taken from book Pioneer Times



To see how to make sugar from one of these so-called "Maypole" trees you don't have to go far. Check out the Maple Syrup Festival at Bronte Creek Provincial Park on Burloak Drive, during the month of March. You can even tour a 120 + year old farmhouse. And have pancakes with maple syrup.

Information can be found at: www.ontarioparks.ca/park/brontecreek/events

Membership Report *Pat Taylor*

We have a total of 59 renewed members – 39 seniors, 8 family (16 people) and 4 adults.

I'm waiting and hoping for the 38 unpaid members from 2022 & 2023 to use the form on the last page of

this Gazette to renew. There are several ways to get your renewal to me: the modern e-transfer method; Canada postal service, sometimes call 'snail mail'; or personal delivery at the meeting on Monday March 11. Thank you in advance for your continued support.

Social Media Report *Jennifer Kemp*

These were the figures at the beginning of February:

Facebook - 1358 followers
 X (Twitter) - 55 followers
 Instagram - 465 followers

Tell your friends who are interested in history about our great postings and lets see those numbers climb!



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

A taste of the past

Recently, we came into possession of an interesting cookbook titled "Recipes, tested and tried." It is all handwritten and a number of pioneer women have contributed. Perhaps it was passed from farm to farm (most likely at the Sunday church service) and when the recipes were added, the booklet was passed on to the next contributor.

Here is just a sample of the recipes. Also included, along with other cakes and cookies, are recipes for Marmalade, Soups, Fish and Pickled Beef.

Mrs. Waldie's Peel Cake

¼ lb butter
1 cup sugar
1 cup milk
3 eggs
3 small cups flour
3 teasp. Baking powder
¾ cup sliced citron peel
Bake in a moderate oven – 40 min.

Nellie's Shortbread

(there is no clue as to Nellie's surname)

10 oz. flour
5 oz. butter
3 oz. sugar
Pinch salt
Pinch baking powder
Do not roll out but press into baking pan about ¼ in. thick. Cook in moderate oven.

Mrs. C.G. Marlatt's Cream Cake

(Agnes Waldie was married to C.G. Marlatt, of Oakville)

3 eggs – beaten separately
1 cup sugar
1-1/2 cups flour
2 small teaspoons baking powder
4 tablespoons cold water

Beat yolks well then add sugar and beat again, add water, whites of eggs, flour. Bake in jelly cake tins and when cooked turn on hot plates & split through the middle with a hot knife and spread cream filling between. Sprinkle tops of cakes with castor sugar.

Cream for filling –
1 pint milk
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 egg
Butter, size of an egg
4 tablespoons sugar
Pinch of salt & 1 teaspoon vanilla

Anyone for trying one? That shortbread looks good!



The Burlington Historical Society
Preserving Burlington's History for Today and Tomorrow

Membership - 2024

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ 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 using e-transfer, please email the completed form to us at the above email

OR

Leave it at the Membership table at any General Meeting

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