

ARMORIES  
DRILL HALL  
1870-1947  
METCALFE ONT.

Metcalfe Drill Hall sketch by Cecil Reaney from memory and portion of a snapshot

**METCALFE DRILL HALL**

*In light of the threat of Fenian attacks, the government, anxious to have a structure for the training of a local militia defense unit, provided funds for the building of a military drill hall, located at the present day corner of 8<sup>th</sup> Line Rd (formerly Albert St) and Kent St.*

The Metcalfe Drill Hall, built in Metcalfe in 1870 was one of many such halls hurriedly constructed throughout Carleton County after October 1866. Under the 43<sup>rd</sup> Carleton Battalion of Infantry, the Carleton Blazers, No. 3 Company, was built to cope with the necessity for drilling and administration to defend the 'homeland' during the Fenian Raids. Cecil Reaney and Lawrence Dowser discussed the location of rifles believed to have been stored in racks at the west end of the facility.

A shooting range where members of the militia practiced as part of their training program was situated on an elevation of land about 1/4 km. North of Metcalfe on the east side of the 8<sup>th</sup> Line road. The target was a crib constructed of logs and filled with field stones. A number of years ago, Lorne Craig, a member of the society in Vernon, dug out a few bullets that had been fired from Snider rifles and they are on display at the museum of the society in Vernon.

The Drill Hall was later used as a Community Centre and meeting hall. It housed an ice rink in winter and in the warmer months as a recreation hall for badminton, other indoor sports and dances. Many recall the good times welcoming home soldiers after the war. It was also used by the Metcalfe Agricultural Society for the Ladies' Exhibits and other events prior to the purchase and subsequent building of the fairgrounds as it is known in 2006.

Unfortunately, the Drill Hall succumbed to fire on a Sunday in January of 1947. The floor boards were saved, however, and were used again as the floor in the Agricultural Hall now situated on the fairground property.

First officers of 43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of Infantry, No. 3 Company were: Ira Morgan, Captain; John Carson, Lieutenant; Andrew Imley, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.

Submitted by Nelda Isaac

\* See Volunteer Militia of Metcalfe page 3. Metcalfe Volunteer Militia of 43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of Infantry researched and submitted by Norma Morrison. Vernon Volunteer Militia in next issue.

Osgoode Township  
Historical Society  
& Museum

at the

Old Vernon School

Newsletter

Volume XXXV No 1 MAR 2008

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The A.G.M of the Osgoode Township Historical Society was held on Feb 5<sup>th</sup> 2008. The following Directors and Officers were selected.

**DIRECTORS**

- |                    |               |              |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Kim Bates          | Bette Crerar  | Ron Isaac    |
| Russell Johnston   | Harvey Linton | Jim Bowman   |
| Ken McDiarmid      | Cecil Reaney  | Pierre Doyon |
| Eda van der Linden |               |              |

**OFFICERS**

- |                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Past President | Doug Hughes |
| President      | Ron Isaac   |
| Treasurer      | Alec Ball   |
| Secretary      | Kim Bates   |

**MUSEUM NOTES**

**Wanted:**

We would like readers to check past OTHS publications purchased and we will buy back:  
KEMPTVILLE ADVANCE 1906  
KEMPTVILLE ADVANCE 1910  
The originals are no longer available for reproducing.  
We will pay \$5.00 upon receipt.

**IN THIS ISSUE**

- |                                 |        |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Metcalfe Drill Hall             | page 1 |
| In Search of Their Roots        | page 2 |
| Metcalfe Volunteer Militia 1873 | page 3 |
| John Mungo Campbell Ledger      | page 4 |
| A Winter Funeral in 1933        | page 5 |
| Robert Seaton Usher             | page 6 |

**COMING EVENTS AT THE MUSEUM OF OTHS**

Mar 8 - Hat making course, 1860's cloth with Ruth Mills

Mar 12,13,14 - Spring Break Crafts for kids 2 - 4 p.m.

Mar 15 - Felt hat making course 9:30 - 4:30 with Ruth Mills

Mar 22nd - Easter Bonnet Fashion Show & Contest  
1 - 4 p.m. Tea & refreshments and great prizes

Mar 28, 29 - Gene-O-Rama at Ben Franklin Place

April 1 - Monthly meeting at 7:30 p.m. speaker - Ron Wilson, - Heritage barn project

Apr 19 - Spring Tea & Art Show

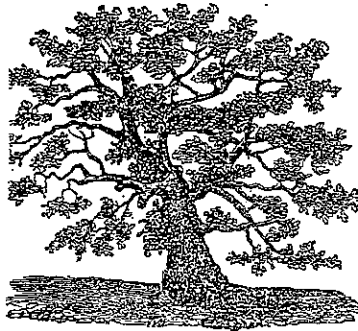
Mar 10 - Volunteer Appreciation Tea

For info e-mail at oths@magma.ca or phone at 613-821-4062

O.T.H.S gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the City of Ottawa



## IN SEARCH OF THEIR ROOTS



**Cheryl Kale**

[cheryl\\_kale2000@yahoo.com](mailto:cheryl_kale2000@yahoo.com)

FAMILY DOLAN SURNAME

My Dolan family is: John Dolan, born Ireland in 1815; wife Ellen

Cassidy, born Ireland in 1817. Buried at St Brigid's.

Their son Patrick, born Ireland in 1838 and his wife Ellen McCarney are also buried at St Brigid's.

Francis Dolan and his wife Ann McVeigh; Francis Dolan and his wife Ann McGovern; Michael Dolan and his wife Ellen Blake are all buried in close proximity to John and Ellen. We are trying to determine the relationship(s) between all of them.

**"Margaret and Mike Gentil"** <[mmgentil@hotmail.com](mailto:mmgentil@hotmail.com)>

Subject: Dennison/Dinnison Family

I'm trying to find an ancestor of my husband. He was James Dinnison and was born in Orkney in 1802 and wondered if he was a relative of the Dinnison family who were in the 1901 Census Transcription project. Their address was Osgoode, Russell at that time. The parents were Robert and Mary Dinnison (both born in 1840).

Hoping you may be able to point me to any Dinnisons who may still be in the area.

**Alec Ball, Metcalfe Ontario**

Searching for information on the "Coynne families" of Winchester.

Contact him at "Alec Ball" [alec.ball@sympatico.ca](mailto:alec.ball@sympatico.ca)

**Judy Neville, Finch Ontario**

Researching information on scare crows pre 1866; when they introduced to Canada, who was responsible for the idea of using them, and the development of the concept of scare crows. If you have any knowledge of their use in Canada prior to 1866 please pass this information on to her.

Contact information; "cookie595959hotmail.com"

**Mary Davidson**

Searching for information on the Harris family.

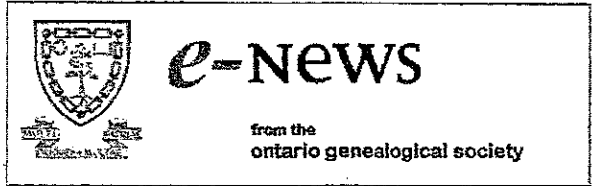
I am currently researching the Harris family of Osgoode Twp. I would like to know if you would have any information on the death/burial of Albert Condie of Osgoode Twp. He was a Presbyterian and born about 1841. His wife Mary Ann died 1907.

**Reply:**

We have looked through our records, including the cemetery records and can not find mention of the death / burial of Albert Condie. The census record for 1881 mentions an Albert and Mary Ann but they are not found in the 1891 census. Supposition would have that Albert had passed away during this 10 year period between census. There is however a William Condie in the 1891 census and we have no other information on this family.

Regarding the Harris families the earliest record we have is the 1851 census which lists a Silvester Harris. John Harris is listed in the 1861 census and there are three families in 1871; Charles Mary, Derias and Orlando. Orlando is again found in the 1881 and 1891 census, listed as married to Sarah and of Dutch origin. Charles who was listed in the 1871 census as English is now listed in 1891 to be of Dutch origin. The 1901 census (on-line) has a John and Marajan Condie listed as living in Osgoode. They were both recorded as being 64 years of age. You may want to look up the records for Albert on the Ontario Cemetery Finding Index which is on the Internet.

Contact her at "Mary Davidson" [dmdson@rogers.com](mailto:dmdson@rogers.com)



## ARE YOU LINKED TO THE IRISH FAMINE OF 1847?

**B**allinran Productions Ltd., a factual film and television production company, is looking for potential interviewees for its upcoming documentary, *Summer of Sorrow*.

Summer of Sorrow tells the story of one of the greatest tragedies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - the Irish Potato Famine, during which more than one million people died and an equal number fled their homeland. In the summer of 1847, 38,000 sick and dying refugees from Ireland landed in Toronto, overwhelming the existing population of 20,000 and causing a health care crisis beyond imagination.

**Were your ancestors a part of that wave of immigrants that fled to the shores of Toronto?**

**Are you willing to share your family stories about that dark time in Toronto's history?**

Contact Jocelyn Geddie, Research & Development Coordinator, at [jocelyn.geddie@ballinran.com](mailto:jocelyn.geddie@ballinran.com)  
Ballinran Productions Ltd. - Creating & sharing stories is what we do best. [www.ballinran.com](http://www.ballinran.com)

Submitted by Alec Ball

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

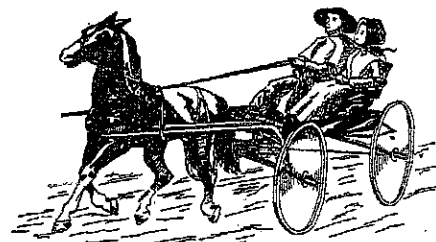
**Winchester Ont**

I enjoy your Newsletters and the last one in particular containing a copy of the will of John Saxon Campbell. John Saxon Campbell was my great grandfather, his daughter Malinda Amelia Campbell married George Comrie. Her daughter Letta Malinda Comrie married Willard Acres, her daughter Orma Gwendolyn Acres married Raymond Earl, her daughter Wendy Roxanne Earl married Peter Kemp. Their children are Jeffrey Kemp and Alison Kemp.

It was interesting to see how my grandchildren are all descended through the female line. Last October I took a "memory drive" to the area around Belmeade where I had gone to public school and past the farms where the Campbells had lived.

Sincerely,  
**Orma Earl**

**Penians are Coming**  
Port Colborne, June 1, 1866  
Refugees from Fort Erie report the burning of a bridge 4 miles back of Fort Erie by the Penians.  
(By Telegraph)



**METCALFE VOLUNTEER MILITIA 1866-1867****No.3 Company 43 Battalion of Infantry**

\* Rate per day per officer, \$2 per day; \$1 per day for Lieutenant or Ensign

\* Rate per day per man is 50 cents and 74 cents a day for horses of the N.C.O and men of Mounted Corps.

\* One drill of 3 hours, or two drills of 1 ½ hours each counts as one day

**30 June 1867**

Sgt. Andrew Imlay	\$8.00
Sgt. Jno Campbell	\$8.00
Sgt. Peter McRostie	\$8.00
Sgt James Sharp	\$8.00
Cpl James Simpson	\$8.00
Cpl Jno McDonell	\$8.00
Cpl Henry York	\$8.00
Cpl Charles Scrivens	\$8.00
Pvt. Daniel McLaurin	\$8.00
Pvt. Edward York	\$8.00
Pvt George Grant	\$8.00
Pvt. William Doctor	\$8.00
Pvt. Thomas Melvin	\$8.00
Pvt James Shepperd	\$8.00
Pvt. George Shepperd	\$8.00
Pvt. William Stoodley	\$8.00
Pvt. John McEvoy	\$8.00
Pvt. William York	\$8.00
Pvt. William Clark	\$8.00
Pvt. Peter McLaurin	\$8.00
Pvt. J. McCormick	\$8.00
Pvt. William Loney	\$8.00
Pvt. William Farlinger	\$8.00
Pvt. D. Girrard	\$8.00
Pvt. Thos Carson	\$8.00
Pvt. John Grey	\$8.00
Pvt. Samuel Scrivens	\$8.00
Pvt. J. Stoodley	\$7.25
Pvt James Webb	\$8.00
Pvt James York	\$8.00
Pvt John Hall	\$8.00
Pvt J.W. Dempsey	\$7.50
Pvt. Richard Quail	\$8.00
Pvt Alec McDonnell	\$8.00
Pvt Wm McRostie	\$8.00
Pvt Thos. Duncan	\$7.75
Pvt William Bell	\$6.75
Pvt. Duncan Fisher	\$8.00
Pvt Henry Wood	\$8.00
Pvt. James Kiefe	\$7.75
Pvt. Robert Gold	\$8.00
Pvt. Ephraim York	\$8.00
Pvt. David McPherson	\$6.75
Pvt. William Scott	\$8.00
Pvt. Daniel McDonell	\$8.00
Pvt. George Blair	\$8.00
Pvt. David Wilson	\$8.00
Pvt. Thomas McIntyre	\$7.50
Pvt. James Pelton	\$8.00
Pvt. James McConnell	\$7.25
Pvt. Frank Iveson	\$8.00
Pvt. James Dempsey	\$7.50
Pvt. Benjamin Thomas	\$7.25
Pvt Robert Duncan	\$6.75
Pvt. Daniel McDonald	\$8.00

**1868-1869**

Capt Ira Morgan	\$16.00
Lieut Joseph Hanna	\$16.00
Ensign John Carson	\$16.00
C. Sgt Andrew Imlay	\$8.00
C. Sgt Peter McRostie	\$8.00
C Sgt. John Campbell	\$8.00
C Sgt. James Sharp	\$8.00
Cpl James Simpson	\$8.00
Cpl Henry York	\$8.00
Cpl. Alex McDonell	\$8.00
Pvt. William Doctor	\$8.00
Pvt. Daniel McLaurin	\$8.00
Pvt. Edward York	\$8.00
Pvt. Thomas Melvin	\$8.00
Pvt. George Shepperd	\$8.00
Pvt. William McCooeye	\$8.00
Pvt. George Grant	\$8.00
Pvt. William York	\$8.00
Pvt. William Clark	\$8.00
Pvt. Peter McLaurin	\$8.00
Pvt. James McCormick	\$8.00
Pvt. John Gray	\$8.00
Pvt. Samuel Scrivens	\$8.00
Pvt. Joseph York	\$8.00
Pvt. John Hall	\$8.00
Pvt. James Dempsey	\$8.00
Pvt. Richard Quail	\$8.00
Pvt. William McRostie	\$8.00
Pvt. Ephraim York	\$8.00
Pvt. Henry Wood	\$8.00
Pvt. James McConnell	\$8.00
Pvt. Daniel McDonell	\$8.00
Pvt. Robert Gold	\$8.00
Pvt. Duncan Fisher	\$8.00
Pvt. William Scott	\$8.00
Pvt. George Blair	\$8.00
Pvt. David Wishart	\$8.00
Pvt. Frank Iveson	\$8.00
Pvt. William Grant	\$8.00
Pvt. Joseph Stoodley	\$8.00
Pvt. William Carson	\$8.00
Pvt. Peter Loney	\$8.00
Pvt. Simon Loney	\$8.00
Pvt. John Wood	\$8.00
Pvt. William Boyd	\$8.00
Pvt. William Cameron	\$8.00
Pvt. William Howes	\$8.00
Pvt. Jonathan Mossop	\$8.00
Pvt. Edward Duncan	\$8.00
Pvt. Alex Cameron	\$8.00
Pvt. John Dempsey	\$8.00
Pvt. Benjamin Wood	\$8.00
Bugler Donald McKercher	\$8.00
Bugler Alex McPherson	\$8.00
Bugler John Carson	\$8.00
Drill Instr. R. A. Bradley	\$8.00

donated &amp; submitted by Norma Morrison

## LEDGER OF JOHN MUNGO CAMPBELL

## "CAMPBELL MILL 1879-1893"

The Moses Mill in Vernon, Osgoode Township operated as a type of trading post or cooperative. Thanks to Lorne Craig who suggested this Account Book. Lorne pointed out that the Campbell Mill was located on the grounds of the present day museum of Osgoode Township Historical Society. Entries show not only daily bookkeeping but some cryptic remarks. For example "gone out west" (50 cents left owing) or "worthless" (more left owing). This Account Book shows bartering, goods for credit and what was a usual practice at the time Promissory Notes.

DEBIT				CREDIT			
<u>John R. Campbell</u>							
Mar 1878	sawing 2000' hemlock. Boards	\$10.00	Mar 1	sleigh to J. McLaren	\$40.00		
	sawing timber & raft	\$4.00		cash at mill	\$4.00		
	" 3179' Hardwood	\$15.90		cash at Kemptville	\$1.00		
	" 4782 Basswood	\$14.34	Apr	10 gal. maple syrup	\$10.00		
				2 pigs @\$3.00	\$6.00		
<u>Daniel McMartin</u>							
Jun 1878	sawing 250'	\$0.75	1879 Nov 22	cash on ac	\$5.00		
Mar	" 3782" pine	\$11.34	1880 Jun 14	cash on ac	\$4.00		
	" 760' birch	\$3.80	1880	weaving for J.A. Campbell	\$5.25		
May	" 1000' pine	\$3.00		cash to bal	\$9.45		
	" 216' maple	\$1.08					
<u>William Porteous</u>							
1879	Bal. Owing for 1878	\$6.77	1879 Jun	Basswood log	\$16.00		
	sawing 9173' pine/hemlock	\$22.93		Cash	\$5.00		
	" 17 m. shingle	\$17.00	1880 Jan	Cash	\$5.00		
	" 2250' hemlock	\$5.62		11 bu. potatoes	\$3.85		
	" 1480' pine	\$3.70	1880 July	Cord Bolt	\$5.50		
				3/4 ton hay	\$7.50		
<u>James Walker</u>							
1879 Feb	74 lb flour	\$2.22	1879 July 5	bass logs	\$5.00		
	76 " flour	\$2.28	Aug	1 box bees	\$4.00		
Apr	65 " Cornmeal	\$1.30		1 cord shingle bolt	\$2.00		
May	35 " flour	\$1.05					
<u>John Bowman</u>							
1880 Apr 26	sawing 1300'	\$3.95	1880 July	One maple log	\$1.00		
July	" 2030'	\$5.09		158 lb. peas	\$1.72		
1884 Jun	" 920' hemlock	\$2.76		3 bu. potatoes	\$1.50		
			1882 Jan	11/2 bu. potatoes	\$0.75		
				570' pine bord	\$5.70		
<u>Daniel McLaurin</u>							
1880 Jun	sawing 8878'	\$22.20	1880 May	Cash	\$20.00		
Apr	" 5085'	\$12.71	Aug	Cash	\$20.00		
July	1 log Hemlock 170'	\$0.42	Dec	120 lb butter	\$25.20		
	3 logs Sumac	\$0.85					
	33 3/4 m. shingle	\$30.37					
<u>Daniel Kennedy</u>							
1880 Jun 1	stone boat	\$0.60	1880 July	105 lbs beef	\$4.20		
	Sawing 5105'	\$12.76		Cash	\$16.00		
	" 16 m. shingle	\$16.00		4 bags apples	\$2.40		
	" 1 m. shingle	\$1.00		Cash	\$11.00		
	" 4 1/2 shingle	\$10.12	Apr	3 pigs	\$5.00		
				7 gal syrup	\$7.00		
<u>W. Poole (Cheese Factory)</u>							
1880 Apr	73 ft plank (scant)	\$5.15	1880 May	Cash	\$5.00		
	Drawing to factory	\$1.00		25 yd. cheese cloth	\$1.50		
	288 ft elm plank	\$2.88		Bal. in cheese	\$6.53		
<u>William Stringer</u>							
1881 Mar	335 lbs provender	\$3.35	1881	Side har (sic)leather	\$6.83		
Jun	73 lbs provender	\$0.73		Farming (?) Kipp	\$2.10		
1882 Mar	294 lbs provender	\$3.68		Hair	\$3.20		
<u>Silas Stoodley</u>							
1880 May	Sawing shingles	\$0.44	1880 Mar	2100 lb hay	\$7.35		
	" 6030' pine	\$15.07	1881 Mar	1200 lb hay	\$5.40		
	" 650' elm/spruce	\$1.95	Dec	Cash	\$5.00		
	" 2 X 4 160'	\$0.96		140 lb beef @ 5 1/2 cwt	\$7.70		
1881 Apr	Sawing 866' spruce	\$2.17					
	" 3 m. shingles	\$3.00					
<u>Dan Cameron</u>							
1880 Jun	Sawing 7511' @ 2 1/2	\$18.80	1880 July	Cash	\$6.50		
Aug	" 676' pine	\$2.02	1881 Sept	105 lb mutton	\$6.30		
Oct.	" 3 1/4' m. shingles	\$6.50		1 ton hay	\$10.00		
	" 380' pine	\$3.44		1 1/4 ton beaver	\$7.50		
	" 56 battens	\$1.68	1882 May	hay	\$6.86		
	" 9 joice 1 x 7	\$2.25					

## A WINTER FUNERAL IN 1933

- submitted by Grace Blair

Reading of two funerals being postponed because of the snow storm on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, I was reminded of a funeral many years ago.

After a lengthy illness on Christmas Eve 1933, a death occurred of a middle aged man at his home south of Springhill Road on the fifth line of Osgoode Township. Arrangements were made for the wake (now visitation) to be held at the home as was usual. The funeral was to be at St Paul's Anglican Church in Osgoode with burial to be in Elmview Cemetery in Kars on Dec 27<sup>th</sup>. In 1933, few roads were plowed in winter.

In those days, batteries were removed from cars and stored in the house and the car stayed in the garage until warmer weather arrived.

December 27<sup>th</sup> was bitterly cold, well below zero Fahrenheit with a strong north wind blowing the snow and filling in the tracks in the roads. My dad had been asked to be a pall bearer so he took his team of horses and sleigh and took other neighbours who were also pall bearers and drove the two miles to the home of the deceased.

It was customary to have prayers before leaving the home and the rector of the Anglican Church at Metcalfe drove with a horse and cutter to perform that service. Then he returned home.

Then began the long, slow drive to Osgoode for the widow, two sons and the pall bearers. I can't recall if the hearse went to Osgoode, but I remember thawing a spot in the thick frost on the window pane to watch the procession going up Springhill Road, two sleighs, a horse and cutter and maybe a hearse. Meanwhile the rector of St Paul's who lived at Kars, had driven to Osgoode by horse and cutter and he and about half a dozen brave souls from the village and nearby, gathered around the register of the wood-fired furnace in the church awaiting the arrival of the cortege. When they arrived well behind schedule, the farm family who lived across the street from the church, put the tired horses in their warm stable and fed them.

After the service, the widow and her younger son stayed at the farm house, two nearby farmers hitched their horses to the sleighs, the coffin was placed on one and the rector, the older son, the drivers and the pall bearers began another bone-chilling drive to Kars. They drove to the end of Main Street, crossed the Rideau River on the ice, then down River Road to the Cemetery. Since it was now dark, someone held a flashlight to the minister could read the grave side service, the grave was filled in and the task completed.

Upon their return to Osgoode, they were invited to supper at the farm home and maybe some of them stayed but others had night chores waiting for them. With gratitude to that kind farm family, they hitched up their horses and began the last long drive to their warm homes and stables.



Submitted by Grace Blair

## PHOTOGRAPHY!

**J. T. PEIRCE**

Begs leave to inform the public that he is now prepared to take

**AMBROTYPES, FERROTYPES,**

AND

**CARTE-DE-VISITE PORTRAITS.**

At *Burlington Jan - July 1883*

TERMS MODERATE.

## 100 YEARS AGO

- 1908 - Sir Wilfred Laurier's Liberals elected to their fourth consecutive majority government
- General Motors Corp founded
- Ford Motor Company produces the first Model T
- 1928 - The Russell Hotel, closed in 1925 burns weeks before it was slated for demolition
- Champlain Bridge opens
- Women's Suffrage in Britain reduced from 30 to 21 years
- Amelia Earhart first woman to fly across the Atlantic
- 1958 - Ottawa - New city hall opens on Green Island on Sussex Drive (August)
- Canadian built Avro Arrow flies for first time
- United States launches first satellite into space
- European Common Market Comes into being

submitted by Mary Bushe

## FROM THE HILLS OF DONEGAL - NEARING ST PATRICK DAY

- submitted by Michael Daley

Now Paddy Murphy had a small farm and a wife, Brigid O'Toole who nagged him unmercifully. From morning till night (and sometimes later), she was always complaining about something. The only time he got any relief was when out plowing with his old mule. He tried to plow a lot.

One day when he was out plowing, Brigid brought him his lunch in the field. He drove the old mule into the shade, sat down on a stump and began to eat his lunch. Immediately Brigid began haranguing him again. Complain, nag, nag, it just went on and on.

All of a sudden, the old mule lashed out with both hind feet and caught Brigid smack in the back of her head. Killed her dead on the spot.

At her funeral several days later, Father O'Brien noticed something odd. When a woman mourner would approach Paddy, he would listen for a minute, then nod his head in agreement. But when a man mourner approached him, he would listen for a minute then shake his head in disagreement. This was so consistent Father O'Brien decided to ask Paddy about this.

So after the funeral, Father spoke to Paddy and asked him why he nodded his head and agreed with the women, but always shook his head and disagreed with all the men. "Well Father, it was like this, the women would come up and say something about how nice Brigid looked or how pretty her dress was, so I'd nod my head in agreement." And "Paddy, what about the men," Father asked. "Sure'n, they wanted to know if that mule was for sale."

## HUMOR FROM THE INTERNET - 1955

- Have you seen the new cars coming out next year? It won't be long before \$2000 will only buy a used one.

- If cigarettes keep going up in price, I'm going to quit. A quarter a pack is ridiculous.

- Kids today are impossible. Those duck tail hair cuts make it impossible to stay groomed. Next thing you know, boys will be wearing their hair as long as the girls.

- It's too bad things are so tough nowadays. I see where a few married women are having to work to make ends meet.

- I'm just afraid the Volkswagen car is going to open the door to a whole lot of foreign business.



Bob Usher at Nov. 2007 Cenotaph Ceremony with Elizabeth Stuart

### ROBERT SEATON USHER

*Past-President of Osgoode Township Historical Society  
1989 - 1992,*

submitted by Patti Mitton

On the 25th of January, we lost a champion and loyal friend. After several years as a board member, Bob Usher served as President of the Osgoode Township Historical Society and Museum from 1989 to 1992. Afterwards, he also continued as a board member of several more years. Interviewed by the Winchester Press, he declared that "The archives are the heart of the historical society."

During his tenure, several books were published by our members and records in our holdings were transcribed for sale. The twentieth anniversary of our group was marked in 1992. But perhaps his most notable and lasting contribution was to raise funds from various levels of government and local organizations, and oversee the construction of the Agricultural Building, which now houses a remarkable and extensive collection of artifacts representing Osgoode Township farming heritage.

Born at Grafton, Ontario, Bob Usher was the son of Blanche Kerr, a school teacher and poet whose work was published in Toronto newspapers, and Nelson Usher, a farmer who had served in the First World War. From them he absorbed a passion for literature and learning, a love of farming and animals, and a keen sense of duty reflected in his own 32 years in the Canadian Armed Forces, mostly with the Royal Canadian Artillery. Rather than hardening him, if anything, his experiences in battle heightened his humanity and compassion for those around him. His service during the Korean War and at bases across Canada, the United States and Japan was a source of quiet pride ... and of many stories.

For Bob was a storyteller, he listened to stories, remembered them, shared them. He was an avid reader on many subjects, but especially in military and social history. In retirement, he published a manuscript by Lt.-Col. Eric Cormack, describing his career in the British and Canadian Artillery, beginning in the First World War. He wrote his own family history, told with warmth and compassion, then published a compilation of over 100 of his favourite poems, many of which he would often quote from in appropriate circumstances. Recently he had begun research for yet another book.

"He knew his friends," Elizabeth Stuart declared upon hearing of his passing. And he had many of them from all stages of his life, people who shared his history, his interests and his sense of humour. To begin new friendships easily, and cultivate them across geography and time as he did was one of the gifts that set him apart.

Bob and I met at the Museum in January 1989, and our friendship quickly expanded beyond its walls: we often called on each other for companionship, for help, and especially in my case, for advice. He spent a good portion of the Ice Storm at my place, tidying up fallen trees, sharing the contents of my freezer, cooked on the wood stove, and joking about my inability to boil water for tea. Afterwards, he cheerfully supervised and contributed materials to the reshingling of my roof.

Late one winter night, I discovered to my horror that the stovepipe and even the lids of my venerable kitchen range were glowing red. In a panic, I called Bob: surely he would know exactly what to do. He calmly advised me to shut down all the drafts, carefully place a pan of cold water on the stove-- and call him in the morning!

Bob was a wise mentor to several young people, working alongside them to share what life had taught him. When he briefly hired my nephews for haying, he marveled as much at their determination not to show weakness as he did at their voracious appetites. He described them as 'stoic,' a word they have proudly carried with them and done their best to live up to ever since.

I will miss Bob's regular visits, accompanied by his devoted dog Dinah; I'll miss his stories, his wisdom, his limitless curiosity, his wit, kindness and loyalty. We will all miss this great friend and honourable man, and we extend our sympathies to his family, who will surely miss him most of all.

### ALL THINGS SCOTTISH

Robbie Burns Night is a night to remember whether your kin are Scottish or not. Robbie Burns Night is celebrated on January 25<sup>th</sup> around the world. Some say it is still more widely observed than the official national day, Saint Andrew's Day.

The format of Burns suppers has not changed since Robert's death in 1796. The basic format starts with a general welcome, a procession to the head table, and announcements followed with the Selkirk Grace. Just past the grace comes the piping and the cutting of the Haggis, where Robert's famous "Address To A Haggis" is read, and the haggis is cut open. The program usually includes a special singer for entertainment. Following this is when the reading called the "immortal memory," an overview of Robert's life and work is given. The event usually concludes with the singing of Auld Lang Syne.

Ann Leighton-Kyle

#### OSGOODE TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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