



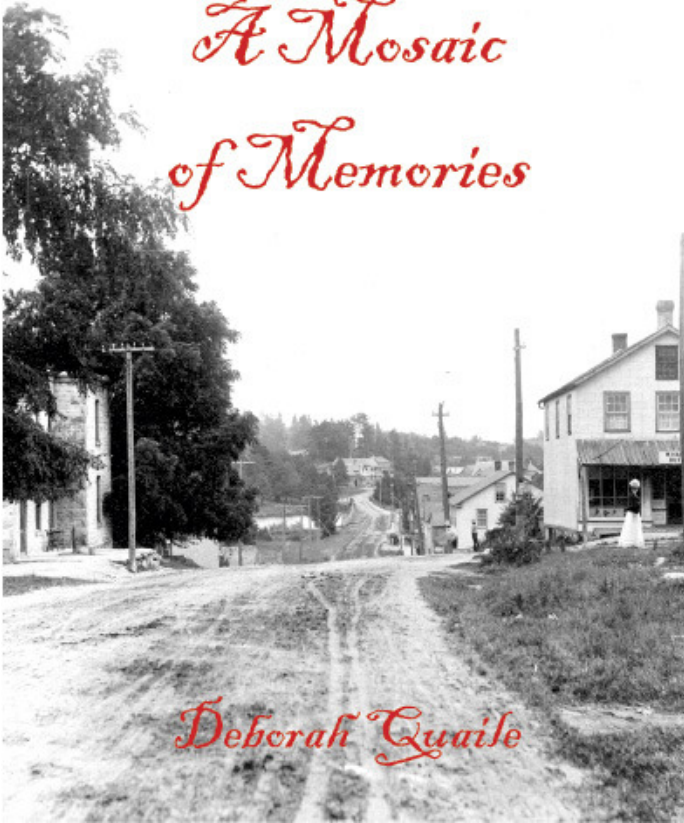
ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 51, Georgetown, Ontario, Canada L7G 4T1
www.hhpl.on.ca/sigs/ehs/home.html

Vol. 29 No. 1

March – April 2004

Rockwood: A Mosaic of Memories



NEW LOCAL HISTORY

Rockwood: A Mosaic of Memories

An entertaining and moving account of nearly 200 years of small town growth. Deborah Quaille uncovers the stories behind hardy settlers, travelling medicine shows, ghost folklore, strange street names and Callithumpians. From industrious hard work and heartfelt memories to the heyday of growth in the 21st century, this recounting offers untold chapters as well as a new perspective on Rockwood's history.

“Here is a kaleidoscope of the people, places and events that shape our community's history; the zest of our present, the wonders dreamt of our future. Catch the spirit of the pioneer in personal stories of delicious hauntings, or courageous accomplishments that carry the tide of time into our characters today. A reference book – the essence of Rockwood and

Eramosa – to consult and amuse for the next 100 years.” -Katherine L. Gordon.

Deborah Quaille will be the speaker at the March meeting to discuss Rockwood and her latest book.

Join the Esquesing Historical Society at Knox Presbyterian Church, Acton on Wednesday 10 March 2004 at 7:30 p.m.

ROCKWOOD

Exotic cars race the streets! A barber is held at gun point!

A school teacher secretly marries the King of England!

Apparitions haunt the hollows of Spirit Valley!
A lucky landing dockside in England makes Rockwood famous at the Waldorf -Astoria!



A Napoleonic Prisoner of War, a pair of Colonels, a Squire, a Railroad Baron, a Quaker teacher, a Group of Seven artist and a bunch of Callithumpians help to shape the story of this town.

About the Author

Deborah Quaille is an editor and freelance writer for numerous publications and magazines with columns, book reviews, feature articles, editorials, and photography to her credit. In 2002 she produced Mrs. Merry's Memories, a book detailing the life of a woman from pioneer roots in Drumquin, Ontario, in the late 1800s/early 1900s. Mrs. Merry's Memories was the winner of the 2003 Milton Heritage Award for writing, and was nominated for the 2003 Ontario Historical Society Alison Prentice Award.

Since moving to Rockwood in 1991, Deb has developed a passion for the local scenery, history and especially the warm-hearted residents. She's a proud member of the cappuccino-consuming Callithumpians Writers' Group.

Georgetown Herald, Pages from the Past: June 19, 1935: "A large four foot rattlesnake was killed on the main street of Rockwood this week. The reptile was coiled in the centre of the road when it was run over by a truck."



ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2003 ARCHIVAL REPORT

John Mark Rowe, Archivist

ARCHIVAL ACTIVITIES

The EHS hired Leah Fagin during the summer of 2003 under a Federal grant. She worked on continuing the re-scanning of our images into a TIF format. She also worked with Sherry Westfahl in preparing the finding aid for the Internet. The work of re-numbering the collection to follow a digital format continues with the help of Karen Hunter.

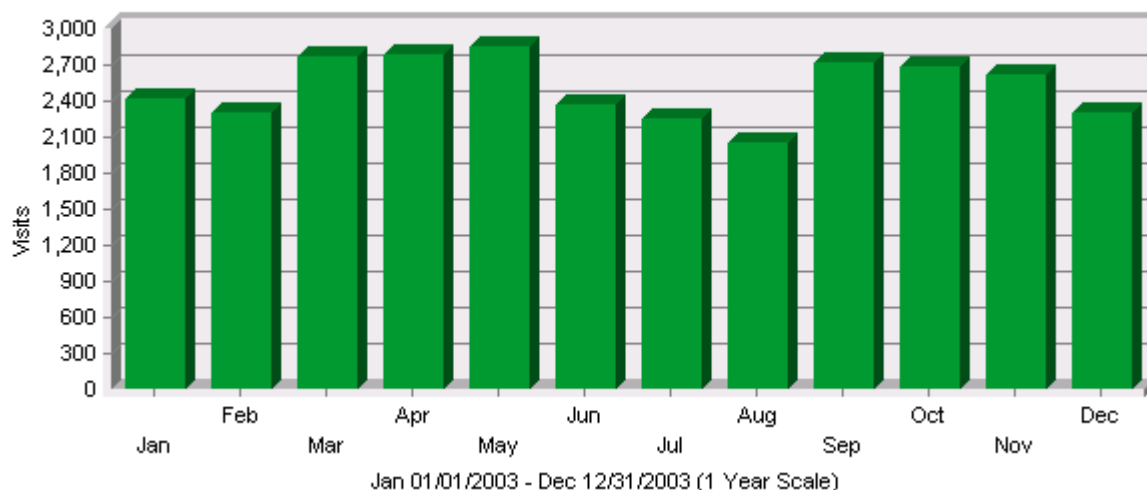
2003 ACCESSIONS

The Archives had donations from Hank Kester (Doug Cole), Myles Gilson, Tom Ramaurtarsingh and John Sommer this year.

EXTENT OF HOLDINGS

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Textual – General Collection: | 34 linear metres |
| Textual - Restricted Collection: | 0.64 linear metres |
| Textual - Newspaper Collections: | 14 linear metres |
| Cartographic Collection: | 241 items |
| Architectural Drawings: | 136 sets |
| Photograph Collection: | 12 636 images (processed) |
| Digital Images Collection: | 96 images (processed) |
| Audio-Visual Collection: | 1 linear metre |
| Negatives Collection: | 23 linear metres (mostly un-processed) |

Visits



Total hits for the year: 56 419 (55 928 in 2002)

Average per day: 154

Busiest Day: Wednesday

Average visit length: 9:39 minutes

Unique Visitors: 13 931 **Visitors who visited more than once:** 2103 (1837 in 2002)

Top Pages Visited: Local Community Histories and Newspaper articles.

Top Documents accessed: The Historical Town of Acton; Georgetown: A busy Manufacturing Community; Historical Glen Williams; The Historic Village of Limehouse; The Kennedy Family of Georgetown; The Historical Hamlet of Ballinafad; Toronto Daily Mail, 24 June 1893; Acton Free Press, 19 April 1888.

RESEARCH REQUESTS

The EHS charges \$5.00 for the initial fee, and \$1.00 per photocopied page. Postage and handling charges also apply. Requests can be made by e-mail or regular mail, but we cannot guarantee a delivery time.

PHOTOGRAPH REPRINTS

Besides the cost of printing a photo, an Archives user fee of \$5 will apply for the first photo and a \$2 fee for each subsequent photo, ordered at the same time. Postage and handling charges will also be applied. Orders require three weeks for processing.

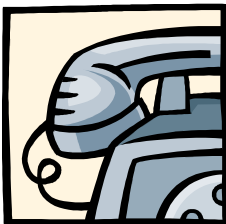
Financial report goes here!

ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

- Wed. 12 **Rockwood: A Mosaic of Memories** - Deborah Quaile has published a new
March book on Rockwood. Join her as she uncovers the stories behind hardy
2004 settlers, travelling medicine shows, ghost folklore, strange street names and
Callithumpians. Deborah promises a new perspective on Rockwood's history.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Acton, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 14 **Friends of the Dominion Gardens** - The extensive landscaping and work
April involved in re-shaping the ground of the former Dominion Seed House on
2004 Guelph Street, Georgetown will be the topic of a slide presentation by Sue
Balough.
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 12 **Silvercreek!** - The hamlet, the creek, the tavern, the *murder* - all will be
May exposed at this meeting about a bustling boom town, now relegated to history
2004 or paved over by Trafalgar Road. Join Mark Rowe as he brings the history of
this village to life!
KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Georgetown, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed. 9 **Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District** - Join the Society on a
June walking tour of the first Heritage District in Halton Hills and other properties
2004 on Bower Avenue. This event will begin with our annual pot luck dinner at
the old Acton Town Hall.
ACTON TOWN HALL, Willow Street, Acton, 6:00 / 7:15 p.m.

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT NO CHARGE!

Please bring your own cup for refreshments to help protect our environment.



ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

| | | |
|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Stephen Blake | 905 877-8251 | President |
| Karen Hunter | 905 838-2109 | Treasurer |
| Dawn Livingstone | 905 877-6506 | Secretary |
| Sherry Westfahl | 905 873-7145 | Past - President |
| J. Mark Rowe | 905 877-9510 | Archivist |
| Carol Wood | 905 873-0792 | Publications |
| Marj Allan | 905 877-9985 | Membership |
| Cathy Hunt | | Social |
| Jan Raymond | | Social |

Society Notes

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

The Esquesing Historical Society has an official web site on the World Wide Web. You can visit us at <www.hhpl.on.ca/sigs/ehs/home.html>

Send your e-mail to rowem@aztec-net.com or dlvngstn@stn.net

Canadian Council of Archives web site: <www.CdnCouncilArchives.ca>

EHS NEWSLETTER

John Mark Rowe prepared this newsletter with assistance from Karen Hunter and Dawn Livingstone. Submissions are welcome.

MEMBERSHIP

Our paid 2004 memberships stand at 70. This will be your last newsletter if you do not renew NOW. Please encourage friends and family to join the EHS and support our efforts to preserve and share our local history. The individual rate is \$10. The family or institution rate is \$12. Cheques payable to the Society can be mailed to our post box.

Marj Allen, membership secretary, will gladly accept your fees at the next meeting.

ARCHIVES

Sherry continues the enormous task of updating the Archive Finding Aid. The updates are being transferred to the Archival materials by Karen, Dawn and Marj. Many thanks from us all for your hard work. We will all benefit in the future from their diligence.

GRANT RECEIVED

We have received from the Ministry of Culture our annual Heritage Organization Development Grant for 2003/2004 in the sum of \$378.00. We

thank and acknowledge the Ministry for their support of our Society and its work.

HERITAGE QUIZ

The military heritage quiz published in the last newsletter, was received late by the newspapers, so entries were extended until the March meeting. Therefore answers will not be published herein until our next issue. Last chance to enter and win, win, win!

OAKVILLE HIST. SOCIETY

March 17 at 6:30 The AGM with potluck supper and a video history. Knox Church.

April 21 - Sarah Walker on "*Fashions of the 1880s*" at 7:30 p.m.

May 23 & 24 – **The Thomas House** opens for the summer season 1 to 4 p.m.

BRAMPTON HIST. SOCIETY

March 18 – AGM and Paul Willoughby presents "*Walter Rolling: A Man Before His Time.*"

April 15 – Keith Felton (of Georgetown!) on "*The Conservation and Restoration of Books.*"

April 18 – **Antiques Appraisal Show** at Peel Heritage Complex from 10 am until 4 p.m., sponsored by the Brampton H.S., Historic Bovaird House and the Peel Heritage Complex.

HALTON-PEEL OGS

March 28 – Diane Kuster on "*Preservation and Conservation of Photos, Postcards, Papers, Ephemera.*"

At Chinguacousy Branch Library, 150 Central Park Dr., Brampton at 2p.m.

April 25 – Fawne Stratford-Deval on "*English Genealogical Research From Afar.*" At Oakville Public Library, 120 Navy Street, Oakville at 2p.m.

A Selection from:
History of Dominion Seed House Georgetown, Ontario

Written by Norma Thompson and Douglas Peck, May 2002

During the late 1870's, James Bradley, a native of Ireland, purchased two hundred acres of land on the southeastern limits of the village of Georgetown, and called the new home Cedar Vale Farm, where the youngest child, William Freeman Bradley, was born. William first worked at the local Bank of Hamilton.



EHS 1 - p228

Dominion Seed House was a good place to work. The employees were certainly expected to give an honest days work, but in return they were treated fairly. Although the business was not unionized, if a regular staff employee were ill and unable to return to work, he would continue to receive his normal pay. It was like one big family, once hired, you were there

forever. Most of the part-time employees were ladies who returned year after year. Many high school students had after school and Saturday jobs in the seed department from January until May, with a few boys working on the farm during the summer.

It was the practice of Mr. Bradley to personally visit the growers of seeds and plants he was selling. This took him to Europe, United States and western Canada, which proved to be invaluable and was carried on by Mr. Douglas Peck while he was General Manager. Mr. Karl Moeschter, Seed Department Manager, also visited various trial grounds. Mr. Peck also had the privilege to visit seed production in Costa Rica while visiting his daughter and her husband who were studying Spanish. There he saw the first few plants of New Guinea Impatiens, which became an All America Gold Medal Winner in 1989.

The catalogue began in a black and white format. Ultimately it grew from the digest size to a magazine format in full colour in 1980, and sales increased dramatically. Descriptions for the seeds and products were written by the general manager and various other employees. Mr. Phares Vannatter was particularly gifted at writing truthful, but

interesting texts to arouse the interest of gardeners. When Jiffy 7 peat Pellets were first introduced, the catalogue devoted two full pages to explain how they worked. With between 300 and 400 different kinds of seeds, nearly 100 miscellaneous products and books, and over 20 different kinds of plants and bulbs, there is no doubt the customers carefully scrutinized the catalogue.

The working force was about 26 full time employees and during the busy season there would be as many as 125 employees on pay roll. For the most part, we were fortunate in having very reliable people, with many of the part time employees serving for 25 years or more.

The operation was large enough to run its own local postal station, with postal workers coming to process the mail, which went to every post office in Canada. As the postal system changed, we went from bagging the mail to using monotainers which were trucked directly to the Gateway distribution centre in Mississauga. Those on the mail table had a "Railway Guide" which listed all express stations across Canada and they would send it via mail or express, whichever was cheapest. In the late 80's UPS became another part of our shipping.

For most of its history Dominion Seed House was rated as the largest mail order seed business in Canada to the garden seed trade.

In April of 1987, Agriculture Minister, John Wise, turned the first sod for a new retail outlet to be built, which opened officially, October 30th, 1987, by John McDermid MP., Mrs. Margaret Harding, owner, Douglas Peck, General Manager and Mayor Russell Miller. This new garden centre was managed by Bob Hankinson.

William Bradley passed away on November 8th, 1953. The Royal Trust Company, executors of the Estate of William F. Bradley, appointed Mrs. Alexandrina Bradley, his widow to manage the business, with Phares Vannatter, the first full time employee ever hired, to become General Manager. Upon Mrs. Bradley's retirement, Mrs. Margaret Harding succeeded her mother. At this time a company was formed with officers.

Regarding the years the various buildings were built, to the best of our knowledge, the first building on Maple Avenue was constructed in 1933; the Tudor designed building in 1936, and the farm foreman's house in 1938. The greenhouses were also built during this period. Additional buildings and extensions were added from 1942 on, as needed. The Garden Centre [was added] in 1987 and its extension was added early in the 1990's.

In 1993, Perron Seeds, a Quebec company, bought the catalogue business. The garden centre closed in 1994. Today, on the land are many homes, a High School and park.

The following persons listed below served the company as officers or in a managerial position. What is listed as a position is what each employee retired from:-

General Manager

P.L. Vannatter 1928-1976
Wm. J. Kay 1966-1982
Douglas Peck 1945-1990

Farm Manager

Fredrick Fryer 1930-1970
Duncan McFarlane 1970-1990
Wim Vink 1990-1992

Office Managers

Cecil Davidson 1932-1977
Kenneth Allan 1975-1991

Garden Centre Manager

Robert Hankinson 1986-1991

Seed Department Managers

Robert Reeve 1937-1978
Karl Moeschter 1953-1991

Assistant General Manager

Douglas Yates 1988-1991

Officers:

Mrs. A.I. Bradley, President, Owner
Mrs. Margaret Harding President, Owner
Norma Thompson Secretary-Treasurer 1942-1987
Mrs. Connie McMennemy Secretary-Treasurer 1982-1991

Acknowledgements:

Jane Fogal
Friends of the Old Seed House
Gardens
Halton Sketches by John
McDonald

OFFICIAL OPENING OF DOMINION GARDENS – 8 June 2003



All photographs taken by J. M. Rowe.

BARBER PAPER MILL, GEORGETOWN TO BE DESIGNATED

On 3 March 2004, Heritage Halton Hills went to Council to recommend that they grant heritage designation under Part IV of the Heritage Act of Ontario to the Barber Paper Mill at 99 River Drive, Georgetown.

The Barber Paper Mill is an industrial complex that is a landmark in a physical sense as well as in an historical sense. Georgetown, known as “Papertown” for many generations, is

represented by this collection of buildings. The Ontario Heritage Foundation recognized them in 1977 when an historic plaque was put on the site. However, the site has never been officially protected as a heritage property.

Fortunately, the Town of Halton Hills recognized the importance of this site to the people of Georgetown and to our history. Development of this site has been tied to restoration of the Barber Paper Mill complex. Everlast Restoration has contacted Heritage Halton



EHS 203 – View of complex from the north about 1916.

Hills with restoration plans which are very sympathetic to the site and which require a heritage designation.

Council approved the report from Heritage Halton Hills and sent it to staff for a recommendation.

Barber Mill on 14 February 2004