



UPCOMING EVENTS

PHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, 16 April
Princess Gardens
Professor Dimitry Anastakis
"The End of an Era? A Century
of General Motors in Oshawa."

Peterborough Historical Society Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, 21 May
Brian Palmer
"1919 and the Labour Revolt:
How Workers
Fought for a Different Canada
100 Years ago."
Lions Centre, 7:30 pm

Hutchison House Events

Heritage Luncheons
first Wednesday of the month
February to June.
Advance tickets
\$15 per person
sitting times at 12:00 noon
& 1:30 p.m.

Hutchison House
gardens clean-up
Sunday, 14 April

Rhubarb Spring Fling
Wednesday, 22 May

Yard and Plant Sale
at Gilmour Street yard sale
Saturday, 25 May

Call Hutchison House
for details

Issue 456

April 2019

PHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DINNER

Following the Annual General Meeting of members, the PHS is holding its annual **fund-raising dinner** with a guest speaker. It is an occasion to socialize with other members, pick up your copy of this year's Occasional Paper, and hear an informed, illustrated lecture on a very topical subject. Non-members are welcome to the dinner and lecture, so do bring friends.

Tuesday, 16 April 2019

Princess Gardens, 100 Charlotte Street

6:00 PM - 6:30 PM (AGM)

6:30 PM - 7:00 PM **Cash Bar & 50/50 draw**

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM (Dinner & Guest Speaker)

\$45 Members \$50 Non-members

Tickets may be purchased and reserved by phone: 705-740-2600 or 705-743-9710

Or in person at Hutchison House, 270 Brock Street

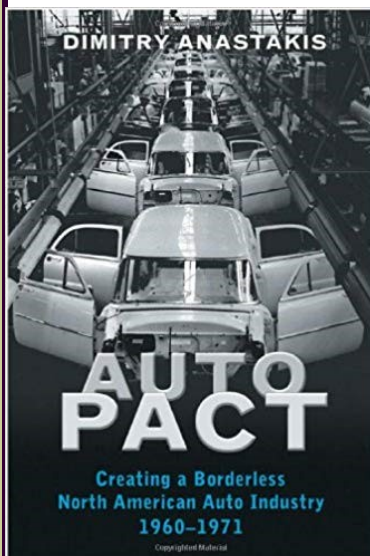
Cash, cheque, Visa or Mastercard

Order/purchase tickets before 2 April 2019

Guest Speaker

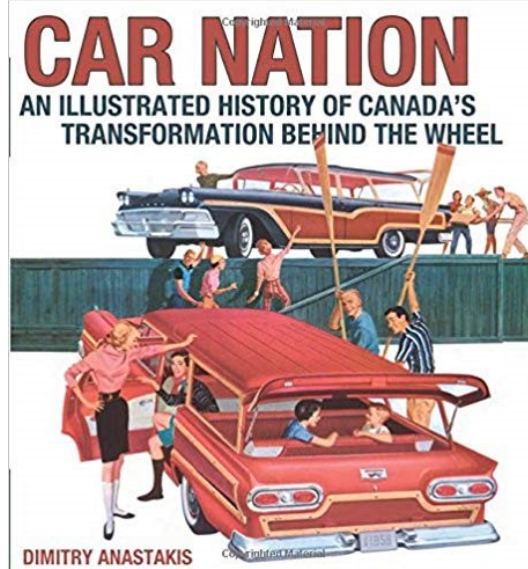
Professor Dimitry Anastakis

"The End of an Era? A Century of General Motors in Oshawa"



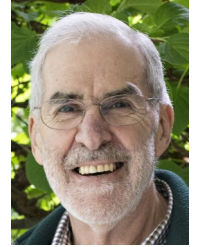
(2014). Professor Anastakis will reflect upon the closing of GM's assembly plant in Oshawa.

Dimitry Anastakis is Professor of History at Trent University and has published extensively on the automobile industry in Canada. His book *Auto Pact: Creating a Borderless North American Auto Industry, 1960-1971* won the Ontario Historical Society JJ. Talman Award in 2009. His book *Autonomous State: The Struggle for a Canadian Auto Industry from OPEC to Free Trade* won the Canadian Historical Association prize for best book in Political History (2014), and the Hagley Prize in Business History



From the President ...

Dale Standen



When I was a school boy in Burnaby in the early 1950s, there were no March breaks. School days were unrelenting, with only the usual recesses in morning and afternoon when we were thrown outside to play and skin our knees on the stony dirt playgrounds that then were the norm. The sensible idea of a week off to break the long stretch between Christmas and July was foreign to the good old days. Now, some families plan travel holidays for the break while others take advantage of the many programs offered to kids and their parents as an alternative to school.

Museums are ideal to offer engaging and enjoyable March break programs, as Peterborough's museums prove. This past month the Canadian Canoe Museum, the Peterborough Museum and Archives and our own Hutchison House Museum all offered outstanding March break camps. Programs were aimed at children between the ages of four and twelve and all were distinguished by hands-on learning through exploration, discovery and practice. At the Canoe Museum, exploration in appropriate galleries was followed by experimentation with soapstone carving, woodworking, wanigan-making, paddle-making and paddle-painting. The Peterborough Museum centred its programs on the newly-installed travelling exhibit from the Canadian Museum of Nature, Ice-Age Mammals. Each day's activities focused on a different theme: Ice-Age giant mammals, climate change from melting glaciers, prehistoric art, fossils and archaeology, and a fun day solving an Ice-Age mystery.

Hutchison House Museum offered four themes over four days, all rooted in historical material culture: the age-old craft of felting; puppet-making; the creation of a personalized, hand-crafted journal for recording experiences; and, the practice of pioneer life through cooking on the open hearth, making rag dolls, writing with quill pens and playing early settler games.

All these programs are linked in some way to the school curriculum. All engage children mentally and physically. All involve working with hands. All escape from screen time. All are fun. We are most fortunate in Peterborough to have these excellent museums, lively places that allow us and our children to experience and learn about so many different worlds. How I wish that March break and these remarkable programs had been available when I was a kid!



March Break at Hutchison House—
Slate Writing

March Break at Hutchison House—
Felting is fun



Annual Heritage Awards

Each year the Peterborough Historical Society recognizes the contributions and efforts made by community members in exploring, celebrating and preserving the rich cultural and architectural history of the Peterborough area. Recipients must be residents of the City of Peterborough or Peterborough County. Nominations will be considered for accomplishments or projects completed in the past three years.

There are six award categories:

The Samuel Armour Award recognizes the development and/or delivery of programs, activities or curriculum-based local history material that engages students in exploring the diverse history of the region.

The J. Hampden Burnham Award recognizes the completion and presentation of a major project in any media such as a painting, video, web design, newspaper articles, etc. that promotes awareness of the history of the region.

The George Cox Award recognizes the sympathetic redesign or sensitive new construction that respects the existing character of significant cultural resources, such as buildings, cultural landscapes, period gardens or the preservation of manuscripts, photographic collections, etc.

The F.H. Dobbin Award recognizes the publication of a major work, either fiction or non-fiction that focuses on Peterborough's past.

The Martha Kidd Award honors the memory of Martha Kidd, historian of architecture and of Peterborough's built heritage, and recognizes outstanding work in the preservation of our region's built heritage.

The Charlotte Nicholls Award recognizes a substantial donation either financial or in kind services towards the commemoration of a historic structure, artifact, cultural landscape, etc.

If you are interested in nominating someone for an award, you can download and fill out an awards nomination form on the PHS website, <http://www.peterboroughhistoricalsociety.ca/awards.php>. Or, pick up a printed form at the PHS office at 270 Brock Street. Send nominations to the Awards Committee, Peterborough Historical Society, 270 Brock St. Peterborough, Ontario K9H 2P9, or email to info@peterboroughhistoricalsociety.ca before 12 April 2019.

Doors Open Peterborough, 2019

Doors Open Peterborough is happening once again on Saturday, May 4, 2019. Join us as we partner with sites and organizations from across the city to bring Peterborough's heritage to life. A full list of this year's sites is available at doorsopenontario.on.ca/Peterborough or you can connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

We are looking for volunteers to help make the day a success! For more information or to sign up as a volunteer, please contact Jessica Bisson (jbisson@peterborough.ca).

In addition, we are looking forward to hosting historian Andrew Elliot who will be giving a public lecture in support of Doors Open. The lecture will be held at St. James United Church (221 Romaine Street) on Friday, April 26. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the cost is \$5 at the door.

Thank you!

Hutchison House Report

Gale Fewings



The March Break programs we offered this year at the House were very well received and exceptionally well attended. The kids kept us on our toes and a great time was had by all. One thing we've discovered over the years is that no matter how often they've played it, children never seem to tire of the game "hide the thimble".

Hide the thimble is one of the simplest, yet endlessly entertaining, pastimes. The rules are simple. One person is 'it' and hides the thimble somewhere in the keeping room while the others wait outside the closed door. The thimble cannot be hidden behind or inside another object. In other words, it must be placed in plain sight.

The aim of the game is to spot the thimble without alerting the others to its location. On seeing the thimble a player immediately sits down on the floor in the middle of the room. Each player in turn upon spying the hidden object sits down with the others until all, or most, of the participants have found it. The first one to find the thimble is the next to hide it.

I'm certain that many adults reading the description of this popular game will remember playing something similar as a child. The really interesting thing is that once they've discovered the game, the children constantly ask if they can play it again. It is amazing that we can hold their interest for so long in the age of TV and video games. Awesome!

We would like to thank Bob Laing's six-year old granddaughter, Beatrice, for helping us to serve participants at our Heritage Luncheon at the beginning of March. She and her little sister were visiting Peterborough for their March Break which is held the first week of the month. She was so popular with our guests that the other volunteers felt a little underutilized.

Our current exhibit "Child's Play" continues until the end of March. Toys and games from various generations are on display. Did you know that Barbie turns 60 this year? Or, that the Slinky was invented by accident by naval mechanical engineer Richard James in 1943? He was designing new tension springs that could stabilize shipboard equipment in rough seas. After knocking some of his samples off a shelf and watching them 'walk' down instead of falling, James knew the product had more potential as a novelty and refined it to improve the walking motion. After initial challenges getting it to retailers, the first 400 Slinkys sold out in minutes.

Soon it will be time to get the gardens into shape and we look forward to again having students from Lakefield College School come out to help with some of the clean-up on Sunday, April 14. The Garden Committee is looking for more members, so if anyone out there has a desire to get your hands dirty or 'green up' your thumb, we'd love to hear from you. In fact, we are looking for new volunteers for all of the committees. You can contact the office at 705-743-9710 or visit our website at www.hutchisonhouse.ca to learn more about becoming a Hutchison House Museum volunteer.

Many members of the Society may be undertaking a spring clean-up at home as well. This year we are planning to take part in the Gilmour Street yard sale on Saturday, May 25. Dale and Bernice Standen have graciously offered their lawn for our use. We would greatly appreciate donations of quality items to add to our sale. Plants will also be welcome.

Additional events coming up at Hutchison House include our Heritage Luncheons on April 3, May 1 and June 5 plus the annual Rhubarb Spring Fling on Wednesday, May 22. Look for more details in the next Bulletin.



Beatrice serving dessert to two of our luncheon guests

Hutchison House
March Break Program
Kids with their journals



March 2019 PHS Public Meeting

“Historical Peterborough Businesses Revealed Through Select Letterheads”

For an audience of almost 50, Jon Oldham, City Archivist, and Ken Brown, local business historian, dissected numerous historical Peterborough business letterheads to reveal the rich stories that they can tell. In the nineteenth century, businesses had fewer means of advertising than exist today. Designing eye-catching letterheads, packed with advertising messages, was then a strategy to broadcast products, services and positive corporate images. Letterheads invariably included the name of the business, the major products or services available, location (often in relation to a well-known landmark such as the post office or train station, before street numbers were common), and an image, usually thematic, that was intended to establish a favorable brand.

Some letterheads used off-the-shelf stock images, while others were custom-designed. Many were aesthetically attractive, like John Bertram’s hardware business “Sign of the Golden Anvil,” which was retained as a brand through successive owners. Advertising, with the purpose of conveying positive impressions, could take liberties with truth in the pursuit of this goal. For his brewery, Henry Calcutt displayed an image of a building larger than life (bigness equals importance), situated on the waterfront (which it was not), with a railway running alongside (which did not exist) and with a steamboat in the river beside the misplaced brewery. The steamboat was to advertise another business of Calcutt, which presumably is why Calcutt wanted to depict his brewery, misleadingly, at water’s edge. The manipulation of consumers by advertisers should come as no surprise to anyone who has witnessed the miraculous feats of automobiles depicted in present-day television ads.

Oldham and Brown guided the audience through a couple of dozen business letterheads, including hotels, medical doctors, dry goods, furniture making, woodworking, stoves, water works, boots and shoes and many others representing products and services that provide an extensive profile of the town. They showed



how much history can be reconstructed from these sources. Beneath the letterheads, what is contained in the thousands of invoices and other documents in the Peterborough Archive collection reveals much about business operations and daily life in the past. We learn of costs of goods and services, how doctors’ fees were determined, how water rates were assessed, what incidental charges were added to a hotel bill. The extent of available detail is remarkable.

It is clear that we can learn much from perusing business papers and what they contain. It is also clear that these documents speak with much greater depth of meaning when addressed by historians who possess extensive further knowledge and context. Because Ken Brown and Jon Oldham possess this knowledge, they treated their audience to a rich and complex world of the past through the entry point of something as commonplace as a letterhead.

Don Willcock thanked the speakers to the accompaniment of great applause.

Dale Standen

Jon Oldham and Ken Brown



**PETERBOROUGH
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

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Voices from Peterborough's Past The Demolition of the Grand Opera House

I often ponder what a more impressive built heritage Peterborough would display if even half of the buildings demolished over the years had been left in place.

Construction of the Grand Opera House began in June 1905; the building opened November 15th of that same year. With its fifteen-hundred (or so) seats on three levels, it was without hesitation reckoned to be “a credit to the city.”

Its ownership devolved over the years from local businessman Rupert Bradburn to J.J. Turner & Sons (with their factory and offices just next door, seen in the photos), and then in 1919 to Toronto theatre magnate A.J. Small. That same year, before mysteriously disappearing, never to be seen again, Small quickly made a pile of money by selling it (along with other holdings) to the Trans-National Theatre Company. In the mid-1920s, the theatre was again taken over by local businessmen, though it was operated under the thumb of Canadian Famous Players, which limited its possibilities.

In its prime, the Grand Opera House had presented an average of three performances a week; from autumn of 1906 to spring 1907, the theatre boasted of over sixty-five productions. In all of autumn 1928, the Grand offered only two attractions. Even before sound came to motion pictures, large so-called “legitimate theatres” everywhere were “capitulating” to movies. Then came the Great Depression. By 1933–34, the City directory was listing the theatre as “closed.”

In May 1937, in what was termed “a real estate deal of major importance,” the local owners sold the property to the Hanson Theatre Corporation of Toronto, which operated a small chain of movie theatres across the country. Hanson announced plans to modernize the building, but soon turned the property over to Famous Players Corporation, which had other priorities. FPC had the seats removed from the theatre in 1940. Demolition began in December 1941. The site was later occupied for almost four decades by the new Paramount Theatre, opened in December 1948 (closed in 1986) – and is now home to The Venue.

Robert Ganton Clarke <https://www.peterboroughmoviehistory.com/>



The former site of the Grand Opera House, June 1944, looking west from Water Street to George St. N. The Turner Building is on the left, with shops and apartments across George. Library and Archives Canada/MISA 4435.



The building that had long occupied that space: the Grand Opera House under Trans-Canada ownership, c.1919–23. Peterborough Museum and Archives, 2000-012(3826-1).