



UPCOMING EVENTS

Peterborough Historical Society Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, 21 May

Bryan Palmer

"1919 and the Labour Revolt:
How Workers
Fought for a Different Canada
100 Years Ago."

Lion's Community Centre
7:30 p.m.

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.

Victorian Afternoon Tea
Monday, 20 May

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

Call Hutchison House
for details

Issue 457

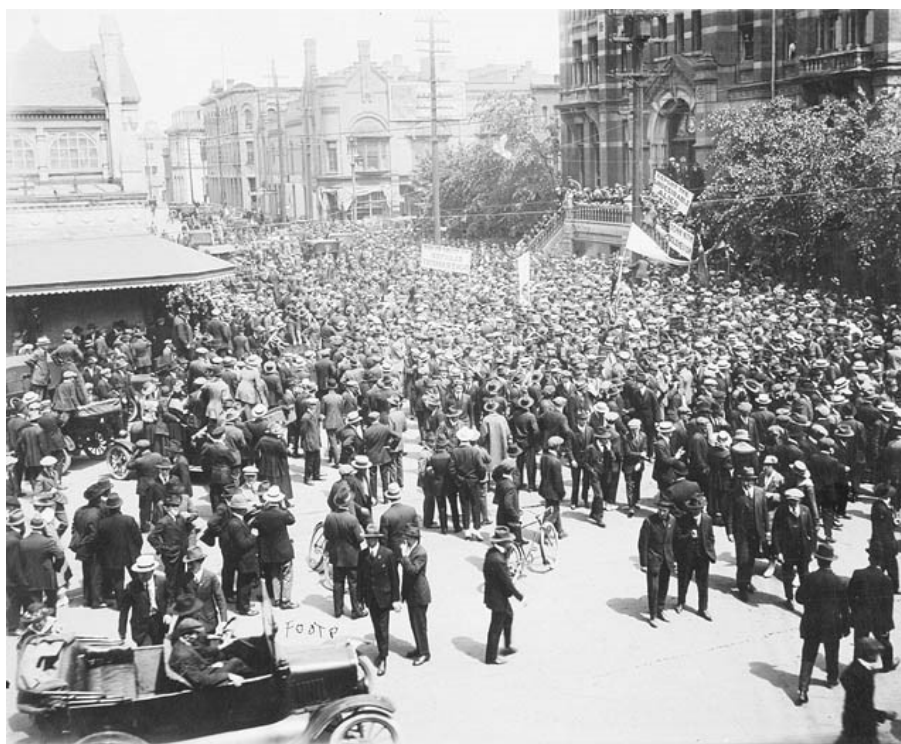
May 2019

PETERBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY MONTHLY MEETINGS. The monthly meetings and lectures are on the **third Tuesday** of the month: **September, October, November, January, February, March and May** at 7:30 p.m., **Lion's Community Centre, 347 Burnham Street.**

"1919 and the Labour Revolt: How Workers Fought for a Different Canada 100 Years Ago"

**Tuesday, 21 May 2019,
Lion's Community Centre,
347 Burnham Street,
7:30 p.m.**

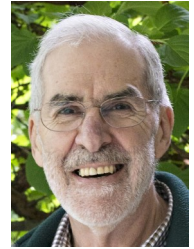
One hundred years ago, massive unemployment, economic dislocation and social unrest greeted soldiers returning from the First World War. Labour revolt and strikes were widespread across Canada, the most notable being the Winnipeg General Strike of May-June 1919. Peterborough, then a manufacturing town, also witnessed strikes in this year. **Professor Bryan Palmer** will take us back to the aspirations of workers in 1919 when Canada was very different from today. Professor Palmer is a labour historian who has taught at McGill, Queen's, Simon Fraser, and Trent where he was a Senior Canada Research Chair. He has authored, co-authored, or edited more than 20 books, a number of which have won awards. All welcome.



Street scene
during the
Winnipeg strike
of 1919

From the President ...

Dale Standen



The Annual General Meeting and dinner held at Princess Gardens on 16 April was well-attended and a most enjoyable evening. Members enjoyed the distinguished company of the Society's Honorary President, Professor T.H.B. Symons. As always, the staff of Princess Gardens were a pleasure to work with, arranged things to perfection, and produced a wonderful meal. Thanks to Wayne Godward for booking the Fireside room, which attendees exclaimed to be much better suited to the event. Our guest speaker, Professor Dimitry Anastakis of Trent University, gave us valuable insight into the historical significance of General Motors' decision to close its assembly plant in Oshawa. A report of the highlights of his talk is included in this *Bulletin*.

For me, the AGM marked the end of my first year as President of the Society and the beginning of my second. In my written annual report for the AGM, I noted some of the ongoing achievements of the Society in 2018 in producing its monthly lecture series, its monthly *Bulletin*, its heritage and high school history awards, its publication of the annual Occasional Paper, and of course the exceptional events and programming produced by the staff and volunteers of Hutchison House Museum. All those who contributed to these achievements deserve our recognition and thanks.

I look forward in my second year as President to another year of the Society's community programming in support of the promotion of local heritage. At the same time, as I noted in my AGM report, the PHS Board will be facing a serious challenge to find the resources to sustain its operations, especially those of Hutchison House. The maintenance of a heritage property is costly, both in maintaining its physical plant and grounds, and in meeting the statutory requirements of museum standards. Despite the generosity of the City of Peterborough in its financial support of Hutchison House, revenues have been falling short of expenses as the museum works to provide the access and programming expected of it. Museums always struggle to make ends meet. All museums depend upon many volunteers to meet their obligations, and this is especially the case for a small, historic house museum. They also depend upon an extensive membership that supports museum projects and programs through donations and participation.

This year, with the aim of placing the PHS on a sustainable basis, the Board will be undertaking a review of all its operations. It will consult you, the members, and will seek outside assessments and advice. Last year, the Society celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of Hutchison House Museum. Living history museums everywhere, facing the same challenges, are now reassessing their visions and missions with a view to reinventing themselves to adapt to the changing expectations of their communities. With the rich community asset that is Hutchison House, and with our devoted volunteers and supportive membership, we are confident that together we will find a way to a sustainable future over the next 40 years.

In the meantime, staff and volunteers are confronting the challenge with promising new fundraising projects. The PHS has contracted with the City to participate in charity Bingo, and plans are underway for a major fundraising event in 2020. Stay tuned! And thank you for your continuing support.



PHS Board Members 2019

From left to right: Jodi Aoki, Bob Taylor-Vaisey, Paul Lumsden, Dale Standen, Linda Chandler, Wayne Godward, Deborah Keay, Don Willcock
Dion Gemmiti is absent

PHS AGM April 2019



Dimitry Anastakis



Betty and Bob Hinton



Deborah Keay, Elaine Goselin



T.H.B. Symons, Bernice Standen

HUTCHISON HOUSE AT GILMOUR STREET SALE

On Saturday, 25 May 2019, Hutchison House will have a presence at the annual Gilmour Street Sale. Dale and Bernice Standen have graciously offered the use of their lawn and driveway for the House's use on that day. We hope you will come out to the Sale, support Hutchison House, and get some good deals.

If anyone wishes to donate good quality items for Hutchison House to sell, please call the House (705-743-9710) to make arrangements or drop the items off at the House between May 10th and May 21st during open hours.

Hutchison House Report

Gale Fewings



Can there be any doubt that spring has finally arrived? Flowers are popping up throughout the gardens, buds are just beginning to burst on the trees, tiny rhubarb leaves are shooting through the earth, and Betty Hinton is out in the yard wearing her trusty and familiar well-worn garden work shirt. For the past week, members of the Garden Committee, and even some non-members, have been working diligently to clean up the grounds and get them ready for the season. We appreciated having the help of some students from the Lakefield College School again this spring; students also helped to put the gardens to bed in the fall.

To my mind, there really is nothing to compare to the beauty of the Hutchison House gardens in the springtime. After the dreary days of November, the snowy ones in winter and the dullness of the grounds after the snow has melted away in early spring, it is so wonderful to watch as the blooms take shape, bringing splashes of colour that grow and spread day by day.

When Doctor Hutchison and his family took up residence in their new home on Brock Street in February 1837, little did they suspect that in just a few months the United Kingdom would lose its reigning monarch. Queen Victoria, born 24 May 1819, subsequently came to the throne on 20 June 1837 at the tender age of 18. During her reign, her subjects often adopted the activities of her court and many of these activities became popular customs. One that stands out today is the custom of afternoon tea.

Anna, Duchess of Bedford, who was one of Queen Victoria's ladies in waiting, is credited with having created teatime. Since the noon meal had become skimpier, the Duchess suffered from a 'sinking feeling' at about 4 p.m. At first, she had her servants sneak a pot of tea and some bread to her dressing room. This eventually evolved into inviting friends for afternoon tea. The Victorian sponge cake, also known as the Victorian sandwich, was named after Queen Victoria who enjoyed this simple cake at the afternoon teas that she helped to make fashionable.

Our upcoming temporary exhibit will focus on Victoria's early years, the Victorian Era, and the literary and popular culture of the time, as 2019 marks the 200th anniversary of the Queen's birth. In conjunction with the exhibit, volunteers Linda Chandler, Loretta Terry, and Juli Hiller are planning a Victorian Afternoon Tea complete with fancy sandwiches and treats served on tiered plates and fine china, as a fundraiser for the House.

Tickets are limited to 24 guests at a cost of \$25 each. The afternoon tea will take place in the Keeping Room at 2 p.m. on Monday, 20 May 2019. To make a reservation for this elegant affair, please call the museum at 705-743-9710 or email us at info@hutchisonhouse.ca. For this special event, tickets must be purchased in advance.



Betty Hinton

Students from Lakefield College



April 2019 PHS AGM presentation: “The End of an Era? A Century of GM in Oshawa”

The Annual General Meeting of the Peterborough Historical Society featured an enjoyable meal at Princess Gardens followed by an entertaining and informative talk by renowned expert in Canada's auto industry, Professor Dimitry Anastakis of the History Faculty at Trent University. His talk, “The End of an Era? A Century of GM in Oshawa,” explored the early history, success and eventual demise of the General Motors operation in Oshawa.

Beginning with the family's early carriage business and the decision in 1907 by Sam McLaughlin to convert to automobile manufacturing, Professor Anastakis noted the importance of Canada's tariff policy to protect such industries from foreign competition. McLaughlin, however, recognized his technical and financial limitations and struck a deal with Bill Durant, the American tycoon who founded General Motors, to produce Buicks and Chevrolets. In 1918, McLaughlin sold his company outright to General Motors and it became a wholly owned GM branch plant in Oshawa, while Sam continued to run the business.

Under his control, GM Oshawa prospered, although the Depression of the “Dirty Thirties” undercut business and led to a massive strike by workers in 1937. Still, during the interwar period, GM Oshawa employed 4,000 people, making it one of the largest employers in the country. With the outbreak of war in 1939, the plant converted to production of trucks and other vehicles for the Canadian Armed Forces. The return to commercial production after the war ushered in a “Golden Era for the Company”. As Professor Anastakis observed, “the booming auto sector, with its relative labour peace and collective bargaining helped spread a middleclass prosperity that in turn fuelled suburban growth and further economic success.” The 1965 Canada-US Auto Pact, which gave greater access for GM Oshawa to North American-wide markets, propelled the company to greater success.

By the end of the 20th century, the Oshawa complex was producing some 800,000 vehicles a year at three assembly plants and employing more than 20,000 workers. Yet, within the success, lay the seeds of its demise. The signing of NAFTA in 1993 opened markets and production possibilities in Mexico. With lower labour costs, government regulations and cheaper power, jobs and investment drifted south making the Oshawa operation less financially rewarding, leading to its closure. The future remains uncertain for Oshawa and it is unknown how it will respond to this challenge, but during its heyday, the plant in Oshawa and its high quality products helped to usher in modern day Canada.

Don Willcock thanked the speaker for a stimulating presentation.

Dennis Carter-Edwards



Dimitry Anastakis, Dale Standen



**PETERBOROUGH
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

Phone: 705-740-2600
info@peterboroughhistoricalsociety.ca

**Hutchison House
Museum**

270 Brock Street
Peterborough Ontario
K9H 2P9

Phone 705-743-9710
info@hutchisonhouse.ca

Websites:
hutchisonhouse.ca

peterboroughhistoricalsociety.ca

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Voices from Peterborough's Past Letterheads Illustrate Peterborough's Telephone History

For our recent presentation on the usefulness of studying letterhead and business stationery, Ken Brown and I wanted to share some of the business and social stories that these documents can reveal. That its letterhead can reveal details about a company is perhaps a given but what may be less obvious is that these letterheads can often reveal details about *other* businesses as well.

For example, the story of the telephone in Peterborough is wonderfully illustrated through the stationery of local businesses.

In 1879, the first two hand telephones in Peterborough were leased from Bell (via its local agent at the time, Dominion Telegraph Company), by Dr. H.C. Burritt; he used them for communicating between his office and home. By 1883, Peterborough had 60 subscribers. Service continued to expand over the following years and by 1890, lists of subscribers along with their telephone numbers began to appear. On their letterhead, businesses would simply note their telephone number, or state that they had a telephone connection.

On 1 January 1891, the Ontario Telephone Company was established. Companies could then be customers of "Bell" or "Ontario", or both. This led to inevitable confusion as the two systems were not interchangeable and customers wishing to reach a business by phone needed to not only use the correct number but also use the correct exchange. Letterheads of this era needed to be more explicit about which phone they had – "Bell", "Ontario", or "Both". When they could, businesses tried to obtain the same number for both systems to cut down on confusion.

This challenge was simplified when the Ontario Telephone Company ceased operation only a few years later. Meanwhile, Bell continued to grow and implement newer technologies. By 1905, customers no longer needed to crank their phones to reach the operator.

But by late 1905, a new competitor arose. The Canadian Machine Telephone Company opened its first exchange in Peterborough offering a new automated telephone system, which required no operators.

Despite the stiff competition, Bell continued to grow and eventually 'won the war'. The Canadian Machine Telephone Company ceased operations in 1925 and their Peterborough plant was purchased by Bell.

Jon Oldham

