



# Newcastle Village and District Historical Society

**Newsletter Issue # 102  
Summer 2010**

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## President's Message

Every once in a while it does one good to reflect a bit. Our organization is small but quite active in our service to the community. Recently, we held "Historical Movie Nights" in both Newcastle and Newtonville that were a tremendous success. We are starting a project for CHIN in which we identify and show what it would have been like to be a child in this community in days gone by.

We will have an exhibit for the Doors Open event June 6th and walking tours for the Newcastle event - Canada Past and Present on June 26th. Yet, these are just the external activities.

The Ontario College of Physicians is very interested in our research of the medical services provided in the mid-19th century. As we continue to transcribe these notes from donated journals, we are amazed by the surgical procedures that were undertaken in this area. I look forward to that presentation later in the year.

Our thanks to Greg St. Amade for building the new shelves that are now a part of our main display area in the Historical Room.

I find that the Historical Room has become a beehive of activity with volunteers helping to transcribe our collection for our records. Thank you one and all for supporting our historical exploration of Newcastle and District.

Allan Kirby  
President  
NV&DHS

## Coming Events

### Student Art Show - June 5 - 27th

Artwork from the students of St. Stephen's Secondary School will be on display in the Historical Society Room AND Gift-of-Art (20 Robert St. W.) until June 27th when it will be judged. The winner will receive the "Ken Stephenson Art Award" and prize monies.

### Doors Open - Sunday, June 6, Clarington

NV&DHS will participate in this event. Residents and visitors are invited to discover Ontario's hidden heritage treasures first-hand, some of which have never been open to the public. For individual site visit times or information on other Doors Open schedules, visit "doorsopenontario.on.ca".

### Canada - Past & Present - Saturday, June 26th

This all day event draws on the rich history & the current times of our community with activities planned throughout the town. NV&DHS will be open and will host walking tours from 10:30 - 3:00. Different routes will be available and will include north residential; business community; & south residential. Details of events will be available at businesses in town.

### Friends of Wesleyville Fundraising Events

In support of their fundraising efforts, Friends of Wesleyville (see Page 4 for information) are hosting two events at the Church in June:

*Antiques Appraisal Day - Saturday, June 12; 10:00 - 3:00 pm at Welcome United Church, Wesleyville*

*Annual Picnic - Sunday, June 13; Noon - 3:00 at the church*

Directions to Wesleyville Church: Hwy 401 to Newtonville Road; south to the end; turn east (left) on Lakeshore to church

### NV&DHS Summer History Camp - July 17 - 21st

See Page 6 for details of this year's camp, focused on the people of Newcastle.

### President's Pot Luck Barbecue - Sept. 12th

Mark your calendars; Sunday, Sept. 12th at 2:00 pm  
57 Wilmot Street, Newcastle (Allan Kirby's house).

NV&DHS is open in Newcastle's Community Hall  
Tuesday & Saturday mornings from 9:30 - 12:00.  
Contact NV&DHS at [info@bellnet.ca](mailto:info@bellnet.ca) or visit the website:  
[www.nvdhs.info](http://www.nvdhs.info)

# British Home Children

It's straight out of a Lucie Maude Montgomery novel - the story of 100,000 orphaned and underprivileged British children who were sent to Canada from 1869 to 1948.

Just as Marilla and Matthew sent away for an orphaned male child (inadvertently getting Anne of Green Gables instead) to help with the farm labour, families in Canada became hosts to orphaned children. It is estimated that 12% of Canada's population is made up of British home children and their descendents.<sup>1</sup>

Canadian Parliament designated 2010 as Year of the British Home Child in an effort to have the stories of these children, aged 6 months to 18 years, told and taught in our schools.

Newcastle was host to many. As reported in the West Durham News of April 7, 1882,

*"Miss Rye, the English lady who has spent so much time and means in bringing indigent orphan children to Canada, is in town. She is the guest of our Reeve, J.J. Robson, Esq., who has, from the commencement of her work, taken an active interest in it and has placed some one hundred and fifty of these girls in comfortable homes in this neighbourhood; and, as a proof of that, as a rule, they have given satisfaction. Mr. Robson tells us that he has a number of applications for children from a party who are expected to arrive at Niagara before the end of the month."*

Unlike young Anne, many of the Home Children were unfortunately not matched with families to live happily ever after. Stories of abuse, neglect, and cruelty are not uncommon. But there are also stories of children being taken in as one of the family. This is one such story.

We'd like to thank Rowlie Coombes', who first shared the story of his father, Christopher Leslie (Les), with NV&DHS in a presentation in 2002. This edited version of Les' story gives us a little picture of the experiences some of these children had in emigrating to Canada.

**Les** and his three brothers lost their mother in 1919 to influenza. She was a widow, living in Wales and struggling to raise her sons alone, having lost her husband previously. Although various family offered to take in one son, in order to keep them together, it was decided that Les and his three brothers (Eric, Cyril and Reggie) would move to a home of approximately two hundred boys and girls. They were schooled and worked at various tasks within the home. In 1922, Les was chosen with six other boys (though not his brothers) to emigrate to Canada. The boys had to meet certain restrictions; be in perfect health, for one. They went before a court of judges to determine if they were going of their own free will.

Although excited about the adventure, Les was reluctant to leave his three brothers behind. He was assured they would follow him some day and so, on June 30th, 1922, he and ninety-nine boys and twenty-two girls set sail for Canada. According to Les, the food on the voyage "was a real treat for all concerned" (after the plain food of the home).

After six days at sea, they landed in Quebec City. "What a sight that was! We had seen icebergs, but landing on Canadian soil was the biggest thrill", said Les. A group were put on a train that travelled overnight to Belleville for a temporary stay at the Marchmont Home run by Mr. and Mrs. Merry. On July 14th, Les was put on a noon train for his trip to Bowmanville where he was met by Mr. Wes Werry and his daughter, Thelma. They took him to what was to be his home for the next six years.

Les was treated as one of the family by the Werrys; working and playing alongside the children of the family. Days began at 6:00 am and ended at 7:30 or 8:00 pm. Saturday nights were spent in Bowmanville (many shops stayed open until midnight or when everybody went home). Work followed the seasons; spraying apple trees, hoeing corn and turnips, mustard to pick, threshing, taking milk to the station. During apple harvest, Les carried the baskets from the pickers to the table for grading and also took the packed barrels to the train station. Winter tasks include pruning and woodcutting; harvesting ice (in 200 lb. blocks); cleaning the stables and feeding, grooming and milking.

It wasn't all work, according to Les. Life included skating parties and hockey games on the rinks; parties at each other's homes and putting on plays to make money for the Church.

In 1923, a neighbour of the Werrys, Mr. Charles Carruthers, asked Les if he had a brother in Wales who would could come to Canada to work for him. Leslie wrote to the Home and the outcome was that Eric could come if Mr. Carruthers would send him to school until he was fourteen. This was agreed to and, on May 6, 1924, Eric was discharged for emigration to Canada, along with five other boys from the Home. *And then there were two.*

Cyril had not been well since moving to the Home and so was concerned that he would not be able to follow his brothers to Canada in the regular way. He feared his health problems would prevent him passing the health exam; and then there was also the running away issue. Although not a serious problem to the Home since he always ran back to his grandparents', it was decided to send him to an agricultural school for wayward boys. On December 4, 1924, he was discharged (along with one other boy) from the Home to Farm Training Colony, Turner's Court, Wallingford.

*Cont'd. on Page 3*

In 1925, Cyril was sent to Boissivan, Manitoba, before coming to work on the farm of Mr. Fred Honey in 1928; one and a half miles away from his two brothers. *And then there were three.*

Reggie was the only one left in the Home. In 1928, Mr. Werry told Les that he could not afford to pay him what he was worth anymore. The original contract had Mr. Werry paying Les \$70 per year. The intervening years had seen his pay raise to \$180 per year. Mr. Werry suggested that he should look for another farm position where he could get more money. Leslie found a job with Mr. Leslie Collacott on a farm not far from the Werrys. At this time, Mr. Werry wrote to the Home to see if Reggie could come to Canada to work for him. From this request, Reggie was discharged from the Home to Dr. Barnardos' Homes, in London, in preparation for emigration to Canada. Three months later, he was working on the Werry farm; with all three boys working within a three mile radius of each other. *And then they were together.*



Rowlie Coombes, presenting his story to NV&DHS in 2001.

If you have a story about a home child to share in a future newsletter, we'd love to hear from you. Please e-mail [judithclapperton@sympatico.ca](mailto:judithclapperton@sympatico.ca).

If you would like to know more about British Home Children, visit the following websites:

- [www.britishhomechildren.org](http://www.britishhomechildren.org)
- [www.pier21.ca](http://www.pier21.ca)
- [www.collectionscanada.gc.ca](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca)

The following is recommended reading on the subject:  
Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924, Joy Parr, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980.

<sup>1</sup> from BRANTches, Volume 30, Issue 1, February 2010

## NV&DHS Room is Humming

During the past year, NV&DHS has noticed a marked increase in traffic to the room, with both visitors and individuals working on history-related tasks. It is often the place to be in Newcastle on Tuesday and Saturday mornings.

The work taking place includes research for a book; work on a database to capture all donated materials on file; transcribing donated ledgers, journals and documents; and converting a collection (the Carveth films, donated to the society) of 16mm film into a digital format.

The photo below is Ron Locke showing some of the videos to Pauline Storcks, a lifelong resident of our little town. With more than 20 films from the 1920's through the 1950's in our collection, there are a lot of images of local residents that need to be identified. Ron and Myno Van Dyke, have been doing a great job of putting the collection together on DVD for presentations at our special "Movie Nights".

Both recent Movie Nights, in Newcastle and Newtonville were very well attended, reflecting the interest in these old films.



## Friends of Wesleyville

Until recently, Wesleyville was a village, home to generations of successful farmers. Since Ontario Power Generation purchased the property (all except the Church; circa 1860), the village ceased to be the active rural community it had always been. The Church was deconsecrated in 1969 and has been empty ever since.

Almost ten years ago, Hope Township's Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) commissioned a study and determined that the village was a cultural landscape and should be preserved for posterity.

Fast forward eight years when a group of enthusiasts - history buffs and preservationists, nature lovers, walkers, historians with archaeological interests and those interested in the community came together. Their goal of is to preserve the remnants of the Village and return the Church building to the Community. Once restored and preserved, this group envisions the property as a living cultural landscape, used for appropriate uses.

With possible links to prehistoric aboriginals, the village had European connections and is well situated to commemorate the lives of our forebears and to educate people of today regarding their way of life and the values exemplified within the village.

The group of enthusiasts formed a Board of Directors and created a non-profit organization for the purposes of raising funds through membership and fundraising activities and events to achieve their goal.

If you would like to support this group in their endeavours by becoming a "Wesleyville Village Member", please contact Roz Farber at (905) 885-1575. Annual membership fee is \$5 per person. Donations are also welcomed and tax receipts will be issued.

Contact [friendsofwesleyvillevillage@bell.net](mailto:friendsofwesleyvillevillage@bell.net) for more information or to get a copy of their newsletter.

Fundraising events planned in the near future are listed on Page 1 of this newsletter under "Coming Events".

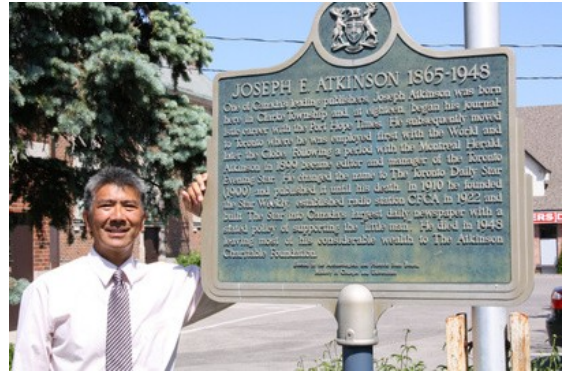


Wesleyville  
United  
Church

## Street name isn't just any old Joe

**"Newcastle aims to honour Star publisher who grew up there"...***from the Toronto Star, May, 2010*

Councillors Willie Woo and Gord Robinson, along with Board Members of NV&DHS, think that Joseph Atkinson should receive more recognition in Newcastle than the plaque that sits in front of the Community Hall.



Clarington Councillor Willie Woo, who grew up beside Joseph Atkinson's family home in Newcastle

*"That's where the road comes in."* Woo, Robinson and NV&DHS (through a letter to Council) are putting their efforts behind the naming of a street after him. *"Atkinson grew up in Newcastle on King Ave. E. with his seven siblings and widowed mother. He always said his upbringing here contributed to his desire to help the disadvantaged,"* says Myno Van Dyke, of NV&DHS.

*"Clarington Councillor Willie Woo thinks a new subdivision in the west end is the ideal opportunity to name a street after Atkinson, who was the Toronto Star's publisher from 1899 until his death in 1948.*

*But there's a small snag. Durham Region's street-naming policy prohibits similar names to avoid confusion during emergencies, and an "Atkinson Court" already exists in Ajax.. Clarington is asking for an exemption, paving the way for 'Joseph Atkinson Street.'"*

Naming a street after him seems a fitting recognition for the many accomplishments of Joseph Atkinson. *"During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Atkinson sent money to Newcastle to buy gifts for children of the unemployed. The Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund and Santa Claus Fund he started more than a century ago continue to give kids in need a boost.*

*Atkinson used his "paper for the people" to crusade for social reform, including workers' rights, mother's allowance and equality for minorities. The Star is still guided by his principles — on a road well-traveled."*

## Curator's Corner

Colonel ASA DANFORTH was a Patriot/Rebel American Revolutionary War veteran; leading citizen of Onondaga County New York; and a "highway" engineer. In 1797 he was contracted by the government of Upper Canada to survey and open a road, at least one mile north of the lakeshore, through the bush from the outskirts of York (now Toronto) east to the mouth of the Trent River, near Trenton. He completed the work in a year and the route was named The Dundas Road after a prominent British colonial official. But Colonial politics were never-ending and Danforth's work was whispered to be shoddy and, as a result, he was unable to collect all of his \$90.00 per mile fee. Nonetheless, after he had returned, disgruntled, to his home in New York State, he would eventually be immortalized by citizens east of the Don River who named one of their principal streets The Danforth (sources: Ont Historical Society & 1790 NY census).

It would be another thirty years before the Dundas/Danforth/Kingston/York Road was adequate enough to allow a stage coach to regularly bump over it and by 1810, the road, through most of Durham County, was impossible for a man on horseback to use; let alone with a wagon or sleigh. Today we grumble if sanders and snow-ploughs haven't cleared every side street and highway we wish to travel; and we certainly do not entertain the thought a bridge might collapse under us because the person who owns the property beside it has not fixed it. Even into the 20th century, some of the road maintenance in Clarke Twp was done by statute labour which was either provided by or paid for by those whose property abutted the road. I remember as a child "helping" my father trench the 4th Concession along the front of our farm to allow spring melt water to reach the ditches rather than sit in the road and create a sea of mud. I also recall riding with him on the tractor as he dragged a stone-boat along the 4th Concession between the Clarke/Darlington town line and the Golf Course Road. This was done in late April or early May, after the frost was out of the ground and the road had dried, to remove the deep ruts created during the thaw. Others, no doubt at the urging of wives who wanted their laundry to be still clean when they brought it in from the clothes line, paid to have a layer of oil and salt sprayed on the road fronting their property in the early summary - not an environmentally friendly practice perhaps but it did keep the dust down! However, in 1811, and for years to come, there were only two roads through Clarke Twp and, while one was impassable, the other was in a sorry state.

March 8, 1811 Read, the Petition of sundry inhabitants of the District of Newcastle, which is as follows:

To the Honorable the Members of the House of Assembly .....Humbly Sheweth, that Dundas Street, through the township of Clarke, is entirely obstructed by fallen timber, and otherwise, so that travelers and the inhabitants of the said Townships of Dralington, Clarke and Hope cannot pass and repass through the said Township of Clarke on Dundas Street at any season of the year. That Your Petitioners further state that it is necessary to have the said road opened for travelers. The sleighing continues much longer upon the said road than upon the front, and that for upwards of eight miles there is no settlers to open the same. Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray that this Honorable House will grant such sum of money for opening the same as they in their wisdom may think proper. Your Petitioners also further state that Mr. JOHN HARTWELL of the said Township of Clarke will obligate himself to keep the said timber out of the road until there is sufficient inhabitants to repair the same ....(Signed) PELETIAH SOPER, ZACHARIAH CHESNEY, WM. ORR, EBENEZER HARTWELL, WILLIAM BORLAND, ALEX'R FLETCHER, and nineteen other petitioners. (source: The Journals of the Legislative Assembly of UC for 1805/06/07/08/10/118th report of the Bureau of Archives for the province of Ontario, 1911 pg 469)

Feb 26 1812 "The petition of the inhabitants of the County of Durham was then read as follows: To their honors the Members of the Commons House of Parliament of Upper Canada, in session assembled. We, the inhabitants of the Western part of the Township of Hope and the townships of Clark and Darlington, beg leave to state to Your Honrs that the front through the above townships stands much in need of repairs, to which the Statute labour is quite inadequate; and as the travelling goes principally on the front road the public are subject to great inconveniences, we pray your Honors to take the above into consideration .... (Signed) 17th January, 1812. BENJ, MARSH, JACOB HASKELL(sic), LEONARD SOPER, and forty-four others." source: The Journals of the Legislative Assembly of UC for 1812/14/16/18 Ninth report of the Bureau of Archives for the province of Ontario, 191 pgs 55-56.

The "front road" was not Regional Highway #2/King Avenue - which is, a little less than more, the Dundas Street referred to in the 1811 petition. The front road was an improvement made by 1807 if not earlier, to a section of an ancient First Nations trail which ran

## NV&DHS to Host 2nd Annual History Summer Camp for Kids

This year's summer camp is July 17th to July 21st. The history camp is open to youth aged seven to thirteen.

Hours are 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, with extended care to be arranged.

The focus for camp this year is on the **'People of Newcastle'**; their houses; their businesses; their families. Activities include making a family album with scrapbooking of their own homes and families for future campers.

Campers will also work on Time Capsules for future campers to know who was at camp in 2010. And each camper will learn to make a small quilt to bring home.

Call Bev Jeeves 905-987-5180 or e-mail her at [GBJeeves@rogers.com](mailto:GBJeeves@rogers.com) for more information or to register. We have a limit of ten spots this year for the camp and they will go quickly.

Cost for the camp is \$125.00 per student; \$110.00 each for two or more students in a family.



Beach 'Discovery' Walk at  
2009 History Camp

### Curator's Corner - Cont'd. from Page 5

from Montreal to the head of the rapids above Niagara Falls at Chippewa. Through Clarke and Hope Twps some of the Canadian National Railway and much of the Lakreshore Road between Port Hope & Bond Head now occupy the old front road. By-the-by, the petitions of the inhabitants fell on deaf ears until War was declared by the US later in 1812. The military needed a direct (and cleared) inland route between Kingston and York for the movement of troops, prisoners and supplies and soon discovered the 30 or so miles of Danforth's road through Durham County was not really "open". Sources: Ont His Soc & Marsh Tavern Ledger, courtesy of S W Haskill of Hope Twp.

## Membership

### Newsletter rules for members

#### Single Membership (one vote):

Hard Copy delivered by mail or by hand ... Annual fees for calendar year \$15.

Digital Copy delivered by e-mail (pdf) ... Annual fees for calendar year \$10

#### Family Membership (two votes):

Hard Copy delivered by mail or by hand ... Annual fees for calendar year \$20.

Digital Copy delivered by e-mail (pdf) ... Annual fees for calendar year \$15

#### Corporate membership (one vote):

Up to 3 Hard Copies delivered by mail or by hand plus Digital Copy delivered by e-mail (pdf)

... Annual fees for calendar year \$25.

Membership Chairman Ron Locke [ronald.locke@gmail.com](mailto:ronald.locke@gmail.com)

NV&DHS gratefully acknowledges the ongoing sponsorship of **Tim Horton's of Newcastle**, who supply the room with complementary coffee for visitors every Saturday morning.