

BHS Quarterly

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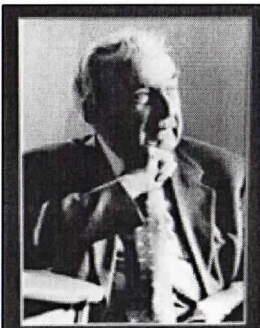
Winter, 2001



John Wyatt, president of the Brant Historical Society, looks at one of the 20 members of the Wall of Honour

Photo by Brian Thompson, courtesy of The Expositor

The Brant Historical Society's Wall of Honour



**David Glenn Kilmer
(1914 -)**

A retired high school principal and co-founder of Westfield Heritage Village, Glenn Kilmer initiated and provided funding for the Brant Historical Society's Wall of Honour.

By Ruth Lefler

In 1992, Glenn Kilmer had a vision to honour persons in Brantford and Brant County who had made outstanding contributions.

The following criteria were established.

The persons chosen had to be:

- Giants in their own right;
- Outstanding in one field in any two of the following areas — local, provincial, federal or international;
- Residents at one time of Brantford or Brant County or Six Nations.

At this time, Glenn was chairman of the Museum Committee of the Brant Historical Society. He and his committee proceeded to choose persons to match the criteria. A list was formalized, biographies were written and edited. Before the project was completed, Glenn left the Society's board of directors but

still wished to finish the Wall.

He contacted Ralph Cook, a member of the Museum Committee, to do the job. Ralph began the project but unfortunately died.

Last year the project was once again revived when Glenn contacted me. I took the plan to the board and, with its blessing, proceeded.

Continued on Page 2

Inside This Issue

Historical Society's Wall of Honour	2
President's Reflections	3
The Birchall Benwell Murder	4
Do You Remember?	5
Book Sale	6
Memberships	7
Happenings	8
Curator's Corner	8


Celebrating 93 years of preserving local history

The Brant Historical Society’s Wall of Honour

Continued from Page 1


Glenn sent me the list of names, offered to edit the information and provided funding for the project. Clare Churchward kindly volunteered to type the biographies.

On May 20, the Wall of Honour was unveiled at “Brant County Days” at Westfield Heritage Village. It then came home to the Brant County Museum and Archives where it was mounted on the stairway wall. On Oct. 17, 2001, the Wall of Honour was officially opened. Adding persons to the wall will become an annual event. Thank you, Glenn, for your vision and initiative to begin the Brant Historical Society’s Wall of Honour.




Arthur Sturgis Hardy
(1837-1901)

Arthur Sturgis Hardy was elected to the Ontario Legislature under the Liberal ticket representing South Brant. From 1896 to 1899 he served as a premier of Ontario. Hardy introduced a bill creating Algonquin and Rondeau Parks.



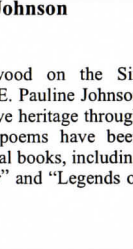
Sara Jeanette Duncan
(1861-1922)

This novelist and journalist, who was born in Brantford, wrote several novels. Her only Canadian book was “The Imperialist” in which she disguised the city of Brantford as “Elgin.”




Thomas Charles Longboat
(1886-1949)

Born on the Six Nations Reserve, Tom Longboat, known as Bronze Mercury, was a legendary long-distance runner recognized around the world. In 1907 he won the Boston Marathon and in 1908, participated in the Olympics.




Emily Pauline Johnson
(1861-1913)

Born at Chiefswood on the Six Nations Reserve, E. Pauline Johnson honoured her native heritage through her poetry. Her poems have been preserved in several books, including “Flint and Feather” and “Legends of Vancouver.”




James G. Cockshutt
(1853-1885)

In 1877 James G. Cockshutt founded the Brantford Plow Works and later invented the JGC riding plow that was designed for breaking the prairie soil, which played a key role in opening the Canadian West. In 1882 the company name was changed to Cockshutt Plow Company.



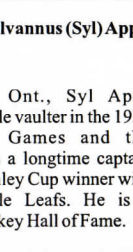
Adelaide Hunter Hoodless
(1858-1910)

In 1897, Adelaide Hunter Hoodless founded the Women’s Institute, which became a worldwide organization. She also introduced domestic science programs into school curricula, assisted in founding the YWCA, the Victorian Order of Nurses and the National Council of Women




Joseph Brant -- Thayendanegea
(1742-1807)

Captain Joseph Brant and his fellow Iroquois were granted a six miles of land on either side of the Grand River through the Haldimand Proclamation, because they had remained loyal to the British during the Revolution. He established Mohawk Village near a crossing place in the river that became known as Brant’s Ford.




Charles Joseph Sylvannus (Syl) Apps
(1915-1998)

Born in Paris, Ont., Syl Apps participated as a pole vaulter in the 1936 British Empire Games and the Olympics. He was a longtime captain and three-time Stanley Cup winner with the Toronto Maple Leafs. He is a member of the Hockey Hall of Fame.




William Charles Good
(1876-1967)

Charles Good was born in Brant County at the family farm, Myrtleville. In 1914, he was one of the founders of the United Farmers of Ontario and was the first president of the United Farmers Co-operative Company.




William Ross Macdonald
(1891-1976)

From 1935 to 1953, Ross Macdonald represented Brantford as a Liberal in the House of Commons. He served in the Senate from 1953 to 1967. From 1968 to 1974 he was lieutenant-governor of Ontario. In 1976, the Ontario School for the Blind was renamed the W. Ross Macdonald School.



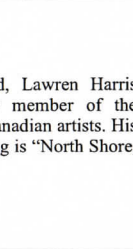
Alexander Graham Bell
(1847-1922)

A teacher of the deaf, Alexander Graham Bell worked in Boston, Mass., but spent summers in Brantford at his parents’ home. It was here in 1874 that he discovered the fundamental concept of the telephone.



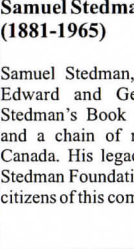
Hiram “King” Capron
(1796-1872)

Hiram Capron founded the Town of Paris in 1829. He earned the nickname “King” because of his leadership in the founding and development of Paris.




Lawren Harris
(1885-1970)

Born in Brantford, Lawren Harris became a charter member of the Group of Seven Canadian artists. His best known painting is “North Shore, Lake Superior.”



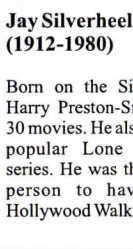
Samuel Stedman
(1881-1965)

Samuel Stedman, with his brothers Edward and George, established Stedman’s Book Store in Brantford and a chain of retail stores across Canada. His legacy, The Samuel W. Stedman Foundation, still benefits the citizens of this community.




Jay Silverheels -- Tonto
(1912-1980)

Born on the Six Nations Reserve, Harry Preston-Smith starred in over 30 movies. He also played Tonto in the popular Lone Ranger television series. He was the first First Nations person to have a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.



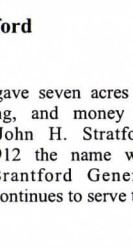
John H. Stratford
(1840-1888)

John Stratford gave seven acres of land, a building, and money to maintain the John H. Stratford Hospital. In 1912 the name was changed to Brantford General Hospital which continues to serve the community.



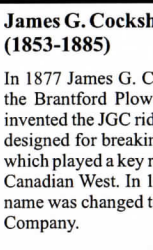
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Harry C. Nixon
(1891-1961)

Born on the family farm east of the village of St. George, Harry Nixon was elected to the Ontario legislature in 1919 on the United Farmers ticket. He later joined the Liberals and became the 13th premier of Ontario in 1943.




Joseph Brant -- Thayendanegea
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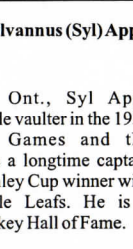
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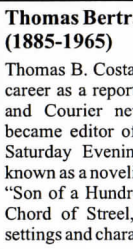
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Thomas Bertram Costain
(1885-1965)

Thomas B. Costain began his writing career as a reporter for the Expositor and Courier newspapers. He later became editor of Maclean’s and the Saturday Evening Post. He is best known as a novelist. Two of his books, “Son of a Hundred Kings” and “The Chord of Stree,” feature Brantford settings and characters.



Dr. James Hillier
(1915-)

Dr. James Hillier was co-inventor of the first resolving-electron microscope in North America.. He was inducted into the U.S. National Inventors’ Hall of Fame and the Order of Canada. With fellow Brant County citizens, he established the James Hillier Scholarship Fund for Brant County Science Students.

President’s Reflections

The informal discussions with the museum and galleries group continue. A grant proposal is being written to fund the hiring of a consultant to review our operations and resources and make recommendations on how we might enhance our situation by co-ordinating activities and sharing resources while maintaining individual autonomy.

You will recall that this initiative was started with the demise of BRAC and the need to present a united front when approaching city council for alternative funding.

I anticipate this initiative will need to be in place next fall for the city’s 2003 budget deliberations. Elsewhere in the newsletter you will see that on Dec. 8, the museum is having a fund-raiser at the former Boys and Girls Club on Darling Street.

This was formerly a Wilkes house and Adam Stelmaszynski, who is renovating it into lofts, approached the museum with an idea to have a house

tour there. Parts of the house will be decorated for Christmas and the museum will decorate a room in a Victorian Christmas style.

This is a fund-raiser for us and I encourage everyone to attend and bring along a friend. I would like to thank Adam Stelmaszynski and Robin Holden for their help with this. Marilyn McDonald is retiring from museum staff effective Dec. 12. Marilyn has been a dedicated employee of the museum and I thank her for all her work for the museum and historical society and wish her all the best in her retirement. As this is the last newsletter of the year, I want to wish each of you the best during the upcoming holiday season and remember you can always find a special present at our gift shop.

John Wyatt

The Museum in the Square (A Satellite of the B.C.M. & A.)

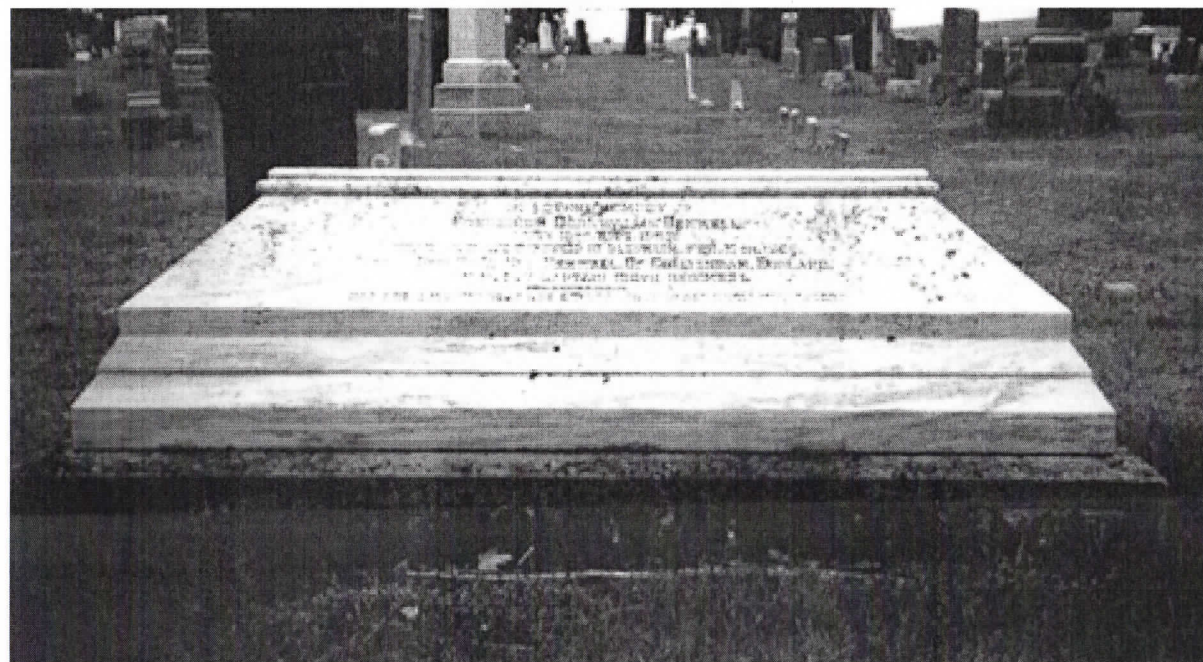
Main Level, Market Square Mall
1 Market Street, Brantford, Ontario
(519) 752-8578
Admission by Voluntary Donation
Hours: Monday to Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed Saturdays

Brant Museum & Archives

57 Charlotte Street, Brantford, Ontario
(519) 752-2483
Admission: Adults \$2.00
Seniors/Students \$1.50
Children \$1.25 Under 6 Free
BHS Members Free
Hours: Wednesday to Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Saturday 1 to 4 p.m.
Web site:
<http://www.bfree.on.ca/comdir/musgal/bcma>

Brant Historical Society Board of Directors

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Vice President Rev. Calvin Diegel
Secretary Margaret Glass
Treasurer Julie Gillis
Past President Robert Glass
Directors
John Bonfield, Angela Files, Dr. Hank Hedges, Ruth Lefler, David Partridge,
Robert Deboer, Gloria Neamtu, Peter Oakes, Anne Westaway



Frederick C. Benwell is buried in the Princeton Cemetery. You will notice that the leaden letters have disappeared from his monument. Souvenir seekers picked them out and carried them away.

The Birchall-Benwell Murder

By Hank Hedges

The Brant Historical Society's recent visit to the Princeton Museum to view the film about this famous local event prompted me to record the main details of the case and to refer to my own interest in it.

During my boyhood in the hamlet of Gobles, two miles west of Princeton, my brother and I often helped my grandfather cut wood in what is known as Benwell Swamp, a mile or so to the northwest, along the Second Concession Road. One day he showed us the very spot, he claimed, where Benwell's body had been found. The reference, of course, was to the event on Feb. 21, 1890, when two brothers, George and Joseph Eldridge of Gobles, while cutting firewood in the swamp, stumbled across the frozen body of a young man. For residents of the area, that was how the story began.

My grandfather's act of showing us the original location of the body and his recall of the subsequent events stirred in me an interest in the case that has lasted throughout my life.

Taken to Princeton, the body was buried at its present grave site in the cemetery on Highway 2, west of the village. The shock to the citizens of this peaceful pioneer community led to the appointment of John Murray as investigator. Murray was Ontario's chief detective and, in effect, the first Ontario Provincial Police officer. Well known for his ability in solving mysterious crimes, Murray applied his skill to the case, using such innovations as having the victim's likeness published in the province's newspapers.

The first clue was the discovery, near the body, of a cigar case bearing the name F. C. Benwell. As a result of publishing the victim's likeness and name, the investigation soon led to the arrest of a young Englishman, Reginald Birchall.

As the story unfolded, it became evident that the beginnings of the case occurred some years earlier. At the time there was an industry known as Farm Pupils, whereby young men, usually from well-to-do English families, were assigned to farm families in southern Ontario in order to gain a practical education in agriculture and eventually to acquire their own farms, with funds from home. One of these youths, Birchall, a bright, handsome and likable individual and the son of a proctor in the Anglican Church, had an unhappy experience with his farm assignment, and left. However, he had gained enough insight in the Farm Pupils program to serve his later interest.

Birchall then moved into Woodstock, where he and his attractive wife adopted the names of Lord and Lady Somerset, and were readily accepted by the upper social set of the town. Early in 1889 they returned to England, leaving behind a host of creditors.

While working in London, a friend told him of a "long shot" horse that was to run in the next year's Epsom Derby. With a big bet, if the horse won, Birchall would be rich. However, not having enough money to place a bet, he turned his fertile mind to the Farm Pupils movement.

Continued on Page 5

The Birchall-Benwell Murder

Continued from Page 4

According to the evidence, Birchall recruited two young men under the program and accompanied them to New York, then to Buffalo and Niagara Falls. His plan was to intercept the funds forwarded from time to time by the boys' families.

To put his plan into action, on Feb. 17, 1890, Birchall left by train with one of the boys, Frederick Benwell, the son of a British colonel, on the pretext of showing him his farm placement. Getting off the train at Eastwood, they walked northeasterly about four miles to the swamp. Whatever happened at this point is not clearly known, but the prosecution at the subsequent trial contended that the two bullet holes in Benwell's skull indicated that Birchall had shot his companion, left the body at the spot, and walked to Eastwood in time to catch the train back to Niagara.

After his arrest, Birchall was housed in the Woodstock jail awaiting his trial to commence on Sept. 22, in the town hall.

Following Birchall's not-guilty plea, a remarkable trial ensued. The defendant's popularity in Woodstock, his family connection, his handsome appearance and charming manner, his connection to the Farm Pupils industry, the involvement of Detective Murray, and the curiosity and shock of the peaceful farming community in Blenheim Township, all contributed to the presence of numerous reporters from home and abroad, and crowds of the curious too great to be accommodated in the courthouse. Telephone lines were set up to nearby hotel rooms. The events were relayed overseas on the newly-created Atlantic cable.

The prosecution rested its case on a sequence of circumstantial evidence; Birchall was not permitted to testify in his own behalf. His appointed defence lawyer was unable to counter most of the evidence. The finding of guilty was regarded by many as a foregone conclusion.

While abiding in the cell awaiting his execution, which took place on Nov. 14, the 24-year-old Birchall wrote his autobiography to raise funds to support his wife. His fertile mind composed a long poem which became a popular song of the time. He never confessed to the murder.

"Come all you tender Christians, wherever you may be,
I pray you pay attention to these few words from me,
On the fourteenth of November, I am condemned to die
For the murder of F.C. Benwell upon a scaffold high."

Birchall's grave is in the Woodstock jail yard.

Two footnotes:

The long shot horse on which an intended bet was to be placed and which led to the eventual tragedy, actually won the race!

Whenever I accompany friends or a bus tour to the long-since-abandoned section of the concession road through Benwell Swamp, I point out the warning sign — "Dead end!"

Do you remember?



Do you remember when the previous Brantford City Hall, located on the "old" Market Square, was dressed in its Christmas finery?

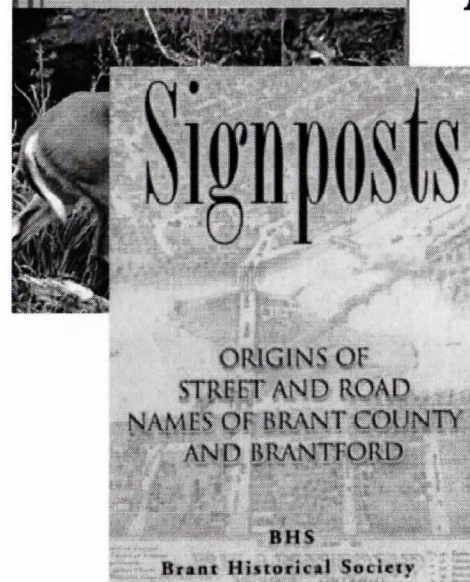
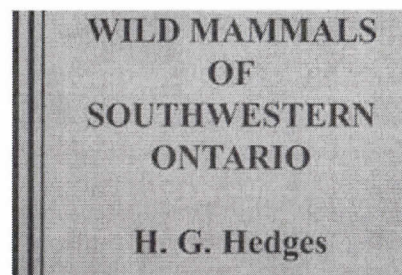
Photo courtesy of the Robbins Family

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Phone: (519) 752-2483
E-Mail: bcma@bfree.on.ca

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*Save Now on Selected Books
For Christmas Gift Giving!*

*Choose from over 20 titles
Brant Historical Society Publications*

Buy 1 Book Save 10%

Buy 2 Books Save 20%

Buy 3 Books Save 30%

On sale now until December 22/01

*Offer applies to total purchase amount

Brant Museum & Archives
57 Charlotte St.
752-2483

The Museum in the Square
Market Square Mall
752-8578



Corporate sponsors

Brant Flour Mills Ltd.
EXTEND Communications Inc.
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ITML INC.
S. C. Johnson and Son, Limited
Raymond Industrial Equipment Limited

Welcome to our new members

Virginia McKendry and Family
Michael and Georgene Schoenborn
John Quinn

Renewing members

Gladys M. Allen
E. Pauline Bradley
Peter M. Brophey
William H. Cockshutt
Douglas and Marilyn Cross
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Dr. N. R. Mesaglio and Dr. E. C. Swan
Rev. Canon Clifford V. Tomkins
Dr. Leo and Mrs. Sandra Vos
Ruth Walker
Patricia G. Whetstone
John and Heather Wyatt

Endowment Fund

In Memory of Mary Jane Mintern
Members of the Brant Historical Society
Mary Stedman

In Memory of Steven Kowalyk
Cy and Marg Walter
Terry and Linda Smith

A Brant Historical Society Membership Offers ...

- free admission to the Brant County Museum & Archives, Bell Homestead and Myrtleville House Museum (excluding special events)
- exemption from personal research fees in our archives
- bulletins about upcoming museum activities
- subscription to the "B.H.S. Quarterly"
- discounts on Heritage Bus Tours, Children's Museum Club and other programs
- 10% discount on Gift Shop purchases over \$10



*Merry
Christmas*

from the

**Brant
Historical
Society**

MEMBERSHIPS

Happenings

Brant County Museum & Archives

Exhibits

"Eastern Treasures from the Harrison M. Scheak Collection"
Nov. 30, 2001 - March 4, 2002
Exhibit Opening Saturday Dec. 1, 2001, 2-4 p.m.

Volunteers

"Christmas at Historic Wilkes House"
Volunteers needed!

Fund-Raiser

"Christmas at Historic Wilkes House"
Saturday Dec. 8, 2001, 12-5 p.m.
\$5 adults; \$2 seniors; kids under 12 free with an adult
Refreshments & door prizes

Curator's Corner

Upcoming Temporary Exhibit: "Eastern Treasures from the Harrison M. Scheak Collection"

Year-round, our Museum in the Square location is home to a permanent display of the Harrison M. Scheak collection. Additionally, we feature special temporary exhibits highlighting parts of this collection once annually. We are very excited to present the upcoming showing of "Eastern Treasures from the Harrison M. Scheak Collection," running from Nov. 30, 2001, to March 4, 2002. The grand opening of the exhibit will be held on Saturday, Dec. 1, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. — everyone is welcome to attend.

Featuring an assortment of Eastern carpets, textiles, ceramics, weaponry, copper vessels, jade and ivory artifacts, and religious objects, this spectacular exhibit is certainly one of a kind. Of particular interest are a rare gessoed wood carving of "Guanyin" (Chinese, 15th– 16th century), and a massive bronze bust of Buddha (Thai, 18th century).

Shanna Dunlop
Assistant Curator



Brant Historical Society

Brantford Film Group

Cineplex Odeon, 7 p.m.

Mark your calendars

Dec. 13	"Innocence" (Australia)
Jan. 10	"Kandahar" (Iran)

General Meeting

Brant Museum & Archives, 8 p.m.

Dec. 19	"Christmas 1901" Ken Strachan
Jan. 16	"Brantford Heritage Inventory Project" John Quinn & Stephen Robinson

Zehrs Tapes

Don't forget to bring in your tapes!

Gift Shop

Discount on all BHS Publications at the Gift Shop for the month of December

Kids Club

"Christmas at the Museum"
Saturday Dec. 15, 2001, 1 -4 p.m.
Games, Crafts & Cookies
Pre-register now!

Happy Retirement Marilyn!
Enjoy your well-earned break! Come back and visit!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Brant Historical Society
gratefully acknowledges support from:
The County of Brant
The City of Brantford
The Ontario Ministry of
Citizenship, Culture and Recreation