

# Historically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Cobourg  
and  
District Historical Society

April 2012 — Issue 251

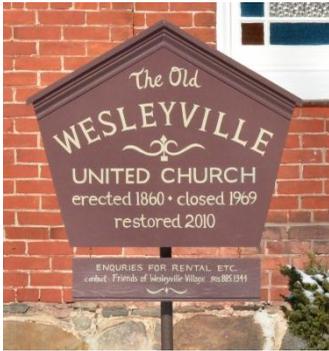
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## ***Annual General Meeting***

The CDHS will hold our Annual General Meeting in Victoria Hall on Tuesday, April 24. The business meeting will include election of officers and voting on proposed changes to our constitution. Afterwards we will have a Canadiana Show and Tell. In this Bicentennial Year of the War of 1812, let's celebrate things Canadian. Please share with the members of the Historical Society any item and/or memory of Canadian significance.

Doors open at 7:30 and the meeting begins at 8:00. All are welcome so bring a friend!

## Our last meeting



Kathryn McHolm and Sue Stickley treated CDHS members to a tag-team presentation on the restoration of the Wesleyville United Church. Although it lacks required accessibility options, the restoration of the church is otherwise largely completed. Restored to much of



its former appearance, it has been used as a venue for concerts and art exhibitions. A number of planned events are listed in the Notes and Notices section of this newsletter. The Wesleyville group hopes to also restore the school and a unique Y-shaped house adjacent to the church. There are also a number of historical sites nearby including the remains of a lime kiln, railroad facilities and other items of interest. During the discussion following the presentation the current usage of OPG's Wesleyville Generating Station to combat terrorism and train firefighters was discussed to the intense interest of many attendees.



*Rapt attention during the meeting's question period*

## Archives Update

The CDHS Archives was officially transferred to the County of Northumberland on March 30 with a ceremony that included the new Archivist Emily Cartlidge, Mayor



Brocanier, Diane Cane, Councillor Henderson and Cath Oberholtzer together with many other CDHS members.



*Mayor Brocanier and Cath Oberholtzer*

*Emily Cartlidge,  
Archivist*

It is planned that the Northumberland County Archives will be open from 1:00-4:30pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays or by appointment. For any questions please contact the Archivist, Emily Cartlidge, at (905) 372-3329 ext 2242 or email to [cartlidgee@northumberlandcounty.ca](mailto:cartlidgee@northumberlandcounty.ca).

# History Repeats: 1882 and 2012

*Ken Strauss*

On December 6, 1882 the planet Venus passed between the earth and the sun. From the earth, Venus appears as a small black dot that moves slowly across the face of the sun. The precise timing of this event, called a “Transit of Venus”, allows astronomers to calculate the distance between the earth and the sun. The alignment that produces a transit is rare due to the exact shapes of the orbits of Venus and Earth. Transits occur in pairs that are about eight years apart but separated by over a century. The first transit after the advent of photography and accurate time measurement was in 1874; previous transits had been in 1631, 1639, 1761 and 1769. Most of the locations best situated to observe the 1874 event were far from major centers of technology – Aleutian Islands, Kerguelen’s Island, Auckland, Woahoo, Marquesas Islands, central Africa, etc. Great effort was expended in preparing for this important opportunity to refine the measure of the Solar System. The British even shipped 93 tons of equipment and supplies to Hawaii to facilitate their observations there. Despite these efforts, observational results were not as accurate as hoped due to weather, remoteness of observing sites, equipment problems and restless natives.

Unlike the disappointing 1874 transit, the 1882 transit was visible from most of North America. With eager anticipation no expense was spared to ensure successful observations. Not wishing to be completely overshadowed by American astronomers, the Dominion government allocated \$5,000 for the purpose of aiding observations throughout Canada. The money was used to purchase new equipment for McGill University, New Brunswick University and observatories in Toronto, Victoria University in Cobourg, Baptist College in Woodstock and The Ladies’ College in Whitby. In addition, existing equipment was planned to be used in Kingston, Belleville, Ottawa, Quebec City, Halifax and Charlottetown. On the day of the transit the weather was poor and no site secured complete observations. The following article from the Cobourg newspaper is a typical account of the problems encountered:

**The Transit of Venus -- Wednesday was a day of excitement among astronomers all over the country. Preparations had been made for observations at various points in Ontario, Cobourg among the number; and at the appointed time on Wednesday morning Prof. Bain and his assistants at Victoria University, had everything in readiness. The early morning was clear enough but towards nine o'clock the clouds began to gather and by the time for the beginning of the show, an impenetrable bank of clouds covered the whole of the southern and south-eastern sky, completely shutting out the sun. This, to their very great regret—we had almost said disgust—entirely prevented their making any observations whatever of the beginning of the transit. However, towards eleven o'clock, the clouds cleared away and during nearly all the rest of the time till the planet had crossed, they were able to trace its course. They also were able to make the final**

**observation of the internal contact at the passage of the planet from the sun's face and this will be valuable in making the calculations as the counterpart to observations which may have been made at places at which the sky was clear at beginning. In this eminently scientific town, nearly everybody managed to see the transit, —some through amateur telescopes, some with opera-glasses with darkened glass, and many by means of ordinary smoked glass, which afforded a ready and most excellent arrangement for witnessing the phenomenon while a large number were favored, through the politeness of the Professors, with a sight of the wonderful and beautiful phenomenon through the College telescope. We are glad to learn that in several parts of the world, opportunities for witnessing both the beginning and the end of the transit were furnished, and have no doubt the facts as observed will be utilized for the benefit of astronomical science.**

*From the Cobourg Sentinel for 08 Dec 1882*

### **Transit on June 12, 2012**

Unlike the case in 1882, Cobourg will not be an ideal observing location for the transit this summer. First contact, the time at which Venus begins its movement across the sun, will not be until 18:03:56. At this time the sun will be about 27° above the horizon. Second contact, the time at which Venus is completely between the earth and the sun, will be at 18:21:26. When the sun sets at about 20:49:32 the transit will be less than half over.

## **Observing the 2012 transit**

It is crucial that safe observing practices be used when watching any solar event. Sunglasses or smoked glass is **not** sufficient protection. Improper use of a telescope, camera or binoculars can permanently blind one in a fraction of a second! If the weather is favourable a CDHS member, Ken Strauss, will be observing the event using safe techniques. For further information you can contact Ken at [ken.strauss@sympatico.ca](mailto:ken.strauss@sympatico.ca).

### *References*

Notes of a Voyage to Kerguelen Island to Observe the Transit of Venus, Rev. S.J. Perry, Henry S. King and Co., 1876

Transits of Venus, Richard A. Proctor, Longmans, Green and Co., 1882

Transactions of Royal Society of Canada, v1 (1883), pp 87-99, Charles Carpmael.

## **Submissions**

The CDHS Newsletter welcomes submissions – short articles, announcements, book reviews, letters to the editor, etc. – that will be of interest to our members. Articles should generally be limited to 300 words although exceptions can be made. Submissions should be sent to the editor at 24 Pebble Beach Drive, Cobourg, ON, K9A 2C5 or by email to [ken.strauss@sympatico.ca](mailto:ken.strauss@sympatico.ca)

# **My GGG Grandpa and Son Were Rebels**

*James Sandham*

My great-great-great grandfather, Rev. George Barclay, was a Scottish Baptist minister and teacher who immigrated to Canada in 1816 with his wife, Janet Tullis and six children. Although he purchased a farm in Pickering Township soon after his arrival, most of the rest of his working life was spent as a travelling minister to Baptist congregations in the areas of Markham, Whitby, and Uxbridge. From 1819, since he no longer had time to farm, the farm was run full time by his wife and eldest son, George Jr.

At the time, Upper Canada was governed by the Family Compact, an unelected group of the governor's friends and their hangers-on, mainly from Britain, who were an independent, irresponsible body exercising great and arbitrary power. Of the many settlers in the Pickering area who were critical of the Family Compact, Rev. George Barclay was particularly outspoken and strongly influenced his neighbour, Peter Matthews, as well as two of his elder sons.

The overall leader of the Rebel/Reform cause was William Lyon Mackenzie, the fiery editor of the Colonial Advocate and leader of the Reform Party in the provincial legislature. He eventually became embittered by the manipulations and intimidation of the government, and became an advocate of open rebellion. In the following year, he succeeded in instigating a rebellion in which a group of armed insurgents marched on Toronto, meeting initially at Montgomery's Tavern, on Yonge Street just north of Eglinton Avenue. Among the insurgents was a party of 50 from Pickering. The Pickering contingent included one of George Barclay's sons, George Jr., and was led by Peter Matthews who was a close friend and neighbour of the Barclays.

To begin the battle, Mackenzie ordered Matthews' party to set up a diversionary attack on a bridge over the Don River. In doing so, they set the bridge and several houses in the area on fire and killed one man before being driven off by loyalist forces. Most of the rebels were eventually captured and imprisoned, including George Barclay Jr.. Mackenzie managed to flee to the United States, reputedly on a horse owned by George Barclay Jr.

Of those arrested, Peter Matthews and Samuel Lount were the only ones hanged in public. Both were acknowledged to be men of exemplary character in their own communities, and the evidence against them was scanty. Peter Matthews, a former Captain with a good record in the War of 1812, was a successful farmer with a family of eight children. Samuel Lount was a respected member of a sect of strictly pacifist Quakers located in the present town of Holland Landing, as well as a blacksmith, and farmer.

Despite appeals for clemency signed by eight thousand people, the executions took place in April of 1838 in Toronto's courthouse yard; the government wished to set them up as examples to deter other would-be rebels. George Barclay Jr. was sentenced to serve a prison



term of six years, but eventually, like Mackenzie and the rest, was granted a pardon by Queen Victoria. While in prison, George Jr. carved three beautiful wooden boxes using only his pocket knife. Many other prisoners carved similar boxes.

One of George's boxes is currently in the possession of the Collections and Conservation Centre of the City of Toronto. The inscription on the box is as follows:

"IN MEMORY OF LOUNT AND MATTHEWS  
Executed at Toronto U.C. April 13th 1838

Their minds were tranquil and serene  
No terror in their looks were seen  
Their steps upon the scaffold strong  
A moment's pause – their lives are gone.

May vengeance draw his sword in wrath  
And justice smile to see it done  
And smite the traitors for the death  
Of Matthews, Lount and Anderson.

Let Canada mourn for Liberty weep  
By the ravage of tyranny torn  
And may the true sense of freedom in peace never sleep  
Till their banners in triumph are borne.

For ever truth to Freedom's call  
For ever see she bids us sally  
We in her ranks would rather fall  
Than round a despot rally.

May the king oftener strike the blow  
And lay those haughty tyrants low,  
Than forge the chains that bind the Free  
And hang the sons of Liberty."

The horror of the government's reaction to the rebellion, plus another in Lower Canada (now Quebec), led to a report by Lord Durham recommending the establishment of responsible government for the colonies which was one of the main demands of the rebels.

At the time of the rebellion, Rev. George Barclay had been the first postmaster of Brougham, but he was removed in the general purge of postal officials of questionable loyalty. Peter Matthews' wife stated after his hanging that it was George Sr. who had persuaded her husband to join the rebels.

George Sr. spent his later years quietly at his home on his farm in Pickering and was buried in the cemetery of the church at Claremont (Pickering). In 1848, his son, George Jr., following his release from jail, sold his farm and moved to a new farm in Lobo Twp, near London, ON.

### *References*

- 1) Robert M. Fuller, *Barclays of Pickering*, Self-published, Approximately 1980.
- 2) *The 1837 Rebellions: Rebel Leaders*.  
[www.edunetconnect.com/cat/rebellions/1837f08.html](http://www.edunetconnect.com/cat/rebellions/1837f08.html)  
(William Lyon Mackenzie, Peter Matthews, Samuel Lount, and others)
- 3) Ronald J. Stagg. University of Toronto. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*. 2000.  
[www.biographi.ca/EN/009004-119.01-e.php?id\\_nbr=3765](http://www.biographi.ca/EN/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=3765)  
(George Barclay)
- 4) W.R. Wilson, 2007. *Historical Narratives of Early Canada*.  
[www.uppercanadahistory.ca/pp/pp4.html](http://www.uppercanadahistory.ca/pp/pp4.html) (The Family Compact)

# Membership Matters

## ***Membership renewals***

The time for annual membership renewal is here. To coincide with our fiscal year, the membership year ends March 31. The winner of the surprise draw for early renewal will be announced at our April meeting.

## ***CDHS Officers***

Officers will be elected at the CDHS Annual General Meeting in April. If you would like to take a more active part in the operation of our Historical Society, then running for office provides a perfect opportunity to make a difference. If you would like more information on the duties or to put your name forward please contact any member of the current CDHS Executive. Their contact information is on the last page of this newsletter.

# Notes and Notices

## ***Alderville Bus Tour on Tuesday, May 29***

Tickets will be available at the April 24 CDHS meeting and after that, directly from Judith Goulin at [jgoulin@hotmail.com](mailto:jgoulin@hotmail.com) or (905) 372-7684. Delivery can be arranged. The ticket price is not firm yet, but we hope to keep the cost around \$30-\$35. Don't miss out on this tour with Band Councilor Dave Mowat encompassing historical sites, interesting facts, Black Oak Savannah, picnic lunch and rides at the Roseneath Carousel, shopping at an art gallery.

## ***A Spirit Walk***

*A Spirit Walk* commemorates Pickering's role in the 1837 Rebellion. It will be presented at the Pickering Museum Village on the evenings of September 14, 15, 21 and 22. Tickets are \$16.50. The CDHS Programme Committee is prepared to arrange tickets and car-pooling. Further details will be provided at our April meeting.

## ***Wesleyville Events Calendar***

A number of events are planned for the recently restored Wesleyville United Church including:

- Country Festival, Collections Sale and picnic. Saturday, May 26 from 9am to 4pm
- Jazzy BBQ. Friday, July 27 from 5:30pm to 8:30pm
- Harvest Festival and Heritage Craft Sale. Sunday, September 30 from 12 noon to 4pm
- Yuletide Carolling. Friday, December 7 from 7pm to 8:30pm

## ***The Breakaway***

There will be a presentation of local history by Dan Buchanan and The Brighton Arts Council on Saturday, April 21 at 7pm in the Hilton Township Hall. This event will commemorate the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the great natural disaster that changed the Hilton area forever, Hear the personal stories of the people involved and the challenges the local folks would have faced after the flood. Admission is free.

## **CDHS Executive for 2011 – 2012**

|                     |                  |  |
|---------------------|------------------|--|
| President           | Ken Strauss      | <a href="mailto:ken.strauss@sympatico.ca">ken.strauss@sympatico.ca</a>     |
| Recording Secretary | Jackie Hick      | <a href="mailto:mikeandjackie@sympatico.ca">mikeandjackie@sympatico.ca</a> |
| Archives Chair      | Cath Oberholtzer | <a href="mailto:cober@eagle.ca">cober@eagle.ca</a>                         |
| Membership          | Martha Watson    | <a href="mailto:mwatson5@sympatico.ca">mwatson5@sympatico.ca</a>           |
| Programme           | Judith Goulin    | <a href="mailto:jgoulin@hotmail.com">jgoulin@hotmail.com</a>               |
| Newsletter Editor   | Ken Strauss      | <a href="mailto:ken.strauss@sympatico.ca">ken.strauss@sympatico.ca</a>     |
| Past President      | David Gregory    |  |