

# ELGIN AND AREA HERITAGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer 2020

Box 480, Elgin, Ontario K0G 1E0



## SPECIAL COVID19 EDITION

### A Message from Our President:

Greetings to all members, friends and supporters of EAHS. Unbelievably, we're into our 6th month of Social Distancing and Self Isolation which has changed the lives and routines of all. Like you, we miss the activities and experiences we have shared in the past.

As all are aware, the Heritage Society has postponed or cancelled most of our public activities of 2020. Nonetheless, dedicated members are continuing to work on - developing new projects, researching and preparing for future exhibits and events, and maintaining on a variety of levels our mission focused on the heritage and culture of the Elgin and area community. This special "update newsletter" will acquaint you with all that is happening.

Please take note of the special "Music in the Park" event as outlined below.

In closing, we look longingly forward to once again meeting at the Red Brick School, no doubt sharing our memories of the 2020 Pandemic. I ask you all to Stay Safe, Stay Healthy, and Stay in Touch with EAHS.



Ted Dwyre  
President, 2020

### Music In The Park

**Sunday, August 30, 2020  
2:00 pm. in  
Veteran's Park, Elgin**

- Bring Your Own Chair
- No Rain Date
- Events may be cancelled without notice due to COVID-19

**Join us as a Guest of the  
The Elgin and Area Heritage  
Society**

### Entertainment By



**Becky Murray**



**King of the Swingers**

## ***Take a look at a Couple of our On Going Projects***

### **Breaking News!!! EAHS soon to have a Website**

Your Elgin and Area Heritage Society (EAHS) has embarked on a cyber journey! We will soon have our own Website! We have contracted with Terrautopia Inc., Jukebox Hosting, a local web design and hosting company for the development and maintenance of our Website. We are presently in the development and construction stage and will be “going live” in the very near future. The site will be constantly evolving, with new and exciting content posted on a regular basis. In that regard, we are always open to your suggestions concerning content or undertakings that will be of interest to the public and promote heritage in our area.

Our domain names are:

- [www.redbrickschool.ca](http://www.redbrickschool.ca)
- [www.eahs.ca](http://www.eahs.ca) either of which will take you to the main site.

Our vision for the EAHS is extensive and far-reaching. We plan on telling the story of EAHS and our flagship, the Red Brick School (RBS), posting interesting and pertinent heritage stories and articles, advertising and highlighting our many heritage events and displays, including videos, audio recording and pictures, lots of pictures. One of the key benefits of our site is the ability to archive. That means that should you have been unable to attend an event, or just want to relive the excitement, it is just a click away.

Our Newsletters will be available online, and if we have your email address we will communicate with you on important news, upcoming events, special notices and so much more. You will also have a dedicated email address in order to communicate with us. We will continue to utilize our Facebook page and will link each; however, more complete details will be available on the Website.

Our launch date has not been set; however, when we are ready to go live, we will notify you. Some elements of the site will still be under construction at that time; however, it will all come together. Going from zero to sixty is quite a process, as in our case most of the content has to be prepared for this exciting venture.

Please stay tuned and thank you for your interest and support of the Elgin and Area Heritage Society.

Submitted by  
Clinton Halladay, EAHS Director

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### **News from the Red Brick School Committee:**

We wish you all good health in challenging times these days. Like you we miss the lives and experiences we shared in the past. To help slow the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19), activities at the Red Brick School are cancelled until further notice. We'll continue to take direction from our public health agencies to decide the duration for these closures.

While we wait for that to finish, we have something for you and your children to take your minds off the news.

In previous years, we have invited Grade Three students to come and visit the Red Brick School for a living history experience. We also sponsored a Spelling Bee. Sadly, this year these events had to be cancelled.

However, we do have something to keep you in touch with us.

The Elgin & Area Heritage Society has created a new online product called “The Red Brick School Journal - 2020 Quarantine”. This is an e-blast to help parents with young children manage their days while staying at home. It's filled with fun and productive activities, plus some fabulous reading material.

We invite you to check our Facebook page (Elgin And Area Heritage Society) and our soon to be established website, for worksheets to intrigue you, entertain you, and most certainly inform you. Watch for a variety of worksheets which include a range of age-appropriate stimuli, including fun questions, fill in the blanks, colouring, connect the dots, multiple choice, essay writing exercises, and more.

Submitted by  
Jane Campbell, EAHS Director

## Heritage Hamlets: California, Jones Falls, Morton, The Bush

Since 2014 the EAHS has been presenting yearly summer exhibits focused on the heritage of South Crosby. Because of the rich tapestry upon which we can draw, our dilemma as to theme selection is a constant one.

The planning for 'Heritage Hamlets: California, Jones Falls, Morton and The Bush' commenced in 2019, continuing into the spring of 2020 when we quickly realized 'the best laid plans of mice and men ...' with the arrival of the corona virus.

With all 2020 activities cancelled, we now look forward to 2021 and the opportunity to showcase these historic communities. Last year's exhibit, 'Creating a Community' highlighted the continuing commitment of individual local families to the land and their society, within some of the above hamlets. This time the spotlight will be on the stories of buildings, events and people, with the remaining South Crosby communities highlighted in the following year.

A contribution to the 2020 display was to have been the unveiling of a new permanent exhibit on Private Martin James Flynn, of Morton. Here he had resided with his wife and 2 young sons until he enlisted in 1915, trained in Elgin, and departed for England in the midst of WW I. In 1918, at the start of a three month stretch at the end of the war, ('Canada's Hundred Days'), he was killed. Several years later, his wife too died; Private Flynn's sister safeguarded her brother's memorabilia throughout her lifetime. It was her descendants, continuing her constancy, who donated them to the care of the EAHS as a record of his valour. These items will be unveiled at the Red Brick School during the 2021 'Heritage Hamlets' show, and will remain on permanent display.

Please join us in 2021 for a fascinating retrospective on these 'Heritage Hamlets' and the passage of time which unfolds and reveals the tapestry of life

We would appreciate the assistance of the community, such as we have enjoyed in the past, in preparing this new exhibit. We are seeking photos, stories and memorabilia relating to the

identified communities (and to Chaffeys Lock, Clear Lake, Crosby, and Davis Lock, for the 2022 display). Kindly contact Diane Haskins, 272-2662 or [d\\_haskins@rbsinternet.com](mailto:d_haskins@rbsinternet.com)



*Old Block House near Jones Falls*

Submitted by Diane Haskins, EAHS Director

### ELGIN AND AREA HERITAGE SOCIETY EXECUTIVE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## The Spanish Influenza (1918-1920): a Local Perspective

Our lives have forever changed with the advent of COVID-19. While trying to learn about this virus and navigate our way through the media coverage, we were reminded by the media and historians that throughout history, pandemics have existed and that they have had devastating impacts on human populations in the past. While this was in fact known by most of us, it did arouse my curiosity about how my ancestors may have coped with the 1918 Pandemic often referred to as the Spanish flu (1918-20). What impact had this pandemic had on the North Leeds area and how had the residents coped? Had there been school closures, social distancing and the wearing of face coverings? I wondered if in fact my own family had suffered from this pandemic. My great grandmother and a few extended family members had died between the years of 1918-1920 but their death records did not confirm that the cause as the dreaded influenza. The recorded cause of death being pneumonia was a possible indicator but nothing I could confirm. I turned then to my eldest first cousin in the quest for any information. Sheila O'Meara-Tremblay was surprised my father had not shared stories about the family having had this flu. The O'Meara family had moved in March 1918 from Burgess Township to South Crosby to take over a grandfather's family farm on Hartsgravel Road. Sheila recounted her father's story (Lambert O'Meara 1911-64):

*"My father told us this story when we asked why he was not eating the blueberry dessert. In 1918, when he was 7 years old, the so-called Spanish flu invaded the region and their farm home. There were seven children, ranging in age from ten to one. Everyone except his father was infected. My Dad said they were all terribly sick and my grandfather was nurse to my grandmother and the children. I should mention that my grandmother was made of steel and the fact that she was flat on her back indicates how sick they were! Once a day Grandpa had to give them all a dose of terrible tasting medicine. Imagine trying to get small children to swallow that! Apparently, he was at his wits end when he hit upon the idea of trying to mask the taste with blueberry preserves. It didn't help much because the children knew what was in the concoction. However, he was able to persuade them to take it. My father vowed never to eat another blueberry and he did, not ever"*



An ad for Bromo-Quinine tablets, circa 1919. They were advertised for use with colds and influenza. They contained yellow phenolphthalein, a cathartic, which was inaccurately believed to help flush disease out of the body. (Image courtesy of the Museum of Health Care at Kingston)

Trying to obtain information about the impact of the 1918 pandemic locally was not very fruitful. I found an interesting article in the Queen's University Alumni Review that provided a glimpse of how Kingston was impacted and the city mobilized to fight this pandemic.

<https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/alumnireview/stories/spanish-influenza-deadly-pandemic-1918>

Next, I turned to local historian Sue Warren who shared the following:

*"The Spanish flu of 1918 hit Canada in full force during the fall of 1918 although there had been an outbreak earlier in the year. Nearly 90% of the Canadian deaths happened during this period although there were also outbreaks in 1919 and 1920. Documentation about the flu in our area is unfortunately almost non-existent although death records for South Crosby and North Crosby that fall, and winter do indicate deaths from influenza in at least 6 younger adults. The disease unlike COvid19 attacked individuals between the ages of 20 and 40. The Athens newspaper has obituaries, but these do not seem to mention the cause of death often. There were ads in the Athens newspaper (few copies of the Westport paper survive) for Lydia Pinkham's pills to revive one after the flu. My grandmother Alice Warren from north of Westport remembered that all the trains through that area stopped and in the city's movie theatres, sporting events, large gatherings were forbidden. However, people came out in droves despite public health warnings to celebrate the end of World War I in November which helped spread the flu in larger centers. My own family story involves my great aunt Nancy in Edmonton who died from the Spanish flu leaving three small children. The oldest boy was raised by his maternal grandmother while the two toddlers were sent to Prince Edward Island to live with their paternal grandparents.*



Caring for influenza patients at the Great War Veterans' Association Emergency Hospital on Princess Street. Photo: Queen's University Archives

*The youngest was only about 16 months old. Nancy was only about 29 years old."*

While, as Sue Warren indicated, there may not be much documentation about the 1918 Pandemic in our area, her recounting of her own family story makes me think there may be many more oral family stories about the Spanish flu that local residents and readers might be willing to share. If you have a family story about the 1918 Spanish flu and are willing to share it, please contact me at [roantree@kingston.net](mailto:roantree@kingston.net) or any EAHS Board of Directors member. Contact information on page 3.

Submitted by Mary S. Roantree in collaboration with Sheila Tremblay and Sue Warren

## **Seamans's Chevies Circa 1960**

Do you recognize any of the faces in this picture? Please help us identify the members of this team? You may contact any member of the EAHS Executive/Board. (Contact information on page 3)



# The Empire Hotel and the Fahey Family



*(Joe Hamilton, a native of Elgin and a member of the EAHS Board of Directors, has written a comprehensive article entitled "The History of the Hotels of Elgin". Below is an excerpt from that work covering the Fahey era of hotel ownership. Joe's complete work can be accessed on the new EAHS website at [www.redbrickschool.ca](http://www.redbrickschool.ca)*

"A new leaser named Patrick Joseph Fahey arrived on the scene in 1893, although he didn't acquire ownership until 1900. When he first moved into the hotel, it consisted of the main house with a dining room, reading room, several

bedrooms and a large kitchen. Coal-oil lamps were kept polished and ready on a long table at the head of the stairs. With the construction of the Brockville-Westport Railway in the 1880s, there was a steady stream of travelers through the Elgin area. Local farmers often provided transportation from Phillipsville train station to Elgin. In 1905, with business thriving, Fahey added a long rear wing containing eight bedrooms, a bar and private family living quarters. Travelling salesmen could display their wares for local merchants in a special "sample room". There also was a lengthy shed adjacent to the hotel where horses could be tethered and fed. There was a second floor storage area above the horse shed. Fahey owned and operated the Elgin Hotel for close to fifty years. The hotel was sold in 1946 following J. P. Fahey's death."

The pictures provided here have been sent to us from **Joe Fahey**, grandson of J. P. Fahey. Joe, along with his sister Catherine and brother Jack, grew up in Elgin living in the hotel and later with his aunts Eileen and Frances in their home on Kingston St. Recalling family stories, Joe testifies to the significance of the Empire Hotel (as it was known under Fahey ownership) to the business and social life of the community; out of town salesmen used the hotel to sell their wares, trappers displayed their furs, an abundance of travelers found food and lodging, and the local residents dined, gathered for meetings, socialized, played cards and celebrated major family and community events there. It was a true "hub of activity".



J. P. Fahey and his wife, Mary Anne on the occasion of an anniversary celebration.



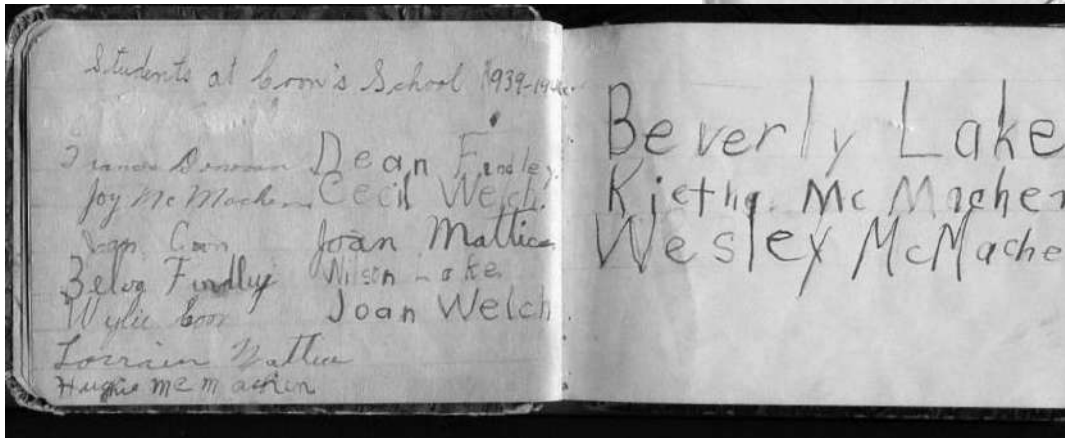
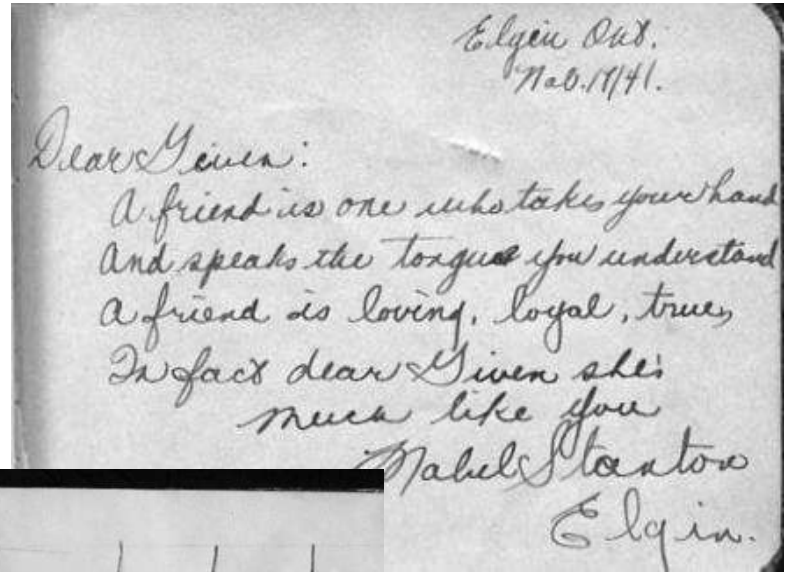
"I can remember my grandmother sitting on the porch in the summertime, making homemade ice cream for we three, her grandchildren." Joe recalls.



P. J. Fahey on the back porch with his dog and his young daughter, Eileen.

# Gwen Coon's Autograph Book

The keeping of autograph books in the 1500s became a fad among students in German-speaking regions of Europe. Scholars preserved their books primarily as evidence of their credentials (names of their instructors), but, also, for sentimental reasons. Most often, students would use the blank pages of their bibles for signatures but over time, books with only blank pages were created with the sole purpose of being used for capturing autographs. The custom has waxed and waned over centuries, surging again in the 1930s and '40s, and then fading out as high school yearbooks took over.



Gwen's autograph book has been gifted to the EAHS, complete with its sentiments from friends; especially treasured are her additions, such as a list of students at Coon's/Hartsgravel Public School 1939-40 (in his/her own script) and her record of students in her classes at the Elgin Continuation School 1940-42. Since ECS offered only grades 9 to 12, Gwen traveled to Athens High School for grade 13, and later graduated from Queens University. Subsequently she married Gordon Murdock, had 2 children and currently lives in Grimsby.

(Submitted by Diane Haskins, EAHS Director)

**Special Plea: Please share your email address, so that we may send you updates on EAHS news and events**

## EAHS Membership/Donation Form 2018

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership: ( \$10 per year per person) is enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation: I would like to make a donation to the EAHS for 2018 in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(A tax receipt will be issued to you for all donations of \$20.00 or more.)

**Make Cheques payable to: Elgin and Area Heritage Society**

Please complete this form, clip it off and send it along with your membership fee and/or donation to:

**Elgin and Area Heritage Society, P.O. Box 480, Elgin , ON K0G 1E0**

## Members and Donors 2018 -2020

As in past years, the Elgin and Area Heritage Society has been most fortunate to have a generous community, both individuals and groups, who have given us a great deal of financial support. The years 2018 and 2020 are no exception. Below is a list of those who have made contributions in the form of a membership purchase, personal or memorial donations, as well as, community and group gifts and grants. We remain very grateful for this support. Thank you.

Alderdice, Mary Lynne	Dubois, Sheilagh	Lambert, Ross & Joanne	Norris, Helen
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- |  |   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Elgin Lions Club</li> <li>▪ Estate of Douglas Halladay</li> <li>▪ Martin Bus Service Ltd</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport</li> <li>▪ Rideau Lakes Township – Municipal Heritage Advisory Council Grant</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

**Please renew your membership or become a new member. Fill out the form on page 7 and send to EAHS with your payment. Donations are always appreciated. Income Tax Receipts are issued for donations of \$20.00 or over. Please remember to include your email.**