November 2026 Volume 22, Issue 09

The Burlington Historical Society
GAZETTE



Remembrance Day 2026





Joining us at our monthly meeting this month - a Remembrance Day Tribute - will be **Fred Norman** from Halton Naval Veterans Association.

Also, with us from the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 60 will be **Barry Moore**. Barry will most likely have information about celebrations for the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion.



We will have a table or two of Remembrance Day related displays.

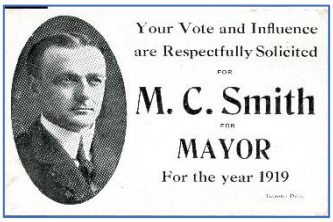
We look forward to sharing our Remembrance Day Tribute with you. Invite your friends to join us for coffee and some interesting sharing.

This month:	*In this issue:*
Monday, November 9th, 2026 **7 pm** Centennial Hall, Central Library **Join us for a Remembrance Day tribute** **Everyone is welcome!** **Admission is free. Lots of free parking.**	President's Corner 2 Broom's HVAC 2 BHS Executive 2 Protecting the Railway 3 Killed in Action 1944 3 Social Media Report 5 Royal Canadian Legion is 100 5 Membership Report 5 Hugh Howie Receives a Medal 5 Girl's Hockey 4 Interview with Stanley Blair 6&7 Outreach Report 7 Membership Form 8

BHS Members will receive the BHS Gazette and other communications and can unsubscribe at any time info@burlingtonhistorical.ca. Information contained on our website, newsletters and publications is printed in good faith and for general purposes Editor: Joan Downey

President's Corner *Nicola Thomson*

Recently, I have been thinking about the growth of Burlington and in particular how far the City has come since it first transitioned from a village into a town in 1915 and we had our first Mayor. The population of Burlington was approximately 2100 people then and previously, as a village, had a Reeve governing the local council. Maxwell Smith had been the Reeve since 1908. It is unclear to me whether Maxwell Smith was acclaimed Mayor in 1915 or whether there was an election but nevertheless he became Burlington's first Mayor.

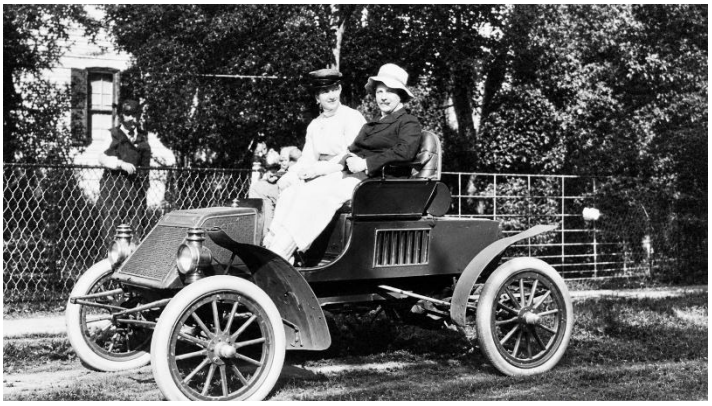


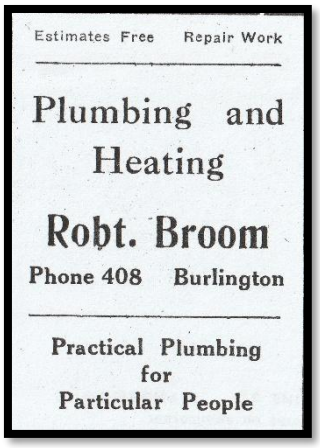
Maxwell Smith was very unlike our current politicians. He had not only been Reeve since 1908 but he had partnered with his father in a fruit growing business. The house that he lived in on Lakeshore Road was known as Apple Villa, with his father being nick-named John Appleseed Smith.

Maxwell was a businessman, expanding his fruit growing business to include chemicals to avoid disease and to preserve the apples.

Indeed there is a story to the house too… later it became the Consulate of The Netherlands with the owner Jan Hersynk being the Deputy Consul. The official coat of arms of The Netherlands is firmly affixed to the front of the house to this day.

Maxwell Smith was the proud owner of the first motorcar in Burlington and is reputed to have been the reason that white lines were painted down the centre of the road. He was known for speeding around town at a top speed of 20mph!





Ad from The Burlington Gazette, 27 August 1930

Broom's is a long-standing Burlington business which has been around since 1920. This ad doesn't give an address but the 1959 Vernon's Directory shows them located at 2012 James Street which was at the corner of Brant. Presently, Broom's Heating & Air Conditioning is located on Fairview Street.

Directors (Elected)		**Officers** (Appointed)		**Convenors** (Appointed)		**Archives Volunteers**
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		Event Planner	Pat Taylor			Pat Taylor
Past President	Don Thorpe	Outreach	All	BHS Representative to Heritage Burlington		Coleen Tew
					Alan Harrington	

Protecting the railway WWII *George Kush*



My grandfather, Fred Cornish of Freeman, a Great War veteran & the longest serving CN employee at Freeman Station, often told me how hectic work became at the station during the war, with troop & supply trains passing through at all hours; men & women bidding farewell to loved ones & welcoming them back.

One of my grandfather's first jobs after Canada declared was on Germany in September 1939 was to teach some of the station operators how to shoot service revolvers. There was a real concern about the possibility of saboteurs blowing up bridges & derailing trains. Even the subway bridge on Plains Road was checked each night by an armed employee.

As the war progressed security slackened but it was always ongoing when it came to train designations; there was always tight security when it came to the movements of troop & ammunition trains. No one was allowed to discuss them.

Two wartime factories were built at Freeman, both on the north side of Plains Road, just east of Brant Street; after the war they stood abandoned well into the 1960's; one produced barbed-wire for the military. Today they're long forgotten.



I still have the Union Jack flag that was flown at Freeman Station for the King's visit in 1939 & displayed in the station waiting room during the war years along with a photo of George VI; also the revolver holster my grandfather wore when on night duty.

They were always on the look out for deserters & caught quite a few. They were locked in the freight shed until the police or military police arrived.

William Wilson – Killed in Action 1944

The Hamilton Spectator, 21 October 1944



PTE. WM. WILSON IS KILLED, DIEPPE HERO AGAIN WOUNDED

Sgt. Arthur Carter, Who Took Part in Famous Raid, Suffers Third Battle Injury

A Burlington soldier, Pte. William Wilson, is reported to have been killed in action in to-day's casualty list. Six city and district men are wounded, one slightly. Sgt. Arthur Carter, this city, who was wounded in the Dieppe assault, is listed as wounded for a third time.

Killed in Action

Mrs. Jenny Wilson, of Burlington, has been informed that her son, Pte. William Wilson, has been killed in action.

In memory of my uncle**, William Wilson**, A Company, Lorne Scots, enrolled April 7, 1938; killed in action in the Canadian Advance to Rimini Line, Palazzo Ceccarini, Italy, September 4, 1944. William immigrated from Northern Ireland only 14 years old, with his brother, my Dad, James Wilson, 16 years old. Both were sold into indentured servitude for two years, eventually coming to Burlington. May God rest his soul. (**Terry Wilson**)

Social Media Report *Jennifer Kemp*

The numbers continue to climb -

Facebook	1822
Instagram	648
X	74

www.facebook.com/burlingtonhistory
www.instagram.com/burlingtonhistorical

Burlington Today Then and Now
https://www.burlingtontoday.com/then-and-now
August 2026 – Mysterious Martimus gravestone
September 2026 – One Room Schoolhouses
October 2026 - How Aylmer and Tip Top Canners shaped fall harvest season in Burlington

An interesting comment arrived in our inbox in response to the latest Then and Now article:

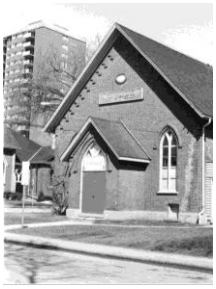
"I just finished reading the excellent article about Canadian Canners. I worked at head office for many years (1957-1969). During that time I had the opportunity to meet with many of the older employees.

On one occasion, I was told a story by a senior executive of the time when the farmers with horse drawn wagons would line up along Lakeshore waiting to unload their produce. Horses do what horses do. Someone from the city contacted the Canners, insisting that they clean up the horses droppings. The Canners, being a responsible company, hired a young lad to do that. I believe he received 5 cents an hour…. Davd Daniels"

Royal Canadian Legion celebrates 100 years

"Since 1926, the Legion has stood with Veterans, honoured the Fallen, and strengthened communities across the country".

That quote is taken from the Royal Canadian Legion website. But, before the legion there was the Great War Veterans' Association, founded in 1917 to help returning servicemen reintegrate into civilian life. It merged with other groups in 1926 to create the Canadian Legion.



At first the GWVA met in a room above the Kerns store on Water Street (Lakeshore Road). When that space was outgrown they moved to a church building on Elizabeth Street. That building is now the home of the Sea Cadets.

Burlington's Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 60 received their charter in 1926. Tom Waumsley, a local businessman, was the first president.

After WWII, the membership increased from 65 to more than 200 veterans. A larger building was purchased, still at the bottom of Elizabeth Street. In 1959 a new hall was completed on Legion Road. To the present day that hall on Legion Road remains the home of Burlington's branch of the Legion.



Sign on the lawn in front of Legion building





Commemorative stamps issued in 2026 (100) and in 1975 (50)

Membership Report *Pat Taylor*

These new members join 38 other paid up members for 2027

Tell your friends about us.
We like to see new members at our meetings.

Welcome to new members

Janet Greey

Louise Hansen

Janet Thorpe

Don Cooke

At our monthly meetings I'll be at a table at the back of Centennial Hall ready to accept your cash or cheque. OR you can mail your cheque to our post box OR you can renew by e-transfer OR by going to our web site and pay with a credit or debit card.

However you pay, please complete a Membership Form and let us know of any changes in your contact information.

Aldershot veteran received medal for his 100th birthday

Column by Mary Jane Boelhouwer
Appeared in The Hamilton Spectator, Wednesday, June 16, 1999

Stories on D-Day made the news last week and we were reminded again about the horrors of war.

On Saturday, June 5th, (1999) long time Aldershot resident Hugh Howie was honoured by the Department of Veterans Affairs as a Veteran of the First World War. One hundred-year-old Hugh thoroughly enjoyed this special event, which took place at Parkview Nursing Centre, Hamilton.

Fern Viola of Veterans Affairs hosted this ceremony. Hugh Received the John McRae Medallion and a certificate from Her Majesty the Queen presented by Stan Keyes, MP for Hamilton West. He also received a pin marking the 80th Anniversary of the Armistice. Family, friends and the choir from Aldershot Presbyterian Church attended the presentation ceremony and reception afterward and Hugh joined in with the choir as they sang The Lord is My Shepherd.

The next day, Sunday, June 6, Hugh Howie passed away at St. Joseph's Hospital.

Number ELEVEN is a significant number in the history of the First World War as the war ended at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month.

Hugh Howie, one of the few remaining survivors of the war, died at 11 p.m. on June 6, the 55th Anniversary of D-Day.



Hugh and his wife, Agnes, were dearly loved members of Aldershot Church and will be remembered by their family and friends.

Girl's Hockey



Burlington Gazette 30 January 1918

A girl's hockey team has been organized in town, and the girls are practicing hard preparatory to a game with a number of married men, captained by Dr. Peart. It is expected the game will be staged at the rink some evening next week.

Notet: Dr. Peart's only child is a girl!

Interview with George Stanley Blair on Dec 1, 1987

(Transcribed from a handwritten copy)

Interview #1 with George Stanley Blair on Dec 1, 1987. Mr. Blair will celebrate his 98th birthday in June 1988.

Stanley Blair's grandfather, George Blair and his brother emigrated from Scotland and settled in West Flamboro, near Harper's Corners

His father, George Blair, disliked clearing land and decided to get out on his own and become a carpenter. The first house he worked on was in Kilbride and is still standing. Then he came to Burlington. He married Hannah Shepperd.

George Blair and a Dr. Richardson purchased the block of land on Burlington Avenue extending from Ontario Street to Elgin and as far west as the property of St. Luke's Church and George Blair had the northern half of the block and constructed several large brick houses there.

Stanley Blair was born in 1890 in the second house from the south west corner of Burlington Avenue and Ontario Street. Mr. Blair recalled that at the age of 14 he drove a team of horses with a scoop scraper to dry out the cellar of the former Hyslop House on the south west corner of Ontario and Burlington Avenue.

At the age of six, Mr. Blair came to live at his present home at the corner of Brant Street and Blairholm. His father purchased the 50 acre fruit farm from Nelson Ogg "to get his sons out of town". The kitchen in the house was very small and as the "Blair women were big", the first renovation Mr. Blair made was to build a big kitchen. The original kitchen is now the den where Mr. Blair spends many hours. In 1907 a hot water heating system was installed in the house at a cost of $425. Stanley Blair was part of the bargain as he had to work as the plumber's helper in the installation.



When George Blair purchased the farm, the orchard numbered 200 apple trees: 100 spies, 50 greenings, 25 ripson pippins and 25 early apples including the harvest apple. Prior to World War I the apple growers in the area clubbed together and loaded a railway car at Freeman Station with apples which were shipped to Glasgow. Apples were taken to Hamilton Market and Mr. Blair recalled driving home from Hamilton on bitter cold winter nights before Christmas after the day's sales.

His father continued as a builder and Stanley recalled that during the early spring months he hauled limestone blocks from the "mountain´ with the team of horses to the site where his father was building a house. The blocks were used for the foundation. On one occasion he loaded several large blocks using a plank to roll them on to the wagon. The stone masons were astounded that he was able to load such large blocks on his own.

Two local incidents he mentioned were:

George Blair built a very large home for William Graham on the site of the present Torrance Apartments. It was sold to a Mr. Torrance, a grain dealer from Montreal, who lived there for 4 or 5 years. He had two sons. One Saturday night George Blair found one of the Torrance boys drunk and asleep on the porch of the 4 roomed Central School on Brant St. Mr. Blair covered him up with a piece of carpet he found nearby. When he returned early Sunday morning both the Torrance boy and the carpet had gone.

On another occasion his half- brother, Ted Smith, came home and reported to his father that he had stumbled on a body along the path leading from the end of the sidewalk which went as far as the school, north on Brant St. When his father went back to the place with Ted, the body had gone.

Stanley Blair's mother, Hannah Sheppard, came to Canada from Yorkshire England in 1859 at the age of 5. Her father, Robert Sheppard, with his wife and his family of three daughters and ten sons, settled in Nelson Township, along Guelph Line, north of No. 5 Highway. His mother lived from 1854 to 1958. She recalled that as a child of five she had walked by the present Blair house and watched as it was being built.

Both she and George Blair had been married previous to their marriage. Hannah (Smith) Blair had two sons and George had two sons and a daughter by their first spouses and two sons and two daughters by their union.

Interview #2 with Stanley Blair Dec 9, 1987

Dr. Richardson, whose office was on the south west corner of Brant and Ontario was the Blair family doctor until he died of pneumonia or flu. His son died on the same day. (Ed. Note: there was actually a 2 week gap between the deaths of father and son, both doctors.)

Then Dr. Spears became their doctor. Blair recalled that his mother became very seriously ill with pleurisy. With his father's consent, Dr. Spears arranged for Dr. Olmstead who practiced in Hamilton to come out on the radial to Burlington. Dr. Spears met him at the radial station (Elgin & Brant) and drove him to Blair's in the horse and buggy. Dr. Olmstead punctured her back with a long needle and drew fluid off from her lungs, saving her life.

(a page is missing)

…..taking a pail of honey to his mother who lived on John St. and he had the pail on the seat beside him. He was racing Woodie Freeman who had a large farm of 230 acres at Brant and Plains Road and who was driving a team of ponies. As they raced down Brant St. the Kerns team ran over a culvert in front of the Blair home and upset the buggy and the liquid honey ran over Ernie and the buggy.

Stan Blair remembered his whole family running out to see what had caused all the racket.

A vivid recollection of his school days was a strapping that he received from his teacher, Miss McNair when he was in the Primer Class.

To this day his one ear lobe is longer than the other as a result of the principal of Central School, Dick Watson, pulling it. When he told his father, he reported the matter to the trustees Fred Galoway and Will Tuck. Mr Watson was asked to appear at a trustees' meeting and there he was told that he would be finished as principal at the end of June. A sequel - Dick Watson went to the West. About the same time a Featherstone girl on the Dundas Hwy married a minister and they went West too. Later Dick Watson came to the minister requesting that he marry him and his fiancé. The minister's wife recognized him and told her husband not to perform the marriage as Watson already had a wife in the East.

This is the end of the handwritten copy.

Editor's note: Stanley Blair remained in that home until his death in 1994 at the age of..… 104!

He is buried in the family plot in Greenwood Cemetery.



www.findagrave.com

Outreach Report *Joan Downey*

In the October issue it was mentioned that we were participating in the St. Luke's 'Adopt a Stone' program and had agreed to sponsor the cleaning of the Augustus Bates Jr. gravestone. We have also offered to 'adopt' the Andrew Freeman Pettit stone.



As you can see, it could certainly benefit from a good cleaning.

When the work on these stones is complete I will share photos.

www.findagrave.com

It seems the news is spreading that we give interesting historical presentations. In October, Nicola presented 'The Pig and Whistle' to residents at Pearl & Pine and 'The Estaminet' at Martha's Landing. In both cases, the talks were well received. And, there are more talks scheduled for November and December.

The Halton Region Community Investment Fund (HRCIF) supports non-profit human service programs that enhance resident health, safety and well-being.

Your board members have spent many hours working on an application for this funding. If we are successful it will permit us to sponsor "memory cafes" whereby seniors would be sharing their personal knowledge of growing up and living in Burlington; purchase equipment to facilitate those with mobility, vision and hearing issues when conducting guided tours; produce brochures for our guided tours, etc. To be continued.

THE BURLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving Burlington's History for Today and Tomorrow

Membership - 2027

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____Postal Code:_____

Telephone: _____ Email address: _____

Membership Dues

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

☐ Family $40.00 ☐ Adult $30.00 ☐ Senior $25.00

☐ Yes, as a **new** BHS member I wish to receive the Gazette newsletter and other e-communications and understand I can unsubscribe at any time.

Volunteer

Are you interested in volunteering with the Society? Would you like to help us in preserving the history of our City? Tell us a bit about your talents and interests – info@burlingtonhistorical.ca

Donation

I wish to make a separate donation to the society in the sum of _____
A Tax Receipt will be issued for all donations totalling $25.00 or more
The Burlington Historical Society is a registered charity # 119217693RR0001

Mail completed form and remittance(s) to:
The Burlington Historical Society
Membership Officer
1450 Headon Road, PO Box 93164
Burlington, Ontario L7M 4A3

Payment options:
Make cheques payable to The Burlington Historical Society **OR** e-transfer funds to info@burlingtonhistorical.ca **OR** Leave it at the Membership table at any General Meeting **OR** Visit our website to sign up and to make payment by credit or debit card.

NOTE: If you are a new member or there are changes to your contact information, please email the completed form to us at the above email

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