



Wednesday, May 1 2024, 7:30 pm

Rousseau Room - Swansea Town Hall

SPEAKER: Chris Higgins

BRICK by BRICK:

Swansea Public School, 1890-2020

Visitors Welcome! Light Refreshments!

*The Swansea Historical Society thankfully acknowledges
funding grants from the following bodies:*

Ontario
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President's Message: by Bob Roden, President

To members and friends of the Swansea Historical Society, we wish to thank you for your ongoing support. As most of you know, back in March 2020, with the advent of COVID-19, we had to close our Archives, cancel all indoor SHS meetings (including Executive meetings), and cut back on various other activities. Over the intervening years, we have done our best to fulfill all the administrative requirements to keep your Society afloat, while gradually restarting our normal activities. We have tried to keep in touch with our members through frequent e-mail messages, postings on the Society's website, and the occasional formal Newsletter. Unfortunately, communicating with members who do not use computers was a challenge. Starting in September 2023, we have resumed a more regular Newsletter schedule, which includes e-mailing of Newsletters to those who are willing to accept electronic copies, and hand deliveries and mailings by Canada Post for those members who have requested paper copies.

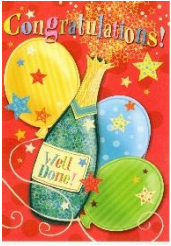
Between October 2021 and May 2023, we held "virtual" monthly Swansea Historical Society meetings, using the "Zoom" on-line conferencing tool. This worked well for many of our members, especially those who were uncomfortable attending in-person meetings during COVID-19, and those who were too far away to attend at the Swansea Town Hall. On the other hand, we regret that many people have been unable to participate, for various reasons. Starting with the October 2023 meeting, we have moved to a "hybrid" approach which means that participants now have a choice of attending SHS meetings in-person at the Town Hall, or connecting on-line using Zoom. In the long run, we hope the hybrid format will be good for everyone, including those who are comfortable now with in-person meetings and those who prefer to participate from a distance.

Before October 2023, when we were running pure Zoom meetings, we were able to record some of those meetings for later on-line viewing. When we moved to hybrid meetings at the Town Hall, technical problems prevented us from creating recordings. We believe those problems have now been resolved, as we were able to record April's meeting, and we hope it will be possible to make recordings of the May meeting and other hybrid meetings to follow.



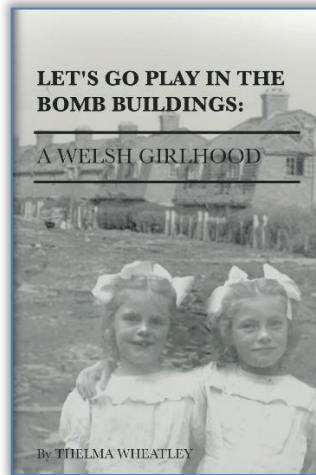
In Sympathy

Merle Hudson: We join the Swansea Area Seniors' Association (SASA) in mourning the passing of Merle Hudson on March 16, 2024. Merle was a devoted worker for SASA for many years, including a lengthy term as the organization's President. She is remembered as a warm and generous spirit with a delightful sense of humour and always ready to give support to those in need. Merle will be greatly missed at the Swansea Town Hall.



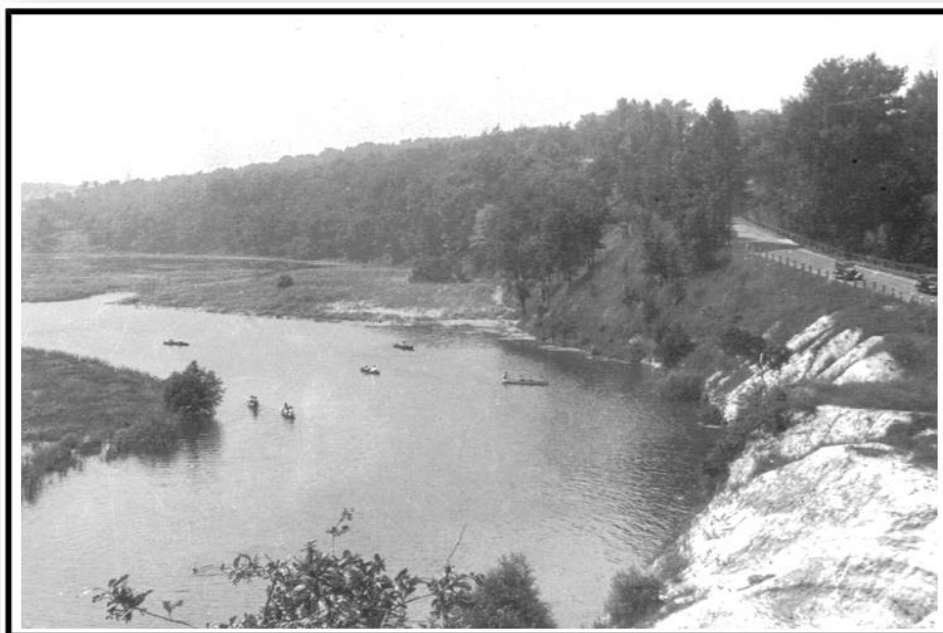
Congratulations to Thelma Wheatley Orchard: We are pleased to report that Thelma's latest memoir ***“Let's Go Play In The Bomb Buildings: A Welsh Girlhood”*** has just been published. It's a short fiction book that probes beneath the surface of the “Silent Generation” (those born during & just after World War II), to the daring lively dramatic lives young girls enjoyed beneath the strictness of their upbringing, and of being a twin.

Thelma is a long-time member of the SHS Executive. For several years she managed the refreshments for our monthly meetings, and she has been the featured speaker at SHS meetings. We wish her success with her latest book, which is available on Amazon.



Historical Photo of the Month

This is just one of many local historical photos in our 2022 calendar. See the 2024 calendar at swanseahistoricalsociety.ca/publications/calendars



Canoeing on the Humber River was captured near Riverside Drive. Date unknown.
(Swansea Historical Society Archives; William Small photo)



Swansea Historical Society Contact Information

The Society's mobile telephone number is 647-859-3901, and you can send e-mails to: swanseahistoricalsociety@gmail.com or swancnews@gmail.com or through the SHS website. Our mailing address is 95 Lavinia Avenue, Box 102, Toronto ON M6S 3H9. However, for urgent items, we suggest that you use email or telephone where possible, since we don't access our mailbox at the Town Hall every day. Your comments and suggestions are always most welcome, and please let us know of any developments that may be of interest to the Society and its members. You can also follow our activities through the Society's website www.swanseahistoricalsociety.ca and the website of the Swansea Town Hall www.swanseatownhall.ca . You can also follow us on X at twitter.com/Swansea_History or Instagram at www.instagram.com/swansea_history .



Future Events

In addition to the following list, please note that our new “Events” web page contains a more complete and more up-to-date list of Swansea Historical Society events and local community events. See swanseahistoricalsociety.ca/events .

Monthly SHS meeting, Wed. May 1, 2024, 7:30 pm, Swansea Town Hall: In our final meeting before we break for the summer, the Swansea Historical Society welcomes speaker Chris Higgins. In 17 years as a teacher at Swansea Public School, Chris curated the school archives as a hobby. Upon his retirement in 2020, he decided to leave a record behind. Adding files from the City of Toronto Archives, Toronto Star, and Globe and Mail, as well as input from the community and rare documents, Chris's book, *BRICK by BRICK: Swansea Public School, 1890-2020*, was the result and it forms the topic of tonight's meeting.

Brick by Brick adds important chapters to the story of Toronto. Students of Swansea Public School were residents of a suburban village before it was absorbed by Canada's largest urban centre in 1967. The school had been built in a prime spot in 1890, where it remains a perfect place to learn and play. Over time, the school has faced its share of challenges, including wars, and pandemics, and 130-odd years of growth and change.

In addition to *Brick by Brick*, Chris has also published *Riverstoryz: Conversations on the Humber* and he is currently working on a third book, one that marries his love of history and true crime, entitled *Hanging on Every Word: Toronto in the Age of Execution*.

Please note that, since April 2024, the start time of monthly SHS meetings has been shifted to 7::30 pm. Assuming that we adhere to our traditional schedule, the next meeting following the May 1 meeting will be on Wednesday, October 2, 2024, and it will include an Annual General Meeting and Elections.

Jane's Walks, Fri. May 3 – Sun. May 5, 2024: Once again, guided walking tours will be held across the City throughout the first weekend in May in honour of the late community activist, Jane Jacobs.

Locally, the Bloor West Village Business Improvement Area (BIA) will be holding two identical Jane's Walks on Saturday, May 4, focused on the history of businesses in the Bloor West area. We are invited to embark on a journey through the charming streets of Bloor West Village by joining an immersive Jane's Walk tour led by local experts Alex Rascanu, [#ExperienceTO](#) historical tours organizer, David Hollands, and Angela Macdonald, Executive Director of Bloor West Village BIA. These walks are offered as an opportunity to uncover hidden gems, delve into fascinating history, and experience the essence of this vibrant neighbourhood first-hand. The morning walk will run from 10:30 am to 12 noon, and the afternoon walk will run from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm. Both walks will start at the Baka Gallery Cafe, 2256 Bloor Street West (one block west of Runnymede Road at the corner of Beresford Avenue). This is a FREE event, and all are welcome, but participants are asked to register in advance. At the time of writing this announcement, we understand that the morning tour is now fully booked, but it is still possible to sign up for the afternoon tour at <https://www.bloorwestvillagebia.com/events-calendar/> .

For other Jane's Walks planned for Toronto, details can be found on the website www.janeswalkfestivalto.com/walks

Annual Swansea Historical Society Walking Tour, Sat. June 8, 2024, 1:30 pm: We are now finalizing plans for our annual guided walking tour of the Swansea area, to be held on June 8, with author Patrick Okens and Lance Gleich as co-leaders. The topic will be “Could the Humber River Have Become Brûlé Lake?”, based on Patrick's research.

“In 1929, a coalition of amateur sports leaders called for the creation of a grand rowing regatta course on the lower Humber River between Bloor Street and Lake Ontario. Had it happened, the largely natural river we experience today would have been transformed into a two-kilometre-long recreational area with significant implications for local *development*, as well as the environment and future natural disasters including Hurricane Hazel. This walk will explore the story of “Brûlé Lake” by walking the length of the proposed course. We will explore how it almost came to be, what it could have meant, why the effort failed, and how the saga could be viewed as symbolic of the end of the predominance of amateur sports in favour of professional sports in Toronto.”

The walk will begin at 1:30 pm at the Rousseaux site (*south of the Petro-Canada station on South Kingsway*) and it will end at the Hurricane Hazel plaque below the TTC Old Mill Subway Station a couple of hours later. Participation is FREE, and all are welcome!!

Garden Tour “Through the Garden Gate Swansea”, Sat. June 8, & Sun. June 9, 2024. 11:00

am to 4:00 pm: In June 2024, the Toronto Botanical Garden's annual Through the Garden Gate tour, Toronto's largest tour of the most beautiful private residential gardens, is coming to Swansea!! This walkable, self-guided tour will highlight the most beautiful private gardens in our west-end Toronto neighbourhood. The Swansea area is known for historical architecture, vibrant shopping and dining in Bloor-West Village, and some pretty amazing gardeners! Garden-goers will have the opportunity to visit more than 20 residential gardens, of varying sizes and themes. The self-guided format enables participants to discover the gardens at their own pace, following a map and guide that contains descriptions of each featured garden. A complimentary shuttle bus service will be available for participants to “hop on and hop off” along the route, which is also very walkable. Back by popular demand will be live music in select gardens to enhance your enjoyment of connecting with nature. Garden seekers will also have a chance to ask questions and learn something too! Knowledgeable [Toronto Master Gardeners](#) will be stationed in each garden and are happy to answer plant and garden-design questions.

This outdoor event can be enjoyed solo or with family and friends, strolling along the tree-lined streets, while skipping in and out of gardens. Come early, or linger after the tour, to shop or dine at one of the local restaurants in the nearby [Bloor-West Village](#).

All proceeds from the tour support the Toronto Botanical Garden. One-day passes are priced at \$45 for the public, \$40 for TBG members, and \$25 for students/children. Two-day passes are priced at \$70 for the public, \$65 for TBG members, and \$25 for students/children. More information can be accessed and tickets can be purchased on-line at torontobotanicalgarden.ca/event/through-the-garden-gate-swanssea

Annual Governor Simcoe Walking Tour, Sat. Sept. 28, 2024: As in past years, we are planning to hold a FREE guided walking tour, retracing the first day of Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe's 1793 expedition following the centuries-old Toronto Carrying Place portage route. We anticipate that Part 1 of the tour will start at 9:30 am at the Rousseaux site, just south of the Petro-Canada station on South Kingsway, and Part 2 will start at 1:00 pm at the Alex Ling Fountain, on the north-west corner of Bloor and Jane Streets.

Annual General Meeting & Elections, Wed. Oct. 2, 2024, 7:30 pm, Swansea Town Hall: If our Society is to continue functioning, we still need more volunteers!! We can always benefit from new blood and new ideas!! Please let us know if you would like to explore ways that you could become more involved in the operation of your Society, or if you can think of someone we might approach. There are vacancies that need to be filled, and some current Executive members are now dealing with personal issues that limit their ability to participate. In addition to filling specific vacancies, we are also happy to introduce people to the Executive as “members-at-large” with no defined ongoing responsibilities – just a willingness to help out when needed. We need to hear from you before October's elections!!

The business meeting will be followed by an invited speaker – to be confirmed.



Financial Notes: We are pleased to remind you that the Swansea Historical Society can accept payments electronically. E-transfers directed to swanseahistoricalsociety@gmail.com will result in a direct deposit to the SHS bank account at Scotiabank. This e-transfer approach can be used to pay membership fees, purchase publications, make donations to the Society, etc. (As a registered charity, the Society can provide tax receipts for donations). We invite you to give it a try. To assist our Treasurer with her accounting, if you are sending money by e-transfer, please use the “message” area to identify the purpose of your payment.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL!!

The current membership year runs from September 1, 2023, to August 31, 2024. Many of you have already paid your membership for 2023-2024, and we thank you. If you have not yet paid your membership fees for 2023-2024, we invite you to do so at your earliest convenience. Fees can be paid at any SHS events, or payments can be sent to: 95 Lavinia Avenue, Box 102, Toronto, M6S 3H9, or fees can be paid by e-transfer to: swanseahistoricalsociety@gmail.com. To assist our Treasurer, please use the “message” area to indicate whether your e-transfer payment is for a single membership, family membership, and/or donation, etc.

For many years, the annual membership fees have been held at \$15 for an individual and \$20 for a family. Your fees help to offset many of the costs incurred by the Society in its ongoing operations. If you are reading this and you are not already a member of the Swansea Historical Society, please join us so that you can be added to our mailing list and help support this worthy cause.



SWANSEA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



2023/2024 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
(The membership year runs from Sep – Aug)

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Individual..... \$15.00 _____
 Family \$20.00 _____
 Corporate \$25.00 _____

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Individual..... \$250.00 _____
 Family \$500.00 _____

Family Name: _____ Given Name(s): _____ Membership Number: _____

Street Address: _____ Apartment Number: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal code: _____

Home Telephone: (_____) _____ Business Telephone: (_____) _____

E-Mail: _____ Please use e-mail for my newsletters: Yes No, thanks

Please send to: Swansea Historical Society Membership Secretary, 95 Lavinia Avenue, Box 102, Toronto, Ontario M6S 3H9