

Orangeville Citizen

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The humblest Citizen of all the land, when clad in armour of a righteous cause,
is stronger than all the hosts of Error. - WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

How many of the 90 child deaths led to inquests?

THERE WAS A TIME in Ontario when coroner's inquests were almost routine, particularly if there was a high-profile homicide.

A case in point was the situation 100 years ago, when a Melancthon man with a history of mental problems strode to a neighbour's house and shot two of the residents to death. An inquest was immediately called, at which three medical experts gave convincing testimony as to the killer's insanity, and within weeks the man was sent to an asylum in Hamilton.

Back then, inquests were often held to assist police in gathering evidence concerning a possible crime. However, this process came under fire in the mid-20th Century when some police forces were accused of using inquests, with their relaxed rules on evidence, as "fishing expeditions."

Today, the Ontario Coroner's Act not only states that the coroner's powers "shall not be construed as creating a criminal court of record," but goes on to stipulate that the five-member juries "shall not make any finding of legal responsibility or express any conclusion of law on any matter" relevant to the inquest.

What the juries must do is inquire into the circumstances of the death, including by what means the deceased died and, more importantly, "may make recommendations directed to the avoidance of death in similar circumstances or respecting any other matter arising out of the inquest."

Last week, Ontario's Child Advocate released a report chillingly titled: "90 deaths, ninety voices silenced."

The 90 were children known to Ontario's child welfare system who died in 2007, according to the latest report from the chief coroner's office

— a number Child's Advocate Irwin Elman says is shocking and should trouble us all.

Equally disturbing, he said in his first annual report to the Legislature, is the government's refusal, on privacy grounds, to share detailed information on these deaths with his office.

"These are obviously very critical documents for the understanding of the events leading to the death of the child or youth, and entirely necessary for the work of the Advocacy Office," he wrote, adding: "The matter of access to information is one that we will pursue vigorously."

In an interview, he told the Toronto Star he had "no idea" so many of the children, who were either open cases of Children's Aid Societies (CAS) or had died within a year of their files being closed, could perish in a single year in Ontario. Nor did he know that the number of children who have died has been constant since the late 1990s when the Coroner's office began tracking their deaths.

Although acknowledging that the deaths represent less than a quarter of all children who died in the province in 2007 and are a fraction of the 26,260 open CAS cases, he said the number of deaths was "too high by any standard."

We heartily agree.

Mr. Elman said key goals for his office are gaining more access to information on children and youth involved in the child welfare and youth criminal justice systems, and broadening his office's legal right to the coroner's files on deaths.

He said such information would help his office "to resolve issues that youth have contacted us about, to know how to respond to incidents involving children and youth in care

and to investigate any deaths among our charges."

The 90 deaths in 2007 are recorded as part of the chief coroner's annual Pediatric Death Review Committee report, released last June. They include children and youths in foster care, whose families had open files with a children's aid society or had died within a year of their files being closed.

Interestingly, the committee concluded that most of the deaths were preventable. It found only 16 were accidental. Nine were listed as suicides; four were homicides; eight died from natural causes and could probably not have been prevented; 22 were "undetermined," while 17 were yet to be assigned a classification; and 14 were not investigated since deaths were expected due to fragile health.

Questioned in the Legislature, Deborah Matthews, Minister of Children and Youth Services, assured NDP Leader Howard Hampton that her ministry takes such deaths "very, very seriously. We work with the Chief Coroner every time there is a death reviewed. We take it very seriously and make sure that we take the steps necessary to prevent future deaths."

Well, one step we see as necessary would be for the law or government policy to ensure that more inquests are held into such deaths and for the coroner's office to disclose publicly the findings of investigations that lead to a conclusion that no inquest is needed.

As we see it, any privacy concerns arising out of such requirements should surely give way to the public interest in preventing preventable deaths.

We certainly wish Mr. Elman well in his efforts and hope the minister will give him the tools he needs to accomplish his important task.



Time to rethink local budgets?

WITHOUT A DOUBT, the roughly \$10 million in federal-provincial infrastructure grants to Dufferin municipalities announced last Friday are welcome news.

However, we wonder whether our politicians have done sufficient homework on the subject of needed infrastructure projects in view of the multiple billions that the senior levels of government are supposedly poised

to hand out.

We're particularly perplexed at the absence of any grants to the county itself or to the townships of Amaranth, Melancthon and East Luther Grand Valley.

And we wonder why on earth Mono council is standing by its decision to cancel the plan to finish paving 5 Sideroad. Without the senior governments' funding, such projects will cost local taxpayers much, much more.

Dufferin in the Civil War

By Wayne Townsend
Curator,
Dufferin County Museum & Archives

The thing that is the most fun about working or volunteering in a museum are the surprises that you discover in everyday work.

The Dufferin County Museum and Archives is currently undertaking a project that will create a virtual record of all the military veterans who have ever had a connection to this area.

Service men's and women's names and records are being compiled from dozens of sources ranging from the internet to the actual names on plaques in churches and legions. Anyone who was born in Dufferin, resided in Dufferin, or died in Dufferin County is being included. The job is expected to take two to three years to complete.

The federal Department of Veterans Affairs gave us a small grant to get the project started and several volunteers have been concentrating on the actual research. We started on World War I and will work into World War II. Korean War, Vietnam and Afghanistan service personnel are also being added to the list.

As with all research, however, we found a few surprises waiting from Dufferin's past. A volunteer discovered the obituary of an early resident and it stated that he was a veteran of the civil war. How cool was that, but was there more?

If I had remembered local history, then I would have had a suspicion of local connections to early American history.

"The Yellow Briar" was the Canadian best seller of 1934. It was written as a fictional story of a local Mono township lad named Patrick Slater, supposedly the author.

Patrick was orphaned on his way to Canada in the late 1850s. When he landed in Montreal he joined a family called the Irwins on their way to settle at Mono Mills. Years later the lad falls in love with the Irwin's daughter and to avoid scandal he leaves and fights in the American Civil War. He later returns to take care of the aging Irwin parents.

It is a wonderful, heart warming story that is full of tales of early Dufferin County. Although fiction, I should have guessed that it may have also have been based on real people and actual events.

After much research, we have found that indeed Dufferin County to date has actually had at least five local boys who in real life went off to fight in our neighbouring country, perhaps for pay, perhaps for

love; we will never know why.

James Norris, who farmed in Melancthon for over 50 years, died March 4, 1915 and was buried in Badjeros Cemetery. His obituary read in part, "Mr Norris was born in England about 1840 and came to Canada as a youth. When the American Revolution (sic.) broke out he was full of the vigour of young manhood and having a taste for the risk and romance of war he enlisted in the Northern forces as a member of a cavalry regiment from Ohio. As a colonel of the war he returned to Canada and took up farming in Melancthon."

Another soldier was Hugh McKenna, a well known Mono pioneer. His obituary also lists him as a "Civil War Veteran." The ORANGEVILLE SUN on May 12, 1864 announced that "Mr. Richard Hewat has joined the Signal Corps of the United States Army. From a letter we learn that although only a few weeks enlisted he has already earned the confidence of his superior officers."

Not all of our research had a happy ending however. In the Aged Peoples Ward at the County Jail we find in April of 1921:

"John Lewis, a veteran of the American Civil War, passed away, deceased hailed from the Mono Centre neighbourhood." We have been able to find records in the USA on the great military career of this forgotten soldier.

Another man, however, remains more clouded in time. William Bradford of the 8th Iowa Volunteer Infantry was six foot four inches, with grey hair and blue eyes. He had a distinguished career. He had moved to the United States to find work and somehow joined the military. He fought at Shiloh and at Petersburg and was eventually captured at Jonesboro, Virginia. His wife assumed he was dead and claimed his pension.

However, an article in the ORANGEVILLE SUN of May 7, 1896 has the story. "One of the early settlers in Shelburne was a soldier during the Civil War. He fell into the hands of the enemy and was in the Andersonville prison. Mr Bradford now resides in Melancthon."

It is interesting to note that at the time the article was written he had another wife and never claimed his pension.

In a small grave in Little Falls, N.Y. lies another Civil War veteran, George Goetchi, who also served with the North and died Dec. 30, 1908. He was a very well known Orangeville businessman in the 1880s, running a cigar store and billiard parlour on Broadway. He moved to Toronto when he was 70 and opened the College Inn Cigar Store. His widow, Dulcie Wallace of Orangeville was more than 28 years younger than her husband.

I guess the story is to never assume anything when it comes to Dufferin County history. We now have found veterans from the Napoleonic wars, War of 1812, Boer War, Crimean War and even a young man from Amaranth who ran off to support the rebels in Spain in 1937.

If any of our readers have veterans connected to Dufferin County, give us a call or e-mail collectionsassistant@dufferinmuseum.com, as we want to make sure that everyone is remembered!

Museum Matters



CITIZEN MAILBOX

Energy Act 'a wolf in sheep's clothing'

The Green Energy Act seeks to do away with any need for proper environmental assessments for renewable energy

projects, strip all planning decisions from municipalities, silence citizens and give more power to the energy companies

Hydro bills need comment

I would like to comment on Orangeville's Hydro bills.

In 2008 our metered water/sewer charge increased from 1.99 to 2.22 per kwh, an increase of 23 cents or 13%.

In 2009 our metered water/sewer charge was increased from 2.22 per kwh to 2.48 kwh, an increase of 26 cents or 11%. The 2009 water/sewage charges went from \$5.42 to \$7.00, an increase of 12%.

A 23 per cent increase over two years? Currently our hydro rates are fair, compared to other provincial towns.

However, if Smart Meters are installed customers elsewhere are paying:

Summer weekdays (May 1

to October 31), 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. 07.2 cents kwh; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. 08.8 cents kwh; 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. 07.2 cents kwh; 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. .04 cents kwh.

Winter weekdays (November 1 to April 30) 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. 8.8 cents kwh; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. 7.2 cents kwh; 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. 8.8 cents kwh; 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. 7.2 cents kwh; 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. (off peak hours) .04 cents kwh. Remember the good old days when our taxes included water and sewer costs?

Most seniors can pay their taxes but how will they pay the rising costs of water/sewage and Smart(?) Meters?

Thomas G. Kelly
Orangeville

A Strong World Needs Strong Women

March 8 is International Women's Day. It is a special day to celebrate the achievements of women in Ontario and all over the world.

It's a day to reflect on the many successes we've had on the road towards women's equality and prosperity - and on the work that still needs to be done.

Women have made great strides in acting as role-models in boardrooms, community centres, academia, and politics.

But we need to do more.

We know that there is injustice when there is a gender wage gap. We know there is inequality when women continue to live with the threat of violence.

Our government is making systemic changes to break down barriers and create opportunity.

Through our Domestic Violence Action Plan, we've created programs aimed at increasing public awareness of woman abuse and improving supports to victims.

Our Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign focuses on recognizing the warning signs of abuse so we all know what to do to help.

It is now in over 140 communities across Ontario. And we've launched similar campaigns in francophone and Aboriginal communities.

Our communities need to see strong women in leadership roles. Women who are making a

difference. Women who act as role models for our young people.

Role-models make a big difference. Our government launched the Leading Girls and Leading Women / Building Communities awards to celebrate Ontario's women leaders and achievers.

I encourage you to contact your local MPP about future nominations.

All of us have women in our lives who have made us who we are - women who have inspired us to do better, to speak out, or to advocate for change.

This International Women's Day, let's celebrate these women.

Take a moment to send a letter to a woman who has made a lasting contribution in your community - or a woman who has touched your life in a special way.

It could be a teacher, a parent, or perhaps it's someone you've never even met but that you have always thought of as a strong leader and mentor. Someone who's made a difference - and inspired you to make a difference too.

Let's take this International Women's Day to thank a woman for the lasting contribution she's made.

Happy International Women's Day!

Deb Matthews
Ontario Minister
Responsible for Women's Issues

with the help of a new Energy Czar. Rural Ontario will be wide open for exploitation and local government will have absolutely no say. This is greenwashing with a gun to your head.

What is very frightening is the anti-democratic 'reverse onus' clause tucked into this bill. In the past, the onus would be on a developer to provide proper study and evidence that a project would do no harm to the environment or humans. No more. Bill 150 goes into some detail how the onus will now be on the "victim" to prove any damages. But, hey, the bill also overrides the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act...so how is the average family going to prove anything, especially if they don't have the hundreds of

thousands of dollars to bring it forward to an complex legal Environmental Tribunal?

Shake the green fairy dust off and one will see this is the most draconian, fascist piece of legislation proposed in our lifetime. Looked at objectively, this is a step backwards for environmentalism. The McGuinty Liberals no longer want bother to with citizens concerned about the protection of wildlife and natural habitat or families concerned about raising their children in the shadow of several 40-storey spinning electrical generators.

This is not about turbines and solar panels anymore. This is about basic civic rights and the future stewardship of rural Ontario.

Maureen Anderson
Amherstburg, ON

Curl for Heart thank yous

Saturday, February 14 was the 12th Annual Curl For Heart and the very best yet, raising \$1,600-plus.

Thanks to all the 64 curlers who brought in pledges galore (\$\$\$) and to all our Major sponsors:

MacMaster Pontiac/Buick, Royal Chevrolet/Cadillac, Burnside & Associates, Bert Gauthier, Marks Work Warehouse, Dufferin Vet Hospital, Data Cable (Dick Fearon), Brian and Lori Smith, Marge Snider, Erskines Auto Services, Triton Engineering, Fred Johnson, Randy Hacen.

Thanks also to Laura Berry, of Lara Berry Gallery, for the beautiful print enhanced by the craftsmanship of Bill Dawson Custom Framing.

Thanks to Ruth and Keith Archbold, of Archbold's Custom Upholstering, for the cloth carrying bags that 64 curlers went home with.

Our thanks also goes to some 65 different businesses and individuals in this community who donated prizes for curlers who brought in pledges for this event.

No more peace for land

The politicians are worried about the election results in Israel. The parties to the right, Likud and Beitenu and others won a majority. (64-120). They probably will not buy peace anymore in exchange for land. Israel is in a special sense God's land and it is land for His special people.

The land was given to Abraham and his descendants

(Gen. 17:7,8) for an everlasting possession. The Jews have been dispersed to the four corners of the earth for their many grievous sins.

Now they are home again and are still coming home to their own country or rather part of it, since the War of Independence in 1947-48. That

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